



HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE

PRESS STATEMENT

(24th AUGUST 2017)

**THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE CALLS FOR A RIGHT
BASED APPROACH IN THE RESETTLEMENT OF VICTIMS OF THE 14TH AUGUST
2017 FLOODS/MUDSLIDE DISASTER**

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone (HRCSL) is saddened by the floods and mudslide of 14th August 2017 at Regent, Kaningo, Lumley and other affected areas in Freetown which claimed the lives of at least 492 persons and displaced thousands.

The Commission expresses profound condolence to the bereaved families and all those affected by the floods and mudslide.

The Commission welcomes the declaration by government of a 7 day period of national mourning in memory of those who lost their lives in this tragic incident. HRCSL further commends the interim measures taken by government and its development partners in providing a dignified state burial to the dead, basic humanitarian services and proposed resettlement of affected persons.

HRCSL wishes to applaud the goodwill messages and donations from Presidents of other countries, non-governmental organizations, business enterprises, religious organizations, financial institutions, philanthropists and individuals towards mitigating the hardship caused by the floods and mudslide.

HRCSL has however observed some human rights concerns during its monitoring of the interim holding centres such as poor sanitation and hygiene conditions, lack of privacy, overcrowding, bedding constraints, poor dietary standards and improper and unverified registration of unaffected persons.

Whilst lauding the interim efforts that have been made, the Commission calls for a human rights based approach to be reflected in all of these interventions especially in the holding centres as well as the proposed resettlement of affected persons to designated areas.

In the area of resettlement of affected persons in particular, HRCSL wishes to draw the attention of government to a number of international legal frameworks that relate to the resettlement of displaced and affected persons:

- Principles on housing and property restitution for refugees and displaced persons (see E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/17 and Add.1);
- Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development Based Evictions and Displacement (see A/HRC/4/18);

- African Union Convention for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in Africa (Kampala Convention see www.achrp.org)

While a variety of distinct actors and non-governmental organisations may carry out interventions seeking to provide support for affected persons, the State however bears the principal obligation for applying human rights and humanitarian norms, in order to ensure respect for the rights enshrined in binding treaties and general principles of international law as referenced above.

In light of this, HRCSL urges the government of Sierra Leone to ensure that the proposed resettlement of affected victims to the designated areas take cognizance of the following:

- Right to information and participation of affected persons in decision making to resettlement areas
- Right to food, clean and safe drinking water
- Right to an adequate standard of living
- Right to property
- Right to education and healthcare services
- Right to recreational facilities
- Right to safe and secured environment
- Right to improved housing conditions
- Right to remedy where violations occur

HRCSL urges government to ensure that whilst resettlement is being done, residents should be prevented from returning to the disaster prone areas.

In view of its mandate to protect and promote human rights in Sierra Leone, the Commission will continue to monitor the current holding centres as well as the implementation of government's proposed resettlement of affected persons in order to ensure that it meets human rights standards.

HRCSL is always committed to working with the government and other development partners for the realization of fundamental human rights of all in Sierra Leone.

Signed:



Chairperson

Rev. Dr. Usman Jesse Fornah

(For and on behalf of the Commissioners and staff of HRCSL)

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone is an independent institution established by the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone Act (No. 9), 2004 with the mandate to protect and promote human rights nationwide

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