



Chairperson Delivers Public Lectures to 4th Batch National Youth Service Corps

The Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone (HRCSL) Patricia Narsu Ndanema on Monday 26th February 2022 delivered a public lecture on the topic "**Understanding Fundamental Human Rights**" at the Peace Mission Training Center Rogbangba, Hastings.

The public lecture targeted approximately 450 trainees from the fourth batch of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). Sub topics addressed included; the mandate and function of the Commission, definition of human rights, categories or rights, limitations and suspension of human rights, obligations of the state to promote human rights and the duties and responsibilities of citizens.

She gave a brief background on the origin of human rights zooming on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). She informed all that human rights are basic entitlements which every citizen must enjoy simply because they are human beings, further adding that our human rights are enshrined in the law and protected by the state.

Participants were informed about the three categories of rights; our Civil and Political Rights (CPR) citing right to life, freedom of movement, right to be heard, assembly and association, right to vote and to be voted for as examples. She said CPRs are justiciable rights (meaning a rights holder can take a person to court if that person denies or tries to deny him/her from enjoying any right within the category of CPR).

Trainees were further informed about our Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ECOSOC) and also our Collective/Group rights citing examples of rights to education, health, social security, work, shelter, family, marriage and divorce as examples of our ECOSOC rights and subsequently the rights to a peaceful, clean and healthy environment, cultural preservation and the right to speak one's language as examples of group/collective rights.

She said that human rights cannot be fully enjoyed noting that rights can be suspended or limited but has to be done within the confines of the law. She informed all that persons incarcerated in Sierra Leone for an example do not enjoy the right to vote or to be voted for or freedom of assembly and association.



She further added that during periods of curfew, pandemic or other communicable diseases, infected persons are denied their rights to freely move or associate with others citing the Ebola periods where infected persons were quarantined by the state in a bid to ensure that the rights to life and health of other right holders were protected.

The state she added has its human rights obligations to **protect, respect and fulfil** human rights. Laws must be put in place to serve as reference points for people to enjoy or claim their rights, and that the state should not be seen trying to curtail the enjoyment of the provisions in the laws.

Noting the fulfilment component of the state's obligation, she informed all trainees that the state must create the enabling environment for rights holders to enjoy human rights stating that at the educational level for example, we must have trained and qualified teachers, availability of teaching materials, textbooks for pupils, school structures, proper sitting accommodation which are examples of some basic elements that constitute the enjoyment of the right to education.

She informed all that rights go with responsibilities and further encouraged the trainees to read Section 13 (a-f) of the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991 and also Articles 27-29 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights which both clearly state our duties and responsibilities as good citizens of Sierra Leone. She encouraged all to promote human rights in their various communities and be good citizens.

Before the lectures by the Chairperson, the origin, mandate and functions of the Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone were presented by Ms. Mariama Sawaneh in the Directorate of Gender and Children's Affairs. Trainees were informed that the Human Rights Commission was established following two recommendations i.e. the Lome Peace Agreement (1999) between the government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2004. She stated that the Commission has a broad mandate to protect and promote human rights, further citing some of the HRC's functions of public education/awareness raising, receiving of complaints and monitoring.

Ms. Faith John during her vote of thanks expressed delight for the lectures and described it as an eye opener which many will benefit from. It is evidenced that learning took place following the interactive session.