



## **PRESS CONFERENCE ON PREPAREDNESS OF THE SECURITY SECTOR FOR THE JUNE 2023 ELECTIONS AND CRITICAL ISSUES BEING DEALT WITH BEFORE AND AFTER THE ELECTIONS**

*– A Statement By The National Security Coordinator,  
Mr. Abdulai Caulker, On Behalf of The Security Sector, Dated Friday, 16th  
June 2023*

1. Members of the Fourth Estate, Elections observation Missions, Colleagues in the Security Sector, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, good afternoon and welcome to this very important gathering,
2. Ladies and gentlemen, we are very close to the June 24 multi-tier elections, and so we have deemed it necessary to call this press conference.
3. The statement, which I am going to make, is on behalf of the security sector, and it is in two parts. The first part is to give you an update on the state of preparedness of the security sector for the upcoming elections in terms of our professional readiness to deliver security. The second part will highlight some of the critical issues we are paying special attention to as a sector during this election and after, and the unfair condemnation of the security sector.

Let me start with the first - our level of preparedness:

- a) The Security Sector has the constitutional responsibility to ensure the peace and security of Sierra Leone, and to protect lives and property. An adjunct to this strategic responsibility is to provide the conducive environment for the holding of democratic elections. This is a responsibility that the sector has always carried out with professionalism and immense success, leading to the peaceful conduct of four democratic elections in the country between 2002 and 2018, accompanied with smooth and peaceful transfer of political power. And so, the Saturday 24th June, 2023 elections will not be radically different from previous general elections, and we will not reinvent the wheel.
- b) In line with our mandate, we have undertaken a number of activities in order to get ourselves adequately prepared for the June 24th 2023, elections, and I feel delighted to outline the following:
  - i. We have reactivated the Integrated Election Security Planning Committee (IESPC) to ensure a focused coordination of the

efforts of Elections Management Bodies (EMBs), support security sector planning and actions through the development of appropriate strategies and mobilize requisite funding support for the Security Sector to cover the elections.

- ii. About one and a half years ago, we conducted a National Threat Assessment/District Risk Mapping leading to the development of three strategic documents pertinent to the effective and efficient management of the elections. These include: the Elections Security Strategy, Elections Communications Strategy and Elections Training Manual, all of which are now being implemented.
  - iii. In respect of the elections training manual in particular, which deals with election security ethical issues such as professionalism, impartiality, adherence to the rule of law and human rights principles, etc., for senior security personnel, a Training of Trainers (ToTs) roundtables were held all over the country. These in turn were replicated to hundreds of junior security personnel that are participating in the elections.
  - iv. We have also reactivated the National Situation Room (NSR) to support the Security Sector Early Warning and Early Response Mechanism relating to the electoral process and related national security issues. The NSR has a Toll-Free Line of 119 accessible by all mobile networks in the country, and the public can call this number to report any election security-related concerns.
  - v. The National Joint Operation Centre (NJOC), the Incident Command Centres (ICCs) and the Forward Control Points (FCPs) have all been reactivated to plan, coordinate and execute elections security operations both at the national and regional levels of the country.
4. We recognise that election is a civil process, and so it is not our plan to over-securitize it. As a result, security for the elections will be predominantly provided by the SLP supported by other auxiliary forces. However, the RSLAF is supporting the SLP under the Military Aid to Civil Power (MACP) policy.
  5. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, members of the Fourth Estate, you can now see that the Security Sector is adequately prepared to provide security for the upcoming elections. The public should rest assured that the Security Sector will remain professional and impartial in the execution of its duties, and every political party will be treated fairly in line with our respective mandates and codes of conduct.
  6. Let me now turn to the second part of my statement – that is, critical issues we are paying attention to and the unfair criticisms levied against members of the security sector.

7. The first is Social Media which has become one of the greatest threats to our national security today. There is no denying the fact that social media platforms have been largely misused to circulate misinformation, lies, tribal bigotry, hate speech, invectives and all manner of incendiary messages, especially WhatsApp. Divisive and ethnic messages expressed through social media have proved very unhelpful for national unity and cohesion.
8. The second threat is lawlessness and indiscipline. These are mainly exhibited by acts of disobedience to the laws of the land and state institutions, wanton violence, drug peddling, abuse, and other forms of criminality.
9. Another key threat is political intolerance which has led to unnecessary tension in the country, undermining national security and the integrity of the elections. Assessment indicates that most of the violent confrontations between political party supporters stem from their inability to accommodate one another.
10. I wish to conclude my statement by expressing our concern about the disturbing assertion by some members of the public and political parties that some security sector member institutions are biased, impartial, and vindictive in the discharge of their functions. Whilst such assertions could be said to be based on perception and figments of the imagination, they can be demotivating to sincere and hardworking members of the security sector. I would like to clearly state that the operations of the security sector are guided by prudence, integrity, and professionalism. The security sector is not a political party and has always tried to remain neutral and not to be influenced by external factors to make it act outside the law. Groupings that are infested by lawbreakers and members who ordinarily want to take the law into their own hands have always been subjects of arrest, detention, and prosecution by law enforcement agencies.
11. Whilst we pledge to remain apolitical and professional, we will be emphatic that, as a Sector, we will not sit by and allow miscreants to subvert either our democracy or the state. We are poised to hunt them and impel them. Just recently, our security architecture uncovered the activities of some groups with the aim of undermining national security. Some of their members have been arrested, and the security sector will continue to effect arrests.
12. Let me end by encouraging you all to support the work of the Security Sector and the EMBs so that we will deliver on our respective mandates to get a peaceful and credible electoral outcome on 24th June 2023. That way, we would have once more vindicated Sierra Leone honourably for the fifth time in our democratic dispensation after the civil war. In all of this, the role of the Fourth Estate is crucial.

13. To the Security Sector Family, I encourage all of us to remain strong and steadfast in protecting our country.

Thank you all, and kindly let this message be circulated widely.