**Effects of State facilitated forced evictions on the structure of poverty among slum dwellers within the capital, Accra, Ghana for the visit of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights to Ghana - 9-18 April 2018**

By Amnesty International Ghana.

“Accra, Sept. 23 GNA – Amnesty international Ghana (AI Ghana) on Thursday called on the government to immediately stop all forms of forced evictions.[[1]](#footnote-1)” Amnesty International Ghana uses various slogans to fight for human rights violations such “Housing is a Human Right”, a slogan used to battle for the rights of those being forcibly evicted from their homes in Ghana. Forced evictions are amongst the widely documented group of economic and social rights violations. Forced evictions deepen the structure of poverty rather than ameliorate it because these forced evictions deprive residents of their homes and means of earning a living. This paper will explore the above topic with the help of a deeper look at old Fadama; a slum in Ghana that has suffered and continues to suffer from forced evictions.

*“Forced evictions, the removal of people from their homes or lands against their will, directly or indirectly attributable to the state[[2]](#footnote-2)”*

The practice of forced evictions displaces entire communities. Generally, poor residents in low income brackets who live in neighborhoods that have been classified as slums tend to be the focus. The evictors often do not use ethical mechanisms when executing the eviction orders; they use force, demolish evictees household assets, it is generally planned, formulated and unannounced.

Each forced eviction has a different reason for being executed; large-scale infrastructure projects, international sporting events such as the football world cup, political conflict, ethnic cleansing, targeted social exclusion and demographic control[[3]](#footnote-3). The practice is used as a method to cleverly rid specific areas that are deemed as a “potential” for urban regeneration and estate development.

In many instances, the subjects of force evictions are the poor or vulnerable groups. These including widows, children, the old and infirm. Their eviction, without the provision of adequate alternative accommodation and compensation, only deepen their poverty.

There are currently 23 slums in Ghana and 11 slums in Accra – this includes Tema and other major towns in the Greater Accra Region. 6 Major Slums have suffered from forced Evictions; our current focus is Old Fadama. Approximately 100 000 people are currently living in Old Fadama. In 2010 the number was 79 000. The slum is located in the heart of Accra, to the northwest of the city’s central business district. It comprises a mix of residential and commercial self-built structures and 56% of the residents earn their living from informal business activities. 72% of the population of Old Fadama’s current residents originate from one of Ghana’s three northern regions.

Old Fadama is a settlement that grew enormously throughout the 90s. This was motivated by the relocation of the Yam market to Old Fadama which meant there was a need for labor in the area. A large migration from the country’s Yam producing areas to Old Fadama occurred. During the final years of the 90s, the local authorities were executing a decongestion exercise to temporarily remove hawkers from the major intersections around Accra; these individuals fled to Old Fadama. It became a very popular residential area and work place for many internally displaced Ghanaians. It became the home for those fleeing from on-going ethnic conflict in the country’s northern regions and for the middle-class families whose income was affected by structural adjustment programmes. Old Fadama offered low rent and proximity to the city center and central markets that provide ample income generating opportunities. The characteristics of this neighborhood are appealing to the vulnerable and poor residents of Accra.

Old Fadama is an enormous slum that provides the vulnerable with a place to live and a way to gain income, yet it also suffers from the highest profile large scale evictions issues in Ghana. During Amnesty International’s walkthrough of the slum it was possible to see the types of individuals that live there. Old Fadama was everything one can imagine in a slum; the gutters were filled with trash, the roads had been used up, there was an unpleasant smell that overtook the area yet, the people living there were out working to make a living, making this area very lively. It is a high-density area made up of self-built wooden kiosks and shacks, Old Fadama lacks adequate water and sanitation facilities.

*“Residents are physically situated within but conceptually outside of the boundaries of Ghanaian society, which serves as justification to the wider constituency, especially as the accompanying propaganda has resulted in the settlement being a no-go area for other residents in Accra due to fear of insecurity[[4]](#footnote-4)”*

The portrait of the residents of this slum make them an easy target within power dynamics of the country. Old Fadama is a result of the collective coping strategies of residents of Ghana; from the lack of employment opportunities as well as the absence of affordable planned or formal housing structures for the newly arrived individuals to the city.

Perhaps the destruction of Old Fadama is inevitable due to it being outside of Accra’s legal and formal urban fabric. Some might view the slums fall as forthcoming and legitimate. The residents of the slum have been investigating alternative methods of contestation which has led to the creation of the slum union and collaboration with shack dwellers international. This stems from the fear of residents of losing their homes and livelihood which demonstrates the importance of Old Fadama. On the other spectrum, this slum is an international E-waste hub which demonstrates Old-Fadama’s importance within the city, to the government and for the international community.

*“The discourse of illegality and informality successfully diverts attention from the fact that far from being situated outside of Accra’s legal and formal urban fabric, Old fadama occupies a central and structurally embedded position within the city’s local economy, a fact which in itself suggests that the bounded categories of illegality and informality as utilized by the city authorities have limited analytical strength in urban Ghana[[5]](#footnote-5)”*

All of this to say that the idea of displacing 100 000 Old Fadama citizens; individuals that suffer from various types of vulnerabilities, would be an extreme challenge to the government. These people are tax payers and contribute to the city’s economy therefore the consequences of how they are being treated will result in worsening the cycle of poverty in Ghana.

The effects of forced evictions put the vulnerable in worse situations than before the evictions took place. The way the authorities in Ghana have been dealing with the situation is with an aggressive combative and impulsive stance against slum dwellers and workers within the informal economy. The city’s tendency to evict informal settlers and workers simply increases their vulnerability; through the loss of shelter and livelihood which leads to the complete loss of social fabric and personal possessions. Sections of Old Fadama had been destroyed years ago; yet the residents also return and rebuild their homes. If they do not return, then the question becomes; where have they been able to settle and find income? Indeed, it is proven through various case studies that these involuntary displacements have a variety of negative impacts for the evictees; increased poverty and asset vulnerability. A lack of compensation results in homelessness, social conflict and importunately effects the poor and marginalized such as children, women and minority groups[[6]](#footnote-6).

Amnesty International Ghana states that forced evictions in the country are a challenge to those living in poverty and this issue is a severe infringement on human rights. Information above is a brief explanation about the effects of forced evictions on the structure of poverty within the country. This short report also highlights for the Special Rapporteur Old Fadama; an excellent case study about the subject in question and a possible follow-up visit by you to the place.

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1. Stop all forced evictions – Amnesty International [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Katia S. Mohindra and Ted Schrecker, “From Bulldozing to housing rights: reducing vulnerability and improving health in African slums” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A. Afenah, 2012, p528 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. (A. Afenah, 2012, p528) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. (A. Afenah, 2012, p538) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. A. Afenah, 2012, p531 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)