



HRCSL COMMEMORATES AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

‘To what extent am I upholding human rights and its responsibilities as a citizen?’

This was among the several questions asked by the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL), Commissioner Patricia Narsu Ndanema, while delivering the Commission’s statement on the commemoration of the Africa Human Rights Day on Wednesday 21st October, 2020.

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone joins other National Human Rights Institutions within the African Union to commemorate the Africa Human Rights Day. This day was set aside by the African Union to remind its member states of their responsibilities to protect and promote human rights.

HRCSL in marking the celebration organized a Press Briefing to raise awareness on this year’s theme ‘Silencing the Guns and Deepening the Culture of Human and Peoples’ Rights: the Opportunities and Challenges of Covid-19 in Africa’.

As stated in the Commission’s statement, Sierra Leone suffered 12 years of brutal and senseless civil war with devastating consequences on lives and property.

HRCSL is concerned about the negative messages of hate and incitement that is pervasive of the social media. The Commission believes that such hate messages have the tendency to plunge the country into chaos if not handled with care and high sense of integrity.

It is in view of this that the Commission has localized this year’s global theme to resonate with events as it relates to Sierra Leone. The localized theme is ‘Silencing the Guns, silencing inciting hate messages, silencing violence and Deepening the Culture of Human and Peoples’ Rights’. Hate messages are recipes for unrest, threat to peaceful co-existence and a pathway for the erosion of the enjoyment of human and national development. Highlighting Section 13 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991, the Chairperson stated that Citizens of Sierra Leone should make positive and useful contributions to the advancement, progress and well-being of the community where they reside.

In her concluding statement, Commissioner Ndanema asked several reflective questions among which is ‘am I amongst the group of people building tension through hate messages that pose threat to state security and subsequently the enjoyment of rights?’

She ended by reaffirming the Commission’s commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights of all in Sierra Leone.

In another engagement to mark the commemoration, HRCSL engaged in public education in schools, ghettos, carwash centres, and ataya bases in the Western Area and the 5 regions of the country.

In light of the vulnerability of the youths in communities across the country, the Commission engaged them on its mandate, functions, rights and responsibilities and how they as citizens can contribute to building a culture of human rights while reflecting on the localized theme. Several concerns were raised by the youths including arbitrary arrest; prolonged detention, delayed judgement, unemployment among others.