



ECONOMIC FIGHTERS LEAGUE

7th June 2020

STATEMENT ON #AccraBlackOut, KIDNAPPING OF ERNESTO YEBOAH BY POLICE AND FIRING OF LIVE AMMUNITION AT VIGIL ATTENDEES.

We will first like to salute all the people who turned out for the #AccraBlackOut vigil against police brutalities and racist violence against black people. The event was attended by Africans resident in Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, some participants from the US and other countries. Even though the vigil was rudely and violently disrupted by police and military, it was a success, because we were actually at the tail-end of the event when they came and illegally arrested our leader, CiC Ernesto Yeboah. With the vigil, we were able to show last night that black people's struggles are truly one and that we need to unify our forces to defeat the evils of racism and police/military violence everywhere. May our brother George Floyd's spirit not die.

We once again raised our collective voice for Ahmed Suale and Takoradi girls whose souls are still searching for justice, Eric Ofotsu who was shot and killed by a military officer in Ashaiman during Accra lockdown, and all black people who have suffered one form of violent brutality or the other.

At this minute, our leader Ernesto Yeboah is still in police custody without any charge. It is imperative to tell the truth of what transpired from the beginning right up to the point where the police "kidnapped" our leader and later shot live bullets at us for chanting for his release.

Before anything, we had sent a letter of notification addressed to the Inspector-General and copied to the Greater Accra Regional Commander on the 1st of June with the event slated for June 6. The Public Order Act with which we were complying it in this respect specifically says citizens are required to NOTIFY the police five (5) days before a public event of such nature. We duly did. Note that the law does not require us to obtain PERMISSION from the police. We never received any reply from the police and since we are not required to obtain written PERMISSION from them, we went ahead with the organisation of the event knowing full well that we had complied with the Public Order Act.

Fellow Ghanaians, it's of critical importance to note that the legal precedence which established that no Ghanaian requires permission from the police to embark on a peaceful public event of such nature was secured by members of the current government, in the case referenced below:

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Fighter-General
COMMANDER HARDI YAKUBU
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Chief of Chest
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NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY v INSPECTOR-GENERAL OF POLICE [1993-94] 2 GLR 459—509 SUPREME COURT.

As such, it comes as a great contradiction to have Police Officers claim they had received arbitrary orders from above to disregard this landmark precedence in the fight to entrench human rights and the rule of law in this country. It's curious as to why stalwarts of the current government went to secure this ruling from the apex court of Ghana, and will not guide the Police to uphold a law they fought for, but will rather send down orders from above to disregard this law and abuse the human rights of Ghanaians and other foreign nationals in such a reckless and violent manner.

In consideration of the fact that we are in COVID19 times, we took on special precautions in that regard. We are also very much aware of the emergency legal provision, the E.I. 64. Nonetheless, we are also certain the E.I 64 isn't an arbitrary law that automatically suspends all other rights under existing laws, without due consideration of the circumstances at hand. It was then the duty of the police to do their homework to establish whether the said event in Solidarity with BlackLives here at home and globally, would result in public breeches the said E.I 64 was meant to address, and if so, duly inform us as such to suspend the Vigil. But nothing of the sort was done. We took it then that by complying with all safety protocols and the limit of 100 people in a gathering as ordered by the President, we were well within our rights as law abiding citizens to gather in memory of BlackLives, as was done by the government and its functionaries just a day or so earlier.

As Indicated above, we decided to hold a vigil rather than a protest march because the former being a stationary event would offer us the opportunity to maintain COVID-19 protocols. In fact in our planning, we bought nose masks and hand sanitisers which we distributed for free to participants who needed them. Prior to the event, we issued guidelines and protocols on social distancing. There were ushers specifically tasked to make sure social distancing was maintained. Persons at the Vigil were less than 100, all socially distanced before the Police and Military disruption. It was the police themselves who broke social distancing to intimidate and abuse vigil attendees and ultimately took the Commander in Chief of EFL.

The vigil was to be spiced up with a projection of the images of brother George Floyd, Ahmed Suale, Taadi girls, Eric Ofotsu and others who have fallen victim to the violence of the system.

When we arrived at the venue, we were told by the security at the Black Star Square that the Director of Operations at the National Security had told them that they were not aware of any event. After showing them all the documentation and COVID19 Safety Protocols, showing our compliance with the law, they were still adamant and

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said that they had been given orders from above to not allow the vigil to go on. Clearly somebody was not happy that black people in Ghana were showing solidarity with black people in America and the world over. We told them that per Supreme Court ruling, they needed to get an injunction to stop us and that we would go ahead.

However being reasonable people, we decided to leave out the projection on the Independence Arch since that would require us to enter the premises. We stood just by the side of the road, properly socially distanced and wearing our masks. Our rallying cry was #BlackLivesMatter, #AfricaMustUnite, #FreedomAndJustice. It was going smoothly with revolutionary speeches. We had almost reached the end of the event when police and military people arrived and said they had been sent to disperse us. We explained our compliance with the law to the leader but he also, just like the others told us that he was only acting on orders from above. We were still trying to reason with him when he received a communication to take the leader. They violently manhandled those who were with him and pushed him into their car. One person fell on a motorbike and got injured as a result.

First they said they were taking him to Osu police station but when a number of us in leadership got there, he was not there. We then went to Ministries police station where we saw him briefly, after which they took him away and said they were going to CID Headquarters. This was again a lie. They did not take him there. They rather took him to Greater Accra Regional Police Headquarters. He was held there overnight without any charge in violation of his human rights.

Meanwhile the vigil went on unabated to the end. It was a successful solidarity vigil for #GeorgeFloyd and the #BlackLivesMatter global movement. We refused to be silenced. The courage of the attendees needs to be commended.

It was after the vigil that participants moved to the Greater Accra Regional Police Headquarters to find Ernesto Yeboah. Officers keeping him did not know why Ernesto was arrested, did not have any charges against him, but have been instructed to keep him seated and guarded at the counter. It was more like a kidnap by force than a lawful arrest. The only piece of news the officers on duty could give was that the team interested in bailing Ernesto must see one ACP Ofori, who was not at post.

Live ammunition was fired into a crowd of vigil attendees across the road from the police station, who were awaiting for news on Ernesto's bail. The gun shots were fired by an unruly gang of Officers who jumped out of a police pick up, as they zoomed recklessly into the gathered crowd. They got out of hand and could not be controlled by the officer who appeared to be their leader. One lady was injured and had to seek treatment in hospital.

Ernesto's protest against a new parliamentary chamber and the results it led to, may have left bitterness and malice, in the wake of the phenomenal change it brought.

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We urge the United Nations, Human Rights Watch and the world media, to ask the Ghanaian authorities three things.

Why display so much hypocrisy, after holding a state sponsored “funeral” for Floyd, just 30 hours earlier? Why risk the lives of many, by instigating the breaking of Social Distancing protocol, at a peaceful vigil? Why was the notice to gather, ignored? Who gave the order from above?

Revolutionary Regards

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