



**OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF PARLIAMENT
PARLIAMENT BUILDING
OAU DRIVE, TOWER HILL
FREETOWN
Tel: 232-76-615187
E-mail: admin@parliament.gov.sl**



PRESS RELEASE

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NEC BOSS ADMITS PROCEDURAL BREACH

Addressing Members of Parliament on Monday 03rd April 2017 in Committee Room One in the full glare of the public, Chairman of the National Electoral Commission (NEC), N’fah Alie Conteh admitted that the MPs are right based on the concerns raised in the private member’s motion regarding constituency and ward boundary delimitations, but that those procedural and constitutional breaches are not intentional.

He also said that NEC was challenged with the joint civil and voter registration process and the issue of the re-districting/de-amalgamation. He averred that the documents had long been “submitted to the office of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice to put them in the form of a Bill for enactment in Parliament”, having regard for the parliamentary notification that the next general elections should be conducted in “132-constituencies”.

In his opening remarks, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Hon. Chernor Bah notes with disappointment the wrong insinuations on the motion that it is meant for the “extension of tenure or more time”. He said that such insinuations will not derail Parliament from doing her constitutional work. He described the debate as constitutional and that the representatives of the people are focused to respect and uphold the tenets of the Constitution of Sierra Leone. He also said that the “registration and the constituency boundaries, using the 2015-Census are carried out on constituencies that are non-existent, as they do not have the approval of Parliament”.

He assured the public that Parliament will “not allow the executive to muzzle or force her to do the wrong thing” and promised to look at the documents within the remits of the Constitution, in spite of public pressure, whilst saying that its continued engagements with NEC is to ensure that the outcome is in the best interests of the public. Hon. Bah reiterated that a week before the instruments were tabled in the House, Parliament had already raised some of these concerns to NEC, bordering on constitutionality.

The mover of the motion, Hon. Sualiho M. Koroma recalled that his motion only “questioned constitutional compliance and that it has nothing to do with the extension of term for parliament or the executive or more time”.

Hon. Dr. Bernadette Lahai, Minority Leader of the House trailed a plethora of documents belonging to NEC, explaining the arduous processes they had been through for previous



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elections before the approval of Parliament and subsequent implementation, and expected same to have been followed by NEC.

Hon. Paramount Chief, Bai Kurr Kanagbaro recalled that he had given notice to Parliament on the day the instruments were tabled in the House, cautioning that the period was too short before the commencement of registration.

Hon. Ansumana Kaikai, Deputy Minority Leader of the House delved into the unconstitutionality of the matter, saying that NEC had failed to comply with the relevant provisions.

Hon. Claude Kamanda, Chief Whip of Parliament suggested that these issues can “be settled through a Bill and that the voter registration exercise should be stopped because the boundaries are not yet approved by Parliament”

Majority Leader of the House, Hon. Leonard Fofanah called for the way forward in spite of Parliament regulating itself, saying that Parliament is acting in utmost good faith as a respecter of the Constitution.

Deputy Minister of Justice, John Arrow Bockarie commended Sierra Leoneans for the interests shown so far, whilst stating that “the instruments are exclusively in the competence and domain of Parliament for deliberations and action”.