



GHANA CENTER FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT

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Press Release

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CDD-Ghana Condemns Brutal Force Used in Military Swoop at Ashaiman

In the early hours of Tuesday March 7, 2023, some officers of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF), under the authorization of the Military High Command, conducted a swoop at Ashaiman in the Greater Accra Region. The swoop apparently followed the alleged killing of a young military officer, Trooper Imoro Sherrif, by unknown assailants in the town on Saturday, March 4, 2023. Described by the GAF as an “intelligence-led operation,” it was supposedly aimed at finding the perpetrators of the crime.

The brutal force used by military personnel in this so-called “intelligence-led operation” left many unsuspecting civilian residents of Ashaiman with various degrees of injuries. Others were confined to their households for hours in fear of falling victim to the barbaric and unprofessional conduct of the military personnel. About 184 persons were reportedly arrested during this exercise by the military. Some were tortured while others were subjected to all kinds of inhumane treatment by the military.

CDD-Ghana is highly appalled by the conduct of the military officers at Ashaiman. We are further deeply dismayed by the revelation that this flagrantly unprofessional and barbaric conduct by military personnel was sanctioned by the military hierarchy and received justification and approval not only from the Military High Command, but also from a Deputy Minister of Defence, Kwaku Amankwa Manu, who as a member of the civilian government must exercise oversight and control over the conduct and operations of the armed forces.

However dastardly, the alleged killing of a military officer and its investigation is a matter of internal security and criminal law enforcement which is the exclusive mandate of the Ghana Police Service, and not the Ghana Armed Forces. The Ghana Armed Forces should not be free to unilaterally use arms, military accouterments and other tax-payer/public-funded resources entrusted to their care for the defense of the nation to avenge a crime committed against one of their own. Resorting to militarized self-help of this nature for criminal acts committed against individual military personnel undermines the rule of law and creates uneasiness among the civilian population.

The fact that this swoop at Ashaiman is not an isolated incident also gives cause for great concern. On many occasions in the past, some officers of the Ghana Armed Forces have resorted to acts of militarized self-help in various parts of the country; terrorizing unsuspecting civilians and leaving many injured. For instance, on or about July 1, 2021, a group of military men were reported to have assaulted some civilians in Wa in the Upper West Region, after

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a phone belonging to one of the military men was allegedly stolen in the area. Unfortunately, it appears the punishment meted out to soldiers have not prevented these acts from re-occurring.

We commend the efforts of the Ghana Police Service in tracking down the perpetrators of this dastardly act. However, in the broader spirit of exercising democratic control over the operations and conduct of the armed forces, we respectfully urge Parliament to investigate this incident; cause sanctions to be imposed on all persons implicated in this swoop at Ashaiman and ensure that justice is done.

We also urge all persons directly affected by the conduct of the military personnel at Ashaiman to seek redress at the courts.

The Executive branch must also be advised that failing to condemn and sanction the military officers implicated in this barbaric episode is a slippery slope toward a generalized state of lawlessness and anarchy. The government's tacit endorsement of this incident only goes to embolden military officers to take matters into their own hands whenever they deem it necessary to do so.

We must remember that under a democratically-elected civilian government, such brutal and unprofessional conduct of soldiers characteristic of military regimes in the past, cannot be encouraged and must never be repeated.

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About CDD-Ghana

The Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) is an independent, non-governmental and not-for-profit organization that promotes and supports, through research, education, advocacy, and policy engagement, efforts to build democracy, good governance and inclusive development in Ghana and throughout Africa. CDD-Ghana's research outputs and other products are available to and used by governmental and non-governmental agencies, Africa regional bodies, development partners as well as researchers and the public.

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