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PRESS RELEASE
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Parliament Ratifies New Declaration of State of Health Emergency (SOE)

Parliament on Thursday the 27th of August 2015, ratified the proclamation of His Excellency President Koroma three weeks ago, on the State of Emergency which was published in the Supplement to the Sierra Leone gazette volume CXLVI No. 36, dated 6th August, 2015 and pursuant to section 29(3) of the constitution of Sierra Leone, Act No.6 of 1991.

Making his submission on the proclamation, the Leader of the House Hon. Ibrahim Bundu, acknowledged the roles played by international partners in fighting the Ebola virus in the country. Hon. Bundu commended Sierra Leoneans who in diverse ways supported the fight and congratulated MPs for a united front in the Ebola war.

Earlier, the Deputy Minority Leader, Hon. Ansu Kai-kai cautioned that, in ratifying the proclamation one should be mindful of the political and civil rights of the people. He urged colleagues to critically look into the proclamation and do justice for the ordinary man and consider the civil liberties of people they are representing.

Hon. Dr. Bu buakai Jabbie argued against the continuation of a SOE and said the proclamation according to section 29 (3) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone has all but lapsed and furthered that the conditions for a SOE are no more imperative.

Hon. PC Bai kurr Kanagbaro Sanka III highlighted the importance of the SOE and cautioned that, President Koroma is not using it to victimize any opponent; this was to fight Ebola, PC Bai Kurr said. He submitted that the late president Tejan Kabbah instituted a SOE during the eleven year civil war, which all political parties then supported and even added an extension of one year to his rule.

Hon. Isata Kabia, also took a historical perspective, noting that Sierra Leone has been under a SOE during the regime of President Kabba without Parliamentary extension. She sees no reason why the state of emergency should be lifted when Ebola is yet to be liquidated. She called on MPs to rally behind the government and end the fight against the disease.

Hon Umar Paran Tarawally also recalled President Koroma saying that “extraordinary times require extra ordinary measures,” but declared that these are ordinary times because health structures are already in place. Making references to Liberia and Guinea, he also opposed the extension of the emergency, noting that there are laws, regulations and security apparatuses to guide the state.

In one of the concluding statements on the debate, the Minority Leader of Parliament, Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai, gave background information on how the Ebola disease

started in the country and expressed the need for Sierra Leoneans to maintain zero cases for 42 days marking the end of Ebola.

She cautioned MPs that Ebola is not yet finished and urged for vigilant measures to be in place to complete the 42 days. Dr. Lahai noted that the people of Sierra Leone are happy with some of the measures put in place by government to end the outbreak. She said the SLPP party stands against the renewal of the SOE but urged colleague MPs to choose between political and national interests.

Concluding the debate, Majority leader Hon. Ibrahim Bundu, observed that all that the President did was in the best interest of the country. He said this action taken by the President is not political but national, and urged colleagues to be patient and allow the World Health Organization to declare Sierra Leone Ebola free.