



CODEO STATEMENT ON THE MENACE OF POLITICAL PARTY VIGILANTISM IN GHANA

Media Briefing addressed jointly by Mr. John Larvie and Mr. Nicholaus Akyire, CODEO Advisory Board Members held on Friday, June 23, 2017 at Capital View Hotel, Koforidua, Eastern Region

Salutation

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen from the Media

Introduction

On behalf of the Advisory Board of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO), I welcome you to this media briefing on the subject of political party vigilantism in Ghana. We are grateful to you for honoring our invitation to this media briefing.

Background

As you may be aware, the phenomenon of political party vigilante groups and their activities have gradually found their way into the centre stage of Ghana's electoral politics, particularly during the Fourth Republic. Over the course of time, manifestations of party vigilante groups with violent approach during each phase of the electoral cycle, especially since the 2000s, have been apparent. The 2016 Presidential and General Elections of Members of Parliament were without exception. The immediate post-election phase also witnessed some incidents around the political transition, nearly marring the almost smooth process. The manifestations of political party vigilante groups have continued in the transition and into the post-election governance period.

At its post-election national stakeholders workshop, following the December 2016 polls, held at Aqua Safari Resort in Ada in the Greater Accra region from March 27-29, 2017, the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) made this subject one of the post-elections issues for discussion and deliberation. This was in recognition of the danger that political party vigilante groups pose to the country's electoral politics and democratic development.

CODEO's stance on political party vigilantism

In a communique issued on April 6, 2017 in Accra after the post-election stakeholders review meeting, CODEO condemned this growing feature in the country's electoral politics. CODEO further called on political parties to disband these affiliated groups. It urged other stakeholders, particularly the security agencies, to address this growing menace. Specifically, CODEO observed that,

- The existence of political vigilante groups is illegal and the Ghana Police Service should ban and disband these groups immediately as a matter of national security.
- The leadership of the NPP and the NDC who are largely responsible for the emergence of these groups in the 4th Republic should own up to their responsibilities and work together with the police to disband all politically affiliated vigilante groups.
- In the medium to long term, there should be a concerted effort amongst key election stakeholders to make the Inspector General of Police independent by insulating him/her from



political interference by securing his/her tenure across regimes and ensuring such appointments are transparent and consultative.

Going forward

In order to sustain the conversation on ridding the country's political space of party vigilantes and their activities, and to prevent the matter from being overshadowed by other happenings, CODEO is embarking on a nationwide public engagement through roundtable discussions on this growing phenomenon. This series of public engagement, made possible with the generous support of the American people through USAID, seek to create awareness of this phenomenon, and thereby contribute to civic and voter education on it. These engagements will also form the basis to collate views from regional level stakeholders on the phenomenon; and develop comprehensive advocacy policy recommendations for stakeholders and relevant institutions to implement.

The first in this series was held today, Friday June 23, 2017 at the Capital View Hotel in Koforidua. The following issues, among others, emerged from the discussions:

- Political parties' lack of confidence in the security agencies, especially the Police, contributes to this phenomenon;
- The need to adequately resource and empower the security and law enforcement agencies to deal with such criminality in all forms;
- The security agencies must deepen the deployment of intelligence to tackle the issue of political party vigilantism;
- The need to strengthen the independence of the security agencies, especially the leadership, which may require a second look at their appointment process so as to prevent political interference;
- The need to ensure equal and fair level playing field on the electoral terrain and to avoid no-go areas for candidates and parties;
- The need to deepen civic and voter education among the citizenry, and also intensify education of the political elites and the media;
- Political parties and their leaders must be part of the solution to curbing the growing phenomenon;
- Conscious and collective efforts to address the winner takes all political system prevailing in the country; and
- The state must address the high youth unemployment rates in the country.

Conclusion

As you may know, CODEO's primary and broad objective is to complement the efforts of Ghana's Electoral Commission and indeed all stakeholders in ensuring transparent, free, fair and peaceful elections in the country. CODEO will continue to advocate for peaceful and credible elections during and in between elections. CODEO calls on all stakeholders, including the political parties, security agencies, and the public at large to, as a matter of urgency, address this growing canker. CODEO calls on all Ghanaians to work together to support this crusade against political party vigilantism in our



electoral politics. CODEO further calls on the media to make this subject critical for public discussion and urge them not to allow this matter disappears from the public discourse.

Finally, CODEO acknowledges the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for supporting CODEO's post-2016 election activities.

Thank you and God Bless Ghana!!!

Signed by:

Albert Kofi Arhin, National Coordinator, CODEO

Dated: Friday, June 23, 2017.

About CODEO and Election Observation in Ghana

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) is an independent and non-partisan network of civil society groups, faith-based organizations, and professional bodies, which observe Ghanaian elections. It was established in the year 2000 under the auspices of the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana) to mobilize citizens of Ghana to actively participate in the electoral process and to complement the efforts of Ghana's Electoral Commission in ensuring transparent, free, fair and peaceful elections. With twenty-two founding organizations in 2000, CODEO currently comprises 42 organizations (*See CODEO Brochure for the list of CODEO member organizations in your folders*) CODEO has become a platform for citizens and groups to participate in the Ghanaian democratic process. CODEO is a member of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM). CODEO is also a founding member of the West African Election Observers Network (WAEON).