



ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC)
MOTTO: ACTION PROGRESS COMMITMENT

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Our Ref:		Your Ref:		30 th March, 2021

STATEMENT BY THE ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS ON THE CONTINUED INTIMIDATION OF THE MAYOR OF FREETOWN

We write to bring to your attention the continued political intimidation meted out by the central government and their proxies against the duly elected Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyer and the Freetown City Council since she took office in May 2018.

Specifically, we chronologically present instances which have culminated in what we view as an attempt to remove the Mayor of Freetown from office following a leaked audio of a private and doctored version of a conversation of the Mayor that has been taken out of context and for which she had apologised to those who might have been hurt by misconstruing the context. The party is mindful of the tribal sentiments discussed around the said audio by some of our compatriots and as a national party that comprises of all tribes we totally condemn tribalism in any form and would not tolerate any group of people that will use tribalism to score political points.

First, in August 2018, following ongoing altercations with hooligans at the SLPP party office, Mayor Aki-Sawyer was physically assaulted with a wooden object by SLPP party thugs resulting in a hospital visit and her hand being put in a sling. No perpetrators were ever brought to justice.

Again in August 2018, due to ongoing assaults, Freetown City Council built a wall separating the SLPP Party headquarters from the FCC building to ensure a sense of safety and security especially for female staff and councilors who were being threatened with rape.

In September 2018, she was verbally assaulted and publicly harassed by the then Deputy Minister of Local Government Hon. Tondoneh following the Mayor's refusal to approve payment for national cleaning day vehicles due to the lack of transparency and accountability in the process.

In January 2020, the Freetown City Council came under attack from SLPP thugs who operate at the party office. The Council building was stoned on the evening of Sunday 26th January 2020 and on Monday 27th January 2020 staff and councilors were threatened by SLPP youth carrying sticks, bottles and cutlasses. Female staff and councilors continued to be threatened with rape. The Mayor wrote a formal letter of complaint to the Minister of Internal Affairs on Thursday 30th January 2020, to which no response was ever received.

In April 2020, a transfer station financed by DfID and being built for the Freetown City Council in New England was vandalized and partly demolished by the then Minister of Lands, Dr. Dennis Sandy along with soldiers.

In June 2020, the Government of Sierra Leone stopped Freetown City Council from collecting property rates for 8 months under pretext of formulating and approving guidelines in Parliament. The guidelines, though formulated, have neither been approved by Parliament nor enforced by the Ministry and discriminatory treatment is only against FCC and does not apply to other Councils.

The latest attempts to politically intimidate Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, follows on from an armed attack on her last week Tuesday 23rd March 2021, a matter which was reported to the Sierra Leone Police and more than a week later, no update on investigations have been provided. On Friday 26th March 2021, her personal bodyguard from the Sierra Leone Police, who has over 10 years of experience was abruptly withdrawn without notice or explanation. On Monday 29th March 2021, a new personal bodyguard was posted to the Mayor without the courtesy to discuss the reason for the sudden replacement. This new bodyguard joined the Sierra Leone Police in 2020, has just passed out of training and has no experience at all of serving as a personal bodyguard. This is a cause for concern for her safety.

It is against this backdrop that we deem unacceptable the veiled threat issued through a public notice from the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development on 29th March, 2021, which states that they are studying a leaked audio from a private conversation of the Mayor of Freetown as "it may have far-reaching implications that can undermine national cohesion, peace and security." We view this as part of a consistent pattern in which the SLPP Government continue to undermine our hard won but still fragile democracy and to intimidate opponents. Our ethos in the APC as a national party is to condemn tribalism, regionalism and mediocrity in all forms. The APC party will never condone such retrogressive ideas as a peace-loving party.

Equally the APC party will continue to encourage women to hold high offices and to operate freely without threat to their security and harassment. This ongoing pattern needs to stop in the face of the rapid transformation and development under the leadership of Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr that has been brought to the Freetown Municipality.

The APC party will stand alongside Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr and any person whose life is threatened and harassment meted against in the sphere of doing their constitutional and statutory functions.

The foregoing paragraphs provide many examples of serious matters that have affected the Mayor of Freetown in respect of which no comments or investigations have been made by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Any attempt by Ministry of Local Government to undermine national cohesion, peace and security by supporting and promoting the misrepresentation of the Mayor's views and actions, will be resisted by the All Peoples Congress.

Signed: 

Amb. Dr. Alhaji Osman Foday Yansaneh
National Secretary General - APC