

Ashaiman Military Brutalities Spur Calls For Accountability In Ghana



Armored military vehicles in Ashaiman during a brutal military operation on March 7. (Photo: via social media). One person is reported to have died days after Ghanaian soldiers invaded Taifa, brutalizing residents and arresting 184 people. The military claimed that the raid was an “intelligence-led operation” in response to the alleged killing of a soldier in the area

GHANAIAANS SUFFERING

NDC Breaks Silence On True State Of Nation Address

The opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) yesterday said the True State of the nation (Ghana) is that the people are

suffering unbearable economic hardships with increase in prices of goods (food items) and services. The NDC said six years after handing over power to the

Nana Akufo-Addo led government, Ghanaians are now witnessing what it says is the gnashing of teeth as prices of goods have in most cases quadrupled in the various markets.

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Duffuor Laces Boots To File Nomination On Thursday ...In Furtherance Of Presidential Ambition

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Calls for an independent investigation, accountability, and compensation have grown in Ghana following a violent military operation in Ashaiman-Taifa, an urban slum settlement located in the suburbs of the Greater Accra Region. On March 7, the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF), reportedly from the Burma and Michel

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Coalition Urges Prez Akufo-Addo To Order Probe Into Gwira Bansa Divisional Chief's Alleged Galamsey Deals



Nana Ette Akraade II

The government of President Nana Akufo-Addo has been called upon to investigate the Divisional Chief of Bansa in the Gwira Traditional Area of the Evalue-Ajomoro-Gwira Municipality

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Books Arrive For Ngleshie Domeabra Ultra-Modern Library Project



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The INSIGHT

— EDITORIAL

DEAL WITH THESE 'GHOSTS'!

The call by a section of the public for persons behind government's recent payroll fraud or 'Ghost Names' to be prosecuted is a

suggestion in the right direction.

The prosecution of these individuals most of whom are public servants has been long overdue.

Despite the introduction of electronic payment system, the fraud still goes on, an indication that the crime is being perpetuated by a well-organised criminal network.

Clearly, should the state agencies especially the Office of the Special Prosecutor and the Auditor General up their game by ensuring the prosecution of these criminal gangs and thieves as suggested, instead of the existing arrangement of surcharging them, this nation-wrecking practice will grind to a halt.

There is no denying the fact that the 'soft' handling of these 'thieves' behind the 'ghost names' is what has emboldened them and made their exorcism difficult. There certainly has to be a shift from surcharging to prosecution. Until that is done, eradicating this canker which only enriches these few individuals in our society will be difficult, if not a mere rhetoric.

With the level of technological advancement, there cannot be any excuse for allowing 'Ghosts' in the government's payroll.

The ghosts have to be hunted out and the only way to do that is to prosecute the individuals behind the 'mystery' of 'ghost names'.

GHANAIAANS SUFFERING

NDC Breaks Silence On True State Of Nation Address

from front page

Johnson Asiedu Nketiah, the National Chairman of NDC who delivered what the party termed the True State of the Nation Address" at the University of Professional Studies auditorium yesterday said, "It is obvious that President Akufo-Addo who continues to revel in the largesse of high office does not appreciate the present reality of the

Ghanaian people. The President continues to live in his own world, far removed from yours and mine, that he fails or neglects to appreciate the true State of the Nation".

"It is absolutely important to awaken President Akufo-Addo and the ruling NPP to the uncomfortable, but frank True State of Ghana today – a nation of many living in fear of where to find their next meal, leaving many parents to endure sleepless nights." "The true State of our dear Nation no longer lies in flowery speeches laced with political chicanery that never accepts responsibility for anything. Neither does it lie in abstract theories that blame personal failings on events that have no significant impact on our lives."

"The true State of the Nation is when a ball of kenkey which used to sell between 50 pesewas and GHS1.00 in December 2016, is now being sold between Gh\$4.00 and GHS5.00.

The true State of Ghana today is that, a sack of maize which used to sell for GHS170.00 in 2016 is now being sold for GHS900.00 as at February, 2023.

The true State of the Nation is when a bag of Gino Rice (5kg) which used to go for GHS25.00 in December 2016, is now being sold for GHS185.00.

Similarly, a tuber of yam which used to sell for GHS5.00 is now being sold for GHS25.00, while a bag of Sachet Water which used to sell for GHS1.50 in 2016, is now being sold for GHS10.00 as at February 2023.

Also, a bag of cement which sold for GHS27.00 in December 2016 is today selling at a staggering GHS90.00 and last, but not least, sanitary pad which used to sell for averagely GHS2.50 in December 2016 is

today selling for GHS20.00.

When everything is said and done, this is the true State of the Nation. This is what we feel when we go to the market. This is what we feel in our pockets. This is our everyday reality.

A reality in which babies do not have vaccines leading to a measles outbreak; the youth do not have jobs; the middle class faces imminent extinction; and the elderly are being deprived of their life-savings by the very government that swore to protect them. This is not the Ghana we deserve; this is not the Ghana our forebears toiled and sacrificed for", the NDC said

This is ther full text of their statement;

ADDRESS ON THE TRUE STATE OF THE NATION BY THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS, JOHNSON ASIEDU NKETIAH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES, ACCRA, ON 20TH MARCH, 2023

My brothers and sisters,

Thank you very much for joining us both in this auditorium and through various media outlets for this critical national event on the True State of the Nation.

A couple of weeks ago, President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo presented a message on the state of the nation to Parliament as required by Article 67 of the 1992 Constitution.

In that address, the President desperately attempted to put an upbeat spin on a truly dismal national situation. However, even before he stepped up to fulfil that constitutional duty, all Ghanaians were fully aware that the state of our nation is hopeless.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Hopelessness, recklessness, corruption and leadership paralysis define the current state of our

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THE INSIGHT

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Ashaiman Military Brutalities Spur Calls For Accountability In Ghana

from front page

military camps, stormed the area in armored vehicles, with helicopters flying overhead. In the ensuing raid, soldiers brutalized residents of Taifa, broke into homes, and detained 184 people. On Thursday, March 16, Ghanaian media [confirmed](#) that one of the victims of the operation, a man identified as Alhaji Mohammed Musah, had died. Musah had allegedly collapsed after soldiers chased him into his house to beat him. In a [statement](#) on March 8, GAF claimed that it had “conducted a swoop in Ashaiman and its environs in a manhunt for some criminals, who are suspected to have stabbed and killed a young soldier (identified as Trooper Imoro Sheriff who had himself grown up in Ashaiman) in the early hours of Saturday, March 4.”

It also confirmed that the operation had been sanctioned by higher-ups: “GAF wishes to state categorically that the military operation, which was sanctioned by the Military High Command, was NOT to avenge the killing of the soldier but rather to fish out the perpetrators of the heinous crime.”

“We knew instantly that this is not something that could have

been done by rogue elements in the military,” Adib Saani, a security expert, said during a [discussion](#) hosted by *Pan African Television* on March 15. “The galvanization of military hardware made it almost look like we are at war, as if it was a major counterterrorism operation.”

While GAF claimed that the “swoop was not targeted at innocent civilians but was an intelligence-led operation conducted on suspected hideouts of criminals and crime-prone areas,” disturbing visuals from the raid circulated on social media show Taifa residents being forced to lie in the mud. There are also reports of people being tortured and flogged, made to eat cow dung, and given bottles filled with water from the gutters to drink. GAF’s refusal to apologize for this violence, while acknowledging that there may have been “excesses,” has been widely condemned.

On March 12, the Ghana Police Service announced that it had arrested six people suspected to be involved in the killing of Sheriff after a week of a “sustained intelligence-led operation.” None of them, Saani pointed out, had been previously apprehended by the military, which meant that the 184 people detained were

innocent.

The incident has raised [questions](#) about the military’s deployment and jurisdiction in matters of “internal security,” and why an “intelligence-led operation” saw this level of mass violence in the first place.

The classification of certain areas, especially areas housing urban poor communities, as “crime-prone” also raises concerns—and this is not specific to Ghana—given that such language is often used to justify state violence, including heavily militarized forms of policing, or, in the case of Ashaiman, direct military action. “The use of military force against civilians is a clear violation of Ghana’s Constitution, which protects the right to life, freedom from torture, and the right to a fair trial. Military personnel are bound by these laws and must be held accountable for any violations they commit,” the Accra Collective of the Socialist Movement of Ghana (SMG) said in a statement.

Speaking to the government’s refusal to condemn the violence, SMG General Secretary Kwesi Pratt Junior [added](#), “I heard a minister complaining that in the past we used to fear the soldiers and policemen and now we do not fear them anymore. And that this exercise



Armored military vehicles in Ashaiman during a brutal military operation on March 7. (Photo: via social media). One person is reported to have died days after Ghanaian soldiers invaded Taifa, brutalizing residents and arresting 184 people. The military claimed that the raid was an “intelligence-led operation” in response to the alleged killing of a soldier in the area

should teach us important lessons so that we shall begin to fear the military uniforms.”

“I thought that was the most unfortunate statement, which betrays the colonial mentality of our leaders. It was during the colonial era that colonizers decided that if [they] are recruiting policemen, to not recruit them from the areas where they will be doing the policing because they will have family there and so they would not be able to be brutal enough. So they brought in policemen from Nigeria, who they thought had no relatives, here so they could brutalize us,” he said. “If this is the mentality of those who govern us today, then we are in deep trouble. Why should we fear soldiers and policemen if they are there truly to protect us?”

Organizations including the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ),

have also [condemned](#) the operation: “Because of their (the military’s) personal interest they come [to Ashaiman], take over the law and do what they want... It is degrading and dehumanizing treatment to put such persons, who are going to their work, [to] arrest them, make them do press ups in mud, sitting down with all their clothing removed apart from some briefs... this is exacted by the army of Ghana? It’s completely unacceptable.” Others have accused Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo, who is also the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, of “[tacit endorsement](#)” of the military’s actions, given the government’s refusal to speak out against the incident, or to “condemn and sanction the military officers implicated in this barbaric episode.”

--Source Peoples Dispatch

Duffuor Laces Boots To File Nomination On Thursday ...In Furtherance Of Presidential Ambition



Dr. Kwabena Duffuor is set to file his nomination forms on Thursday

An aspiring presidential candidate of the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), Dr. Kwabena Duffuor, is set to

file his nomination forms on Thursday, March 23, 2023. Contained in a statement signed by the Spokesperson for the former Minister of Finance, Antonio Edem Asinyo, it said that Dr. Duffuor will file the forms at the NDC’s headquarters in Accra. “Aspiring Presidential Candidate of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), Dr. Kwabena

Duffuor will be submitting his nomination to contest the flagbearer election at the Party HQ on Thursday, 23rd day of March 2023 at 11:00am,” the statement said.

Also, the statement said that the initial date of Wednesday, March 22, was changed due to a request from the national executives of the party.

This, he explained, is due to the fact that on that initial date, the NDC’s National Chairman, Johnson Asiedu Nketiah, is set to present what the party has termed the True State of the Nation Address.

“The change in date from Wednesday to Thursday is in response to a request from the National Executive of the party

to reschedule, due to the party’s True State of the Nation Address to be delivered by the Chairman, Johnson Asiedu Nketia today, Monday at the UPSA auditorium at 2pm,” he added.

The Duffuor camp has since urged members of the party to be present at the event, adding that their candidate will also be present.



INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

French Government Bypasses Parliamentary Vote And Passes Unpopular Pension Reform



Mps from the left-wing NUPES coalition protesting against Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne in French parliament. Photo: Liberation.fr. Left-wing opposition parties and trade unions have slammed the reform as anti-worker and illegitimate and called to continue protests

The French government last Thursday invoked the emergency provision Article 49.3 of the Constitution in the parliament and passed a controversial pension reform, bypassing the parliamentary vote. The decision announced by Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne to avoid voting on the

pension reforms envisaged in the 'law of amending financing of Social Security for 2023', provoked ire from progressive legislators of the New Ecological and Social People's Union (NUPES) coalition as well as large sections of civil society. Spontaneous protests have already broken out across the country

condemning the forced approval of the bill. The pension reform proposed by the French government on January 10 of this year, calls for an increase in the retirement age from 62 to 64 and also stipulates a mandatory 43 years of service before one is entitled to a full pension or benefits. While the parliamentary bloc that supports the pension reform has a clear majority in the Senate, it would seem that the government was not confident about its support in the lower house of parliament, which may explain why it bypassed the normal legislative process. As per constitutional provisions, the bill will be considered validated, unless the opposition files and passes a non confidence motion against the government in the parliament within 24 hours (by Friday evening) after invoking

Article 49.3.

The move comes amid a wave of [mass mobilizations](#) against the pension reform which has been deemed by major trade unions and society as anti-worker. A survey done by [L'Humanite](#), found that 65% of people in the country support the strikes and protests against the pension reforms proposed by Emmanuel Macron's government.

France's General Confederation of Labor (CGT), estimated that around 3.5 million people have participated in [demonstrations](#) in 270 cities and towns across the country, in addition to workplace pickets. Students have also organized blockades in 39 [universities](#) across France. The strikes have affected transport, schools, the energy sector, industries, municipal services, and government offices, among others. On March 7 and 8, the coordination of the trade unions

organized a two day national strike against the reforms, and on March 15, alone, more than 1.5 million people demonstrated across the country. The CGT figures also suggest that 70% of the population and 94% of the workers are [against](#) the pension reforms.

On Thursday evening, while addressing the media, French Communist Party (PCF) leader Fabien Roussel MP [stated](#) that "this reform is illegitimate and the prime minister, by announcing the 49-3, humiliates the parliament. She is not worthy of the Republic. The mobilization must go on!"

NUPES leader Jean-Luc Melenchon [accused](#) that "the pension reforms have no parliamentary legitimacy. It is a spectacular failure and a collapse of the presidential minority. United unions call for continued action. That is what we are going to work on."

Brazilian Supreme Court Orders Release Of 130 Accused In The Brasilia Riots

Brazilian Supreme Court Judge Alexandre de Moraes has ordered the provisional release of another 130 people detained for having participated in the violent riots in Brasilia against left-wing President Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva on January 8. Moraes determined that the accused have already been indicted and no longer represent a risk to the legal process or to society at this time, and can respond to the process at liberty. Moraes has released more than a thousand detainees in recent weeks, all with a series of precautionary measures including electronic anklets, obligation to spend the night and weekends at home, prohibition from using social

media and from driving. The accused are also prohibited from leaving their cities or the country, as well as from communicating with others involved.

On January 8, around 4,000 supporters of former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro [invaded](#) the Supreme Federal Court, the National Congress, and the Planalto Palace (the office of the president), breaking through blockades erected by the Military Police and the National Security Force at the Esplanade of Ministers in the capital Brasília. After invading the headquarters of the three branches of government, the violent groups vandalized the

buildings, looted the armory at the Planalto Palace, and caused tremendous damage to public institutions. The acts of violence, which came just one week after Lula da Silva took office, have been widely condemned by political leaders and organizations in Brazil as well as from across the globe, with some seeing it as an act of terrorism and a coup attempt.

On January 9, the Federal Police (PF) arrested 2,151 people who had participated in the anti-democratic acts. Of these, 745 were released immediately after being identified. Among those immediately released were



Supporters of former far-right Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro invaded the headquarters of the three branches of government on January 8. (Photo: Archives). Federal Police arrested 2,151 people following the anti-democratic riots in Brasilia, over a thousand have been released but continue to face charges

those over 70 years of age, as well as those between 60 and 70 years of age with comorbidities, and about 50 women who were accompanied by children under 12 years of age. Of the remaining 1,406, 1,014 people have already been

released in recent weeks. 310 men and 82 women remain in prison. The Attorney General's Office has so far accused 919 people of public incitement to crime and criminal association. Of these, 219 are also charged with more serious crimes such as qualified damage, violent abolition of the rule of law, and coup d'état. The people released on Monday have been accused of terrorist and anti-democratic acts and destruction of public buildings. The Attorney General's Office is also investigating Bolsonaro in the case for his possible role in instigating the attack.

Coalition Urges Prez Akufo-Addo To Order Probe Into Gwira Bansa Divisional Chief's Alleged Galamsey Deals



Nana Ette Akrade II

in the Western Region, Nana Ette Akrade II, amidst accusations and counter-accusations of his alleged involvement in galamsey (illegal mining) activities. The chief is accused of operating illegally in his traditional area of

jurisdiction without recourse to the Minerals and Mining Act, 2006 (ACT 703). Recently, there was a flash news about Nana Ette Akrade II's alleged involvement in galamsey operations in the Gwira Bansa Divisional Area through his recently formed community

task force who are said to operate on behalf of the chief contrary to government directive.

The Gwira Bansa Chief and his elders are said to have given out already mined pits of some mining companies to some illegal miners to mine gold resources in the area. Although the chief and elders of Gwira Bansa are to ensure that the mining companies reclaimed the pits on the lands they mined gold resources, this reporter was reliably informed that Nana Ette Akrade II and his elders rather gave out these pits to the miners to mine as the operators often paid homage to them.

Some 11-pages of hand written document which was

intercepted from Gwira Bansa Divisional Area detailed how the chief has been using his office to dabble in galamsey. The hand written document in the Note One exercise book has embossed picture of Nana Ette Akrade II and records of how the chief and his elders have enjoyed from galamsey operations.

Per the law, the chief is supposed to ensure that the already mined pits are properly reclaimed, but the chief took possession of these pits and allegedly gave them out to the illegal small scale miners. The practice has drawn attention of some concerned residents and youths in Gwira Bansa who have kicked against it.

The concerned group which calls itself Bansa Coalition Against Illegal Mining therefore, called on the government to initiate investigation to find out how galamsey is destroying water bodies in the Gwira Bansa as conflicting stories emerge to dent the image of President Akufo-Addo and New Patriotic Party (NPP) government. According to the group, there are pieces of documentary evidence which showed that the menace of illegal small scale mining activities is still prevalent in the Gwira Bansa and its adjoining communities and the colour of water bodies has not changed in the area. The group stressed that these water bodies, forest range reserves and farm lands were also still destroyed and that the traditional authorities are benefiting from galamsey. The group indicated that the fight against galamsey in Gwira Traditional Area, particularly in Bansa keeps failing, because the chief, land owners, stakeholders and politicians are part of the problem. "The miners when they mined they supposed to reclaim the pits but Nana Ette Akrade II

chief who supposed to make sure that that these mining pits are covered pleased with the miners and they left the whole pits for him so that he also engages the youths in the Bansa Divisional Area to go and work in these pits so that he can also get something from the activities of the operators," the group alleged. According to the group, Nana Ette Akrade II has publicly endorsed illegal small scale mining activities in his area to the extent that it has become like an equity.

However, when contacted to get his side of the story, Nana Ette Akrade II flatly declined to comment and rather invited the journalist to come to Bansa before he can respond to the matter appropriately. But when this journalist quizzed him further, Nana Ette Akrade II denied endorsing illegal mining activities as well as benefiting from the mining activities of galamseers in the area. He stressed that his outfit is not even aware of anyone being employed in Gwira Bansa who is mandated to take daily records of the monies collected from the miners.

"I am not even aware that my photo has ben embossed on the Note One of the exercise to take daily records of the activities of the illegal small scale miners," the Gwira Bansa Divisional Chief, Nana Ette Akrade II stated stressing that he has owned mining pits in his name in the area for which he has given them out to the youths/ illegal miners to mine gold and shared the proceeds with him and his elders. "I am inviting you (referring to this reporter) to come to Gwira Bansa community to do your independent investigations so that you can see things yourself to report accurately on this matter. Because if I tell you something today it may be true or lies," the chief stressed.

Books Arrive For Ngleshie Domeabra Ultra-Modern Library Project

Nii Sackey Akomea I, Chief of Ngleshie Domeabra has taken delivery of thousands of books he personally shipped from the United Kingdom to stock his ultra-modern library complex in his community.

The books include; English dictionary, novels, drama, poetry, prose, science, ICT and other relevant materials reading materials.

According to Nii Sackey Akomea I, the way forward for anyone to make it in life is through education although occasionally others can become successful but education is the key to modern success story.

He said the library project will be completed very soon to enable school going children and mature students access the facility.

Nii Sackey Akomea urged the youth to take advantage of ICT to use the skills to explore workable solutions to problems in their environment, adding that it was important for them to make use of the little opportunities in the country, rather than always complaining.

"In this digital world, you are easily distracted. Information is everywhere and you feel the need to deal with increasing and multiple forms of information, it drags your time and your attention," he cautioned.

He also added that as a chief it is double pleasure to give back to his people not always taking from them.

"There are other fantastic



Nii Sackey Akomea I

projects I will carry out at Domeabra after the library project", Nii Sackey Akomea I assured his constituents in an interview with the media when he took delivery of the books over the weekend.

Ghana And Zambia's Debt Restructurings Going In 'Diverging Directions' – Citi

DEBT restructuring programmes in Ghana and Zambia are going in 'diverging directions' due to Zambia's larger exposure to Chinese lenders and its weaker ability to cope with a large amount of debt, investment bank Citi said on Friday. Ghana was likely to get an International Monetary Fund (IMF) board sign-off for a \$3bn rescue loan in the next few weeks, while Zambia's restructuring had stalled, Citi's analysts said in a note to clients. Ghana [defaulted](#) on its external debts in December

and has since sealed a [domestic debt swap](#) and requested a restructuring of its bilateral debts via the G20's Common Framework vehicle. Zambia meanwhile has been stuck in default since it became the first Covid-era African nation to do so in November 2020. Its finance minister has said it is pushing to finish the [long-delayed Common Framework restructuring](#) by end of March or shortly after. 'Our more positive view (on Ghana) is supported by a strong commitment by the IMF and Paris Club to achieve a quick

breakthrough,' the Citi note said. It estimated that Ghana's international sovereign bonds would need an average coupon reduction of 30 percent-50 percent and five-year maturity extension, with no cut in the principal value, to cover the country's forecasted \$4.5bn financing gap in the next three years. 'Assuming a 12.5 percent exit yield... suggests an average price uptick of 10 cents' on bond prices, the note said. It said there was little upside to bond prices in Zambia



now, even with a 'conservative' estimate of a 25 percent principal haircut, 30 percent coupon cut, average maturity extension of six years and a three-year grace period.

'The Zambian restructuring will require high-level compromises at multilateral (IMF) and bilateral (China vs G7) level.'

Pay Us Our 8 Months Arrears – Rotational Nurses To Government

The Rotational Nurses and Midwives Association (RNMA) in Ghana have called on government to pay them their allowances.

Rotational Nurses and Midwives are newly qualified health professionals who are obliged do a mandatory one-year national service within the various hospitals across the country.

The Rotational Nurses and Midwives number about 10,957 currently. According to the Association, they have not been paid in the last eight months. The National President of the RNMA, Jasper Dzorkah and a concerned member of the association, Belinda Sarpong, explained the plight of members in an interview on Accra based CTV's Dwabre Mu. According to the association's President, the National Service Secretariat (NSS), deployed the Rotational Nurses in June 2022 while the Rotational Midwives were deployed in July 2022.



"Till now we have not received our allowances; not even a pesewa," he revealed. "The situation has, thus, left us frustrated, as many affected persons struggle to commute to work and make ends meet," he noted. The association indicated that for the past three months, the Ministry of Health has been telling them they are following up with the Ministry of Finance. "That is all they keep telling us," they indicated. They called on government to come out with timelines for the payment of their

allowances. "What we want government to do is from today, till 20th March 2023, the government should come out with a communiqué that will be word-binding on when payment will be made within the shortest possible time," the President stated. The association also indicated that if nothing is heard from government by the deadline given, its leadership will declare the next action to be taken on Saturday, 25 March 2023.

Source: [classfmonline.com](#)

Human Trafficking Secretariat Rescue 821 Victims And Prosecute 22 Traffickers

By Joseph Nana Yaw Cobbina

The Secretariat of Human Trafficking has been able to rescue 821 traffickers and 71 offence cases whilst 22 offenders been prosecuted.

Speaking at a stakeholders consultative meeting on human trafficking, the head of human trafficking Secretariat, Madam Abena Anobiah Asare, said global plan of action to fight against human trafficking are prevention, protection and prosecution are on course. The collaboration with the NGO's and especially Engage Now Africa is to help prevent, protect and prosecute, track offenders and clear them from the system through these collaborations.

She urged Ghanaians to always consult before falling victim to the perpetrators of human trafficking. According to her if someone comes and tells you that give your son or daughter for any form of activities there is a need to ask questions to avoid them falling victim.

There is no free lunch anywhere so wise up and don't fall victim. Madam Asare said now there are a lot of information desk in Immigration Service and Ghana Police for such conviction of human trafficking.

Meanwhile the country director for Engage Now Africa, Cecilia Amankwah observed that most of the victims her firm has rescued are



mostly foreigners and only few were Ghanaian.

So what they do is they engage them through skills training and make sure they get something meaningful before sending them back to their various places. According to her, most of the victims are being exploited through commercial sex, labour and other means.

She said what the firm observed was that lack of shelter and break up homes were the causes.

In his remarks, the Director of End Modern Slavery, Mr Afasi Komla said the Engage Now Africa has provided all care for trafficking survivors they rescued, including shelter, food, medical treatment, family reunification and reintegration, counseling, and income-generating assistances for them.

He called on the law enforcement agencies to as a matter of urgency deal with perpetrators without fear or favour because they're destroying our future generations.

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socioeconomic pain and hardships visited on them by the NPP administration and not flimsy excuses. Ghanaians want a government that will be truthful even in difficult times and listen to them in humility. Incontrovertible facts show that, Ghana's economy showed signs of serious challenges even before COVID-19 struck, a point that was made by the Country Director of the World Bank, Mr. Pierre Laporte. For instance, way before the first case of COVID-19 was recorded in Ghana in March 2020, the Public debt had increased from GHS120 billion in 2016 to GHS225 billion in 2019, representing an increase of GHS105 billion in the country's debt stock. Our Debt to GDP ratio had increased from 56% in 2016 to about 70% in 2019 (that is, including the ESLA, Daakye and other hidden debts). Before COVID-19, the debt servicing amount had increased from GHS11 billion in 2016 to GHS37 billion in 2019 and constituted 91% of tax revenue. Also, the budget deficit had exceeded the legally acceptable threshold of 5% and had hit 7.5% in 2018 and 7% in 2019. Again, before COVID-19, the Ghana Cedi in 2019 was plummeting in double digits leading to the setting up of a 40-member Committee by the government to investigate the causes of the alarming depreciation of the national currency. Surprisingly, this Committee excluded the Chairman of the Economic Management Team – a move described by many analysts as a vote of no confidence in the competence of Vice President Bawumia by his own government. In fact, per paragraph 61 of this government's own 2020 Mid-Year budget review statement, "In the year to December 2019, the Ghana cedi cumulatively depreciated by 12.9 percent against the US dollar, compared with 8.4 percent depreciation in 2018. Against the British pound and euro, the Ghana cedi commulatively depreciated by 15.7 percent and 12.2 percent respectively, compared with 3.3 percent and 3.9 percent over the same period in 2018." Far from being the cause of our economic collapse, COVID-19 brought the Akufo-Addo/Bawumia government an unprecedented windfall of about GHS30 billion cedis

to manage and mitigate the impact of the pandemic. Unfortunately, this was largely wasted on election-related expenses. This amount excludes proceeds from the obnoxious COVID-19 levy which Ghanaians continue to pay till date. My brothers and sisters, According to the Auditor General, only GHS11.7 billion of this amount was spent by the government on COVID-19, with the remainder of about GHS18 billion being channelled into so-called "budget support." There is no gainsaying the fact that the coronavirus pandemic affected all countries in the world, including our next door neighbours Benin, Togo, Côte D'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Whereas these countries managed their resources prudently, thereby recording deficits below 8% and Debt to GDP ratios of below 65%, the Akufo-Addo/Bawumia government borrowed excessively and spent recklessly for election-purposes thereby recording a disastrous deficit of 15.7% and a Debt to GDP ratio of about 80% in 2020. It is instructive to note that in the year 2020 when COVID was at its peak, all our neighbours recorded a budget deficit of less than 8%: Burkina Faso recorded a deficit of 5.7%; Côte D'Ivoire recorded a deficit of 5.6%; Nigeria recorded a deficit of 5.8% and Senegal recorded a deficit of 6.4%. But Ghana alone recorded a deficit of 15.7% because of the reckless election-driven expenses and wastage the Akufo-Addo/Bawumia NPP government engaged in. My brothers and sisters, did COVID-19 affect Ghana any more than it did our neighbours? How come none of these countries who were all affected by the pandemic are recording double digit deficits and high debt to GDP ratio of over 100%? How come none of these countries are recording inflation rates of over 50% like Ghana? How come none of them has defaulted on their debt repayments? How come none of them has been downgraded to junk status and have been locked out of the international capital market? How come none of these countries are going through a domestic debt restructuring? How come none of these countries are visiting cruel financial haircuts on their citizens including pensioners?

How come none of these countries are experiencing childhood vaccine shortages? To paraphrase Dr. Bawumia, how did COVID-19 jump over Nigeria, Benin, Côte D'Ivoire and other neighbours of ours to attack and destroy only Ghana's economy? Ladies and gentlemen, the truth of the matter is that the economic mess we have on our hands has largely been brought about by the reckless spending, excessive borrowing and crass economic mismanagement by the Bawumia-led Economic Management Team and not any external factors as government will have us believe. The last thing that is required in times of crisis, is a leader whose words ring hollow and who cannot be trusted. In truth, Akufo-Addo has proven Steven Levitsky right when he wrote in his famous book, "How Democracies Die": "For a demagogue who feels besieged by critics and shackled by democratic institutions, crises open a window of opportunity to silence critics and weaken rivals. Indeed, elected autocrats often need crises – external threats offer them a chance to break free, both swiftly and, very often, 'legally.'" During this crisis, nothing the President says can be believed because everything he has said has proven untrue. Ghanaians have come to realise that: The claim by the President that he knew how to revive a dead economy was a scam; "We are a proud nation; we are not going to the IMF" was a scam; "There will be no haircuts" was a scam; The promise to build 88 district hospitals within one year was a scam; The Agenda 111 hospital project was a scam; The promise to abolish road tolls was a scam; The promise to convert toll booths into ultramodern public toilets was a scam; The claim that there was a global shortage of childhood vaccines was a scam; No state funds will finance the national cathedral was a scam designed to fleece the state by the likes of Rev. Victor Kusi Boateng/Kwabena Adu Gyamfi (whichever is applicable), David Adjaye and Curry Summers.

Ladies and gentlemen, another deliberate falsehood peddled by the President in his infamous address, was the claim that his government has constructed more NCA licensed fibre optic cables than any other government in the Fourth Republic. We submit that the total of 93% of fibre optic cables the President claimed credit for constitutes the greatest telecom scam ever. At least, the NPP must give credit to the NDC for providing: The 900-kilometre Eastern corridor fibre optic network running from Ho to Bawku with a link from Yendi to Tamale and an extension to the campus of the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS); The 300-kilometre Accra and Tema metro fibre; The wireless broadband of one hundred and nineteen (119) 4G LTE base stations to power the GOTA phone system. And let me add, the Ministry of Communications, the National Data Centre, the Accra Digital Centre and the National Communications Authority are all housed presently by NDC constructed edifices. When a president constantly shows such blatant dishonesty, it crushes the accountability mechanism. **CORRUPTION** My brothers and sisters, President Akufo-Addo's silence on corruption in his infamous address was loud. It was as loud as his guilt. Evidently, corruption has defeated his family and friends government. Instead of confronting this canker head-on, President Akufo-Addo has constituted himself into a "Corruption Clearing Agent", ever-willing to whitewash himself and any of his appointees who dabble in corruption, even before investigative processes commence. The President's actions and complicity have emboldened many of his officials, not least the Vice President, Alhaji Bawumia whose name has come up in multiple corruption scandals such as the PDS scandal, the shady Gold-for-Oil deal, the Stolen Rice scandal and the "Appearance Fee Scandal". My brothers and sisters, President Akufo-Addo's misguided declaration that "nothing dishonorable was done with the COVID funds" adds to the litany of failed attempts to conceal the rot that has left many scandalised, following the publication of the Special Audit Report into COVID-19 funds by the Auditor-General. First, it was the Attorney General

pretending to take umbrage to the publication of the report, then comes the "Chief Corruption Clearing Agent" himself, even before the said report is considered by Parliament. How does President Akufo-Addo reasonably expect Ghanaians to accept as honorable, the Auditor-General's finding, that COVID-19 related payments totalling more than GHS543 million (GHS543,058,709) were made to various service providers outside of the Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS), in clear violation of Regulation 61 of the Public Financial Management Regulations, 2019 (L.I 2378)? How about the Auditor-General's finding that medical equipment valued at nearly US\$250,000 (US\$247,404.79) which were procured with COVID funds and subsequently issued to some specific health facilities, did not reach the health facilities? Mr. President, I put it to you that there is everything dishonourable with the finding by the Auditor General that a company known as Modern Security Printers Limited which was awarded a contract to conduct public education on COVID-19 safety protocols for students at an outrageous cost of GH¢1,456,310.00 has been paid in full for no work done. I put it to you that there is everything dishonourable with the damning finding by the Auditor-General that cash payments totalling GH11,999,444.00 to caterers who provided hot meals during the three-weeks of partial lockdown were all retired with "honour certificates" instead of receipts and that, other COVID-19 related payments to caterers totalling GH¢5,638,684.00 were neither backed by receipts nor honour certificates. Again, I put it to you Mr. President, that the Government's management of COVID-19 funds cannot be said to be honourable when the Auditor General could not verify bills and validate dubious payments amounting to GHS37,609,791.71 by the Ministry of Finance to NGO's and Private Individual Water Providers for the provision of so-called free water. Also, it is dishonourable for officials of the Kojo Oppong-Nkrumah-led Ministry of Information to line their pockets with COVID funds under the guise of risk allowances meant for frontline health workers. It is the height of cruelty for COVID funds which were meant to save lives during a public health crisis to have been looted and misappropriated in this bizarre manner. Brothers and Sisters, despite the desperate attempt by the Chief Corruption Clearing agent to sweep these serious crimes under

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the carpet, one thing which will tarry for ages to come, is how the COVID-19 pandemic became a corruption bonanza and a milking cow for President Akufo-Addo and his officials to cream state resources in the most obscene manner. It should come as little surprise therefore that the president has become a clearing agent who actually rewards unscrupulous members of his government with national awards. Instead of the President sacking the serially incompetent Minister for Health, Kwaku Agyeman Manu, he decided to confer National honours on the minister's corruption and included even more corrupt appointees and companies to desecrate the revered National Awards Ceremony. Dr Kwame Nkrumah established this National Awards Scheme with the view to honouring people and institutions that have distinguished themselves in service and sacrifice to propel Ghana's growth and development. Mr. President, our nation's founder Kwame Nkrumah did not intend for the national awards scheme to honour criminality by cleverly sprinkling and sandwiching a few meritorious awardees among nation wreckers. This year's awards and the inclusion of these shady characters some of whom are under Parliamentary Enquiry, can at best be viewed as part of the systematic denigration of our statehood. It also reveals the weakened and depraved state of our nation: A nation where those who scrutinise government's dubious expenditures are chased out of office as Auditor Generals, the Domelevo's of this world. A nation where journalists who unearth corruption are harassed, intimidated and sometimes murdered, the Ahmed Hussein Suale's of this world. A nation where Members of Parliament who diligently carry out their constitutional mandate of oversight and expose crimes are persecuted, the Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa's of this world. And a nation where those who fight corruption are fought back and are even described as terrorists by the courts. The Anas Aremeyaw Anas' of this world. On this note, let me urge Ghanaians and the diplomatic community not to be intimidated by the president's unprecedented attack on the German Ambassador during his message on the state of the nation in

parliament.

We urge all true democrats to join hands with the NDC to resist the suppression of free speech by the Akufo-Addo/Bawumia NPP government. My brothers and sisters, Another example of the corrupt schemes under this government is the Genser energy deal which is stifling the Ghana Gas company and may end up collapsing this monumental NDC legacy project. Under this corrupt deal, this government has decided to allow persons known to be affiliated to the NPP to build a private Gas plant so GNPC can sell natural gas from our oil fields to them at one-third of the price at which they sell it to Ghana Gas which is state owned. The whole idea is to cream off hundreds of millions of dollars in unreasonable and super-normal profits into the pockets of greedy NPP cronies. As Chairman of the NDC, I wish to serve notice that we will vigorously oppose this glaring theft of national resources for private gain. Ladies and gentlemen, the NDC believes institutions must work and the standards must even be higher for independent constitutional bodies that are legally clothed with independence to work independently. This is why we in the NDC maintain that the Electoral Commission (EC) must abandon its intransigence and listen to wise counsel in order to save Ghana's democracy. Why would the EC insist on making the Ghana Card the sole document for registration of voters when the National Identity Register law allows for the guarantor system as an identification mechanism? In the interest of our democracy and development, the Jean Mensah led EC should for once agree with the opposition NDC, Civil Society Organisations, and other well-meaning Ghanaians including the venerable Dr Kwadwo Afi-Adom, Ghana's longest-serving former Chairman of the Electoral Commission and foremost authority on electoral issues, who insists that the guarantor system must be maintained in our electoral system. My brothers and sisters, Another reason for Ghana's economic collapse is the expenditure on the bloated size of government.

As has been revealed by our hardworking Members of Parliament, between January and September of 2022, the Akufo-Addo/Bawumia presidency wasted the taxpayer's money as follows: The President's "operational enhancement expenditure" cost the suffering Ghanaian taxpayer a mind-boggling GH¢59.4 million; The fuel bills at the presidency cost the taxpayer GH¢51.1 million; President Akufo-Addo's regional tours last year cost GH¢16.9 million; Tyres and Batteries for official vehicles at the presidency cost Ghanaians GH¢15 million; A Cabinet Retreat cost the taxpayer a colossal GH¢4.8 million; Payments for new vehicles cost the suffering Ghanaian taxpayer GH¢6.5 million; Payment for Networking and ICT Equipment cost the Ghanaian taxpayer GH¢6.6 million; An amount of GH¢10.4 million was spent on the 2022 Independence Day Celebration in Cape Coast; An amount of GH¢4 million was spent by the Vice President on so-called "emergency activities"; Telecommunications and Internet Services from January to September alone cost the suffering Ghanaian taxpayer a shocking GH¢20 million (GH¢20,000,000.00); and last but not least; Expenditure on office furniture and fittings cost Ghanaians GH¢7 million. Further evidence of the waste of scarce resources can be seen in the many needless political appointees at the Presidency. In the midst of the worst economic crisis in living memory, the President continues to make ridiculous and superfluous appointments at the Presidency such as the following:

1. Youth Ambassador for Diaspora Affairs;
2. Policy Associate;
3. Chief Executive of Public Sector Reforms;
4. Overseer of the National Cathedral;
5. Church Relations Manager;
6. Diaspora Church Mobilization Officer;
7. Policy & Coordinator Analyst;
8. Focal Person, La Francophonie;
9. Technical Director, La Francophonie;
10. Coordinator, Special Development Initiatives Secretariat;
11. Director of Special Projects;
12. Manager of Operations & Programs;
13. 5 Technical Communications Assistants;
14. Technical Advisor, Zongo Development Authority;
15. 2 Technical Advisors, Special Development Initiatives Secretariat;
16. Technical Advisor, Political Affairs;
17. Presidential Staffer, NABCO;
18. Office Management Executive Associate;
19. Technical Director to the Presidential Advisor on Media; and
20. Data Manager.

Enough of this disaster of a government that continues to



waste the battered public purse with reckless abandon. We demand an immediate dismissal of these redundant hangers-on at the Presidency. In this regard, we wish to advise the Akufo-Addo/Bawumia NPP government to consider the detailed alternative policy proposals put out by former President John Dramani Mahama in his famous address to the nation on "Building the Ghana we want" which was delivered in this very auditorium on 27th October 2022.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we in the NDC, love our dear nation Ghana. We shall neither price partisan politics above policy nor personal interest above patriotism. Therefore, we shall continue to engage our Members of Parliament, Civil Society Organisations, Religious Organisations, Organised Labour and all stakeholders to fashion out a viable and sustainable alternative strategy to save Ghana's economy and democracy. Saving our economy also means saving our democracy. So, we expect the president to drastically cut down the size of his government to signal a new beginning. We further expect the government to be tolerant of dissent, heed the calls for implementation of the Constitutional Review recommendations, eschew profligacy, desist from nepotism and corruption, sanction corrupt officials and be honest about the True State of our Nation. My brothers and sisters, It is obvious that President Akufo-Addo who continues to revel in the largesse of high office does not appreciate the present reality of the Ghanaian people. The President continues to live in his own world, far removed from yours and mine, that he fails or neglects to appreciate the true State of the Nation. It is absolutely important to awaken President Akufo-Addo and the ruling NPP to the uncomfortable, but frank True State of Ghana today – a nation of many living in fear of where to find their next meal, leaving many parents to endure sleepless nights. The true State of our dear Nation no longer lies in flowery speeches laced with political chicanery that never

accepts responsibility for anything.

Neither does it lie in abstract theories that blame personal failings on events that have no significant impact on our lives.

The true State of the Nation is when a ball of kenkey which used to sell between 50 pesewas and GHS1.00 in December 2016, is now being sold between Gh\$4.00 and Gh\$5.00.

The true State of Ghana today is that, a sack of maize which used to sell for GHS170.00 in 2016 is now being sold for GHS900.00 as at February, 2023.

The true State of the Nation is when a bag of Gino Rice (5kg) which used to go for GHS25.00 in December 2016, is now being sold for GHS185.00. Similarly, a tuber of yam which used to sell for GHS5.00 is now being sold for GHS25.00, while a bag of Sachet Water which used to sell for GHS1.50 in 2016, is now being sold for GHS10.00 as at February 2023. Also, a bag of cement which sold for GHS27.00 in December 2016 is today selling at a staggering GHS90.00 and last, but not least, sanitary pad which used to sell for averagely GHS2.50 in December 2016 is today selling for GHS20.00. When everything is said and done, this is the true State of the Nation. This is what we feel when we go to the market. This is what we feel in our pockets. This is our everyday reality.

A reality in which babies do not have vaccines leading to a measles outbreak; the youth do not have jobs; the middle class faces imminent extinction; and the elderly are being deprived of their life-savings by the very government that swore to protect them.

This is not the Ghana we deserve; this is not the Ghana our forebears toiled and sacrificed for.

The NDC shall not be complicit in this mess. We are determined to work assiduously with the Ghanaian people through our superior patriotic policy alternatives and impressive track record to rescue our dear nation from the abyss. We are certain that with God on our side, we shall succeed.

Thank you for your attention.