Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity given me to contribute to the Statement ably made by the Hon Member for Gomoa East.

Mr Speaker, for quite some time now, the menace posed by land guards in this country is actually an issue that needs the urgent attention of Government and all of us as citizens of this country.

Mr Speaker, I recall with a lot of pain how a police officer, by name Kwaku Ninja and another, were brutally murdered at Ablekuma in the late nineties. Even though the security agencies at the time were able to apprehend a handful of the land guards for perpetuating that heinous act, the menace posed by land guards is still an issue that needs to be tackled head on.

Mr Speaker, a number of reasons account for the phenomenon of the nefarious activities of land guards in our country.

First of all, in my estimation, the inability of our court system to expeditiously adjudicate on landed disputes is a reason which accounts for the activities of land guards in our country. So, when people get away with the feeling that they cannot have justice through our land adjudication system in the country, they resort to self-help by hiring the services of land guards, some of whom are usually armed to the teeth with very dangerous weapons that in most cases our security agencies, perhaps, do not have.

Mr Speaker, if we must deal with the issue of land guards in our country, we need to look at our land adjudication system, and empower and resource the Judiciary very well to deal expeditiously with land disputes.

Mr Speaker, what is even more worrying is that, whenever the land guards do not have work to do by way of guarding land, so to speak, for want of a better word, they easily metamorphose into political vigilante groups, and we all know what such vigilante groups can do.

In recent times, I do not want to mention names, we have seen the havoc wreaked on innocent citizens by some of those political vigilante groups.

Mr Speaker, it is as a result of the nefarious activities of political vigilante groups that are under the watch of former President Mahama and my boss, the former Minister for the Interior, we deemed it very expedient to ban the activities of all political vigilante groups in this country, and when we did that, the just-ended elections came and passed very peacefully.

Mr Speaker, in previous elections, we were all witnesses to the dangers those political vigilante groups posed to the peace and unity of our country.

So, we need to look at the issue of land guards very seriously and deal with it as such.
Mr Speaker, one other cause which would usually result in people hiring the services of land guards, is the inefficient way and manner in which our land title registry or the Lands Commission operates. As a country, we need to resource these agencies of State, so that, they are able to register lands with the speed of light, so that if a person is the owner of a parcel of land and the person registers it in a way that is devoid of the bottlenecks that are usually associated with land registration in this country, then the person knows that his title is indefeasible unless a court says otherwise. So, it is an issue that we need to tackle very seriously.

Mr Speaker, as a legal practitioner, I have had occasion to have direct encounters with land guards. Courts had occasion to rule on cases that we sent to court. Injunctions were granted in most cases, but you go to the locus and you find that, the land guards have taken over. They are a law onto themselves. So, in no time, you would realise that you have an empty judgement on your hands. You cannot also cite them for contempt because they are invisible – So, Mr Speaker, we need to take stock of the activities of these people because, their activities have the potential to undermine the security of our State.

Mr Speaker, it is appropriate that you refer this matter to the Hon Ministers responsible for the Interior and National Security to deal with.

Mr Speaker, lastly, I wish to recall how the Police Administration itself set up the Property Fraud Unit (PFU) to deal with land guard-related activities. Unfortunately, the PFU of the Ghana Police Service is not well resourced, so, its very capacity to deal with the issue of land guards is questionable. It was gratifying that President Nana Akufo-Addo talked about the scourge of land guard activities in his inaugural address.

Mr Speaker, if he really wants to tackle this issue, I would humbly advise that he devotes the chunk of the resources of the State towards re-equipping the Police Administration, so that the PFU could be more effective.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.