

# Gender

## Assent to Anti-Witchcraft Bill to protect aged women

### • CSOs Coalition to President

From Mohammed Fugu, TAMALE

**A** COALITION of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) has reiterated calls for urgent Presidential assent to the Anti-Witchcraft Bill to help protect the aged, particularly women who are accused of witchcraft and subjected to inhumane treatment.

The coalition expressed worry about the delays by the President, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, to assent to the bill to become a law, saying the development was drawing back efforts towards ending the practice and integrating the vulnerable women languishing in the various camps.

#### Forum

The coalition made the call in a communiqué issued at a forum in Tamale to mark this year's

International Women's Day which was on the theme: "Ending Witchcraft Persecution Advancing Justice, Inclusion and the Prohibition of Witchcraft Accusation in Ghana- Fate of the Anti-Witchcraft Bill".

Members of the coalition included Songtaba, Amnesty International Ghana, Action Aid Ghana, Sanneh Institute, Legal Resources Centre, International Alliance Against Witch Hunts, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Ghana, Youth for Human Rights Africa and Oxfam.

Organised by Songtaba with funding support from Vibrant Village Foundation, the forum aimed at raising awareness of witchcraft accusation persecution in Northern Ghana and deliberated on ways to end the menace.

#### Reintegration

Presenting the communiqué on behalf of the coalition, the Executive Director of Songtaba, Lamnatu Adam,

noted that witchcraft accusations did not only reflect and perpetuate stigmatisation and discriminatory beliefs but also served as a means of dehumanising and marginalising women.

"Ghana is the only place where physical facilities have been developed to shelter women accused of witchcraft, mainly found in the Northern and North East Regions with a disproportionate number of female victims constituting 93 per cent," she said.

#### Community engagement

For her part, the Country Director of Amnesty International, Genevieve Partington, said witchcraft accusations continued to tear apart the

fabric of the society, perpetuating gender-based violence and denying women their fundamental rights to dignity, security and equality.

By enacting the law, she explained that it would send a clear message to accusers that witchcraft accusations have no place in a modern progressive society.

#### Anti-Witchcraft Bill

In August 2023, the Parliament of Ghana passed the Anti-Witchcraft Bill that prohibits the practice of accusing others of witchcraft and criminalises the declaration, accusation, naming or labelling of another person as a witch.

However, nine months after Parliament had passed bill, the President, is yet to assent to it to become law.

@ a glance



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