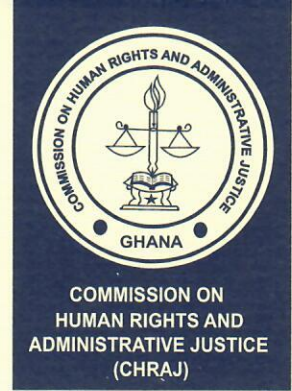


25<sup>th</sup> June 2024



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE 2024**

There is still a worrisome number of victims of torture and other degrading and inhumane treatment in Ghana, and the Commission in commemorating the 2024 International Day in Support of Victims of Torture draws the attention of government to these pertinent issues.

Statistics from the Ghana Prisons Service in June 2024 indicate an overcrowding rate of 43.79% (4,495), with a total prison population of 14,760. In addition to overcrowding, Ghana's detention facilities face improper sanitary conditions characterised by poor structures, ventilation and limited toilet facilities. Also, there is the lack of balanced diet and medical care for inmates. These harsh conditions and treatment of pre-trial detainees and prisoners curtail their enjoyment of right to dignity, health, food, clean prison environment among others.

It is worth noting the issue of mentally challenged individuals, a considerable number of whom are still chained, starved and confined in insanitary places in some faith-based centres and psychiatric hospitals across the country. Although the Mental Health Act, 2012 (Act 846) requires the establishment of Visiting Committees to inspect and monitor the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities, the exercise has been fraught with financial challenges thus resulting in the continuous cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of mental health patients in Ghana.

The persisting cases of military and police brutality against civilians is equally troubling and needs to be urgently addressed by government especially by the Ministries of the Interior, Defence and National Security to ensure peaceful co-existence and the respect of human rights of civilians.

CHRAJ acknowledges the various actions and initiatives implemented by government and relevant stakeholders to curtail the perpetration of torture and safeguard the rights of victims in Ghana including implementation of the Justice for All and Open Camp Prison programmes which aim at reducing pre-trial prisoners and decongesting prison facilities.



However, more remains to be done to ensure Ghana is fully compliant with the dictates of the 1992 Constitution, as well as the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights as they relate to the right and dignity of persons.

The President's refusal to Assent to the Criminal Offences (Amendment) Bill, 2022 and the Armed Forces (Amendment) Bill 2022, passed by Parliament which are intended to remove the death penalty as ultimate punishments in Ghana and the reasons given for the refusal in the light of the time that has since elapsed (2 years) without any concrete action being done to remedy the "constitutional concerns" in order to give assent to the two Bills most baffling and unfortunate.

Relatedly, the President is also exhorted to assent to the Criminal and Other Offences (Amendment) Bill, 1960 (Act 29) which was passed by Parliament in July 2023 to promote and protect the dignity and life of elderly persons accused of witchcraft in Ghana.

Thus, the Commission encourages the government of Ghana to resource the establishment of visiting Committees and Tribunals across the country to ensure the effective monitoring of prayer camps and psychiatric centres which are much needed to ensure the rights of mentally ill individuals are respected. In addition, government is entreated to fast-track the amendment of CHRAJ's enabling Act (456) to include provisions on the establishment, composition, and functioning of a National Preventive Mechanism. In addition, there is the need to enhance collaboration and harmony between the various Security Agencies and to conduct comprehensive human rights education for military and police officers on a continuing basis.

The International Day in support of victims of Torture was instituted in December 1997, by resolution 52/149. The UN General Assembly proclaimed 26 June the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture as an opportunity to call on all stakeholders including UN Member States, civil society, and individuals everywhere to unite in support of the hundreds of thousands of people around the world who have been victims of torture and those who are still tortured today.



**DR. JOSEPH WHITTAL**  
**COMMISSIONER**