

PRESS STATEMENT

IMPASSE BETWEEN WORKERS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF KOIDU LIMITED

Monday 12th May, 2025

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) is concerned about the mass dismissal of local employees of the Koidu Limited.

Recalling that the HRCSL has had a long-standing record of engagements (Monitoring and Training sessions) with Koidu Limited operations since 2017 that was geared towards improving the operational conduct of the company with regards to respecting human rights as provided for in the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and other related instruments.

In April 2021 and September 2024, HRCSL carried out monitoring exercises to assess human rights compliance in the operations of the company. In all of these monitoring exercises, HRCSL was informed about the human rights concerns raised by workers. The Commission engaged the management of the company and the Government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security on the findings including but not limited to the following;

- Underpayment of salaries due to conversion discrepancy from USD to Leones, this contravenes ILO 95 (Protection of Wages Convention), SDG 8
- Poor union representation for workers
- Poor hygiene situation in the underground mines, this contravenes Section 145(a) of the Mines and Minerals Development Act 2023, Employment Regulations 2023, Regulation 16, Paragraph C – F, various provisions in the Bill of Rights (UDHR, ICCPR and ECOSOC Rights), African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights
- Non-provision of risk allowance, this contravenes SDG 8, ILO 95 (Protection of Wages Convention)
- Lack of clean and safe drinking water especially for underground miners, this contravenes Section 16 of the Employment Regulations 2023

During separate engagements with the management of the company and MELSS, the company was not in agreement with some of the issues raised but however, maintained to the Commission that they are opened to dialogue in order to resolve same, whilst the Ministry agreed to look into the issues as well.

In March 2022, the Commission conducted four separate capacity building training sessions for Senior, Middle and Junior staff of Koidu Limited and members of the host communities on the “United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and Conflict Resolution”. The aim was to introduce the concept of business and human rights to management and staff of the company and increase human rights compliance in the operations of the company.

On the 13th and 14th March, 2025, due to strike action by local employees of the company, the Commission further conducted fact-finding mission to ascertain the reasons for strike action, document human rights issues and engaged government on same.

On the 18th March, the Commission engaged the MELSS on the findings of the fact-finding mission. The Minister of MELSS informed the Commission that he is aware of the impasse and negotiation was at an advanced stage to resolve the said issue.

Despite all these interventions geared towards improving the human rights situation in the company's operational areas, the Commission is concerned with the degenerating situation between the company and its local employees.

Regrettably, on the 6th May, 2025 the Commission was privy to letters of dismissal from Koidu Limited signed by the Director Mr. Gustaf Fredrik Bodin, pronouncing dismissal of over 900 of its employees. The reason proffered in the letters was that they were dismissed for gross misconduct without notice and it took effect on the last working day of each employee. According to the press release, the company maintained that it has held series of engagements with the affected employees to resolve the said issue but proved futile, hence the dismissal of the staff.

This dismissal affects livelihood related rights for both workers and their families and right to work. The dismissal of the employees also affects their right to end of service benefit and gratuity.

HRCSL continues to reminds government of its human rights obligations to protect, promote and fulfill the rights of everyone in Sierra Leone.

To this effect, HRCSL calls on government through the relevant MDAs to take immediate actions to resolve the impasse between the affected workers and the company so as to ensure the dignity of employees are protected and respected.

HRCSL further reminds Koidu Limited Company of its responsibilities under the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which requires businesses to respect human rights in their operations.

HRCSL continues to assure the general public of its unwavering commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights of all in the country.

Signed:



Chairperson
Patricia Narsu Ndane (Mrs.)

END