



# HUMAN RIGHTS MONITOR

A quarterly Newsletter by the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone

## NEWSLETTER

Volume 4, Issue 1

**2018 Elections Update**

### Message from the Chairperson



The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone is an independent National Human Rights Institution established by an Act of Parliament in 2004. Since its operation in 2006, the Commission has come a long way in promoting and protecting human rights in the country. This Newsletter caption "Human Rights Monitor" is a novelty that seeks to provide a platform for the effective dissemination of the Commission's activities on a quarterly basis. In this edition, the Commission showcases some of the core activities and engagements it undertook during the 2018 elections. As a Grade 'A' Human Rights institution, we remain proud to have been able to play our little part towards the successful outcome

of the 2018 electioneering process. Among many other things, the Commission held a roundtable discussion with media practitioners on hate speech, conducted an inter-senior secondary school debate competition on human rights and elections, held a stakeholder symposium at the NEC conference hall on elections preparedness, organized a national conference on human rights and elections, trained District Human Rights Committees in the regions on elections monitoring, established an elections situation room and monitored the 2018 elections. The Commission appreciates the contribution of the government, development partners, civil society and staff as it strive to fulfilling its statutory mandate. Thank you. **Rev. Dr. Usman Jesse Fornah.**

### From HRCSL Newsletter Editorial Team

This Newsletter is a product of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone highlighting some of its key activities undertaken before, during and after the 2018 elections.

It is housed within the Directorate of Education, Communications and Training and is one of the main channels through which the Commission disseminates its core work to the public on a quarterly basis. Through this medium, a much wider audience would be reached.

It is also the desire of the Editorial Team that through this Newsletter, respect for human rights will resonate with every citizen of Sierra Leone irrespective of age, sex, ethnicity, religion, class, region and status in the society.

We therefore call on all to support the work of the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone.



**"ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE & EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS"**

Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights



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## JOURNALISTS ENGAGED ON ELECTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

In Commemorating the African Human Rights Day, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone with support from the United Nations Development programme engaged the media at the Harry Yansaneh Hall, SLAJ HQ to discuss issues relating to elections reporting, hate speech and equal access to the media for all political parties. The engagement coincided with the commemoration of the African Human Rights Day Celebration with the theme "matching forward to a politically tolerant and peaceful 2018 elections".

The engagement saw the participation of media practitioners from the print, electronics and new media as issues on press freedom, the defamation and libel laws and protection of journalists were discussed.



*HRCSL Engages the Media on Human Rights & Elections*

## REGIONAL TRAINING OF DISTRICT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEES ON ELECTIONS MONITORING

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone with funding from the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights from 6th to 12th February 2018 completed regional training of District Human Rights Committees on Monitoring human rights violations and abuses during the electoral processes.

The training was conducted to strengthen and to enhance the capacity of the District Human Rights Committees in human rights monitoring during elections as well as to equip them with the requisite knowledge and skills in identifying and reporting human rights violations and abuses during and after the elections.

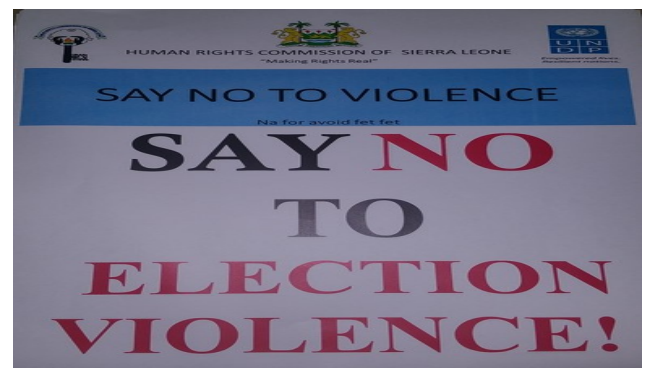
Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, Rev. Dr. that The regional training was facilitated by Commissioners and staff of HRCSL making use of the training manual for monitoring human rights violations developed in December 2017 as well as the revised checklist for monitoring human rights violations during elections.



*Stakeholders Engagement with NEC on the Elections*



*HRCSL Engages Communities on Human Rights & Elections*



**NOR PROVOK, NOR CUSS, NOR FET**

## HRCSL EMBARKS ON COMMUNITY EDUCATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ELECTIONS



The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) with support from the UNDP embarked on community engagement on human rights and elections in Kambia town, North of the country and Matru Jong, South of the country.

The engagement was in line with the Commission's function of promoting respect for human rights through public education and awareness raising programmes aimed at creating a culture of human rights in Sierra Leone. These community engagements focused on areas like conflict prevention, raising awareness on human rights before, during and after the elections, monitoring places of detention and hospitals as well as human rights education in schools.

Two other engagements were simultaneously held from the 19th -20<sup>th</sup> February in Kabala and Kono. The engagements focused on two key areas of conflict prevention and raising awareness on human rights before, during and after the elections.



## ANNIE WALSH SCHOOL WINS HUMAN RIGHTS DEBATE



Fatmata Binta Jalloh of the Annie Walsh Memorial Secondary School won the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone Inter-Secondary School debate on the topic 'respect for human rights as a pre-requisite for a politically tolerant and peaceful 2018 elections'.

As part of series of activities undertaken by HRCSL in commemorating the International Human Rights Day Celebration on December 10th, 2017 and in continuation of its elections project, held a debate at the Sierra Leone Library Board that involved five secondary schools.

Fatmata Binta Jalloh attained the first position by defeating Amos Claudius Gordon from the Prince of Wales who came second, Abubakar Marrah from Saint Edwards Secondary School came third, Kelfala Kamara of the Government Model Secondary School came fourth and Evelyn T. Ahorney from the Saint Joseph's Secondary School came fifth.

The Judges graded the contestants based on their expres-

sions, appearance, mastery of subject matter, composure and consistency.

Edmond Alpha from the National Electoral Commission, Emmanuel Satti from Amnesty International and Ibrahim Turay from Fourah Bay College human rights clinic served as judges.

On Friday 8th, December 2017, the Commission continued with its activities by holding a panel discussion on elections and human rights at the National Electoral Commission conference room. The panelists were drawn from the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, the Political Parties Registration Commission, the Sierra Leone Police, the National Electoral Commission and the Civil Society.

HRCSL partnered with the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations Country Team in Sierra Leone (UNCT), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) in holding the panel discussion.





## HRCSL HOLDS ITS 2ND NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ELECTIONS



Registered political parties on Tuesday November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017 signed a communique to respect human rights during the March 7<sup>th</sup> 2018 elections. This communique was signed during the 2nd National Conference on Human Rights and Elections organized by HRCSL at the British Council Auditorium in Freetown.

The theme for the conference was: “respect for human rights as a pre-requisite for a politically tolerant and peaceful 2018 elections”.

The conference saw the involvement of registered political parties, governance institutions, elections management bodies, MDA’s the media and

donor partners.

During the plenary session by the elections management bodies, the National Electoral Commission presented on the topic: Towards the March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018 elections, prospects, challenges and human rights considerations. The Sierra Leone Police presented on the rights-based approach to elections security, prospects and challenges. The Political Parties Registration Commission did a presentation on prospects and challenges in respect for human rights during the electoral period. At the end of the conference, political parties signed a Communique as

their commitment to respect human rights and ensure a non-violent elections.



**UNDP Country Director—Dr. Samuel G. Doe Mak—  
ing the Keynote Address in the Conference**

### HRCSL SETS UP HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION ROOM ON ELECTIONS.

The Human Rights Commission of Leone (HRCSL) during the March 2018 elections set up its Human Rights Coordinating Room otherwise known as Situation Room to document human rights violation during the election. The situation room is located at the Commission's Headquarters at Tower Hill, NEC Building, Freetown.

The funds for the setting up of the Coordinating room was from OHCHR/UNDP. Human Rights Commission monitors in the field sends human rights reports to the situation room for documentation and action.



**Commissioning of the HRCSL Election Situation Room**

**PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY THE COMMISSION BEFORE THE MARCH 7TH ELECTIONS****HRCSL CALLS ON POLITICAL PARTIES AND THEIR SUPPORTERS TO RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS FOR A PEACEFUL MARCH 7TH ELECTIONS—(22nd February, 2018)**

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone is concerned about the blatant disregard of the campaign timetable set out by The National Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone (NEC). During its monitoring and community engagement activities on human rights and elections in the regions, the Commission observed that supporters of various political parties were unaware of their scheduled days for rallies and as a result, were seen to be coming out for rallies on days not allocated to them by NEC.

HRCSL blames the leadership of the political parties who might not have widely disseminated the campaign timetable to their supporters especially in the regions and further ensure strict adherence to the same. HRCSL therefore condemns the current spate of violence, hate speech, political intolerance, inciting and inflammatory languages by various political actors on the media and other fora.

The Commission therefore calls on all political leaders and their supporters to denounce violence and promote political tolerance and refrain from the negative use of the media during the campaign period.

HRCSL particularly reminds government of its obligations to maintain peace and security and therefore calls on the Sierra Leone Police to execute their work with a deep sense of cosmic responsibility during this period and to provide adequate security for all Presidential aspirants as they carry out their campaigns. There are many fundamental human rights that are currently under threat during this election period including:

- Right to freedom of assembly and association
- Right to freedom of movement
- Right to freedom of expression and the press
- Right to freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention

It is the duty of the state to ensure that all of these rights are enjoyed by citizens in the state and where any limitation is to be exercised, such must satisfy the four tier limitation test under international law. In other words, any limitations of rights must be based on legality, reasonability, justifiability and necessity in a democratic society.

HRCSL further calls on all media practitioners and institutions particularly those aligned to political parties to be responsible, refrain from the use of hate speeches and inflammatory publications, adhere to the IMC media code of conduct and to educate the public to refrain from elections related violence. We therefore call on all media practitioners to give voice to all shades of opinion in their newspapers and over their radio and TV stations during the electioneering process.

With barely two weeks to elections, HRCSL calls on all citizens to conduct themselves responsibly within the rule of law, display political tolerance and immense respect for the fundamental human rights of each other so that a peaceful environment will be ensured for a successful election on March 7, 2018.

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone remains committed to building a culture of respect for human rights within the nation of Sierra Leone and will continue to monitor the process.

**SIGNED:**

**CHAIRPERSON**



**POST ELECTION COMPLAINTS HANDLING ACTIVITIES BY THE COMMISSION****Mobile Complaints Hearing in Port Loko**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) held a mobile complaint hearing exercise in Port Loko District. The purpose of the mobile complaint hearing exercise was not only to receive complaints from people living in that part of the country but also to raise awareness about the Commission's complaints handling mechanisms. Apart from receiving complaints from the people and conducting a monitoring exercise at the Port Loko Correction Center, stakeholders of Port Loko were also educated about human rights and elections.



*Stakeholders and HRCSL staff at Port Loko*

**HRCSL's Fact Finding Mission to Masingbi**

Following the announcement of the results of the Presidential run-off election of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018, there was an apparent mass exodus of people from communities in Tankoro and Nimiya chiefdoms in the Kono district to Masingbi in the Koninkeh Sanda Chiefdom, Tonkolili district. According to reports received from both the Commission's Eastern and Northern Regional Offices, close to 2,000 people mainly women and their children fled their communities and sought refuge in Masingbi Town for fear of political violence and reprisals.

**Fact-Finding Mission engages affected people at Masingbi, Northern Sierra Leone**

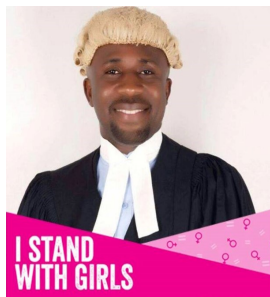
The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone was gravely concerned about the situation since it had effect on the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms. It was against this background that HRCSL sent a team led by Commissioner Grace Coleridge Taylor on a fact finding mission to assess the situation and look into reports of violence in those areas.



*Comm. Grace-Taylor addressing victims at Masingbi*

The Commission was also part of the Inter Peace Committee that was set up by His Excellency Julius Maada Bio immediately after the elections to address the spate of political violence that ensued after the pronouncement of the March 2018 presidential run-off election results. The Commission together with the Office of National Security and other stakeholders held several peace and reconciliatory meetings in affected districts, towns and communities such as Kaningo, Kenema, Kono, Masingbi, Port Loko, Falaba, Kambia and Kailahun to name but a few. The Chairperson, Rev. Dr. Usman Jesse Fornah represented the Commission in many of these engagements.

## UNDERSTANDING THE LEGAL, INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS ON ELECTIONS IN SIERALEONE



Sierra Leone has signed, ratified and domesticated a plethora of international and regional instruments that deal with the issue of human rights and the governance of elections. Below are listed a

few of them. Furthermore, a comprehensive list of the institutional and policy framework on elections at the national level is also captured.

**At the international level exists the following:**

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**
- **International IDEA Electoral Standards**
- **Guidelines for reviewing the legal frameworks of elections**

**At the regional level exists the following:**

- ♦ **Africa Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights**
- ♦ **The African Union Declaration on the Principles Governing Democratic Elections**
- ♦ **The African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**
- ♦ **The Principles for Election Management, Monitoring and Observation (PEMMO).**

**At the domestic level,** a plethora of legal, institutional and policy frameworks have also been established for the smooth and efficient conduct of public elections within Sierra Leone. These include the following:

- ♦ **The 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone**

- ♦ **The Constitution of Sierra Leone Amendment Act of 2001**
- ♦ **The Electoral Laws Act of 2002**
- ♦ **The National Electoral Commission Act of 2002**
- ♦ **The Public Elections Act of 2012**
- ♦ **The Political Parties Act of 2002**
- ♦ **The Local Government Act of 2004**
- ♦ **The Disability Act of 2011**
- ♦ **The Election Petition Rules of 2007**
- ♦ **The National Civil Registration Act of 2016**
- ♦ **Chieftaincy Act of 2007**
- ♦ **Wards (Boundary Delimitation) Regulations, 2008;**

### **Institutional Frameworks**

- \* **National Electoral Commission**
- \* **The Supreme Court**
- \* **The High Court**
- \* **The Election Offences Court**
- \* **The Political Parties Registration Commission**
- \* **The Sierra Leone Police**

### **Policy Framework**

- \* **The NEC Disability Policy of 2015.**

A cursory look at the above normative frameworks reveal that, a comprehensive legal framework on elections exist in Sierra Leone for the efficient conduct of public elections. What is largely in dispute however is whether these legal, institutional and policy frameworks have been fully implemented to realize the desired objectives for which they have been established.

*By Commissioner Rashid Dumbuya Esq.*



## IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT THE COMMISSION

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) is an independent body that was established in 2004 by an Act of Parliament after the war, following the Lome peace Accord of 1999, and the recommendation of the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) Report 2004. The Commission became operational in December 2006.

The Commission consists of:

- 5 Commissioners with background in human rights and peace building. They are led by a chair and vice-chairpersons elected by the Commissioners themselves.
- Commissioners are appointed for a period of five years which can be renewed for other five years.

### VISION

A Sierra Leone where a culture of Human Rights prevails and the People respect the rule of law and live in peace and dignity.

### MISSION

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone exists to take the lead role in building a culture of human rights (including respect for individual responsibilities) which maintains human dignity for all in Sierra Leone in full compliance with the constitution, international and regional instruments, through effective partnership and collaboration.

### Some Functions/Responsibilities of the Commission:

- Investigate or inquire into any allegations of human rights violations. Promote respect for human rights through public awareness and educational programmes. Publish guidelines, manuals, and other materials explaining the human right obligations of public officials and others. Advise and support government in the preparation of reports under international human rights instruments or treaties. Issues out State of Human Rights Report annually. Monitor and document violations of human rights in Sierra Leone

### Independence of the Commission

The Human Rights Commission is not subject to the control of any person, authority, or government.

### Jurisdiction of the Commission

The Commission has no jurisdiction over human rights violations that occurred before 2004. It also has no jurisdiction to investigate matters pending before a court or matters which have been dealt with by a competent court of law.

### Relationship with the Courts:

The Commission is not a substitute for the courts, but it can refer to the High Court for contempt, any person who refuses without justifiable cause, to comply with a decision, direction, or order given by the Commission within a specified time.

### Powers of the HRCSL

- *HRCSL can make rules of procedure for the conduct of investigations or inquires. Compile and produce any relevant document or other materials on human rights. Hold public inquiry and can also issue a request for mutual assistance to examine witnesses abroad. Issue or make orders or directions to enforce its decisions, including measures to protect the life and safety of individuals.*

### FUNDING

*The HRCSL receives funds from government as subvention, donors and other development partners as project support*

### Lodging Complaint to the Commission:

*Complaints can be lodged to the commission by way of letter, telephone, email, HRCSL website and in person.*

### CONTACT US AT:



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## PHOTO NEWS



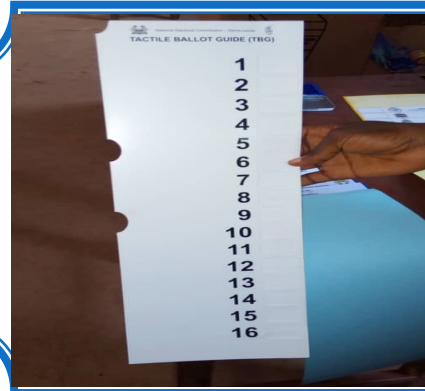
HRCSL staff monitoring the campaign rally



Chairperson of HRCSL doing a TV Broadcast on the Elections



HRCSL Commissioner & staff in full gear monitoring the elections



Use of Tactile ballot guide in the 2018 elections



Voters in long queue waiting to cast their vote



HRCSL's monitoring of APC rally



HRCSL's monitoring of SLPP rally



Community education on the elections in Matru Jong

## PHOTO NEWS



Community engagement on elections in Korquama, Kono



Public education at Islamic Primary School, Korquama



Monitoring of elections



Election monitoring



Media activity during the elections



People queuing for transportation to go cast their vote



Inspection of HRCSL situation



Monitoring the voting process

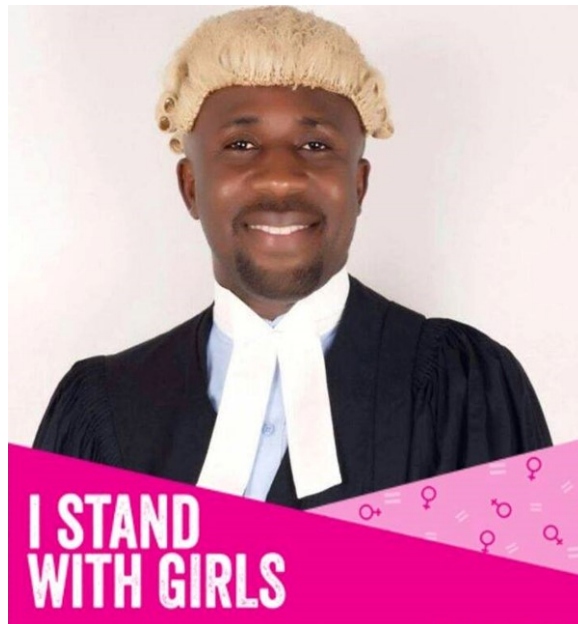
PHOTOS OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE



*Rev. Dr. Usman Jesse Fornah*  
Chairperson



*Grace Coleridge-Taylor Esq.*  
Vice Chairperson



*Rashid Dumbuya Esq.*  
Oversight Commissioner, Directorate of Education, Communication and Training.

# HRCSL - "MAKING RIGHTS REAL"

## HRCST - "MAKING RIGHTS REAL"



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*Empowered lives.  
Resilient nations.*