

**MALEN AFFECTED LAND OWNERS AND USERS ASSOCIATION
(MALOA)**



Malen Chiefdom, Pujehun District
Defending Land Rights

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22nd October, 2022.

Mr. Gerben Haringsma
Country Director
SOCFIN Agriculture Company (Sierra Leone)

Mr. Philip Tonks
General Manager
SOCFIN Agriculture Company

Dear Sirs,

Re: "Request of details of affected landowner members of your organization who claim they did not receive land compensation"

We received your letter dated 17th October, 2022, on the above-mentioned subject. In the letter, you requested "that MALOA provide the details of the affected landowners who have not been compensated for their land providing the full family names, head of the family and the village as to where the landowners resides in Malen". You also stated that on receiving the list, "SAC will make an in-depth investigation into the land compensation data and verify with section chiefs, village chiefs, respected elders and landowners of the concerned villages as well as the Paramount Chief, to obtain an in-depth fair and balance view" and that "SOCFIN undertakes to carry out its investigation and verification and come back with its findings in 30 days" and "where found compensate those landowners who were not compensated for their land in order for this to be addressed and closed".

We have been instructed by the Executive Committee of MALOA to remind you that:

1. MALOA has held several meetings with you, including those facilitated by the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRC-SL) and the Office of the Vice

President of Sierra Leone, in which we presented to you and other stakeholders verbal and written accounts of our grievances and demands. We are surprised that you have deliberately reduced our several grievances and demands to only one issue, which is the non-payment of crop compensations. You are aware of our grievances and demands, which include the continuing human right abuses, the arrest, beating and criminalization of MALOA members, the seizure or grabbing of our land, environmental pollution, very low and non-payment of crop compensations, the corrupt practices involved in the calculation and payment of the annual lease rent to landholding families, the failure of Paramount Chief B.V.S. Kebbie to account for over forty-six thousand US dollars (USD 46,000) that is meant for the people of Malen, paid to him every year and represent the twenty percent (20%) of the annual lease rent allocated to the Chieftdom, which he has never accounted for, a land survey process that was marred by corruption, a manipulated list of landowners, including ghost landowners whose monies were collected by unknown persons, the poor, slavish and dangerous working conditions of SOCFIN workers (without benefits) who include landowners, the arbitrary appointment and removal of subchiefs (town/village chiefs and section chiefs) in violation of the Chieftaincy Act, 2009, the sacking of SOCFIN workers and subchiefs perceived to be supporters of MALOA or Hon. Sama, shattering of livelihoods and accusing our people of being palm fruit thieves, raiding of villages and homes by security forces and seizure of palm oil, cash and other properties of peaceful citizens, restriction of movements within the chieftdom etc. Sadly, the human rights situation in Malen has continued to deteriorate and the demands of the affected landowners are far from being addressed.

2. His Excellency, President Julius Maada Bio, during his 2018 election campaign in Malen Chieftdom, acknowledged the fact that the shady land deal was not in the interest of the poor and oppressed people of Malen and promised to resolve the conflict in our favour if elected. Our people voted massively for President Bio with the high expectation that he would fulfill that election promise and we were

excited and happy when he appointed the Vice President, Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh, to mediate the land conflict. The Vice President started a mediation process and visited Malen in 2019 but we have not seen him again. As usual, your company and the Paramount Chief influenced the mediation process which has apparently caused the Vice President to abandon the mediation. The long-awaited Technical Report of the Committee which was set up by the Vice President to investigate the land conflict has not been published despite the initial assurances given to us by the Honourable Vice President. MALOA has always insisted on independent mediators and investigators who cannot be influenced by your company with money and other favours. We believe that SOCFIN and the Paramount Chief, who are the architects of the land conflict and the suffering imposed on us cannot make a fair and credible "in-depth investigation and verification" of our claims and demands "to move forward and ensure this issue is addressed and be closed" as stated in your letter. How can you be the accused and the judge at the same time? MALOA will continue to advocate for the intervention of Government and independent mediators, which would ensure that the issue of crop compensation, other payments and all equally important matters are adequately addressed to achieve a peaceful win-win resolution of the land conflict. Though we have been greatly disappointed by the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRC-SL) and the Office of the Vice President, who have failed to protect our rights from abuse, we are convinced that dialogue through independent investigation and mediation is the best way forward out of this land and moral crisis, which is killing our people.

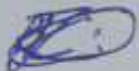
3. Your company and the Paramount Chief have continued to target MALOA members and the Member of Parliament, Hon. Shiaka Musa Sama, for standing up against the land theft and the human rights abuses perpetrated by your company and cronies. All members of MALOA and sympathizers are targets for arrest, beating, detention and kangaroo trials. All cases of violent attacks on them reported to the police are ignored. The Member of Parliament was arrested and sent to prison, and his development projects are being targeted because he has continued to give his unwavering support to the affected landowners,

advocating for their land rights and raising awareness on the human right abuses perpetrated by your company and our own Paramount Chief. The Chief has used his dictatorial powers to stop the construction of a mosque at Makka Junction and a school at Kpangba. He also caused the destruction of a court barray that was being constructed in Jaluahun and stopped the rehabilitation of a mosque at Monorgor, to name few of the development projects undertaken by Hon. Sama that have been obstructed by the Paramount Chief.

4. Your strategy of buying support and giving financial support to some unscrupulous government officials, and civil society organisations/NGOs, such as Fambul Tok and Land for Life, to write bad reports that is being used by your company to discredit our leaders and Member of Parliament has failed. Your company has always provided vehicles and other logistical support to the Sierra Leone Police for the arrest, beating and detention of MALOA members. How would any responsible government expect you to do a credible "investigation and verification" of a problem you have created? We are still convinced that President Julius Bio will not let us down by leaving us in your hands. We will continue to appeal for the intervention of the President and his government. No matter how long it takes, justice will ultimately prevail. Our trust is in God, the Almighty.
5. The Paramount Chief and your company have always prevented MALOA from holding meetings and conducting a full-scale registration of affected landowners and you have formed and sponsored a group called Hopanda, which has been holding meetings and making derogatory remarks about MALOA and Hon. Sama on your radio. Some members of this group have publicly threatened to disrupt all MALOA meetings and to physically attack our members. We are also disappointed that you and our Paramount Chief have continued to publicly boast of your relationships with government officials and the "enormous support" you enjoy from the government and His Excellency. We are frustrated that all our efforts to meet with His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio after his visit to Malen in February 2021 have been unsuccessful, though he promised to meet with us in Freetown "as soon as possible".

6. The Executive Committee will soon engage our members on the next steps to the peaceful way forward. We will also endeavour to conduct a registration of affected landowners for presentation to government, independent mediators and investigators. We are requesting for the cooperation of your company and the Paramount Chief so that the process is not disrupted by the Police or men who take instructions from you, as usual.
7. Rest assured of our good intentions and willingness to cooperate with you and independent mediators for a peaceful resolution, but under the supervision of the Government of Sierra Leone, with credible civil society organisations, religious leaders and NGOs serving as moral guarantors.

Yours sincerely,



Kinney James Blango
(Coordinator)



Bockarie M. Koroma
(Chairman)

Copy: His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio
Honourable Vice President of Sierra Leone
Resident Minister, Southern Region
Secretary to the President
Ward Councilors, Wards 368, 369, 370 and 371
Member of Parliament, Constituency 104
District Officer, Pujehun District
Chairman, Pujehun District Council
Paramount Chief B.V.S Kebbie III
Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRC-SL)
Mr Joe Demby, Presidential Adviser on Economic and Financial policy
SAC Community Liaison Manager
The Local Unit Commander, Pujehun Police Station
The Country Director, Welthunger Hilfe
The Country Director, UNDP
CSOs/NGOs