



Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL)

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PRESS RELEASE

FREETOWN 10TH APRIL 2023: HRDN-SL CONDEMNS DELIBERATE AND CALCULATED ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENTS

Sierra Leone continues to make progress in the area of maintaining internal security and external security. Both the police and the armed forces have all kept excelling in their various constitutional mandates notwithstanding the numerous challenges they are faced with. The fact remains that the police force has continued to stand the test of modern day policing, since the return of Sierra Leone to multi-party democracy.

The high level of unemployment among youths and adult population coupled with the growing political divide in the evolution of democracy in Sierra Leone has greatly undermined the safety and security of state and individuals and the hard won peace as most of these youths and adults are said to be involved in politically motivated crimes, thieving, armed robbery, drug addiction, anti-social behaviors and organized crimes.

Law enforcement in Sierra Leone is primarily the responsibility of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP). The Sierra Leone Police was established in the Colonial Era by the British in 1894 and remains one of the oldest policing forces in West Africa. The Sierra Leone police have the mandate to prevent crime, protect life and property, detect and prosecute offenders, maintain public order, ensure safety and security, and enhance access to justice.

The August 10, 2022 incident which led to the deaths of Six (06) police officers and 27 civilians and the killing of ASP Mathew Moiwah Gbanya, Regional Coordinator of the Operational Support Division (OSD) in the North-East Regional Headquarter Town of Makeni on 8th April 2023, does not only set a dangerous precedent in the history of democracy in Sierra Leone but also demonstrate the risk law enforcement agents faced in the dispensation of their constitutional mandate.

The network believes that the act of indiscipline and lawlessness under the pretext of political activism and display of political discontent as we move closer to the forthcoming elections undermines not only the

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security of the state, peace and national cohesion but hinders development, investment and the enjoyment of

fundamental human rights.

The network therefore calls for the following actions:

SIERRA LEONE POLICE:

- 1- Investigate the killing of ASP Mathew Moiwah Gbanya and bring perpetrators to justice;
- 2- Strengthen Local Police Partnership Board;
- 3- Monitor social media platforms and robustly enforce the cyber security law.

POLITICAL PARTIES:

- 1- Renew their commitment to the promotion of peace and national cohesion and protection of human rights;
- 2- Denounce political violence and hold supporters accountable.

DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY:

- 1- Support CSO engagement on peaceful elections and national cohesion;
- 2- Maintain impartiality and neutrality on political issues and uphold the tenets of human rights, peace and security.

The Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL) is a coalition of civil society organizations and individuals working to promote and protect human rights with specific focus on defending human rights defenders.

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