

Press Statement

13th January 2025

Urgent Need To Address Systemic Insecurity And Human Rights Violations In Mining Communities.

We are extremely concerned by the incident at Newmont's Ahafo South mines, where reports indicate that, police officers who were protecting Newmont's site, shot and killed three people and injured others on 8th January 2025. The deceased and injured persons who are believed to be indigenes of Acherensua in the Ahafo region, were alleged to have engaged in illegal mining activities on the concession of Newmont's Ahafo South mines.

Whilst the tragic incident is under investigation, it has sparked significant public outrage and condemnation among the youth, some traditional authorities in Acherensua and other neighbouring communities who are of the belief that, the response of the security agencies to the alleged illegal mining activity was excessively disproportionate to the allegation of trespassing leading to the needless deaths and injuries.

Many stakeholders including Civil Society Organisations and Human Right Defenders have raised concerns about the growing tensions in mining communities especially those affected by Newmont's Ahafo mines. This incident cannot be disassociated from the existing tensions and underlying unaddressed community concerns against the modus operandi of Newmont Mining Company. The systemic trend of insecurities and harassment which had led to deaths and severe injuries to people in mining communities due to the employment of state and private security personnel by multinational mining companies to protect their concessions had been treated with undue leniency by state agencies.

Such acts of gross human rights violations in the mining sector compelled The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) to undertake investigations into the human rights abuses in the mining sector in 2008. A report by CHRAJ on the state of human rights in mining communities in Ghana highlighted that in the case of large-scale mining concessionaires, there is evidence that alleged illegal miners and some innocent community members were harassed, and inhumanely treated often with the help of state security.

The Report additionally notes that almost all the companies operating in the communities CHRAJ visited had established Security Posts in their concessions for the military, the police or both to protect the company. It is apparent that the recommendations made by CHRAJ called upon the Security Agencies to comply strictly with Article 15 (1) (2) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana, which provides that: "The dignity of all persons shall be inviolable. No person shall, whether or not he/she is arrested, restricted or detained, be subjected to a) torture or other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; b) Any other condition that detracts or is likely to detract from his dignity and worth as a human being".

The actions of the mining companies with respect to how they use the security agencies in handling allegations of trespassing on mining concessions by host communities constitute

violations of the rights of people in mining communities with impunity and therefore such methods have not yielded the required results.

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana guarantees the right to life and the right to fair trial. Where individuals are alleged or accused to be engaged in illegal mining activities it does not warrant extrajudicial actions. It is proper that all individuals are given the right to go through all due processes under the law. As much as it is the responsibility of state security personnel to enforce the law whilst protecting mining companies, they are also entrusted with the responsibility to protect the rights and lives of all citizens.

We call on the Government to as a matter of urgency:

1. Conduct independent investigations into the underlying insecurity and human rights violations in mining communities, particularly those impacted by Newmont Ahafo North and South activities.
2. The Inspector General Police should investigate the conduct of the police personnel deployed to protect Newmont and the incident that have resulted in the needless deaths and injuries to poor and vulnerable people.
3. Review the security protocols in mining areas recognising the rights of mining affected communities.
4. Hold mining companies accountable by requiring them to take on greater responsibility and mandating the reporting of measures they implement to protect the rights of individuals in mining communities.

This should aim at preventing future incidents of gross human right abuses, ensure that mining companies and law enforcement agencies operate within the tenets and boundaries of the law and respect for human rights.

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