



## **Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL)**

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### **PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **FREETOWN 6TH JUNE 2022: THE WORRISOME STATE OF 'SECURITY OF ELECTIONS AND DEVELOPMENT' AND THE ATMOSPHERE OF DOUBTS SURROUNDING THE MID-TERM POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS**

The Human Rights Defenders Network while commending the efforts of Statistic Sierra Leone (SSL) on the conduct of the Mid-Term Population and Housing Census that generate a detailed picture/data of social and living conditions of Sierra Leoneans, is concerned with the politicization of the process by stakeholders.

We observed that since H.E. the President Brigadier (Rtd) Dr. Julius Maada Bio made proclamation of a Mid-Term Population and Housing Census to be conducted by SSL there have been reported concerns by members of the public with regards the purpose, intent and relevance of the Mid-Term Population and Housing Census despite the public education and strategic engagements made by SSL clarifying the purpose, intent and relevance.

The Network observed that in the run-up to the commencement of the census, there were incidences of some political parties instructing their members not to take part in the census process. The Network is with the opinion that every single person in country has the right to participate and to be counted irrespective of their political party affiliation, sex, tribe, religion and place of residence. We believe that the advice given by the leadership of some political parties was misguided and discouraged some people from coming out to be counted. The network observed that during the publication of the Provisional Results of the 2021 Mid-Term Population and Housing Census, there has been an increase in population size in some communities and a corresponding decrease in others.

The politicization of Census and its link to the conduct of elections is not in the interest of the Security of our elections and Development in the country. We believe that despite the concerns raised by our development partners such as the World Bank and other stakeholders the outcome of the Mid-Term Population and Housing Census could be classified within the

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ambit of census as a parameter for us a nation to plan properly to ensure equitable distribution of resources and foster social and economic development, peace and national cohesion. We call on all Sierra Leonean to translate the NATIONAL PLEDGE into action/practice as we approach the general elections in 2023, particularly before, during and after elections. The network therefore calls for the following actions:

1. The government engage all stakeholders to discuss the outcomes and implementation of the Mid-Term Population and Housing Census
2. Statistic Sierra Leone to ensure that all data generated during the Mid-Term Population and Housing Census MUST be captured in the final results and where possible, create opportunity for Sierra Leoneans who have not been documented to have the chance to do so.
3. We urge political parties and their leadership to fully respect the National Symbols of the country and particularly the National Pledge.

The Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL) is a coalition of civil society organizations and individuals working to promote and protect human rights with specific focus on defending human rights defenders.

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