

**STATEMENT ON THE STATE OF THE GHANA PRISON SERVICE,
CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD, BY HON. FREDA PREMPEH, MP.
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Thank you, Rt. Hon. Speaker, for giving me this opportunity to express my views on the state of the Ghana Prisons Service.

Mr. Speaker, over the years much has been said about decongesting our Prisons and making the prisons suitable to reform the inmates and yet there is persistent increase in population of the prisons including the influx of remand prisoners.

Mr. Speaker, having once served as a Prison officer myself, I can say that the situation at Duayaw Nkwanta Settlement camp which is in my constituency, is not different from other Prison establishments nationwide. Indeed, there are problems.

And these problems arise as a result of;

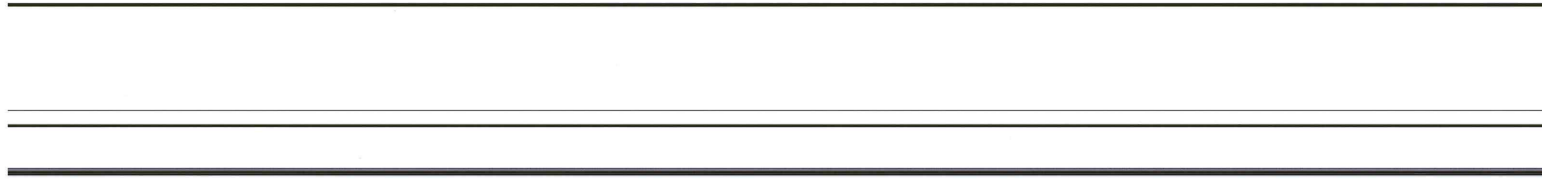
1. Inadequate budgetary allocation, inadequate feeding rate High remand population, poor health delivery, Poor sanitation, lack of reformatory, learning and training facilities, etc.
2. Poor conditions of service for staff, inadequate decent residential and office accommodation for prison personnel.
3. Slow judicial processes.
4. Lack of Electronic National database on Prisoners etc.

THE WAY FORWARD

- The construction of prison hospitals and clinics in every region with an inmate population of 1000 or more is crucial. The construction of these health facilities must go in tandem with adequate staffing and logistics.
- In the interim, however, existing infirmaries should be adequately resourced to ensure that inmates receive better health care whilst in lawful custody.
- At present, those on remand are being catered for by the Prisons Service but for their transportation to and from court therefore, taking over the transportation of same will be a minor addition to the mandate of the Prisons Service. This should however, come with the necessary logistical support. This would help expedite the trial processes as suspects will be sent to court on schedule thereby reducing congestion in the prisons.



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- Mr. Speaker, It is recommended that detention centers be constructed to ensure that remands and convicts are not held at common places. This measure will also be useful in our quest to decongest the prisons.
- Some convicts, who are almost completing their sentences in prison, could be placed in what is known as prison – operated halfway houses, community – based restitution programs and work release centers.,
- Construction of modern prison facilities to augment the capacity of existing prison intake.
- Provision of electronic national database (records on Prisoners) to capture all biometric features of the inmates for effective identification and classification of prisoners.
- There should be an effective collaboration among key stakeholders in criminal justice system to solve the remand problem
- Improvement of staff working conditions to attract and retain qualified professionals
- Adequate budget allocation and feeding rates must be enhanced.

Conclusion,

Mr. Speaker, we cannot apportion blame to any single institution. Therefore all institutions involved in criminal justice system should co-operate in finding appropriate solutions to these challenges. We must be in a position to enforce a system that ensures that no matter the crime, a suspect should be able to know his or her fate within the shortest possible time.

I would like to end by suggesting that the name Ghana Prisons Service be changed to Ghana Correction and Reformation Service in order to reflect the key functions of the service and the objective for which it was established. The need for review of our sentencing options, for example, the introduction of non-custodial sentences, probation, community and home supervisions in order to reduce the excessive strain on existing facilities could be considered.

Thank you.

