



HRCSL OBSERVES PRE-TRIAL DETENTION DAY

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) Thursday April 25th, 2019 observed the Africa Pre-Trial Detention Day by undertaking monitoring of Police and detention facilities.

HRCSL joined in the commemoration in order to ensure that regional standards as set out in the Guidelines on the Conditions of Arrest, Police Custody and Pretrial Detention in Africa (also known as The Luanda Guidelines) are complied with.

The Luanda Guidelines was adopted in May 2014, during the 56th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. At the 10th biennial conference held in Yaoundé, Cameroun, in October 2015, delegates agreed that Africa Pre-Trial Detention Day should be observed annually on 25th April.

The Deputy Director of Monitoring and Research at HRCSL, Mr. Brima Kelson Sesay, said the monitoring exercise will help the Commission to understand the challenges faced by inmates and the institutions in the implementation of the provisions in the Guidelines. He also said it will serve as a basis for making recommendations and engaging relevant authorities which may result in policy change to enhance the welfare of inmates, thereby forestalling or minimizing violations of human rights in detention facilities.

The Deputy Director also explained that the HRCSL is a member of the Network of African Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) which is spearheading the promotion and awareness raising of the Luanda Guidelines.

The Commission will send a report of monitoring activities to NANHRI, highlighting the types of petty offences and the number of detainees charged with petty offences, number of detainees held in custody for petty offences, the conditions of detention centers and the laws criminalizing petty offences.

The monitoring was conducted in Koinadugu and Falaba in the Northern Region, Kailahun in the Eastern region, Pujehun in the South, Peninsular and its environs in the Western Rural District and east, west and central Freetown.

The Human Rights Commission was established by an Act of Parliament Act (No. 9) 2004 with the mandate to protect and promote human rights in Sierra Leone. Section 7(2) (f) of the HRCSL Act requires the Commission to monitor and document human rights violations in Sierra Leone. In addition, Section 9 gives the Commission authority to access facilities and places of detention including prisons, police cells and probation facilities in order to investigate human rights matters.

“All my dream is for the HRCSL to be constituted”... UN Human Rights Advisor



The United Nations Human Rights Advisor to the Resident UN Representative in Sierra Leone Yande Kane, said during a collaborative meeting with Commissioners of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) that all her dream was for the HRCSL to be constituted.

Whilst congratulating the Commissioners, the UN Human Rights Advisor expressed how she wanted a meeting with the Commissioners before she departs and how all her dreams was for the HRCSL to be fully constituted which will enable her make progressive recommendations to Geneva for continued collaboration with the HRCSL.

Yande came to Sierra Leone in January at the time the HRCSL was not constituted and therefore programmes could not be implemented by them. She told the Commissioners that when she arrived, there was a pending project on conflict prevention and mitigation during elections which led to the training of 400 law enforcement officers in eight districts.

The UN Advisor informed the Commissioners that her office was willing to collaborate with them but was quick to remind them about the Universal Periodic Review and the need for capacity building for the law enforcement officers-especially the next target being the military.

In thanking the Advisor, the Chairperson of HRCSL, Mrs. Patricia Narsu Ndanema expressed appreciation of the Advisor's visit to the commission, and also thanked her for OHCHR's continuous financial and technical support. She highlighted the importance of collaboration with international partners which to a large extent has facilitated the work of the HRCSL. She however noted a few constraints faced by the HRCSL in the areas of funding to enable the institution expand its activities. She appealed for capacity building for staff and logistics to drive the work of the commission.

In their contributions, the Vice Chairperson of HRCSL, Victor I Lansana called on the advisor to continue her advocacy on behalf of HRCSL for more funding. Commissioner Hassan Samba Yarjah called on her to assist in changing the negative perception and also in revamping the district human rights committees. Commissioner Gassan Abess pointed out the need for the Commission to expand and to secure more funding, whilst Commissioner Simitie Lavalay underscored the point of recommendations from her office to capacitate HRCSL's outlook.

The Director of Education, Communication and Training, Frederick Kamara buttressed the role played by Yande Kane during her three months stay that hugely assisted the Commission's visibility. The Executive Secretary, Joseph Kamara earlier highlighted projects on disability issues, business and human rights and elections and human rights that were supported by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.