

Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law - Sierra Leone (CARL-SL)

....fostering human rights through accountability

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CARL-SL Calls on the ACC to Investigate Possible Systemic Corruption and Oversight Failures in the 2026 WASSCE Results

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The Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law – Sierra Leone (CARL-SL) expresses grave concern over the reported withholding of results for 47,524 candidates in the 2026 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). CARL-SL considers the scale and nature of the reported irregularities a serious national concern that demands urgent attention from the education authorities and, where potential corruption or abuse of office is indicated, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

According to figures announced by the Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, the withheld results comprise 26,735 female candidates and 20,719 male candidates. The Ministry-reported summary lists 47,525 alleged malpractice cases across 13 categories, including social media-related offences, collusion, mobile phone offences, written materials, impersonation and cases involving candidates reportedly absent while scripts were submitted.

The reported figures raise questions that cannot be answered by placing responsibility on candidates alone. They require a thorough investigation of the conduct of examination personnel, the adequacy of supervision, the effectiveness of school-level controls and the accountability of institutions responsible for administering and safeguarding public examinations.

One particularly troubling category concerns candidates who were reportedly absent but whose examination scripts were submitted. This raises fundamental questions about the administration and supervision of examination centres.

If a candidate was absent, who accepted, registered or submitted a script in that candidate's name? What checks were conducted by invigilators and centre supervisors? Were attendance registers, seating plans, script labels and examination records properly reconciled? Were the relevant officials interviewed, and have any failures or possible misconduct been identified?

If the evidence establishes that a script was submitted in the name of an absentee, the investigation must determine whether this resulted from an administrative error, negligence, deliberate falsification, collusion or another form of misconduct. The public deserve a clear explanation based on evidence, not speculation.

The other reported categories equally raise important questions.

Social media-related offences: How were answers allegedly obtained or distributed? Were communications traced to individual candidates, examination personnel or external actors? Were any school officials or other persons found to have facilitated the circulation of answers? What safeguards were in place to prevent unauthorised access to examination centres?

Collusion: Did the alleged collusion occur between candidates in the same examination hall, across different centres, or through an organised network? What evidence distinguishes deliberate collusion from similarities that may have other explanations? Were invigilators or supervisors alerted to suspicious conduct, and what action did they take?

Mobile phone offences and written materials: How were prohibited devices or materials brought into examination halls? Were the required searches and examination protocols followed? Were breaches reported promptly, and were officials held accountable where evidence indicated that they knowingly permitted or facilitated violations?

Impersonation, multiple handwriting and multiple answer booklets: What verification procedures failed or were tried? Who was responsible for checking candidate identities and handling examination scripts? Were these isolated cases or evidence of weaknesses that affected multiple centres?

These are legitimate investigative questions. The existence of a recorded category does not itself prove that corruption occurred or establish the responsibility of any individual. This is precisely why transparent, independent and evidence-based investigations are necessary.

A direct call to the Anti-Corruption Commission

CARL-SL calls on the ACC to **investigate any credible indications of corruption, bribery, collusion, falsification of records, abuse of office or deliberate interference with examination administration** arising from the 2026 WASSCE examination. CARL-SL recognises that the ACC should not assume that every examination irregularity is a corruption offence. Examination malpractice and administrative failures may fall under different legal and disciplinary frameworks. The Commission should coordinate, as appropriate, with WAEC, MBSSE, civil society and other competent institutions.

Accountability must extend beyond candidates

The reported scale of the irregularities demands an examination of the entire chain of responsibility. Candidates who deliberately violate examination rules must be dealt with in accordance with established procedures. However, where the evidence points to negligence, collusion or misconduct by invigilators, school administrators, examination personnel or other officials, those responsible must also be held accountable through the appropriate legal and disciplinary measures.

It would be unacceptable for a system to impose consequences on candidates while leaving unanswered questions about the conduct of adults and institutions entrusted with the supervision and protection of the examination process.

CARL-SL therefore calls on MBSSE and WAEC to publish a clear account of the safeguards used during the 2026 examination, controls applied when scripts were collected and submitted, and measures taken to investigate possible failures of supervision.

CARL-SL urges the ACC to act promptly where potential corruption is indicated, MBSSE and WAEC to provide transparent answers, and all responsible institutions to implement practical safeguards against recurrence.

The integrity of Sierra Leone's education system must be protected through evidence, accountability, fairness and decisive institutional action.

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