

SONGOR LAGOON

Ada Communities Vow To Protect Livelihoods Of Salt Winners Against Threats By Presidency, Paramount Chief



Some members of the Ada communities addressing the media yesterday

Communities within the Ada Songor Lagoon enclave yesterday vowed to resist any attempts to use security forces to deprive them from earning their living through salt winning (mining) at the lagoon.

The communities which comprise Bonikope, Toflokpo, Salom, Matsekope, Luhuor, Medie and Kablevu among several dozen others say Ada Lagoon lands are owned by clans not the Paramount Chief, Nene Abram Kabu Akuaku III

nor the government and as such, would not sit unconcerned for Accra based businessman, Daniel McCorley popularly known as McDan to forcibly use his Electrochem Company Limited to take over their legitimate lands and salt winning

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DW Congress: SMG Extends Goodwill Message To Youth Wing Of Democratic Way

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Kojo Bonsu Blasts Prez Akufo-Addo

...Insists 7 Years Of Blaming Predecessor Shocking!



Businessman cum politician, Kojo Bonsu

A businessman and politician, Kojo Bonsu, has said it is baffling that President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo continues to jab the erstwhile John Dramani Mahama administration for his failures, 7 years after he took over power.

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**THE WOMEN'S WING OF THE
SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF GHANA
IN COLLABORATION WITH YEBETUMI
and
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The INSIGHT

EDITORIAL

DEAL WITH THIS HEALTH MENACE

The revelation that there is upsurge in stroke cases among young people per records at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi is very deeply worrying.

There is clearly no doubt that non-communicable or lifestyle diseases appear to have fast taken over from communicable which used to be our bane as a country. According to the Neurologist, Dr. Fred Stephen Sarfo those as young as 13 are now developing the condition which one suffers when a blood vessel that carries oxygen and nutrients to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts resulting in lack of blood to the brain and thus death of the brain cells.

According to the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital it records between 800 and one thousand cases, each year with more than 300 dying and the rest becoming permanently disabled.

With its high risk factors being hypertension, diabetes, high alcohol intake and lack of exercise among others, there is the need for improved or change in lifestyle including other health measures to adequately deal with the situation. Stress is also another causative or factor and health authorities need to intensify public education to reverse the tide. The revelation that there is upsurge in stroke cases among young people per records at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi is very deeply worrying.

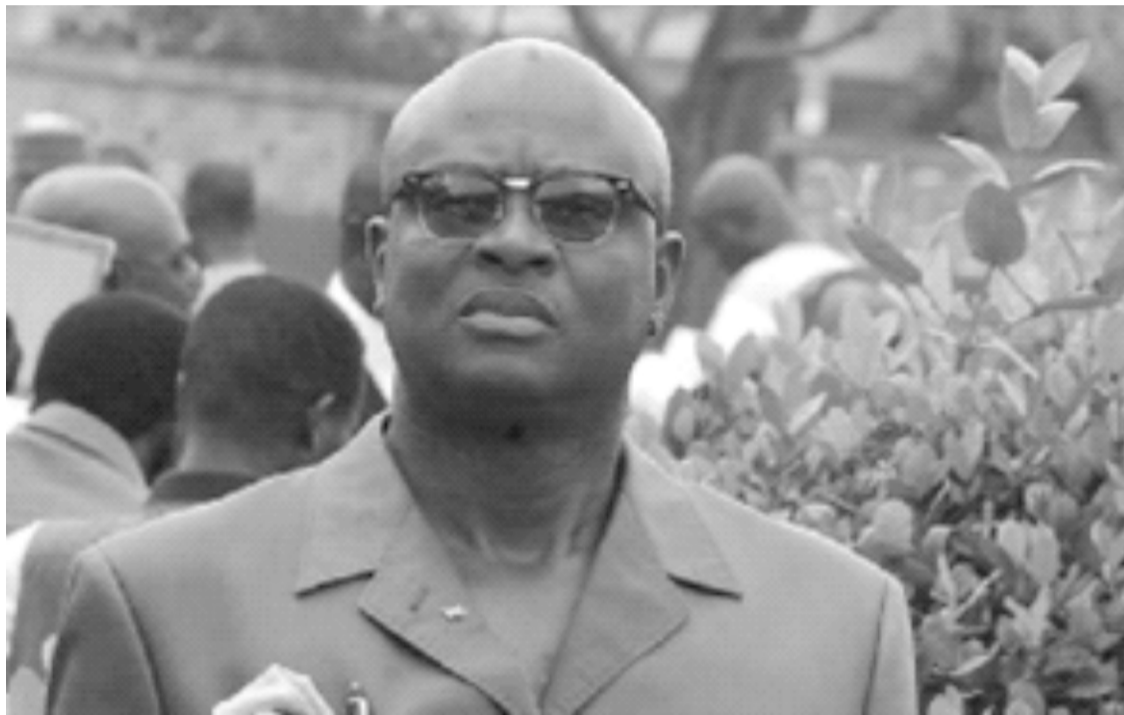
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Kojo Bonsu Blasts Prez Akufo-Addo

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Businessman cum politician, Kojo Bonsu

from front page

The politician said that he is extremely surprised that the president continues to blame Mahama whenever he gets the chance to speak, for the economic mess in the country.

This reaction comes on the back of the statement President Nana Akufo-Addo made during the commissioning of the 161kv Bulk Supply Point at Accra Central on Tuesday, June 13, 2023.

The president, during the ceremony, said that Ghana is never returning to the era of erratic power supply, adding that he leaves 'Dumsor' as John Mahama's legacy.

In responding to this, Kojo Bonsu tweeted that Ghanaians voted for the NPP to make right all the issues and problems they trumpeted when they were in opposition, hence there is no need for them to continue blaming the NDC for their woes.

"I honestly feel Prez Akuffo Addo's bla bla bla about dumsor is neither here nor there. Ghanaians voted for him & his party to fix the issues they were so "loud-mouthed" about whilst in

opposition. 7 solid years of blaming your predecessor is a pity, sham & egregious!

#FixTheMess," Kojo Bonsu tweeted.

Meanwhile, the Ranking Member of the Mines and Energy Committee in Parliament, [John Jinapor](#), has revealed that the construction of the 161kv Bulk Supply Point at Accra Central was only made possible through a grant aid former President John Dramani Mahama requested from Japan in 2014.

THE INSIGHT

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SONGOR LAGOON

Ada Communities Vow To Protect Livelihoods Of Salt Winners Against Threats By Presidency, Paramount Chief

from front page

trade despite being given a part of the large salt mining concession by the government.

Addressing a press conference at Koluedor Ada, in the Greater Accra region, Hon. Ebenezer Adjaottor, Deputy Secretary of the Ada Songor Lagoon Association (ASLA) asked McDan to stick to the original concession granted him by the government warning that any attempts to use state security to deprive them their legitimate livelihood on the lagoon which their forebears bequeathed to them would be resisted.

It would be recalled that the Paramount Chief of Ada Traditional Area, Nene Abram Kabu Akuaku III and his few entourage of elders in a courtesy call on President Nana Akufo-Addo at the Jubilee House last week Monday appealed to him (Akufo-Addo) to deploy state security forces to stop the locals from winning salt at the lagoon calling them illegal miners.

The paramount chief who spoke through Nene Agudey Obitchere, Mankralo of Ada urged the president to let state security forces deal with indigenes of the area for organising demonstrations against Electrochem Ghana Limited, a private salt mining company owned by businessman Daniel McKorley who has allegedly taken over nearly all salt winning activities from the locals (indigenes) in the area contrary to the original agreement and concession granted him by the government.

The chief told the president that recent agitations through demonstrations by the locals were a threat to their peace and wants state security to deal with those who foment trouble as they are disturbing Electrochem which he claims has brought 'wealth' to the area.

But the indigenes view his claim as a betrayal of the interest of the thousands of people in the communities who for over 500 years have depended on the Ada Songor

lagoon for survival

Hon. Adjaottor said it is wrong that the paramount chief and the Ada Traditional Council have labelled them as galamseyers who need to be driven away from their own lands from Sege Nakomkope to Elavanyo for a so-called investor to take over. He noted that it was worrying that a petition signed by over 5000 indigenes to the presidency on May 4 2023 has been shelved but that of a few chiefs has been heeded to by the presidency.

The ASLA deputy secretary recounted atrocities suffered by some of their compatriots who are still receiving medical care due to alleged brutalities by Electrochem's security operatives.

Naana Korliki Korley I, Queen Mother of Terkperbiawe Clan also called on the government to allow the indigenes earn a living since the lagoon is their only livelihood.

Abraham Ahumah Tetteh Karim also told the media in an interview that Electrochem activities are illegal and a threat to their survival.

He noted that some of the chiefs who qualify to be arrested are rather calling on the presidency to use brute force on Ada songor locals for fighting for their common livelihood.

"A section of the chiefs at Ada traditional council who are supposed to fight the interest of the people they serve have turned against their people for one man called the investor and tries to hand over all the 41,000 acre songor lagoon to one person".

"The chiefs are justifying their deeds that the resource belong to the government and for that matter no local has the right to work in the lagoon for their livelihood.

The chiefs are pointing accusing fingers to the locals as undertaking an illegal mining in the lagoon in their bid to justify why the government should prevent the Ada people from producing salt from their culturally and PNDC law 287 inherited lagoon", he said.

"Ada Songor Lagoon Association, and the entire citizenry of Ada has this question to ask the members of Ada traditional council who are championing the course for McDan and his Electrochem company to get monopoly right over the lagoon".

"If the chiefs are aware that the entire concession belongs to the state, why did the chiefs secretly sign a memorandum of Agreement with McDan to use some portion of the lagoon and its adjoining lands to produce salt for fifty years subject for renewal for additional twenty five years?"

"Have they not committed a crime by leasing state property if they knew the resource belongs to the government as they are parading in the media space?"

"Salt control the petrochemical industry, is it not a calamity to hand over the salt power to a single



person and a single company to control the power of salt?

"If the chiefs claim McDan and his Electrochem company is worthier and can feed the entire Ada people whose livelihood relied on the songor lagoon since the making of Ada, why then that the company could not pay its electricity bill and has been disconnected in the ECG mass disconnection exercise conducted recently with a media

report that the company has been illegally using electricity power from ECG?, he queried..

"The people of Ada also want to find out whether or not the lease given to McDan includes using land guards, brutality, torture, arrest and prosecution of the locals who decides to be non spectators but citizens as President Akufo Addo charged Ghanaians", he asked.

DDEP: Organised Labour Rejects New Proposal To Restructure \$2.7 Billion Pension Funds



Finance minister Ken Ofori-Atta

Organized labour has rejected new attempts by the government to restructure pension funds worth \$2.7 billion, reports have said. The Secretary-General of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), Dr. Yaw Baah, stated that the new debt restructuring proposal sent by the government has not been accepted

by the Board of Trustees of Pension Funds.

"We have scrutinized this letter and other accompanying documentation and have come to a firm conclusion that the proposal amount to roping in pension funds back into the DDEP," Graphic Business quoted him as saying.

The government had already signed a Memorandum of Understanding with organised labour to exempt them from the domestic debt exchange programme.

However, a new offer signed by the finance minister was addressed to the Board for their involvement in an alternative debt restructuring proposal.

"This new request undermines the spirit and letter of the MoU signed between the government and organised labour," Dr Baah told the Graphic Business.

Graphic Business reports have noted that "labour unions have asked for more time to study the new proposal from the government, however, indications are that the labour front is hesitant with the new proposal."



INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

French Left Calls For No-Confidence Vote As Macronists Obstruct Bill To Repeal Pension Reforms



Mps from the NUPES coalition outside the National Assembly. (Photo via Twitter). Emmanuel Macron's government in France has abused the emergency provisions in the constitution to pass and defend its anti-worker pension reforms. It has also used the security forces to crack down on workers protesting against the rise in retirement age

The president of the French National Assembly, Yael Braun-Pivet, last Thursday blocked proceedings on a bill proposed by the Liberties, Independents, Overseas and Territories (LIOT) opposition group to repeal the controversial pension reforms enacted by the Emmanuel Macron government. Braun-Pivet is from Macron's party, the

Renaissance (RE). To dismiss the opposition bill in the National Assembly, she invoked Article 40 of the French constitution, under which any proposals or amendments made by parliamentarians that would decrease revenue or increase public expenses are not permitted.

The LIOT group subsequently withdrew the bill. A key clause in the bill against the increase in retirement age had already been struck down in a parliamentary committee.

Outraged National Assembly members from the left-wing coalition New Ecological and Social People's Union (NUPES) protested the move as an attack on democracy and resolved to continue the fight against pension reforms. They have also called for a motion of censure (no-

confidence motion) against the government.

The pension reforms were [announced](#) by French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne on January 10 and stipulated the phased raising of the retirement age from 62 to 64 at a rate of three months per year from September 1, 2023 until 2030. Additionally, workers would have to work for 43 years instead of the current 42 to get a full-rate pension. On March 16, the government used the emergency [provision](#) Article 49.3 of the French constitution to bypass final voting on the bill in the National Assembly and passed the 2023 Social Security Financing Adjustment Law amidst fierce opposition from the NUPES and the French working class. The government narrowly [survived](#) a no-

confidence motion pushed by the opposition on March 20 over the bill.

Two requests by the opposition parties to conduct a referendum on raising the retirement age were also [denied](#) by the French Constitutional Council. The protests against the reforms saw the massive mobilization of people across the country, as millions marched against the reforms and observed National Strikes for many days. On June 6, in the 14th round of [mobilization](#), hundreds of thousand participated across the county. On multiple occasions, the government used security forces to quell the protests. The parliamentary debates on pension reforms have also witnessed the government abusing emergency provisions of the French constitution to

undemocratically push and defend their anti-worker pension reforms. On June 8, Elsa Faucillon, MP from the French Communist Party (PCF), [tweeted](#) that "National Assembly President Yaël Braun-Pivet prevents the vote against retirement at 64 and gags the will of the French and its representatives, bowing to Macron's will. This government is destroying democracy." On June 9, in its [statement](#), the General Confederation of Labor said that "by failing to protect the rights of the opposition and by applying the orders of the Elysée in defiance of the independence of its function, she [Braun-Pivet] further weakens the democratic debate and the separation of powers." The union confederation added that it will continue the struggle for the withdrawal of reforms.

At Least One Civilian Killed And Scores Injured In Firing By US And Allies In Syria

At least one civilian was killed and an unspecified number injured in an unprovoked firing incident by the US occupation forces in al-Shahadi in Syria's north-eastern Hasaka province on Sunday, June 11, *Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA)* [reported](#).

SANA claimed that local Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) also participated in the "indiscriminate firing" on houses and agricultural fields carried out while the US forces were conducting an airdrop operation near the Syria-Iraq border.

The report claimed that SDF had cordoned off the area while the operation was carried out, preventing the citizens from leaving.

Though there is no official

verification about the incident from the US forces or the SDF yet, they have previously been involved in several similar incidents, supposedly as part of operations against ISIS, but which also led to the arrest of local tribesmen who opposed the presence of US forces. US forces and the SDF have been [conducting](#) such operations in the area using live ammunition for some time now, claiming increased threat of attacks from terrorist groups in the region. Hasaka and nearby Syrian provinces are mostly controlled by the SDF and the US forces.

US troops were originally deployed in the region to fight ISIS in 2014, when the Syrian government was busy with the war at home. However, even after the US and its allies

declared [victory against](#) ISIS in 2019, the forces were not withdrawn, with former US President Donald Trump claiming that their presence in Syria was to protect oil fields from falling into the hands of ISIS.

The Syrian government has termed the presence of US forces in the country as illegal, calling it an occupation and demanding their immediate withdrawal. The government has stated that contrary to the US claims, these forces aid "terrorist" groups fighting against the government and are prolonging the war in the country. It has also alleged that the US forces are involved in [the loot](#) of Syrian oil resources. US forces have reinforced their presence around Syria's oil fields in the region lately



(Photo: SANA). The firing took place while the US forces were conducting an airdrop operation near the Iraq border. The Syrian government has termed the presence of US forces in the country as illegal, calling it an occupation and demanded their immediate withdrawal

by bringing in forces from neighboring Iraq, *Cradle.co* reported.

According to [local news reports](#), the SDF has also been involved in fresh attacks in government-controlled areas in the

region. Its fighters had briefly held over 150 Syrian officials and soldier's captive last week and threatened to block access to Qamishli, the second largest city in the Hasaka province.

DW Congress: SMG Extends Goodwill Message To Youth Wing Of Democratic Way ...Condemns Capitalism For Current Debt Crisis, Economic Hardships

The Youth Wing of the Socialist Movement of Ghana (SMG) on Wednesday extended a goodwill message to the Youth Wing of the Democratic Way in its Congress to elect new members. The SMG in its goodwill message signed by Emmanuel Oboe Baiden, the Youth Co-ordinator while wishing them (DW) a successful congress also lashed out at decaying

unbridled capitalism for the current pervasive debt crises afflicting nations the world over and their resultant economic hardships. This is the full text of the statement;
SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF GHANA (SMG) YOUTH LEAGUE
 14-06-2023.
 Dear Comrades,
MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS OF THE YOUTH WING OF DEMOCRATIC

WAY
 On behalf of the youth of the Socialist Movement of Ghana (SMG) we extend our very best wishes to your congress. We note that your congress is taking place at a time when the crisis of capitalism is deepening around the world and imperialism is getting increasingly bellicose. The crisis of capitalism is manifesting as lack of access to social services,

such as healthcare, education and housing. The pursuit of the neoliberal agenda has also led to increasing the debt stock of its victim nations. Ghana as a neo-colony also suffers these symptoms of decaying capitalism and our people are suffering very high unemployment-rates, escalating food prices, poor national infrastructure and worsening violence from

state actors and fringe groups. The youth wing of the SMG extends its full solidarity to your congress and that the bonds of comradeship will continue to grow over the years.

We will be victorious over the forces of capitalism and reaction.
 Signed
 Emmanuel Oboe Baiden.
 Youth Co-ordinator.

NUMSA Secures 7% Wage Increase At Eskom

15 June 2023
 Press statement

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) has signed the wage proposal at Eskom which was negotiated in the Centralized Bargaining Forum of Eskom. The agreement is broken down in the following way:
 1. This is a three year agreement which is valid from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026
 2. Wages will be increased by 7% across the board for year one, 7% for year two and 7% for year three.
 3. The increase for year one will be implemented from the 30th of June 2023 and will be implemented in term of Eskom's remuneration principles
 4. Housing allowance will be increased by 7% for year one, 7% for year two and 7% for year three.
 5. Eskom shall pay a once off taxable payment of R10 000 to all employees for year one of the agreement. And again, in the 2nd year of the agreement, a once-off taxable payment of R10 000 will be paid to workers. Parties have further agreed to engage on the following issues within the next 12 month period:

- Income differentials and salary disparities
- Jan H smith Loan
- Business scheme vehicle and cellphone allowances
- Fixed daily allowances
- Reimbursement for business travel
- Moratorium on the closure of power stations

NUMSA views this agreement as a victory for workers at Eskom who have been denied meaningful increases since the 2016/2017 financial year. We are coming from a dark period where Eskom was led by the racist, clueless Andre De Ruyter who plunged the country into rolling blackouts, because of his refusal to drive quality maintenance at power stations. We are in the process of trying to recover and repair what was destroyed during Andre's tenure. At the same time, the same Andre De Ruyter, tried to collapse centralized bargaining by imposing 1.5% increase on the workforce. But he refused to intervene on Eskom's true cost drivers, namely, coal costs, REIPP's and diesel costs. He wanted workers to pay for Eskom's financial challenges and used them as a scapegoat for his glaring failures to motivate workers, and to drive

a program to increase the Energy Availability Factor at the power utility. NUMSA wants to assure the public that we are playing a progressive role in trying to repair the damage caused by Andre's incompetence. This agreement is a sign of an improvement in the relationship with Eskom. We want continue on this path. And part of our contribution is the signing of a multi-year agreement so that there is labour stability. This will allow workers at Eskom to focus on quality maintenance, without interrupting that process with annual wage talks. We promised South Africans that we would do everything in our power to prevent a repetition of last year where workers were provoked into picketing and protesting at power stations, and we have upheld that promise. We managed to secure an agreement without deadlocking, and we did it before the end of June, which is when the old agreement expires. We want to thank our negotiating team which worked tirelessly to secure this agreement and settle this round of wage talks. We are deeply grateful to them for their hard work. NUMSA is a sword and a shield for the working class and we will continue to fight for

improvements in wages and benefits, for the producers of wealth in this country. Aluta continua!
 The struggle continues!
 Issued by Irvin Jim
 NUMSA General Secretary
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Close Down Schools Over Flooding In Ketu South – Dzifa Gomashie Appeals



Member of Parliament for Ketu South, Dzifa Gomashie

The Member of Parliament for Ketu South, [Dzifa Gomashie](#) has called on authorities to close down schools due to incessant flooding in some three areas in the constituency. The Ketu South MP believes the constant flooding in Klikor, Agbozume, and Aflao endangers the lives of students or pupils who commute to school on the flooded roads. Parts of the Ketu South Constituency have seen over 1000 people displaced due to flooding caused by the rains in the past few days. [Dzifa Gomashie](#) made this call when she was speaking on Citi Breakfast Show on Monday, June 12, 2023. She added that she fears for the lives of the children in these communities who could encounter any form of danger on their way to school due to the enormous amount of water on the roads. "I think what we should do is to close down the schools in the three

traditional areas affected by the flooding. That is Klikor, Agbozume and Aflao. My fear is that anything can happen when these children are wading through the floodwaters. It is scary, I was born by the seaside, and my house is also at the beach, but I am terrified of water. What I saw this weekend has even scared me more," she said. The MP also added that the amount of water seen on the roads is the same quantity you will find in the rooms, so, her constituents are unable to sleep in their rooms. There also seems to be no hope and help in sight as the water comes from the lagoons and sea so there is no way they could go anywhere else. "They cannot even sleep in their rooms and the classrooms have water there too, so I am at wit ends and the churches. There is nowhere you can even send them to perch until the water recedes, perhaps, maybe, the Municipal Assembly Hall that is not flooded. We could move the people to lay their heads until we find some form of shelter for them. "We have a serious situation where the lagoons and the wetlands are all overflowing into the community and there is no way the water can go into the sea," she added. Some parts of Ghana, between March and June this year, have experienced flooding due to rainstorms.

Moroccan Agents Assault Former Sahrawi Political Prisoner Mahfouda Lefkir, Besiege Her House In Occupied Territory

By Pavan Kulkarni

The Moroccan authorities illegally occupying Western Sahara have besieged the home of 39-year-old Mahfouda Lefkir, a former political prisoner and prominent human rights defender, for over a month. Mahfouda has been tortured several times in the past and threatened with rape. Mahfouda is the head of the Sahrawi Committee for the Defense of Workers Arbitrarily Expelled by the Moroccan State and a trade unionist. She has been on the frontlines of several struggles in the occupied territory, “organizing protests for Western Sahara's independence and workshops with human rights organizations,” said Babouzeid Lebbihi, President of Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA). Moroccan security agents stationed outside her house in the occupied territory's capital El Aaiun since May 4 have physically assaulted Mahfouda, her husband, and her two brothers, who have been stopped from visiting her. Her 14-year-old son and 20-year-old daughter are also in her besieged home and are allegedly being harassed. Her third child had to be aborted in early 2017 after the occupation police, who had detained her from a protest in El Aaiun, tortured her when she was pregnant. Her sister-in-law and neighbor Salha Boutangiza, a correspondent at the *Sahrawi National TV* who had moved into Mahfouda's home to document the attacks on her, is also held under the siege. **'Anyone trying to enter her house is being attacked'** “Anyone trying to enter her house to meet them is being attacked,” Babouzeid told *Peoples Dispatch*. Coordinating with Mahfouda, a delegation of five people, including three CODESA members and two former political prisoners, Khyarhoum Alia and Kaouria Saadi, managed to sneak into her house on June 5, taking

advantage of a momentary drop of guard by the security agents. While leaving, members of this delegation were harassed and threatened with consequences by the security agents who had returned outside her house by then, added Babouzeid. Mahfouda's movement has also been restricted. On May 10, while on a visit to her husband's family, the security agents “demanded that I leave the house immediately, threatening to break in. I left because I wanted to prevent them from entering and harming the elderly,” Mahfouda [told El Independiente](#). This was an apparent attempt by the Moroccan occupation to preempt the family celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Polisario Front (PF) on May 10, 1973. PF is recognized by the UN as the international representative of the people of Western Sahara. The UN also recognizes Western Sahara as one of the last few countries yet to be decolonized. To mark the anniversary of the armed struggle launched by the PF for the liberation of this territory from its former colonizer Spain, Mahfouda along with other women activists held a demonstration in El Aaiun on May 20. Waving the Sahrawi tricolor, they called for Western Sahara's liberation from Morocco which sent troops in with the Spanish retreat in 1975 and has since occupied 80% of its territory. The women also flung fliers over the streets, demanding the release of all political prisoners. Moroccan security agents and police sprung into action, with some assaulting the women, pulling their scarves off their heads and dragging them on the streets, while others chased the fliers in the wind to confiscate them all. Days later, after arresting her brother Omar Lefkir in the neighborhood on May 29, the Moroccan agents proceeded at 1 am on May 30 to remove one of the CCTV cameras Mahfouda had mounted on the wall of her house. On May 31, they also removed the

other camera, before allegedly assaulting Mahfouda and her husband Lahbib Boutangiza in front of their home.

When her other brother, Sheikh Lefkir, tried to enter the house later after midnight, the security agents allegedly dragged him away, beat him up, and detained him in police custody where he was tortured for several hours before being released. Omar Lefkir was also released on June 1, but neither of them have been able to meet their besieged sister yet.

This is not the first time such a siege has been imposed on Mahfouda. She was put under a similar undeclared house arrest at her parents' home when she had visited them before heading to her house after her release from prison in May 2020.

She had been imprisoned on charges of “obstructing justice” and “humiliation of a public official” after she was arrested on November 15, 2019 for protesting in the courtroom during the trial of her cousin Mansour Moussaoui and Mohammed Gargar.

The duo had been arrested for participating in a public celebration of the Algerian football team's victory in the Africa Cup that year. Since Algeria is a key supporter of the cause of Western Sahara's liberation, cheering its football team is perceived by the Moroccan occupation as an act of protest that is worthy of a trial.

Enduring over a decade of political persecution

Detained for protesting this trial, “I was thrown into a very small and foul-smelling cell with humidity, darkness and cold, without any blankets and with insects,” Mahfouda recalled in an [interview](#) with *Equipe Media*.

“Then I was taken to an interrogation room where they undressed me completely and left me naked twice [during questioning]... They interrogated me about my relationship with the Polisario Front, my political activities, my involvement in protest gatherings, demands appearing as graffiti.. on walls in occupied El Aaiun.”



Mahfouda Bamba Lefkir has a long history of fighting the Moroccan state's occupation of Sahrawi land. As a trade unionist and prominent human rights defender, Mahfouda has been unrelentingly participating in the struggle for Western Sahara's liberation from Moroccan occupation despite torture, imprisonment, and threats of rape

The following day, on November 16, 2019, she was handed a six-month sentence. “They threw me into a 15 square-meter cell with seven criminals. It was a pestilential stinking cell due to a toilet inside, without any ventilation and no natural light,” she added. During her sentence, she was allegedly denied access to medicines for the hemorrhoids and asthma she was suffering from. Allegedly, on the instruction of the prison authorities, the criminals she was held with continuously harassed her, including by contaminating her food with fingernails and rubbish even as her health condition was seriously deteriorating. Undeterred by her prison experience, she returned to political activities right after her release.

Her perseverance for over a decade, despite the violent crackdown by Moroccan authorities, has made her “a feminist struggle icon” rooted in the grassroots movements and looked up to by the young people under occupation as “a role model,” Babouzeid remarked. “She was also a member of the Gdeim Izik,” he said, referring to the massive protest camp that was erected in October 2010 barely 12 kilometers from El Aaiun. About 15,000 to 20,000 people had held out in over 6,500 tents pitched in the desert for a month, protesting peacefully against the economic woes and political disenfranchisement imposed on Western Sahara's people by the Moroccan occupation.

A month later, in November, the protest site was violently attacked and uprooted by the Moroccan police who were [reportedly](#) supported by civilian Moroccan settlers brandishing machetes. According to the PF, over [700 Sahrawis were injured, 36 killed and 163 detained](#), most of whom were tortured in custody. Gdeim Izik has been described as the “[Third Sahrawi Intifada](#)” and “[the greatest unrest in the Occupied Territories since the 1991 ceasefire](#)” between Morocco and the PF after the establishment of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). Noam Chomsky has [argued](#) that the “Arab Spring” had in fact started with this protest. 19 members of the Gdeim Izik group, including Mahfouda's cousin Mohamed Lefkir, remain in prison. When their trial began in 2013, two years after their arrests, it was before a military court. UN Special Rapporteur Juan Mendez [reported](#) at the time that he had “received credible testimonies relating to torture and ill-treatment in the Prison of Laâyoune [El Aaiun], including rape, severe beating and isolation up to several weeks, particularly of inmates accused of participating in pro-independence activities.”

Moroccan occupation threatens rape

In 2014, when Mahfouda took part in protests calling for the release of political prisoners and the inclusion of human rights monitoring in MINURSO's mandate, she was physically assaulted several times. In

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Defence Minister, CDS Storm Court

...As Contempt Conviction Against Them Set Aside Over Land Disputes



The Minister for Defence and the Chief of Defence Staff were spared contempt conviction by the court

The Minister for Defence, Dominic Nitiwul and the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) of the Ghana Armed Forces, (GAF) Vice Admiral Seth Amoama have escaped sentencing after they were convicted for Contempt by the High Court in Accra.

After being found guilty for Contempt, convicted and a date fixed for sentencing, the Minister and the CDS through the Attorney General Godfred Yeboah Dame filed a motion to have the conviction and the entire proceedings set aside.

This was after the Attorney General had raised jurisdictional concerns and the fact that the Respondents were not personally served with the Contempt Application.

Jonathan Obodai Sai, an Estate Developer filed an application for Contempt against the Minister and the CDS after the High Court had entered judgment in his favour on November 1, 2018.

Despite having judgement in his favour, he contended that, the military was still interfering with the portions of the land that the court judgement covered against the minister, the CDS and the Attorney General.

As a result, he initiated a Contempt application against the Minister and CDS which succeeded with the Respondents (Minister and CDS) convicted for Contempt.

With the matter coming to the attention of the Attorney General

when a court had fixed a date for sentencing, an application to have the conviction and the entire contempt proceedings set aside was moved.

Counsel for the Applicant (Respondent) led by Lawyer Charles Amon Kotei, opposed to the application and urged the court to dismiss the application.

The High Court in Accra presided over by Justice Nabeela Naeema Wahab after listening to the parties said when a matter of jurisdiction succeed, the court cannot proceed with its sentencing.

The court said it renders the entire proceedings a nullity before setting aside its conviction and entire contempt proceedings.

EIB Network's Legal Affairs Correspondent, Murtala Inusah, who was in court reports that a cost of GHc1,000 was awarded against Jonathan Obodai Sai, the Applicant.

AG's argument

In Court on Tuesday, June 13, 2023, while moving the application for the Court to set aside the conviction and the entire Contempt proceeding against the convicted Respondents, the Attorney General (AG) Godfred Yeboah Dame said, the basis of the application are that the Respondents (applicants) became aware of the conviction after "I the Attorney General had indicated to them the fact of the pendency of the instant application, the conviction and the adjournment for sentencing."

This according to the AG, was because, the proceedings were conducted on

behalf of the Respondents by the Legal Department of the Ghana Armed Forces, who assumed responsibility without bringing it down to the personal notice of the persons involved.

Godfred Dame while advancing his argument said a consory examination of the motion for committal for Contempt, will show that there were no proper Respondents named in the application.

"The application clearly was titled the Minister for Defence and Chief of Defence Staff and the application was brought in the official capacity of the Respondents," Godfred Dame pointed out.

He said, "It is trite learning that application for Contempt is personal and each of the act complained of must have been committed personally by specified persons named in the affidavit."

No legal effect

It was the case of the AG that, "where no named person had been specified as Respondent to the application, the indication is that, there was no proper person clearly named as a Respondent to the application."

The AG contended that, "the ultimate result is that the application is a nullity, void and of no legal effect and the court has no power to punish where no person had been named as the Respondent."

Godfred Dame argued that, Contempt is quasi criminal and being quasi criminal it must be prosecuted in the same manner as a criminal action.

He added that, "even if a public officer had committed an act and is to be committed for contempt, you can't charge the office and the said public office cannot be named."

The AG argued further that, the charge is brought against the specific public officer to be charged personally, because the holder of public office can change anytime.

"The implications would be that, a subsequent change in the holder of the Public Office will render any person who subsequently occupies that Public Office liable for the Contempt in this manner," the AG argued.

CDS now, not CDS then

It was the contention of the Attorney General, that, "at the material time the alleged Contempt of Court was committed, the 2nd Respondent (CDS) was not even Chief of Defence Staff.

The AG said, he was appointed in 2022 after the said alleged contempt act was committed.

While pointing to certain paragraphs in the Respondents affidavits in support, the AG said, the court will note that all the matters constituting Contempt of Court were committed between December 2018 and May 2020.

"All the various act impeding the judgement had taken place when the 2nd Respondent (CDS) was not in office.

*In terms of Contempt, the specific officer whose action is the subject of the complaint of the Contempt have to be personally named as a Respondent to the Contempt application and not his office," the AG argued.

GAF not a corporate entity

"It matters not that, the act complaint about were allegedly committed by a corporate entity and indeed in this situation the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) is not even a corporate entity," he stated.

He said, GAF is "not a legal entity on its own capable of suing and being sued."

"If one has a complaint against the GAF, the cause of action would be against

the Attorney General and not the Ghana Armed Forces because the armed forces are part of government of Ghana," he explained.

He said, even in the case of a corporate entity where a Contempt is alleged, the directors of the entity must be specifically named as Respondents in the Contempt application and (the said) act committed by each of them specified.

"While the corporate entity itself would be liable for Contempt, it would not be legally competent or sufficient for the office of the managing Director or another office Director to be cited for Contempt.

"The individual directors must be named personally and personal liability shown against each of them," he argued.

Montie 3

The AG while citing authorities made reference to 'The Republic vs Abu Ramadan and Nimako no.4 against the Electoral Commission and the Attorney General' where apart from the contemnors, individual owners of Montie 3 were also handed punishment.

To buttress his argument, the AG said, for a Contempt application against corporate bodies to be liable, individual directors have to be named otherwise, no case had been made.

"If a Contempt application is treated the same as criminal proceedings, then it goes without saying that a Contempt application brought against a public officer in his official capacity as a minister cannot hold," the AG argued.

Conditions precedent

Mr Godfred Dame further argued that, the Contempt application was deployed as one of the means of enforcing the obedience to the judgement of the High Court

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Moroccan Agents Assault Former Sahrawi Political Prisoner Mahfouda Lefkir, Besiege Her House In Occupied Territory

from page 8

January that year, the Moroccan security officials left her face with multiple injuries after an attack, and threatened her with rape if she took part in more protests.

A month later, in February, while out on a walk one evening with family, “four police cars stopped beside us and a number of officers got out. They began to attack me, in front of my husband and kids... My husband tried to rescue me, but they hit him too,” according to her testimony published in a [report by the Norwegian Students' and Academics' International Assistance Fund \(SAIH\)](#). “They.. told me that they were

going to rape me,” she added. “They then told us they would take my daughter and rape her too. She was 11 years old at the time.” When Mahfouda refused to yield to threats and continued protesting, she was subjected to multiple assaults in April, during which Moroccan policemen tried to strip her.

Rape is not an idle threat under Moroccan occupation. Sultana Khayya, a prominent human rights defender and Sahrawi activist, was [gang-raped and tortured several times along with her sister after being put under house arrest in November 2020 soon after the war resumed as Morocco broke the ceasefire with PF](#).

“Mahfouda, like all Sahrawi women, has been subject to

threats of rape several times,” Babouzeid said, adding that “almost every political prisoner from both sexes has been subjected to sexual violence in the prisons of Morocco. Sexual violence is a commonly used means of political repression by the Moroccan occupation.”

Also common is the practice of laying siege on family homes. A siege amounting to an undeclared house arrest has also been imposed on the family home of the director of *Guerguerat Media Network*, Sabi Yahdih, since his release from jail on May 28 after two years imprisonment for “filming without a license,” Babouzeid said.

“His mother, brother, and sister were beaten because they

stepped out to the front of their house to receive him. Hundreds of Sahrawi activists have been prevented from visiting him after his release from prison.”

'Morocco committing crimes against humanity'

Babouzeid argues that the widespread nature of the human rights violations by Morocco amounts to crimes against humanity. He insists that such crimes laid out in international law are applicable because the UN has recognized and reaffirmed time and again that Western Sahara is occupied by Morocco, whose claim to sovereignty over the territory has no legitimacy.

Western Sahara has been on the [UNs list of countries that are yet to be decolonized since 1963. The fact](#)

[that Moroccan forces are at war with Western Sahara people's UN-recognized international representative, the Polisario Front, warrants the application of the Geneva Conventions, Babouzeid reasoned.](#)

The International Court of Justice, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the United Kingdom High Court of Justice, and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights have all recognized that Morocco is illegally occupying Western Sahara.

Nevertheless, since the time former colonizer Spain ceded the country to Morocco at the persuasion of the US in 1976, the occupation has been [consistently backed by the US, the UK, and the EU, which are extracting Western Sahara's resources in cahoots with Morocco.](#)

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He said, the rules of the court had stated clearly in a situation where a Contempt application is being deployed in enforcing a judgment of the High Court and where such an application has to commence.

“In conditions precedent for invoking Contempt as a means for enforcing obedience and judgement of this court dated November 1, 2018, were never complied with by the applicant (Respondent) herein,” he argued.

He said per Order 43(1) CI47, the court will note that the commitment for Contempt had been specified for immovable properties and the conditions in evoking Contempt is that applicant was complaining about his denial to enter into the property.

To this, he said one of the reliefs in the committal for Contempt is that, the person in possession may be served personally and the person has to show that the person has personal knowledge

Incompetent application

While describing the Contempt application as “incompetent,” the AG said it was of no legal effect

because the condition precedent was to satisfy Order 43.

He said the application was null, void and of no legal effect and prayed for “the entire conviction and Contempt proceeding be set aside.”

Opposition

Counsel for the Applicant (Respondent), Charles Amon Kotei, opposed to the application for the court to set aside the Contempt, the conviction and the entire proceedings.

“We opposed the instance application which has been canvases on behalf of the Respondents (Minister and CDS) and that the application ought to have been brought against them personally. Counsel said, all offices are occupied by personalities and the said personalities hold the office in a period of time.

According to him, if the application for committal for Contempt filed against the Respondents and have been served on them and being it their matter personally, they can engage personal counsel to defence them in court.

He contended that, the affidavit in opposition for Contempt was filed

by a competent lawyer at the BAR on behalf of the Respondents. Counsel said, the depositions in the affidavit in opposition was also sworn to by a competent member of the BAR.

He said, “the learned trial judge ordered that parties to file written submissions in the matter and again a lawyer who has always represented the Respondents file written submissions on their behalf.”

Lawyer Kotei said, it had been deposed to in their affidavit in support of the application that the Respondent were not aware of the application for Contempt and that because aware on May 19, 2023.

“It is our case that a lawyer of good standing at the BAR knowing the consequences of acting without instructions will not proceed to act on behalf of the Respondents when he had no instructions from them,” Counsel argued.

No merit

Counsel said, “The application that was filed before this honorable court for committal for Contempt was argued on its merit and the court delivered its decision against the Respondents.

“It is our case that if the Respondents are dissatisfied with the decision of the court, they can always appeal against the said decision and not to bring the instance application,” counsel argued.

“It is also our case that the grounds canvassed will not go to jurisdictions to annul the conviction of Contempt proceedings that took place before this court and when one look at the substance and not the form, the court did not erred in convicting the Respondents. Counsel subsequently prayed that the instance application is of “no merit and same out to be dismissed.”

By Court

The High Court (Land Court 9) presided over by Justice Nabeela Naeema Wahab, after listening to the application filed by the 1st and 2nd Respondents on June 5 and the affidavit in opposition from Lawyers of Jonathan Obodai Said, the court set aside the conviction and the entire Contempt proceedings.

While referring to the Supreme

Court decisions, the court said jurisdiction is so fundamental that it's absence in a court renders the court proceedings a nullity

“The court considers therefore that even though the Contempt proceedings have already been heard and a ruling delivered, the proceedings against the parties not personally named as party deprived the court the jurisdiction to consider the sentence,” the judge held.

“A judgment or order given or made without jurisdiction is void and the court is under a legal obligation to set same aside or an application for the parties affected.

Justice Wahab held that, no judicial discretion arises here,” in situations where jurisdiction is raised.

To this end, the court ruled that the “Contempt proceedings and the conviction of the Respondents (applicants) are therefore set aside.”

Source: [starrfm.com.gh](#)