

CSOs Joint Press Statement - Shooting at Ejura Sekyedumase

July 2, 2021

By: The Coalition of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Working Towards the Promotion of Good Governance, Human Rights and Public Accountability in Ghana

On Tuesday, June 29, 2021, two (2) persons, identified as Abdul Nasir Yusif and Murtala Mohammed, were reportedly shot and killed by security forces when the youth of Ejura Sekyedumase in the Ashanti Region were protesting the brutal murder of Ibrahim Mohammed alias 'Kaaka', a community activist mobilising with the #FixtheCountry movement, by as-yet unknown assailants. Four (4) other persons were also severely injured as a result of the brutal force used by security forces.

A video of the protest captured live and broadcast by the Multimedia Group shows military personnel, upon arrival at the scene, fired warning shots into the air and then took aim at the protesters, firing live rounds into the crowd and reportedly killing the two protesters and injuring four others. The Minister of Interior has since constituted a three-member committee to investigate the unlawful killings and related matters, upon the instruction of President Akufo-Addo.

The Coalition of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Working Towards the Promotion of Good Governance, Human Rights and Public Accountability in Ghana expresses its deepest condolences to the families of the victims and wishes the injured speedy recovery.

We are appalled at this development and condemn the excessive and brutal use of force by security officers deployed to the area, particularly the firing of live rounds at protestors who were only exercising their constitutional right to protest the unsolved murder of their compatriot.

This unfortunate incident and many others in the recent past point to a long standing, systemic and recurring problem in how State security agencies handle protests in this country. The undemocratic exercise of police powers and the unwarranted brutal use of force by the police and the military who are too eager to display machismo often result in needless fatalities and injuries; the Ejura Sekyedumase matter being a case in point.

We are also deeply troubled by the frequent deployment of the military in internal security matters of the country and urge the Commander-In-Chief of the Ghana Armed Forces and the National Security hierarchy to reassess when and how to deploy military

personnel. By constitutional design, the Ghana Police Service is responsible for the maintenance of internal security and it should remain so until the need arises.

While we commend the President for directing swift investigations into this matter, we are concerned that the use of the Interior Ministry in conducting investigations into matters which involve agencies acting under the authority of the Ministry may compromise the fairness and integrity of its findings. The Ministry of Interior which may have been complicit in the handling of this unfortunate incident at Ejura Sekyedumase cannot be judges in their own cause. It is only proper that an independent body conducts investigations into this matter. In this respect, we call on the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) under whose mandate this matter which involves excessive abuses of human rights squarely falls, to thoroughly investigate this incident and cause the criminal prosecution of all persons found culpable.

We also urge all persons acting in the public space (including journalists) to be circumspect in their language in describing or reporting on this unfortunate incident. The tendency to mischaracterise and perhaps trivialise such sensitive and critical national issues often do not help in ascertaining the facts of what may have actually happened.

We urge the youth of Ejura Sekyedumase, and indeed, all Ghanaians to remain calm. We must all exercise restraint and not engage in any acts of violence as investigations continue, in order to bring to justice all those responsible for the unlawful killings and injuries of our compatriots.

As a follow-up to this statement, the Coalition is working actively to secure a meeting with the government and the security hierarchy to engage on how best to manage the twin challenges of securing and policing the right to protest as well as the use of the army for policing work. We will keep the public informed of our efforts.

Thank you.

Signed:

Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition (GACC)

Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII)

Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)

African Centre for International Law and Accountability (ACILA)

Parliamentary News Africa

Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)

African Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP)

Financial Accountability and Transparency - Africa (FAT-Africa)

Citizens Movement against Corruption (CMaC)

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI - Africa)

Centre for Local Governance Advocacy (CLGA)

Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG)

IMANI GHANA

WILDAF Ghana

SEND Ghana

West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI)

ISODEC

Youth Bridge Foundation

Legal Resource Centre (LRC)

ISODEC

International Budget Partnership

STAR-Ghana Foundation