

# Network Movement For Democracy & Human Rights

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## PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Seeking Justice for Rape Survivors: The Need for Forensic Testing Machines

Network Movement for Democracy and Human Rights (NMDHR) is concerned over the large numbers of rape cases, especially of minors, that are going unreported in Sierra Leone, with few survivors of sexual violence either willing or able to approach the authorities or have access to immediate and free forensic testing facilities that expedite the delivery of justice in Sierra Leone.

The issue of rape and sexual harassment has become a culture for certain quarters of the Sierra Leonean society. Victims and survivors of rape continue to be subjected to constant fear, and stigmatization in their communities and also with little or no sign of justice. There are no forensic testing facilities in Sierra Leone for victims and survivors of sexual penetration and or violence, and also inadequate resources to respond and treat victims and survivors of sexual violence. Rape survivors who do not report their cases and gain access to appropriate treatment also risk severe health complications including sexually transmitted disease and long term effect.

According to the Family Support Units division of the Sierra Leone Police, about 3,252 sexual penetration cases were recorded in 2019 since the proclamation of State of Emergency on rape by his Excellency the president of the Republic of Sierra Leone.

As a result, many sexual violence cases go unreported with no evidence and the perpetrators are often not prosecuted while the victim would remain subjected sexually to a lengthy period of abuse sometimes leading to death.

From our interview with the Director of Rainbow Initiative Daniel S. Kettor said there are currently no available forensic testing machines across Sierra Leone to speed-up testing so that doctors can process sexual penetration reports.

NMDHR, therefore, calls for the following;

1. That religious leaders, traditional authorities, and local community chiefs to stop the traditional justice mechanisms where both the victim's parents and the perpetrators negotiate to keep silent and forgive the perpetrators while the victims of rape continue to suffer stigmatization.
2. That the government invest in and transform the medical infrastructure to properly investigate rape and speedily bring perpetrators to book

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