



HRCSL PRESENTS ITS 12TH AND 13TH STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTS TO H.E. RTD BRIGADIER DR. JULIUS MAADA BIO

Pursuant of Section 24 of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone Act (No. 9) 2004, The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone on Thursday 17th December 2020 presented its 2018 and 2019 State of Human Rights Reports to the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone; HE Rtd. Brigadier Julius Maada Bio at State House.

This reports entail ways in which fundamental human rights and freedoms have been, observed, enjoyed, violated or abused. It also contains steps taken by the Commission in the respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights.

Declaring the purpose of the engagement, the Vice Chairperson; Commissioner Victor I. Lansana started off by giving a brief background to the establishment of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone. He noted that it was set up by recommendations from the Lomè Peace accord and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to be an independent institution that will serve as redress mechanisms for people to access when they feel that their rights have been violated / abused.

He stated that the commission was there to present its reports which was mandated by the Act that brought it into being stating that through the help of the State House Communications unit, Senior Government functionaries were invited to the presentation so that they will be able to note the recommendations from the Commission with regards their specific institution and act on them.

Whilst making her statement, the Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, Commissioner Patricia Narsu Ndanema stated that the information contained in the State of Human Rights Reports were drawn from human rights observations, monitoring, investigations, stakeholders and other community engagements by Commissioners and staff.

Noting the general state of human rights in Sierra Leone, Commissioner Ndanema stated that 'Sierra Leone could be described as satisfactory, although there are numerous challenges that undermine the fulfillment of rights generally'.

Highlighted some of the successes of the Commission, she mentioned the establishment of the Directorate of Gender and Children's Affairs, several human rights awareness raising ventures, monitoring of Correctional centres and detention facilities, establishment of human rights and school clubs, a new North West office in Port Loko and also holding an executive position in the Network of National Human Rights Institution- West Africa.

She also threw light on some of the rights and freedoms observed to have been enjoyed, violated or abused by all in Sierra Leone. These included issues relating to the Death Penalty, Freedom of the Press, Conditions of Detention Facility, Deprivation of Property, Women and Children's Rights, Gender Based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation, Education, Access to water, persons living with disability among others. She took note of the strides made by



government towards the full enjoyment of human rights and also gave recommendations that are intended for consideration by targeted MDAs.

In her closing, Commissioner Patricia Narsu Ndanema highlighted some of the challenges faced by the Commission which included staffing, vehicles and inadequate Budgetary Allocation. She ended by calling on government for the abolition of the death penalty, reactivation of the constitutional review process, support the development of a national action plan on business and human rights and support the process of the development of a National Human Rights Actions plan.

Reacting to the statements by the Chairperson, the President Rtd Brigadier Julius Maada Bio commended the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone for carefully monitoring the human rights situation in the country. He later highlighted some gains made by his government including the Repeal of Part IV of the 1965 Public Order Act, the launch of the Gender Empowerment and Women Equality Policy among others.

"We are not where we were Seven years ago, we are not where we were last year. We are committed to ensuring that the progress we made is irreversible. Be assured that our Sierra Leone will be in a better place next year' President Bio stated".

President Bio made several commitments among which were; the willingness of his government to discuss alternative punishment to mandatory custodial sentences for petty offences, his approval to the setting up of a technical Committee to review the recommendations of the Justice Cowan led Constitutional Review Committee that will later advise cabinet on its recommendations, the full implementation of the Gender Empowerment and Women Equality Policy and the commitment by the government to develop a national action plan on human rights that will support the Commission in fulfillment of its mandate and better advice the government on compliance on obligation on international instruments.