



NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY DECRIES THE GROWING CULTURE OF POLITICAL HARASSMENT IN THE COUNTRY; CONDEMNS THE RECENT ARREST AND DETENTION OF KWAME BAFFOE ‘ABRONYE’

The New Patriotic Party condemns in the strongest terms the arrest and detention of the Bono Regional Chairman of the Party, Kwame Baffoe, alias ‘Abronye’, by the police for allegedly insulting the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Christian Tetteh Yohunu. The Party notes rather disturbingly that the persecution of Chairman Abronye is the latest instalment of the growing pattern of politically motivated intimidation and harassment of its members for being critical of the NDC government.

It is rather unfortunate that eight (8) months into the administration of H.E. John Dramani Mahama, the government appears to have completely lost focus. The government has used the past eight months to weaponise the state security, not in the fight against galamsey, and certainly not to protect the citizenry and deescalate the growing insecurity situation in many parts of the country, particularly in Bawku, Nkwanta, and Gbeniyiri in the Savanna Region, where recent communal clashes have claimed over 32 lives and displaced more than 50,000 Ghanaians, some of whom have become refugees in neighbouring countries.

The NDC government is rather focused on weaponising state security to intimidate and punish dissenting voices, particularly members of the opposition, in an excessive clampdown on free speech. Today, the police and national security are more interested in arresting and persecuting NPP social media activists such as ‘facebookers’ and ‘tiktokers’ who make “unpalatable or controversial statements” than fighting insecurity in the country, whereas members of the NDC who make similar or worse statements are spared. The selectivity in the so-called application of the law is too manifest to go unnoticed.

The nation, under John Mahama’s presidency, is essentially witnessing the resurrection of the dreaded culture of silence and criminalisation of speech which was murdered in 2001 (24 years

ago) following the repeal of the Criminal and Seditious Libel Law by the Kufuor administration, signalling the nation's bold declaration in decriminalising speech.

It is therefore worrying that the government of John Mahama is today using the police to erode all the democratic gains and significant progress that the nation has achieved, particularly in the media space.

The NPP, as a party of civility, does not countenance incendiary language, insulting and disrespecting others, or vulgarity in public discourse.

However, it is worth emphasising that the position of the law in Ghana after the repeal of the Criminal Libel Law is that, if any Ghanaian (including the IGP) feels defamed or falsely accused, he or she has a remedy in law by way of civil libel, such as a defamation suit, and not criminal libel or criminal prosecution.

The law, they say, is the law, and we expect the IGP to know better. You don't weaponise and abuse your office to settle personal scores with the very people you are supposed to protect. Ugly noises are certainly better than the culture of silence. Criminalising speech has no place in a democracy, and we call on COP Christian Tetteh Yohunu to respect the laws of Ghana and mend his ways.

Equally, we are calling on President John Mahama and the NDC government to put an immediate stop to the continued weaponization of state institutions against perceived opponents. The latest institution that is being weaponised by the government against political opponents is the guardian of the rule of law, the nation's judiciary, after unlawfully removing the Chief Justice of the Republic on flimsy grounds.

This growing climate of state-sponsored intimidation and harassment, as well as the criminalisation of speech, represents a debilitating assault on Ghana's democracy and our commitment to the rule of law. It is therefore not surprising that our country is losing its enviable stature as one of the shining examples of democracy in Africa.

We are also consistently dropping in the World Press Freedom Index, and that should be concerning. The NPP will not remain passive while this government destroys what we have collectively worked hard to build for our dear country. We call on all peace-loving Ghanaians and defenders of democracy to join us in fighting this growing tyranny as we become ready to roll out a series of actions to salvage our country.

Justin Kodua Frimpong

General Secretary