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PRESS RELEASE

PARLIAMENT DEBATES THE ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY ACT 2021

The Parliament of Sierra Leone has on Thursday 15th July 2021 extensively debated the Bill entitled: "The Abolition of the Death Penalty Act 2021".

The Bill is an Act that is seeking the abolition of the death penalty in the case of persons convicted in Sierra Leone for murder under the Offences Act Against the Person Act, 1861, robbery with aggravation under the Larceny Act, 1916, mutiny under the Sierra Leone Military Forces Act 1961, treason and other related offences under the Treason and State Offences Act 1963, to make alternative provisions for the punishment for persons so convicted and to provide for other related matters.

Presenting the Bill, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Anthony Y. Brewah said the document is seeking to amend various acts in the jurisprudence of Sierra Leone regarding the abolition of the death penalty in Sierra Leone. He said the intention of the Bill was not to eliminate the various offences, but to abolish the death penalty as maximum sentences from our law books.

Hon. Hindolo Moiwo Gevao described the day as historic and thanked President Bio for the implementation of his manifesto promise on the abolition of the death penalty from our law books. He recalled how leaders had used it to eliminate political opponents like Mohamed Sorie Fornah, Kula Samba and others; adding it has been expunged from the law books of most democratic countries in the world on the grounds that it had not prevented people from killing people, be it intentionally or not. Referring to the death penalty as an archaic law, he called for its replacement with life imprisonment.

Hon. Ajibola Manly- Spain said as opposition they appreciate the abolition of the death penalty from our law books, but he cautioned it has to be done wholesomely with other crimes including arms and ammunitions. Speaking on the invitation to Civil Society and Human Rights Organizations, he called on Parliament to critically analyze the Bill to stand the test of time.

Hon. Emilia Lolloh Tongi, an Independent MP said death penalty is the worst punishment for mankind, and spoke about the need for its abolishment from our law books, and be replaced with life imprisonment.

Deputy Chief Whip, Hon. Alusine Kanneh said the abolition was needful and recalled many instances where it had been used against Mohamed Sorie Fornah and others. Speaking on the democratic credentials of this Government, he commended President Bio for delivering on his campaign promise regarding the abolition of the death penalty in Sierra Leone.

Hon. Abdul Kargbo commended President Bio for the abolition of the death penalty and decried security forces for using disproportionate force against rioters in Makeni and other places in the country resulting in deaths.

The Leader of C4C, Hon. Saa Emerson Lamina in light of international best practices, thanked President Julius Maada Bio for delivering on his campaign promise regarding the abolition of the death penalty from our law books. He recalled how a brilliant Sierra Leonean, Mohamed Sorie Fornah was executed under this law, including Kula Samba and others. He also thanked the Fifth Parliament for being part of repealing and passing progressive laws for the development of Sierra Leone.

Hon. Dr. Mark M. Kalokoh thanked President Bio for the abolition of the death penalty. He recalled how a lot of people had been executed under this law including Mohamed Sorie Fornah, Kula Samba and others. Speaking on human rights, he condemned all forms of "extrajudicial killings" in the country.

Deputy Leader of Government Business, Hon. Bashiru Silikie thanked President Bio for delivering on his manifesto promise regarding the abolition of the death penalty. He recalled how President Bio on collective responsibility apologized to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for the extrajudicial killings carried out by NPRC. He said the SLPP Government would not keep a bad law to be used by bad leaders in future to eliminate political opponents. He also recalled how it was used to eliminate political opponents such as Mohamed Sorie Fornah and others.

Hon. Moses A. Edwin commended President Julius Maada Bio for delivering on his promise on the abolition of the death penalty and called for necessary safeguards in respect of same.

Hon. Foday Mario Kamara supported the abolition of the death penalty and spoke on the need for safeguards. He called for education of the citizenry on the abolition of the death penalty.

Hon. Abdul Karim Kamara referenced efforts that have been made by Amnesty International on the abolition of death penalty. Speaking on justice and freedom in a democratic state, he called on Parliament to be cautionary in the passage of laws, following the incarcerations of small boys because of amendments on sexual offenses.

Hon. Dominic Tshombe also thanked President Bio for delivering on his campaign promise and called for critical examination of the Bill in light of the abolition of the death penalty from our law books.

Hon. Dr. Unpha Sorie Koroma thanked President for the repeal of the death penalty and recalled how his father-in-law, GMT Kaikai and others were eliminated as political opponents by this law. He spoke of safeguards for those hooligans who would say "ah go kill you en run you jail".

The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Chernor R.M. Bah said the sanctity of lives should not be mortgaged by either judicial or extrajudicial killings. He recalled how former president Ernest Bai Koroma had apologized in Moyamba for judicial killings perpetrated under the APC. He was opposed to disproportionate use of force that had been used by the police resulting in the loss of lives in several places in the country. Thanking President Bio and Parliament for the repeal, he promised that they would follow the process to the latter to ensure that the Bill would stand the test of time.

The Leader of Government Business, Hon. Mathew Sahr Nyuma said they are operating an open Parliament and thanked SLBC, AYV and FTN TV for live streaming of proceedings in Parliament. He said, as a Catholic, he believes in the doctrines that "thou shall not kill". Speaking on safeguards, he thanked President Bio for delivering on his campaign promise regarding the abolition of the death penalty. He spoke on the need for the determination of alternative sentences and recalled how the death penalty was used to eliminate political opponents like Mohamed Sorie Fornah and others.

The Presiding Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Segepoh Solomon Thomas has called on Civil Society and Human Rights Organizations to submit inputs in the form of either position papers or otherwise on the abolition of the death penalty, through the Office of the Clerk of Parliament for consideration by the Leadership of Parliament on Wednesday 21/07/2021 at 10:00 AM.

Department of Public Relations

Parliament of Sierra Leone

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