



**BROADCAST TO THE NATION BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR.
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SIERRA LEONE, 23 DECEMBER 2020**

Nearly eighteen years ago, Sierra Leoneans laid down arms and embraced one another. Over the last eighteen years, we have demonstrated through the power of reconciliation and goodwill towards our fellow Sierra Leoneans that we can, together, rise up again and rebuild our nation in peace; and together, triumph over adversity, war, and disease.

It is with the favour and the mercies of God, and the power of our will as a nation that we have come thus far. So in this season of goodwill and peace, let us thank every Sierra Leonean for his or her sacrifice and commitment to the common purpose of keeping our nation safe and keeping one another safe through even COVID-19.

Throughout this pandemic, my Government has provided proactive leadership guided by data, science, and expert advice. We have kept our country's case fatality ratio way under 4%. But COVID remains a clear and present danger.

Infections elsewhere in the world have peaked in the last couple of weeks with news of a new strain of the virus that spreads more rapidly and is highly infectious. There is a real threat that the new strain may be imported into this country. Government is concerned that there has been an upsurge in the last few days in the numbers of people who are infected with the Corona virus in Sierra Leone.

This upsurge coincides with increased volumes of airline passengers arriving over the holiday period and especially with some of those arriving passengers deliberately providing false information on health locator forms. This makes it extremely difficult for Surveillance teams to trace them and their contacts when their PCR tests turn out to be positive.

There is also general and increasing indifference among the general public to healthcare directives regarding the proper wearing of face masks, the proper and frequent washing of hands, and keeping appropriate social distances.

Government has decided on the following measures. As always, our measures are well-considered to protect lives and support livelihoods.

1. For now, there will be no curfew. That decision may be reviewed regularly based on case numbers and how effectively the public adheres to health directives from NACOVERC.
2. Places of worship will remain open as long as congregants adhere to all public health directives.
3. All arriving airline passengers must complete health locator forms that must contain correct and verifiable address, telephone, and other contact information. The health locator forms and their passports will then be retained by the Sierra Leone Immigration Department until those passengers receive negative PCR tests. This measure will ensure that NACOVERC's surveillance and contact tracing teams can easily locate every inbound passenger and his/her contacts.

4. The Sierra Leone Immigration Department and law enforcement agencies have been authorised to track down all persons who deliberately make false declarations on health locator and contact forms.

Over this festive season, be well, stay safe, and keep one another safe. From my family to yours and to all my fellow Sierra Leoneans, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.