



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE (HRCSL)

PRESS STATEMENT ON THE INCIDENT OF 8TH OCTOBER 2020 AROUND ERNEST BAI KOROMA AVENUE, MAKENI

(Freetown, 15th October, 2020)

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) is the national institution mandated by law to protect and promote human rights of all in Sierra Leone. In doing this, HRCSL recognizes that the right to natural justice which includes but not limited to giving an opportunity to the other side to be heard; fair and expeditious trial; and the right to legal representation is a fundamental right which every right-holder must enjoy unhindered by anyone. Section 23 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone Act No. 6 of 1991, Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966 etc., strongly support the position of HRCSL on natural justice.

HRCSL notes that the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) invited the former President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma for questioning over corruption allegations on Monday 5th October 2020 which said interview was postponed to Thursday 8th October, 2020. During its usual monitoring of the media, HRCSL observed that tensions were building up leading to the re-scheduled interview with the former President. This prompted the Commission to dispatch its regional oversight commissioner, Hassan Samba Yarjah and the Director of Education Communication and Training, Mr. Richard M'Bayo on Wednesday 7th October, 2020 who teamed up with the regional office in Makeni in order to monitor the interview session with a view to ensuring a fair process. This is to the effect that HRCSL believes the former President like any other citizen should be given the opportunity to defend any allegations brought against him.

HRCSL however observed the following unfortunate occurrences while monitoring the situation on Thursday;

- That hundreds of young people were gathered around the precinct of the residence of the former President, Ernest Bai Koroma at Ernest Bai Koroma Avenue, Makeni in a riotous manner obstructing the cause of justice;
- That masquerades were flaunted on the street leading to the residence of the former President which said display amounts to a violation of the ongoing ban on the activities of secret societies;
- That there were road blocks mounted by the crowd thereby preventing other road users from going about their normal business within that area at ease;
- That the crowd openly hauled insults at the incumbent President, His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio, the Commissioner of ACC, Francis Ben Kaifala Esq. and at the security forces;
- That some children were also spotted among the rowdy crowd;
- That such assembly was in violation of the Covid-19 regulations on public gatherings;
- That officials of the ACC were unable to conduct the interview with the former President due to the tension and the security threats which the situation then posed.

HRCSL wishes to inform the general public that the obstruction of due process/justice; and the insult on public officials and the President of the Republic while executing their lawful duties is unacceptable and unlawful and this amounts



to bad citizenship and runs contrary to section 13 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, Act No. 6 of 1991.

HRCSL therefore roundly condemns every act of lawlessness as was clearly evident in Makeni at the Ernest Bai Koroma Avenue on Thursday 8th October, 2020.

HRCSL calls on the former President, Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma as a statesman who led this nation for nearly eleven (11) years to formally distance himself from such act of lawlessness and indiscipline exhibited by persons on 8th October 2020.

HRCSL continues to call on every citizen to internalize and abide by the **Duties of the Citizen** as enshrined in section 13 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone Act No.6 of 1991 with particular reference to paragraphs (b) & (j) which provide as follows:

Every citizen shall-

(b) **“cultivate a sense of nationalism and patriotism so that loyalty to the State shall override sectional, ethnic, tribal or other loyalties”;**

(j) **“render assistance to appropriate and lawful agencies in the maintenance of law and order.”**

Further to the above constitutional duties, Article 29 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) bestows duties on nationals and residents of the State. Special reference is made to sub-articles (3) & (4) of same produced hereunder for ease of reference; The individual shall also have the duty:

(3) **“Not to compromise the security of the State whose national or resident he is;”**

(4) **“to preserve and strengthen social and national solidarity, particularly when the latter is threatened.”**

HRCSL uses this opportunity to acknowledge the restraint and professionalism exhibited by the security forces especially the Sierra Leone Police during the said incident.

HRCSL however calls on the police to speedily investigate and bring to book those who participated in the said incident especially the ring leaders.

HRCSL takes this opportunity to assure the general public of its unwavering commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights of all in Sierra Leone.

END

Signed

Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndanema
Chairperson