

PRESS RELEASE

DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS SHOULD NOT BE TURNED INTO PLUTOCRATIC AUCTIONS: URGENT NATIONAL ACTION IS NEEDED TO END VOTE SELLING & BUYING IN GHANA.

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The Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) and the Civic Forum Initiative (CFI) have noted with grave concern the persistent trend of vote selling and buying in Ghana's elections, which, unfortunately, was openly highlighted in the recent NDC parliamentary primaries conducted ahead of the Ayawaso East constituency by-election scheduled to be held on March 3 2026.

Some of the public reactions emanating from some leading players in Ghana's political arena would seem to suggest that the practice of vote selling and buying has become so widespread in our democratic political practice that it should be accepted as the new normal.

Vote selling and buying are so injurious to our nascent democracy that they should not and cannot be accepted as a standard practice in any democratic political culture.

What is consistently driving the commercialisation of our electoral politics is the total lack of a strong values-based bond between voters and the political class in Ghana, as well as the near-total absence of servant leadership in our political system.

This vacuum has been filled with the monetisation of electoral politics, whereby voters offer their votes in exchange for financial and material rewards, and election candidates, in turn, sharing no values with the electorate, are convinced that offering voters monetary and material incentives is the surest way to enlist their electoral loyalty.

In this toxic environment, rules and regulations on vote selling and buying, bribery and treating, count for nothing, as institutions charged with enforcement inevitably become weak and ineffective.

Above all, internal party elections in Ghana are perceived as processes lying within the exclusive purview of the party rather than the state, the EC and other state agencies.

IDEG-CFI is of the firm conviction that Ghana's reputation as a leading African democracy is too valuable to be left to be tainted by corrupt occurrences of the kind recorded in Ayawaso East NDC parliamentary primaries and similar elections. Accordingly, we propose:

- (i) Political Party Executives should prioritise the development of clear guidelines and regulations to curb vote selling, bribery, and vote buying in their internal elections.
- (ii) Political party leaders should implement concrete measures to enforce the same integrity standards in internal elections as in national elections—especially against vote selling, vote buying, bribery, treating, and other electoral offences.
- (iii) The Constitutional requirement for the internal organisation of political parties to be based on democratic principles also requires that a state body, such as the EC, be given a bigger mandate in internal party elections.
- (iv) Since the EC currently appears to be overburdened with excessive constitutional functions, the role of regulating and building the capacity of political parties should be hived off and assigned to a completely different body.
- (v) Accountability must be comprehensive for reforms to gain credibility; thus, relevant investigative agencies should take concrete steps to address electoral inducements.
- (vi) The NCCE, with full support of political party leaderships, should inculcate in all political parties the critical importance of democratic values and ideals in our national political culture.

When political advancement depends on financial capacity, public office risks being treated as a private investment to be recovered rather than a public trust to be honoured. This trajectory institutionalises corruption, deepens inequality in political participation, and erodes public confidence in democratic institutions. Until the practice of vote selling, buying, and related electoral offences is scrupulously dealt with by the Criminal justice system, all deterrence mechanisms will ultimately break down and fail. Hence, these practices must neither be normalised nor tolerated.

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