



## **ON COVID-19 MONITORING OF THE LUNGI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT HOTEL QUARANTINE CENTRE ON 17TH MARCH 2020**

### **BACKGROUND**

A five man delegation from the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone led by the Chairperson Patricia Narsu Ndanema, on Tuesday 17th March 2020 undertook a monitoring activity at the Lungi International Airport Hotel (LIAH) housing approximately 49 quarantined passengers who had come from the UK, Kenya and Morocco.

The quarantine process in the hotel commenced on 4th March 2020. Quarantined guests in this hotel arrived between 6th -16th March. Some of the quarantined guests are Sierra Leonean Nationals, Chinese and Indians. Two suckling mothers and two sick children also formed part of the number of quarantined guests.

The purpose of the visit was to assess whether guests were enjoying their human rights despite their current location. The HRCSL engaged the following appropriate authorities i.e. the hotel manager, the representative from the District Health Medical Team attached to the airport and the hotel, a staff of SALWACO and 10 quarantined guests on human rights concerns related to the rights to food, water, medical care, security, shelter and electricity.

The Hotel Manager and the DHMT Representative informed the HRCSL of the under mentioned;

- The hotel is one of the three designated quarantine centres in the community and its role is to provide accommodation for travellers who disembark in Sierra Leone and brought to the centre by the District Health Medical Team having gone through COVID-19 checks at the airport.
- The DHMT representative reported that the normal temperature check is conducted every morning. According to him, temperatures have remained normal since the arrival of all quarantined guests in the hotel. No alarming case of increase in temperature has been recorded.
- According to the Hotel Manager, government's responsibility is to provide all essential facilities for quarantined guests i.e. food, water, security, shelter, medical facility and electricity.
- HRCSL was informed that electricity (provided by generator) in the hotel is rationed based on the number of guests present. However, when there is an adequate number of guests, electricity runs from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. This is how the hotel operates under normal circumstances.  
The manager informed the HRCSL that provision of 24 hours electricity will pose a challenge for the management.
- HRCSL was informed that government is in the process of making concrete arrangements for the provision of fuel to have electricity provided for longer hours.
- The incident which occurred on Sunday 15th March resulted from some passengers who had arrived at the hotel at 2 a.m. without management's knowledge. According to the manager, some of these guests refused to be quarantined due to the fact that they had not been informed about the 14 days quarantine process. During the



course of settling down the new arrivals at the hotel, the lights went off. This aggravated the situation and thus became chaotic.

### **ENGAGEMENT WITH QUARANTINED GUESTS**

- Ten quarantined guests engaged revealed that they were not informed about the 14 days quarantine process. According to the respondents this has to a large extent affected several planned activities and other official assignments. They however expressed their commitments to the process.
- Guests reported that drinking and bathing water no longer pose challenges. However, timely provision of breakfast, lunch and dinner do. Dietary concerns have not been taken into consideration as there was a diabetic guest amongst them who raised concern to the HRCSL.
- Quarantined guests confirm that since their arrival at the hotel, all toiletries have been provided by government.
- Two children aged 8 and 9 were found with serious health issues. They were, in the presence of the HRCSL and other partners transferred from the hotel to a medical facility under the directives of the Minister of Health and Sanitation.
- A guest expressed concerns over the discriminatory manner in which some were treated. ‘Why are some guests allowed to quit the hotel while others are not?’ She asked.
- HRCSL was also informed by a passenger that he was the only one brought to the centre who had come from Kenya on 16th March while the others were allowed to go home.
- All quarantined guests were found to have access to accommodation facilities. HRCSL attested to the availability of some empty rooms through inspection.
- As at the time of the visit, electricity was available at the hotel.

### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

- HRCSL met on site the Chief Minister, the Minister of Health and Sanitation, the Resident Minister North West, the Head of ONS, the Chief Immigration Officer, Former Ebola Response Lead Paolo Conteh and other key government stake holders, who had gone to discuss issues concerning government’s preparedness to the process. The Chief Minister openly engaged quarantined guests present and assured them of government’s commitment to address all the concerns raised against Friday 20th March 2020. He encouraged all to understand the extra ordinary measures taken at a time like this in the country.
- Although the presence of both military and police security was glaring, access to quarantined guests seemed porous. Little or no restriction was observed as visitors walked in the hotel at ease to engage family members and friends. Respect for social distancing was not observed.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Government to provide the Ministry of Health and Sanitation with all financial support to address this health emergency.
2. Government to ensure that persons in quarantined centres are provided with the minimum essentials for their well being.



3. Security personnel to ensure that persons in quarantined centres are strictly monitored and prevented from mingling in a bid to ensure that the rights to health and life of others outside these centres are protected.