



## **Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL)**

...fostering human rights through accountability  
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### **PRESS STATEMENT**

#### **AHEAD OF THE JUNE 2023 ELECTIONS, ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES EXPRESS COMMITMENT TO UPHOLD ELECTORAL JUSTICE, AMIDST CALLS BY POLITICAL PARTIES FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE AND INDEPENDENT SECURITY AND JUSTICE SYSTEM**

*Freetown: 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2023:*

On March 23, 2023, key election management bodies in Sierra Leone reaffirmed their commitment to adhere to electoral justice standards before, during and after the 2023 multi-tier elections. Organised by the Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law, with funding from the Government of Ireland, the seminar brought key electoral stakeholders to discuss the progress made since the 2018 elections in strengthening Sierra Leone's electoral justice system. Speaking at a seminar on the state of Sierra Leone's electoral justice system, representatives of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone, the judiciary, the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC) and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) underscored the importance of conducting the forthcoming elections in line with the country's electoral laws and policies, pointing out that a peaceful and credible outcome of the forthcoming elections is critical to strengthening Sierra Leone's recent democratic gains.

Whilst speaking on behalf of the judiciary, Justice Monfred Sesay said additional measures have been taken to ensure speedy and effective resolution of election-related complaints. In addition to the establishment of electoral disputes management tools, he said the Election Petition Rules, 2007 has been revised to include, among other things, procedures for filing petitions against presidential elections. He said the judiciary will ensure that all electoral complaints are resolved speedily, and in any case, within four months for all electoral complaints or petitions.

The representative of the Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone, Commissioner Abu Bakarr Koroma, said the Commission has made significant efforts to improve its capacity as well as the standards and quality of elections, pointing out that there have been electoral law and institutional reforms since the 2018 elections in line with the recommendations of election observer bodies. He said the institution has been transparent in its management of the electoral process so far, adding that they are pleased with the financial support from the government of Sierra Leone ahead of the 2023 elections. He said the Commission has been largely funded by the Government of Sierra Leone to conduct the 2023 elections.

Speaking on behalf of the Political Parties Regulation Commission (PPRC), Chairman Abdulai M. Bangura commended parliament and other stakeholders for amending the PPRC Act to expand the powers of the Commission, stressing that they are now better placed to regulate the conduct of political parties, resolve both intra and inter-party disputes, and ensure effective oversight. He said only three political parties are currently functional, and warned that parties that are in breach of the PPRC will be barred from participating in the forthcoming elections. He said the three functional political parties include the ruling SLPP, opposition APC and the National Grand Coalition.

Speaking on behalf of the Sierra Leone Police, AIG Brima Jah said the police remain fully committed to providing security for the electoral process, adding that a Military Aid to Civil Power (MAC-P) regime will be implemented before, during and after the elections. He said there have been significant efforts to improve professional standards in the police, and acknowledged the support of the Government of the United States of America in training the police on election security management. He said an Incident Command Center has been established as part of preparations for the elections, and urged electoral stakeholders, including political parties and civil society, to support the police in ensuring free, fair, and violence-free elections.

Representatives of political parties, including the All People's Congress and the National Grand Coalition, expressed concerns about delays in distributing voter identification cards and the apparent lack of professionalism and independence of the police in responding to public order issues and electoral offences. The representative of the APC particularly requested access to the Electoral Commission's voter management database, challenged the independence of the security sector, and questioned the proposed votes tallying procedure announced by the ECSL, which he said is in violation of the Public Elections Act, 2022. The representatives of the ECSL and the Sierra Leone Police denied the allegations, stating that they will conduct elections strictly in line with the electoral laws of the country and that the police have always acted professionally and will continue to do so before, during and after the 2023 elections.

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