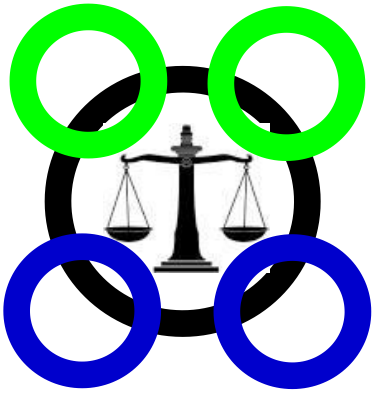


Human Rights Defenders Network



Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL)

9 Water Street Main Motor Road Congo Cross, Freetown,
Western Area, Sierra Leone

Email: Hrdefenderssl@gmail.com

Website: www.hrdnsl.org

Tel: +232-78-213688/+232-25-272457/+232-76-680213

For immediate release

HRDN-SL CONDEMNS ATTACKS ON POLICE AND CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE PROSECUTION OF ALLEGED RAPE INVOLVING A 17 YEARS OLD GIRL

23rd April 2019

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

The Human Rights Defenders Network has been following the recent development in relation to the alleged rape involving a 17 years old girl in Subu Village, Torma-Subu Section, Gbap Nongobabulum Chiefdom in the Bonthe District and calls for action from the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) and the Family support Unit of the Sierra Leone Police which has the primary responsibility to protect women and children especially the most vulnerable.

We recalled H.E. the President Julius Maada Bio's declaration on rape and sexual violence against women and girls as an Emergency in Sierra Leone which had received parliamentary approval. We also recall commitment made by the Sierra Leone government through the signing and ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) and the AU Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (AUCRWC) including the promulgation of the Child Rights Act of 2007. We note the efforts made by the government in the establishment of the Family Support Unit within the Sierra Leone Police to investigate and prosecute domestic violence matters.

MOTTO: "Defending the Defender"

The network is with the opinion that the decision of the Sierra Leone Police to issue a warrant of arrest for the alleged perpetrator PC Jonathan Tucker of Gbap Nongobabulum Chiefdom in the Bonthe District, Southern Province of Sierra Leone was a step in the right direction to hold alleged perpetrators of rape and domestic violence accountable.

Our concerns

- Since February 2019, the Resident Minister- South has made several attempts to settle the alleged rape matter at the community level, suggesting complete disregard and calculated attempt to undermine the ambition of H.E the President's fight against rape and sexual violence,
- On 20th April 2019 the Resident Minister South- obstructed the police in carrying out lawful orders as law enforcement agency and directly attacked police officers while performing their duties which demonstrates not only a total disrespect of state institutions but absolute abuse of office including political interference in the rule of law, justice and accountability for survivors of rape and sexual violence;
- Beating and molestation of police officers while performing their duties by alleged perpetrators due to political affiliation;
- Senior Bo District officials of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) supporting the actions of the Resident Minister South during the execution of a warrant of arrest suggested naked political obstruction in the dispensation of justice for survivors of rape and sexual violence;
- Senior government officials aiding and abating rape and sexual violence against women and girls.

Our Expectations and recommendations:

Since these issues raised are very serious and critical, we recommend and expect the following:-

1. Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL):

- Immediately investigate and prosecute the alleged rape matter involving a young girl;

MOTTO: "Defending the Defender"

- Protect the survivor by placing her into a specialized child protection organisation for psychosocial counseling services;
- Reaffirm her commitment to the rule of law, justice and accountability
- Resident Minister South and the Paramount Chief of Gbap Nongobabulum Chiefdom to recuse themselves from office until the alleged rape matter is investigated and prosecuted;

2. House of Parliament:

- To provide strong oversight on the executive and all other stakeholders this time; since oversight for all previous occasions had been weak or nonexistent;
- To amend the laws on rape and sexual/domestic violence in line with the President declaration of emergency on rape and sexual violence against women and girls

3. Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone

- To investigate and report on the 20th April 2019 attacks on Sierra Leone Police by government officials, political party supporters and alleged perpetrators while carrying out their duties in Bo and Bonthe district respectively

SIGNED



Executive Secretary

Copy:

The Secretary -Office of the President

The Secretary- Office of the Vice President

The Speaker Sierra Leone House of parliament

The Chief Minister

The Inspector General of Police

Diplomatic Missions

UN Agencies

All Press and Media Houses

MOTTO: "Defending the Defender"