



PRESS RELEASE FROM THE GADANGME COUNCIL, ACCRA.

**“BAN ON DRUMMING AND NOISE MAKING -THE DODOWA DEBACLE”**

The attention of the GaDangme Council has been drawn to a Joint Declaration which was allegedly concluded between the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs; Greater-Accra Regional House of Chiefs; the Greater-Accra Regional Coordinating Council led by the Regional Minister; Faith-Based Organizations and Representatives of Traditional Councils in the Greater-Accra Region which Declaration dealt with the Annual Ban on Drumming and Noise Making.

The Joint Declaration sought to modify the total ban on drumming and noise-making imposed by the Ga Traditional Council within parts of the Greater-Accra Region which it had done from time immemorial

The Joint Declaration contrary to the total ban now permits Faith-Based Organizations to use microphones, at reduced volumes which includes public address systems; and the clapping of hands at minimum levels confined to the church's auditorium.

What is troubling about the Joint Declaration is that though the ban was imposed by the Ga Traditional Council those who initiated the process of modifying the ban rather chose to go to the Greater-Accra Regional House of Chiefs at the time most of the Chiefs of the Ga Traditional Council, had travelled outside the jurisdiction to attend a GaDangme International Programme in the US.

It must be recalled that after this year's ban was announced, the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs attempted to modify the effects of the ban, by putting up a statement similar to what took place at the Regional House of Chiefs at Dodowa. On that occasion, the Ga Traditional Council promptly reacted in a statement issued by the Council and signed by the Ga Mantse, Nii Tackie Teiko Tsuru II rejecting the use of microphones and public address systems by the clergy or any other at reduced volumes in Church Auditoriums, etc and directed the general public to adhere to the earlier statement issued by the Ga Traditional Council.

Of particular interest is the fact that on the date the ban was announced ahead to take effect from the 15th of May 2023, the Honourable Greater-Accra Regional Minister was present at the Ga Traditional Council and was captured on video assuring the Chiefs and members of the Ga Traditional Council that the Traditional values and culture of GaDangme people must stay and must be protected. He there and then directed the Regional Service Commanders to direct their subordinates to work with the MMDCES to ensure the ban is adhered to. He was lauded by all present.

It must be noted that to enforce the ban the Ga Traditional Council and all other Traditional Councils, the Councils have over the years formed task forces led by Wulomei and Asafoiatsemei who seize noise-making instruments and after the culprits have settled their issues with the authorities, the instruments mostly from faith-based organizations or drinking spots were returned with a warning. We must commend the many Orthodox Churches which have over the years respected the total ban.

Surprisingly, the Regional Minister who gave assurance to the Chiefs and members of the Ga Traditional Council of full compliance with the ban which he described as custom and not idol worship, was again the leader of the delegation to the Greater-Accra Regional House of Chiefs with an already prepared document entitled:

*“Joint Declaration On The Annual Ban On Drumming And Noise-Making By The Mistry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, Greater-Accra Regional House of Chiefs, The Greater-Accra Regional Coordinating Council And Faith Based Organizations (FBO)”*

Our discreet investigations as to why some representatives of Traditional Councils in the Greater-Accra Region were present and allegedly appended their signatures to the Joint Declaration which acts we considered incongruous as Traditional leaders and persons expected to uphold the customs and traditions, revealed that upon arrival at the Guggisberg Hall, they were supplied with Attendance



Sheet with columns including name, traditional council, designation, phone number and signature which they were required to complete which they faithfully filled.

Unknown to them, the said Attendance list with the title "Emergency Meeting Of The Greater-Accra Regional House of Chiefs Held At Guggisberg Memorial Hall, Dodowa On 25th May 2023" completely different from the Joint Declaration, was surreptitiously attached to the first sheet which already had typed on it, the positions of those expected to append their signatures namely; President, Regional House; Regional Minister, Representative from the Faith Based Organizations(FBO), The Mayor, a representative from Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs; and Representatives from the Traditional Councils in the Greater-Accra Region and beneath the already typed Document, the words "See attached list of signatories" was added.

It is the case of those who attended the meeting that (1) they received phone calls inviting them to an Emergency Meeting of the Greater-Accra Region at which representatives of all Traditional Councils were to attend without any Agenda (2) the delegation came in the Company of media personnel but after the meeting started, the media personnel were ordered out of the meeting and brought in later to cover the signing ceremony and speeches.

To them, to attach the Attendance List as evidence that they voluntarily appended their signatures to the Joint Declaration is clearly misleading, unacceptable and unfortunate. Some of them have recorded videos denouncing what happened and pleading their innocence.

The GaDangme Council has followed the press conferences held by the Gborbu Wolomo and the GaDangme Wulomei Council and we fully endorse their position. We wish to reiterate that GaDangmes are part of the community of Ghana with their customs, traditions and festivals like all other communities and expect that their customs, traditions and festivals are fully respected.

Many communities in Ghana, as part of the observance of their customs, traditions and festivals impose various restrictions within their communities including the closure of shops and schools as well as curfews, all of which are adhered to and respected by all inhabitants within the said communities.

The GaDangme Council is at a loss to appreciate why faith-based organizations operating within the Greater-Accra Region would want to influence state actors to disrespect our customs, traditions and festivals.

We condemn, without any reservations, the Joint Declaration, the contents of which are contrary to the ban imposed by the Ga Traditional Council and note that the said meeting had no quorum to have enabled them to have transacted a valid meeting. Further, the representatives of the various Traditional Councils present, alleged to have appended their signatures to the said Joint Declaration, were misled into believing they were filling an attendance sheet.

We call upon Ga Traditional Council and all Wulomei to adhere to the Statement issued by the Ga Traditional Council which imposed the total ban on drumming and noise making, as they had done from time immemorial and to resist state actors from interfering with the customary law and practices provided under the Constitution reiterating that Article 270 "guarantees the institution of Chieftaincy together with its traditional councils as established by customary law and usage: "

We wish to draw attention to the definition of customary law as provided for by Article 11(3) to wit that "For the purposes of this article "customary law" means the rules of law which by custom are applicable to particular communities in Ghana".

It is therefore our understanding that the ban on drumming and noise-making is a rule of law of the Ga Traditional Council and other Traditional Councils within the Greater-Accra Region and therefore perfectly Constitutional which must be upheld by all within our community.

We wish to draw attention to the provision of Article 43(5) of the Constitution 1992, which imposes a mandatory obligation on the state to actively promote the integration of the peoples of Ghana and prohibit discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of place of origin, circumstances of birth, ethnic origin, gender or religion, creed or other beliefs.



GaDangme as a community is entitled to equal protection by the state with respect to the enforcement of its customary laws and therefore does not deserve to be discriminated against on grounds of ethnic origin and therefore calls on the Government to adhere to the Constitutional injunctive.

The GaDangme Council condemns in no uncertain terms the acts of all those involved in the Dodowa debacle and calls on The Ga Traditional Council and other Traditional Councils which have imposed the annual ban on drumming and noise making and other Traditional Councils yet to impose theirs to remain steadfast knowing they have the backing of Ghana's Constitution fully behind them. Those who cannot abide by the ban are advised to relocate for the period of the ban.

Dated At Accra This 30th Day of May 2023

SGD.

Hon J. Ayikoi Otoo

President of the GaDangme Council