

**Statement of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations
in Sierra Leone**

Freetown, 23 June 2020. The United Nations in Sierra Leone is shocked and deeply saddened by the horrendous murder and alleged acts of rape and torture of a five-year old girl, which was reported in Freetown on 17 June. The United Nations in Sierra Leone extends its sincere condolences to the bereaved family and relatives of the young girl.

This brutal act reminds all of us that many children and women in Sierra Leone continue to experience acts of rape and violence in their families and communities. The United Nations in Sierra Leone calls for prompt and full investigation of this incident so that the perpetrator(s) may be brought to justice in accordance with the Amended Sexual Offences Act 2019. We also call for swift investigation and conclusion of all pending cases of violence against women and girls, so justice can be delivered without delay.

Violence against women and girls is one of the greatest human rights violations. In 2019, the Family Support Units under the Sierra Leone Police recorded 3,252 cases of sexual penetration. It is likely that the real figure is higher due to the difficulties women and girls face in reporting cases of violence.

The United Nations commends the efforts exerted by the Government of Sierra Leone in recent months, including the adoption of the male engagement strategy, to prevent sexual and gender-based violence and to support women and girls, who have suffered from such violence. At the same time, we remind all Sierra Leoneans that protection of women and girls is an obligation of the entire society and all efforts should be made by all men and women, independently of their role and position in society, to protect and respect the rights of women and girls, chiefly the right to dignity and life.

The United Nations, therefore, calls on all parts of society – including national and local institutions, local and traditional leaders, and citizens in general – to work together and commit to end all forms of violence against women and girls.

The United Nations in Sierra Leone will continue to support all efforts made by the Government, Police (including the Family Support Units) and Judiciary, among others, to ensure that rights of women and girls are protected, and justice prevails.

