



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

Office of the Hon. Minister  
Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs  
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**PRESS RELEASE**

**12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2020.**

The Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (MTCA) is informed with dismay that certain esoteric groups within the North and North-West of Sierra Leone have undermined or violated the current moratorium on masquerading in the Northern Regional Headquarters (Makeni).

It should be noted that Culture could be deemed as a vehicle to foster peace, social cohesion, hence, influencing national unity, and not to serve as political instrument. Over the past two years, the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, in collaboration with its global partners and its constituents, have worked assiduously in developing the infrastructure for Culture. Culture is the most singular instrument that gives a country its identity and unique quality that makes it an entity of its own. Today, Culture and Tourism have made significant impact on the development and prosperity of the world. Therefore, any attempt to abuse Culture for political and ethnic polarization is a disease to the beauty and aesthetic function of Culture.

As a Ministry, we therefore condemn the use of Culture and esoteric groups in obstructing the rolling out of governance in Sierra Leone. We continue to plead that Culture must not and never be used for such purpose.

The Ministry wants to inform the general public that the moratorium is still in force, and that any individual found wanton shall face the full force of the law; since any act that flouts the Public Order Act of 1965 is punishable by law.

It could be recalled that all stakeholders within esoteric groups in the country signed up to a resolution in August, 2018; having held series of meetings and consultations at both the Miatta Conference Center and at MTCA Conference hall respectively. Further, The Ministry of Local Government has had deepened engagement with some of its constituents where guidelines have been approved by government for the operations of esoteric groups and secret societies. These guidelines are yet to be popularized.

In addition to the above, citizens should not lose sight of the current COVID-19 regulations, which restrict certain amount of gatherings and the use of face masks as part of the many preventive measures against the deadly decease as prescribed by global health experts.

Let us hasten to remind the general public that there are guiding principles with regards the operations of culture and cultural groups enshrined in various UNESCO conventions and the National Cultural Policy for Sierra Leone which include but not limited to:

- Preservation, protection and promotion of our culture for tourism and development purposes.

- Linking cultural policies to national development policies
- Consultations, involvements and participations.
- Employment creation, income generation and poverty alleviation
- Partnerships with the private sector and civil societies
- Cultural Rights and Related Rights
- Cultural impact assessment

The Ministry wants to also inform the general public that even when the said law/ban would have been lifted; there are processes and procedures that should be followed within the ambits of national esoteric guilds or associations and the laws of our beloved country.

Therefore, these processes and procedures should be followed in the future in order to avoid any form of embarrassment and/or chaos.

**YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!**



Signed.....

Memunatu B. Pratt (Dr.)

Hon. Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs