



Campaign for Good Governance
16 Clark Street, Tengbeh Town
Freetown, Sierra Leone
West Africa

STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Freetown, 13th April 2021: GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE TO TAKE URGENT ACTION TO ADDRESS INCREASING LEVELS OF POLICE BRUTALITY!

Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) is seriously worried and disturbed over the continued display of excessive force by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) in response to protests/demonstrations in Sierra Leone. We note with incredible dismay the high-handed and unprofessional conduct of some personnel of the response team dispatched to quell the student demonstration at the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) on Monday 12th April, 2021.

We are particularly shocked by the public stripping and extent of police brutality against a female student awaiting final result of the said institution during the operation. We wish to unequivocally state that such acts of violence by the SLP are unacceptable and a complete breach of human rights standards irrespective of the circumstances that precipitated the assault and battery. We also wish to inform the SLP, who are meant to be the custodian of our laws, that the conduct of their personnel amounts to gender-based violence, an issue which the President himself has stated his commitment.

CGG's investigations reveal that the demonstration by the students were triggered by serious administrative lapses with regard the omission in a published list for the conferment of degrees, names of students who have successfully completed their course and complied with all the accompanying administrative processes for conferment.

While we acknowledge that there are other legitimate avenues to be utilized by students for channeling of such grievances, we also note the lapses within the institutional arrangement that triggered the student response though unjustified.

Police brutality continues to be commonplace in Sierra Leone and we have not witnessed any serious action taken by government to investigate and hold accountable those who are found wanton of such acts of violence. Rather, citizens have always been the focus of accountability, an application of justice we perceive to be selective in all its forms and nature. While force is legitimate in curbing riotous conduct, international human rights standards have prescribed rules on the proportionality of force to be used for such operations and these rules must be respected.

In light of the above and the many incidences of the use of excessive force by the SLP, we call on the government, the leadership of the SLP and the Independent Police Complaint Board to take appropriate action. These Police officers in question must be immediately suspended pending an investigation into the incident and hold to account all personnel found wanting of this act of brutality on the female student so as to deter future unprofessional conduct by police personnels.

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We also urge the Leadership of the University of Sierra Leone and IPAM administration to investigate the administrative lapses that triggered the demonstration and ensure systems including effective complaints and response mechanisms are put in place to build student confidence and trust in the administration so as to prevent a reoccurrence of such demonstrations.

Finally, CGG calls on all students to exercise caution and to channel their grievances through the prescribed institutional redress mechanisms and desist from any further uproar that would cause violence. CGG will continue to monitor the situation.

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