

**A SPEECH DELIVERED BY BR. YUSSIF MOHAMMED ABUL HAIRI, UDS GMSA  
PRESIDENT, AT GMSA PEACE SUMMIT AT THE UNIVERSITY FOR DEVELOPMENT  
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**PEACE: AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHERN REGIONS**

Northern Ghana since independence has lagged behind in all aspect of national forward march: education, health, mentality and infrastructure out of the lot. This can be largely attributed to the damning level of poverty that plagued majority of the people. But why the north is poor is a question that demands a prose of explanation.

The high poverty level many a times is rationalised by the late arrival of formal education in the North. However, I share the same opinion, but I can point out to several more factors responsible for the retroversion of the north. And one of those factors is non-abating violence – thus absence of peace.

To those of us wearing green faces (young ones), we rose to see that Until 2001, Northern Region grows considerably in terms of infrastructural development and entrepreneurial businesses. It was heart-warming to have noticed then that there were positive signals to bridging the gap between the North and the South. The “no-understanding” mentality of northerners observably saw an improvement under meagre but relatively sustained peaceful living.

Regrettably, the road to attaining independence for the North was barricaded – peace fled us. Up to date, northerners are finding it hard to reconcile their senses on the topic of “Who drove away our development partner, Peace.” People who seek political power are largely complicit in the destruction of peace. So, it is

thinking time for us. For Heaven's sake, why must we allow ourselves to be used by power seekers as means to achieve their goals? If we allow self-seeking individuals to exploit us all the time, their children certainly will exploit our children. The vicious cycle must be bisected now! And only the youth can lead the change campaign – change of minds on our way of politicking devoid of war songs, name calling, provocations and violence.

Nine out of ten cases of unrest in the north has a political tag. Indeed, politicians have found the northern youth as the cheapest tools to effect their course. The chunk of the northern youth who are out of the classroom are often more convenient for manipulation for their egoistic interest. As a matter of fact, all political parties one way or the other exploit the northern youth. However, there are some political parties that brazenly and outrageously mortgaged their conscience to power; and will move heaven and earth to make a mess of the disadvantaged youth.

Education is said to be a great asset for it changes the entire mentality of one's view on all aspects of life. For all I know, no matter my loyalty to a political party, no politician of any standing can convince me with a gun, a cudgel or a machete to foment chaos for his/her personal aggrandizement. My biggest worry is my dear brothers and sisters who do not have the opportunity to have not even kindergarten education, because they have been the clear majority victims of the whims and caprices of the power seeker.

I can't just help pestering myself with the thoughts of the north. When do we get there? Are we showing commitment of forwardness? Do we live by experience at all?

I shed tears when Metro TV carried detailed profile coverage of all presidential candidates running for the 2012 elections. Almost all the candidates had their children overseas (I won't mention names). I was dumbfounded by their possessions – big hospitality facilities, big communication set up and so much of “comfortabilities”. I know one day their children will return from overseas and mismanage our children. And the cycle of desperation goes on and on. Do we have what they have? No! So why must we chase one another around to fulfil their interest?

Heartless are some politicians. They give a gun to someone's child to go and kill someone's child. Where are their children when chaos sparks? The children are yonder seas. The Election 2008 was characterised with sporadic gunshots from camps of political wings within the Tamale metropolis. As a matter of fact, the African Election hardly ends without victims. You cannot tell me that, for a want of a better word, the hungry northern youth can buy sophisticated guns with big real dough to foment troubles. The GH¢1,000.00 plus worth of guns bought for the youth can help each to start to think positive. Without shame, politicians went round sharing guns. This can only happen in the north. What name are they (politicians) trying to call us?

To start to think positively, can you count and collate the number of election-related deaths since 1992? Let's guesstimate the numbers and recall the incidents. You will agree with me that the North is the biggest loser in terms of victims count.

Since the 4<sup>th</sup> Republic begun, I can only wonder a day northerners will wake up with one mind and charge at leaders to provide them with tools of construction but not destruction. We have loaned our prosperity and posterity to politics and

yet it brings us more pain, pain that gnaws the heart and soul. When are we learning lessons from the cataclysms born out of our short-sightedness? Please let's think!

An election is barely fortnight away. We need to encourage peace messages on our social gatherings: mosques, churches, rallies, weddings etc. A peace message is a powerful anaesthesia that has the proclivity to gravitate wild political activists into sobriety. People seeking for power are capable of doing the inconceivable. However, it takes two to Tango. Let the peace messages send a signal to them that you are not ready to assist them in any dubious way to mar the serenity of the North.

I have often dreaded civil violence or conflicts for one reason: no one is majority everywhere. If there is unrest, NPP will suffer in certain areas because they are the minority and NDC will also suffer in certain areas because they are minority. If you happen to live in area where you are the majority, bear in mind that your sisters, bothers and friends are in the minority zones. Same analogy is applicable to religious, ethnic and regional scuffles.

A time-tested study reveals that when there is a conflict, the effects of it span for a whole generation of 60 years. So, when create conflicts today, it affects the unborn. We need to leave a good legacy for posterity.

Last but not least, I will entreat everyone to be tolerant. Absence of tolerance for diverging views has always been the hotspot for violence. Let's remember that there is no victor in war.

Peace means

People

Encouraging

Anger

Control

Everyday

It is in this light that GMSA UDS TLC is sending a strong message to the nation and the world over that; “We are Up for Peace, before during and after the election”. And we want you to stand with us for Peace before, during and after the election. On this note, on behalf of the wise chair, I respectfully request that we stand up on our feet to show our commitment to peace before during and after the election.

Indeed, that is our campaign message, and we want you to help us carry the message to reach the last person in this country. Let us become Ambassadors of Peace everywhere we find ourselves, lets preach peace and say no to hate speech.

On this note, on behalf of our Patron and the entire executives and members of GMSA UDS TLC, I declare this campaign message duly Launched. Thank you very much for granting me audience.

May Peace reign before, during and after the elections...