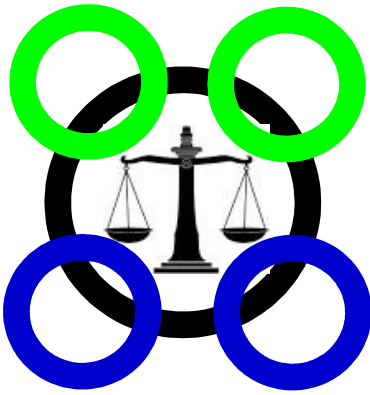


Human Rights Defenders Network



Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL)

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PRESS RELEASE

FREETOWN, 21 SEPTEMBER 2026: HRDN-SL Welcomes Dismissal of Criminal Proceedings against Human Rights Defenders

Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL) welcomes the dismissal of the criminal proceedings against human rights defenders Mr Prince Tommy Williams and Mr Mohamed Turay.

Mr Williams and Mr Turay are associated with Lifeline Nehemiah Projects, a civil society organization working with children, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable members of the Kuntorloh community in eastern Freetown. The charges against them arose in the context of their efforts to peacefully defend property held by Lifeline. HRDN-SL had previously raised concerns regarding the treatment of both men by the Sierra Leone Police and the Ministry of Social Welfare, including their alleged arbitrary arrest and detention.

The criminal prosecution of human rights defenders in connection with their peaceful efforts to defend the rights and property of a civil society organization is deeply concerning. Human rights defenders must be able to carry out legitimate human rights activities without fear of arrest, prosecution or other forms of retaliation. The use of criminal prosecutions in response to peaceful human rights activity can have a chilling effect on the individuals concerned and on others who seek to challenge violations/abuses and defend the rights of their communities.

HRDN-SL commends the Judiciary for bringing these matters to an end. We also note that both cases remained before the Court for several months, with numerous appearances required by Mr Williams and Mr Turay, before their eventual dismissal.

It is vital that human rights defenders are not subjected to prolonged criminal proceedings in connection with their legitimate work.

HRDN-SL remains committed to working with the Judiciary, law enforcement authorities and other relevant institutions to promote the rule of law, protect human rights defenders and ensure that individuals are able to peacefully defend human rights without fear of criminalization.

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.

END