



PRESS RELEASE

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UNAMSIL HUMAN RIGHTS SECTION HOLDS TRAINING SEMINAR FOR SIERRA LEONE SECURITY AGENCIES

Freetown, Sierra Leone- About twenty-five senior officers of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and personnel of the Office of National Security (ONS) are at present attending a five-day training seminar on Human Rights and the Rule of Law, organized by the Human Rights Section of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) at the Mission's headquarters in Freetown.

This is the third training course organized by UNAMSIL for law enforcement officials, aimed at building and strengthening of the Sierra Leone security sector in the realm of professional ethic and respect for human rights and the Rule of Law. It also aims at contributing to the development and strengthening of a vision of law enforcement in the country which is robust but humane.

In his address to officially open the seminar, the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago said, "without the maintenance of the rule of law, violations of rights occur; and where violations occur, rebellion is fomented. The conclusion is escapable: violating human rights cannot contribute to the maintenance of public order and security." He noted that respect for human rights by the police, in addition to being a legal and ethical imperative, was also a practical requirement for law enforcement.

The SRSG stated, "When police officials are seen to respect, uphold and defend human rights, public confidence is built and community cooperation is fostered; police are seen as part of the community, performing a valuable social function; they are able to be closer to the community, and therefore in a position to prevent and solve crime through proactive policing." But warned that their "actions in the field will to a greater or less extent encourage the international community to do more."

Ambassador Mwakawago disclosed that the United Nations and the international community were committed to support the efforts of the Sierra Leone government in establishing effective principles and guidelines for attaining overall objectives, performance and accountability for the security agencies. He told participants he had faith that they had committed themselves to a new "Salone" [the Krio word for Sierra Leone] and that they would do their utmost to change the ways of doing business in the force.