

**\*PRESS RELEASE\***  
**Black Johnson Land Owners Group 11th May 2021**

We are still trying to establish the authenticity of the press release purported to be from Hon. Emma Kowa Jalloh (Madam) Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources on 10th May, 2021 (below). We have typed this document up in order to make it legible and have an electronic form because we only have this jpeg picture of the document. It is the same jpeg that has been circulating on social media. We have requested an electronic copy to forward to our lawyers.

We received a copy of this document yesterday afternoon from a person who claims to work as a consultant to the World Bank on the West Africa Regional Fisheries Project in 9 countries of Ghana to Mauritania and now a GEF supplementary project in Sierra Leone.

We were informed that they were part of the evaluation team that refused government proposals to develop Black Johnson as an alternative fisheries harbour to Freetown. At that time detailed surveys were carried out all the land around. The site did not pass environmental screening under World Bank procedures.

To be clear we have not yet received a response to our open letter to H.E. President Julius Maada Bio. It is possible that his ministers are making deals that he is not aware of. We urge H.E. President Julius Maada Bio to respond to our letter as soon as possible. Hopefully he will show leadership in the matter and put it to rest once and for all. The world is watching!

**Our response**

We thought it best to deal with the issues the Minister's Press Release raises paragraph by paragraph. Our responses are numbered to reflect the Paragraph in her Press Release. E.G. The first paragraph is 1 Our response to that is 1r.

We have completely duplicated the original letter including any mistakes or typos.

**1** The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources has read social media reports about a fish mill to be located at the Black Johnson community. The unfounded reports even purport land grabbing from genuine owners by the government for said facility.

**1r** I am one of the land owners and one of the drafters and editors of the **\*Press Release 9th May 2021\* Black Johnson Beach to be turned into a toxic industrial fish-meal factory.** I can confirm that we were given this information first hand at the Ministry of Surveys and Lands last Thursday 06 May 2021.

We were informed that it was not possible to challenge this decision because it was an order from the Government. We have also been told the Army and Police have been alerted to stand by if enforcement is needed.

I am happy to swear an affidavit to this effect and/ or testify in any court in Sierra Leone or internationally to this effect.

I am recognised as Officer of the Court in the UK and have been for more than 40 years.

We only discovered this information by a coincidence of fate. I felt we had no alternative given the secrecy with which this has been carried out but to take it into the public arena. This was because of the potentially devastating impact on the environment and people of the area of this proposal.

**2** The MFMR wishes the general public to know that the facility to be constructed is a Fish Harbour not a Fish Mill as portrayed by the social media writers. The objective of the Fish Harbour is to centralise fishing activities. The government of Sierra Leone has been yearning for a Fish Harbour since the early 1970s, but could not actualise it due to the huge amount of money that is required. With the new shift in government policy for the development of the fisheries sector, the Chinese government has given a grant of \$55m to build this platform.

**2r** My own credentials for accurate written reports are well documented and verifiable.

Published materials include:

One of the named writers of The Report of the Constitutional Review Committee, Sierra Leone  
The Houses of Commons and Lords Libraries UK Independent Evaluation

UNHCR Geneva Quality Initiative Audit

Report for the Home Office (UK)

Report for the Ministry of Interior Republic of Benin.

We have been informed by a reliable source that previously an evaluation team commissioned by the World Bank refused government proposals to develop Black Johnson as an alternative fisheries harbour to Freetown. The site did not pass environmental screening under World Bank procedures.

This leads to the question about whether an Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as required by the ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AGENCY ACT, 2008, Sections 23 and 24 and the First and Second Schedule.

This must be made a public document.

You claim that the proposal is only for a fish harbour and we will deal in more detail with that below at paragraph 3. Please make your plans available to the public in the interest of transparency.

**3** The Fish Harbour will provide the facility for Tuna Vessels and other bigger fishing vessels to anchor. It will also increase fish stock in the country whilst simultaneously increasing our capacity for export to international markets. The facility will comprises a waste management component which will involve recycling of marine and other wastes into useful products. The strategic relevance of the Fish Harbour does not only include revenue generation and job creation, but it will also build the capacity of Sierra Leoneans in vessel repairs and maintenance.

**3r a)** Tuna fishing and other bigger fishing vessels like trawlers are extremely damaging to the local fishing environment. They are known to destroy local artisanal fishing which is the mainstay of food for people in that vicinity. They damage the ecosystem and breeding grounds of the many different species currently in those waters. They pollute the waters with dead fish "by product" i.e. Fish that is not lucrative for them to process and sell. Some of the main fish

that local people in that area depend upon for food. They are a disaster for protected species of turtles, porpoise, dolphins and whales.

**3r b)** Please can you be explicit about what you mean by “a waste management component which will involve recycling of marine and other wastes into useful products”. This is the same description given to the fish-meal farms that have been established in Gambia where fish are ground down to make fish pellets for farmed fish, and animal feed.

There are many documentaries and reports available detailing this and other problems. It is very useful to look carefully at what has happened to a near neighbour country, Gambia.

**4** For technical reasons, Black Johnson was the most suitable place for construction of the facility in terms of bathymetry, social safeguards (minimum resettlement cost) and environmental issues. The Ministry of Finance had put aside a compensation package of Le 13.76 billion for the affected land owners, after the ministry of land had secured 252 acres space for the Fish Harbour. Compensation to land owners however should be strictly by the production of authentic documents for ownership of the land within the space required.

**4r** You say that Le 13.76 billion has been put aside for compensation but this only equates to approximately Le 5,460,000 per Town Lot. This is not adequate compensation for the land which would be in breach of Section 21 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone.

Relating to the matter of compensation in circumstances where it is decided to take the land compulsorily the Constitution of Sierra Leone 21(1) b.ii of demands that the government must secure the right of access to a court or other independent authority for the determination of their interest, the legality of taking the property, the amount of compensation and the speed at which that compensation must be paid.

I hereby put you on formal notice that I do want to secure access to an independent arbiter for these issues.

**5** The government is a people-orientated one and will not do anything inimical to the interest of the people. The Ministry of Fisheries has been proactive to meet the market demand for fish. Since 2018, government has increased local fish landing to %40 from the previous %30. This is intended to insure the regular supply of fish which is a (main? Obscured by stamp) source of protein, to the local market. Several other measures have been instituted to sanitise the industry and improve the livelihoods of our people.

**5r** The people of Sierra Leone need to know exactly what is proposed in this area. Section 21 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone only allows for the compulsory acquisition of property where **“it is necessary in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality, public health, town and country planning, the development or utilization of any property in such a manner as to promote the public benefit or the public welfare of citizens of Sierra Leone.”**

Destroying the main protein source of the local area is not promoting the public benefit or welfare.

The Feb 2021 ONCHR submission to the United Nations Human rights Council examination of Sierra Leone's human rights record - which is being held tomorrow Wednesday - includes a recommendation from UN Sierra Leone.

13. The United Nations country team noted that there had been several instances of violent protests involving local young people, landowners and farmers against large-scale agricultural investment companies and mining companies over the use and ownership of land and/or compensation rights.<sup>24</sup> It recommended that the Government ensure that informed consent was given by the communities concerned prior to any investment in their land.<sup>25</sup>

Hon. Emma Kowa Jalloh (Madam)  
Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources  
10th May, 2021

Black Johnson Land Owners Group  
The world is watching  
11th May 2021

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**\*ENDS\***