

THE NEGATIVE SHADOW CASTED OVER THE COI

The publication of the Commissions of Inquiry reports and the Government White Paper could have been a real victory for the New direction in the fight against corruption and a historic contribution to accountability. Sadly, it is not. Egregious breaches of the principles of natural justice and violations of the fundamental rights of individuals have cast a negative shadow over the findings of the Commissions of Inquiry, especially the Commission chaired by Justice Biobelle George. The names of reputable Sierra Leoneans have been sullied without allowing them to be heard.

Justice Biobelle George clearly misunderstood his mandate and his jurisdiction. He went as far as to find some people guilty of criminal offences under the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, for which he clearly had no powers and sentenced them. In addition, the failure of the Honourable Chief Justice to assign a matter which was brought before the Supreme Court regarding constitutional questions pertaining to section 150 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone has sadly led to the erosion of the rights of many and the disregard for the rule of law.

As a lawyer and past President of the Sierra Leone Bar Association, I stand in solidarity with the many other voices outraged against the violation of due process and the baseless adverse findings made against our senior colleague, Ajibola Manly Spain, and the law firm of Basma and Macaulay. Yes, they have a right of appeal, and I am sure they will exercise it, but their names should not have been besmirched in the first place. Berthan Macaulay Jnr has always been a great senior colleague with a sterling reputation for integrity and sincerity. He is principled and espouses a school of thought. No Commission can smear his good name.

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