



Sierra Leone Medical and Dental Association

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PRESS RELEASE

The Sierra Leone Medical and Dental Association (SLMDA) would like to express its total dissatisfaction with statements made by the Minister of Health and Sanitation in media interviews on Thursday the 15th of April, 2021 and the press release issued by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS) on Friday, the 16th of April, 2021. The statements and press release do not address the demands made by SLMDA over the past several days and attempt to castigate both SLMDA as an association and Dr Catherine Jackson Cole personally and professionally.

The Sierra Leone Medical and Dental Association views with greatest distress the incident that occurred on the 13th of April 2021 at the Connaught Hospital where one of our members, Dr Catherine Jackson-Cole was physically assaulted by a group of people including the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Minister 1 of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, and the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation Sierra

Leone (MOHS SL). She sustained injuries due to physical assault as a means of intimidation for highlighting the truth of the current events at the Connaught hospital through audio-visual media. On this fateful day, the rights that Medical Doctors have to be protected by the MOHS was outrightly violated publicly via senior officials of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation Sierra Leone. Dr Catherine Jackson-Cole was asked to stop recording the chaos that was occurring of the cleaners on strike.

She acted as a concerned citizen and Medical Doctor whose fiduciary duty is not only to heal patients but call attention to change and factors that undermine the health of patients like the unhealthy environment in Connaught. Even though she was not recording any material which could jeopardize national security, nudity nor included the abuse of minors. She stopped and kept her phone in her pocket on demand to stop recording events at the scene. Furthermore, infringing into her rights, she was threatened by officials to delete the said media which she refused. After which she was physically assaulted by same officials until she sustained injuries on her left elbow. She was threatened to be removed from the payroll immediately and a derogatory remark was made about her as a woman.

The assault on Dr Catherine Jackson Cole is totally unacceptable. SLMDA views this incident as an assault and act of violence against women, violation of human rights as provided for by the Sierra Leone constitution, the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, and The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) that Sierra Leone is also a part of. As an association, we work with victims of sexual and gender-based violence. It is rather unfortunate that one of our members is a victim of violence against women. We strongly condemn all acts of violence against all medical Doctors in Sierra Leone.

Our demands to the MOHS are aimed at ensuring justice for our colleague and immediately addressing the sanitary conditions at Connaught Hospital.

As we continue with our strike action, we still stand firmly with our colleague and reiterate our demands that:

1. The MOHS officials who assaulted or were involved in the assault of Dr Jackson Cole **be suspended**.
2. An open, transparent public investigation be conducted into the incident by an **independent body and necessary disciplinary actions taken**.
3. The MOHS officials who assaulted Dr Jackson-Cole **publicly apologise to her**.
4. The sanitary condition of Connaught Hospital and other hospitals is addressed **without delay and in a sustainable manner**, and an inquiry be made into the Connaught Hospital management.

The SLMDA is calling on all its members to remain calm as solutions are sought to our demands.

In addition, we are also calling all persons and organizations that support the rights of women and protect the rights of civil servants for their support and intervention so that this grievous situation is mediated and corrected promptly.

We eagerly want to return to our patients and offer loving care in a clean and safe environment free of bullying and prejudice.

Signed:



Dr Delwin M. Findlay
President SLMDA



Dr Samba Jalloh
General Secretary SLMDA

Signed:

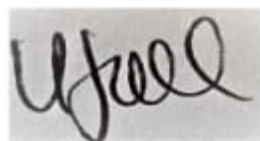


Dr Olabisi Claudius-Cole
President SLMWA



Dr Ruth Taylor
P.R.O SLMWA

Signed:



Dr Unisa Jalloh
President JUDASIL



Dr Joseph G. Conteh
Secretary General JUDASIL

