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Press Release

COVID-19 Lockdown: Security Agencies must Respect the Human Rights of Civilians

We, the Independent Police Complaints Coalition (IPCC), are a group of civil society organizations/individuals advocating for the setting up of an independent police complaint body for Ghana.

We commend the efforts by the President of the Republic His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo and his government on the various steps they have taken to address the current pandemic of the Corona Virus (COVID 19). We understand the severity of this global pandemic and encourage the government to adopt policies that continues to advance the human rights of Ghanaians.

As part of the measures government has put in place is the enactment and invocation of the Imposition of Restrictions Act, 2020 (Act 1012) in fighting the pandemic which has resulted in the current lockdown being observed from today 30th March, 2020 for a period of 14 days.

While government can impose certain restrictions on some human rights in order to protect public health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, any such measures must be consistent with the wider human rights framework. It is therefore important that Law Enforcement Agencies deployed to implement the restrictions imposed undertake their activities in line with Article 15 (1) and (2) of the 1992 Constitution which provide in no uncertain terms for the respect for human dignity as follows:
(15) (1) “The dignity of all persons shall be inviolable., (2) No person shall, whether or not he 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.

We also note the assurances given by the Police Administration in their Operation COVID Safety,
to undertake a humanitarian operation adopting “democratic security systems” to enforcing the
restrictions to avoid any form of human rights abuse during this period.

We on this note want to remind the security agencies (Police, Military, etc.) that Ghana is a
signatory to many international human rights treaties and protocols that prohibit all forms of human
rights violations including torture, degrading and inhuman treatment of persons.
Specifically, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) in Article 5 calls for
respect of the dignity inherent in a human being and the recognition of his legal status and the
prohibition of all forms of torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment. The Universal
Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in Article 5 also expressly abhors torture. Similarly, the
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in Article 7 also condemns torture
while The Luanda Guidelines on the Conditions of Arrest, Police Custody and Pre-trial Detention
in Africa (Luanda Guidelines) demands that the State must always endeavour to promptly take
steps to prohibit and prevent torture.

The Coalition recalls that the Daily Graphic newspaper reported on July 3, 2019, quoting the then
Inspector General of Police (IGP), Mr David Asante-Apeatu, that the Ghana Police Service had
taken delivery of 250 body cameras to be used by its personnel. He said the 250 pieces was the
first batch of 3,000 pieces expected to be delivered by the close of 2019 as part of efforts to enhance
police transparency and accountability. We urge the Ghana Police to make use of these body
cameras at this time to ensure we are able to monitor incidents which may occur during the period
of the lockdown.

Again, we call on the Police Administration to proactively institute measures with the objective to
monitor the actions of their personnel deployed for this assignment, and enforce disciplinary
measures against all those who may be found to have gone wayward, and manhandled any civilian.

In furtherance of the right to remedy provided in Article 2 (3) (a) of the ICCPR, we ask the Police
Administration to set up a Complaints Desk, and publicize Hotline phone numbers by which the
public, who have suffered any abuses from the police, especially in this trying times, to call and
report such personnel.

Finally, in light of the spread of COVID-19 in Ghana, we call on the public to abide by the
restriction orders and follow the rules. We equally call on the security agencies themselves to take
precautions and not contract the virus while enforcing the restrictions during this period.

Issued By:
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Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana)
Amnesty International Ghana
POS Foundation
Human Rights Advocacy Centre (HRAC)
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