



SUPREME SUBORDINATE COMMANDERY AND LADIES' AUXILIARY - GHANA

**KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN INTERNATIONAL**



**STATEMENT FROM THE KNIGHTS OF ST. JOHN INTERNATIONAL AND LADIES' AUXILIARY ON THE PROTECTION OF OUR COMMON HOME: A CALL TO END ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION THROUGH ILLEGAL MINING – GALAMSEY**

The Knights of St. John International and Ladies' Auxiliary, a Catholic lay society committed to the upholding of justice, peace and dignity of God's creation, align with the concerns raised by the Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference (GCBC) in their press release issued on Wednesday, September 11, 2024, on "Protecting Our Common Home: A Call to End Environmental Degradation through Illegal Mining – Galamsey". This press release reminds all, of the Papal encyclical "Laudato Si" which calls on all people to care for our common home, the Earth.

We are deeply concerned about the devastating environmental, economic, and social impacts of illegal mining, commonly referred to as galamsey. We echo the concern of Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the Asantehene, to the Ghana Bar Association in his speech to them recently at their annual conference in Kumasi, "What does the law do when mercury is poured into our water bodies knowing well that it kills." The pollution of our water bodies, destruction of agricultural lands, health risks to communities, and the enforcement of laws highlighted in the Bishops' press release reflect a grave threat not only to the environment but also to the future well-being of our nation.

The Knights of St. John International and Ladies' Auxiliary join our Bishops in calling for immediate and decisive action from the government to put an end to galamsey. The government should be firm in responding to this call and should demonstrate the same by immediately prosecuting defaulters irrespective of which side of the political divide they belong. We urge the enforcement of existing laws and the transparent restoration of destroyed lands and water bodies. Our call resonates with that of our Bishops that, "we cannot tolerate the destruction of our environment due to greed and corruption."

In support of the Bishops' Conference, we align ourselves with the following recommendations:

- 1) **Education and Awareness Campaigns:** We amplify the need for public education on the harmful effects of galamsey through our various platforms, engaging our communities in understanding the long-term consequences of illegal mining.
- 2) **Support for Alternative Livelihood Programmes:** We urge the government to prioritize the development of alternative livelihoods for individuals engaged in illegal mining, particularly in agriculture and other sectors, to combat economic desperation driving them towards this activity.
- 3) **Political Commitment Against "Galamsey":** We strongly encourage all political leaders, especially Presidential and Parliamentary candidates, to make public commitments against galamsey. Governments must take urgent steps to prevent mining in water and forests. We must reject any political manipulation of this national crisis.



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As members of the Catholic faith and defenders of social justice as epitomized in the social teachings of the Church, we reiterate that “galamsey” is not only a crime against the environment but also an offense against the dignity of human life. We stand ready to support every effort aimed at preserving our common home, Ghana, for present and future generations.

May God bless our efforts and guide us as we work together with the Bishops and all people of goodwill in this noble cause.

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September 12, 2024

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