

OPEN LETTER TO:

His Excellency Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah
President of the Republic of Sierra Leone

Friday 1 July 2005

Dear President Kabbah,

CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S
"WHITE PAPER ON THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION REPORT"

We write to you in a spirit of engagement and co-operation.

When the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was presented to you at State House on 5 October 2004, you declared that Sierra Leone had reached "a significant milestone in its history".

You told key national and international stakeholders that the TRC report was "not just another report, but a sacred document", and that your Government is "committed to taking seriously the report and the recommendations contained in it".

It is in this light that we in civil society respond to the issuance on Monday 27 June 2005 of a document entitled "White Paper on the Truth and Reconciliation Report". While we welcome your Government's ongoing commitment to the TRC process, we are deeply concerned at the unconventional manner in which this paper has been composed and released.

The "White Paper" is vague and non-committal. It does not reflect any serious engagement on the part of your Government with the TRC's comprehensive programme of recommendations. It does not address the issues of greatest concern to the people of Sierra Leone. Indeed it fails to indicate any strategy or timeframe for the implementation of the few TRC recommendations your Government purports to accept.

If this "White Paper" is intended to represent Government's definitive response to the TRC report, then in civil society's view it is in need of substantial revision.

We believe that the document issued this week is in fact more akin to a "Green Paper", which serves to instigate a period of public consultation *in advance* of a Government policy proposal.

This interpretation accords with the undertakings you made during our meeting at State Lodge on 11 May 2005. You stated that you will welcome civil society input into the production of the Government's policy response to the TRC report, even after the issuance of an initial paper. We are convinced that the document issued this week re-

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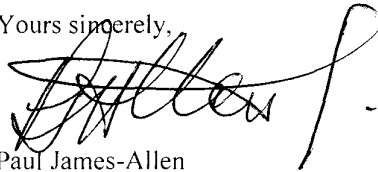
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emphasises the imperative for our engagement in the implementation of the TRC recommendations.

We now urge you to lend substance to your words and demonstrate that your Government is taking seriously the TRC report. We appeal to you for a public notification that the consultative process around the TRC recommendations is underway. We remain your committed partners in this initiative and we stand ready to work with you and your Government.

We have no doubt that the implementation of the TRC recommendations will go a long way to establishing the rule of law, human rights, accountability and the development of Sierra Leone into a more progressive society. Government and civil society must tackle these crucial issues now. We believe that the most serious consideration of the TRC's recommendations is the starting point.

Yours sincerely,



Paul James-Allen
National Forum for Human Rights
On behalf of civil society

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