



ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC)
MOTTO: ACTION PROGRESS COMMITMENT

| <u>Headquarters & Western Region</u> | <u>Eastern Region</u> | <u>Northern Region</u> | <u>North/West Region</u> | <u>Southern Region</u> |
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| Our Ref: | Your Ref: | | | 15th November 2021 |

PRESS STATEMENT BY THE ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC)
ON THE EU REPORT - DEMAND FOR THE RESIGNATION OF
THE LEADERSHIP OF THE SIERRA LEONE POLICE, THE
JUDICIARY AND THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION

Following the 2018 General Elections which ushered in the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) government of President Julius Maada Bio; the APC, our international partners and the general public, have witnessed an unprecedented and systematic decline in the country's democratic and peace building gains. This has happened owing to a completely disorderly transition and a deliberately skewed and emotional transition report which laid the basis for ethnic hegemony and a dangerous political purge of the public and civil service. The fallout from that disorderly transition include improperly constituted Commissions of Inquiry (COIs) and an array of constitutional violations; state sanctioned electoral manipulations and violence, brazen miscarriage of justice related to

political cases, and police/military brutality against unarmed and peaceful protesters and prisoners.

More than three years after the President Bio - led SLPP Government came to power; we in the APC have repeatedly and loudly raised our concerns over and protested against the agonizing and dramatic decline in Sierra Leone's democratic, peace and human rights credentials. Sadly, the President Bio - led SLPP Government has consistently treated and dismissed our legitimate concerns and protestations with reckless indifference.

We are therefore very heartened that at this very crucial moment when Sierra Leone is gearing up for the next general elections; our position on the worrying state of affairs has been verified and validated by many of our civil society organisations and one of our international partners – the European Union (EU). The issues so aptly captured in the recent EU Elections Follow – Up Report are definitely not new nor is the President Bio - led Government's reaction to these revealing facts.

To recall, we specifically raised concern and protested against the Government Transition Team (GTT) Report, the way the COIs were constituted and harrowing spate of intimidation, unlawful arrests and detention of protesters and of stalwarts, members and supporters of the main opposition All People's Congress (APC) party. We highlighted that this painful and accelerated reversal has been occasioned by the President Julius Maada Bio - led SLPP Government's deliberate and systematic constriction of the democratic space through the unbridled overreach of the executive.

Regarding the Judiciary, on 31st May 2019, we pointed out and protested against the unprecedented usurpation of the electoral mandate of ten (10) elected Members of Parliament of the APC through their nonprocedural and illegal removal from Parliament by Court order.

Precedent to the abnormal decision of the court to remove our MPs from Parliament, armed police were ordered on 25th April, 2018 to brutally attack our entire 68 Members of Parliament in the sacred well of Parliament. That was the day the Speaker was to be elected.

So our duly elected Members of Parliament were subsequently forced out of Parliament and prevented from voting for the Speaker on that day even though the APC had the majority of seats in the House.

It will be instructive to note that when an MP is found guilty of electoral malpractices the court should not order their replacement with opposition runners up.

Section 146 (4) of the Public Elections Act clearly spell out that when an election is nullified, a re-run of the polls should be conducted. In this case, the APC MPs were illegally removed and the SLPP runners - up candidates unconstitutionally imposed on the people of Sierra Leone. Even worse, the same wrong and rogue procedure was upgraded to impose a Speaker on the House of Parliament.

We have also noted, and drawn attention to the refusal of the Judiciary to assign 32 APC petition cases while at the same time, those of the ruling SLPP party have been speedily assigned,

adjudicated and verdicts delivered. The petitions relating to the MPs, the Presidential elections results and those of Commissions of Inquiry are some of the examples in reference.

On the violence Perpetuated by the Police and SLPP Supporters against the APC, we further complained, time and again, about the unnecessary use of disproportionate force by the military and the police against unarmed protesters in Tonko Limba in 2019; in Tombo in May 2020; in Makeni in July 2020; and on 29th April 2020 at the nation's Correctional Centre along Pademba Road in Freetown among others. We recorded that in all of these incidents, innocent unarmed citizens, peacefully exercising their political and civic rights, were confronted with brute force resulting in the needless loss of lives, injuries, arrests and detention without bail or trial.

We recorded that the Sierra Leone Police launched unprovoked attacks on the APC head Office in Freetown; injuring scores of our secretariat officers and supporters, as well as inflicting substantial

damage on the premises. All of these took place in the full view of a complicit number of senior police officers including AIG Kaillie.

We further observed and drew attention that as if in competition to annihilate the APC, SLPP supporters have been emboldened by, and have taken cue from the police in unleashing violence against the APC. We reported that in Kailahun, in the Eastern part of Sierra Leone, an APC supporter Madam Satta Lamin was gang raped by seven boys the age of her sons and left to die. Abubakarr Kamara, a 25 year old Zonal chairman of the APC of Sheriff Drive Lumley was brutally bludgeoned to death by known SLPP thugs in broad day light in 2018. Three of the thugs were arrested but were quickly released without explanation. To this moment the police have not investigated these heinous crimes and no arrests have been made. We lamented this same inaction which the police adopted when a Pharmacist wearing an APC T-shirt was killed in Gbondapi in the Pujehun District and his body dumped in the bushes.

Furthermore several houses of APC supporters were attacked and vandalized in the south and eastern parts of the country. In

particular, a peaceful supporter of an independent candidate was attacked and killed during the run up to a councilor bye election in Kailahun district; while in Bo, Michael Mansaray, an APC supporter was kidnapped by SLPP thugs in military fatigue and dragged to the police. His actual crime was for daring to commend former president Koroma for constructing in that part of the country, a mini stadium, shopping malls, township and trunk roads and other social infrastructure. Eventually, and following public uproar, Michael Mansaray was arraigned on trumped up charges of possession of illegal drugs when in fact, what was found when his house was searched, were painkillers (ibroufen and diclofenac). He was sentenced to eight months imprisonment. He has served his sentence and released on 11th November 2021.

On the National Electoral Commission (NEC), we even went to court over the unconventional and haphazard announcement of the 2018 Presidential elections and we repeatedly highlighted the anomaly associated with the announcement of the Presidential results and demanded the publication of the full disaggregated results to no avail. Then, we again highlighted the discrepancies

which we noted, have become a regular occurrence in NEC's conduct of bye elections. From Ward 196 in Tonko Limba in the Northern district of Kambia; through to Constituency 110 in the Western Area, on to the ward and district council elections in Koinadugu, we protested against the systematic pattern of institutional rigging in favour of the ruling party.

We informed the public and drew the attention of the relevant authorities that this has been carried out through the manipulation of results or the entire elections process by NEC personnel. We stated that this was done in the form of tampering of the RRFs or needless cancellation of elections. We have also noted the disruption of elections and the destruction of electoral materials by known government functionaries including cabinet ministers. We have further noted that these electoral violations have gone unchecked owing to the failure of NEC and the police to take action against perpetrators.

Of grave concern over the independence, integrity and credibility of NEC, we have highlighted and protested the deliberate dowsing of

NEC with personnel who are preponderantly from one region and ethnic group and with obvious leanings to the ruling party. In particular, we strongly objected to the arbitrary appointment of Commissioners contrary to constitutional provisions contained in Sections 32 and 33 of the 1991 Constitution and long held democratic conventions. The latest of such arbitrariness is the imposition of the Commissioner for the Western Region which led to strong objection by 13 out of the 17 registered political parties and a parliamentary walk – out by the APC, the NGC and some C4C.

Based on the above, the APC hereby categorically state that we have lost faith in the leadership of the Police, Judiciary and the National Elections Commission and that by their poor and politically compromised leadership, the heads of these critical national institutions do not have the credibility, integrity and independence to serve Sierra Leone. The current Minister in the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning who is in charge of Statistics Sierra Leone should be investigated for waste of the Country's meagre resources by going ahead with the unprecedented mid-term census.

We demand also that Statistics SL should stop all activities they are putting up for this discredited mid-term census. We are pleading with the World Bank and UNFPA not to support a process that is at variance with the Laws of Sierra Leone. The contested and controversial Census Statutory Instrument has not been properly laid in Parliament. The Pilot Census is also not legal; many Sierra Leoneans have strongly supported civil society organisations and political parties in opposition to the mid-term census.

The people of Sierra Leone would like to ask the World Bank and other institutions to review their decision to fund the mid-term census. Continuing with mid-term census has the tendency to create instability in the country. The EU Report has highlighted and described the holding of such an exercise when elections are just around the corner as unnecessary.

Now therefore, while we applaud the EU for their forthright Elections Follow-Up report and acknowledge the said report as a root and branch verified validation of our concerns over the

existential threat to democratic good governance, peace and national cohesion;

Given the uncomfortable fact that the APC and the people of Sierra Leone have endured more than three agonizing years of the constitutional abuses and state sanctioned violence;

Noting with deep disappointment that the President Julius Maada Bio – led SLPP Government, in their characteristic arrogance, have acted in bad faith in outrightly dismissing the independent findings of the EU - one of Sierra Leone's strongest partners in the building and consolidation of our nation's hard earned peace and democracy;

Being cognizant of the fact that intransigence on the part of the President Bio – led SLPP Government, and the failure to, in good faith, accept legitimate criticism, underscores an unwillingness to make amends and do what is right and needed for free, fair, credible and peaceful elections;

The APC herein demands, in the wider interest of peace, stability and national cohesion, the immediate resignation of or removal from office the leadership of the Sierra Leone Police, the Judiciary and that National Elections Commission.

Signed

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Amb. Dr. Alhaji Osman Foday Yansaneh

National Secretary General - APC