



## PRESS STATEMENT

### COMMEMORATING MARCH 23<sup>RD</sup> – THE START OF THE CIVIL WAR IN SIERRA LEONE

23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2021

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 1991, rebels from Liberia led by Retired Corporal Foday Saybana Sankoh, attacked the Border village of Bomaru in Eastern Sierra Leone. The war lasted for about 11 years: It destroyed communities, social infrastructure and institutions. People were maimed and an estimated 50,000 people were killed. During the period, gross human rights violations were recorded including the right to life, the right to health, and the right to education etc etc. All these were in violation of our national, regional and international human rights laws. This caused a large portion of the population to be internally displaced whilst others fled to neighbouring countries of Liberia and Guinea and other parts of the world.

This period has been referred to as the darkest moment in the history of the country as it experienced a battered socio-economic system, wanton destruction of lives and property which worsened the already existing poverty level of the country.

In January 2002 following the Lomé Peace Agreement between the government and the RUF, the war was pronounced ended and life began to seemingly return to normalcy. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established as one of the recommendations of the Lomé Peace Agreement. The TRC was mandated to deliberate on the question of whether the violations and abuses committed were deliberately planned by individuals or institutions. The TRC made an imperative recommendation, amongst others, the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution that will be mandated to serve as a watch-dog and a visible route through which people can seek redress. This was a means to forestall any recurrence of what led to the war in Sierra Leone.

In furtherance to its recommendations, the TRC also requested that the state ***“should put in place procedures and mechanisms within the relevant government ministries to ensure that any petitions directed against it to the Human Rights Commission, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and similar bodies, are answered promptly and faithfully, and that requests for information from the Special Rapporteurs of the***



***United Nations and the African Commission are treated seriously and with respect”.***

This was meant to consolidate peace, respect human rights for sustainable development.

However, HRCSL notes that some of the causes of the civil war still exist including greed, corruption and nepotism, a challenged judicial system, unemployment, some weak national institutions and the lack of access to key social services by majority of citizens.

HRCSL notes the progress made so far in implementing the recommendations of the TRC. However, the Commission is concerned about key recommendations that are yet to be implemented, in particular, the Constitutional Review.

On this day therefore, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone calls on government, Political Parties, Development Partners, Civil Society Organisations and the general public to work together to prevent a recurrence of war and any other forms of violence that would destabilize the nation.

The HRCSL takes this opportunity to assure the public of its unwavering commitment to promotion and protection of human rights of all.

Signed

Patricia Narsu Ndanema  
Chairperson

END

