



HRCSL ENGAGES CHIEF JUSTICE AND DPP ON PRISON MONITORING FINDINGS

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) on Wednesday June 5, 2019 engaged the Chief Justice Desmond Babatunde Edwards and the Director of Public Prosecutions Easmon Nathanael Ngakui on its findings from Correctional Centres monitored.

The HRCSL on Monday 13th May began outreach activities in the regions where they engaged their stakeholders, traditional authorities, conduct human rights education in schools and also conducted monitoring of Correctional Centres.

In engaging the DPP, the Chairman of HRCSL, Patricia Narsu Ndanema said the HRCSL found out that there were high numbers of non-indicted trial inmates making reference to one Dauda Kaiwo who was noted to have spent over 11years at the Kenema Correctional Centre without indictment. She also said the Commission noted fewer State Counsels in the regions to provide legal opinion on huge backlog cases and also the prosecution and conviction for petty crimes and misdemeanor offences for larceny, loitering, frequenting places and some for breach of contractual agreements.

Making some instances to the DPP from the Correctional Centres, she revealed that in Bo, Sia Lebbie was convicted and sentenced to a year or to pay a fine of Le800,000 for which she had already paid the sum of Le500,000. Jonathan Maigbe and Dennis Allieu were convicted and sentenced to serve a term of 6months and 2years or pay a fine of Le500,000 and Le200,000 respectively.

In his response, the DPP noted that overcrowding in the Correctional Centres were concerns to all but explained that the DPP's office play an advisory role on cases sent from the police. On the issue of lack of indictments for inmates in the regional correctional centres, Mr. Ngakui explained that there were several factors responsible for that one of which is tied down to fewer state counsels in the regions. He disclosed of plans to recruit 25 state counsels which he hoped will deal with the inadequacies in the provinces where a judge and a state counsel handles huge task. The DPP however disclosed that indictments for Freetown have been done but stated before indictments are done, his office would have to wait for depositions to be sent by the courts.

Meeting with the Chief Justice at his Chambers, Commissioner Simitie Laval highlighted several of the findings of HRCSL like the lack of a High court sitting in Kailahun which results to matters being transferred to Kenema; the lack of jurors and poor conditions of service for Magistrates, Judges and members of the judiciary.

Responding, the Chief Justice, Babatunde Edwards stated that as it is now, the Magistrates have a wide discretion on sentencing "we have this guideline on bail and sentencing. We have done with the bail, left with now with the sentencing aspect. We have the new Criminal Procedure Act that will have to deal with that".



The Chief Justice added that the judiciary will do circuit courts next week in Port Loko, Sefadu and Moyamba. On the issue of jurors, he said he was working with the establishment secretary's office to get a pool of jurors.