



AdvocAid Condemns Death of Baby in Police Station

27 December 2021

AdvocAid condemns the tragic loss of life of a 17 month old baby who died in a police cell in Makeni yesterday while being detained with her mother. Her mother had been arrested on allegations of stealing a handbag.

AdvocAid has repeatedly called for pregnant women and women with young children not to be detained and instead to be supported through alternatives to incarceration such as community support, mediation or diversion. This is in line with the [African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child](#) (Article 30), [UN Standards for the Treatment of Female Prisoners and Non-Custodial Measures for Women Offenders](#) (Rule 64), and Sierra Leone's Bail Regulations 2018. This mother was arrested for a minor, non-violent offence and should not have been detained, especially with a young baby.

AdvocAid calls for the police to immediately and unconditionally release the mother and for the Ministry of Social Welfare to provide the required medical and psycho-social support.

AdvocAid will be investigating this matter further and calls on the Independent Police Complaints Board and the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone to also undertake an investigation.

Further, AdvocAid calls on the Government of Sierra Leone to urgently review all cases of pregnant women and women with young children detained in police stations and correctional facilities across the country. We urge the Government to facilitate early releases of this group of women as a COVID-19 prevention measure given the increasing infection rates, in line with our press statements of [25 March](#) and [8 July](#) 2020, and calls by the [UN](#), [WHO](#) and [African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights](#). We also stress the need for petty offences to be decriminalised, which disproportionately target marginalised communities and criminalise poverty.

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