

## NEWS RELEASE

### GJA Condemns Arrest, Maltreatment Of Journalists In Thursday's Demonstration

**ACCRA, September 22, 2023 (GJA) – The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) condemns the Ghana Police Service in no uncertain terms for arresting and maltreating some journalists covering Thursday's demonstration in Accra.**

In our estimation, the conduct of the Police was highly unprofessional, absolutely unwarranted and inherently repugnant to press freedom and the dignity of the affected journalists.

The GJA is utterly disappointed in the Police for lowering the bar of professionalism by arresting and maltreating journalists who did not breach any law but rather breached their comfort on a national hallowed day (Kwame Nkrumah Memorial Day) to discharge their cardinal duty of informing the general public about happenings in the country.

Our investigations indicated that some journalists, including correspondents of foreign media organisations such as the **BBC**, **AFP** and **AP**, were arrested in spite of the fact that they properly identified themselves.

In other instances, some journalists were maltreated and the Police seized their working equipment, leaving them traumatized in the process.

In the case of a **Metro TV** reporter arrested at the Accra Regional Police Headquarters for taking video of happenings there, our investigations indicated that she was manhandled by some police officers after arrest.

Some of the journalists were arrested near the 37 Lorry Station, which was a converging location for the demonstrators, and were transported in the bucket of a police pick-up vehicle guarded by armed police officers to the Accra Regional Police Headquarters.

Our investigations further established that the police officers who effected the arrest did not inform the journalists about their offence except to say they (police officers) were acting on "orders from above".

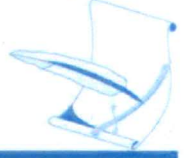
However, a few minutes after they arrived at the Accra Regional Police Headquarters, a senior police officer was reported to have ordered their release because journalists were not among the targets of arrest.

Unfortunately, the Police, who had refused to allow the journalists to drive in their own vehicles to the Accra Regional Police Headquarters, left them stranded after their release, as they struggled to find their way back to the 37 Lorry Station area to pick their vehicles.

The conduct of the Police in arresting and maltreating the journalists who were non-targets, transporting them in the bucket of a pick-up vehicle (not designed to carry human beings) like criminals and leaving them stranded after release to find their own way back to pick their vehicles from such a long distance, was highly unprofessional and inhumane.

In the circumstances, the least the GJA expected from the Police was an unqualified apology to assuage the hurt of the innocent journalists in respect of the violation of their human dignity and the unwarranted attack on press freedom.

We are, however, shocked to read, to the contrary, a Police press release issued on **Thursday, September 21, 2023** denying the arrest of two **BBC** correspondents.



- ALBERT KWABENA DWUMFOUR (**PRESIDENT**)
- LINDA ASANTE-AGYEI (MRS) (**VICE PRESIDENT**)
- KOFI YEBOAH (**GENERAL SECRETARY**)

- DOMINIC HLORDZI (**NATIONAL ORGANISING SECRETARY**)
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The Police press release, signed by Superintendent Juliana Obeng, Head, Public Affairs Unit / AR, described the media reports as "erroneous" in Paragraph One, adding in Paragraph Two, "The Police would like to put on record that the report is false and should be disregarded".

Contrary to such claims by the Police, our investigations confirmed that, indeed, two **BBC** correspondents were arrested by the Police.

Therefore, if there is anything "erroneous" and "false" that ought to be disregarded by the public and even roundly denounced for its deception, it is the Police press release denying that which is factual, and not the media reportage extolling the truth and fact.

Interestingly, in Paragraph Three of the Police press release, the Police admitted arresting two journalists but released them "immediately" when they identified themselves as journalists.

"The facts are that in dispersing illegal demonstrators, a group of them were picked up and sent to the Police Station. During their screening process, two persons identified themselves as journalists and were immediately allowed to go," the Police indicated in the press release.

The question is: if, on one hand (Paragraphs One and Two), the Police denies the arrest of two **BBC** correspondents and, on the other hand (Paragraph Three), the Police confirms the arrest and release of two journalists, is it not prudent, in the face of contention, to disclose the identities (name and/or media house) of the two journalists arrested and freed to put the Police denial beyond doubt?

Why must the Police bury the fact to discredit the media in an unrelenting effort to cover their condemnable conduct against journalists and the media.

Again, where lies the honesty in shouting denial and claiming piety in consequence but not admitting the excesses as though the Police were sinless and the violation of the dignity of the journalists was immaterial?

The GJA believes the conduct of the Police in arresting and maltreating innocent journalists was distasteful but if the Police wish to add salt to it, they must not rub it in the wounds of the affected journalists, as the Police press release sought to do.

We, therefore, call on the Police to exercise utmost good faith and render an unqualified apology to all journalists who were wrongfully arrested and/or maltreated by the Police, just because they (journalists) were discharging an onerous constitutional mandate.

The GJA expresses its heartfelt sympathy to the affected journalists and wish them speedy recovery from the bodily and emotional harm they suffered at the hands of the Police for no crime committed.

We wish to encourage the media fraternity to remain resolute to their calling and never be intimidated by such attacks against their person in particular and media freedom in general.

**END.**



[SGD]

**Kofi Yeboah**  
**(General Secretary)**