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PRESS RELEASE

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PARLIAMENT RATIFIES PUBLIC EMERGENCY REGULATIONS FOR ANOTHER 90 DAYS

The Parliament of Sierra Leone, after a protracted debate on the 11th June, 2015 through a collection of voices; passed the extension of the Public Emergency Regulations (PERs): Constitutional Instrument No. 5 which was laid before Parliament on the 21st August, 2014; by majority of the Members present and voting with some dissenting views; that the regulations be continued and extended for another period of 90 Days; starting on the 11th June, 2015; pursuant to Section 29 Subsection 10 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

The following Members contributed to the debate before the motion was carried by the House:

- I. Hon. Umar Paran Tarawally said that the State of Emergency (SoE) was declared because of ebola. He said that Kambia and Port Loko are the two districts that are still recording new cases of ebola; and called for them to be isolated as was done to Kailahun and Kenema to beat back the virus. He also said that the ebola situation has improved drastically; and that the regulations be reviewed critically before ratification as it has affected the socio-economic fabric of the Sierra Leone society.
- II. Hon. Paramount Chief, Victor B. S Kebbie, said in his contribution that he stood to support the motion for the extension of the Public Emergency Regulations (PERs). He recalled his travelling experience; and told the House that ebola in one area could not exclude the whole country from it. He also said that the idea of isolating the two districts would promote sectionalism. He called for the approval of the extension of the PERs; and admonished MPs to think and speak Sierra Leone; and not political parties.
- III. Hon. Alhassan Kamara said that SoE came into existence as a result of ebola. He also said that we could not leave Kambia and Port Loko to suffer alone. He said that the relaxation of the PERs would undermine the fight against ebola; and noted that the Police are using their wisdom and discretion to implement the regulations; and would be treated otherwise if you attempted to go above the bar. He also said that what affects one, should affect all; and that though the ebola situation has improved; it is yet to be finally eliminated.
- IV. Hon. Jusufu B. Mansaray said that the regulations should be relaxed in areas that are recording zero ebola cases to enhance socio-economic activities. He said that they wanted to assist President Koroma to achieve the Agenda for Prosperity (AfP). He also called for the extension of trading hours; and noted that the regulations should be strengthened in Kambia and Port Loko to fight-back the ebola virus.

- V. Hon. Isata Kabia declared that we should either eradicate ebola, or perish as a nation. She also said that SoE was declared for a national purpose to fight ebola; and since Ramadan is fast approaching, congregants should be monitored. She also said that the restrictions should be intensified and strengthened; as Kambia and Port Loko are more than willing to go into self-quarantine to help the country get out of ebola; as it started with two districts; and may probably end in two districts.
- VI. Hon. Sualih M. Koroma called for the relaxation of some of the PERs; and the inclusion of punishments for police and military personnel that are not manning quarantined homes where people are escaping from; and called for the separation of ebola and non-ebola burials. He said that business hours be shifted to 10:00 pm as most people cater for their livelihood on a daily basis; whilst appealing to NERC to involve MSF and other experienced bodies to assist GOAL to fight ebola in Kambia and Port Loko.
- VII. Hon. Francis Amara KaiSamba observed that the regulations have been used to silence dissenting views; and implemented discriminately. He said that opposition processions were not allowed; and noted that Liberia lifted their SoE before they were finally declared ebola free. He said that the PERs should not be extended; and that SLPP supporters were arrested in Kenema for illegal gathering.
- VIII. Hon. Chernor R.M. Bah referred the House to Section 29 subsection 10 (b); and said that the PERs would only be reviewed after they have been extended. He said that those regulations were formulated to give effect to the SoE which still remains in full force as it was passed to last for a year; and called for the extension to be approved before a review.
- IX. Hon. Ansumana J. Kaikai, the Acting Minority Leader said that ebola is a new disease in the country; and as much as they agree to disagree; the SoE was ratified as a weapon to fight ebola. He said that people jubilated when we started recording zero ebola cases. He said that MPs should be empowered by the executive to go and do sensitization in the remaining districts. He also spoke of police brutality and harassment of traders at Gbondapie in Pujehun; and recalled when a policeman detained him for two hours before he could be released. He said that such acts are killing our domestic economies; noting the suffering of our people; and called for the review of the PERs; such as the prohibition of meetings and gatherings.
- X. Hon. Leonard S. Fofanah, the Deputy Majority Leader, who served as the acting Majority Leader; in concluding the debate said that the President of Liberia noted that she would not jubilate as ebola is still in the two neighboring countries; whilst saying that the PERs should be maintained; even though it is not comfortable for everyone. He also said that "ebola somewhere is ebola everywhere". He said that Section 29 subsection 10 (b) could only be revoked or amended by President Koroma. Responding to concerns raised by the opposition, he said that police patrols and surveillance relating to ebola should be maintained before moving for the extension of the PERs.

The Hon. Speaker of the House, Sheku B.B Dumbuya put the motion and it was carried by the House.