

# Sierra Leone: Authorities must thoroughly investigate deadly protests



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UK

Police clash with hundreds of protesters on the streets of Freetown

Tensions over rising cost of living turned deadly, with reports of more than two dozens deaths

‘When policing assemblies, the security forces have an obligation to minimise harm and injury’ - Michèle Eken

In response to the Sierra Leonean government saying it would investigate the deadly protests that erupted on Wednesday in response to rising living costs - with reports of more than two dozen deaths in the capital Freetown - Michèle Eken, Amnesty International's West and Central Africa Researcher, said:

“The commitment from the authorities to investigate the deaths and other harm caused during the demonstrations which turned violent is a step in the right direction. “When policing assemblies, the security forces have an obligation to minimise harm and injury, preserve human life and exercise restraint in the use of force. “After hearing reports of more than a hundred people arrested, the authorities must ensure that bystanders and those who were protesting peacefully are not arbitrarily arrested simply for having participated in the demonstrations. “If the authorities have enough evidence pointing to the use of violence by some individuals during the protests, they must guarantee their rights to due process and fair trial throughout the proceeding, including the right to representation. “It is essential to ensure the full independence and impartiality of the investigation to determine the circumstances and responsibilities for the loss of lives, including if force was used in accordance with international

standards, and to hold accountable all those responsible, including those in command.”

Amnesty is urging the government of Sierra Leone to amend the 1965 Public Order Act to expressly include an exemption from the prior notification requirement in the case of spontaneous assemblies so that individuals are not criminalised simply for taking part in spontaneous protests.

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