



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SANITATION
4TH FLOOR, YOUYI BUILDING
BROOKFIELDS, FREETOWN
PRESS RELEASE #3

Issue at Connaught Hospital

Freetown, Sunday, 18th April 2021: The Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) is very disappointed at the content of the press release issued by the Sierra Leone Medical and Dental Association (SLMDA) on Saturday 17th April 2021 regarding the incident that occurred at Connaught Hospital on Tuesday April 13th 2021.

A meeting to find common ground and a way forward was convened on Thursday, 15th April at the MoHS headquarters, Youyi Building. The engagement was very interactive as representatives from SLMDA, Junior Doctors Association of Sierra Leone, Female Doctors of Sierra Leone, and Civil Society Organisation all made very important contributions and agreed on the following:

- that MoHS should make a public apology for the disruption of healthcare services.
- that MoHS should also urgently constitute an independent body to embark on a fair and transparent process of investigating what transpired.
- that the body should submit a formal report for appropriate actions

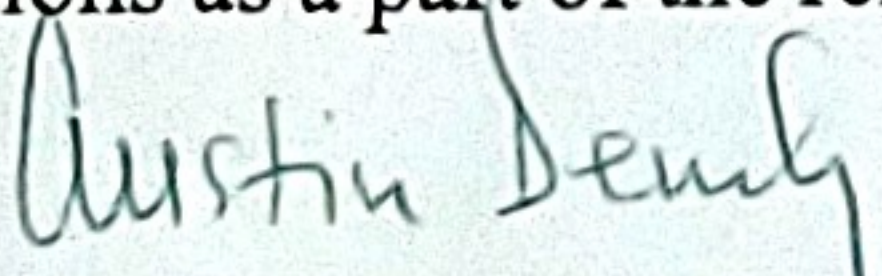
The meeting also emphasized the need to expeditiously resolve the hospital sanitation issues. To that end, all of these key points were captured in the MoHS Press Release of Friday April 16th, 2021.

The Ministry is, therefore, disturbed that without reference to all those genuine efforts the SLMDA could describe our interactions as “*bullying and intimidation*” in their press release, especially when we agreed that the matter should be investigated by an independent body. Even as we work on addressing the accusations levelled against senior MoHS staff, we should never lose sight of the millions of Sierra Leoneans whose lives remain in jeopardy without the services of healthcare professionals.

We want to caution the SLMDA that there exist divergent views from eyewitnesses of the said incident. We do not expect the SLMDA to be the *judge, jury, and executioner* while at the same time asking for an independent investigation. As a nation, we subscribe to and faithfully adhere to our treaty obligations and international arrangements, but we also take very seriously the notion of due process.

We should never let patients pay a price with their lives as we investigate accusations of wrongdoing. Doctors play a vital role in our lives and that role comes with the responsibility of putting the lives of their patients first. The continued withholding of services orchestrated by the SLMDA cannot address patient care needs, which the association of doctors should prioritize.

However, if doctors continued to withhold their services, even after actions haven been taken to constitute an independent body to investigate, we will consider that as a lack of good faith on the part of the SLMDA. Therefore, as a supervisory ministry, we will be left with no option but to consider urgent administrative actions as a part of the remedy.


AUSTIN DEMBY (DR.)
MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SANITATION