



PRESS STATEMENT DELIVERED BY COMRADE SAMMY GYAMFI, NATIONAL COMMUNICATION OFFICER OF THE NDC, AT THE 9TH EDITION OF THE NDC'S WEEKLY PRESS BRIEFING HELD AT THE PARTY'S HEADQUARTERS IN ACCRA, ON TUESDAY 4TH AUGUST, 2020.

DIVISIVE AKUFO-ADDO MUST HALT THE ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION AND TRIBAL BIGOTRY IN THE ONGOING VOTER REGISTRATION EXERCISE.

Introduction

Good morning distinguished friends from the media. It is always my greatest pleasure to welcome you to the headquarters of the great National Democratic Congress. We remain grateful to you for availing your esteemed platforms to us to engage the Ghanaian people on national issues that are critical to the development of our beloved country.

We have invited you here today to address a very worrying development currently playing out in the ongoing voter registration exercise, which threatens to throw our nation into a full-blown ethnic unrest if not checked.

The NDC is deeply worried and totally aghast at what appears to be a deliberate agenda of tribal discrimination, hatched by President Akufo-Addo and the NPP, to frustrate and disenfranchise Ghanaians of certain tribes from acquiring Voter ID Cards that will qualify them to exercise their democratic right to choose a President and Members of Parliament on 7th December, 2020.

Indeed, we have long known about this diabolic and nation-wrecking agenda. You would recall that as part of our resistance against the compilation of a new voters' register, we argued forcefully that the EC's entrenched and unjustifiable decision to compile a new voters' register at all cost, was part of a grand scheme to help the NPP/Akufo-Addo government suppress votes and disenfranchise many in NDC strongholds. Yet some of you our friends in the media did not believe us. As a matter of fact, some of you have always challenged us to produce evidence to back our claim.

Today, we will be showing evidence of state-sponsored discrimination and unlawful prevention of thousands of Ghanaians belonging to various ethnic groups, including Ewes, people of Northern descent and other non-Akans from registering at various registration centers across the length and breadth of Ghana. Hopefully, this time, you will appreciate the NPP's clandestine agenda to deploy voter suppression through ethnocentric discrimination to rig the 2020 general elections and the danger that portends for the democracy and stability of this country.

Banda Constituency

Distinguished friends from the media, we will start from the Banda Constituency in the Bono region of Ghana where armed military men and NPP hoodlums are terrorizing and brutalizing innocent citizens believed to be Ewes in the ongoing voter registration exercise.

I am sure some of you may have seen a short video that emerged from Banda Ahenkro in the Bono Region over the weekend. In that video, a man identified as Awuku Gyeabia, the Asiakwahene of the Banda Ahenkro Traditional Council is seen openly confronting armed military men who stormed a registration center to forcibly prevent people who are believed to be settlers of the Ewe tribe from registering in the Banda Constituency.

The chief, while calling out President Akufo-Addo for encouraging the ethnocentric military invasion of the area, also gave a brief history of the Ewe people on Banda soil, which dates back to as far as 1919, long before the Gold Coast became Ghana.

Just like the chief in that video, many are perplexed at how these settlers who have lived in Banda area for over 100 years, and have voted in the area since 1992 suddenly do not qualify to register and vote in the Banda Constituency now that Akufo Addo is President.

The harassment and brutalization of innocent Ghanaians by some military personnel and NPP thugs at several peaceful registration centers in the Banda Constituency has exacerbated tensions in that Constituency and created a situation where several thousands of people have not been able to register.

Over the weekend, we received reports of severe brutalities being meted out to people of the Ewe tribe in a community called Bator Akanyakrom, a fishing community which has been relocated as part of the Bui Dam Resettlement Plan. As a matter of fact, Akanyakrom is a community of Ewe people located in the Banda District of the Bono Region. This community has existed since the 1920's, when these settlers who are predominantly fishers got attracted to the area due to its fishing potential. However, and quite unfortunately, it has been the plan of the despotic and tribalistic Akufo Addo government to physically and violently prevent these Ghanaians from taking part in the ongoing voter registration exercise on grounds that they are Togolese.

We must also add, that due to the relocation of settlements to make way for the Bui Reservoir, most of the Ewe people of Akanyakrom, especially those from communities such as Dokokyina have found themselves on one side of the Dam, whilst others remained upstream of the dam, and mostly go fishing, staying for several weeks and months before coming back on market days. The number of people who are currently staying upstream are close to 42,000, whilst those at the Bono side are about 20,000 people, if not more. These are all Ghanaians that President Akufo Addo and the NPP are bent on disenfranchising on the basis of their tribe and nothing more.

It is worth mentioning that these events in the Banda Constituency were heralded by a capricious and inhumane decision to demolish the homes of an indigenous Ewe community around Bui under the auspices of the Bui Dam Authority, for allegedly posing an unspecified danger to the Dam. This exercise was designed to unsettle the people and render them incapable of part-taking in the ongoing voter registration exercise.

Over the weekend, NPP thugs, ably supported by military men in uniform, police and immigration officers stationed themselves at the landing beach at Bongase and physically prevented these people from going into the community to register, including people who wanted to visit the clinic to seek healthcare. Some of the people were brutally assaulted, and those who managed to get to the registration centers were denied the process completely. It is instructive to note, that all these people were not challenged as the law demands. Instead, they were attacked and beaten up, while several of them remained on the river, unable to dock.

Again, on Sunday, August 2, 2020, known thugs of the NPP besieged the Akanyakrom Funeral Grounds registration center, beat up people who had turned up to register, including elderly women and injured several of them. The registration exercise got disrupted, the police were called in, they came to meet those NPP thugs in khaki and black uniforms, but watched on while these thugs jumped into their vehicles and drove off, only to return intermittently to unleash more violence.

Friends from the media, it is this situation which compelled our General Secretary who hails from the area and has served as Member of Parliament of the Banda Constituency to visit these areas last Sunday as part of his monitoring activities, leading to a confrontation between him and some armed military officers who had mounted a road block and were preventing innocent Ghanaians belonging to the Ewe tribe from crossing into the nearby community to register.

Only this morning, five (5) Voltarians whose eligibility were challenged upon registration and were on their way to attend the adjudication committee meeting of the EC, were attacked by some armed NPP hoodlums belonging to the NPP's "Delta Forces" around the Bui Lake close to Bongase. Three (3) of them who sustained series injuries managed to escape, while two (2) of them were kidnapped by the NPP hoodlums, a situation that is currently generating a lot tension in the area and has led to the suspension of the entire registration process at Akanyakrom by the EC citing heightened insecurity.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, this is how serious the matter is and the earlier President Akufo Addo halted the ongoing ethnocentric harassment of innocent Ghanaians in the area, the better it will be for the nation.

Ahafo Ano North Constituency

Ladies and Gentlemen, another area which had recorded similar happenings is the Ahafo Ano North Constituency, where armed military men are aiding Electoral Commission Officials to deny hundreds of people of northern descent, predominantly of the Grumah tribe from taking part in the Voter Registration Exercise, despite majority of them possessing Ghana Cards, one of the requirements needed to register. Their only crime according to their oppressors is that, they do not bear Akan names and therefore cannot be identified as hailing from the Ahafo Ano North Constituency.

Not even the presence of the media to highlight these obvious infractions of the law has been able to convince the EC and the armed military men deployed to the area to allow these Ghanaian citizens to register.

Still in Ahafo Ano South Constituency, on Saturday July 11 2020, the BVR kits deployed to the D/A Primary School Akwadaanyame 1 Registration Centre stopped functioning few hours after the start of the exercise and many attempts by the EC officials to resolve the issue was unsuccessful. Unfortunately, the District EC Officer declined the request to replace the BVR and claimed they simply needed an IT technician to rectify the situation, it took 4 hours for the IT technician to arrive, and regrettably, he was unable to resolve the situation. This was the last day for the 2nd phase of the exercise. Yet, at about 4pm, the over 300 registrants most of whom are Ewes and Northerners who were waiting in the queue to register were aggressively dispersed by armed Military men in the area. It will interest you to note that this registration center is a known stronghold of the NDC in the constituency.

SEKYERE AFRAM PLAINS CONSTITUENCY

Similarly, in the Sekyere Afram Plains Constituency, on Thursday 9th July 2020, NDC supporters who in accordance with our electoral laws challenged some registrants at the Sekyere Afram Plains District office of the EC on grounds that they are not residence of the area were arrested by the military and beaten to pulp and Locked up at the Drobonso Police Station based on the suspicion that they were foreigners

Ketu South Constituency

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, the election-driven ethnic victimization of Voltarians by the NPP/Akufo Addo-government continues to manifest in the Ketu South Constituency of the Volta Region as we speak.

It is trite knowledge, and indeed a matter of public record, that the Vice President, Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia and other NPP bigwigs have long singled out the Ketu South Constituency for their election-driven myth of a so-called bloated register. As we all know, this myth is backed by no evidential value, other than fictitious and imaginary fallacies championed by Dr. Bawumia. And so, throughout the ongoing registration exercise, Ketu South has been reduced to a military zone,

where combined forces of military personnel, National Security Operatives, Immigration and Customs Officers sometimes storm people's homes, ransack them and molest innocent Ghanaian citizens in search of so-called Togolese nationals who allegedly attempt to part-take in the voter registration exercise.

This dehumanizing and disturbing tribal bigotry being sanctioned by President Akufo Addo and the NPP in the Ketu South Constituency has degenerated into preposterous extremes, where security officials now indiscriminately attack vehicles conveying people to funerals, markets and other places, and literally beat them up on suspicion that they are being conveyed to registration centers.

Scenes of uniformed military personnel at peaceful polling stations and streets of the Ketu South Constituency and other parts of the Volta Region over the past few weeks, accurately describe the posturing of the Akufo-Addo government towards a group of people this regime considers unfavourable to its reelection bid.

If we may ask, when did it become a crime to be deemed as loyal to a particular political tradition? Are political strongholds not commonplace in most jurisdictions around the world? Why is President Akufo-Addo up in arms against an innocent ethnic group just to massage his political ego? Is the President not supposed to unite rather than divide us?

Only last week, the Volta Regional Minister, Dr. Archibald Yao Letsa led a team of military personnel to the Ketu South Constituency after reports emerged of high enthusiasm among the people of the area to defy the intimidation antics of NPP to register in their numbers. Dr. Archibald Letsa was accompanied by Hon. Elliot Edem Agbenorwu, the Municipal Chief Executive of Ketu South who turned himself into a "Citizenship Inspector", by personally confronting majority of his own indigenes and forcibly preventing them from taking part in the registration exercise.

Sadly, these are high-ranking government officials in the Volta Region, who are fully aware of the challenge rules governing this registration exercise, yet they are gladly lending themselves as pliant agents of President Akufo-Addo's tribal agenda against their own tribesmen for political capital.

OTI REGION

Ladies and gentlemen, the situation is not different in the Oti Region. Only yesterday, about 17 Ghanaians who were in a queue waiting for their turn to register at a village called Kpena in the Nkwanta South Constituency of the Oti region, were arrested by armed National Security operatives on grounds that they speak French, hence are Togolese. In the process, the so-called National Security operatives without any provocation fired warning shots at the registration center thereby disrupting the entire registration exercise at the center. Ladies and gentlemen, since when did

Other incidents in the Asougnyaman Constituency, Atiwa East Constituency and other parts of the Eastern Region

Friends from the media, we also wish to bring to your attention similar acts of ethnic discrimination and tribal bigotry being pursued by the Akufo Addo-government in parts of the Eastern Region so you appreciate how widespread this evil agenda is.

In the Asougnyaman Constituency for instance, Ewe settler communities have witnessed the deployment of two military groups, made up of both uniformed and non-uniformed armed men who are going around molesting and terrorizing innocent people. The uniformed military men are being led by one Lieutenant Daniel Opoku, whilst the non-uniformed troop is being commanded by one Sergeant Bio, who often resorts to brandishing offensive weapons at innocent civilians at various registration centers, as was witnessed at the Senchi registration center recently.

In the Atiwa East Constituency, Hon. Abena Osei Asare, MP and Deputy Minister for Finance has been terrorizing and physically preventing non-Akans from partaking in the ongoing registration exercise. During the fourth phase of the registration exercise, Hon. Abena Osei Asare, together with the Anyinam Police Commander and some thugs belonging to the NPP, stormed the houses of about 30 non-Akans who registered unchallenged at Anyinam and forcibly took their voter ID cards from them with the excuse that they are not Ghanaians. It was this same Deputy Finance Minister, Abena Osei Asare, who stormed registration centers at Abekwaase in the Atiwa East Constituency with armed NPP bandits

and physically chased out all Non-Akans at the three (3) registration centers during the fourth (4th) phase of the registration exercise.

Similar happenings in the Central Region

In the Central Region, ethnic discrimination via state sponsored military intimidation and orchestrated thuggery have been widespread since the ongoing voter registration began in the Upper Denkyira West Constituency and other areas. The aim, obviously, is to disenfranchise Voltarians and northerners in areas like Denkyira Adaboi, Denkyira Abura, Denkyira Bremang, Denkyira Brofoyedru, Denkyira Domenase, and currently, Denkyira ANANEKROM where the intimidating activities of NPP hoodlums have reached an alarming crescendo.

These communities have large Ewe and Northern population because of mining in the Offin River and Farming. In these places, the NPP MP for Upper Denkyira West, Samuel Nsowah Gyan with his youth organizers acting as hoodlums have on some occasions, yanked registrants off registration queues saying they were either Ewes, and therefore Togolese ; or Northerners, and therefore Burkinabes.

It will interest you to note, that in some cases public announcements are caused to be made at the outset of the registration exercise to warn ewes, northerners and other minority groups to stay away from registration centers if they valued their lives and properties. For these NPP hoodlums, the resort to the use of challenge forms is alien to them as they display violence in the full glare of the security personnel at the registration centers.

This state-sponsored ethnic discrimination and tribal bigotry in the ongoing voter registration exercise targeting Voltarians, Northerners and Muslims in our Zongo communities is very pervasive in the Upper Denkyira East and West, Assin North, Central and South, Twifo Atti Morkwaa, Awutu Senya East and West, Agona West and East Constituencies of Central Region.

The dishonesty and hypocrisy of President Akufo-Addo

Distinguished friends from the media, despite the fact that some of the above shameful incidents have been widely reported in both the traditional and social media space, President Akufo Addo who is the sponsor, promoter and ultimate

beneficiary of the ongoing electoral-driven ethnocentrism and tribal bigotry has failed to take any action to nip these disturbing acts in the bud.

We in the NDC are not surprised by the posturing of President Akufo-Addo towards this rather worrying trend, because this has always been his plan. This is why he has chosen to see nor hear any evil about any infamy or injustice to the Ghanaian people, once it advances his electoral fortunes.

Only last week Friday, President Akufo-Addo claimed in his speech delivered to Muslim leaders in Asawase during the celebration of Eid, that the ongoing Voter Registration exercise has been peaceful in the Ashanti Region and across the country. The President further claimed that every Ghanaian has been allowed to take part in the registration exercise and that no one has been denied the chance to register on account of their tribe and ethnicity, because there is unity and togetherness among Ghanaians.

How dishonest can Akufo Addo be? We know that the President was not misled by his handlers on this occasion. President Akufo-Addo knows deep down his heart, that he currently presides over a country where ethnic tensions are alarmingly high and threatens the peace and cohesion of the nation. President Akufo-Addo knows fully well, that thousands of Ghanaians are being threatened, molested and physically prevented from taking part in the ongoing registration exercise simply because they are Ewes, Grumahs, Gonjas, Frafas, Moshie or belong to other ethnic groups.

The media space is awash with incontrovertible video and pictorial evidence on these happenings. Yet as usual, he has chosen the path of deception and dishonesty to throw dust into eyes of unsuspecting members of the public to conceal the evil tribalistic voter suppression agenda he is supervising. The odious dishonesty and hypocrisy being displayed by President Akufo Addo in this matter is the height of insensitivity and an insult to the intelligence of Ghanaians and must be condemned. But we know that the good people of this country are discerning and very much aware of what is going on, and will not be hoodwinked by his lies anymore.

We have also taken notice of a laboured effort by the Defence Minister, Dominic Nitiwul to attempt to justify some of the ethnocentric events we have witnessed

in the ongoing registration. The Defence Minister's ludicrous attempt to explain away the sheer use of brute force and physical assault by certain elements in the once revered Ghana Armed Forces to prevent some legitimate Ghanaians from taking part in the ongoing registration process, only goes to reinforce President Akufo-Addo's attitude of 'see no evil, hear no evil'.

For the Defense Minister of Ghana to be justifying the unfortunate use of armed soldiers in peacetime to terrorize innocent civilians belonging to a particular ethnic group in areas such as Banda, Oti Region and Ketu South is ample testament to a deliberate targeting of that ethnic group, regardless of where they find themselves.

Dominic Nitiwul should stop the unlawful use of armed military men to harass innocent Ghanaians based their tribe or ethnicity in the ongoing voter registration exercise, if he still has a conscience or shut up and spare us his lies if he has nothing meaningful to say. We have had enough of their chicanery and insults.

Conclusion

Distinguished friends from the media, never in the history of Ghana, have we seen this level of tribal discrimination, lawlessness and divisiveness in our body politics as we are witnessing today under the despotic, tyrannical and tribalistic Akufo Addo government.

What is happening is shameful and totally reprehensible, and has the potential to plunge our beloved country into civil unrest if not halted.

The NDC is a political tradition that holds dear the peace, unity and development of our beloved Ghana because we are patriotic and also guided by history. We are very much aware of the divisions that our dear nation suffered in the immediate pre and post-independence era.

In addition, the deep scars of the obnoxious and ethnocentric aliens' compliance order in the early 1970s under Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia – a celebrated forbearer of the NPP – which drove people perceived to be non-Ghanaians from Ghana remains an eternal dark spot in our history.

It is, therefore, surprising but as others put it, not unsurprising that Nana Akufo-Addo whose father served as the President of Ghana during Dr Busia's era will repeat such travesty of justice against sections of Ghanaians just because of their ethnicity.

We unreservedly condemn the misuse of the military, police service and other security services to intimidate and harass innocent citizens in the ongoing voter registration exercise. Under our electoral laws, where an eligible voter must register to vote is determined by residence and not tribe or ethnicity. We equally wish to make the point, that under the laws of Ghana, the provision of security for voter registration and other election related activities is the responsibility of the Ghana Police Service and not the Ghana Armed Forces.

No military officer has the right or power to prevent any person who turns up at voter registration centers from registering. Therefore, the deployment of military officers to harass and prevent people from registering in the ongoing voter registration exercise as we are witnessing across the country is unlawful and unacceptable and must cease immediately.

For emphasis, It does not take one's lineage of the Grumah, Ewe, Ga, Dagomba or Akan ethnic Group to qualify to be registered. Rather, it is one's proof of residence and possession of either a Ghana Card, a Ghanaian Passport or two guarantors, which qualifies one to have his or her name registered in any part of this country.

Also there are clear rules under our electoral system that allows political party agents to challenge any registrant they consider ineligible. Therefore, brazen lawlessness that NPP hoodlums and a few unscrupulous military men are engaging in by brutalizing innocent citizens and preventing them from registering based on their tribe must cease forthwith.

The NDC demands the immediate withdrawal of military men who have been deployed for the purpose of the ongoing voter registration exercise in the Banda constituency, the Central Region, Ahafo Ano North Constituency, Ketu South, constituency, Oti Region, and other parts of the country.

We wish to remind President Akufo-Addo that Ghana remains a unitary state, and that Ghanaians must continue to be united by a common destiny and not by tribal or ethnic cleavages.

Ladies and gentlemen of the media, we acknowledge the vital role you in the media have played and continue to play towards sustaining the peace and modest developmental gains we have chalked as a nation. We call on you who are the fourth estate of the realm, Moral Society, Traditional Leaders, CSOs and all men and women of conscience to rise up and speak out against the well orchestrated ethnic discrimination, harassment and tribal bigotry in the ongoing voter registration exercise being supervised President Akufo Addo and his New Patriotic Party.

Ghana is a peaceful country. And we all have a duty to God and country to speak up against the shameful culture of tribalism, ethnocentrism, divisiveness and lawlessness that President Akufo Addo is gradually normalizing and entrenching in our body politics.

We have entered the final phase of the Electoral Commission's voter registration exercise, yet there are several thousands of Ghanaian citizens who have not been able to register due to a state-sponsored ethnocentric discrimination being championed by President Akufo Addo and his failed NPP regime against people belonging to certain tribes.

We wish to encourage all such Ghanaians and all the teeming supporters of the NDC not to give up, but to persist and defy the intimidation antics of the despotic, tribalistic and tyrannical NPP/Akufo-Addo-government.

We have an opportunity on 7th December to vote out Akufo Addo and stop the ongoing tyranny and tribal bigotry. To refuse to register to vote is to allow this evil to triumph. The John&Jane ticket is our only hope for a united and peaceful Ghana, where the rights of all will be respected irrespective of their ethnicity or tribe.

And so let us all go out in our numbers in the next four days, starting from today, to register to be able to vote in the December polls. It is only by so doing, that we can accomplish the mission of kicking out this tribalistic and nepotistic Akufo

Addo-government. That is the only way we can restore Ghana back on the path of peace, togetherness and true progress.

We cannot survive four (4) more years of tribal bigotry, four (4) more years of harassment, four (4) more years of violence and lawlessness, four (4) more years of bastardization of state institutions and four (4) more years of injustice under despotic Akufo-Addo.

Thank you for your attention.