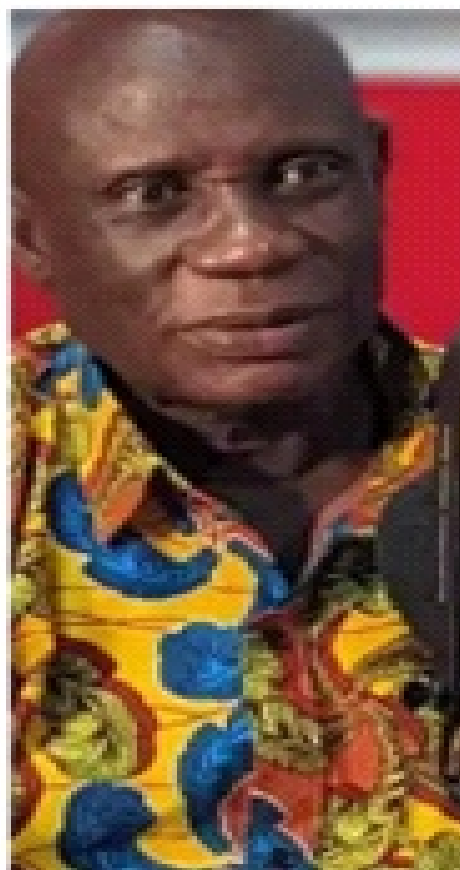


DEBT EXCHANGE

NPP Cracks Over Attacks On Ex-CJ Sophia Akuffo



Sophia Akuffo (left), Gabby Otchere-Darko and Nana Obiri Boahen

Deep cracks are beginning to emerge in the frontline politics of the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP) following last Friday's picketing by the former Chief Justice Sophia Akuffo. Even though the Ex-CJ is

not bothered by the insults rained on her especially from Gabby Otchere-Darko, a nephew to President Nana Akuffo-Addo, it does appear that the learned justice's stand is beginning to gain grounds and to find favour

among many in the party who are deeply worried about the involvement of pensioner bondholders in the domestic debt exchange programme. Former deputy General Secretary of the New

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Afari Gyan Tells Political Parties Not To Recruit Nonentities As Polling Agents Because Election Is Brainwork *page 5*

Mexican President AMLO To Lead International Campaign Against US Blockade Of Cuba *page 5*

Illegal Gold Mining Activities Thrive At Backyard Of Gwira Banso Chief's Palace



A video in Circulation has shown how the Chief of Banso in Gwira Traditional Area of the Evalue-Ajomoro-Gwira Municipality in the Western Region, Nana Ette Akrade II, who is called in military service as WOII Gerhart Yao

Cont. on page 8

Ahanta Traditional Council Gets New President!



The member of Ahanta Traditional Council at the press conference

page 2

The INSIGHT

— EDITORIAL

THE WAR ON SANITATION

Sanitation issues have been the 'talk of town' lately due to heaps or pile of refuse that are seen in the cities and the localities.

Certainly, the handling of sanitation or waste continues to be a major headache to governments especially in Africa.

This is as a result of lack of genuine commitment to tackle filth and address the broader sanitation challenges.

In other parts of the world, the issue of waste has been adequately dealt with such that waste from other countries are imported for power generation and recycling among others.

There are also bye-laws to check indiscriminate dumping of waste which are strictly enforced and individuals who fail to comply with the law, made to pay spot fines for littering the environment indiscriminately.

In Ghana, the government upon assumption of office vowed to make Accra the cleanest in Africa.

However, the dream became a mirage despite enormous resources being devoted towards that cause.

Clearly, there is the need for policy makers to change strategy and develop and adopt a more holistic modern approach in the fight against the menace and this can be done through the construction of recycling and waste treatment plants in all regions and in future, all districts of the country. It is possible and should be done.

Ahanta Traditional Council Gets New President!

The National House of Chiefs (NHC) has accepted the decision of Ahanta Traditional Council in their endorsement of Nana Akwazi Abrabo IV as Acting President of the Council.

The NHC has consequently gazetted the appointment of the Divisional Chief of Princes Town, known in the business circle as Labianca to take charge of the Council.

The latest development follows an overwhelming support and outright endorsement secured by the chief as declared by the traditional council last week.

Following this decision, the newly appointed Acting President, according to the council, would henceforth preside over all traditional matters within the council as prescribed by law. The endorsement comes in the wake of a temporal vacancy created following the inability of the President of the Council to perform his statutory duties and therefore, the law requires that a member ought to be appointed to act until the president is able to resume his duties.

In view of this, the Ahanta Traditional Council met last week Tuesday, January 31, 2023, to discuss all important issues in the Ahanta Traditional Area, including the appointment of an Acting President. Nananom decided unanimously to appoint Nana Akwazi Abrabo IV as Acting President of the Ahanta Traditional Council at the meeting after thoughtful deliberations and several considerations.

At a press conference organized by the traditional council to carry out the decision of the Chiefs, the traditional council made it clear that her appointment was based on merit. Nana Akyekese, Divisional Chief of Cape three point, on behalf of the council addressed the press conference last week Tuesday.



The member of Ahanta Traditional Council at the press conference

"Let it be known that the total membership of the traditional council stands at thirty one (31) of which number, there are 10 vacancies bringing the current membership to twenty one (21).

Present at the meeting were twenty (20) members which constitutes a majority.

"We wish to unequivocally state that Nana Akwazi Abrabo IV, was duly nominated for which the said nomination was not contested, making her the preferred choice"

The Acting President of the Ahanta Traditional Council is known privately as Honourable Jacqueline Eunice Hinneh Buah.

She is the Western Regional Council of State Representative and Chief Executive Officer of Labianca group.

THE INSIGHT

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DEBT EXCHANGE

NPP Cracks Over Attacks On Ex-CJ Sophia Akuffo

from front page

Patriotic Party (NPP), Nana Obiri Boahen, has criticized Gabby Asare Otchere-Darko for attacking former Chief Justice Sophia Akuffo for participating in a picketing exercise by pensioners. Obiri Boahen contends that everyone has different viewpoints on various subjects so it is incorrect for Gabby to criticize the former CJ for participating in the February 10 edition of picketing by pensioners against the government's Domestic Debt Exchange Programme. Obiri Boahen added that remarks as the one Gabby made of the former CJ won't benefit the party because they might anger the person involved, thus there is a need for the party to exercise extreme caution while making such comments. Speaking in an interview with Okay FM, Nana Obiri Boahen said "the former Chief Justice is a human being, if she partakes in a demonstration, I don't see the reason why people should insult her. "She's a human being and everyone has different opinions. When the issue came up, you can't blame the Minister of Finance and the government because they've made us understand that where things have gotten to, we're in dire times so there's the need for everyone's help." He added "...now, you can't also blame the Chief Justice and her pensioners also...because they have also invested their money and hope to enjoy the profits.

"The government is also saying because we're in crisis they need to adjust things to make the economy better. The government hasn't committed any crime and the pensioners who also went to do the picketing have not committed any crime. "Because picketing is a form of democracy. There is nothing like pulling a gun, knife, or sword in picketing, they just want to express their displeasure. "So, I don't see the reason why someone should attack the former Chief Justice, I don't understand. Because everyone is expressing his/her views so why do you attack her? I beg to differ I don't agree with him (Gabby Otchere Darko). "...she is just expressing her views, so we shouldn't do that because if we do that it is not good. We should be careful with our communications," he lamented. It may be recalled that Sophia Akuffo, joined the retirees picketing the Ministry of Finance in Accra. The pensioners have been picketing at the premises of the ministry since Monday, February 6, 2023, over the government's plan to involve their bonds in the DDEP. Sophia Akuffo was captured in a front-seat position at the premises of the Ministry holding a wooden placard. Her placard read: "We use our bond yields to pay our: rent, medical bills, electricity, and water bills." On the other hand, leading

member of the New Patriotic Party, Gabby Otchere-Darko, stated that the gesture by the former Chief Justice, Sophia Akuffo to picket at the Finance Ministry together with pensioner bondholders was done in error. According to him, the offer to self-exempt has been given to pensioners, therefore, there is no need to picket when they could just self-exempt. In a series of tweets on February 12, 2023, he wrote: "The former Chief Justice, Sophia Akuffo, may mean well but she erred big time in her basic appreciation of the issues. Rather than asking the Govt for exemption at this late hour, why did she simply not 'exempt' herself from exchanging her original bond for the new one!" "Why picket over something you don't like (the improved offer) when you have the right not to sign up? Sorry, but I struggle to get her emotional outburst over-exemption! I hope she won't volunteer to picket tomorrow and on the same issues when the time to sign up has expired," he added. Also to defend Sophia Akuffo is the the Majority Leader of Parliament, Osei Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, who has backed the former Chief Justice, Sophia Akuffo, for joining a group of pensioners who picketed at the Finance Ministry over the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP). The lawmaker says he disagrees with people who are claiming the stateswoman erred in joining the pensioners to protest the government's



Sophia Akuffo, Gabby Otchere-Darko and Nana Obiri Boahen

DDEP.

"I cannot say the former stateswoman did wrong for joining the protest because he who feels it knows it, and it was within her right to come out and speak against any policy or programme she thinks it's affecting the public negatively". The Member of Parliament made this known in an exclusive interview on Kumasi-based OTEC 102.9 FM's morning show, Nyansapo, on Monday, February 13, 2023.

"I don't know how much she has invested to join the protest, but we have to understand also that there are others who will have their entire world collapse if they are signed onto the program, and such people must be given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the DDEP." He told the host, Captain Koda.

The former Chief Justice on Friday, February 10, slammed the government for trying to force pensioners to sign up for the DDEP.

She joined the Pensioner Bondholders Forum, which picketed at the Ministry of Finance in an attempt to get their voice heard.

It will be very difficult to 'break the 8' with current economic hardships - Osei Kyei Mensah Bonsu

Meanwhile, , Osei Kyei Mensah Bonsu who is also the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and the Majority Leader of Parliament has admitted it will be difficult for the governing New Patriotic Party NPP to break the eight in the current economic hardship. The Member of Parliament for Suame believes Ghanaians may turn their backs on the NPP come 2024 if they fail to address the current economic situation in the country. He was speaking to Captain Koda on the Kumasi based OTEC 102.9 FM's morning show Nyansapo on Monday February 13, 2023.

"Retaining power in the 2024 general polls is not farfetched but the party will have to do more to make the living condition of the ordinary Ghanaian a bit easier".

"I strongly believe breaking the eight is doable, however we all must accept that, there is hardship in the country and as the adage goes 'a hungry man is and angry man', and so we must work hard to turn things around if indeed we want to remain in power", he said.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

Ohio Train Derailment Exposes System-Wide Failure



For unionized rail workers, the train derailment exposes systemic failures in a railroad system that is driven by profit, not safety. (Image via the Environmental Protection Agency). After 50 derailed train cars caused a massive fire and led to the release of toxic fumes into the air, workers argue that corporate cost-cutting was the culprit

Norfolk Southern freight train has derailed in the town of East Palestine, Ohio. 50 out of 100 train cars ran off the tracks, igniting a massive fire that could be seen from miles away. Governor Mike DeWine of Ohio issued an evacuation order on February 5, due to the possibility of a major explosion. Local community members and activists across the country have sounded the alarms regarding the impacts the incident could have on public health and environment. Many have pointed to reports of animals dying en masse as evidence. Yet, despite the public outcry over the environmental and public health catastrophe, the actions of Ohio authorities reflect an attitude of concealment.

A reporter with *NewsNation* was recently violently arrested while covering one of Governor DeWine's news conferences regarding the derailment. Police officers claimed that the reporter, Evan Lambert, was being too loud while the governor was speaking and in response, tackled him to the ground and handcuffed him. Lambert was released from jail the same day. "No journalist expects to be arrested when you're doing your job," Lambert told NewsNation. Ohio officials claim that they have received no reports of animals dying in or near East Palestine, despite multiple public reports of local animal deaths. *NewsNation* obtained a video of dead fish in the Ohio River near East Palestine. According to Wildlife Officer Supervisor Scott Angelo, these fish could have died due to toxic fumes dissolving oxygen in the water, although the causes have not been confirmed. Farmer Taylor Holzer claims that his foxes have fallen mortally ill after the derailment. Many concerns of East Palestine residents, as well as those of the rest of the nation, stem from the fact that

the derailed train had 20 cars carrying hazardous materials. Norfolk Southern Railroad conducted a "controlled release" on February 6 of several tankers that ran the risk of explosion. State officials are yet to inform residents of East Palestine about what effect this "controlled release" of toxic fumes, combined with a massive fire burning for five days, will have. Five of the derailed cars contained vinyl chloride, a carcinogen linked to various forms of cancer. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is monitoring two other toxic chemicals: phosgene and hydrogen chloride. Public health experts have already indicated that the effects of these chemicals could last decades. "There's a lot of what ifs, and we're going to be looking at this thing 5, 10, 15, 20 years down the line and wondering, 'Gee, cancer clusters could pop up, you know, well water could go bad,'" Silverado Caggiano, a hazardous materials specialist, told NewsNation. Most recently, the EPA discovered that three other toxic chemicals were present in the derailed train.

Railroad workers point to cost-cutting as the culprit

For unionized rail workers, the train derailment exposes systemic failures in a railroad system that is driven by profit, not safety. Railroad Workers United (RWU), a cross-union workers' organization, writes, "in the last 10 years, the Class One carriers [rail companies with the highest revenues] have dramatically increased both the length and tonnage of the average train, while cutting back on maintenance and inspection, and we have a time bomb ticking." A report by *The Lever* highlighted that in 2017 during Republican Donald Trump's presidency, Norfolk Southern lobbyists successfully rescinded regulations aimed at improving railroad safety regulations. Specifically, the company successfully beat back measures that would require train cars carrying hazardous, flammable materials to be equipped with electronic brakes which can stop trains more effectively than conventional brakes. Railroad company donors delivered over USD\$6 million to Republican Party campaigns in the 2016 election cycle, but still

claimed that safety regulations would "impose tremendous costs without providing offsetting safety benefits."

Norfolk Southern made a record of over USD\$12 billion in revenue last year, and recently announced a USD\$10 million stock buyback program.

Last year, railroad workers in the US were on the cusp of a strike, which would have shattered the US economy as rail workers are some of the most essential workers in the nation. Workers were demanding more sick leave to combat the effects of "Precision Scheduled Railroading," a corporate scheme to cut costs by demanding more work from fewer workers. Infamously, President Biden and the US Congress blocked rail workers' right to strike by rapidly passing legislation that forced workers to accept an agreement without sick days.

Railroad Workers United argues that Precision Scheduled Railroading, and the overworking, lay-offs and lack of safety measures that unionized workers were fighting for last year were a primary reason for the derailment. One of the causes of the derailment, RWU argues, is that a damaged car was allowed to leave a terminal due to cut inspection times and layoffs. The train was also not blocked properly, the group claims, because blocking a train properly takes longer and therefore has been mostly done away with by rail companies. *More Perfect Union* has pointed out that rail companies have cut 22% of railroad jobs since 2017. Unionized workers were planning to use their right to strike to combat this trend in 2022. Instead, they were forced back to work on penalty of arrest.

Barcelona City Decides To Cut All Official Ties With Israel Over Its Systemic Violations Of Palestinian Rights

Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona, has announced her city's temporary suspension of all official relations with Israel over its apartheid practices and systematic violations of Palestinian rights in the occupied territories. Colau wrote a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday announcing the decision to suspend relations with Israel. She also announced that the twinning agreement with the Tel Aviv city council, signed in 1998, was suspended "until the Israeli authorities put an end to the system of violations of the Palestinian people and fully comply with the obligations imposed on them by the international law and the various United Nations resolutions." Colau clarified that the decision was solely related to the institutional relationship between

authorities in Barcelona and Israel, and did not affect relationships between the residents of Israel and the city.

The decision was taken after a petition for the same was signed by a federation of over 110 human rights groups—called Lafede.cat—from and more than 4,000 residents of the city. Lafede.cat, also known as the Organizations for Global Justice, had first published its demands in May 2021 during the 11-day-long attack on the besieged Gaza strip by Israel, in which more than 250 Palestinians were killed and over 2,000 injured. It had also demanded that the Spanish government stop selling weapons to Israel and end all business deals with Israeli companies.

Action against Israeli apartheid
Colau claimed that the petitioners had asked her to "condemn the crime of apartheid against the

Palestinian people, support Palestinian and Israeli organizations working for peace, and break off the twinning agreement between Barcelona and Tel Aviv." The Deputy Mayor of Barcelona and the leader of the Catalan Socialist Party in Barcelona, Laia Bonet, opposed the decision and demanded the "restoration" of the relationship. She said that authorities should make efforts to "reinforce, not weaken, the role of Barcelona in the world," Catalan Newsreported.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry responded to the news by claiming that the decision was not backed by the majority of the residents of Barcelona. Some Jewish groups have also called the decision "sophisticated anti-semitism." This prompted a wave of international solidarity in favor of Colau and her party Barcelona En

Comú on Thursday. European Jews for Just Peace, a federation of 12 European Jewish peace groups, supported Colau's decision, claiming that "boycott is a legitimate, time-honored method for civil society to protest against a country that commits human rights abuses. Mayor Colau is following the footsteps of those who boycotted apartheid South Africa." The Palestinian national committee of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement also welcomed the decision, "[saluting] the Mayor of Barcelona." It also noted that Barcelona's move to suspend ties with Israel was "reminiscent of the historic and courageous city councils that pioneered cutting ties with apartheid South Africa."

The decision will be voted on in the city council on February 24.

Mexican President AMLO To Lead International Campaign Against US Blockade Of Cuba

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) has awarded Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Mexico's highest medal of honor for foreigners, the "Order of the Aztec Eagle," for his work in strengthening relations between the two countries. AMLO during Cuban President Díaz-Canel's official visit to Mexico, also announced an international campaign against the US blockade of the island. Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel last Saturday arrived in Campeche, Mexico, and was received by his Mexican counterpart Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO). Under the leadership of Díaz-Canel and López Obrador, friendship and cooperation between Cuba and Mexico have deepened and reached unprecedented levels in recent years. This was Díaz-Canel's third official visit to Mexico, including his attendance at the inauguration of President

AMLO. The main objective of Saturday's visit was to continue strengthening bilateral relations. President AMLO recalled that Mexico and Cuba have always had relations of political brotherhood and called Díaz-Canel a "distinguished and admired guest." "For more than 60 years, Cuba has defined with the will and support of an indomitable people that the frontiers should always exist between sovereignty and the desire for hegemonic domination. That is why you, President Díaz-Canel, are a distinguished and admired guest for the Mexican government," said AMLO in his welcome speech for Díaz-Canel. For his part, President Díaz-Canel thanked AMLO for its solidarity with the Cuban people. "I once again thank our sister nation for its solidarity with the Cuban people, who have faced tremendously difficult challenges in the last few years and months, due to a

combination of the impacts of nature and the effects of the intensified blockade," said Díaz-Canel. The Mexican president also thanked his Cuban counterpart for sending doctors to Mexico, some of whom serve in dangerous or remote areas. Over 600 Cuban doctors and specialists are working in 12 Mexican states. López Obrador announced that, during 2023, more Cuban professionals could join this health program. Meanwhile, the Cuban president explained that in May 2022, during President AMLO's visit to Cuba, "we agreed that both countries could send specialists to provide public health services in health units or institutions of our respective nations. In less than a year, we are complying with what was agreed on and there are already results to show." Díaz-Canel added that the two



Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has awarded Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Mexico's highest medal of honor for foreigners, the "Order of the Aztec Eagle," for his work in strengthening relations between the two countries. Photo: AMLO/Twitter

countries "will analyze new goals in areas of common interest." In this regard, he indicated that the export of crushed stone ballast from Cuba's Cienfuegos province to Mexico for the Mayan Train project, a tourist train that will run around the Yucatan peninsula, could be identified as a new area of the bilateral relationship. "These are beneficial projects for our peoples and are examples of the potential that exists for the development of bilateral ties."

Mexico demands lifting of the US embargo against Cuba

Later on Saturday, President Díaz-Canel and his wife Lis Cuesta Peraza visited the Edzná archaeological zone and observed the progress of the Mayan Train. Following a visit to one of the stations under construction of the Mayan train, President AMLO awarded President Díaz-Canel with the "Order of the Aztec Eagle," Mexico's highest medal of honor for foreigners, for his work in strengthening relations between the two countries. At the same time, AMLO demanded that the United States government lift the economic, commercial and financial blockade that has been imposed on Cuba for more than six decades. "As a sign of goodwill and that all the countries of the Americas are willing to join forces, I consider and express with respect that the US government should lift, as soon as possible, the unjust and inhumane blockade of the Cuban people," he stated.

"The US model of relations imposed in the region is completely worn

out, anachronistic, it has no future or point, and it no longer benefits anyone. It is time for a new coexistence among all the countries of Latin America. It is time to express and explore another option, to dialogue with the rulers of all countries, especially with the US rulers, to convince them that a new relationship is possible," AMLO added, opposing the US sanctions against Cuba. In the light of the same, President AMLO expressed his willingness to lead an international campaign demanding lifting of the embargo. "Mexico is going to lead a more active movement to unite all countries and defend the independence and sovereignty of Cuba. Nothing to treat them as a terrorist country or put them on the black list of alleged terrorist countries. Cuba is a deeply humane people and government. Long live the dignified people of Cuba!" he announced.

President Díaz-Canel expressed his "deep appreciation for the people of Mexico and their admiration and interest in deepening bilateral ties with our country in the different visits and the broad transformative proposal that they defend."

"It is a great honor to receive the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle, a medal that symbolizes the origin, identity and strength of this beloved nation. I receive it with humility and infinite gratitude, being aware of the fact that the true deserving recipients are the heroic Cuban people," Díaz-Canel later tweeted.

Afari Gyan Urges Political Parties Not To Recruit Nonentities As Polling Agents Because Election Is Brainwork

Former commissioner of the Electoral Commission of Ghana, Dr Kwadwo Afari-Gyan has advised political parties to ensure the recruitment of persons with knowledge in electoral processes as polling agents. According to him, it is important for political parties to rely on competent persons as polling agents rather than those who can foment violence. "Fortunately, in some elections I have seen some big people serving as agents. Don't go and recruit nonentities to go and do the work at the polling stations, it is brainwork," Mr. Gyan is quoted in a report by Dailyguidenetwork.com. The former EC boss who was speaking at a lecture organized by the Rotary Club of Accra West on Wednesday, February 8, further educated the gathering about the significance

of pink sheets. He noted that "refusing to sign the pink sheet, as we call it in Ghana, does not automatically invalidate the election results." "Some candidates believe that if the agents don't sign it means the results are invalid. Sometimes we are told that the candidates even tell the party 'if I lose very badly don't sign it', thinking that it will be invalidated. No, refusing to sign the pink sheet does not automatically invalidate the election results. "What does the law say? The law says if you are refusing to sign you must give reasons in writing at the polling station why you do not sign it and then the electoral commission will later look into the reason that you have given. If you have not written any such thing then ignore it.



"So it is important to remember that being an agent at the polling station is brainwork, it is not a brawl, it is not a fight, you are not going to fight at the polling station, it is brainwork, the person must understand what is going on so that he can raise these things. "I have said many times that given the importance of pink sheets, I think nobody is too big to serve his or her party as an agent on election day," he added. Dr Afari-Gyan, up until his retirement in 2001 supervised all of Ghana's elections held under the 1992 Constitution and

Illegal Gold Mining Activities Thrive At Backyard Of Gwira Banso Chief's Palace

Fugal allegedly endorsed illegal small scale mining activities popularly known as galamsey which have rendered the river Akonbra, and the entire community, including the Banso's backyard, deplorable.

It is worrying to see in a video that the illegal small scale mining activities were seriously ongoing under the chieftaincy jurisdiction of the Gwira Banso chief who was recently spotted in a video inciting the youths/residents of Gwira Traditional Area against the Managing Director (MD) of Okoben Mining Company Limited Nana Okoben Amponsah and his company.

In the earlier video, Nana Ette Akrade II accused the business mogul of engaging in illegal mining activities which has destroyed river Akonbra only to be caught in his own web of miners indiscriminately mining gold resources in his backyard which is even worse than what he was fighting against.

However, a couple of days ago after the chief declared the war

against Okoben, the illegal miners living in his Banso community have been spotted in a video using the Changfan machine and other mining equipment to engage in illegal small scale mining activities on river Akonbra at Gwira Banso without confrontation of Nana Ette Akrade II.

The video also showed the miners who used excavators to mine on the land of Gwira Banso, destroying water bodies, forest range reserves and environment on the blind side of the military task force [Operation Halt II team] against galamsey in water bodies. The heartbreaking situation has informed the decision of the concerned citizens of the Gwira Banso to call on the government of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo to immediately deploy the military task force to arrest the illegal small scale miners who are working on water bodies of the River Akonbra.

They accused Nana Ette Akrade

II of allowing the illegal miners to engage in illegal mining activities in Banso which were polluting rivers, and degrading farmlands threatening food security and livelihood of small holder farmers.

They couldn't fathom why Nana Ette Akrade II who incited youths against the mining company could not use his military position to invite the military task force to arrest these illegal miners on his land.

"Foreign national miners and local Ghanaians living in Gwira Banso have been allowed and in conjunction with chief of the town and are dangerously engaging in illegal mining on river Akonbra and environment in Gwira Banso. In fact, some of the mining sites almost end within the river bed causing so much discomfort and damages to the residents. The concerned residents wondered why Nana Ette Akrade II who is noted for supporting galamseyers in Banso could cover up himself and went ahead to be



fighting against the company for doing illegal mining. According to some residents, the chief under his watch allow gun wielding macho-men to guide the illegal small scale miners to operate illegally on the Banso land which polluted water bodies and environment. They noted that the hired macho-men numbering about twenty who go to the various mining sites of these illegal miners to collect the charges from miners. They wanted President Akufo-Addo to impress upon the

Minister of Lands and Natural Resources to call the chief and other accomplices to order to stop mining activities in the Gwira Banso community. "Whilst we make this appeal for the intervention of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, we are ready to join hands to look at other means by which this menace can be thwarted legally." The residents also implicated some political figures in the illegal mining activities

DDEP: We Will Abandon Hospitals If You Touch Our Pension Funds – GMA Warns



GMA is demanding its exclusion from the DDEP programme

The Ghana Medical Association (GMA) has threatened it will abandon the hospitals if the government touches their pension funds for the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme (DDEP). Speaking with Accra based Starr Fm, the General Secretary of GMA, Dr.

Titus Beyuo said that the government dares not touch their independent pension funds adding any move by the government on their fund will be a complete betrayal of trust and action in bad faith.

"If you touch people's pensions they are not going to sit down.

Already you are underpaying us and what we are saving towards pension the same threat that existed before for which reason the government backed down on pension funds is the same that prevails.

"We have told the government what will happen if they touch our pension funds and we will desert the hospitals. We will go on a total strike and that is what we have decided to do. We have given out a letter and everything that we will do is the same principle that will apply here," Mr. Beyuo stated.

He continued: "It was the same thing the government sought to avoid that they will not touch pension funds. So if they are now going to touch some pension funds under the pretext that they are not regulated by

the MPRA, when the government is aware that prior to the establishment of MPRA organizations like the GMA, the Universities and other organizations set up independent pension funds to help their members." Meanwhile, Minority Leader, Cassiel Ato Forson has assured Pensioner Bondholders and others that parliament will move swiftly to address the burning issues related to the ongoing domestic debt exchange program. Pensioner Bondholders' meeting with Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta on Friday, February 10, 2023 ended inconclusively as the government insists the retirees should consider voluntary exemption.

In a tweet, the leader of the opposition frontbench said the Finance Minister is billed to appear before the House by next to deal with the concerns of investors in the debt restructuring programme. "It is disheartening to see our dear pensioners including a former Chief Justice picketing at the MOF over the domestic debt restructuring. I wish to assure her & the rest, parliament is dragging the Finance Minister before us next week and we will represent their interest fully!" a tweet by Ato Forson said.

Source: starrfm.com.gh

In The Dark Alleys Of Human Trafficking, By Owei Lakemfa

By Owei Lakemfa

Over the course of 400 years, 15 million men, women, and children were transported across the Atlantic as slaves, but the statistics for human trafficking, particularly the sex trade, are far worse.

Conservatively, 800,000 people are trafficked annually, with 80% of them being women and half of these being minors. The global sex trade itself is worth \$32 billion annually. The issue of what can be done to end human trafficking, in which 25 million people are trapped, was the theme of an international meeting on 17 January in Abuja.

Argentine Ambassador Alejandro Herrero, who set the tone of the conversation, said human trafficking is one of the most horrible violations of human rights and it has to be combated. Equally, the American Ambassador Mary Beth Leonard, described the peddling of humans across spaces as a global scourge, a brutal and inhuman trade that violates human rights and robs people of their dignity.

The US says it is facing serious human trafficking challenges. In 2021, its Office of Justice Programmes (OJP) budgeted almost \$87 million to combat the menace, providing support services to victims, and conducting research into the nature and causes of labour and sex trafficking.

Ambassador Leonard said victims of trafficking must be assisted, and that awareness of the signs of the act can help to detect and prevent it.

She pointed out that there are laws against trafficking, but the problem is their implementation. "The United States is committed to fighting it because trafficking destabilises societies, undermines economies, harms workers, enriches those who exploit them, undercuts legitimate business and most fundamentally, because it is so profoundly wrong," said US Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the presentation of the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report in Washington, DC.

Spanish Ambassador Juan Sell said fighting human trafficking entails

sending a message of hope to its victims and one of determination to bring the perpetrators to justice. He advised people to beware of offers that seem irresistible, adding that human trafficking and sex enslavement are real. His country, he said, is on the receiving end of trafficking.

The French Embassy's Deputy Head of Mission, Olivier Chatelais, regretted that, annually, hundreds of Nigerian women are trafficked directly to France. He added that a way out is to organise a worldwide solidarity alliance to fight international crime. France is a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.

On 29 November 2022, Spain's Council of Ministers approved a draft "Anti-Trafficking" law against 'sexual exploitation, forced and arranged marriages, slavery, forced labour, organ and tissue removal, and situations where vulnerable people are forced to engage in criminal activity'. Its Justice Minister, Pilar Llop, said that the law will protect "people who suffer a lot in our country and also in other countries around the world" and "break the business chain that is generated using human beings as commodities". Under this law, customers of forced sexual workers face fines and prison sentences of six months to four years.

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United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The European Union Representative, Reuben Alba Aguilera, noted that Nigeria is richly endowed with human and natural resources, so there is need to help the authorities check migration flows. Part of the EU's announced strategy is to disrupt the online and offline businesses of traffickers by working with technology firms to reduce the access to platforms that facilitate human peddling. It also engages in the protection and empowerment of victims.

Sweden was represented at the event by its Ambassador, Annikka Hahn-Englund. The country spent \$1.44 million to combat human trafficking in 2021, and the beneficiaries include the National Support Programme, a civil society platform representing 20 non-governmental organisations. Its 2002 anti-trafficking law prescribes two to three years of imprisonment for those involved in sexual exploitation and forced labour. Others on the platform of the meeting included Jarai Sabally of The Sisterhood is Global Institute, Taina Bien-Aime of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Jonathan Machler of the Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution, Esohe Aghatise of Iroko and Mickey Meji of the Survivor Empowerment and Support Programme.

A survivor, originally known as Nomonde Mhlahi Meji, is a South African who campaigns for the rights of trafficked and prostituted women. Her engaging story began when she got pregnant at 16, dropped out of school, got into prostitution, crawled out, and became a fighter to get as many women as possible out of prostitution and rehabilitate them.

Some of the panellists at the Abuja meeting argued that the basis of sexual exploitation is a culture that sees women as commodities, disposable objects that can be bought and sold. They argued that prostitution is not a female problem but mainly that of the buyer who pays for



Conservatively, 800,000 people are trafficked annually, with 80% of them being women and half of these being minors. The global sex trade itself is worth \$32 billion annually. The issue of what can be done to end human trafficking, in which 25 million people are trapped, was the theme of an international meeting on 17 January in Abuja. The French Embassy's Deputy Head of Mission, Olivier Chatelais, regretted that, annually, hundreds of Nigerian women are trafficked directly to France.

the human body.

She was assisted out of prostitution by an organisation called Sex Workers Education Advocacy Task Force, or SWEAT, and decided that one of the main things to do is to get the term "sex work" abolished and have the sex industry recognised as exploitative and oppressive. When the ruling African National Congress (ANC), at its 54th Congress in 2017, passed a resolution to fully decriminalise prostitution and recognise it as "work", Meji fired a protest letter saying prostitution was not employment: "Women in prostitution do not wake up one day and "choose" to be prostitutes. Prostitution is chosen for them by our colonial past and apartheid, persistent inequalities, poverty, past sexual and physical abuse, the pimps who take advantage of our vulnerabilities, and the men who buy us as prostitutes. Most women are drawn into prostitution at a young age, some as young as 13 years old. Women and girls in prostitution have almost no resources to help them exit the sex trade. Some of the panellists at the Abuja meeting argued that the basis of sexual exploitation is a culture that sees women as commodities, disposable objects that can be bought and sold.

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They pointed out that almost all the victims of prostitution and sex trafficking are from marginalised communities. The solution they posited, is to provide the victims with shelter, support and an exit programme, while the perpetrators, pimps and customers are penalised. They argued that unless there is a focus on cutting-off demand, humanity would be bogged down with the problem for another thousand years, because once there is demand, there will be supply. They pointed out that sex trafficking is not necessarily from one country to another, but that it can be from one room to another. On how to meet the cost of fighting the scourge, they suggested that money can be taken from the traffickers, pimps and sex buyers.

The highlight of the meeting was the screening of the 2019 film *Oloture*, which is based on sex trafficking.

[Owei Lakemfa](#), a former secretary general of African workers, is a human rights activist, journalist and author.

Descendants Of Namibia's Genocide Victims Call On Germany To 'Stop Hiding'

By Kaamil Ahmed

Descendants of victims of genocide in Namibia have called on Germany to “stop hiding” and discuss reparations with them directly, as they take their own government to court for making a deal without their approval. The Herero and Nama people have gone to Namibia's high court, rejecting an apology made in 2021 after years of talks between Namibia and Germany, which they say falls short of atoning for the 1904 to 1908 genocide, the first of the 20th century.

“We were not involved at any stage. The government set the agenda, it discussed what it discussed and never disclosed it until we saw a joint declaration last year,” said Prof Mutjinde Ktjiua, chief of the Herero.

The declaration included a German pledge of €1.1bn (£980m) in development projects over 30 years but Ktjiua said the tribes want direct reparations to address the poverty and marginalisation that resulted from the genocide.

“It is critical because we know without any doubt that we have in this country a government that is misappropriating resources. A government that has for all these years denied that

Hereros and Namas were [subject to genocide] – now you trust them to manage this?” said Ktjiua.

The German empire unleashed a campaign of killing and torture after the tribes rejected colonial rule in 1904. An estimated 80% of all the Herero people and 50% of Nama were killed; estimates vary between 34,000 and 100,000 people. They are now politically marginalised minorities in Namibia.

Herero lawyer Patrick Kauta argued that the joint declaration breaks a 2006 Namibian parliamentary motion to seek reparations from Germany.

Gaob Johannes Isaak, chair of the Nama Traditional Leaders Association, said reparations needed to address the loss of 80% of Nama ancestral land – much of it now occupied by farmers of German descent – as well as generational damage to livelihood and identity.

“Reparations would bring back dignity, self-worth and play a meaningful role in our own development and education for the Nama people so we can share equally in the resources of Namibia,” said Isaak.

“For us, it's not about politics, we want our Namibian government to

be on our side against Germany. It's not about money – the joint declaration does not address our needs. Let it be clear: we want to negotiate directly for the blood of our ancestors,” he said. “Let the two governments stop hiding behind the issue of state-to-state [negotiations].”

The joint declaration admitted “a moral, historical and political obligation to tender an apology for this genocide”, accepting that the killings amounted to genocide “from today's perspective”.

A spokesperson for the German foreign office said only the Namibian government had the mandate and “democratic legitimacy” to negotiate with Germany, but the federal government had sought the voices of the descendants of victims, including through an advisory committee of five people who worked with the Namibian negotiator, who was himself Herero. “The federal government calls the crimes committed against the Herero, Nama, Damara and San by their name: genocide. The fact that we use this term in its historical rather than its legal sense is because the



Protesters outside a ceremony in Berlin in 2018 to hand back to Namibia the remains of Herero and Nama people killed in the 1904-1908 genocide. Photograph: Christian Mang/Reuters. Herero and Nama people demand direct talks and take Namibian government to court for accepting reparations on their

Genocide Convention of 9 December 1948 cannot be applied retrospectively,” the spokesperson said.

Karina Theurer, an adviser to the Namibian lawyers, said Germany has argued against responsibility, referring to the historical legal position when European powers distinguished between “civilised nations and the savage or wild nations”.

“You cannot today rely and base your legal arguments on such a racist distinction,” she said, adding that the case could “open the floodgates” for other former colonies to demand reparations against occupying powers.

“We really think that our domestic litigation makes some legal arguments which can be used by others in their quest for reparations and that

is the reason why it is so important from an international perspective as well. It can really be a historic milestone when it comes to those quests for reparations worldwide,” she said.

Henning Melber, president of the European Association of Development Institutes, said the declaration should be shelved. “One of the most scandalous parts of the whole joint declaration for me, it's not only the money, it's that it says Germany will apologise to the Namibians and then it continues to say the Namibians accept their apology.

“Come on. Can it be more colonial as an agreement? They are not even given the opportunity to reject the apology,” he said.

Gabby Cannot Tell Me What To Do, He Is Not Important - Sophia Akuffo Fires

The immediate-past Chief Justice of Ghana, Sophia Akuffo, has responded to criticism from a leading member of the New Patriotic Party, Gabby Asare Otchere-Darko, over her participation in the pensioner bondholders picket at the Ministry of Finance on Friday, February 10, 2023. According to Gabby, the former CJ erred in her move to join pensioner bondholders in their

resolve to get the Minister of Finance, Ken Ofori-Atta, to exempt them from the Domestic Debt Exchange Programme. But Madam Sophia Akuffo, in her response, described Gabby Asare Otchere-Darko as a less important being to her and one who does not even hold any proper position in the governing New Patriotic Party. “He [Gabby] cannot tell me what I need to do and what I do not

need to do and it's as simple as that... You know I don't have time for things like that because people like Gabby are not important to me or to my life, he is a disturbance and that's all I can say about it,” she told journalists when she joined pensioner bondholder to picket again at the Ministry of Finance on February 14, 2023. Touching on the government's stance that the DDEP remains voluntary for bondholders, the

former Chief Justice insisted that pensioner bondholders will not sign unto the programme which has since concluded. “With the way, things are going and from what I sense, there will be a creation of two categories of bondholders. Those who refused not to participate still want to stand by the existing bonds that they have with government.” “My problem with the whole

Debt Exchange Programme is the destruction that will come upon this nation which is being done and can last through many generations. It took a long time for Ghanaians to buy into any government securities because there was always the suspicion of the unknown and now that is being introduced in the form of the DDEP,” Sophia Akuffo stressed.