



INITIAL MONITORING OBSERVATIONS OF THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

Freetown, Thursday, 8th June 2023

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL), is the statutory body responsible *to monitor and document violations of human rights in Sierra Leone*, pursuant to Section 7(2)(f) of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone Act No. 9 of 2004.

With monitoring being one of the six pillars of HRCSL's Elections Preparedness Strategy, HRCSL has been monitoring the campaigns of political parties and the conduct of their supporters since the campaign period was declared open by the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (ECSL) on 23rd May 2023.

During this period, HRCSL noted the launch of political party manifestos and also the signing of the Peace Pledge which took place on the 25th May, 2023 at the Bintumani International Conference Center, Aberdeen by all Presidential candidates, committing themselves and their supporters to non-violence and peaceful elections before, during, and after the elections.

HRCSL observed that the campaigns of political parties across the country have been largely peaceful. However, HRCSL recorded the following incidents:

- On the 23rd May there were reported incidents in Bonthe District and Tonkolili District as follows:
 - In Moriba town, Rutile, Bonthe District, APC supporters reported to the Sierra Leone Police that some of their supporters were attacked and wounded by SLPP supporters.
 - A video on social media showed that one APC supporter in the Bonthe municipality was beaten and taken to the police for wearing an APC T-Shirt and moving in front of SLPP supporters while they (SLPP) were campaigning;
 - In Mile 91, Tonkolili District the campaign banners of SLPP had been destroyed overnight which angered SLPP supporters. On the 23rd May, which was the scheduled date for the SLPP campaign, supporters in retaliation destroyed APC campaign banners. This led to violent clashes between supporters of the two political parties in the town. The incident was however brought under control by the intervention of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP);
- On the 25th May, at Mile 91, one APC supporter was killed allegedly by a supporter of the same party, following a dispute after the party's campaign on the same day. This allegation is under investigation by the SLP;
- On 27th May, the PMDC Presidential candidate was prevented from campaigning at Moyamba Junction in Moyamba District by SLPP supporters;
- On 29th May, at Koidu town, Kono District unknown persons burnt down the house of Diana Konomanyi allegedly for political reasons. This matter is under police investigation;



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(“A” status Accredited NHRI)

- On 2nd June, in the Bonthe municipality, SLPP supporters on their campaign day pelted stones at the residence of an APC supporter. Later, on the same day, the SLPP base called “Tally Centre” was burnt down by supporters of the APC.
- On 7th June in Kenema city, the APC campaign day was disrupted by some SLPP supporters who came out to rally in breach of the campaign calendar.

HRCSL also noted various audio and video messages trending on social media propagating hate and other inciting messages which undermine the peace and security of the state. Below are instances of such messages:

- A video of a Paramount Chief Member of Parliament of Neya Chiefdom, Falaba District, threatening the local authorities in his chiefdom not to vote for the APC;
- A video on social media in which an APC supporter who is alleged to be a former member of Parliament, during a campaign at Lungi in Port Loko district threatened that they will “massacre” all SLPP supporters in “Temne Line” if SLPP touches any APC person in the “Mende Line”;
- A video on social media in which the APC Presidential candidate during a campaign at Tombo, Western Area Rural District, openly pronounced in our local dialect that, “*are dae announce the result now, APC don win! En nar so we dae announce am everyday now*” which when translated in English means that he has announced the result and that APC has won the elections; and that he will continue to make such announcement throughout.

More worrisome are audios and videos being circulated on social media in which individuals are threatening to shut down the country on 12th and 13th June 2023 and burn down the ECSL office. There are also death threats and incessant abuses specifically directed at the ECSL’s Chief Electoral Commissioner, his colleague Commissioners, staff and their families which threaten their rights to security of persons.

HRCSL is deeply concerned that in all of the above incidents, the enjoyment of human rights has been hindered. Therefore, HRCSL calls on political party stakeholders and citizens in general in and out of the country to refrain from making incendiary statements and hate speeches that have the potential to create political instability and undermine the electoral process.

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Contact: Directorate of Monitoring and Research

Executive Secretary: +232-79-481520

Email: info@hrc-sl.org