



Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)

CONTACT

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CODEO Statement on the Sentencing of 13 Accused Delta Force Members and the Menacing Effects of Political Party Vigilante Groups' Activities

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) is deeply dismayed by the outcome of the investigations and judicial proceedings involving thirteen members of the 'Delta Force', a vigilante group associated with the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP). The sentencing follows a case of the group's assault on the Ashanti Regional Security Coordinator, and the attendant destruction of public property that occurred at the Ashanti Regional Coordinating Council in March 2017. CODEO is concerned with the apparent weak quality of the official investigations into the case and the subsequent prosecution of the accused, which concluded with a sentence of a fine of GHC1, 800 for each or, in default, twelve months imprisonment.

Coming on the back of a spate of havoc and unlawful acts perpetuated by a myriad of groups associated with the ruling party, CODEO is highly disappointed with the kid glove treatment that the country's criminal justice system has apparently given to the Delta Force miscreants in the investigation of the incident and its related prosecution. By changing the original charges brought against the accused persons from conspiracy to assault of a public officer; and causing unlawful damage, to the lesser charge of conspiracy to commit crime and rioting, the prosecution appears to have influenced the judgment in favor of the most lenient sentence. And in so doing, the opportunity for the justice served in this matter to have had both punitive as well as a deterrent effect, needed; to help curb the menace of political party vigilantism was needlessly lost.

It will be re-called, that, CODEO had embarked on a series of regional discussions and consultations on this growing phenomenon of political party vigilantism between June and August this year. The regional consultations and focus group discussions (made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development-USAID) sought, among other objectives, to, ascertain the reasons for the emergence of these groups, to deepen public awareness of the menace of political party vigilantism and its implications for Ghana's democratic, economic and social development, and to collectively find appropriate measures to curb the menace.

In the meantime, CODEO firmly believes that blatantly applying political color to the investigation and prosecution of purely criminal offences is inimical to the country's democratic, economic and social progress. It encourages lawlessness and impunity among politically aligned hooligans, as reflected in recent incidents in which an NPP-affiliated group based in Tamale, calling itself Burma Camp Youth, locked down the Regional Secretariat of the School Feeding Program in Tamale; and a group based in Karaga forcefully invaded and freed their colleagues from lawful custody at the Karaga Police Station. In the view of CODEO, the failure on the part of the Police Service and the other institutions in the criminal justice system to swiftly and decisively deal with similar cases in the past is the main cause of the persistence of such utter lawlessness.

Accordingly, CODEO implores the Attorney-General to appeal against the Delta Force 13 sentencing for stiffer punishment. This will send a clear signal to all such groups and their members that there is no shield under the law if they perpetuate crimes. CODEO reiterates its earlier call for all stakeholders, particularly government, political parties, the security agencies, the media and the general public to find credible ways of dealing with the canker – lest it would escalate and continue to disturb the country’s peace and stability.

Signed:

(For and on Behalf of CODEO Advisory Board)

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Albert Arhin', with a large, stylized initial 'A'.

Albert Arhin,

National Coordinator

Dated: Friday, October 27, 2017