



Grave Concern About the Deteriorating Civic Space and Violations of Human Rights of protesters in Ghana

[Saturday, 28 September 2024] - The undersigned civil society organizations condemn incidents of police manhandling, arbitrary arrests, detention without indication of location, and ill-treatment of peaceful protesters over the past weekend in Ghana. These actions where and as confirmed represent a grave violation of human rights and further deteriorate Ghana's standing as a democratic state committed to upholding human rights, including the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of speech, and the rule of law. The protests, which called for government accountability, highlighted public frustration over worsening economic conditions, rampant corruption, and the growing threat of illegal mining (Galamsey) to the country's water bodies, environment, and governance.

Ghana has long been celebrated as a beacon of democracy in West Africa; however, recent developments point to an alarming decline in its human rights record. Civicus' 'People Power Under Attack' report has downgraded Ghana's civic space status to **"Obstructed,"** citing an increasing number of attacks on peaceful protests and restrictions on freedom of expression. Similarly, the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders and findings from Afrobarometer reveal growing concern about the erosion of civil liberties and the culture of impunity surrounding these violations.

The Constitution of Ghana, in Article 21, guarantees the right to peaceful assembly and protest. These rights are non-negotiable pillars of our democracy, and any attempt to curtail them undermines the fundamental freedoms of citizens. Protesters have the right to demonstrate lawfully; where there are breaches of the law, arrests are warranted. However, such arrests must be made lawfully, and the rights of those arrested, including the right to bail, must be fully respected.

We call on the IGP to respond publicly to these alleged violations of human rights as a matter of urgency. We also call for the immediate release of all protesters who have been unjustly detained and demand adherence to due process in addressing any allegations made justly against others. We also demand an independent investigation into the policing of the protests at weekend. We expect the courts, as one of the last bastions of democratic governance in the country, to uphold the rights of citizens as mandated by the Constitution.

The concerned organizations listed below also call on the Government of Ghana, under the leadership of President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, to act swiftly to restore confidence in the

state's commitment to protecting human rights and the right to peaceful protests. The sanctity of our democracy depends on respect for the rule of law, freedom of expression, and the rights of citizens to hold their leaders accountable. We urge the government to work with civil society to address these concerns and restore Ghana's human rights record and democracy.

With the elections just weeks away, this moment is crucial in Ghana's democratic journey, and any regression may be costly if not decisively and promptly addressed. Now more than ever, Ghana must reaffirm its commitment to the values of transparency, civic participation, and justice to protect and preserve its democratic legacy.

Accra, Ghana

28 September 2024

Endorsed by:

1. West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI)
2. STAR Ghana Foundation
3. Civic Space Resource Hub (CSR-Hub) for CSOs in West Africa
4. Girls Advocacy Network
5. Centre for Communities Education and Youth Development (CCEYD)
6. E-Governance and Internet Governance Foundation for Africa (EGIGFA)
7. SWIDA Ghana
8. Human Rights Reporters Ghana
9. Transparency Centre, Africa
10. United Force For Development International (UF4D)
11. African Network of Young Leaders for Peace and Sustainable Development (ANYL4PSD)
12. Center for Youth and Child Crisis Intervention (CYCCRIS Intervention)
13. Rural Initiatives for Self Empowerment Ghana (RISE-Ghana)
14. Human Rights and Development services (HURDS Foundation)
15. Youth and Women Empowerment (YOWE)
16. The Ark Foundation Ghana
17. Pro Bono Impact Legal Fund
18. One Ghana Movement
19. NORSAAC
20. Federation of Female Lawyers (FIDA-Ghana)
21. Dream Africa Volunteer Service
22. Human Rights Advocacy Centre
23. Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI)
24. Western Region Development Network of NGOs (WERENGO)
25. Center for Youth and Child Crisis Intervention
26. Nyankonton Aid Foundation
27. Foundation For Environmental Rights,Advocacy & Development (FENRAD - NIGERIA)
28. World Impact Development Foundation (WIDEF)
29. Center for Peace and Progress Advocacy Ghana (CePPAG)
30. Civil Society Platform on Oil and Gas (CSPOG)

31. IMANI Africa
32. Pensplusbyte
33. Citizens Movement Against Corruption
34. Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition