



*HOLDING STATEMENT*

*For immediate release  
Freetown 10 August 2022*

## **We Condemn Violence and Lawlessness and Call for Full Investigation into the Riots on August 10, 2022.**

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Multitudes of citizens, largely young people took to the streets in many parts of Sierra Leone on August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in response to a call for a national protest by some unknown individuals/groups. After clashes between law enforcement agencies and the rioters, social media and local TV broadcasts have been full of scenes of violent disorder that is only reminiscent of the decade-long rebel war in the 1990s. Images of killings of many innocent people including civilians and security officers, as well as the destruction of vital national assets such as police stations, government offices and vehicles, and looting of private property have been reported.

We are concerned that this event follows weeks of unsuccessful requests by groups seeking clearance for protest from the Sierra Leone Police. Equally so, we are disturbed by social media incitements by faceless individuals that have been calling for the protests. We condemn all forms of violence, denial of rights to protest as well as the use of subversion to seek or express rights.

Given the progress Sierra Leone has made in consolidating peace and democratic freedoms over the last 20 years, today's action, unfortunately, shows a disappointing reversal. We are however encouraged by the widespread condemnation this savagery has received from all sections of the political divide.

### **Our Pleas**

While we embark on consultations of our colleague CSOs to investigate and prepare a wider position paper in the incidence, we call for the following:

1. As a matter of urgency, calm be restored and urge government to investigate the incident impartially and hold individuals and institutions accountable.
2. SLP be more open to addressing the notion that the police are determined to suppress every dissenting view about the government. SLP and stakeholders including political actors, civil society, and the media, should as a matter of urgency, agree on the parameters for peaceful protest and ensure that a clear framework is developed for seeking and protecting the right to protest.
3. Beyond condemnation and revulsion, we call for concrete commitment from all political actors to work together to address the growing intolerance in our body politics ahead of the 2023 elections and take steps to address cyber incitement.