



THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE

PRESS STATEMENT ON THE IMPACT OF 'KUSH'

Thursday 21st March 2024

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) has been monitoring the media (both social and traditional media) in respect to substance abuse being consumed by especially young people who should constitute a resource base for the development of the country. One of the leading drugs that is being fatally abused is a substance called “KUSH”. The Commission notes with grave concern the rate at which this substance is affecting the rights to life and of health of its victims.

Recently, there was a mass burial of 32 persons who allegedly died as a result of the use of this dangerous drug, in addition to many other deaths as have been reported by authorities from the Government’s Morgue at the Connaught Hospital in Freetown.

The Commission is equally concerned over the undignified treatment of victims of Kush including undignified burial, shaving of their heads, and sometimes the beating and dehumanization and stigmatization of these victims by persons in different communities. We note that both male and female youth are victims of this deadly substance.

HRCSL notes the efforts made by the Sierra Leone Police in tracking down peddlers of the deadly substance and strongly encourage citizens to desist from activity detrimental to the general welfare of others.

In order not to witness any further deaths and dehumanization, HRCSL therefore recommends the following:

- That the President immediately declares a state of public health emergency on drug abuse especially on the use, importation, trade and otherwise of Kush pursuant to Section 29 (1) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 which states as follows: *Whenever in the opinion of the President a state of public emergency is imminent or has commenced, the President may, at any time, by Proclamation which shall be published in the Gazette, declare that;*



b) a situation exists which, if it is allowed to continue, may lead to a state of public emergency in any part of or the whole of Sierra Leone.

The Commission holds the view that there's an imminent danger which if not addressed now would lead to a calamity on the young and unemployed population in the country.

- That the security agencies, the Immigration Department, the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, and the National Revenue Authority strengthen security at border crossing points in Sierra Leone.
- That the Government through the Ministry of Social Welfare and NaCSA identify hotspot areas and create rehabilitation centres for victims of substance abuse.

HRCSL hereby continues to assure the general public of its unwavering commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights of all in the country.

Signed:

Chairperson

Patricia Narsu Ndanema (Mrs.)