



Organization with Special Consultative Status with the UNITED NATIONS

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Subject Report: IHRC AFRICA REGION HQ DEMANDS FULL SCALE INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE KILLINGS IN MAKENI DISTRICT, IN THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE

By Directive and under the supervision of the IHRC Special Envoy to the UN of Geneva Amb. Dr. HAISSAM BOU-SAID, The International Human Rights Commission (IHRC) Africa Region HQ has been monitoring with keen interest the actions and inactions of relevant authorities following the incidents that took place on July 17th and 18th, 2020 in Makeni City in the Republic of Sierra Leone which resulted to the killings of five civilian young protesters, many sustaining serious injuries and 51 others arrested and detained by the Sierra Leone Police. The IHRC Africa HQ news story about this matter was immediately published in order to share it's impressions with the general public.

Nearly two months after this unfortunate incident, an uneasy calm, a state of fear and an atmosphere of uncertainty has persisted in the City of Makeni.

Apart the action of the President of the country H.E Maada Bio who had set up a presidential committee to investigate the incident nothing else has been done.

In a report received by Amb. Bou-Said's office, the Director/Ambassador of the IHRC Africa Region HQ H.E Dr. Tivlumun Innocent Ahure has acknowledged the step taken to investigate the incident by the President. But while Dr. Ahure hails and welcomes the efforts of H.E Maada Bio, in setting up a presidential committee to investigate the July 17th and 18th incidents in Makeni as a first step in the right direction, the IHRC Africa Region HQ is however very concerned about the continued:

* Intimidating acts of parading and displaying heavy weapons along the major streets of Makeni City by security forces. These actions are very intimidating to the residents of the city and a sad reminder of the unfortunate incidents of 17th and 18th July.

* indiscriminate and arbitrary arrests and, inhumane treatments meted out to residents of Makeni by security personnel. The latest incident being the arrest of two civilians (one along station road for allegedly printing T-shirts with the inscription "Makeni Life Matters" and one along Kojo street for yet unknown reasons) by heavily armed security personnel in a convoy of 5 pickup vans. While the Coordinator/Special Envoy of the IHRC in Sierra Leone, Mohammed Kamara Sylvanus has sent a report to Dr Ahure indicating that his office has no problems with security forces carrying out arrests of individuals that they may want to



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question, Mohammed said his office is concerned about the inhumane manner in which such arrests are often conducted. For instance, the beating up of a 13 year old minor by a security personnel at Kojo street, for simply enquiring from the Police the reasons for arresting his uncle, the 24 year old WASSC student at station road was arrested and taken away with only underwear pants. It is the considered opinion of the IHRC that the security forces should make deliberate efforts to de-escalate the situation but their present actions in the municipality are suggesting otherwise and may undermine the efforts of the President.

* Delay in conducting the autopsy and subsequent release of the remains of all the civilians that were killed during the incident. We cautiously note the news that an autopsy was carried out on two of the victims on 4th August 2020 (16 days after the killings took place) and their remains handed to their families for burial. But continued delay in handing over of the remains of the rest of the victims to their families will increase the anxieties of these families all of whom have already exhibited visible signs of post traumatic stress disorders (PTSDs)

The IHRC Africa Region HQ has raised it's position which has been communicated to the authorities in Sierra Leone pertaining to the following:

1. Encouraging all residents of Makeni City to continue to show maximum restraint and continue to maintain peace, stability and tranquility of the municipality.
2. Demands that security forces should with immediate effect cease the unprovoked and unwarranted show of force in the streets of the municipality. The parading and display of heavy weapons by convoys of security forces within the civilian populated streets of Makeni must stop.
3. Considers such actions as provocative and tantamount to intimidating the civil populace even as they mourn the killings of their loved ones.
4. Calls for the immediate release of the remains of all those killed in the unrest to their families for burial.
5. Demands the release or charge to court of all protesters that were arrested on the 17th and 18th July or any other individuals that is currently being held in detention in connection with the said incident
6. Continues to condemn the increase in the state of killings of civilians in the country by security forces.



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7. Calls on Humanitarian Organizations to provide counseling support to the heavily traumatized familiar of those that were killed.

Meanwhile, considering the uncertainties surrounding the carrying out of the autopsy, IHRC Africa Region HQ together with both its local and international partners is considering the option of consulting an international expert to carry out an independent autopsy.

Finally, we wish to announce that IHRC Sierra Leone has obtained approval to put together a coalition of both national and international civil society organizations to commence its own investigations into the killings of armless and defenseless civilians on the 18th July 2020 in Makeni.

Your cooperation in this matter will be highly appreciated and until then, we remain.

Yours sincerely

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Ambassador at Large

IHRC Special Envoy to the UN in Geneva (ECOSOC)

