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STATEMENT OF THE GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE ON THE DESTRUCTIVE SCOURGE OF ILLEGAL MINING (GALAMSEY) AND THE URGENT MEASURES REQUIRED

Dearly beloved in Christ and fellow citizens of Ghana, grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

As shepherds of the Church and moral custodians of our nation, we cannot be silent before a calamity that imperils both the integrity of God's creation and the dignity of His people. Illegal and unregulated mining, commonly known as *galamsey*, has become one of the gravest afflictions of our time. It ravages our rivers and forests, poisons our soil, endangers public health, corrupts governance, erodes our moral fibre, and extinguishes livelihoods. This is not a routine challenge to be managed with half-measures; it is a national emergency requiring decisive, extraordinary response.

From the dawn of creation, humanity was entrusted with stewardship of the earth. Scripture declares: "*The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it*" (Genesis 2:15). This vocation of care is not a licence for reckless exploitation but a sacred trust for the common good. Yet our rivers, forests, and farmlands now bear witness to a profound betrayal of this mandate. The Pra, Ankobra, Birim, Offin, Ayensu, and other once-pristine rivers are now laced with mercury and toxic effluents. Some have ceased to flow downstream, while others, like the Ayensu, show turbidity levels so extreme, 32,000 NTU compared to the Ghana Water Company's maximum treatment threshold of 2,500 NTU, that they defy purification. Once-verdant forests lie stripped to barren scars, while fertile farmlands are rendered sterile, punctured by deadly pits. "*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it*" (Psalm 24:1). To desecrate creation through *galamsey* is not only an offence against neighbour; it is a grave sin against God Himself, the Creator and Owner of all.

The consequences are dire. Farmers can no longer trust the land to sustain their families, and our capacity to feed the nation diminishes. The Ghana Water Company strains at great cost to render water barely potable, yet traces of mercury, arsenic, cyanide, and chlorine persist in what is supplied. Children, seduced by the mirage of quick riches, forsake school for perilous pits, many losing their lives in collapses that are both tragic and preventable. The poisons of mining seep silently into our food chain, breeding cancers, skin diseases, kidney failure, and neurological disorders. Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si'*, admonishes us with prophetic clarity: "*The earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor. She groans in travail*" (LS 2).

But the rot is not only ecological. *Galamsey* has become a cancer in our national soul. It corrodes politics, corrodes governance, and corrodes conscience. Disturbingly, some politicians, Members of Parliament, Municipal and District Chief Executives, chiefs, religious figures, and even members of our security services have been implicated - shielding illegal operators for personal gain, granting illicit concessions, or remaining silent when duty demands bold speech. This betrayal of trust cuts to the very marrow of our national identity. We call such leaders to repentance without delay.

Worse still, *galamsey* has matured into a threat to national security. It enriches criminal cartels, breeds lawlessness, and foments violent conflicts in mining communities. Yet, in the face of this, the President of the Republic, His Excellency John Dramani Mahama, appears not to grasp the existential scale of the menace. In both January and May 2025, delegations of our Conference raised these concerns directly with him, only to be met with unsatisfactory responses focused narrowly on economic gain. At his “Meet the Press” session of 10 September 2025, he dismissed calls for a state of emergency. This is profoundly troubling. The hour is late. Delay is betrayal. Now, not tomorrow, not later, is the time to act.

We therefore urge the President and his government to declare, without hesitation, a state of emergency in the most affected mining zones and around endangered water bodies. Such a declaration would empower extraordinary interventions: curfews in volatile areas, the securing of devastated lands, the dismantling of entrenched criminal syndicates, and the halting of corrupt administrative complicities. The scale of the crisis justifies nothing less.

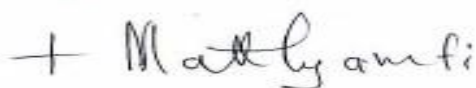
But we stress: a declaration, while urgent, is insufficient. Ghana requires a holistic, integrated national strategy. Laws governing mining must be revised, sharpened, and rigorously enforced, with stiffer penalties for offenders. Specialised courts should be established to expedite prosecutions. A permanent, well-resourced, and corruption-proof task force must be constituted, comprising security services, environmental experts, and local authorities, to ensure consistent enforcement beyond transient crackdowns.

Yet justice must be tempered with mercy. Those driven to *galamsey* by desperation must be offered sustainable alternatives. Properly regulated small-scale mining zones could be created, fortified with environmental safeguards and technical support. Displaced farmers should be restored with land, credit, and training. A nationwide afforestation and reclamation programme should be launched, not only to heal the scars of destruction but also to provide dignified employment, especially for the youth.

We appeal to President Mahama to show the courage of leadership. His government must prosecute not only the poor but also the powerful; not only the weak but also the well-connected. Without courage, no policy will stand, no law will hold, no declaration will succeed.

To all Ghanaians, we say: resist the lure of quick wealth that leaves our children a desert in place of a homeland. To chiefs: remember your sacred responsibility as custodians of the land. To politicians: place Ghana above personal and partisan advantage. To religious leaders: speak prophetically without fear or favour. To our security agencies: act with integrity, be defenders of the people, not accomplices in their betrayal.

Beloved brothers and sisters, this struggle is not merely about law enforcement. It concerns the very soul of Ghana. It is about whether we choose life or death, blessing or curse (Deuteronomy 30:19). With God’s grace, let us choose life, for ourselves, for our children, and for generations yet unborn. May the Lord bless our homeland Ghana, and make us faithful stewards of His creation.



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