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Press release

6th October, 2020

CARL calls for public support in the fight against corruption, emphasizes the need for peaceful and expeditious resolution of complaints

The Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL) today urged Sierra Leoneans to demonstrate unwavering support for ongoing anti-corruption efforts in the country, pointing out that the scourge of corruption remains a binding constraint to the country's development aspirations.

“Corruption has inflicted unquantifiable damage to our country since Independence, and sadly, it is still prevalent and pervasive. There is no doubt, however, that if we work cooperatively, we can minimize the scourge of corruption through various measures of education, prevention, investigation and resolution”, said Ibrahim Tommy, Executive Director of Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law.

Both local and international assessments suggest that Sierra Leone is making some progress in the fight against corruption, but significant challenges persist. In addition to the ongoing efforts of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), the Government of Sierra Leone in 2019 set up three Commissions of Inquiry to investigate the stewardship of key members of the previous administration, especially those who served as president, vice president, ministers, deputy ministers, and heads of boards and parastatals. The objective was, among other things, to examine their assets and investigate whether such assets were acquired lawfully or unlawfully. In response to the reports of the three commissioners, the government has released white papers indicating its position on the recommendations.

Since the white papers were published, many complaints have been expressed – and some of them justifiably – by persons against whom adverse findings were made. We urge such persons to use the courts to resolve their grievances. While some of those procedural issues and unfair recommendations complained of could have been avoided, such complaints by no means de-legitimize the Commissions of Inquiry and the resulting white papers. Accordingly, the white papers published by the government remain legitimate and binding until they are overturned by an appellate court. We, therefore, applaud the decision of the President to suspend serving public servants against whom adverse findings were made, pending the outcome of their appeals. Accordingly, we urge the judiciary to look into these complaints expeditiously and fairly, having regard to the huge public interest in this matter.

Our attention has also been drawn to the ongoing investigation of former government officials by the Anti-Corruption Commission, including former President Koroma. We

believe that as a former president of our country he deserves all the respect our laws and customs confer on him. Similarly, as a law-abiding citizen, we respectfully urge him to cooperate fully with ongoing investigations into his 11-year stewardship as President of Sierra Leone, including by availing himself at the offices of the Anti-Corruption Commission whenever he is required to do so. We remind the leadership and staff of the ACC of the need to treat him fairly and respectfully, having regard to his rights under the constitution. We also urge members of his family and supporters to remain calm and peaceful, as we will continue to monitor the process to ensure that his rights are fully respected.

During his 11-year tenure, former President Koroma repeatedly stated his commitment to the fight against corruption, and we believe the ongoing investigations present an opportunity for him to once again demonstrate that commitment and to clear his name.

For more information:

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