



PR66973



**GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE**  
**PRESS RELEASE**

**SIERRA LEONE REPEALS PART V OF THE PUBLIC ORDER ACT OF 1965.**

In the New Direction Manifesto and in several public statements as President, His Excellency, Dr. Julius Maada Bio made a firm public commitment to repeal the 55-year old criminal and seditious libel law (Part V of the Public Order Act of 1965). The repeal, the President has consistently argued, will unshackle free speech, expand democratic spaces, and consolidate our democracy.

In keeping with this commitment, the President took very bold and courageous steps to secure cabinet approval for the repeal of the Criminal libel law and thereafter tabled it in Parliament through the Ministry of Information and Communications. The Parliament of Sierra Leone has today finally amended the Public Order Act of 1965 (Act No. 46 of 1965) by repealing Part V of that law which deals with criminal libel and also enacted the Independent Media Commission (IMC) Act 2020. The IMC Act 2020 will enhance the professionalization of journalism and make investments in media more attractive.

Members of Parliament, during their respective contributions to the debate, applauded His Excellency, President Dr. Julius Maada Bio for keeping his promise and rescinding the criminal libel law as an old law that has strongly affected the development of the media industry in the country.

"The bold decision by the Bio led government to repeal this legislation is a very promising step that changes the media landscape in Sierra Leone," Minister of Information and Communications, Mohamed Rahman Swaray stated. "We hope that practicing journalists will opt for media professionalism, work with the Independent Media Commission (IMC)



PR66973

to enhance its regulatory powers, and give the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists the civic and moral responsibility to institute self-regulatory systems for their members”, Information and Communications Minister, Mohamed Rahman Swarray opined.

The President of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) Ahmed Nasralla maintained that “following the repeal of the Public Order Act and the introduction of the IMC Act 2020, there will be a more professional and responsible media. Media houses will be encouraged to abide by their editorial guidelines/code of ethics,” he added. He paid glowing tributes to president Bio for keeping his commitment and noted that journalists will justify the trust and confidence reposed in them by practicing more responsible and professional journalism.

-END-



© **INFORMATION DIRECTORATE**

**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS**

**23<sup>RD</sup> JULY, 2020**