

## **ELECTORAL JUSTICE AND SECURITY UPDATE FOR WEEK ENDING 25TH MARCH, 2023**

Dear readers;

We are pleased to present the 6th weekly update for the week ending 25th March, 2023. These updates are part of the electoral justice and security projects currently implemented by CARL and funded by the Government of Ireland and OSIWA. The projects are aimed at promoting effective administration of electoral justice as well accountability for human rights violations and electoral offences before, during and after the 2023 elections. As part of this initiative, CARL-SL has hired and assigned Monitors across the 16 districts of the country. Their main responsibility is to keep tabs on critical election-related incidents/developments, including petitions, lower level elections and conventions for the election of party executives, politically-motivated violence and human rights abuses, among others. CARL-SL will also use these updates to guide its public engagement and advocacy interventions.

During the week under review, the following developments/incidents were observed/reported:

Freetown/nationwide:

### **THE CENTRE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE RULE OF LAW (CARL) ORGANIZES A SEMINAR ON THE STATE OF SIERRA LEONE'S ELECTORAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

The Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL) on the 23rd March 2023 held a seminar in Freetown on the state of electoral justice in Sierra Leone. Funded by the Government of Ireland, the main objective of the seminar was to hear from key electoral stakeholders, including the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone, PPRC, the judiciary, and the security sector about their level of commitment to uphold the standards of electoral justice before, during and after the 2023 elections. It was also about discussing the progress made to address the electoral justice-related challenges since the 2018 elections, identify challenges and make recommendations for reforms. During the day-long con-

structive but animated discussions, electoral stakeholders said there has been some progress in many respects, but limited funding and a rising sense of mistrust are some of the major challenges that confront them. Political party representatives also expressed concerns about lack of independence and professionalism by electoral justice mechanisms, and demanded improved and effective performance before, during and after the 2023 elections.

### **ONLY 3 POLITICAL PARTIES MAY CONTEST THE 2023**

The Chairman of the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), Abdulai M. Bangura ESQ., has announced that only three political parties may participate in the 2023 elections, pointing out that registration is not a sufficient requirement to contest elections. Speaking at a seminar on electoral justice or-

ganized by CARL-SL, Chairman Bangura said that the Commission's assessment of registered political parties shows that only three political parties, the ruling SLPP, the main opposition APC and the NGC are functional. He said he will advise the Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone to not accept nominations from the other political parties until they are fully compliant with the laws of the country.

### **APC AND SLAJ CONDEMN MAYORAL ASPIRANT OF THE SIERRA LEONE POLITICAL PARTY, MOHAMED GENTO KAMARA FOR POTENTIALLY DIVISIVE SPEECH**

The Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) and the All People's Congress (APC) have issued statements condemning Mohamed Gento Kamara, the mayoral aspirant

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of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), for what the APC describes "distasteful tribal and religious bigotry" that could pose a threat to the peace and stability between Muslims and Christians in the nation. SLAJ also condemned Mr. Gento Kamara's remarks made at a mosque, and called on all political aspirants to be mindful of their campaign messages and to refrain from using divisive sentiments for political gains. The Association also urged the Inter Religious Council (IRCSL), which has itself issued a statement in response to Mr. Kamara's remarks, to prevent houses of worship from being used as campaign platforms to preach hate and intolerance.

## IGR CALLS FOR MORE AWARENESS ON THE PR SYSTEM

The Policy Director of Institute for Governance Reform (IGR), Mr. Andrew Lavali, has called for the intensification of voter education on the Proportional Representation System, stating that an IGR survey shows that majority of Sierra Leoneans do not understand the PR System. The data was collected in February, 2023.

## ALL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS (APC) INVITES APPLICANTS TO APPLY FOR SYMBOLS

The main opposition APC has called for applications from all interested and qualified APC members who intend to be considered for the award of the party symbol for parliamentary, mayoral, district chairperson and councilor positions for the forthcoming 24th June, 2023 local council

and parliamentary elections. The application forms are sold for fees ranging from 5,000.00 (five thousand new Leones) to 1,000.00 (one hundred new Leones).

## STAKEHOLDERS SIGN YORK DECLARATION ON FREE AND PEACEFUL MULTI-TIER ELECTIONS

On Friday 17th March, 2023, the ruling SLPP and main opposition APC have pledged their commitment to a free, peaceful and multi-party electoral process. The Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone, the Chief Justice of the Republic of Sierra Leone, the National Security Coordinator (ONS), and the PPRC, also signed what is known as the *York Declaration* on free, fair and non-violent multi-tier elections.

The York Declaration is an initiative of the Sierra Bar Association to promote free, fair, and non-violent elections, and it is the first declaration to be signed by key stakeholders in the country. President of the Bar Association, Michaela E. Swallow, said the signing of the Declaration demonstrates the commitment of all stakeholders to promote free, fair and non-violent elections.

## THE SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY HOLDS ITS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL (NEC) MEETING IN KAMBIA

The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) on the 25<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 held its National Executive Council meeting at the party's head-

quarter in Kambia. The Council met to discuss and approve the guidelines for the selection of candidates for parliamentary and local council positions. The party also unanimously agreed to select those who will head strategic positions within the election management bodies that were created ahead of the 2023 elections.

## SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY (SLPP) ACCUSES MEMBERS OF THE ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC) OF THE DESTRUCTION OF PARTY BANNERS IN KAMBIA.

In the weekly DISEC meeting held on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2023, representatives of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) accused members of the All People's Congress (APC) of destroying their party's campaign banners in the township of Kambia. They said the incidence of destroying campaign banners is rife, and must be stopped. The All People Congress has denied these accusation, stating that the claim lacks evidence. However, the political parties have pledged to caution their supporters against the destruction of party banners.

## BO DISTRICT YOUTH COUNCIL CONCLUDES A SENSITIZATION CAMPAIGN ON THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION SYSTEM

The Bo District Youth Council has concluded a sensitization campaign on the Proportional Representation (PR) System across the 16 chiefdoms in Bo District. This, according to the Chairman, Melvin Lahai, was to redirect the

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minds of youth towards national developments.

### **THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION SIERRA LEONE ENGAGES WARD COORDINATORS IN MAGBURAKA**

The Electoral Commission Sierra Leone (ECSL) has held an engagement meeting with Ward Coordinators in Magburaka to discuss the challenges of Ward Coordinators and to proffer possible ways to handle them.

### **INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNANCE REFORM (IGR) HOLDS ENGAGEMENT MEETING ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

Institute for Governance Reform (IGR) has met with various stakeholders across the country to validate the Citizen's Manifesto. The engagements were done in all the districts to rank the issues that are most important to citizens and which they want political leaders to focus on and include in their manifestos.

### **SECURITY UPDATE**

The week under review has been generally peaceful, and our monitors recorded no form of election-related violence in any part of the country.