



National Early Warning System (NEWS)

Situation Report on the Mitigation of Elections Threats to the peaceful conduct of the 2018 General Elections in Sierra Leone

October 2017

Introduction

The situation report for October focused on the competition between political parties and their supporters accompanied by increased violence events. NEWS reports indicate political violence in several locations across the country expressed in the form of violent communication and physical attacks. With four months left to the elections date, risk factors arising from political activities could threaten the effort of the National Electoral Commission and the State to conduct credible polls. Relevant stakeholders such as Office of National Security, Political Party Registration Commission, Provincial and District Security Committees, National Electoral Commission and Civil Society Organizations require strategic and effective response measures. Emphasis on strengthening peace and security infrastructure of the State will contribute to the mitigation of identified threats before, during and after the 2018 elections.

Also during October, the National Grand Coalition (NGC) emerged as a newly registered party. The general public opinion is that the party represents the third political force and a challenge to the political influence of the two major political parties.¹

¹The Traditional supports base of the opposition SLPP is South-eastern where majority of the Mende ethnic group and the founding members of the party originated, whilst the North-Western parts of the country is the support base of the incumbent APC with the Temne and Limba ethnic groups.

The Current Election Security Threats in Sierra Leone

Physical Violence and Destruction of Properties:

- On October 7, 2017, posters of Alliance Democratic Party (ADP) were destroyed by suspected supporters of aspirants for the All People's Congress (APC) party along the main Kaindordu Road, Koidu City, Kono²;
- On October 11, 2017, there was violent altercation between supporters of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the Police at the APC headquarters at Western area in a bid by the Police to stop the supporters from using a route through the APC office. While the supporters pelted stones at the headquarters, police fired tear gas to disperse the crowd;³
- On October 15, 2017, some youth groups in Port Loko District destroyed posters, burnt T-shirts and images of the President Ernest Bai Koroma in protest of his role in the emergence of Dr. Samura Kamara, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, as APC presidential candidate;⁴
- On October 16, 2017, five SLPP members, including Abu Kokofele, were attacked at a toll gate located a few miles to Masiaka in Port Loko District by people dressed in APC party T-shirts who claimed they were returning from the Party Convention in Makeni;⁵
- On October 21, 2017, supporters of Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) accused supporters of All People's Congress (APC) of destroying their party posters and portraits of Brigadier Julius Maada Bio at Orgu Farm junction, West End of Freetown;⁶

Hostile Communication:

- On October 16, 2017, Mr. Melvin D. Rogers, the Regional Secretary for Sierra Leone People's Party, Bo District tendered his resignation and suspended his membership from

² NEWS Monitor Report

³ Africa Young Voices (AYV) Television, October 11, 2017

⁴ Africa Young Voices Newspaper, October 17, 2017

⁵ NEWS Monitor Report

⁶ op cit

the Party over complaints of continued insults and harassment from party members and disunity in the Party;⁷

- On October 4, 2017, supporters of All Peoples Congress Party publicly called the Chief Electoral Commission Chair, Mohammed N’fah Alie Conteh, a “Public Enemy Number One”. They accused him of being partisan and sympathetic to the Sierra Leone Peoples Party because his wife is a Mende and hails from the Eastern Region.⁸
- On October 23, 2017, the Public Relations Officer of the SLPP described the presidential candidate of the APC as a very dishonest man who he claimed had falsified his PhD Certificate and also accused of being a rapist;⁹

Ethics and Procedure:

- On October 15, 2017, some members and supporters of the All People’s Congress (APC) criticized the Chairman and leader of the Party, President Ernest Bai Koroma of disenfranchising flag bearer aspirants and delegates by way of selection rather than allowing 1,407 party delegates to elect the Party’s presidential flag bearer and running mate during the Party Convention held on October 14 and 15 at Makeni City, Bombali District¹⁰;
- On October 16, 2017, Paramount Chiefs in Kono District, endorsed the Minister of Lands and Country Planning, Finda Diana Konomanyi as the Vice Presidential aspirant for the All Peoples Congress (APC) and presented him as their choice to President Ernest Bai Koroma during the October 14 and 15 Convention held at Makeni City¹¹;

Conformity to the Rule of Law:

- Mr. Charles Francis Magai, the leader of the People’s Movement for Democratic Change, expressed his intention to file a petition against Dr. Samura Wilson Kamara for failing to resign his position as Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation before being appointed as a presidential candidate of APC party, in accordance with Article 76 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

⁷ Official resignation letter, October 16, 2017

⁸ Global Times Newspaper, October 4, 2017

⁹ Society for Radio Democracy, 98.1., October 23, 2017, Radio debate between Deputy Minister of Information and Communication, Mr. Cornelius Deyeaux and the Public Relation Officer of the SLPP, Mr. Lahai Lawrence Lemah.

¹⁰ Standard Times, October 16, 2017

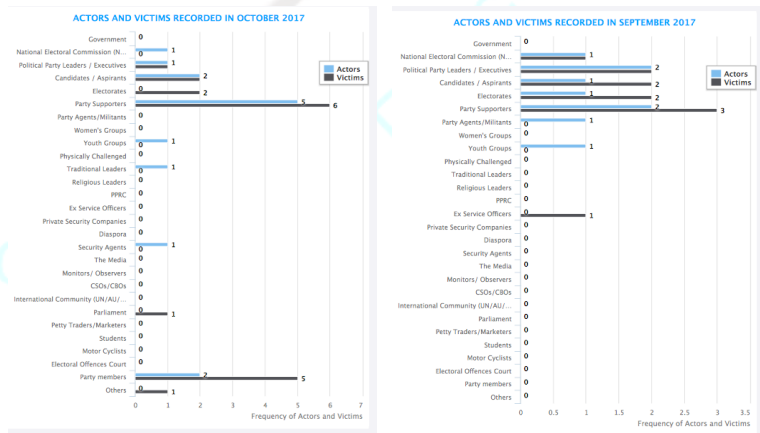
¹¹ NEWS Monitor Report

Statistical Overview of the Election Threats

Based on WANEP’s NEWS reports of October 2017, there were a total of 11 incident reports submitted. These incidents occurred in five districts, namely Bo, Bombali, Kono, Port Loko and Western Urban which recorded the highest number of cases related to physical violence and violent communication. A trend analysis of September and October highlight that Western Urban has the highest cumulative frequency of 12 incidents out of a total of 25 incidents reported or a percentage representation of 48% of the total incidents reported in the NEWS system within the two-month period. A comparative analysis between September and October reports indicate that Western Urban, Bo and Bombali recorded recurring threats.

In line with the NEWS indicators categories, Physical Violence is the most recurring threat, at 45% threshold for all incidents for October; Hostile Communication is at 27%, Ethics and Procedure is at 18%, while Conformity to the Rule of Law is 9%. This indicates a 31% increase in physical violence from 14% in September to 45% during the month of October. Also, the percentage for Hostile Communication increased by 13% from 14% in September to 27%. In comparative terms the month of October recorded an overall frequency decrease in the total number of politically related incidents reported but raises the risks of physical violence and hostile communications.

In terms of comparative analysis for stakeholders highlighted as actors or victims in the September and October reports, political party members and supporters were most reported as primary actors and victims in the reports.



Recommendations

For NERG/DERG/CSOs:

- NERG and DERG should organize town hall meetings to disseminate information on peaceful elections; and community dialogues to discourage youths and citizen mobilization for violent purposes, especially in high risk areas such as Western Urban, Kono and medium risk areas such as Bombali and Bo;
- WANEP, CGG and appropriate CSOs should work with the Political Party Liaison Committee and the Political Party Registration Commission to design and implement Dispute Management training programs for the political parties to enhance political tolerance and conflict management in Western Urban to mitigate the threat of violence in the District;
- NERG and DERG should improve communication and strategic meetings with the Integrated Security Planning Committee of the ONS to share the NEWS reports and enhance the security interventions in high risk areas such as Western Urban, Kono, as well as in Bombali and Bo;
- NERG and DERG to engage the Council of Paramount Chiefs in a consultative dialogue that seeks ways to minimize traditional rulers' partisanship and improve community confidence in the leadership.

For NEC/PPLC:

- The Political Parties Liaison Committee should work with National Electoral Commission to organize multi-stakeholder dialogues at district levels with youth party leaders to develop intra and inter party dispute resolution mechanism to mitigate youth violence in the lead up to the elections:

For NCD/IMC

- The Independent Media Commission should monitor and sanction respective media houses used as platform for disseminating hate speech;
- The National Commission for Democracy should embark on non-violence and peace education campaigns in Western Urban, Kono, Bombali and Bo.