



THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE

HRCSL Unveils Report on “Human Rights Behind Bars”

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) through its Directorate of Monitoring and Research has launched its report titled “Human Rights Behind Bars”, a detailed analysis of the situation in Correctional Centers and inmates across the country.



With support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), between 2nd to 24th September 2025, HRCSL embarked on a nationwide monitoring exercise of correctional facilities under the research initiative titled “Human Rights Behind Bars”, aimed at obtaining comprehensive data on the conditions, challenges, and human rights concerns affecting inmates across the country. The monitoring covered 20 Correctional Centres across Sierra Leone’s



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five regions, assessing compliance with national laws, regional commitments, and international human rights standards.



The report highlighted overcrowding, non-separation and non-classification of inmates, which are attributed to prolonged trials, delays in processing indictments, frequent and long periods of adjournments, absence of resident High Court Judges in some districts, and the inability of inmates to meet bail conditions or fines.

Other findings included rationing, quantity and quality of food, inadequate supplies of toiletries, jumpers, and the non-availability of vocational skills training for women except for the Freetown Female Correctional Center and the Kailahun Female Correctional Center.

The report recommended that the Sierra Leone Correctional Service should develop policies to ensure correctional officers have access to free dedicated



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medical facilities and also regularly provide capacity building training programmes for their officers.



The Executive Secretary, Joseph Kamara, during the official launch at J.C Hall, Bailey Street in Freetown, made a detailed PowerPoint overview of the research, capturing the scope, methodology, legal and institutional frameworks, findings, and recommendations.

The welcome address was done by the Oversight Commissioner for the Directorate of Monitoring and Research, Commissioner Simitie Lavaly, who stressed the importance of the report, urging relevant authorities to look at its findings and recommendations.

UNDP's Senior Rule of Law and Human Rights Officer, Alie B. Sesay, commended the Commission for undertaking such a critical review of correctional centers across the country. By shedding light on the realities within correctional



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facilities, Mr. Sesay noted that the HRCSL helps all and sundry to confront issues that are often hidden, sensitive, and sometimes uncomfortable but essential to the enjoyment of human rights, justice, and the rule of law.



Director of Policy, Planning and Legal Services at the Sierra Leone Correctional Services, Lamin Bangura, welcomed the report, noting that many of the correctional centers are challenged by overcrowding, sanitation constraints, and logistical shortages which impact not only the welfare of inmates but also the safety and effectiveness of officers.

On behalf of the Commission, the Vice Chairperson, Victor Idrissa Lansana Esq., commended the UNDP for providing the necessary support for the Commission to be able to travel across the country to engage Correctional Center officers and inmates and also inspect the conditions that they lived under in those facilities. He said the report brought out concerns that might bother on every



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Sierra Leonean, which is why the government must treat its findings and recommendations very seriously.





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In his keynote address, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Mr. David Fortune, described the report as an important national document that provides independent, factual, and constructive assessments of the conditions within correctional centers across the country.



He said the report is coming at a time when the government continues to uphold and strengthen its commitment to justice sector reforms, human rights protection, and the transformation of the correctional system. He added that the findings contained in the report highlight areas where the country's



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correctional services must make progress, such as strengthening inmates' welfare, expansion of correctional training, and efforts to reduce overcrowding.



"As a government, we welcome these recommendations. The insights contained in this report will be a roadmap for the way forward. No nation can claim progress if its correctional centers remain behind," the Deputy Internal Affairs Minister stated.

Other statements were made by the Judiciary of Sierra Leone, Prison Watch and Advocaid.



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