

Press statement

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NMJD is concerned about Disruption of ACC Work in Makeni

Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) is concerned about recent incidences in Makeni that resulted in the withdrawal of the team of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) investigators that had gone there to interview former president, Ernest Bai Koroma, on allegations of corrupt dealings during his tenure as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. The team of investigators left Makeni the same day, Thursday 8th October 2020, without being able to conduct the rescheduled interview with the former president. NMJD believes these incidences were unnecessary and they would have been prevented or completely avoided if the actors involved had all owned up to their responsibilities, or had executed such responsibilities conscientiously.

The fight against corruption anywhere is very herculean and challenging, but it is a fight that should not be compromised, no matter who and what is involved. This is the mantra that even former President Ernest Bai Koroma himself held aloft throughout his tenure as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone. He demonstrated his commitment to fight corruption in Sierra Leone by causing the review of the Anti-Corruption Act 2000 in order to give the ACC more independence and more prosecutorial powers to carry out its mandate independently without fear. This wasn't a misplaced priority by the former president and it isn't now either. Corruption was as important and pertinent then in our country as it is today.

It is in this vein that NMJD is calling on all Sierra Leoneans to see the fight against corruption not from the narrow lenses of party politics, but from the wider national perspective. Corruption is as pervasive as it is destructive. Its harmful impacts affect every facets of our society. It has eaten deep into the social fabrics of our country, leaving majority of the people poor and deprived. Corruption has put a stranglehold on our ability to run a functional and effective healthcare system, provide quality education to our children, create jobs and provide affordable, uninterrupted and quality electricity supply and clean and safe drinking water for our people, including those in rural areas. This is a fact we all must understand and appreciate, regardless of whose side of the political divide one belongs.

NMJD is aware that several allegations of corruption have been directed at former President Ernest Bai Koroma's administration since he left the Presidency in 2018. He has always claimed innocence of these allegations, though. We, therefore, believe the recent moves by the ACC to interview the former president relating to these allegations present him with the opportunity to prove his innocence and to further reinforce his commitment to accountability and the rule of law. This opportunity will be lost at a great cost to the former President's public image and integrity if the incidences in Makeni last Thursday continue to happen. NMJD calls on the former President and his team to take necessary actions to prevent a recurrence.

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In the same vein, the former President and his team have always claimed that he's been targeted for a smear campaign and that the just-concluded Commissions of Inquiry and the corresponding Government White Paper failed to follow due process. We equally call on the government and relevant state institutions to follow due process in implementing the recommendations of the Commissions of Inquiry Report and to ensure the implementation of the recommendations is done in a free, fair and transparent and civil manner.

We also call on the judiciary to take necessary actions to hear all cases that are before it, which relate to the Commissions of Inquiry.

In conclusion, we commend the national security sector, particularly the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) for the professional way in which they managed the situation in Makeni.

About NMJD

NMJD is a national civil society human rights and development organization. It was established in 1988 in Kenema, eastern Sierra Leone, with the aim of working towards building a just and self-reliant Sierra Leone, where the marginalized and exploited will be equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge and empowered enough to take control of their own lives. NMJD focuses on empowering the people in the quest to build a free, just and democratic society where there is respect for human rights and sustainable development for the benefit of all.

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