

SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY



One Country One People.

Press Statement

Incendiarism and Hate Speech by the Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki Sawyerr OBE

Wednesday March 31 2021.

The Secretariat of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party has taken note of mainstream and social media being awash with audio recordings of the Mayor of the Freetown Municipality, in which she brazenly demonstrated unacceptable practise in our beloved country.

The Secretariat has also taken note of the fall-out from the unacceptable behaviour of the Mayor especially her incendiary and hate speech against a section of residents of Freetown.

After keenly listening to the five different audios, transcribing the words in to English, having our team of Linguists, Psychologists, Anthropologists, Sociologists, Political Scientists and Security Experts analyse the contents and then advise the Secretariat, the SLPP Secretariat wishes to make the following statements:

1. The Mayor of Freetown Mrs. Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr let herself and the very decent people in her party, down;
2. Mayor Yvonne Aki Sawyerr's vitriolic attacks against a particular tribe are atavistic and have no space in present day Sierra Leone because such Incendiarism and Hate messages are a recipe for chaos, insecurity and instability;
3. The Mayor displayed utmost arrogance, poor leadership and bad management skills in her revealing words spoken in the Audios including a display lack of trust and lack of respect for her colleagues and co-workers.
4. The Mayor made very frivolous comments that are highly derogatory, defamatory and condescending of His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio and the State House;
5. The Mayor uttered very contemptible words she is claiming to be a representation of views of the International Community and Donor Partners concerning the governance of Sierra Leone;

6. The Mayor informed Sierra Leoneans that she has been using the Freetown City Council as a platform to sabotage the current Government in a bid to not only undermine the SLPP chances of working successfully in the Capital City but with an over-arching aim to ensure the SLPP-led Government loses support "all over the country";

7. Contrary to the Mayor's interview with the pro-APC Radio Kopoyoh, it cannot be true that the audios were leaked by SLPP supporters working at the Freetown City Council. The evidence within the Audios themselves shows otherwise;

8. The Audios have revealed that the ongoing malicious divisions creating factional sides within the APC has extended to the Freetown City Council;

9. The APC and the Mayor of Freetown have once again resorted to their trade mark of needlessly blaming the SLPP with false accusations. This has been the nefarious pattern of Yvonne Aki Sawyerr ever since she took up office as Mayor.

THE WIDER PICTURE:

10. What has happened here is a clear attempt by the Mayor to undermine the SLPP and the current Government, which is a clear attempt to

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10. What has stunned many decent Sierra Leoneans is her sentence which we quote to be:
“When me tell Mr. Kemokai say do so, he tell me say BUWAA BISIEH, No!”

11. Buwaa in Mende means "I greet you well" and Bisieh means "I thank you for greeting me." It is like As-salamu-alaykum and the response of Wa-alaykumu-salam in Arabic language.

12. Combining the two words (Buwaa and Bisieh) together in the manner in which it was done by the Mayor makes no linguistic sense but since time immemorial, it is combined and thrown out of the tongue of Bigots, as a form of ridicule of the Mendes.

13. So the Mayor combining the greeting and the response to be one phrase was a clear pejorative reference to the Mende people.

14. Further, Sierra Leoneans believe that there was no need for the reference to the Mende tribal language when the Mayor spoke of her fear of insubordination of the said Mr. Kemokai. If Mr. Kemokai or any of the Freetown City Council staff show insubordination to the Mayor, there are disciplinary guidelines to be followed so Sierra Leoneans are shocked at why the Mende language reference when discussing insubordination?

15. Why was Mr. Kemokai's Mende tribal language an issue in a matter of the Mayor having suspicions of insubordination from a staff of hers? Is the Mayor saying any Mende man is automatically to be suspected? Then what about all the Mendes living in Freetown who had voted for her to become their Mayor?

16. This brings us to the next serious position of the Mayor in the audios. According to the Mayor, when the Vice President of the World Bank sent her an SMS text to speak on an issue relating to Freetown City Council, she was busy with Parliament that day and had to send

someone else to speak with the World Bank but according to her, she looked at the entire core members of staff and elected local councillors including her own Deputy Mayor from her own APC party and she said none of them had the required competencies to speak with the World Bank so she did not send them to speak with the World Bank.

17. The Deputy Mayor and the vast majority of Freetown City Councillors are from her own APC party so the SLPP is bemused with the Mayor putting down her Deputy Mayor and Local Councillors as having low academic acumen or lacking required competence to speak with the World Bank.

18. We are further concerned because we note that the Chief Administrator of the Freetown City Council, Mr. Festus Kallay, is a highly qualified Sierra Leone gentleman. Mr. Festus Kallay is a university graduate with several post graduate qualifications including a Masters degree. So it appears Mr. Festus Kallay, even though he heads the entire Administration of Freetown City Council, was just not 'competent' to speak to the World Bank simply because Festus Kallay is a Mende man who uses "Buwaa Bisieh" words.

19. The SLPP believes there can be no other explanation for why the Mayor did not ask Festus Kallay, as Head of Administration, to speak to the World Bank on Freetown City Council matters except for the fact that Mr. Kallay is a speaker of "Buwaa and Bisieh" Mende language.

20. Her benign apology and feeble attempt at defending her unfortunate utterances only betrayed her real intent and exposed her as a tribal bigot;

21. **“I have every right to do whatever I damn well want”** says Mayor Yvonne Aki Sawyerr in one of the leaked Audios. However, let it be known to her that it is not her "damn" right to deprive qualified Sierra Leoneans from working at the Freetown City Council simply because they speak "Buwaa and Bisieh" Mende language.

22. The Mayor displayed streaks of utmost arrogance, poor leadership and bad management skills when she stated that she did not trust anyone to manage the Council finances in her absence so when she travels, there will be no financial disbursements or payments until she returns. That is a classic sign of an uncontrolled dictator.

23. Respect for Laws and Authority is imperative on all citizens irrespective of status in society. However, Yvonne Aki Sawyerr, since she took office, has consistently overstepped her bounds with lawlessness. For example, Yvonne Aki Sawyerr lawlessly waded into the functions of the Local Government Service Commission vis-a-vis recruitment of core council staff. Recruitment by LGSC and all other state institutions is non partisan, but based purely on merits.

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24. The leaked audio discussions clearly show it was a closed door meeting of ONLY the Mayor and APC local councillors but whom were repeatedly said in the audios to belong to various factions of the APC that are fighting for and against the Mayor. Clearly, from the transcript, it is clear that ONLY APC political people were in that room because the Mayor

was even telling them that they are all going to be running for re-election next year. They also asked to close the door as it was frank talk amongst themselves. They also spoke of them all being APC but belonging to different sides of APC and the Mayor was even asking some of the APC if they all belonged to her own side in the APC. She then warns one "Mr. Aruna" that if the other APC side continues to fight her and she fails, then it is APC that has failed. She also made it clear it was an APC only discussion. With all the overwhelming evidence that it was a purely APC discussion, so how does SLPP come in to be accused as having leaked the Audios? Clearly, the intra-APC camps are fighting themselves and one side opposed to the Mayor's camp, leaked the audios

OUR CALLS/APPEALS:

25. The SLPP is appealing to all Mendes and party supporters to not be inflamed by Mayor Yvonne Aki Sawyerr's tribal rhetorics;

26. The SLPP is demanding an unreserved apology from Yvonne Aki Sawyerr to the people of this country generally and to Mendes in particular.

27. In addition, we call on Yvonne Aki Sawyerr to issue an unreserved public Apology to His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio who has shown her so much respect and tremendously supported her in her work as Mayor; only to now learn the shocking extent to which she confesses she had been deceiving his Government and sabotaging him to lose support.

28. We call on the Ministry of Local Government to institute an immediate investigation into the past three years of the Freetown City Council to ascertain the extent to which the deliberate tribal bigotry and partisan sabotage may have gone and to take remedial steps to cure the cancer.

29. The Mayor made very frivolous comments claiming to be a representation of views of the International Community. The SLPP believes the Mayor's claims were swaggering braggadocio to mislead gullible APC councillors in that closed door APC discussions. However, out of an abundance of caution, we call on the Office of the Vice President to engage the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to seek clarity from them on the scoffing words of the Mayor of Freetown that she has information that the MCC Compact which Sierra Leone recently won, is a pipe dream that will never happen.

30. We also call on the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs to engage with our country's Development Partners and the International Community to seek clarity from them about the wild boasts of the Freetown Mayor in respect of their conversation with her.

31. We call on the All Peoples Congress (APC) party to refrain from baseless accusations launched at the SLPP which is the victim in these unfortunate developments.

32. We call on the APC to try to speedily settle their bitter internecine warfare amongst themselves that has spread to the Freetown City Council.

33. We call on the authors of press statements, social media postings and tweets, to take a pause and listen to the five leaked audios plus read the English transcripts of the utterances of Mayor Yvonne Aki Sawyerr. We believe they will then rethink their public defense of her unfortunate and reprehensible statements in those leaked audios.

THE DISAPPOINTING APC PRESS RELEASE.

34. We are particularly disappointed at the unfortunate press release put out by the APC Secretary General Osman Foday Yansaneh in which he has attempted to vilify the SLPP and the SLPP led Government in the APC's attempt to justify the act of the Mayor. For the benefit of the public, let us state the following for all to know who the real offender is.

35. The facts show that His Excellency President Bio has supported this particular Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki Sawyerr, more than any other President in recent times (including his immediate predecessor) has supported previous sitting Mayors of Freetown. For example, President Bio graciously invited Mayor Aki Sawyerr to accompany him on two of his international trips including to his TED TALK in Canada in 2019.

36. In August 2018, the Government overlooked her breach of the laws when she unilaterally took upon herself to build a wall that blocked a public pathway without even seeking a Building Permit.

37. In August 2018, the Mayor claimed that she was attacked by an unknown, strange man holding a wooden object as she rode by in her vehicle around the SLPP offices but even her Council's Metropolitan Police officers at the scene never saw the attack happening thus creating a dilemma for the Police investigators. In the end, the Mayor asked the Police to drop the investigation into the mystery man with the wooden object.

38. Government and the SLPP analysed her behaviour and came to the conclusion that she needed some attention and so she was treated gently with understanding that she is an hypersensitive lady. The SLPP and Government then started to make several confidence-building visits to her at the Freetown City Council; one such visit was led by the Minister of Political Affairs and the Secretary General of the SLPP.

39. Recently, she has again alleged of being attacked by several unknown men with knives along the Beach but the men ran away when she told them she is the Mayor. This can only mean, if the attack really took place, the fact that the men ran away when she identified herself, then she was not specifically targeted for an attack because of who she is. However, our understanding is that the Police are perplexed at the paucity of information she provided to them about the said mysterious attack she said happened to her on the Beach at 6am in the morning.

40. In January 2020, the Mayor told a local journalist Amadu Lamrana Bah that she was under attack by SLPP members only to later recant and deny that she never told the journalist that when it was discovered that she was nowhere near her office during the purported attack and siege.

41. In September 2018, the Mayor without consultations, singlehandedly decided to withhold part of the funds given to her by the SLPP-led Government that were meant for the payment of 120 cleaning trucks. This created sabotage of the Cleaning Process which led to her supervising Cabinet Minister, Honourable Tondoneh, to query her act as being a deliberate sabotage.

42. In April 2020, the Transfer Station referred to in the APC press release, was actually built on Private Property owned by a famous Freetown family called The Multi-Kamaras which was headed by a famous Temne Leader, Chief Multi-Kamara of blessed memory. One of the senior members of that Family is Ambassador Multi-Kamara. He is a strong member of the Mayor's own APC party and he served as former Ambassador to China under the erstwhile APC Government of President Koroma. Ambassador Multi-Kamara went to file a formal complaint against the Freetown City Council at the Ministry of Lands about an illegal encroachment in to the Multi-Kamara family land. The Lands Ministry then ordered the Council to stop all construction on the alleged private property until the matter was investigated. The Council paid no heed to the Orders to stop work which led to the enforcement of the Lands Ministry Order by State Security. The Multi Kamara Family have since produced all their documents for the said property showing the Council had no claim to the property. The Mayor of Freetown acted most improperly and yet again, the Central Government looked the other way as she was a Woman.

43. The SLPP has practised inclusive governance and has not discriminated against anyone because of their political association. For example, His Excellency the President took a personal decision to appoint the father of the Mayor, Professor Hector Morgan, to be his personal representative at the University of Sierra Leone as his Pro-Chancellor. This clearly shows that there is no animosity against Mayor Yvonne Aki Sawyerr as is being purported cheaply by the APC Secretary General Alhaji Osman Foday Yansaneh in his unfortunate press release of 30th March 2021.

44. The SLPP under President Bio has a proven record of encouraging Women to hold high offices both locally and internationally. Our record surpasses that of the APC so much so that one of the most senior women of the APC, Haja Zainab Hawa Bangura who is currently a very senior United Nations official, recently issued a global statement to praise the Leader of the SLPP, His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio for his unprecedented strides in the empowerment of Sierra Leone Women. The SLPP therefore finds it disingenuous and unfortunate for the APC to accuse the SLPP of discouraging Women from operating freely without threat.

45. The Mayor has a Freetown City Metropolitan Police unit under her mandate and full control. They are a fully empowered Police Unit with powers to apprehend and arrest as well as to secure. So the Mayor does not lack professional police protection. It is another disingenuous claim of the APC in that release.

Finally, the SLPP Secretariat is releasing the English transcriptions of all the five leaked audios alongside this Press Statement. The audios and transcribed words are really

disheartening. However, we call on all Sierra Leoneans to continue to respect and cherish our hard won peace. Also, the APC cannot hide behind the cloak of a 'threat to resist' to defend this unfortunate act of the Mayor of our municipality. There should be no need for street demonstrations. There are legal policies and processes to be followed should in case the Mayor refuses to adhere to the calls of the nation.

Long live Sierra Leone!
Long live SLPP!
ONE COUNTRY, ONE PEOPLE!

Signed
Umaru Napoleon Koroma.
National Secretary General.