



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE (HRCSL)

PRESS RELEASE ON MONITORING OF QUARANTINE HOMES AND ON THE RECENT SPATE OF VIOLENCE IN THE COUNTRY

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 22nd May, 2020

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) which is the statutory body mandated to protect and promote human rights of all in Sierra Leone has been monitoring quarantine homes over the past months, and raises concern on the human rights conditions observed in most of the quarantine homes visited across the country.

The HRCSL is also concerned about the spate of recent violent incidents that occurred at the Pademba Road Male Correctional Centre in Freetown, Lunsar in the Northern Province and Tombo in the Western Rural Area.

Between March and mid-May 2020, HRCSL monitored quarantine homes and treatment centres in Freetown and in the regional towns, and noted the following human rights concerns:

- 1. Inadequate and Untimely Food Supply in some Quarantine Homes visited:** Persons in quarantined homes informed HRCSL that the quantity and quality of food supplied was insufficient and untimely. They also complained about inadequate drinking water.
- 2. Hygiene Conditions:** HRCSL observed poor toilet facilities, and was informed by persons in quarantined homes of insufficient supplies of toiletries and inadequate water supply for bathing and general cleaning of the facilities.
- 3. Accommodation:** HRCSL observed that persons in quarantined homes in the regions are housed in places with no proper sleeping facilities, especially in communities where schools are used as quarantine centres.
- 4. Psychosocial Support:** Inadequate psychosocial counselling services for persons in quarantined homes were raised as a concern by some quarantine persons interviewed.
- 5. Access to Medication for Pre-existing Health Conditions:** Persons in quarantined homes complained that there is lack of access to medication for patients with pre-existing medical conditions and that this was leading to a worsening health condition.
- 6. Disbursement of Funds and Logistics:** The District Emergency Operation Committees (DEOCs) in communities visited informed HRCSL that they are yet to receive their disbursement of funds and logistics from the EOC. To a large extent this posed a challenge in their operations.

With respect to the incidents of violence, HRCSL observed the following:

1. On 29th April 2020 a riot broke out at the Pademba Road Male Correctional Centre leading to the loss of lives, injuries and destruction of property.
2. On 30th April 2020, youth in Lunsar attacked and damaged the residence of the Paramount Chief, burnt his vehicles and destroyed other property. This incident led to the death of a relative of the Paramount Chief. The Lunsar Police Station and the Total Petrol Station at Old Makeni Road were also vandalized by the youth.



3. On 6th May 2020, HRCSL monitored the incident at Tombo Community during which youth attacked and vandalized the police station (FSU), burnt down the maternity section of the Peripheral Health Unit. This incident led to the death of at least one person, and injuries to others, including security personnel.

HRCSL unequivocally and strongly condemns all acts of violence and all perpetrators involved in such acts. HRCSL frowns at any attempt by individuals or group of individuals who take the law into their own hands and destroy government and private property meant to fulfil the enjoyment of rights and subsequently put the lives of rights holders and duty bearers alike at risk.

HRCSL takes this opportunity to express heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families of all three recent incidents.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF MONITORING OF QUARANTINE HOMES AND TREATMENT CENTRES

1. The Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) should ensure the provision of adequate food, water supplies, and monitor the distribution of same to all quarantine homes and treatment centres in a timely manner.
2. EOC should ensure the provision of basic minimum standards of hygiene conditions for all persons in quarantine homes and treatment centres.
3. EOC to ensure proper and habitable accommodation for persons in quarantine homes. Further, they should build more make-shift treatment centres across the country.
4. MoHS should ensure the provision of medication for patients with pre-existing conditions in quarantine homes and treatment centres.
5. Ministry of Social Welfare should ensure the availability of professional routine psychosocial services at every quarantine home.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF SPATE OF VIOLENCE

The security of the State is paramount and the fulfilment and enjoyment of other rights are dependent on same. As such, any threat to the security of the state is a threat to all other rights and liberties.

Section 5(2) (b) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 states that “*the security, peace and welfare of the people of Sierra Leone shall be the primary purpose and responsibility of Government, and to this end it shall be the duty of the Armed Forces, the Police, Public Officers and all security agents to protect and safeguard the people of Sierra Leone*”.

Accordingly, Government is hereby reminded of its primary obligation to provide security for the State of Sierra Leone and by extension for all citizens and non-citizens alike, including persons in detention centres.

Similarly, citizens are reminded of their constitutional duty under **Section 13 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone** *to be of good behaviour at all times, show loyalty to the State and protect and preserve public property.*



In light of the above, HRCSL specifically recommends as follows:

1. That GoSL should expedite investigations into these incidents of violence, publish its findings and hold accountable anyone found responsible for the said incidents without delay.
2. The Ministry of Internal Affairs should work with the correctional centre management to improve on the internal security measures to prevent a recurrence of such riots.
3. That the relocation of the Pademba Road Male Correctional Centre from its current residential area to a more secured and spacious location is long overdue. We therefore urge the government to seriously consider a relocation of the facility as soon as practicable.
4. The Sierra Leone Police (SLP) should strengthen and expand the Local Police Partnership Board for effective community policing.
5. Youth should desist from taking the law into their own hands and always aspire to be law abiding no matter the circumstance.
6. The Ministry of Youth Affairs, National Youth Commission, National Commission for Civic Education and Development should strengthen efforts in engaging youth to understand the procedures and processes of governance and to make them become aware of their constitutional and civic duties and responsibilities in nation building.

At this crucial time, HRCSL strongly encourages everyone in Sierra Leone to direct all their energies towards the fight against the deadly Covid-19, which is currently spreading at an alarming rate in the country.

The public is assured that the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone remains committed to protecting and promoting human rights of all even at this difficult moment.

Signed

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Vice Chairman

22nd May 2020