



Kono District Development Association  
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## **JOINT STATEMENT KDDA UK, KONO UNION USA, KDGO, KONSU**

We, the undersigned Kono Organisations in Sierra Leone and in the Diaspora wish to express our deep concern and call the international community's attention to the disturbing trend of events affecting Kono communities and Kono's descendants over the past several years, culminating most recently in the expulsion of the Vice President of Sierra Leone from his party, the dismissal of several other members of the minority Kono ethnic group from their positions and the apparent intention of factions within the current regime to remove the Vice President from his position. We further strongly condemn the stationing of troops at the Vice President's residence and disarmament of his official security detail, which has reportedly forced him and his wife to seek refuge in the US Embassy. We are deeply disturbed by the use of military force in Sierra Leone against a democratically elected civilian Vice President, an action which flouts the rule of law.

Our organisations have protested the disturbing spate of harassment, beatings, unlawful detentions and deaths of Kono indigenes that have occurred at the hands of authorities over the past seven years and we will continue to advocate for these individuals and their families.

Although we are Kono organisations and descendants of Kono District, we are proud Sierra Leoneans, and we believe that all ethnic groups and religions share an obligation to ensure peace and sustainable development in the country. Our members cross all parties and religions. Some belong to APC while others are SLPP, PMDC and other registered party cardholders. Some of us have no political affiliation. We are as ethnically and culturally diverse as the region we call home. We are Christians and Muslims and as descendants of Kono District we are united in our desire to see a better Sierra Leone that our children will enjoy in future.

While we recognise there are internal dynamics, rules and protocols of a political party, we are deeply troubled by; the timing of recent events in light of the current Ebola epidemic, the manner and the lack of due process in the way this situation was handled, as well as the implausible explanations that were provided for the Vice President's expulsion. We highly commend the Vice President, Hon. Alhaji Chief Sam Sumana in his radio interview to the nation on March 10, 2015 for his calm handling of each questionable allegation that was levelled against him at the APC's NAC press conference concerning his expulsion from the ruling party. The Vice President challenged the preposterous charges that he lied about being a Muslim and having a post-graduate degree and that he is surreptitiously creating a new political party. We do not feel that these allegations are worthy of any further serious attention by the people of Sierra Leone. As for the more serious though equally questionable allegation that the Vice President is responsible for fomenting violence, in the absence of prima facie evidence to support these allegations and subject to the findings of any judicial investigations and proceedings, we unanimously denounce this attempt to mask the real causes of violence perpetrated in Kono District and on the Kono people.

As many Sierra Leoneans have observed, the issue of the expulsion of the Vice President from the APC party, as an apparent precursor to attempts to remove him from office, is more than just

about the political fate of an individual. It is about protecting the constitutional rights of everyone in Sierra Leone and refusing to allow a precedent to be set for the seemingly arbitrary use and abuse of power by any party, organisation, individual or, most especially, a ruling administration.

Our organisations will continue to push for official, independent investigations into the unlawful arrests and deaths of Kono citizens at the hands of the authorities. We will continue to demand that the President retract all presidential arrest lists and arrest decrees, and desist from making presidential decrees ordering the arrest of anyone within or outside Sierra Leone. We will continue to demand that OCTEA Group (formerly Koidu Holdings), the mammoth kimberlite mining company in Kono, live up to its tax obligations to the common citizens of Kono and the city of Koidu and to honour its corporate social responsibilities which include environmental safeguards, restoration of damaged environments and sustainable development of our communities. We will join in solidarity with other mining and large agriculture affected communities in the rest of Sierra Leone. We stand firm and join hands with other institutions and organisations in advising against any attempt to impeach, unlawfully remove, or hinder the sitting Vice President of the Republic of Sierra Leone in the performance of his lawful duties. We regard these measures as a distraction from more salient national issues such as fighting the Ebola epidemic to zero cases, investigations into the alarming alleged misappropriation of Ebola funds as highlighted by the Auditor General's report, and the recovery of Sierra Leone after Ebola.

Above all, we will continue to ensure the accountability of individuals, groups and organisations from Kono and Sierra Leone as a whole. To our Kono brothers, Hon. Karamoh Kabba and Mr. Logus Koroma and to our Kono sister, Hon. Diana Konomanyi we remind each one of you of our ancient solemn vow Kono ay Kono fa. This maxim does not mean that we Kono people must agree at all times or that we must even like each other at all times or support each other's political aspirations at all times. It does not mean that we cannot call out each other's failings or be openly critical of one another's shortcomings. But it does mean that we cannot and should not seek to destroy one another. The expulsion of Alhaji Chief Sam Sumana, who is the Vice President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the highest ranking Kono leader, at a time when he is under self-imposed Ebola quarantine, is a national disgrace and an insult to us all.

To our fellow Sierra Leoneans we express our deepest gratitude, for many of you have risen above party politics and ethnic differences to speak out against a serious breach of power that reflects badly on the nation as a whole. This has been a wake-up call for ALL Sierra Leoneans, especially Kono descendants in Sierra Leone and globally. Please take note that a new Kono will INEVITABLY arise. The complacency with which we have treated our sacred trust to protect the welfare and environment of our local communities and peoples, since the onset of party politics and diamond mining, must and will end, as we usher in a new era of Kono unity and solidarity.

We admonish all Sierra Leoneans, especially our paramount chiefs, local councils, civil society groups and organisations, members of parliament, cabinet ministers, civil servants, and other government officials to get on board and voice their opposition to any form of social, legal, political, injustice against people and communities in and from Kono or Sierra Leone as a whole, and insist upon enforcement of the rule of law and due process.

SIGNED:

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