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

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **CONCERNS OVER APPOINTMENT OF ACTING MAYOR FOR FREETOWN CITY COUNCIL**

***Freetown: 26<sup>TH</sup> March, 2026:***

The Center for Accountability and Rule of Law, Sierra Leone (CARL-SL) has carefully followed recent developments regarding the appointment of an “Acting Mayor” for the Freetown City Council, arising in the context of the absence from office of the elected Mayor, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, and her Deputy. These events have generated significant public discourse and raised important questions regarding the proper interpretation of the legal framework governing local councils in Sierra Leone.

At the heart of the matter lies an issue of statutory interpretation under the Local Government Act, 2022. Specifically, the current circumstances present a gap or ambiguity as to how mayoral functions are to be exercised in a situation where both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are simultaneously absent from office. In the absence of explicit statutory provisions addressing this precise scenario, differing positions have emerged, contributing to legal uncertainty and public concern.

In this regard, we observe that where such uncertainty exists, it is imperative that all actions taken by political or administrative actors remain within the confines of the law. Any measure adopted outside clear statutory authority risks undermining the rule of law and eroding public confidence in democratic institutions. It is therefore essential that this matter be approached with caution, restraint, and a firm commitment to legality.

In a constitutional democracy such as Sierra Leone, the court remains the ultimate arbiter of legal disputes and questions of interpretation. Issues concerning the scope of authority of public offices, and the legality of actions taken in their absence fall squarely within judicial competence. Resort to the court is not merely an option but the most appropriate and legitimate pathway to resolving such institutional ambiguities.

In light of the foregoing, we respectfully advance the following recommendations:

- All relevant stakeholders, such as the governing party, main opposition party, and the Freetown City Council, should promptly seek judicial interpretation through appropriate legal proceedings.

- Pending such judicial determination, all parties should refrain from taking further unilateral actions that may deepen the legal uncertainty or create competing claims to authority.
- The relevant institutions of local governance should ensure continuity of essential administrative functions through lawful internal mechanisms, without attempting to exercise powers not clearly granted by law.
- Supporters of the governing party and the main opposition party, and members of the public are urged to remain calm, peaceful, and law-abiding, and to allow due process to take its course without resort to confrontation or disorder.

CARL-SL emphasizes that the peaceful and lawful resolution of this matter is critical not only to the smooth running of the Freetown City Council, but also to the preservation of democratic governance and the rule of law in Sierra Leone. At this moment, restraint, respect for institutions, and fidelity to legal processes are of utmost importance.

Furthermore, we remain committed to promoting accountability, constitutionalism, and the rule of law, and will continue to monitor developments closely.

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**THE END!**