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PRESS RELEASE

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MUSLIM STUDENTS IN CHRISTIAN MISSION SCHOOLS IN GHANA.

BACKGROUND

The discrimination against Muslim students in Ghanaian mission schools is an age old practice that is known to everyone. Parents and their wards have gone every length to seek amicable redress but to no avail. Members of the high political class including former president John Dramani Mahama openly directed management of Christian mission schools to desist from this peace breaching act, but every word fell on deaf ears. In recent times, the former Minister of Zongo and Inner City Development, Hon. Mustapha Abdul Hamid shared similar concerns and charged these Christian Mission schools to liberalize and tolerate Muslim students. Professor Dominic Fobih, a former Minister of education under former President, John Agyekum Kuffuor also vehemently criticized Christian Mission Schools to desist from their increasing proclivity to coercing Muslim students into the church on campus when in ADISADEL COLLEGE, a student jumped from fourth floor of a storey building when being chased by the Senior Housemaster to attend church service on campus. As Muslim teachers across the length and breadth of this country, with our members in almost every school in Ghana, we can, without any iota of equivocation confirm that the situation is even worse today.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE DISCRIMINATION, ABUSE AND INJUSTICE AGAINST MUSLIM STUDENTS

Ghana National Association of Muslim Teachers has observed with keen interest this phenomenon of consistent abuse of Muslim Students in the various Christian Mission Schools, and it is instructive to submit that the discrimination is chiefly about the coercion of Muslims into church services while proscribing them from offering Salaat on campus. The refusal of the management of Wesley Girls' SHS to allow Muslims to fast during Ramadan is only the **newest twist** to the myriad of the discriminatory acts against Muslims on Senior High School campuses. Worth mentioning is also the fact that the situation in non-mission schools in regards to the abuse of Muslim students is even more worrying. Schools with dominant Christians as members of management operate as Christian mission schools, and abusing Muslim Students with impunity. The aggregate effect of these abuses is an indication that the much touted mantra of tolerance and coexistence among Christians and Muslims in Ghana is only a façade of superficial significance. We have observed the following implications relative to the consistent desire of school managements to preventing Muslim students from observing their religious obligations while dragooning them into church on campuses:

1. The disregard of the directives from former and present Presidents and Ministers for the liberation of Muslim Students with impunity is an indication that the government, and for that matter Ghana Education Service (G.E.S) is not in full charge of education in Ghana.
2. Recent developments in matters of religious discrimination has made it picturesque that the constitution and G.E.S. rules have become subservient to school rules and regulations.
3. The decision to have labeled church service on campus as **School Gathering** is a tool consciously devised to indoctrinate Muslim Students into becoming Christians.

4. Islamic Mission Schools could equally comfortably cite an advantage of fasting, and use that as a basis to compel all students to fast just like what Wesley Girls SHS management has been doing for the past 186 years by citing just one effect of fasting, to wit, stomach ulcer, which has been proven to be fallacious when subjected to pure medical science.
5. The Utterances of the Vice Chairman of the Scripture Union of the Methodist Church has further emboldened the fears of the Muslim community of the strong hunger of the Christian missions to suppress Muslim students in the various Christian Mission Schools. The Vice Chairman refers to Muslims as a minority group who should not be given the freedom to practice their faith and have their way. He actually refers to the request to allow Ramadan fasting on campus as **a satanic agenda** which must not be allowed to fester in Wesley Girls SHS.
6. GNAMT has observed that there is a calculated agenda to perpetuate the persecution and discrimination against Muslim students in schools at all cost. For this reason, the Vice chairman of the Scripture Union of the Methodist church called the bluff of the Education Minister and threatened to rally all Christians to vote out the president and his party, NPP from power.
7. The Methodist Church, through its vice Chairman, in a digression, vehemently criticized the NPP government and His Excellency Nana Akuffo Addo for the creation of the Zongo and Inner City Development Ministry when the discussion was about the discrimination against Muslims. This posture of the Methodist Church, taking cue from the utterances of its vice chairman, has made it clear to the Muslim Community in Ghana that the Methodist Mission, with other Missions is pleased with the impoverished state of Zongos in Ghana. Muslims have now understood the mysterious circumstances that led to the scrapping of the Zongo Ministry in Nana Addo's second term despite the excellent initiatives the ministry commenced!
8. What many are oblivious of is the fact that, even in most Islamic Mission schools, Christian Students dominate in population. So, Should Islamic Mission Schools emulate their Christian counterparts, and Christian students in Islamic schools are coerced to take active part in the rituals of the Islamic faith, the tension would be unbearable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Muslim communities must continue to exercise patience, pursuant to **Quran 2:256**, and not be tempted to act in retaliation by coercing non-Muslims to take active part in the Islamic worship in Islamic schools.
2. It has become imperative that the Ghana Education Service promulgate a comprehensive standardized school rules to regulate student behavior in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.
3. The Attorney General and Minister for Justice must uphold the 1992 constitution of the Republic of Ghana, particularly the relevant provisions that relate to religion and the manifestation of same.
4. The guidelines that regulate the school selection process must accommodate and make room for those students who strictly want to be placed in defined Mission Schools.
5. B.E.C.E. leavers must be given the chance to be solely responsible for the senior high schools they select to attend without restrictions.
6. The school selection must be done after the BECE results have been released, as this would afford the student applicants the opportunity to select schools that match their qualifications.

7. We would like to call on the various Christian Missions to pay attention to the gains Ghana has made in the area of religious tolerance and coexistence. Their brassbound posture is likely to have deleterious effect on our gains so far, and hence the need to be liberal, tolerant and accommodating. Even their White Masters, who originally established those Mission Schools have accepted Muslims and granted them the freedom to practice and manifest their religion in Europe.

CONCLUSION

This publication has sought to provide a comprehensive overview of the real issues in respect of the recent brouhaha in regards to the discrimination against Muslim students in Christian Mission Schools and other schools. As teachers in active service, we have submitted herein that the discrimination has been there for decades. We have been very fastidious about the implications of such injustices and have exhibited that strongly in this publication. We have hinted that this issue has the potential of escalating into Muslim-Christian brawl, and hence the need for tolerance to reign in the various Christian Mission schools. The government is the biggest stakeholder in all of this, and for that matter, should invite parties on to the table for amicable redress that would emancipate Muslim students from such persecution and desire to have Islam deep-sixed in the various senior high schools.



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