

PRESS CONFERENCE ADDRESSED BY THE CONVENER OF COALITION OF GHANAIS WITHOUT GHANA CARD (CGWiGC), RICHARD KASU ON NIA'S SELECTIVE REGISTRATION OF GHANA CARD AT ACCRA INTERNATIONAL PRESS CENTER ON THURSDAY, 27TH JULY, 2023.

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press!

Let me welcome you on behalf of the Coalition of Ghanaians without Ghana Card (CGWiGC) and to also thank you most sincerely for coming on such a short notice.

Before we speak to the substantive issues, we wish to provide brief background information on the Coalition. The Coalition of Ghanaians without Ghana Card (CGWiGC) is an interventionist national advocacy group consisting of Ghanaian citizens, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Public Interest Groups, Students, Human Rights Advocates, and Academics among other identifiable groups with about 12,000 members and still counting. The Coalition is being used as a special purpose vehicle to advocate for Ghanaians without Ghana Card to get registered for the card and use same for the purposes for which the card has come into being.

Our VISION is a Ghana where there is justice, peace and respect for fundamental human rights as enshrined in the supreme constitution of the Republic and the MISSION is promoting participatory governance to addressing inequality, politics of exclusion, human right abuses, and electoral violence.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, this press briefing has been necessitated by two key issues including the NIA's selective registration of Ghana Card and the Electoral Commission's (EC) insistence on the use of Ghana Card as the sole source document for voter registration in Ghana.

To proceed, it is critically important to provide undeniable facts on the ECOWAS Card otherwise known as Ghana Card including some statistics on its registration.

ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card:

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in recognizing the need to facilitate free movement, and to restrict irregular border crossing in order to addressing security challenges, ECOWAS Member States at its Heads of State and Authority Meeting in Abuja, Nigeria in 2014 adopted the development of ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card to be used as a travel document within the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, it is therefore important to clear the misinformation on the minds of many Ghanaians regarding the Ghana card. For the records, the ECOWAS Card being issued to Ghanaians is an ECOWAS Identity Card for purposes of travelling and could not be mistaken for a Ghana National ID Card. The hard fact is our beloved nation Ghana, Do not have any Ghana Card. What we have is an ECOWAS travel card.

It is also important to note that per our constitutional arrangements and best practices, it is Ghana Immigration Service (GIS) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration mandated by law to issue travel certificates and not National Identification Authority (NIA).

Statistics on Ghana Card by NIA:

From available information on the official website of the National Identification Authority (NIA), the following statistics gives a vivid account of data on Ghana Card as at 3RD MARCH, 2023;

Citizens Enrollment:

🇵🇸 Total New Registrations: **17,385,548**

🇵🇸 Total Cards Printed: **16,753,909**

🇵🇸 Total Cards Issued: **16,111,846**

Non-Citizens Enrollment:

🇵🇸 Total New Registrations: **170,176**

Card Replacement:

🇵🇸 Total Number Of Cards Replaced: **244,331**

NIA's selective registration of Ghana Card:

Friends of the Press, the Coalition has become aware of ongoing premium registration of Ghana Card at various regional offices of the National Identification Authority (NIA).

Our research revealed that, in a press release signed by one Dr. Abudu Abdul-Ganiyu Ag. Head, Corporate Affairs, the National Identification Authority (NIA) announced for the information of the general public that effective Monday, 19th December 2022; it will offer premium registration services at its Ashanti, Eastern, and Western Regional offices. According to him, these centers will operate in addition to the premium centers at the NIA Head Office and Calbank Head Office in Accra.

The said release indicated that the premium registration centers will offer the following fee-based registration services:

1. First-time registration and issuance of a Ghana Card-Ghc 280;
2. Replacement of lost, missing, or damaged cards-Ghc 110;
3. Update of a personal record that requires the printing of a new card- Ghc 110.

We consider the commercialization of the Ghana card acquisition selective and a tool of marginalizing majority of Ghanaians from its national use and benefits thereof.

In fact, what is more worrying is that Ghanaians who even make efforts to move to regional offices of NIA seeking to register are unable to register with several excuses from officials including network challenges and lack of printing cards among other flimsy excuses.

The questions which obviously must be answered by the NIA are;

1. What becomes of the poor Ghanaian who does not have money to register for the card?
2. What becomes of the people leaving in the hitherlands and do not have access to regional capitals for the registration exercise?

EC's entrenched position to make Ghana Card sole document for voter registration:

The Coalition, having thoroughly interrogated the issues and reforms being contemplated by the EC including its insistence on the use of Ghana Card as sole document for voter registration, would like to reiterate its displeasure against the unpopular position by the EC.

We have taken note of the ongoing efforts by the Electoral Commission (EC) of Ghana to review the existing Constitutional Instrument (CI) particularly portions pertaining to registration of voters. As you may recall, Parliament on Friday, 31st March 2023, has by unanimous decision, rejected the Electoral Commission's (EC) Constitutional Instrument (CI), that sought to make the Ghana card sole registration document for voting.

Comparative Analysis Of 2020 Registered Voters Against Ghana Card Issued As At March, 2023:

Ladies and Gentlemen of Press, let us do some basic comparative analysis here;

The total number of registered voters in 2020 stood at **17,027,941** (<https://ec.gov.gh/>, Wikipedia, 2020 Ghanaian general election).

The total number of Ghana Cards issued by the NIA as at March, 2023 is **16,753,909** (<https://nia.gov.gh/>)

Assuming without admitting that the 2020 registered voter population of **17,027,941** is to be re-registered onto a new voter register using ONLY Ghana card as a source document, (17,027,941-16,753,909) a whopping **274,032** representing (1.6%) of potential voters shall be denied registration to participate in the elections for no fault of theirs.

As a coalition, championing participatory governance, we cannot seat unconcerned for any qualified single Ghanaian to be disenfranchised in any public elections. Ghana and for that matter Ghanaians must resist the oppressors rule to administer injustice by using a so called ECOWAS Card as the sole sourced document for registration of voters.

Never again should any state institution be used directly or indirectly to exclude citizens from their fundamental rights including the right to vote as guaranteed under the 1992 supreme constitution of the Republic of Ghana.

Friends of the Press, in line with the above, the Coalition of Ghanaians without Ghana Card is calling for the following reviews on behalf of the Ghanaian people;

1. That having taken cognizance of the numerous challenges regarding the acquisition of the Ghana Card, it must not be made as the sole source document for the voter registration card;
2. That the premium registration exercise ongoing by the NIA at a commercial value of Ghs280 should be stopped immediately due to the already burdened harsh economic challenges faced by Ghanaians;
3. That Government, NIA should make provisions to enable Ghanaians access Ghana card registration through a nationwide mass registration at various district levels and further decentralized the registration to electoral areas if possible;
4. That all-inclusive stakeholder discussions by NIA to make its services more progressive, accessible and affordable to all Ghanaians at all times;
5. That the 'Ghana Card' is not wholly Ghanaian but appropriately called the ECOWAS Card hence cannot be adopted as the national identity card of Ghanaians;

Thank you for coming!

Long live Ghana!!

Long Live the Coalition!!!