



**Statement for the Declaration of Rape and Sexual
Violence as a National Emergency by
His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio on
Thursday, 7th December 2019, at State House,
Freetown.**

Each month, hundreds of cases of rape and sexual assaults are being reported. These despicable crimes of sexual violence are being committed against our women, girls, and babies. Some of the fatalities are as young as 3 months old and 70% of survivors of this traumatic experience are under age 15.

Sadly, thousands more cases of rape and sexual violence go unreported. Some families and communities practice a culture of silence or indifference about sexual violence leaving victims traumatised.

Alarmingly, the perpetrators are getting younger and their acts are getting more violent and bestial. Of nearly 3,000 reported sexual assault cases, 602 of the survivors became pregnant; 7 of them contracted HIV/AIDS; 2, 404

had STDs; thousands more were scarred and traumatised by their ordeal. Only 39 of those 3,000 reported cases were successfully prosecuted whilst 2,961 of the survivors of sexual violence were denied justice. Additionally, there were no safe homes for survivors and medical treatment was unaffordable to many. As a nation, we must address this scourge.

I have consulted with local NGOs such as the Rainbow Initiative, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, the Office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, the Honourable Chief Justice, the Police, and other relevant ministries and agencies. My government will continue to work closely with civil society organizations, development partners, and community stakeholders to

address gaps and deficiencies in the Sexual Offences Act of 2012. I am directing close interagency collaboration in ensuring that the full cycle of services from reporting, investigation, treatment, after-care, and prosecution is free, uncomplicated, and delivered speedily.

As a government, we will invest in training specialised Police personnel, provide adequate forensic facilities, collect and collate comprehensive sexual violence data, deliver free medical services to survivors, and cater for safe homes and psychosocial care for survivors. We will engage communities and civil society in dialogues to eliminate the culture of compromise and silence around sexual violence. We must put an end to this scourge wrecking our nation.

On this note, I therefore declare rape and sexual violence as National Emergency.

With this declaration, I have also directed the following:

1. That ALL Government Hospitals MUST provide FREE Medical Treatment and certificate to every victim of rape and sexual abuse.
2. That a Special Division for Rape and Sexual Penetration of Minors be created by the Sierra Leone Police to speedily handle all cases of Rape and Sexual Penetration of Minors. This new Special Division will be separate from the Family Support Unit.
3. That the Honourable Chief Justice consider creating a Special Division with assigned judges to deal with cases of Rape and Sexual Violence.

4. With immediate effect, sexual penetration of Minors is punishable by LIFE IMPRISONMENT.
5. The High Court should consider 136 Proceedings in the High Court in order to speed up prosecution and trial of ALL new cases of Rape and Sexual Violence.
6. That Law Officers Department should consider to charging all persons accused of Rape and Sexual Violence with an offence of "Aggravated Assault".

Finally, a dedicated National Emergency Telephone Number for reporting Rape and Sexual Violence will be made available to the public.