

# INDEPENDENCE DAY STATEMENT 1



## **ADDRESS TO THE NATION BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE ON INDEPENDENCE DAY - 27 APRIL, 2020**

Fellow Citizens

In this Holy Month of Ramadan, *Asalamualaikum warahamatu-ilahi ta allah wa barakatuhu*

1. On this 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our nation's independence, we are once again reminded of how we are a resilient people, who have stood together as a nation in trying times and come out every time a stronger and better nation.
2. These are not normal times in our country and in the world at large. The ravaging Coronavirus has overwhelmed nations and left over two hundred thousand dead in its trail. This pandemic has changed societies, unsettled notions of unilateralism, and left economies in shambles.
3. As we mark this day, I would like to thank our healthcare and other essential workers, Chiefs and community

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leaders, journalists, development partners (local and international), and Sierra Leoneans who have volunteered to work hard to rid our great nation of COVID-19.

4. I am also profoundly grateful to every Sierra Leonean who has complied with restrictions on movement, assembly, livelihood, and lifestyles. Those measures may seem intrusive and unbearable now, but they are necessary to break the chain of transmission so we can return to normal life and routine. For all you do to prevent, protect yourselves and others, and to curtail the disease, I thank you. Let us all be communicators and social mobilisers who do not only act to prevent Corona but also educate our loved ones, neighbours, and our communities about this highly infectious disease.

5. Fellow Sierra Leoneans, you all know that before the COVID-19 pandemic, we had made steady progress as a nation. There had been improved macroeconomic stability, increased revenue mobilization, and we had taken measures to open the country up for competitive and rewarding investments in various sectors.

6. We had allocated 21% of national budget to support free quality education for two million children regardless of gender and ethnicity. We were building effective and resilient institutions and fettering corruption because

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corruption is inimical to our development. We were deploying new technologies for governance, education, healthcare, agriculture and for business. We will continue pursuing these and many more as we fight to contain COVID-19.

7. Fellow citizens, the baseline for our national development remains to be human capital development. As I have always maintained, a fit-for-purpose education that nurtures talent and promotes innovation; a resilient healthcare system that is affordable and accessible; and, a vibrant agriculture sector that targets food security through promoting modernized farming, value-addition, and agro-based businesses for our citizens, are the very precursors and the very foundation for our development.
8. Fellow Citizens, let me remind all of us that the task ahead is arduous. Now is the time for every patriotic Sierra Leonean to unconditionally contribute his or her fair effort for Sierra Leone. Patriotism is not about standing up only for people with whom you share the same political loyalties, ethnicity, or region. It is about embracing and caring about people who hold different views, and who belong to different ethnicities and different regions. It is about standing up for the ideal that your country's call in its hour of need is supreme.

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9. Only with our collective commitment, determination, focus, and unity of purpose, shall we prevail over Corona. I, therefore, entreat every Sierra Leonean to strictly adhere to all hygiene protocols and healthcare directives, and to report anyone showing symptoms of COVID-19. You must also continue to use healthcare facilities for all other illnesses.
10. Fellow Citizens, if natural disasters, war, and the Ebola pandemic never vanquished our resolve to survive, we shall overcome this yet again, and together build a strong and productive SIERRA LEONE.

**I thank you. *Asalamu alaikyum*. God Bless Sierra Leone**