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**PRESS RELEASE**

**NORTHERN COMMAND AND HUMAN RIGHTS SECTION  
HOLD SEMINAR FOR OFFICERS**

*Freetown* – About 34 officers drawn from four battalions serving with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) are currently participating in a three-day seminar organized for officers of Northern Command by the Human Rights Section and the Military Training Cell at the Mission's Mammy Yoko headquarters in Freetown.

The seminar, which started yesterday, has as its theme: "Military Ethics, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Democracy". Throughout the three days, officers drawn from NIBATT 17 and 18; GHANBATT 9 and KENBATT 12 will be taught human rights issues and their responsibilities as soldiers in a multi-national peacekeeping force.

UNAMSIL Chief of Staff, Colonel Rowland Ladley, noted that the seminar aimed at making officers be able to practice, develop and validate their soldiers and units in relation to human rights issues. "Individual and collective skills will deteriorate if not used or practiced regularly", he said.

In his opening and welcoming speech, the course director and Sector North Commander, Brig Nuhu Bamalli, disclosed that the seminar emanated from a discussion he had with the Human Rights Section in March after a similar one was organized by UNAMSIL for senior leadership of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). "Going through the reading materials, I realized that UNAMSIL peacekeepers, especially the officers, need to be educated on Human Rights and Military Ethics," he said.

Brig Bamalli hoped that at the end of the seminar "we would have learnt that as commanders and officers of our various units, it is our duty and responsibility not only to respect the rights of our soldiers and every individual but to also ensure that the men and women under command do exactly the same". He also noted that respect for the Rule of Law and Human Rights could only be actualized if soldiers were subjected to disciplinary measures in the event of abuses.

The Officer-In-Charge of the Human Rights Section, Mr. Ahowanou Agbessi, in his address said, "I'm always happy when people, especially soldiers, come together to discuss human rights issues because human rights are the cornerstones of every society."