

Top 10 socio-legal wrongs and political misconduct of this decade (2010-2019)

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As we're within a whisker of the next decade, perhaps we might wish to look back on some prime social and legal transgressions which occurred or are surviving this decade (2010-2019). I have put together my own top 10 list of the most scandalous socio-political wrongs and political misconduct of the decade in Sierra Leone (there were indeed many wrongdoings so pardon me if any of the others you believe ought to make the cut are missing!).

To avoid misgivings, let me state at the outset that these wrongs, be they social or legal, are not confined to any particular regime of government. Some of the social wrongs are legal/judicial but so were the apartheid and Jim Crow laws. Social wrongs can sometimes be legislated—but laws cannot serve as sanctuary for wrongdoings.

10. **Exclusion of Pregnant girls from school:** Since 2015 to the very end of this decade, government of Sierra Leone's policy has been that girls should not be allowed to attend schools while pregnant. Opinions, often emotive rather than rational, differ and emotions run amok on this issue. This policy, striped of social sentiments only further victimizes, traumatizes and aggravates the circumstance of girls whom studies have shown are vulnerable to pregnancy in a society with dominant patriarchal power structures like ours. Recently, the ECOWAS Court declared the ban illegal and a violation of the rights of the girls to education.
9. **Display of teachers at Cotton Tree:** No doubt, the greatest fighter of corruption in Sierra Leone is the current Commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission—Francis Ben Kaifala. But even good men do wrong sometimes. In September 2019, the ACC got fed up with rampant examination malpractices and so when they conducted a sting operation arresting some teachers who were allegedly involved in the exams malpractice syndicate, they hurried to display them at the Cotton Tree (our own public square) to express the nation's disgust at their conduct, inimical to quality education. Even good intentions can produce social wrongs, in this case, the teachers' right to presumption of innocence was infringed and it seemed they were convicted even before they were arraigned in a court of law.

8. **Suspension of an elected Mayor:** In early 2016, an elected Mayor of the Koidu town, was removed by the Minister of Local Government— Diana Konomanyi in unlawful circumstances. How come an appointed executive officer would wield so much power and authority over an elected mayor? Well, only the ravages of power intoxication can explain such!
7. **Police Brutality:** The Sierra Leone Police always win '*the most corrupt public institution*' award by a huge margin. But beyond the corruption crest, they are also deep into the art of brutality and unlawful arrest and detention. In this decade, there were several documented reports of extra-judicial killings by personnel of the Sierra Leone Police. Now it seems the police are abandoning their role to save life and property to doing the bidding of executive power.
6. **Detention of Sallieu Tejan-Jalloh:** In November 2019, Sallieu Tejan-Jalloh a journalist sent a text message to the Chief Minister and the next thing he knew was he was being whisked away to detention. To this day, we do not know who ordered his arrest and what his crime was. While there can only be conjectures about who pulled strings behind scenes, this incident mirrors the abuse of political power and usually against poor journalists whose only crime is seeking and enquiring about the truth or otherwise of state matters.
5. **Squander of Ebola funds:** In 2014, the Ebola Virus Disease struck Sierra Leone and other West African Nations. Like always in humanitarian disasters, aid was pouring in like manna from Heaven. But so were the ravenous appetite of our leaders. Despite the warning of the former President to his team not to *chop* funds meant for the sick and dying, the sum of US\$14M reportedly went missing. Those who survived the disease are still waiting for adequate care and compensation from government because the Ebola coffers was scrupulously emptied.
4. **The imposition of a Speaker of Parliament:** The events of April 2019 in the election of the current Speaker of Parliament cannot but be characterized as some dishonourable political theatrics. Opposition APC MPs who were controversially injunctioned from participating in Parliamentary proceedings by the High Court were thrown out of the well of Parliament in order to make way for the election of the said Speaker by the ruling SLPP who would not otherwise have been elected

but for the decimation of the majority of the opposition by those injunctions.

3. **Removal of elected Members of Parliament:** In May 2019, by highly controversial judicial decisions, about ten elected APC MPs of the opposition party were replaced in Parliament by candidates of the ruling SLPP whom the former had flogged at the polls. It is not now so much the questionable legal reasoning but the continuing denial of these disrobed ‘Honourables’ to their right of appeal for more than six months and counting. Once again, the court of justice is fluffing justice!
2. **The Supreme Court decision on the removal of the Vice-President:** In 2015 when the President fired the Vice-President as if he hired him in the first place, the Vice- approached the Supreme Court to determine whether by a declaratory Supreme Executive Authority, the President can remove him from office. In an untypically unanimous decision, which remains to this day quite infamous and rejected by many a brilliant legal mind as nothing shy of a political treatise intended only to exonerate the impeachable conduct of the former President, the people were remarkably let down by the highest arbiter of justice!
1. **Sacking of the Vice-President (Chief Sam Sumana):** Nothing can beat this constitutional iniquity by ex-President Koroma. Perhaps, only the “third term/More time” self-seeking bid would have outdone this political and social felony. Many a time democratic leaders have a brush with their constitutions but to subvert the Will of the people by removing an elected Vice-President (though indirectly) by just a Press Release will forever remain the most notorious constitutional violation of the 1991 Constitution.