

Sierra Leone Medical and Dental Association

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8th July 2020

H.E. President Julius M. Bio
State House
Freetown
Sierra Leone

Your Excellency,

Re: Disaffections of the Medical Doctors of Sierra Leone

I specially greet you today as I write to acquaint you with the disaffections of medical doctors in Sierra Leone vis-a-vis the present Covid-19 response.

On 25th March 2020, the Executive of the Sierra Leone Medical & Dental Association made a courtesy call to you at State House where we presented ourselves to you. In that meeting we as the executive of the association on behalf of the members of the association, commended you on the proactive measures you had put in place to prepare for the advancement of Covid-19 pandemic to Sierra Leone. We highlighted your statement in your address to the nation on 18th March and I quote **"It is no longer a question of whether the corona virus will come to Sierra Leone, it is a question of when"**. We presented a survey of preparedness of Health facilities to you giving a summary of equipment and infrastructure. The executive also reiterated the commitment of all the doctors to helping fight the virus when it would appear as various members were already working within the EOC in the Level 2 phase and are ready to work in the treatment of the disease.

Your Excellency, in your reply you stated your Government's commitment to improving the healthcare system in Sierra Leone. With regards to the fight against covid-19 your statement was, and I quote **"the fight against covid-19 is a fight for health professionals and not for soldiers with guns"**

Your Excellency we left State House that day elated that we had a Head of State who cared about Healthcare and the Healthcare workers in Sierra Leone. Little did we know then that exactly a week later on 31st March 2020 Sierra Leone had its first (index) case.

Your Excellency, it is now three months into the Covid-19 fight and as Medical doctors we are feeling disaffected/alienated.

An MOU between Government of Sierra Leone and healthcare workers was signed with a three month validity which expired on 30th June 2020. This has been partly honoured by GOSL. The weekly allowances for doctors in Treatment/Isolation Centres are now only being paid after a strike action.

Mr. President, I know you will be told that lists of beneficiaries were not provided. Who should have the lists of it? My question is **How can NACOVERC not know the clinical staff after 3 (three) months ??? Is it the onus of the clinical staff or the administration of NACOVERC ???**

The ill-informed Head of NACOVERC is on record on AYY TV Breakfast Show on Tuesday 7th July making insulting and derogatory remarks against healthcare workers. As the SLMDA we shall seek an apology from him for

the slurs on the characters of the Medical Doctors.

Your Excellency, I sure you have not been properly informed about about lack of drugs and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in the Treatment/Isolation Centres. In some of these facilities, **the healthcare workers buy drugs for patients from their own pocket.**

Are we to be dependent on charitable institutions and members of the public to donate equipment and drugs to these facilities, when we hear and see publications from the Ministry of Finance about monies being paid to the Covid-19 Response ???

In the non-COVID services where risk of infection is extremely high because of the number of asymptomatic cases, there is far from adequate PPE.

There are to date, 6 (six) deaths of Healthcare workers due to Covid-19, 3 (three) doctors, 2 (two) nurses and 1 (one) CHO. All these six people were not working in Treatment/Isolation Centres but were all involved in general services. This shows PPE is very essential for non-COVID services.

Your Excellency, the general perception in this country is that Covid-19 does not exist and is a **ploy by politicians to obtain and misappropriate funds. This view is strengthened when only politicians who people believe are masters of spin, are seen to be talking about Covid-19.**

In present day Sierra Leone there is a wide access to international news media. Everyone sees that all over the world where there is Covid-19, Healthcare Professionals take the lead in informing the general public, but here in Sierra Leone, in the lead are politicians, soldiers, lawyers etc. Your Excellency this has to change or the perception of the people **will not change.**

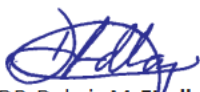
Your Excellency, till today there has been **no word** to the Healthcare workers about life after the expired MOU.

What is happening ?

Your Excellency, I will not end without commending the Hon. Minister of Health Prof. Alpha T. Wurie for the part he played in the introduction of a Special COVID-19 Life Insurance Policy for Healthcare workers. This policy has surpassed what the SLMDA was pushing for.

Your Excellency

Together we can fight COVID-19



DR. Delwin M. Findlay
PRESIDENT