



KDDA



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& KONO UNION USA

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The Kono District Development Association (KDDA) United Kingdom and Kono Union USA are deeply concerned about the current trend of events in Kono District and Sierra Leone at large. KDDA UK and Kono Union USA collectively represent a significant proportion of Kono people and friends of Kono District in both the Diaspora and Sierra Leone. We believe Sierra Leoneans must be treated fairly and that our human rights, the rule of law and provisions of the Constitution of Sierra Leone must be unequivocally maintained at all times. It is the responsibility of the State to ensure this.

The arrest of Dr. David Tam Baryoh, a prominent radio journalist, was preceded by a series of arbitrary arrests in Kono District (including the arrest and detention of the Vice President's sister) spearheaded by the Deputy Minister of Political Affairs, Hon. Karamoh Kabba under the direction of His Excellency, President Ernest Bai Koroma. The unlawful detention of Councillor Kai Lawrence Mbayo on 25th October 2014 was challenged by all the Councillors in Kono District. These arrests were precipitated by the gunning down of two people on 21st October 2014 - Mr. Kalil Mansaray (Alias Freetown Boy) and Mr. Safea Yayah - in a reportedly peaceful protest overseen by the Sierra Leone police. This apparent sanctioning of violence after the fact, and arbitrary arrests, by officials of the State, constitutes an unacceptable and disturbing trend in Sierra Leone over the last ten years.

We have noted a persistent pattern of gross human rights abuses in Kono District including arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detention and excessive use of force by the Sierra Leone police resulting in the death of local civilians within the District. Further, concerned family members inquiring into the fate of their loved ones were repeatedly ignored or maltreated by the Sierra Leone Police.

In addition to these recent events, our organisations are concerned about numerous other cases relating to the use of excessive force by the Sierra Leone Police, a number of which have resulted in deaths. Two cases that made headlines are as follows:

1. 13th December 2007, the killing of Mr. Aiah Momoh and Mr. Momoh Musa during a peaceful protest in Koidu city against resettlement ordinances being enforced on behalf of Koidu Holdings (now OCTEA Mining).
2. 18th December 2012, the killing of Mr. Alimamy Williams and Mr. Abdulai Kargbo while exercising their right to peaceful protest in respect of their promised bonuses as employees of OCTEA Mining.

These above arrests and deaths have never been fully investigated and efforts to prevent such abuses and tragedies - such as the Recommendations of the Jenkins Johnston Commission of Inquiry 2008 - have never been fully implemented. We deplore the use of live ammunition against civilians by armed police officers and we urge the Government to take necessary measures to ensure accountability for such actions.

As the Government's press release on the issue of Dr. Tam Baryoh's arrest indicates, Sierra Leone is faced with an international health emergency as the deadly Ebola virus disease continues to wreak havoc in our communities. However, we are urging the Government to ensure that officials of State are not using the current State of Emergency in Sierra Leone due to the Ebola crisis to illegally harass, attack, detain, and persecute innocent civilians in Kono District specifically and throughout the country in general, in pursuit of other hidden political agendas.

We are united in our resolve to ensure that the dignity, rights and interests of our people and communities are protected.

SIGNED

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