



GOVERNMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**JUDICIAL WEEK ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO DECONGEST CORRECTIONAL CENTRES**

**Freetown, Sierra Leone, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2022:** The Judiciary of Sierra Leone wishes to inform the general public that it will hold a nationwide **ACCESS TO JUSTICE THROUGH JUDICIAL WEEK**, scheduled for 31st January, 2022 to 4th February, 2022, aimed at increasing access to justice and decongesting Correctional Centres across the country.

This is one of the initiatives of the current administration provided by the Honourable Chief Justice, His Lordship Justice Desmond Babatunde Edwards, to enhance access to justice and to further decongest correctional centers by ensuring that inmates/accused persons or some convicted persons have the opportunity to be heard and have their cases reviewed by specific Judges deployed across the Country by the Honourable Chief Justice.

Following a stakeholders meeting involving the Judiciary, Sierra Leone Correctional Centers, Legal Aid Board, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Sierra Leone Police, it was discovered that a good number of inmates had issues bothering on access to Justice. Out of a total number of one thousand and thirteen (1,013), 111 of these inmates had been incarcerated awaiting trial without indictments; 138 on prolonged adjournments due to lack of empaneled jurors, 181 on bail but unable to fulfil their bail conditions to secure their release, 47 were serving unjustifiable and disproportionate sentences from Magistrates with no Summary Review application in their favour and 532 were incarcerated with no admission to bail for possible bailable offences.

As a means to addressing those issues, 26 Judges will be deployed across the country. During this Judicial Week, a total of 1,013 inmates would be given the opportunity to have their incarcerations reviewed in Prison Courts holden outside the Correctional facilities with those without indictments been given opportunity for their cases to be dealt with expeditiously or as the justice of case may require.

Pursuant to the above, there will be one-week recess across the country where all other Court matters will not be heard except for those matters to be dealt with during this Judicial Week. In effect, no Court sitting will take place because the Judges will be using all the Courts across the country to expedite the process in a transparent manner.

For more enquires contact the Communications Department on +23234617548/+23279101086 or visit us on [www.judiciary.gov.sl](http://www.judiciary.gov.sl)



*nr*