

ATRONIE TRADITIONAL COUNCIL

OUR REF:.....

YOUR REF:.....



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ATRONIE TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY AND THE PEOPLE OF ATRONIE REJECT BONO REGSEC'S RESPONSE TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ATRONIE AMOMA RIVER

The Atronie Traditional Authority and the people of Atronie have noted with deep disappointment the press statement issued by the Bono Regional Security Council (REGSEC) following its visit to the illegal mining site responsible for the destruction of the Atronie Amoma River and surrounding farmland at Jinijini, a farming community at Atronie.

We wish to state that we reject the conclusions and directives contained in the statement, as they fail to address the urgent environmental crisis confronting our community.

During REGSEC's visit, members of the Council witnessed at first-hand the extensive destruction caused by the ongoing illegal mining activities.

They saw the heavily polluted Atronie Amoma River, destroyed farmlands, a degraded environment, and the devastating impact these activities continue to have on the livelihoods and health of our people.

Despite this, instead of ordering an immediate halt to the illegal mining operations, REGSEC has given the operators time to produce licences and other documents while they continue to pollute our only source of drinking water. The people of Atronie find this decision completely unacceptable.

We also find REGSEC's position on documentation contradictory. During the first visit by the chiefs to the Bono Regional Minister to report these illegal mining activities, the Minister emphatically stated that if the mining operations were legitimate, their documents would have been on his desk. He further indicated that since he had no knowledge of the operations, they were illegal.

If that was the position of the Regional Minister, why is REGSEC now requesting the same operators to submit documents? If these operations were lawful, those documents should already have been available to the relevant authorities. We therefore reject this contradictory approach.

Environmental destruction cannot be allowed to continue while authorities wait for paperwork to be submitted. Every passing day results in further pollution of our river and irreversible damage to our lands.

We are equally surprised that REGSEC's response focuses on requesting the Regional House of Chiefs to advise traditional authorities against illegal mining instead of taking decisive action against those who are actively destroying our environment. If REGSEC has credible evidence that any chief is involved in or supporting these illegal mining activities, it should be bold enough to publicly identify that chief and take the appropriate legal action. Writing to the Regional House of Chiefs without naming any individual only creates unnecessary suspicion and does not address the real problem.

Advice alone will not restore our polluted river or stop the ongoing destruction.

Even more disturbing is REGSEC's directive that mining companies engaging armed security personnel should merely ensure that such personnel are properly authorised. The individuals guarding these illegal mining sites are heavily armed with guns and rifles, intimidate residents, and prevent legitimate landowners and farmers from accessing their own lands. Ghana's laws do not permit vigilantism or unlawful landguard activities. Rather than advising operators to ensure such persons are "authorised", we expected the security agencies to arrest and prosecute anyone carrying weapons or operating outside the law.

We also reject REGSEC's attempt to attribute this crisis to an alleged land dispute involving Atronie and Wamfie, (Mansene) traditional areas. Land disputes have never been part of the concerns raised by the Atronie Traditional Authority and the people of Atronie.

Furthermore, REGSEC is not a judicial body mandated to determine land ownership disputes.

We therefore view the introduction of an alleged land dispute as a deliberate attempt to divert public attention from the real issue, the ongoing destruction of the Atronie Amoma River through illegal mining. This diversion is similar to previous attempts by Wammfie people to shift attention away from the environmental destruction instead of confronting it directly.

We therefore ask: on what basis has REGSEC concluded that a land dispute is responsible for the current environmental crisis?

The Council owes the people of Atronie and the Ghanaian public a clear explanation.

The statement issued by REGSEC does not give the people of Atronie confidence that urgent action will be taken to protect our environment and our lives.

Our concern is simple: our river is being destroyed, our farms are being devastated, and our people are losing their only source of clean drinking water.

These are matters requiring immediate enforcement of the law, not prolonged administrative processes.

From the contents of REGSEC's statement, we are left with the unfortunate impression that the Council has failed to act in the best interests of the people and in accordance with the Government's commitment to combating illegal mining.

Consequently, the people of Atronie have lost confidence in the Bono Regional Minister and REGSEC to handle this matter impartially.

We believe their actions have failed to demonstrate the urgency, commitment and leadership expected in the fight against illegal mining.

We also wish to acknowledge the intervention of the National Anti-Illegal Mining Operations Secretariat (NAIMOS), whose officials visited Atronie to assess the extent of the environmental destruction caused by the illegal mining activities.

We appreciate their swift response and the interest they have shown in the concerns of the people of Atronie. However, our appreciation should not be misconstrued as satisfaction.

The people of Atronie will not relent or lower their guard until the illegal miners have been completely removed from our lands, all illegal mining activities have ceased, and decisive measures have been taken to protect and restore the Atronie Amoma River and our degraded environment.

The Atronie Traditional Authority and the people of Atronie therefore wish to assure the public that we shall continue to pursue every means available to protect our lands, our river and our future.

We will continue to draw the attention of His Excellency the President of the Republic, relevant state institutions, civil society organisations, the media and all well-meaning Ghanaians to the situation in Atronie until decisive action is taken to end the illegal mining activities.

We remain committed to peace and the rule of law. However, we remain equally determined to do everything within the confines of the law to prevent the continued destruction of our lands, our water bodies and the future of our people. We will not rest until the illegal miners have been removed from Atronie and our environment is protected for present and future generations.

Issued by:

Atronie Traditional Authority

For and on behalf of Atronie Traditional Authority and the people of Atronie.



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