STATEMENT BY HON. SAMUEL ATTA AKYEAA, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR ABUAKWA SOUTH CONSTITUENCY ON THE OCCASION OF THE 55TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF DR JOSEPH KWAME KYERETWIE BOAKYE DANQUAH AT NSAWAM PRISON

Rt. Hon Speaker,

Today marks the 55th anniversary of the demise of Dr. Joseph Kwame Kyeretwie Boakye Danquah in condemned cell number 4, at the Nsawam Medium Security Prisons.

Mr. Speaker, the pith of this statement will be the power and example of his political sacrifice. With this in mind, I will let history speak rather than sentiments and vile propaganda.

Mr. Speaker, while JB, as he was affectionately called, was languishing in a condemned cell on the basis of President Nkrumah\'s pernicious Preventive Detention Act passed by the Parliament in 1958, he appealed to the conscience of President Nkrumah in a prison letter dated 9th May 1964, for his immediate release.

Mr. Speaker, because of economy of time, I would want to quote the relevant excerpts which take us right into the soul of JB.

"Dear Dr. Nkrumah,

I am tired of being in prison on preventive detention with no opportunity to make an original or any contribution to the progress and development of the country, and I therefore respectfully write to beg, and appeal to you to make an order for my release and return home. I am anxious to resume my contribution to the progress and development of Ghana in the field of Ghanaian literature (Twi and English), and in Ghana Research (History and Culture), and I am anxious also to establish my wife and children in a home, to develop the education of my children (ten of them) and to restore my parental home at Kibi (Yiadom House) to a respectable dignity, worthy of my late father\'s own contribution to the progress of our country.

You will recall that when in 1948 we were arrested by the British Government and sent to the North for detention they treated us as gentlemen, not as galley slaves, and provided each of us with a furnished bungalow (two or three rooms) with a garden, together with opportunity for reading and writing. In fact, I took with me my typewriter and papers for the purpose, and Ako Adjei also did the same, and there was ample opportunity for correspondence."
Here at Nsawam, for the four months of my detention up to date (8th January to 9th May 1964), I have not been allowed access to my books and papers, except the Bible, and although I was told in January that my application to write to my wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Danquah, could be considered if I addressed a letter to the Minister of the Interior, through the Director of Prisons, I have not, for over three months, since I wrote to the Minister as directed on the 31st January 1964, received any reply, not even a common acknowledgment from the Minister as to whether I should be allowed to write to my wife or not. As I had no opportunity to make any financial provision for my wife and children at the time of my arrest, this delay in the Minister’s reply has made it impossible for me to contribute to the progress and maintenance of my wife and also for the education of my children as is my duty to the nation.

Secondly, you will recall that barely a month after our detention in the North in 1948 we were brought down to Accra and released to appear before a Commission of Enquiry set up to investigate the justice or otherwise of our arrest of our arrest and detention. We duly appeared before the Watson Commission and made history for Gold Coast and Ghana. It resulted in the finding that the Burns Constitution was outmoded at birth, with a recommendation that our country should attain its independence within ten years, and that a Constitutional Committee (the Coussey Committee) should be set up to lay down the foundations of such independence and the steps to be taken towards its attainment.

In the present case, since I was arrested four months ago, I have not been asked to appear before any Judge, or Committee, or Commission, and, up to now, all I have been told is contained in a sheet of paper entitled "Grounds for Detention" in which I am accused that "in recent months" I have been actively engaged in a plan "to overthrow the Government of Ghana by unlawful means" and that I have planned thereby "to endanger the security of the State" (the Police and Armed Forces).

As no particulars of any kind were provided in the grounds for detention to indicate how the Government of Ghana came to formulate such a disgraceful charge against me, I spent in the prison here the greater part of January and February 1964 to write a review of the whole of my activities in "recent months" (roughly, from June 1962 [last release from detention] to January 1964). This writing was done by way of "Representations" in answer to the charge...
I confidently assure you, Sir, that when my representations reach you, it will be realised that my contribution in the said period of "recent months" to the intellectual and cultural achievement of the country was such that what should have been sent to me on January 8, 1964, was not a hostile invasion of my home and family, like enemy territory, together with my arrest and detention, but rather a delegation of Ghanaian civil officials and other dignitaries to offer me the congratulations of the nation and the thanks of the Government for my inestimable and distinguished contribution to the higher achievements of our great nation.

This, however was not to be, and I find myself locked up at Nsawam Prison in a cell of about six by nine feet, without a writing or reading desk, without a dining table, without a bed, or a chair or any form of seat, and compelled to eat my food squatting on the same floor where two blankets and a cover are spread for me on the hard cement to sleep on, and where a latrine pan (piss pot) without a closet, and a water jug and a cup without a locker, are all assembled in that narrow space for my use like a galley slave...

I am required to sleep or keep lying down on the blankets and a small pillow for the whole 24 hours of the day and night except for a short period of about five minutes in the morning to empty and wash out my latrine pan, and of about ten to fifteen minutes at noon to go for a bath. I am occasionally allowed to do a short exercise in the sun say once a week for about half an hour. That is all I have been engaged on in four months with my talents, such as I possess, going waste and my health being undermined and my life endangered by various diseases without being allowed to be taken to the Prison Hospital for continuous observation and treatment.

I am now left in a prison cell at the Special Block at the Nsawam Prison reserved for "dangerous criminals", and I am being thereby effectively prevented from making any original contribution to the intellectual and cultural progress of our country...

I read the second paragraph of the grounds for my detention and gathered that I am being punished by imprisonment to prevent me from taking any part in country's life, not for what I have done at present but for what I may do, or not to do, "in the future". I was completely astonished that in taking that decision Government did not balance my distinguished record at my age 68 against the possibility of an offence entirely foreign to me and go my career and my way of thinking.
The curious text of the second paragraph of the grounds for detention reads;

"Your detention is necessary in order to prevent you from acting in future in a manner prejudicial to the security of the state".

This is punishment for a crime not yet committed, and Mr. President will I am sure be the first to condemn it when it's full implications seize his soul and his spirit in a vision of God.

For instance, at the present moment I have three major works out in the world for publication, but I do not know for certain where they are to be found. Assuredly it is only when I am fresh at home that I can take steps to retrieve the manuscripts and secure publication.

These are:-

(1) The Ghanaian Doctrine of man- Research into the Dual Family System of the Akan People (Ntoro and Abusua) undertaken with the assistance of Sir Alan Burns' Government (Your Government Cabinet Secretary, Mr. D.A. Chapman, has an earlier copy of the manuscript. The definitive copy is with a friend at U.N.E.S.C.O., Paris).

(2) The Elements of Ghana Culture- This is a collection of my lectures and essays on our origin from ancient Ghana. Last year the manuscript was in possession of a friend at Reed College, Oregon, in the United States, but I do not know for certain where it is today.

(3) Sacred Days in Ghana- This contains additional and inclusive proof of our cultural achievement, in particular the Ghana Calender of a planetary week of seven days, which confirms my theory of our ancient and undoubted membership of an earlier civilisation. The manuscript, too was in the hands of the Professor of Sociology at Reed College, Oregon, U.S.A, up to last year, but K do not know for certain where it is today.

I trust you will accept this appeal for my release from detention in the spirit of utmost confidence and cordiality in which it is written, and I look forward to my early release from prison with the greatest possible faith, expectation and confidence.
Believe me to be,

Yours Very Sincerely and Respectfully

(Sgd.) J. B. Danquah"

Right Honourable Speaker this primordial cry for freedom did not minister to Ghana’s Independence leader who was touting that the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa. I surmise that Dr. J. B. Danquah was pouring water on stone. Ghana’s opposition leader breathed his last at 6.30 a.m. on that fateful day, according to the medical records.

There is a line in our national anthem which is a prayer to the Almighty God. It states as follows:

“And help us to resist oppressor’s rule with all our will and might forever more”.

Rt. Hon, I beg to submit that our current freedom was largely purchased with the innocent blood of the doyen of Gold Coast politics, the inimitable Dr. Joseph Kwame Kyeretwie Boakye Danquah whose final funeral rites are still outstanding 55 years down the line. Let this Parliament initiate the programme to give this world class legislator a befitting and final send-off.

This is the least we can do to the memory and honour of Ghana’s sacrificial lamb.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for this important space to make this commemorative speech.