



West Africa Network for Peacebuilding

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS FOR PEACE

PRESS STATEMENT

WANEP CONDEMNS VIOLENCE IN THE AYAWASO WEST WUOGON BY-ELECTION

The West Africa Network for peacebuilding (WANEP) has followed with concern current security challenges in Ghana and more recently the Ayawaso West Wuogon By-Election organised by the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana on 31st January 2019, following the death of the Member of Parliament of the Constituency, Emmanuel Kwabena Kyeremateng Agyarko, in accordance with the provisions in the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana.

From WANEP's perspective, the by-election was a further attestation of Ghana as the bastion of democratic stability in West Africa. However, reported acts of violence and a shooting incident perpetrated by unidentified armed men in National Security apparel witnessed around the Bawalashie Presbyterian JHS Polling Station and which led to various degrees of injury of at least fifteen persons raises critical concerns for Ghana's democratic stability. The ensued violence, believed to have been perpetrated by armed political vigilante groups, reveals increasing violent acts of vigilantism and thuggery around elections in Ghana.

In addition, it demonstrates a seeming culture of impunity, which is increasingly becoming entrenched in the body-politic of the country and a lack of political will on the part of the political parties' leadership to address the menace. More importantly, continual perpetration of violence by vigilante groups in elections obfuscates Ghana's democratic ethos and undermines the peace and security of the country.

WANEP, through this medium, strongly condemns such acts of violence and expresses our heartfelt sympathy to the victims of the shooting incident. We also wish to call on the security agencies to expedite the investigation process, leading to the arrest and prosecution of perpetrators of violence at the by-elections.

Furthermore, WANEP seeks to draw the attention of political actors, opinion leaders and the Media, to the need to be circumspect in their utterances and refrain from any form of polemics on public conversations on the matter to avoid the likelihood of further heightening tension in the security climate.

Moving forward, WANEP wishes to call on the peace and political actors - the National Peace Council, Christian Council of Ghana, Ghana Islamic Council, Security Agencies, Traditional Authorities and Opinion leaders - to initiate dialogue to engage the two main political parties, the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), leading to disarming and disbanding of vigilante groups associated with them. It is also pertinent for the Government to retool the Police to enhance their capacity to deal with the phenomenon of vigilantism and increasing spate of violent acts in the country. Equally, it is imperative to strengthen regulatory procedures that allow for more robust legislation to deal with the patrons of vigilantism and reduce the appetite for violence.

Finally, we wish to call on the Ghanaian citizenry, particularly the youth, to be tolerant, eschew violence, and continue to uphold the tenets of democracy as a necessary prerequisite in enhancing peace and security in the country.

For Further Inquiries on this release, please contact WANEP Regional Office:

- ✓ **Email:** wanep@wanep.org
- ✓ **Tel:** **+233 302 411638, +233 302 406340**
+233-(0)302 426004, 302 408224
- ✓ **Mobile :** **+233-55-3147910**