



Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL)

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PRESS RELEASE

FREETOWN, 30 JUNE 2026: HRDN-SL Calls for Urgent Investigation into Alleged Human Rights Violations against Lifeline Nehemiah Projects and the Kuntorloh Community

The Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL) expresses grave concern over alleged attacks, arrests, and intimidation targeting human rights defenders, staff, and beneficiaries of Lifeline Nehemiah Projects (Lifeline) in Kuntorloh, eastern Freetown.

Lifeline is a civil society organisation working to advance the rights of children, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. In Kuntorloh, Lifeline operates schools, vocational training programmes, housing, and community services supporting more than 1,000 people daily.

The allegations arise in the context of an ongoing dispute concerning land lawfully owned by Lifeline, which is currently the subject of High Court proceedings and an interim injunction restraining interference with the property. Despite this, reported incidents involving the Sierra Leone Police and the Ministry of Social Welfare have intensified tensions and given rise to serious allegations of human rights violations.

HRDN-SL has received credible information, including photographic and video documentation, concerning the following alleged incidents occurring between September 2025 and February 2026:

- The Minister of Social Welfare and a delegation reportedly visited Lifeline without prior notice and announced plans to construct a centre for persons

with disabilities on a sports field owned and used by Lifeline for children and young people. The Minister refused to engage with Lifeline staff on this issue.

- Construction materials were allegedly delivered to the disputed land under police escort. When Lifeline staff and beneficiaries questioned the legality of the activity, they were arrested by police.
- Police reportedly used tear gas during a peaceful parent–teacher meeting at the Lifeline compound and in surrounding residential areas, with reports that a two-day-old baby died following the incident.
- Police allegedly attempted to force entry into the private residence of Lifeline’s Executive Director. His wife, a breastfeeding mother with a 10-month-old infant, was reportedly arrested, physically assaulted, and detained overnight, where she was forced to continue breastfeeding while in custody.
- Multiple Lifeline staff and beneficiaries, including Lifeline’s Executive Director, were reportedly arrested and subjected to degrading treatment in custody, including deprivation of food and family contact. Two young detainees were forced to walk on their hands and knees and beaten with metal chains, resulting in lasting injuries.
- Police reportedly attempted to demolish structures at the Lifeline compound, including a vocational training workshop, causing significant physical and financial damage. When Lifeline’s Finance Director requested to see a court order authorising the demolition, police arrested him and detained him for a week without charge.
- Police also allegedly seized several phones, computers, cash, building materials and other property belonging to Lifeline and its beneficiaries.
- Lifeline’s Executive Director and Finance Director are facing ongoing criminal proceedings for charges including ‘obstruction’, ‘incitement of violence’ and ‘riotous conduct’. The hearings in these proceedings have been repeatedly adjourned due to the police complainants failing to appear in court and present evidence against the accused.

HRDN-SL is deeply concerned that the reported actions, if substantiated, may amount to serious violations of rights protected under the *Constitution of Sierra*

Leone and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR), including the rights to liberty and security of person, protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, and protection against unlawful interference with home and property.

HRDN-SL further notes that allegations of human rights violations by public officials are especially serious, as they represent a misuse of public authority and risk undermining public confidence in the rule of law and the institutions responsible for upholding it.

HRDN-SL has formally raised these concerns with the Inspector General of Police and called for an investigation, but has received no response to date. This matter has also been the subject of a communication from four United Nations human rights experts to the Government of Sierra Leone, expressing concern about these alleged violations and their impact on fundamental rights and freedoms in Sierra Leone.

HRDN-SL calls on the Sierra Leone Police and relevant authorities to:

- Respond publicly to the concerns raised and conduct a prompt, independent and transparent investigation into all allegations of police misconduct;
- Ensure accountability for any violations established, including appropriate disciplinary or criminal action where warranted;
- Respect the rule of law and ongoing court proceedings, including compliance with the High Court injunction concerning the disputed property; and
- Guarantee that Lifeline staff, beneficiaries, and affected community members can exercise their rights and carry out their legitimate activities free from intimidation, harassment, violence, or reprisals.

The Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL) is a coalition of civil society organizations and individuals working to promote and protect human rights with a specific focus on defending human rights defenders.

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