

GHANA: WOMEN FIRED FOR GETTING PREGNANT SHOULD GET THEIR JOBS BACK

In Ghana's National Fire Service there is a regulation from 1963 which says that a woman cannot get pregnant within their first three years of employment. Decades after the regulation was created it is still effective which Thelma Hammond and Grace Fosu learned the hard way after they lost their jobs back in 2013 and 2014 respectively. A few years later, in 2017, the women decided to **sue** the National Fire Service. A year later the **court ruled** what happened to the two firefighters was gender discrimination and ordered they should be **reinstated** to their positions, paid all salaries and bonuses they lost over the period they were not able to perform their duties and receive a compensation of about \$9,000 each. This became the first successful gender discrimination case in the country's history. During the trial NFS claimed the first three years of service include intensive training which may be harmful both to mothers and the fetus but the judge did not appreciate this reasoning. Mrs Hammond and Mrs Fosu must have been very happy to hear the verdict, yet until today they still have not been reinstated and have not been paid their **outstanding** salaries.

CATS SAVED A CITY

When you read a title like this one you probably expect a story of cats warning citizens before an incoming natural disaster, defeating a spreading illness or something equally spectacular. Well, not this time. Yet, Houtong, a city in Taiwan, does owe its survival to cats. In the 1900s it used to be a place whose economy was based entirely on the biggest coal mine in Taiwan and, as such, was effectively able to support its 6,000 inhabitants. In the 1990s the mine stopped being used and all but 100 residents left in the search of employment. Houtong's fate changed again in 2010 when a photographer and cat-lover made it famous after he started writing about its stray cat population (apparently the village is home to 286 stray cats). Soon the place became a very popular tourist destination of cat-lovers. Local authorities used the surge of popularity incredibly well. Among others they started giving cat-related names to shops and cafes, built a cat bridge, opened a cat information and education centre. Thanks to their engagement today Houtong is visited by one million tourists a year, so cats literally saved it financially. A new danger appeared, however: people who come here only to intentionally leave their pets.

UNVACCINATED CHILDREN BANNED FROM PUBLIC PLACES

"If you are under 18 years of age and unvaccinated against measles you must NOT enter any public place until Saturday, April 27 or until you receive the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine" reads the notice for citizens of Rockland county north of New York City. Parents of unvaccinated children are **outraged** as under the law their kids are not allowed to enter restaurants, schools, places of worship, malls or use public transport. They say the health authorities are violating human rights. The controversial ban was introduced because this year the USA has been struggling with the biggest number of measles cases in recent history (387 confirmed cases so far). Deaths caused by measles are rare (1 in 1000 cases) but the disease whose symptoms include rash, high fever and cough is contagious and dangerous. The only effective method of fighting the virus is vaccination. The American one, called MMR, is over 90% effective but its producers admit there is "remote chance" of side effects or even serious injuries, which is why some parents try to avoid it.

TENSIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND CHINA RUNNING HIGH

On March 31 2019, two Chinese army jets purposely crossed the sea border separating Taiwan from mainland China. Or perhaps: separating China (People's Republic of China) from China (The Republic of China, Taiwan's official name). In 1949 a bloody civil war ended and the victorious communists forced the then-sitting government to go to **exile** to Taiwan. Both sides to this day maintain they are the rulers of the whole Chinese territory. In the late 1990s China and Taiwan set their territorial/independence disputes aside and worked out a trade deal that benefited both sides for years. All things considered however, it's a rather stormy relationship and it very much depends on election results in Taiwan. If Kuamintang - the party that supports closer ties with mainland China - wins, the relations warm up; if the Democratic Progressive Party - who advocate Taiwan's independence - gets majority, the relations become tense. **Sadly** (or not!), the latter has been the case since 2016. And now the Taiwanese are feeling the giant breathe down their necks.



FOR&AGAINST

1

A woman should never be fired for getting pregnant.

2

A city full of stray cats will not be a tourist attraction for long.

3

Banning unvaccinated children from public places is violating human rights.

4

Small nations have nowhere to hide or seek help when threatened by big ones.

VOCABULARY:

to sue - pozwać

court ruled that - sąd zdecydował, że

to reinstate - przywrócić

outstanding - zaległy

outraged - wściekły

exile - wygnanie, uchodźstwo

sadly - niestety

to breathe down one's neck - deptać komuś po piętach

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. Why were two women fired from Ghana's National Fire Service?
2. Did the court in Ghana decide Thelma Hammond and Grace Fosu should get their jobs back?
3. How did cats save a city in Vietnam?
4. How many cases of measles were there in the USA this year?
5. What regulation concerning unvaccinated children did Rockland county introduce?
6. What is the official name of Taiwan?

SOURCES BOX

cnn.com, an article from April 1, 2019 about two female firefighters from Ghana being fired for pregnancy

cnn.com, an article from April 1, 2019 about a city saved by cats

Cnn 10, episode from April 2, 2019 about unvaccinated children being banned from public places

Cnn 10, episode from April 2, 2019 about China violating Taiwan's maritime border