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CONDEMN MANDATORY VACINATION TO ACCESS PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN SIERRA LEONE

The Network appreciates the government strategic response to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in country and particularly measures put in place by the National Emergency COVID-19 Response Center (NACOVERC) to control the transmission, infection and spread of the virus. We also acknowledged the cooperation from the citizens to comply with the government response measures under difficult circumstances.

In his recent Call to Action for Human Rights to put human rights at the heart of UN actions, including in times of crisis, the Secretary-General underlined that: *our shared human condition and values must be a source of unity, not division. We must give people hope and a vision of what the future can hold. The human rights system helps us to meet the challenges, opportunities and needs of the 21st century; to reconstruct relations between people and leaders; and to achieve the global stability, solidarity, pluralism and inclusion on which we all depend. It points to the ways in which we can transform hope into concrete action with real impact on people's lives. It must never be a pretext for power or politics; it is above both*

The Network note with grave concerns over National COVID-19 Emergency Response Centre (NACOVERC) "Public Notice on Measures to Curb COVID-19 Third Wave" dated 17th June 2021 that Section 5 of the public notice does not only undermine the UN Secretary General's call but a gross violation of the rights to freedom of movement, Labour rights and ethical consideration for collateral damages where there is mandatory vaccination. Although restrictive/coercive measures may be justified in certain situations, they can backfire if applied in heavy-handed, disproportionate way and thereby under mining the whole pandemic response itself.

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Unfortunately, neither Parliament, civil society organizations including human rights defenders have rarely been consulted in the process of designing or reviewing appropriate measures of response and in several cases the processes through which such laws and regulations have been passed have been questionable nor their human rights implications have been fully considered. In many cases, it appears these measures are being enforced in a discriminatory manner, with poor and vulnerable individuals and communities, constituting prime targets. Section 5 of the recent NACOVERC public Notice of 17th June 2021 suggests that the citizens are the **THREATS** but NOT THE VIRUS. Section 5 of the public notice is being enforced by MDAs as well as Sierra Leone Commercial Bank and Bank of Sierra Leone by restricting entrance without vaccine card.

It is vital that both the process and the substance of any new measures passed be in compliance with human rights obligations. Consultations with Parliament, human rights defenders and the wider civil society should take place, if possible, before new measures are adopted. Where new laws or regulations are adopted, any limitations on rights imposed must be in accordance with the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality.

While intelligently targeted mandatory wearing of facemasks in public makes sense everywhere in the world including Sierra Leone, stricter measures such as MANDATORY VACCINATION does not only threatens the gains made in the fight against the COVID-19 virus but serves as confirmation of the widespread conspiracy theories surrounding the COVID-19 virus itself and the vaccines.

In view of the above, the Network calls on:

1- Government to:

- Introduce COVID-19 response measures that do not create more controversies in the fight against the COVID-19 virus.
- NACVORC to reverse Section 5 of the June 17th public notice on the COVID-19 response measures and to follow best practices in the COVID-19 response
- NACOVERC to enforce existing restrictions i.e. wearing of facemask, handwashing and social distancing and **ENCOURAGE** citizens to take the vaccine rather than making it mandatory.

2- House of Parliament to:

- Ensure that all restrictions and or regulatory frameworks on the fight against the COVID-19 response measure should be tabled, discussed and approved by parliament before implementation.

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3- The World Health Organisation to:

- Continue to provide technical advice and support to the government including UN key human rights messages in the fight against the COVID-19 virus.

SIGNED



Executive secretary

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