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Mr. Julius Maad Bio
President
The Republic of Sierra Leone
Freetown
Sierra Leone

15 December 2018

O/R: 015-D/2018/SG/SK

Mr. President,

ITUC-Africa Protests Against Arrest of Sierra Leone Trade Unionists and Government Interference in Union Affairs

I write on behalf of the African Regional Organization of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa www.ituc-africa.org) representing over 17 million workers in 52 African countries to protest the arrest and detention of trade union leaders of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC) and the Motor Bike Riders Union and call for their immediate release.

We have learnt that yesterday, December 14, 2018, Police stormed the offices of the SLLC and arrested eight trade union leaders to prevent the commercial Motor Bike Riders Union, an affiliate of the SLLC, from holding its National Delegates Conference and to freely elect its leaders. Those arrested include:

1. Mr. M.B Williams- Vice President – SLLC
2. Mr. Emmanuel Pratt – Chairman Financial and General-Purpose Committee (F&GPC) of the SLLC
3. Mr. Edward Kamara – Vice Chairman Financial and General-Purpose Committee (F&GPC) of the SLLC.
4. Mr. Aaron Bioma – National Coordinator Informal Economy Committee SLLC
5. Mr. Ballard Y. Koroma – Executive member of the SLLC
6. Mr. Obia Kamara- President Bike Riders Union, and two other members of the Bike Riders Union.

We are further informed that other leaders of the SLLC are being trailed and stalked with the purpose of arresting them.

ITUC-Africa is aware that yesterday's attack and arrests is the latest in a continuing effort by officials of the Sierra Leone Government to interfere in trade union administration and to suppress their activities. We have been told that government officials have been trying to impose leaders on the Motor Bike Riders Union in a desperate attempt to hijack the union. The SLLC's attempt to assert the independence and autonomy of trade unions and their activities by facilitating the holding of the conference of one of its affiliates yesterday was thwarted by the arrests carried out by the Police with the allegation that the meeting was a threat to public peace.

ITUC-Africa strongly condemn these acts of interference in trade union activities and harassment of trade union leaders and activists and deem them a threat to democracy and good governance.

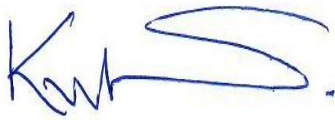
We remind Mr. President that Sierra Leone is bound by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is a signatory to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and the African Union Democracy and Good Governance Protocol. Sierra Leone has also ratified the International Labour Organization's Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize.

These instruments eloquently and without ambiguity demand that state parties and signatories provide guarantees for the enjoyment of the civil liberties they espouse without let or hindrance. The acts of interference and intimidation by the Sierra Leone Government against trade unions and their leaders are retrogressive and undermine the forward march of the Sierra Leonean and African people away from oppressive governments towards democracy and good governance.

ITUC-Africa urges the Government to immediately and unconditionally release all the trade union members and officers who have been arrested and detained without charge and to cease forthwith any further interference in trade union affairs.

We urge the Government of Sierra Leone to create conditions for the growth and operation of trade unions as legitimate social partners in the development of Sierra Leone for the wellbeing of its people.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kwasi Adu-Amankwah'.

Kwasi Adu-Amankwah
General Secretary