

SMG BLASTS GOVT

Over 2023 Budget; Describes It As IMF Imposed Austerity



Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister of Finance

The Socialist Movement of Ghana (SMG) has rejected the 2023 Budget Statement and Financial Policy statement by the government describing it as “Bretton Woods imposed austerity”. According to the SMG the budget statement which sought to raise the Value Added Tax (VAT) by 2.5% from

2023 next year will adversely affect businesses and intensify the economic hardships being faced by the majority of Ghanaians. The SMG in a statement issued Tuesday November 29 signed by Emmanuel Oboe Baiden, for its General Secretary after a meeting by

its Standing Committee which reviewed the 2023 budget statement and economic policy of the government presented by the Finance minister, Mr. Ken Ofori Atta said it is regrettable that the Akufo-Addo led New Patriotic Party (NPP)

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NPP's Amoako Baah Protests Calls To Name Kumasi Airport After Separatist Baffour Osei Akoto



Dr. Richard Amoako Baah, a political scientist and leading member of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP), has reacted to calls for the Kumasi International Airport to be named after Baffour Osei Akoto, father of the current Agriculture Minister, Dr. Akoto Afriyie describing it as inappropriate. Dr. Baah has subsequently vowed to support any move to resist such

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The INSIGHT

— EDITORIAL

THE LOOMING DEBT CRISIS

Data released by the Bank of Ghana recently indicated that Ghana's debt was now over \$40 billion, which is almost double what was bequeathed to this administration.

What is worrying about the country's rising debt level is that no stop-gap measures appears to be put in place to halt the phenomenon. Instead, floatation of new bonds domestically and abroad appears to be the order of the day which has far-reaching repercussions for the nation in terms of its debt sustainability. Already, the unbridled government borrowing is giving many financial analysts headache since that appears to be the only leeway or succor in government raising needed capital for infrastructural projects.

Paradoxically, political watchers are worried that the present managers of the economy who in recent past complained about borrowing are themselves doing worse.

Reality of governance, has undoubtedly dawned, and it is important that a new paradigm shift is charted since the rate of borrowing is not sustainable in the long run. The attempt by some official spokespersons to score political points using economic indicators which clearly do not make sense and also address the looming debt crisis because of their obvious contradictions and deficiencies is the most worrying.

The time to domesticate the economy to grow and eat what the country needs and quicken the industrial pace to lessen imports is now more than important to the nation's survival.

NPP's Amoako Baah Protests Calls To Name Kumasi Airport After Separatist Baffour Osei Akoto



A section of the Kumasi Airport

from front page

It was therefore high time that the nation honored him for his role.

"It would not be a bad idea if the Kumasi International Airport was named after him. I don't think Baffour Akoto did anything inferior," he added.

"Baffour Akoto has actually distinguished himself with the nationalist struggle and if you look at the big six, all have national assets named after them and some other people", he stressed.

However, reacting to the calls, Dr. Baah believes any attempt to do that must be resisted as it is inappropriate to do so.

"Chairman Akoto was not NPP at all, he was NLM, and this was the period in our history when Ashanti wanted to break away from Ghana, even that, it is not appropriate to name the airport after him.

"Somebody who did not champion the cause of Ghana but rather champion the break away, it shouldn't be", he cautioned.

"But here the consolation is, if they name somebody after the airport, it is the same way somebody will come and change it...it's not a big deal. If you present it to parliament and they debate it and say yes, and they say someone deserves more honor than him they will change it... it's not cast in stone.

"It will be better if they deliberate properly and name the place after somebody who deserves better but today they are in charge. Akufo-Addo will not listen, he doesn't listen to anything, and he does what he wants" he said.

"I don't see Okyeame Akoto's stature as a national hero. This is not how you honor

people; you cannot honor people who were just on one side", he argued.

He however believes the government of the day needs to be careful of such actions, especially the President and his appointments even.

"Look at the judiciary; he has just filled all the vacancies. Majority of the judges he appointed, is that how it's supposed to be? Someone who came before you could have named them, all. He doesn't think like that he does what he wants"

"Some of these things he is doing I suspect someday the whole judiciary will be removed and done again. Why do you do this? People left it and you come and you appoint everyone. You don't do that. Even the US with conservatives and liberals even they don't do that". He said.

THE INSIGHT

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from front page

administration continues to follow the neoliberal economic agenda championed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank which have resulted in hardships for Ghanaians. The statement condemned the increase in VAT by 2.5% and the freeze on public sector employment at a time the teeming number of graduates are looking for employment including some other policy initiatives as unacceptable.

“The SMG also observe that the government in its plan to “aggressively mobilize domestic revenue” will increase the Value-Added Tax (VAT) by 2.5%, a plan that will adversely affect the economic situation of the already strangled Ghanaian worker.” “We note the government's announcement to freeze civil and public sector employment in a bid to cut down expenditure. This is, again, a lazy way of solving such a problem. Obviously, the Government has not thought of the negative ramification of leaving the teeming young people who have completed school and those who are yet to complete in the streets?” The unemployment rate is already bad, and the government is shirking its responsibility of creating jobs for the growing number of the unemployed. This for us is clearly an IMF conditionality that must be shoved into the dustbin”, portions of the statement said. The SMG rather called on the government to reduce the number of ministers, take steps to review the benefits of *article 71* officeholders downwards, and create jobs in other sectors of the economy, particularly in Agriculture to help absorb the youth lest the already existing unemployment time bomb detonates in our faces. The SMG again called for the construction of an economic system which places the control and exploitation of national resources into the hands of the working people. A system which

is free from suffocating control of the multinational corporations from the colonial metropolis and their local agents.

This is the full text of the statement;

29th November 2022.

THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF GHANA'S POSITION ON THE 2023 BUDGET STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA

At its Monday 28th of November 2022 meeting, the Standing Committee of the Socialist Movement of Ghana (SMG) reviewed the 2023 budget statement and economic policy of the government of Ghana read by the Finance minister, Mr. Ken Ofori Attah on the floor of parliament to ascertain the prospects it held for the working people of Ghana and the economy in general. After a painstaking analysis of the budget, the Standing Committee of the SMG arrived at the following conclusions:

1. As a well-known practice, the ultimate goal of every budget ought to be to stimulate the national production base and improve the living standards of the people but this budget like previous ones under this government does not have this goal as its crux. A country with repeated current revenue shortfalls which requires 105% of current revenue receipts and grants to be able to pay its debts and wages and salaries, an unsustainable fiscal deficit from year to year leading to large borrowing internally and externally to finance the gap, unmanageable debt levels with a debt to GDP rate of over 100% (insolvency) and a woefully inadequate foreign exchange due to our inability to produce more exportable tradables one would have thought we would pull the breaks and think of a better alternative to the reckless neo-liberal path to development. Unfortunately, the government appears stuck on the same path

and is seeking to gain some policy credibility with this budget to allow it to borrow more. Sadly, the budget reveals that government has no plans to fundamentally change the structure of the economy but is rather rushing to negotiate with Bretton woods institutions and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in particular to perpetuate the neoliberal structure of the national economy.

The SMG is of the view that neither the IMF nor any of the Bretton Woods institutions hold the magic wand to deal with our economic woes. Rather, they will make it worse and there is enough evidence to back this. A cursory look at all the countries that have banked their hopes on the neoliberal institutions, are speeding towards Armageddon.

2. We call on the managers of the economy to pull the breaks and put forward a framework that will focus on the fundamental restructuring of the Ghanaian economy. They must focus on making the people the real owners of their resources which would be exploited for their own benefit because as it stands the budget leaves the neoliberal structure intact and allows the transfer of the national wealth into the hands of multi-national corporations. We must end this Bretton Woods imposed austerity.

3. The SMG also observe that the government in its plan to “aggressively mobilize domestic revenue” will increase the Value-Added Tax (VAT) by 2.5%, a plan that will adversely affect the economic situation of the already strangled Ghanaian worker. This will bring the effective rate to 21.9% which means on every GHC 100 turnover there will be a deduction of GHC 21.90 indirectly increasing effective



Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister of Finance

corporate tax by an additional 5% and all these increments will reflect on the price of every item bought on the market from January 2023. We find it instructive that the current president Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo led a demonstration against the introduction of the Value Added Tax in which several innocent citizens lost their lives

4. The SMG notes that the government's plan to review the unpopular Electronic Transfer Levy (E-levy) from 1.5% to 1.0% and remove the GHC 100 threshold will in effect extract more from electronic transactions and not to reduce the tax burden.

5. We note the government's announcement to freeze civil and public sector employment in a bid to cut down expenditure. This is, again, a lazy way of solving such a problem. Obviously, the Government has not thought of the negative ramification of leaving the teeming young people who have completed school and those who are yet to complete in the streets? The unemployment rate is already bad, and the government is shirking its responsibility of creating jobs for the growing number of the unemployed. This for us is clearly an IMF

conditionality that must be shoved into the dustbin. The government should rather reduce the number of ministers, take steps to review the benefits of *article 71* officeholders downwards, and create jobs in other sectors of the economy, particularly in Agriculture to help absorb the youth else the already existing unemployment time bomb will detonate in our faces.

6. On 27th March 2017, President Akufo Addo announced an indefinite ban on the purchase of new vehicles by Ministries, Departments and Agencies and to date we haven't heard about the lifting of that ban so why is the Finance Minister repeating the same directive in the 2023 budget? The Socialist Movement of Ghana (SMG) advocates the construction of an economic system which places the control and exploitation of national resources into the hands of the working people. A system which is free from suffocating control of the multinational corporations from the colonial metropolis and their local agents.

Signed
Emmanuel Oboe Baiden
For General Secretary



INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

Saudi-Led Coalition Continues Its Seven-Year Blockade Of Yemen

According to the Houthi-led government in Yemen, the Saudi Arabia-led international coalition has intensified its comprehensive land, sea and air blockade of the country, causing increased suffering of common people. The Houthis claimed that in the last few days, Saudi forces aided by the US have seized four ships carrying crucial supplies to Yemen's Hodeidah port.

Essam al-Mutawakel, spokesperson of the Yemen Petroleum Company (YPC), tweeted on Tuesday, November 15, that one such ship named *Red Ruby* carrying thousands of tons of petroleum was detained and stopped from reaching the Hodeidah port by Saudi and US forces despite it having all necessary clearances by the UN verification and inspection mechanism (UNIVM) based in Djibouti.

Al-Mutawakel called the move by the US and Saudi Arabia "piracy," which will "increase the suffering

of the Yemeni people."

He had earlier claimed that Saudi-US forces prevented two ships, *Fos Energy* and *Princess Halimah*, which were carrying thousands of tons of diesel, from reaching the port last week.

The Houthi-led government in Sanaa claims that during the six-month ceasefire between April and September, the Saudi coalition allowed only 33 out of 54 ships bound for Hodeidah, in complete violation of the truce agreement. It was one of the reasons the [Houthis refused to extend](#) the UN-brokered deal.

Earlier this month, Iranian *Press TV* [quoted the Yemeni Health Ministry](#) in Sanaa as saying that the country is facing an unprecedented shortage of medical supplies due to the continued Saudi blockade, which has also shut the Sanaa international airport again after it was [partially opened](#) for around five months during the UN-brokered ceasefire.

Blockade causing world's worst humanitarian crisis

The Saudi-led international coalition in Yemen, backed by the US and the UK, launched a war against the Houthi-led government in Sanaa in 2015, claiming it to be a proxy of Iran and to reinstall President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi who had fled to Saudi Arabia following the Houthi takeover. The Saudi coalition imposed a complete sea, air and land blockade of Yemen allegedly to prevent the supply of weapons to Houthis.

Both Iran and the Houthis have denied the Saudi coalition's claims of a proxy war. Iran has said that even after seven years of blockade, the Saudis have failed to establish the claims of weapons smuggling but have only caused human suffering. Iran asserts that its [support to Yemenis](#) is "political in nature."

The blockade has caused tremendous suffering for millions of Yemenis who are largely



(Photo: Al Mayadeen). A Houthi official said that in recent times, at least three ships carrying petroleum products have been stopped from reaching Hodeidah port. The seven-year-long blockade has prevented crucial supplies of energy, food and medicine from reaching millions

dependent on imports of food, fuel and medicines. It is one of the main reasons for the large-scale humanitarian crisis in the country that has pushed millions of Yemenis toward starvation and death due to lack of medical supplies, prompting the UN to call it the ['worlds worst humanitarian crisis](#).

[Hadi later stepped down, handing](#) power to a seven-member

Presidential Council.

The Saudi coalition has refused to end its aggression and lift the blockade despite repeated appeals from [the UN and other human rights groups](#) who have expressed concern about it causing large-scale deaths.

Thousands March In Dublin Demanding Dignified Housing For All

Thousands of people have marched in Dublin, Ireland, under the banner 'Raise the Roof' calling for urgent government action to tackle the soaring housing crisis across the country. Activists from housing rights groups, trade unions, community organizations, and political parties including Sinn Fein, People Before Profit, Communist Party of Ireland, and Workers Party of Ireland participated in the march which took place last Saturday. They demanded a new policy which ensures dignified housing for all by providing homes at affordable prices and rents. They also called for stopping evictions, especially in the winter, and to ensure security for tenants.

Irish cities, particularly Dublin, have been reeling under a severe housing crisis for the past four years. This crisis has been made

worse by the soaring inflation of the past year which has significantly affected people's capacity to pay high rents and energy bills. Amid this crisis, people in Ireland have been faced with soaring rents and an increase in forced evictions. As a result, the rate of homelessness in the country has also increased. A report by Simon Communities of Ireland stated that from September 2021 to September 2022, there was a registered 29.5% increase in the number of men, women and children in homeless emergency accommodation.

For the past several years, tenant and housing rights groups such as the Raise the Roof campaign have [organized](#) massive mobilizations and

campaigns all over the country demanding dignified housing. Organizations such as the Community Action Tenants Union (CATU) and the Connolly Youth Movement (CYM) have also resisted bids for forced [evictions](#) by landlords, organized [protests](#), and occupied uninhabited buildings to provide shelter for homeless people in major cities across Ireland.

Paul Gavan, MP from Sinn Fein, told *Peoples Dispatch* on November 27, "The government must recognize an emergency in housing and take immediate measures to ban rent increases, convert vacant houses to homes, and fast track delivery of modular housing. Above all, the government needs to double capital expenditure with a focus on building

public housing on public land."

"The demonstration came just one day after a new record number of homeless people was announced – 11,397, a figure that does not include another 5,000 citizens in direct provision who have been granted the right to remain in Ireland, but also remain homeless. As Christmas 2022 approaches, Ireland has record rents, record house prices and record levels of homelessness. As a result the specter of emigration has returned with many young people feeling they have no choice but to leave the country rather than be trapped in impossibly expensive accommodation or stuck living with their parents well into their thirties," he said.

Graham Harrington, International

Secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland, said to *Peoples Dispatch* on November 27, "The Irish housing disaster is a result of the Irish state's policies working as designed. Homes have been commodified and turned into an investment asset. The result is mass homelessness, sky-high rents, as many evictions now as there was in the Famine years and one of the highest levels of vacant housing units in the world, all to ensure a bonanza in profits for landlords."

"The people have taken to organizing themselves, taking the political offensive against the capital. The solution is universal public housing, with rents linked to income. The re-conquest of the basic means of life," he added.

Melcom Outdoors Mega Superstore At East Legon

By Gifty Mamle Agyemang

Melcom Group of Companies, Ghana's largest leading chain of retail department stores, yesterday opened a new state-of-the-art supermarket at East Legon in Accra. The new shopping center is located at the East Legon boundary road close to the Gethsemane private cemetery. Speaking at the launch of the mega superstore yesterday, Mr. Godwin Avenorgbo, Director Of Communications, Melcom Group Of Companies said the Mega Three Storey Superstore is easily accessible from many parts of the city. He noted that the new state-of-the-art facility is a one stop shop designed to serve all demographics of Melcom's clientele and it also has a Pizza Hut restaurant. Being the 10th location in Ghana, Mr. Avenorgbo revealed that more outlets are coming soon, along with other exciting concepts such as a bar, a gym and a gourmet Lebanese restaurant. "Our new, Art Kitchen, gives you the opportunity to take a break from your shopping to enjoy a selection of freshly prepared snacks or full meal right here

in the shop. Our menu offers you choices from Ghanaian, Lebanese, Indian, continental Japanese including sushi dishes, at very reasonable prices.

"With a great variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, a bakery, butcher and fishmonger with fresh seafood, delicatessen and separate pork room to maintain the Halal status of the main butchery. The physical environment is congenial; the merchandising is appealing and provides relevant brand presence and stocks".

He noted that Melcom, the Original Cedi Saver is investing in New Look Stores with new features and attractions for the convenience of our Customers/Patrons.

"These are reflected at varying levels of our operations from food to non-food, covering new and extended departments namely, Multimedia, Small Appliances, Home Care, Delicatessen, The Liquor Store, Perfection, Butchery, The Art Kitchen, Frozen Foods, Bakery, Baby Care and Fresh Produce, to mention a few."

"Our Customers can now enjoy a

World Class Shopping Experience right here at Melcom. While our subsidiaries have increased in number and are offering special services in support of the Melcom Group's Corporate Goals, we have consistently pushed the agenda to reach out to many less serviced communities with the Melcom Brand even as we expand services to already well serviced areas by opening up facilities which offer wider and more congenial shopping space for the convenience of our cherished Customers", he said.

"In the last few weeks we have opened our doors to residents living in Sakumono and Baatsona areas with a Melcom Mini which is well stocked and as big as some fully fleshed stores. For convenience we added in the same block the global favorite quick meal restaurant Pizza Hut.

"As you are already aware of major events, the Black Friday is being observed globally and Ghana is not left out. At Melcom we are extending the duration to make it possible for all our clients to make purchases at their convenience. Since it has become obvious that Black Friday is a precursor of the huge global Christmas Season,



Melcom Management has taken steps to invest in bigger, better and more modern facilities to improve the shopping experience for all its loyal Customers. "As a result, in addition to Melcom East Legon which has just opened to the public and is receiving amazing patronage, we are opening next month a new Melcom Branch in Takoradi and another one which will be by far the most modern Melcom Branch on the Spintex Road in The Melcom Hall", he said.

Our everyday lower prices are made even stronger with discounts that are bigger and better than ever.

Whatever you buy gives you more value, for as little as you spend. Take your cedi further at Melcom!

Our varieties are limitless for household needs, office, indoor and outdoor.

Prepare for a warm, friendly and tantalizing Christmas shopping experience at Melcom, Where Ghana Shops.

The new store is opened from 8 am to 10 pm, Mondays to Sundays.

There has been a remarkable transformation by Melcom this year, and this was first made visible by the official launch of the new logo. This rebranding is supported with enhancing and elevating the corporate goals and business direction of the Melcom Group, with a focus on achieving higher standards and providing an excellent customer experience.

Abuja High Court Sentences IGP To 3 Months In Prison



Nigeria's Inspector General of Police (IGP), Usman Alkali-Baba, has been sentenced to three months imprisonment. Usman alkali-Baba didn't follow a valid court order, so a federal high court in Abuja put him in jail for 3 months. Vanguard says that on Tuesday, November 29, Justice M.O. Olajuwon gave the sentence to the IGP. Olajuwon said that the police chief should be sent to prison

and held there for three months or until he follows a court order from October 21, 2011.

This is Vanguard's story

ABUJA— The Federal High Court in Abuja sentenced Usman Alkali Baba, the Inspector-General of Police, to three months in prison on Tuesday for not following a valid court order.

In a decision made by Justice M. O. Olajuwon, the court said that the IGP should be sent to prison and held in custody for three months, or until he follows an order that the court has had since October 21, 2011.

"If, after three months, the contemtor is still stubborn and won't get rid of his contempt, he will be committed for another period and until he gets rid of his

contempt," the court said.

The IGP was arrested after a suit was filed by Mr. Patrick Okoli, a police officer who was forced out of the Nigerian Police Force against his will.

Justice Olajuwon pointed out that even though the Police Service Commission (PSC) and the court agreed that Okoli should be put back into the Police, the IGP refused to follow the order. The court also said that the Applicant should get N10 million in special and general damages for being denied his rights and privileges as a Senior Officer of the Nigeria Police Force from 1993 to the present.

Source: vanguardngr

Speaker Worried About Ghana's Worsening Economic Situation

Speaker of Parliament, Alban Bagbin has commented on the current state of the Ghanaian economy describing it as being in a state of severe disoriented downward spiral. Bagbin who was speaking over the weekend during an out-of-town post-budget retreat for Members of Parliament and other relevant stakeholders was not happy about the situation. In his address, he spoke about the responsibility that the MPs had in passing the budget but importantly scrutinizing it to ensure the citizenry get the best out of it. He admitted to the challenging times and the different schools of thought about what and why the economy is where it was, but also that there was the need to acknowledge that the economy in its current state was distressed. "The times and circumstances we are in at the moment are extremely challenging. The global challenges, uncertainties, complexities, insecurity and national moral and psychological decay. More germane, we cannot pretend and dismiss the obvious regarding Ghana's severely disorientated economic downward spiral. "Things are getting tougher by the day. Some may assert that there occurs a global economic crisis, but others will present data to suggest otherwise. Mainly that the challenges are largely a result of our own doing. In order words, self-inflicted. That we pressed the



Alban Bagbin, Speaker of Parliament

self-destruct button," he said. Other leaders of the House also spoke about the importance of the Workshop and urged MPs to work assiduously to ensure that the Appropriation of the 2023 budget is duly passed. Embattled Minister of Finance, Ken Ofori-Atta, presented the budget to Parliament on November 24, The annual Post-Budget Workshop has the primary goal of equipping Members of Parliament (MPs) and Senior Officers of the Parliamentary Service with the skills required for scrutinising the Budget and Economic Policy of the Executive arm of government for the 2023 fiscal year. It also had the objective of offering MPs the opportunity of a deeper appreciation of the 2023 Budget and Economic Policy of the government. The key expected outcomes would be quality deliberations of the statement on the floor of the House in the ensuing days, relevant legislation and the ultimate Appropriation Act for the 2023 financial year

Wikileaks Delegation In Latin America To Rally Support For Assange's Release

By Anish R M

A delegation from *Wikileaks* is on a tour across Latin America to drum up support from various social movements and progressive governments in the region to call for Julian Assange's release. The delegation consisting of Kristinn Hrafnsson, editor-in-chief of *Wikileaks*, and Joseph Farrell, journalist and *Wikileaks* ambassador, are set to finish their Brazil leg of the tour on November 30.

The duo had already completed a visit to Colombia between November 22 and 24, before coming to Brazil. There, they met with the leftist president Gustavo Petro and Colombian foreign minister Alvaro Leyva Duran as part of their larger campaign to organize international solidarity for Assange.

In a press release Hrafnsson stated that they were “content with the outcome of the meeting” and that Petro and Duran showed “their commitment and support for Julian Assange's freedom, and strongly recognized the implications for press freedom worldwide that Assange's extradition would set.” He further added that both Petro and Duran assured their assistance in raising among Latin American leaders and to “collectively and individually urge the Biden administration to drop the charges brought by the Trump administration and grant Assange his long overdue freedom.”

In Brazil, the duo are expecting to hold a meeting with Brazil's leftist president-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Da Silva is already one of the most prominent political leaders to defend the imprisoned *Wikileaks* publisher. In September 2020, he published an op-ed in *The Guardian* calling Assange a “champion of democracy” and calling for his immediate unconditional release. Now that da Silva is back on the world stage as an elected president, the delegation hopes to secure a similar commitment.

Apart from a meeting with Lula, the two are also expected to meet with the civil society groups, trade unions, federations and journalist guilds to not only raise solidarity for Assange but also to campaign in defense of the right to information.

The visit to Brazil is being coordinated by the International Peoples' Assembly (IPA) and is part of a series of events and meetings that the two will be participating across Latin America with political and social leaders, movements, organized civil society and all those who support Assange's release.

They are expected to participate in an event at the Brazilian Press Association (ABI), in Rio de Janeiro, where they will meet with representatives of Union of Journalists of São Paulo, Reporter Without Borders (RSF), Instituto Vladimir Herzog, Artigo 19, Network for the Protection of Journalists and Communicators in Brazil, Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), National Federation of Journalists (FENAJ), Brazilian Association of Investigative Journalism (Abraji), Tornavoz, Association of Digital Journalism (Ajour), Intervozes, and National Forum for the Democratization of Communication (FNDC). “Without strong international mobilization, journalist Julian Assange will not be released,” declared Giovanni del Prete, a member of the secretariat of the International People's Assembly, underscoring the need to mount international pressure against the US persecution of Assange. “By publishing thousands of documents, photos, and videos on WikiLeaks that prove the involvement of the United States and its allies in the killing of innocents and in espionage on an international



(Left to right) Wikileaks' Joseph Farrell and Kristinn Hrafnsson, met Colombian president Gustavo Petro and foreign minister Alvaro Leyva Duran in Bogota on November 21. Photo: Assange Defense. A delegation from Wikileaks is canvassing among progressive movements, press freedom advocates, and political leaders across Latin America to garner support for Julian Assange's release

scale, Assange fulfilled his duty as a journalist. That's why the fight for (Assange's) freedom affects all of us.”

The *Wikileaks* delegation also plans to discuss issues related to the importance of freedom of expression and the right to information, values that qualify as pillars of a democratic society. “Wikileaks representatives intend to speak about the risks that exist for democracy and press freedom if Assange is extradited to the United States,” the organization said.

Assange is currently facing extradition to the US to stand trial before a federal grand jury on a total of 18 charges, 17 of which are under the notorious Espionage Act, carrying a total maximum prison sentence of 175 years.

He is being held under judicial remand at the high-security Belmarsh prison in the United Kingdom, as he awaits an appeal against the British Home Office's decision to facilitate his extradition to the United States. In his interview with *Folha de São Paulo*, Hrafnsson emphasized the hopelessness of the judicial process at the moment. “We are giving up the official battle,” Hrafnsson said.

“Julian has been fighting in the courts, but throughout this process, we understand that this is not a legal case. The laws are distorted, the whole framework rests on a foundation of public harassment.”

According to reports, the duo are expecting to hold meetings with at least seven of the region's leftist leaders, in the light of a recent wave of leftist electoral victories. In the interview with *Folha*, Hrafnsson also pointed out how recent political events present an opportunity. “I would be a hypocrite if I didn't say that we are looking to take advantage of this window of change,” he told *Folha*.

“It is extremely urgent that we build political support at all levels to urge the US government to stop this — not just the extradition request, but all charges.”

“Latin America is at an important crossroads. There are winds of change, and we have decided that this is the right time to knock on doors and ask politicians to come and support us. It's time to put pressure on the (Joe Biden) administration and tell them to back off,” the *Wikileaks* editor-in-chief told

Folha.

Western media groups oppose US prosecution

In the meanwhile, on Monday, November 28, a group of mainstream media outlets released an open letter condemning the continued US prosecution against Assange, on the 12th anniversary of the publication of the US diplomatic cables leak, often known as the 'Cablegate'.

The letter was jointly released by *The Guardian*, *El Pais*, *Le Monde*, *Der Spiegel* and *The New York Times*, the first to publish the leaked cables from *Wikileaks*. The letter argued that the ongoing prosecution set a “dangerous precedent, and threatens to undermine America's first amendment and the freedom of the press.”

“Obtaining and disclosing sensitive information when necessary in the public interest is a core part of the daily work of journalists,” the letter read. “If that work is criminalized, our public discourse and our democracies are made significantly weaker.”

“Twelve years after the publication of ‘Cablegate’, it is time for the US government to end its prosecution of Julian Assange for publishing secrets,” the letter added.

98% Of Medical Device, Disposables And Equipment Are Imported – Manufacturers & Suppliers Call For Action



Anthony Ameka and His Excellency Sugandh Rajaram

Manufacturers & Suppliers of medicines in Ghana have called for a drastic action to be taken over the importation of 98% of medical device, disposables and equipment in the country. A whopping Ninety-Eight Percent (98%) of all medical device, Disposables and equipment products used in Ghana are imported. These include Medical Consumables, Diagnostic Imaging Equipment, Dental Devices, Orthopaedic products, prosthetics and many more. This is according to data from the

Federation of Africa Medical Equipment, Disposables and Devices, Manufacturers and Suppliers (FOAMEDDMS). Speaking at a forum organized by the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil), the Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of Africa Medical Equipment, Disposables and Devices, Manufacturers and Suppliers (FOAMEDDMS) Mr. Anthony Ameka said medical devices constitute the largest product area, accounting for over 60% of all importations within the health sector.

He indicated that globally, medical device industry is poised for steady growth, with global annual sales forecast to rise by over 5 percent a year and reach nearly US\$800 billion by 2030

Mr. Ameka further called for rapid action from government and other relevant partners to whip up local production of Medical Equipment, Disposables and Devices.

“Availability of forex is key to this sector because about 98% of medical device products are imported into the country, Therefore, the sector requires over \$65 million in FX annually” he said.

He said, the consumable market of the medical devices sector is expected to expand by 2025 CAGR of 12.3% in local currency terms, which should see increase to GHS225.2mn and in USD33.6mn by 2025. He added that the diagnostic imaging market is also expected expand by a 2020-2025 CAGR of 11.8% in local currency terms to GHS136.7mn by 2025.

As the sector generates most of its revenues in Cedis,

fluctuations in exchange rate affects cost of sales. Because of the key player's exposure to volatility in the local currency to foreign currencies especially the dollar, the use of derivative hedging strategies and forward contracts are employed to minimize the effect of currency fluctuations.

The CEO of the Federation also used the opportunity to admonish Indian investors to boost investment in the medical consumables, equipment and devices industry by partnering with local counterparts as Ghana has a strong growth prospect, fueled by the expansion of health infrastructure like government intention to increase health infrastructure under the Agenda 111 District and Regional Hospitals due to the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic and a growing middle class. The sector requires over \$65 million in FX annually” he said.

The India – Ghana webinar cum B2B session was organized under the auspices of the Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India

(Pharmexcil) and Indian High Commission in Ghana. Key stakeholders like the Indian High Commissioner to Ghana His Excellency Sugandh Rajaram, Director General of Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) Ravi Udaya Bhaskar, the Director of Drug and Herbal Medicine Registration of the Ghana Food and Drugs Authority Dr. Samuel Asante Boateng and a Deputy of Procurement and Supplies of the Ghana Health Service Paul Gawu.

The forum also availed the opportunity for pharmaceutical and Healthcare industry players from both Ghana and India to build bonds with the ultimate aim of partnership for local production as well as importation.

Some of the participants expressed their gratitude to the organizers for the opportunity and pledged their support to continually support the health sector and its core mandate of serving the people of Ghana.

Source -- GNA

'Breast Cancer Is The Number One Cancer Killer Among Women' - Dr Wiafe Addai Warns

Women have been advised to desist from activities that may increase the risks of developing breast cancer, the number one cancer killer among women. Among the risks, according to Dr Mrs Beatrice Wiafe Addai, include alcohol intake, fatty diets, skin-lightening creams, lack of exercise, and cigarette and shisha smoking. Other risk factors that need urgent attention are women with positive breast cancer history, women who have had lumps in their breasts before, and women with reoccurrence of infections

with the breasts. She said this during a free breast cancer education and screening at Duayaw Nkwanta in the Tano North municipal in the Ashanti region. The exercise dubbed “Kick Breast Cancer Out” forms part of BCI's awareness creation on the control and reduction of breast cancer in rural communities where the disease is highly recorded. The program held on Wednesday, November 23, 2022, was organized by Breast Care International (BCI) in collaboration with Peace and Love Hospitals and supported by Delta Air Lines.

It was attended by people in and around Duayaw Nkwanta.

Dr Mrs Beatrice Wiafe Addai, who is the President of Breast Care International (BCI), stated that the causal agents of breast cancer are not yet known but it falls within some risk factors. “What causes breast cancer is not known but being a woman puts you at risk of contracting the disease. Alcohol intake, fatty diets, women who have had lumps in their breasts before, women with positive breast cancer history, lack of exercise, and cigarette smoking,” she said.

Apart from the risk factors, Dr Wiafe Addai also advised women to adopt regular clinical breast cancer screenings to know their status to avoid late-stage presentation that may lead to early death.

“A lot of women are dying needlessly from the disease, and perhaps if they had come early to the hospital, they could be saved; their breasts could be saved and their lives as well,” she added.

Dr Mrs Beatrice Wiafe Addai, the CEO of Peace and Love Hospital, posited that “breast cancer strives every day and in every 19 seconds a woman somewhere is diagnosed with

breast cancer”.

This, she urged women to immediately report to a health facility if they find a lump or anything unusual in the breasts for prompt action to be taken.

The Queen Mother of Duayaw Nkwanta Traditional Area, Nana Serwaa Nyarko, appealed to mothers to encourage their girl children to go for clinical breast cancer screening regularly. She said that will enable them to support their children if lumps are detected.

Source -- [otecfmghana.com](https://www.otecfmghana.com)

“Harris Imperialist!”: Filipino Movements Criticize US Vice President's Visit



Hundreds participated in a large protest demonstration in Manila against the visit of US Vice President Kamala Harris on November 21, 2022. (Photo: Altermidya/Facebook). The three-day visit to the archipelago included an unprecedented visit to Palawan, an island close to the South China Sea dispute, and promises of military aid to the Marcos administration

By Anish R M

United States Vice-President Kamala Harris ended her three-day visit to the Philippines last Tuesday, November 22, amid protests by peace advocates and social movements in the country. Harris is the first top-level US official to visit the Philippines after President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr took office in June earlier this year. While President Marcos arranged for a warm reception for Harris, social movements received her visit with a massive demonstration to protest the US' role in the worsening human rights situation in the Philippines. On Monday, November 21, thousands participated in a massive rally in Manila, organized by several groups under the left-wing progressive coalition Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan). Protesters shouted slogans saying that Harris was “Not Welcome” and carried placards and posters against US imperialist policy and its military presence in the country. Protesters were also seen holding a poster with a caricature of Harris and Marcos Jr which read “Harris Imperialist.” According to reports, a massive battalion of the Philippines National Police blocked the planned march

route and even chased protesters when they tried to take a detour. Despite the heavy policing, social leaders and progressives managed to speak at the rally decrying the visit and the impact it will have on the region as a whole.

“Kamala Harris' visit to the Philippines will bring harm to the country,” said Raymond Palatino, a leader of Bayan and its constituent youth movement Kabataan. “Because her agenda here is not for peace, not for the Philippines' development, but for additional military bases of the US; additional aid for the military, funds that will be used for corruption, funds for war equipment that will be used against Filipinos.”

Millions for militarization Just ahead of the visit, the US announced major plans to infuse military aid into the Philippines and further expand US military presence in the region. In October, the US ambassador in Manila announced USD 100 million in foreign military financing for the Philippines “to use as it wishes.” Rights groups and grassroots activists have raised concerns that such financing could go into continuing the counter-insurgency programs in the country. “The US cannot evade

accountability for the worsening human rights situation in the Philippines,” said Cristina Palabay, secretary general of rights group Karapatan, in a statement released on Monday. “It already has blood on its hands for having pushed and funded successive regimes in the Philippines, including the Duterte administration, to adopt increasingly vicious counter-insurgency policies resulting in stepped-up attacks against people's rights and civil liberties.”

The financing is also being viewed as a reward to the Philippines for scrapping a Rodrigo Duterte-era USD 227 million deal for military helicopters from Russia, and instead opting for Chinook helicopters from the US. Despite US media speculation that the closer ties between the US and Philippines under Marcos Jr is an apparent break from his predecessor's policies, data shows that the US had provided massive military financing even under Duterte's regime. As per official data, the Philippines remained the largest recipient of US military aid and financing between 2015 and 2022. It received funds, arms, equipment and training to the tune of USD 1.14 billion, including foreign military financing of USD 475 million.

Furthermore, just a week ahead of Harris' visit, the Philippine's chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Bartolome Bacarro confirmed that the US wanted to construct five new military facilities in northern Philippines. These facilities are to be constructed in addition to the five that already exist under a controversial 2014 military pact, the Enhance Defence Cooperation Agreement (EDCA), tying the AFP with the US.

Harris' visit included agreements about this plan

with senior military officials of the Marcos administration. According to *Rappler*, the US has already agreed to allocate more funds on top of the earlier agreed upon allocation of USD 82 million for EDCA expansion. Sites for the development of new facilities have already been identified. **“Visit to contend with China”**

Activists also raised alarm over the anti-China agenda which they claimed is at the heart of the visit, especially the much criticized visit to Palawan province. The island province is the Filipino territory closest to the disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, parts of which the Philippines claims as part of its territory. Liza Maza, former legislator and a member of women's group Gabriela, said that the US conflict with China was at the heart of Harris' visit. Speaking to the protesters in Manila, Maza argued that “Harris visited the Philippines to contend with China.” “The United States makes the Philippines enter conflict against China. That's their projection. That's why we, being peace-loving people, should reject this US agenda.”

The activists' concerns were vindicated when Harris made statements targeting China over the multi-national dispute in the South China Sea from a coast guard boat. She also claimed that the US “stands with the Philippines” against what she characterized as “intimidation and coercion in the South China Sea.” Movements also called out the Marcos Jr administration for allowing the US to use the Philippines in its acts of aggression. In a statement, the International League of Peoples' Struggle-Philippines called out Marcos Jr for continuing in the footsteps of his late father and former

dictator Ferdinand Marcos in pursuing a pro-US policy. “The US imperialist government is no friend of ours,” the statement said. “With its long history of colonization, waging wars of aggression and intervention, and engineering of policies that worsened the economic, political, and cultural lives of the Filipino people – it has never been an ally nor a partner.”

This was echoed by Kilusang Mayo Uno, which said that the talks held between Harris and Marcos Jr “aims to strengthen the so-called US-Philippine alliance; but the Filipino people know that this just means further puppetry to the US neoliberal policies, and intensified curtailment of our rights.”

Hollow platitudes for rights defenders

Faced with such protests from movements, Harris' itinerary included a meeting organized on the sidelines of her visit with a carefully selected group of social workers and issue-based advocates. During the meeting, she extended solidarity to human rights defenders and advocates of free speech and women's rights in the Philippines, telling right defenders that they are “not alone.”

However, she failed to mention any measures the US might take in realizing this solidarity. She even failed to mention the recent incidents of violence against rights defenders and journalists in the country, including the high-profile case of independent radio journalist Percy Lapid. Activists were prompt to call out the hypocrisy in her statements. “By these actions, the US continues its double-speak on human rights, while pursuing its geo-political and military interests in the Philippines and in the Asia Pacific region,” said Palabay, while pointing out Harris' own