

Minority in Parliament's press statement on the desecration of the national awards scheme at the 2023 National Awards Programme by Kwabena Mintah Akandoh, MP for Juaboso and Ranking Member on the Parliamentary Select Committee on Health.

The Minority in Parliament is deeply concerned about the manner in which yesterday's National Awards Ceremony held at the Accra International Conference Centre turned out to be a final attempt at clearing persons being investigated by a Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry on their stewardship in the management covid-19 funds.

The National Awards Scheme instituted by the first President of Ghana, Dr Kwame Nkrumah in 1960, presents high honours to Ghanaian citizens and institutions who have distinguished themselves in service and sacrifice for the maintenance and advancement of our country.

Inasmuch as the Minority agrees with the principle of duly recognizing the efforts of deserving awardees, we are of the opinion that yesterday's event lowered the high standards previously set and maintained by previous awardees by comingling deserving and undeserving awardees at the event.

For the first time in our history, persons whose conduct are currently being probed by a Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry, were publicly decorated with high honours in a desperate attempt by the President to finalize the corruption clearing process that he began during the message of the state of the nation address in Parliament.

The sensibilities of Ghanaians are ever being tested by this government and it beats the imagination of reasonable Ghanaians how a Health Minister who not-so-long-ago was investigated for the manner in which he flouted our procurement laws to award an overpriced contract for the procurement of Sputnik V in what looked like an underhand dealing to defraud the state was given the high honour of the Order of the Volta.

Equally disturbing was the fact that at that same event the Minister for Information who was cited by the Auditor General for having made unauthorized allowance payments to staff of his office during the pandemic was also publicly draped in the high honours of the Order of the Volta even before his conduct or misconduct is fully investigated and cleared by the Parliamentary Committee of Enquiry.

Of greater concern is the conferring of national honours on Frontiers Healthcare Service Limited, a company whose ownership is opaque and whose formation and operations was brought into being by a contract that Parliament is yet to be apprised of for so-called national security reasons of which most Ghanaians are of the opinion that Ghanaians were fleeced of their mega resources during the pandemic.

If these awards were meant to recognise hardwork, dedication and commitment towards the maintenance and advancement of the state with reference to COVID-19 then the frontline health workers who worked extended hours, sacrificed their health and lives to ensure that several others did not die should have been awarded instead of a mere mention of their work.

Some 6,543 of them who actually contracted COVID-19 with some dying in their line of service are still waiting to be paid those meagre insurance packages promised them since the year 2020. Their awards wait in perpetuity even as we hurriedly confer national awards on those whose actions are yet to be justified before a parliamentary committee of enquiry.

The Minority in Parliament believes that awardees including the Minister for Health, the Minister for Information and others cited in the Auditor General's audit of COVID-19 funds and other undeserving awardees should be stripped of their national honours in order to maintain the sanctity of the awards otherwise we risk a situation in which deserving Ghanaians will shun the awards altogether.

Signed.

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(MP for Juaboso and Ranking Member on the Parliamentary Select Committee on Health).