



PRESS RELEASE

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UNAMSIL MARKS HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

Freetown, Sierra Leone – The Human Rights Section of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) is today holding a series of activities in Freetown and the provinces in observance of International Human Rights Day and the climax of 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence.

In Freetown, events include a consultative seminar on economic, social and cultural rights at UNAMSIL's Mammy Yoko headquarters coordinated by the Mission's Human Rights Section, and a public human rights sensitization rally in collaboration with the Freetown City Council and local human rights non-governmental organizations at Murray Town in the west end of Freetown.

The UN Fund for Women (UNIFEM) is also scheduled to launch a training manual on violence against women at Mammy Yoko later today.

Under the theme "Human Rights Education for All – Culture of Peace in Sierra Leone", the Human Rights Section is also organizing a symposium in the northern district town of Port Loko for an expected 10,000 participants who will be entertained and educated on aspects of human rights and gender, such as the right to health and education by all Sierra Leoneans and eradication of violence against women, among others.

Meanwhile, United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his message to mark the Day, says human rights problems still persist in various parts of the world and that "enormous efforts" still need to be made to guarantee those rights. According to the Secretary-General, "human rights education is much more than a lesson in schools or theme for a day; it is a process to equip people with the tools they need to live lives of security and dignity". These rights are as diverse as the rights to health, to education, to food, to housing, to marry and found a family, to participate in public life, to be free from torture, arbitrary arrest and detention.

The Secretary-General further urges that all continue to "work together to develop and nurture in future generations a culture of human rights, to promote freedom, security and peace in all nations".

The day also marks the conclusion of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education. The UN General Assembly will meet at a plenary session later today to recommend the proclamation of a World Programme for Human Rights Education, the first three years of which will "focus on primary and secondary education, through integrating human rights issues into curricula, changing educational processes and teaching methods and, most importantly, improving the environment in which education takes place," Mr Annan states.

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