UN Human Rights Council, 53rd session (19 June to 14 July 2023)

Item 6: Universal Periodic Review

Statement on Ghana
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This statement by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) Ghana is supported by Songtaba and by Savannah Women Integrated Development Agency (SWIDA), Ghana.

As the UPR process has shown, there are global concerns over the persistence of the harmful practice of witchcraft accusations in Ghana.

Individuals accused, predominantly women, especially older women, widows, women with disabilities, and mothers of children with albinism, face stigmatization, various forms of violence, mutilation, and sometimes homicides. They are often driven violently from their communities and forced to seek refuge in designated “witch camps.”

Ghana has highlighted its efforts to close these camps, increase awareness campaigns, provide relief support in camps and communities, and a bill to criminalize witchcraft accusations presented in the Parliament.\(^1\) We welcome these efforts.

We also welcome Ghana’s support for UPR recommendations to prohibit witchcraft accusations, close the “witch camps,” guarantee the protection and rehabilitation of victims, and raise awareness with traditional leaders.\(^2\) Their effective implementation could pave the way to eradicating this form of gender-based violence.

Mr President,

Prompt and decisive actions are needed. These include:

- expediting the process to enact the law criminalizing witchcraft accusations;
- ensuring safe resettlement of women and their dependents from “witch camps” into communities of their choice, with access to rehabilitation and legal redress;
- enacting protection measures for those at risk of witchcraft accusations; and
- carrying out systematic, targeted awareness-raising campaigns for families, traditional and religious leaders, teachers, and the public to dispel witchcraft myths and counter stigmatization of women and children in the camps.

We believe that women in the camps should be given support to claim their rights, and it’s essential they have a strong and active role in decision-making at every step.
In the Working Group session, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, H.E. Godfred Yeboah Dame, recalled that Ghana was undertaking efforts to close witch camps, but some challenges persisted, such as the slowness of the process and the difficulties making the camps habitable. He also indicated that in the meantime, the Gender Ministry had embarked upon sensitization programs, awareness-raising campaigns and relief support interventions in the camps and the communities. He added that additional progress had been achieved in eliminating witchcraft accusations through the introduction of a witchcraft accusation bill before the Parliament, which aims at criminalizing any such accusations. See recording of Review of Ghana - 42nd Session of the UPR Working Group https://media.un.org/en/asset/k14/k14cwysi7x, at 01:00.08 and at 03:01.24; see also Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Ghana, UN document A/HRC/53/7, 24 March 2023, paragraphs 54, 147 and 148.

1. **Adopt and Implement laws prohibiting accusations of witchcraft**
   149.171 Accelerate the adoption and implementation of laws prohibiting harmful practices against women and girls, including early and forced marriage, and accusations of witchcraft as well as guaranteeing the protection and rehabilitation of victims (Netherlands);
   149.181 Accelerate the adoption and implementation of laws prohibiting harmful practices against women and girls, including trokosi, female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage and accusations of witchcraft as well as guaranteeing the protection and rehabilitation of victims (South Africa);
   149.204 Strengthen and enforce laws to protect all girls and women from sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and accusations of witchcraft (Norway);
   149.225 Adopt action plans at the local level and conduct awareness-raising campaigns to strengthen the implementation of laws prohibiting harmful practices, including but not limited to trokosi, FGM, child, early and forced marriages, widowhood rites and witchcraft-related practices (Burkina Faso);

2. **Close ‘witch camps’**
   149.175 Take steps to close the four facilities identified by the United Nations country office in Ghana as camps for women accused of witchcraft, including because they suffer from mental illness (Peru);
   149.191 Permanently eradicate the so-called “witch camps” and adopt comprehensive measures for the reintegration and restoration of the rights of women who have been forcibly displaced to said camps after being accused of witchcraft (Colombia);
   149.192 Persevere in its efforts to close the camps for women victims of accusations of witchcraft and reintegrate them into the community (Congo);
   149.229 Conduct awareness raising campaigns and ensure the eradication of so-called witch camps as well as the social reintegration of affected women and accompanying children in the society (Croatia);
   149.93 Accelerate the procedures and steps for the urgent closure of “witch camps” which are still operational on national territory (Togo);
   149.94 Remove witch camps as soon as possible (Czechia);
   149.173 Redouble efforts to prevent, punish and eradicate harmful and dehumanizing traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation and “witch camps” (Paraguay);
   149.187 Take further measures to eradicate “witch camps” in northern Ghana, working on raising awareness with traditional leaders, and to promote the reintegration into society of the women found in those camps (Brazil);

3. **Protect women accused of witchcraft through programs/services**
   149.184 Protect the human rights of women accused of witchcraft, including through education programs, provision of adequate shelter and strengthen mental health and domestic violence support services (Australia);