April 1, 2024

**ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE**

**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL**

**MINISTRIES, ACCRA**

**ATTN: GODFRED YEBOAH DAME**

**URGENT ACTION NEEDED: RESCUE A 12-YEAR-OLD BRIDE FROM ILLEGAL MARRIAGE IN NUNGUA**

Respectfully,

1. I am writing to you on behalf of the Article II Initiative, a non-profit organisation fiercely dedicated to upholding Ghana’s 1992 Constitution and safeguarding the fundamental human rights of all its citizens, especially the most vulnerable among us – our children.
2. **The recent alleged marriage in Nungua between a 63-year-old chief, Gborbu Wulomo, Nuumo Borketey Laweh XXXIII, and Naa Okromo, a girl believed to be 12 years old, has outraged and deeply disturbed us**.
3. This purported marriage is an egregious violation of the girl’s inalienable human rights and a flagrant breach of Ghana’s domestic laws, including **Article 28(5)** of the Constitution and **Section 14** of the 1998 Children’s Act, both of which unequivocally set the legal age for marriage at 18 for both girls and boys. For the avoidance of doubt, **Section 14 of the Children’s Act**, which gives the child the right to refuse betrothal and marriage, states:

**“14. Right to refuse betrothal and marriage.**

**(1) No person shall force a child:**

1. **to be betrothed;**
2. **to be the subject of a dowry transaction; or**

**(c) to be married.**

**(2) The minimum age of marriage of whatever kind shall be eighteen years.”**

1. We believe that the alleged marriage also undermines **Section 2** of the Children Act which makes it clear that the **“best interest of the child shall be paramount in any matter concerning a child.”**
2. Moreover, the alleged marriage stands in stark contravention of Ghana’s international obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
3. We also wish to humbly draw your attention to comments invoking the **“customs and cultural practices of the people of Nungua”** as the basis for the alleged marriage. On this point, we respectfully direct your attention to **Article 39** of the Constitution on Cultural Objectives. It states:

“39. (1) Subject to clause (2) of this article, **the State shall take steps to encourage the integration of appropriate customary values into the fabric of national life through formal and informal education and the conscious introduction of cultural dimensions to relevant aspects of national planning**.

**(2) The State shall ensure that appropriate customary and cultural values are *adapted* and developed as an integral part of the growing needs of the society as a whole; *and in particular that traditional practices which are injurious to the health and well-being of the person are abolished***.”

1. Mantse Odaifio Welentsi’s shocking statement, which not only endorsed this illegal marriage but also suggested that there are currently no virgin girls in Nungua above the tender age of 9 years, particularly appals us. Numerous news outlets widely reported this deeply troubling assertion, underscoring the urgent need for immediate and decisive action to protect the rights and welfare of vulnerable children in the community.
2. In light of these grave concerns, we humbly request the following immediate actions from your office and or relevant state agencies:
3. Launch an urgent investigation into the alleged marriage and take all necessary steps to nullify the union and rescue **Naa Okromo** from this illegal and exploitative situation.
4. Ensure that **Naa Okromo** receives comprehensive support, including medical care, psychological counselling, and rehabilitation services to help her recover from this traumatic experience.
5. Prosecute all individuals involved in facilitating the alleged unlawful marriage, including the 63-year-old chief and any other traditional or religious leaders who may have played a role, to the fullest extent of the law.
6. Work with the Ministries for Gender, Children and Social Protection and Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs, and other relevant agencies, including the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, to develop and implement a comprehensive action plan — including strategies already in force — to prevent child marriages and protect the rights of children in Ghana, with a specific focus on addressing harmful traditional and religious practices.
7. Engage with traditional and religious leaders across the country to educate them on the laws against child marriage and the severe consequences for those who violate these laws, and to promote positive cultural values that respect the rights and well-being of children.
8. **We recognise that addressing the scourge of child marriage requires a multi-faceted approach that tackles the underlying root causes, including entrenched gender inequality, systemic poverty, and harmful traditional practices.** **However, we firmly believe that the rigorous enforcement of existing laws and policies is an essential and critical first step in sending an unambiguous message that Ghana will not tolerate child marriage under any circumstances**.
9. The eyes of the nation and the world are upon us. We look forward to your prompt, decisive response and concrete action on this urgent matter. The future of our children and the very soul of our nation hang in the balance.

Sincerely,

**RICHARD SKY**

**PRESIDENT AND ADVOCATE-IN-CHIEF**

CC:

* President of the Republic of Ghana
* Chief Justice of the Republic of Ghana
* Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection
* Minister for Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs
* Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice
* National Commission on Civic Education
* Inspector General of Police
* UNICEF