

Action for Large Scale Land Acquisition Transparency (ALLAT)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

27th January, 2015.

The incident in Sahn Malen chiefdom, in the Bamba axis where there is allegation of shooting at Socfin staff warrants to be frowned at. If the allegation is true, ALLAT and its members denounce the act of using weapons to resolve a problem. We sympathise with the staff that met with this unfortunate incident.



ALLAT is aware that over 13 persons have been arrested among which are three women and the Councillor of that area. All arrested are from the village of Bamba, the home town of Paramount Chief Kebbie. They are now in detention in the Bo police station as investigations continue; none have been granted police bail.

ALLAT network appreciates the efforts of the police and all those helping with the investigation of the incident. We wish to caution that the investigation is done objectively and in line with human rights principles.

CDHR

ALLAT wish to inform the public that it is keenly following police investigations through its members as it is also engaged in its own independent investigation the report of which will be made public.

CCHRA

CEPA-SL

SLADEA

UPHR

BIOSALONE

MALOA

AFLUA

SLCGG

RACAPSL

SEDA

WoNES

ALLAT members have on several instances undertaken actions that would lead to dialogue and an amicable resolution to the land rights issues in Malen Chiefdom. For instance, ALLAT members have published research reports (Who Is Benefiting, Green Scenery Fact Sheet etc) with recommendations; ALLAT members were instrumental in involving the Human Rights Commission to undertaking a proactive mediation position; The Committees on Land and Agriculture in Parliament were lobbied by ALLAT members to undertake an oversight action in the land issues between land owning communities, the company and the chiefdom authorities.

All of these actions were either thwarted, not taken seriously by major stakeholders including government, or largely ignored by some parties to the conflict.

ALLAT is of the strong convictions that this incident is an indicator of deep seated grudge as a result of suppression of communities over their right to land and consequent deprivation of their livelihoods and way of life guaranteed by the Sierra Leone Constitution.

Even as the Ebola outbreak is taking a major part of government's attention, we urge the government to take this incident very seriously and commit time to deal with the problem in a humane manner in which all parties are granted their due respect.

ALLAT wish to bring to the notice of the Government and the public that similar development is simmering in the Soro Gbema and Makpele chiefdoms where in recent times a company known as Natural Habitat has emerged to acquire some 97,745 ha from the two Chiefdoms (Soro Gbema 60,045ha and Makpele 30,700ha). According to a Green Scenery report of April 2013, "Fact Sheet on Large scale Agri-investments in Pujehun District" This land area was acquired in unclear circumstances by three companies: West African Agriculture Number 2 Limited, West African Agriculture Limited and Aristeus Palm Oil Limited all of which are run by the same small group of Sierra Leoneans and nationals of British origin.

A recent report on land issues in Makpele and Soro Gbema by an ALLAT member indicates that majority of communities whose land have been arrogated by Natural Habitat are aggrieved and tension is gradually rising in the communities.

These developments warrant a moratorium on large scale land acquisitions. A moratorium will give space and time to the government to design policies, regulations, monitoring mechanisms and structures that will ensure safeguards for the communities and protect the state from unsecured revenue generation as well as security of investments. ALLAT therefore urge the government to declare a moratorium on large scale land acquisitions in Sierra Leone.

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