



CITIZEN'S FORUM

FOR DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

We Aspire To Inspire And Empower

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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONCERNS OVER THE ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND POLICE DETENTION OF WOMEN PROTESTERS IN SIERRA LEONE

In the service of democracy and good governance, human rights and national cohesion, the attention of Citizen's Forum for Democratic Accountability (hereinafter referred to as C4D) has been drawn to the standoff between the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) and Women Protesters, who stood out from the crowd and made the difference by expressing their dissatisfaction over the cost of living due to hike in prices of basic commodities and services through peaceful protest in Sierra Leone.

In view of the aforesaid, C4D has thoughtfully followed the stalemate and came to the conclusion that the action of the police is preposterous, discourteous and outrageous and therefore, unreservedly condemns the arbitrary arrests and detention of Dr. Denis Bright, Femi Claudius-Cole and the other Sierra Leonean women who stood their grounds and went out to protest in large numbers against their suffering caused by the persistent increases of petroleum products which have left a ripple effect on the livelihoods of the people of the country.

As a responsible institution with a niche in democratic accountability and the provision of accessible and affordable social and economic services, human rights and national cohesion, C4D is calling on the undivided attention of the government and the Police Council to note the following:

1. That on Monday, 4th July, 2022, Sierra Leonean women went on a peaceful demonstration headed by Femi Claudius Cole to protest over the hike of the prices of basic social amenities in the country which is strongly connected with their livelihoods and families, caused by unwarranted increase of the prices of petroleum products which in turn has escalated the prices of all commodities and services in the country to a rooftop.
2. Before the protest started, the house of Femi Claudius-Cole was stormed by the Sierra Leone Police on Sunday, 3rd July, 2022. She was eventually arrested and locked up at the CID headquarters and on the same day, her colleague, Dr. Denis Bright was also arrested and detained by the Sierra Leone Police.
3. That despite the arrest of the duo and police threats to arrest and detain anyone who dares come out to protest, the women audaciously went out in large numbers with their affirmative protest action. The protest eventually led to the arbitrary clamp down on women protesters by the Sierra Leone Police in an

effort to stop the protest without considering the fact that the women were merely expressing their frustration as a way to draw the attention of the president, government and people of Sierra Leone over the deplorable state of socio-economic services in the country.

4. That the arrest and detention of Femi Claudius Cole and Dr. Denis Bright of the Consortium of Progress Political Parties (CoPP) in relation to the protests organized by women and before the said date is being considered by many Sierra Leoneans as a politically motivated judicial harassment in relation to previous arrests and detentions of the duo in different occasions in the country.
5. That the arrest and detention of Femi Claudius Cole before the demonstration is not right and therefore unacceptable, considering the number of police personnel who went to arrest and detain a harmless woman and a Sierra Leonean for that matter.
6. That the denial to give women the permission to protest by the police is an infringement upon their right to freedom of assembly and association as provided in Chapter 3 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone which supersedes the Public Order Act of 1965.
7. That the intimidations, arrests and detentions of these Sierra Leonean women protesters undermines the president's assertion in both parliament and international fora of his commitment to uphold the principles of good governance and gender parity in Sierra Leone. The action of the police has the tendency to impugn the gains made by the country over the years and exposes the extent of the relegation of women to mere spectators rather than participating and contributing to nation building.

In view of the above, C4D is calling on the authorities of the Sierra Leone Police for the immediate release of Dr Denis Bright, Femi Claudius Cole and the other women who have been arbitrarily arrested and detained for seeking clarification for the unprecedented escalation of the prices of basic social and economic services that has become a burdensome to ordinary Sierra Leoneans. C4D holds the view that Sierra Leone is a signatory to International, African, Regional human rights instruments and the government is not oblivious Chapter 2&3 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone and the Human Rights Act of 2004, which all together guarantees the fundamental human rights of the individuals in the country.

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