

**MALEN AFFECTED LAND OWNERS AND USERS ASSOCIATION  
(MALOA)**

**MALEN CHIEFDOM, PUJEHUN DISTRICT**

12<sup>th</sup> July, 2021.

His Excellency Brigadier (Rtd) Dr. Julius Maada Bio,  
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone,  
State House,  
Freetown.

Dear His Excellency,

**THE VICE PRESIDENT-LED MEDIATION AND PROPOSED MEETING WITH MALOA  
REPRESENTATIVES**

Sir, we wish to thank you for the commitment you have demonstrated to deliver on your campaign promise to resolve the land conflict in Malen Chiefdom, a conflict caused by the operations of Socfin Agriculture Company (SAC) and the associated human rights abuses by the company and authorities. We welcomed your appointment of the Vice President, Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh, to lead the mediation process, a move that sent a positive signal to us, the aggrieved land owners, and for which we were most grateful. The visit of the Vice President to Malen Chiefdom in November, 2018, to hold mediation meetings with stakeholders including the affected land owners was enough to reassure the people of Malen of your government's commitment to end our suffering. Your Excellency sir, in 2018 we voted for our land. In 2018 Malen recorded the highest percentage of presidential votes for you in the entire Pujehun District because you promised to resolve the land conflict in our favour if we voted for you. This was why we voted massively against the previous regime. After nearly three years we still trust that you will deliver on that promise.

The Vice President set up a Technical Team to do an investigation of the land conflict in our chiefdom. We accepted to work with the Technical Team although we wanted an independent team that would be free to investigate and publish its findings, a move that would have adequately guided a credible mediation effort. The Technical Team held fact-finding meetings with stakeholders in Malen, including affected land owners, and carried out field/site visits. The Technical Team, under the chairmanship of Mr. Abdulai M. Bangura, the former Deputy Minister of Justice, concluded its investigation and wrote a report about two years ago but unfortunately the report has not been published and our repeated appeal for the official disclosure of the report has not been successful, justifying our demand for an independent investigation and mediation. We have not received any communication from the Vice President's Office for over two years now. This situation is worrying especially when senior company officials and our Paramount Chief have publicly boasted of enjoying governmental support.

The mediation seems to have run into problems. What we now see are the holding of meetings by SAC and their agents in a desperate attempt to smear the image of our organization and the use of the company's radio to make derogatory remarks about our leadership and members. We are also witnessing a failed attempt by the company to use cash and other inducements to win the support of our members. Socfin Agriculture Company and groups sponsored by the company have established another mediation process and claim to have the backing of the Vice President's Office. We see this as a desperate attempt to prevent the publication of the Technical Report. Most of the organisations and persons involved in the illegitimate mediation only seek personal interests and the company's. It's ridiculous that Fambul Tok, one of the organisations that claim to be mediating under the Office of the Vice President, has appointed the Paramount Chief to chair the illegitimate mediation.

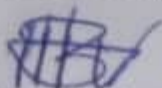
Frankly speaking sir, our situation is worsening with rampant arrests, confiscation of palm oil belonging to law-abiding citizens, police raids and beatings, refusal of chiefs and the police to take action when reports are made by MALOA members, violent attacks on our members by persons under the command of Paramount Chief B.V.S. Kebbie and SAC, the mysterious disappearance of an elderly woman from Kanga Malen since February 2021 under suspicious circumstances, sacking of workers perceived to be supporters of MALOA etc. It is sad that nothing seems to have changed on the ground.

The long delay in the publication of the report and the break in communication between our organization and the Vice President's Office have created serious doubts in our minds. We would not accept the company or any group loyal to it to serve as a mediator, to replace the Vice President's Office, because a player cannot serve as a referee. The company and local authorities cannot be abusing our rights, organizing public meetings against us and using their radio station to make derogatory remarks about us and still expect us to meet with them in the absence of independent mediators. This is why we have decided not to recognize any Socfin-sponsored mediation. There cannot be any credible mediation without the publication of the long-awaited Technical Report in its original form.

The Executive Committee has therefore instructed me to write and appeal for your intervention to ensure a win-win outcome as promised during your official thank-you-tour to Malen in February 2021, where you also promised to meet with Hon. Shiaka Musa Sama, our Member of Parliament, and other representatives of our organization. We would be most grateful if you could provide the opportunity for us to meet with you as soon as possible to resuscitate the mediation process.

Thanking you in anticipation of your intervention.

Yours faithfully,



Bockarie M. Koroma

Chairman

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Copy:

The Country Manager, SocfinAgriculture Company(SAC)

The Secretary to the Vice President

The Chairman, Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL)

The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS)

Mr. Abdulai Bangura Esq, Chairman, Technical Team, Office of the Vice President

Hon. PC B.V.S. Kebbie

The Resident Minister (South)

The Chairman, District Security Committee

The Office of National Security

Civil Society Organisations/NGOs