



**Independent National Commission on Human Rights
(INCHR)**

Adjacent Zone 3 Police Station, Congo Town

2015 Annual Report

Message from the Chairperson

The Board of Commissioners (BOC) of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) is deeply gratified to submit the 2015 Annual Report to the heads of the three branches of Government: the President, Speaker and the Chief Justice, in accordance with Article IV (17) of the INCHR Act of 2005.

This 2015 Annual Report is in two folds: First, it reports on the activities of the INCHR in 2015, and highlights key accomplishments as well as challenges experienced by the Commission during the reporting period. Second it informs on the “national situation with regard to human rights in general, and on more specific matters” (Article IV (5), and also draws the attention of the Government to human rights violation in Liberia, as well as makes proposals/recommendations to help address such situations (Article IV (6).

During the reporting period, the INCHR exerted all efforts to ensure its independence and to strengthen its associations with all stakeholders especially in the area of human rights, including civil society institutions and the international community.

Further, in order to enhance its work and ensure a high level of efficiency and proficiency of the INCHR in the execution of its mandate, the BOC commissioned a full and all-inclusive Capacity Assessment of the INCHR from February – April 2015. Funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund through UNDP-Liberia, the overarching objective of the assessment was to identify skill gaps and other related challenges; develop a capacity building program and implementation strategy for the Commission informed by the findings and conclusions of the assessment. The assessment also reviewed and updated where needed, the INCHR key administrative related policy documents including the INCHR Staff Hand Book – with Code of Conduct, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), and the INCHR Jobs Descriptions and Terms of Reference Manual for all of the positions in the INCHR. This process was characterized by a critical self-reflection of the institution and its staff and focused on how best the INCHR could utilize its very limited resources to achieve its mandate and make a meaningful impact throughout the country.

The Board of Commissioners is pleased to note that despite financial, logistical and other constraints, 2015 was a more successful year than 2014 especially interruption of activities caused by the out-break and spread of the Ebola Pandemic which unfortunately took away the precious lives of a little over 4000 of our fellow citizens and residents alike. It is the expectations of the INCHR, that this Annual Report will enhance the visibility of the Commission and allow stakeholders to acknowledge its efforts. It is also our ardent anticipation that the concerned authorities in government as well as other stakeholders will not only read this Report, but will find it useful if we must accelerate the promotion, protection and attainment of human rights. We encourage all the relevant actors to once again review thoroughly the 2005 Act establishing the INCHR especially its essential powers.

Finally, before I conclude this message, I would like to formally highlight the issue of Proposition # 24 Declaring Liberia a Christian State/Nation through Constitutional Amendment and state the position of the INCHR and its Board of Commissioners. Since

proposition # 24 was put forward it has been a contentious issue that has caused national concerns. In this regard, the INCHR has carefully reviewed the Proposition and carefully listened to the articulation / debate of those either for or against as well as the many concerns being expressed by the citizens of Liberia. The INCHR holds the following view:

1. Proposition #24 is in derogation of the very purposes and objectives which the Constitution Committee would aim to achieve as set out in the PREAMBLE to the Liberian Constitution (1986). Those purposes and objectives called for the establishment of a framework of government aimed at promoting Unity, Liberty, Peace, Stability, Equality, Justice and Human Rights under the Rule of Law, with opportunities for Political, Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement of our Society, for Ourselves and our Posterity.

INCHR warns that Proposition 24 is divisive and would pose a threat to that National Peace, Unity, Stability, etc, envisioned in the PREAMBLE to the 1986 Constitution.

2. Proposition #24 is a setback to the reconciliation which Liberians are struggling to engender after years of warfare and the concomitant human rights violations.
3. Proposition 24 seems to imply that declaring Liberia a Christian State is the solution to Liberia's numerous problems; that bad or immoral things are happening in Liberia because we have not declared Liberia to be a Christian State, a conclusion that has no foundation or historical supporting record.

Instead of pushing for constitutional provision to declare Liberia a Christian State/Nation, and by so doing creating problems between Christians and non-Christians, INCHR suggests that the proponents of proposition 24 follow the dictates of the Master of Christianity who said to his followers "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in Heaven" (Matt 5: 16). In other words, let Christians win souls, converting non-Christians by their good works, and let them live exemplary lives, loving their "neighbors" as themselves and having respect for the dignity of their fellow human beings, eschewing corruption, fornication, adultery, ritualistic killing, cruelty, malicious gossiping, selfishness, greed, envy, jealousy, lying, cheating, etc.

4. Proposition 24 – declaring Liberia a Christian State is undemocratic. It contradicts and undermines Liberia's determination and efforts to establish a democracy. Freedom of religion is one of the most closely guarded tenets of any democratic society.
5. Proposition 24 is contrary to Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, an instrument to which Liberia has subscribed and by which it is bound. The said Art. 18 declares: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, either alone or in community with others and in public, private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

This freedom cannot be holistically enjoyed in the environment proposition 24 seeks to create.

6. Proposition 24 is a mockery of the Christian religion. INCHR says that to declare Liberia a Christian Nation when in truth and in fact there are other people in Liberia who are not Christians and who have every right by virtue of their citizenship to live in Liberia and practice their kind of religion is a sham, a pretense intended to serve the proponents' hidden agenda or ego as did the Pharisees – words and not deeds to attract attention.
7. The argument that Liberia was founded on Christian Principles is not sufficient or strong enough to support Proposition 24, INCHR says that the Liberia that was founded on Christian Principles consisted of less than half a million people and the territory or land space far less than today's Liberia. As the population expanded to include people of other territories and religions, the Constitution cannot now declare Liberia to be a Christian Nation when in reality Liberia has been inhabited by people of various religious beliefs and backgrounds.
8. Furthermore, as the Constitution is the organic law of the land, its provisions should protect the rights of all Liberians, including their right to practice any religion of their choice. Accordingly, the Constitution cannot choose one religion above all others to be the national religion. Under the doctrine of separation of church and state Proposition 24 is a no.
9. Proposition 24 is dangerous to national security, a perfect setup for attack by non-Christian religious zealots or fanatics already in pursuit of Christians in our region and elsewhere in the world.
10. Proposition 24 is attempting to solve a non-existent problem, despite a popular adage which admonishes, "if it aren't broke, don't fix it." For the past 168 years of peaceful co-existence in our country, there have been occasional conflicts among the people, but never one based on religious differences. We should let sleeping dogs lie. Proposition 24 is a recipe for trouble and instability.

The INCHR says it also was a participant in the nationwide consultations out of which several meaningful and beneficial propositions evolved, but Proposition 24, is an exception having no unifying, reconciliatory or problem-solving value.

In view of all the cogent arguments against the submission of Proposition 24 to referendum, INCHR recommends to the Honorable Members of the House of Representatives and the Senate that Proposition #24: to make and declare Liberia a Christian nation be scrapped, deleted, omitted and obliterated from the list of Propositions submitted for referendum by the Constitution Review Committee. The INCHR is confident that the Honorable Members of the Legislature will see wisdom in scrapping Proposition 24 now and thereby nipping this trouble in the bud.

Justice Gladys K. Johnson

Chairperson
Independent National Commission on Human Rights

Acknowledgement

The Board of Commissioners of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) acknowledges with thanks the efforts of the INCHR field monitors for monitoring, investigating and reporting under challenging circumstances; extends gratitude to local officers, the Liberian National Police, and prisons officers, court officers, traditional chiefs and elders, women and youth groups and all those who responded to our interviews and investigations which in one way or the other contributed to this report.

The Commission remains grateful to the Human Rights and Protection Sections of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and its field staff in the counties for all the support and contribution in helping to get this report concluded. The Board of Commissioners remains grateful to Civil Society Organizations across the Country for their support and partnership. Also, the Board of Commissioners expresses thanks to the Government of Liberia for the support to the Commission during this Period.

Vision

The INCHR envisions a country that will guarantee and realize the fundamental human rights of all of its citizens and all those within its borders. It envisages a country where human rights remain the pillars on which the national peacebuilding and development agenda are built and sustained. In sum the vision of the INCHR is to ensure a “peaceful, secured and developed Liberia founded on the protection and promotion of human rights.”

Mission

The mission of the INCHR is to “combat human rights violations and advance the welfare of all Liberians irrespective of sex geographical location, political affiliation and socioeconomic condition,” as well as “to build and sustain a positive human rights culture in Liberia.”

Acronyms:

AP	Administrative Procedure
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AU	African Union
BCPR	Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery
CAT	Convention against Torture
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CJP	Center for Justice and Peace building
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Accord
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
EMU	Eastern Mennonite University
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GVL	Golden Veroleum Liberia
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
INCHR	Independent National Commission on Human Rights
JSC	Joint Steering Committee
LNP	Liberia National Police
MCC	Monrovia City Cooperation
MOH	Ministry of Health
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PBF	Peace Building Fund
PMU	Project Management Unit
SOP	Standard Operation Procedure
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SSF	Same Sokie Fawar
TOR	Term of Reference

TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UNO	United Nations Organization
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UPR	Universals Periodic Report

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1. Executive Summary

The 2015 Annual Report is submitted by the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) in line with Article IV section 17 of the INCHR Act of 2005, which mandates the Commission to submit Annual Reports to the heads of the three branches of the Liberian Government (Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary). The report covers the period January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015, and comprises a letter from the Chairperson to the three branches of Government, a message to the public, as well as the INCHR vision and mission statements. The report is in two folds: First, it provides progress updates on the work and achievements of the INCHR in 2015 and also notes the challenges; and 2) it reports on the human rights situation in Liberia as at December 31, 2015.

A portion of the information contained in this Report is primarily firsthand obtained from INCHR monitors in the field, and some from complaints received and investigated by the Commission. Some portion is secondary in the case of information provided by collaborating partners including civil society and international organizations such as the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Human Rights Protection Section (HRPS) among others. As far as possible, the Commission usually authenticates secondary information to ensure a balanced and objective position with ardent emphasis on the respect for the dignity of all persons or institutions concerned.

Programmatically, the Commission undertook projects and activities including: capacity building and training to strengthen its human resource, deployment of human rights monitors in the counties, participating and undertaking human rights awareness activities nationwide, and organizing and commemorating human rights events, with the help of the United Nations in Liberia. During the period, the Commission organized and conducted workshops, seminars, conferences and investigations, with INCHR Commissioners serving as investigators and performing clerical duties most times due to lack of adequate staffing.

The Commission was challenged in its work to promote and protect human rights during the period under review due to inadequate government funding which impeded the recruitment of the requisite staff needed for the Commission to effectively monitor, investigate and report human rights violations. Notwithstanding, the INCHR succeeded in staffing and operationalizing two of its five Departments: the Department of Budget and Administration and Department of Education, Training and Information. It also recruited a few staff for the Department of Complaints, Investigation and Monitoring and contracted and deployed additional human rights monitors in few of the counties.

During this period, a full capacity assessment of the INCHR was undertaken, and as part of the consultancy, several institutional documents of the INCHR were revised, updated and or developed. These include the INCHR Staff Hand Book, Standard Operating Procedures, Job Descriptions and Terms of Reference Manual and the INCHR Financial Procedures Manual, Procurement Policy and Petty Cash Policy. The INCHR also reviewed and broadened its Organogram to reflect current and future positions.

Further, the INCHR accelerated preparations for the National Palava Hut Program as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report and highlighted as a Thematic Area in the National Reconciliation Roadmap, and initiated the construction of the first national memorial on a mass-grave site at Duport Road, Paynesville.

The report highlights a number of human rights violations, including the conditions of prisons, freedom of the press, harmful traditional practices, sexual and gender based violence especially rape and police brutality. The report also flags and draws attention to ritualistic killings, accusation of witch craft and youth based violence amongst others. Incidents of statutory rape were alarming. Disappointingly, most of these cases were compromised because of relationships or by police and perpetrators and victims' families. In 2015, there were mysterious deaths that still need to be fully investigated and the public informed of their outcome. Some of those deaths were clearly ritualistic because of missing body parts, but up to the end of the reporting period there were no arrests because of lack of evidence. There were reports of police misconduct some of which were punished by dismissal and pending prosecution. There were incidents on police violence especially during arrests which went with impunity.

Meanwhile, while several human rights violations were reported during the period under review, the INCHR notes that in 2015 there were no records available to INCHR on arbitrary arrests and detentions by government.

Finally, the Commission continues to make recommendations to the Government of Liberia, the public, human rights defenders in Liberia, the Liberia National Police, other law enforcement agencies, the Judiciary and the Legislature to ensure Liberia fulfills and upholds its international and regional treaty obligations, ensures speedy trial of accused persons, and addresses human rights issues associated with cultural practices. The Commission recommends that concrete steps are taken to address and put an end to sexual gender-based violence, ensure adequate public information as well as prosecution of perpetrators of human rights offenses; ensuring that all Liberians and foreign residents enjoy civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights including access to quality healthcare, education, amongst others.

2. INCHR: Power, Functions, Method of Operation and Mandate

2.1 Background

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed on August 18, 2003, in Accra, Ghana, intended to end the Liberia civil war, recognized the importance to promote and protect human rights. This was a deliberate effort to address some of the fundamental root causes of conflict in Liberia, especially the malevolent disregard and disrespect for human rights. In Article VIII, the CPA recommended the establishment of an Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) which was subsequently created, by an Act of Legislature in 2005, as a national institution to promote and protect human rights.

Although created in 2005, the Commission did not become operational until 2010.¹ The INCHR was also established in line with the Paris Principles of 1993 which amongst others requires “States to give a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), as broad a mandate as possible, which shall be clearly set forth in a constitutional or legislative text, specifying its composition and its sphere of competence.”²

The INCHR is envisioned as a vital national institution created to realize human rights not as an end in itself, but also to play an instrumentalist role as a means to achieving other national strategic objectives, such as employing rights based approaches with the governance structures; enhancing peacebuilding and national reconciliation, and ultimately contributing to human development.³

The Commission consists of seven (7) Commissioners including a Chairperson and six other Commissioners, who are to perform the functions as assigned to them by the Act. The Chairperson and the six other Commissioners are appointed by the President of the Republic Liberia, with the consent of the Legislature, for five years each and the Chairperson six. The nomination of Commissioners to the INCHR is also based on recommendation of an Independent Committee of Experts (ICE) formed by the Chief Justice in consultation with civil society organizations.

2.2 Powers, Functions and Operational Method under the 2005 Act

Article III of the INCHR (2005) Act titled Powers of the Commission states the “INCHR has the general and special qualification to protect, promote and monitor human rights in the Republic of Liberia, monitor Liberia’s compliance and commitment to the international conventions and protocols, writes reports and makes recommendations to the Government of Liberia.”

Within the framework of its operational method, the Commission has the mandate to freely consider any questions falling within its competence; whether they are submitted by Government or taken up by the Commission without referral from a higher authority; or of complaint; by any individual or group hear any person and obtain any information and any documents necessary for

¹Following the enactment of the law establishing the INCHR, the process of nominating nominees to the INCHR met with serious delays. An Independent Committee of Experts set up by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Liberia, submitted a shortlisting of INCHR nominees to the President through the Chief Justice in early 2007 but in February 2010, the Legislature finally rejected *en bloc* the INCHR nominees placed before them for confirmation. With this rejection, the process of vetting possible INCHR nominees had to begin afresh. In March 2010, a new Independent Committee of Experts (ICE) was constituted for this purpose.

² Their mandate should include a number of responsibilities with the ultimate goal of promoting and protecting human rights, including: 1) Submitting of recommendations, opinions, proposals and “reports on any matters concerning the promotion and protection of human rights,” either on their own initiative or at the government’s request; 2) Meeting on a regular basis; 3) Establishing working groups and regional or local sections, as necessary to achieve their goals; 4) Consulting with other entities that are responsible for protecting and promoting human rights, including entities in [the UN system](#); and 4) “Develop[ing] relations with the non-governmental organizations devoted to promoting and protecting human rights, to economic and social development, to combating racism, to promoting particularly vulnerable groups.”

³In 1997 the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA) enacted into law a Human Rights Act, but this was however repealed on 2005 to give way for the passing into law of the current INCHR Act.

assessing situations falling within its competence; address public opinion directly or through media organ, particularly in order to publicize its opinions and recommendations. The Commission can set up local or regional sections to assist it in discharging its functions; maintain consultations with other bodies responsible for the protection and promotion of human rights, among others.

Its functions include practical measures such as the following: stakeholders' consultation, take up situation of violation of human rights, which it may deem necessary, for necessary action in accordance to this Act; hear and consider complaints and petitions concerning human rights violations brought before it by victims, their representatives, third parties, non-governmental organizations, association of trade unions or any other organization; addressing public opinion, hearing cases, investigating human rights violations, and writing quarter/annual reports for submission to the three Branches of the Liberian Government. Its core functions are divided and compartmentalized into five Departments as follows:

- a. The Department of Administration and Budget
- b. The Department of Planning, Internal Monitoring and Evaluation
- c. The Department of Complaints, Investigation and Monitoring
- d. The Department of Legislative Assistance, Treaty Matters and Law
- e. The Department of Education, Training and Information

2.2 The Administration and Operational Structure of INCHR

The INCHR Administrative and Operational Structure comprise standardized operating procedures that guide the work of both the Board of Commissioners (BOC) and the Secretariat. The BOC is headed by a Chairperson who is assisted by six Commissioners from amongst which one is selected by the rest of the Commissioners to serve as Vice-chairperson. The other five Commissioners provide oversight for the five Departments of the INCHR listed above. A Commissioner provides oversight for a Department which functions he or she may have the requisite knowledge and experience.

The Secretariat is administered by the Executive Director who is assisted by five Directors responsible for the day-day administrative and programmatic functions of the INCHR.

2.2.1 Finance of the Commission

a. Funding, Accountability and Transparency

The key source of funding of the INCHR is the Government of Liberia which is responsible to provide adequate funding for the operation and functions of INCHR. Article XIX section 1&2 of the Act creating the INCHR states: "That, in order to enhance the operational efficiencies and independence of the INCHR, the Government of Liberia shall ensure adequate resources and funding; following consultations with the National Legislature and the Director General of the Bureau of Budget" (Section 1) "That, the Commission, to exist and function as a fully independent body with respect to its administration and finances, it shall have financial allocations, autonomy, budgetary and shall not in any way be connected or placed within the

budget of any other agency, ministry or institution of Government” (Section 2). Accordingly, its resources are administered in compliance with the financial management procedures of Liberia. In this regard, the Commission adhered to the management procedures and employed skilled personnel to execute its financial and procurement functions.

In the last three fiscal years, the Government has underfunded the INCHR, thus making it difficult to fully establish its Departments and to carry out all its functions with high level of proficiency, and efficiency as provided in its Act of 2005. Despite the Commission has made several appeals with the Legislative and the Executive Branches of Government to provide adequate funding for the work of the INCHR, no concrete actions have been taken.⁴

2.3 Funding of INCHR in 2015

In 2015, the INCHR crafted and submitted a proposed budget of US\$3.1 million and US\$3.4 million for the Fiscal Years 2014/2015 and 2015/2016 respectively. Upon completion of the budget hearings, the National Legislature approved the annual appropriations of US\$937,536.00 and US\$992,736.00 respectively. This amounts to about 27 to 29 percent of the amount required and requested.

During the calendar year 2015 (Q3 FY 2014/2015 – Q2 2015/2016), Government allocated US\$1,089,269.00 and disbursed US\$994,269.34 which was expended as follow:

- a. Personnel Cost - US\$738,741.34 = 74%
- b. Goods and Services - US\$167,166.00 = 17%
- c. Fixed Capital - US\$88,462.00 = 9%

3. Projects and Activities Implemented in 2015 – Accomplishments

Despite inadequate funding, the INCHR made notable accomplishments during the reporting year. The INCHR partially operationalized three of its five Departments including: 1). Administration and Budget, 2). Education, Training and Information, and 3). Complaints Investigation and Monitoring. The Commission was able to employ the Director of Administration and Budget, and the Director of Education, Training and Information. In addition, the Commission employed seventeen (17) other personnel amongst them are Research/Documentation Officer, Accounts’ Clerk, Expeditor, Procurement Officer, Human Rights Monitors’ Coordinator, Human Rights Education Officers, a Human Rights Investigator, and ten (10) Human Rights Monitors. Others included ten (10) Human Rights Monitors deployed in three (3) Counties: Montserrado, eight (8), Gbarpolu, one (1), and Margibi one (1). Due to the inadequate funding, the Commission was unable to acquire the needed number of Human Rights Monitors to cover the fifteen (15) Counties.

⁴The INCHR is not insensitive to the competing priorities of the Government coupled with limited financial resources and at times budget short falls. However, the INCHR has required the minimum to get it fully operational.

Moreover, in an effort to operationalize the Planning, Internal Monitoring and Evaluation Department and Legislative Assistance, Treaty Matters and Law Department, INCHR also contracted three (3) technical staff for only 5 months: a Legislative Officer, Program Officer and a Research Analyst paid from the consultancy fees allotted by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning.

Given the inadequacy of funding in 2015, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning accepted and approved the INCHR request to utilize the balance in special allowance allotment to underwrite the salaries of seventeen (17) contracted Human Rights Monitors and ten (10) support staff of the Secretariat. The Monitors were deployed in the counties covered by the five (5) Justice and Security Regional Hubs (fourteen counties). Despite the deployment of these monitors, their work has been hindered by lack of logistics and mobility to travel within the counties where they are deployed.

3.1 The Palava Hut Program-Sponsored by UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)

In addition to its statutory functions, Section 47 of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report recommended that the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) follow through on the implementation of its recommendations (findings) in the TRC Final Report of 30 June 2009.

It also assigned a few of the recommendations especially those related to transitional justice as directly the responsibility of the INCHR to implement including the palava hut talks, memorialization, and reparations. In addition, the Government of Liberia Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding, and Reconciliation of December 2012 also articulated these responsibilities assigned to the INCHR in the first three thematic areas of the Roadmap under Category 1 (Accountant for the Past): 1) Palava Hut Process 2) Memorialization and 3) Reparation. A fourth thematic area was also assigned to the INCHR: 4) Diaspora and Reconciliation. Thus the implementation of Community-based Truth Telling and Atonement Project is one of the priority areas that INCHR leads and coordinates.

In 2014, with funding from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the then Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) based in New York, a Project Management Unit (PMU) was established by the INCHR to oversee the implementation of the National Palava Hut Project. As approved by the PBF Joint Steering Committee (JSC) in Liberia, the project set out to achieve the following:

- Strengthen the capacity of the INCHR to lead and coordinate the National Palava Hut Project;
- Conduct nationwide ethnographic studies which result will help define and develop methodology and operational guidelines for the Palava Hut;
- Conduct nationwide outreach to galvanize grass-root support, understanding and participation in the Palava Hut Project;
- Conduct Palava Hut process piloted in 2 communities; and
- Construct at least two regional memorials in hard hit war affected communities; particularly on mass grave sites where victims of the Liberian civil war are buried.

a. Staff Recruitment and Capacity-building

In 2014, the INCHR recruited six staff to set up the Project Management Unit (PMU) to implement the Palava Hut Project funded by the UN PBF and BCPR. Those recruited included a Project Manager, two Coordinators, Administrative Assistant and a Driver.

With the requisite staff recruited and the PMU established, the INCHR started the implementation of the National Palava Hut project and is poised to meet all its key outcomes. To begin the Palava Hut Project a few staff of the PMU underwent short-term training in four topics including: “Community Organizing for Social Change and Justice in Transition: Restorative Indigenous Approaches in Post-war Context”, Conflict Analysis, and Restorative Forms of Justice as well as Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR – Level 1) at the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) Program of the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (CJP), Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg Virginia, United States of America. A few of the PMU staff also underwent training in Monitoring, Evaluation and Result-based Reporting. This training was held at the Regional Security Hub of Gbarnga, Bong County and funded by the Liberia Peacebuilding Office.

b. Ethnographic Forums

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommended the establishment of National Palava Hut Program (15.0). It recommended *“the Palava Hut is another form of justice and accountability mechanism with traditional orientation to foster national healing and Reconciliation at the community and grass root levels creating the opportunity for dialogue and peace building.”* (15.1), It also highlighted that the Powers of the Palava Hut Structure as: *“Can seek pardon (15.1), reparation (15.1), public sanctions (15.1), can reduce or waive debarred years”* (15.2). In addition, it recommended the *“INCHR to oversee Palava Hut process and coordinate activities and has power to review decisions on request”* (15.1).

In order to successfully undertake this tasks the Palava Hut Project called for the conduct of a nationwide ethnographic study of the existing traditional Palava Hut Systems and other traditional or informal conflict resolution and justice mechanisms of Liberia’s four linguistic groupings (Mel, Kwa, Mande and Settlers) with the anticipation that the outcome will inform the development of context-specific, structure, methodology and operational guidelines for the implementation of the TRC recommended National Palava Hut Program. In this regard, two consultants (national and international) were contracted and conducted an ethnographic study in four selected forums of the four linguistic groupings of Liberia. (The Settlers, not officially counted among the traditional linguistic groupings of Liberia, but for the purpose of this study, were selected; making them four Linguistic groupings of the Republic of Liberia. The forums were held in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County for the Kwa, Tubmanburg, Bomi County for the Mel, Gbarnga, Bong County for the Mande, and Brewerville, Montserrado County was selected for the Settlers.



The study highlighted the similarities, dissimilarities and other perspectives of the palava hut system from region to region in Liberia and provided insights on how we develop context-specific methodology and operational guidelines for the National Palava Hut Project. Moreover, the study identified some war-related human rights violations which could be considered under the Palava Hut agenda.⁵

Participants at the forums agreed that violations considered not in breach with the International Humanitarian Laws and other International Human Rights Laws, should be handled by the Palava Hut. The Forum brought together chiefs, traditional leaders, women and youth; sixty five percent (65%) male and thirty five (35%) female, exceeding the required gender mark (30%) for projects funded by the United Nations Peace building Fund (PBF). The draft report produced from the forums was validated by partners and stakeholders at a one-day session held at the Regional Security Hub in Gbarnga, Bong County, 14, December 2015. The findings and recommendations contained in the draft report were discussed and eventually rectified by the participants. The consultants afterward produced a final report which contained the methodology and operational guidelines of the Palava Hut subject to its utilization.

Few pictures from the ethnographic fora and validation workshop



UNMIL Civil Affairs Officer Christiana Solomon speaking at the Ethnographic validation Program



.Some of the participants at the workshop



Hon. Wilfred N. Gray-Johnson – Director of the Liberia Peacebuilding Office making remarks

⁵This is in addition to the recommendations of the TRC report on how to conduct the Palava Hut Program and suggestions on its structure and methodology. There is also a full but non-exhaustive listing of 7,600 persons recommended for Palava Hut contained in Volume III, Title XII (15.2).

First National Memorial - Du Port Road mass Mass-Grave Site

The TRC recommended the construction of memorials to honor victims who were killed during Liberia's 14-years Civil War. The Recommendations among other things, called for the construction of memorials in the capital city of each county "to include every site of massacres where the victims were buried beginning with 1979 to 2003" (17.4). At least 150 mass grave sites have been listed in the TRC Report.

In 2012, INCHR embarked on identifying lawful owner(s) of the land which host the mass grave situated near the Du River, Du Port Road, Paynesville. In August 2015, discussions to acquire the land were finalized.

In this development, INCHR on December 10, 2015, conducted a formal groundbreaking of the site for the construction of the First National Memorial.



Figure 1 Justice Gladys K. Johnson breaking grounds for the construction of the memorial on Duport Road

Stakeholders represented at the groundbreaking program included: the Government of Liberia, the Peace building Office, the Inter Religion Council, the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and Leaders/residents of Du Port Road Community. Others were the Forth (4th) Estate a cross section of victims' relatives and students' representatives. The architecture design for the memorial was drawn and approved by the Ministry of Public Works.

3.2 INCHR Institutional Capacity Assessment

During the reporting period, a capacity assessment of the INCHR was conducted to examine and understand the effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity of the INCHR. At the end of the exercise, the consultants worked with the INCHR to revise and in some cases develop the Administrative Handbook, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and the Jobs Description and Terms of Reference (ToR) documents. Based on the development of these instruments, the INCHR Board of Commissioners embarked on steps to operationalize these administrative documents.

Also during the period under review, the Commission conducted several human rights awareness workshops and training in Monrovia and in the counties. The INCHR also collaborated with UNMIL Human Rights and Protection Section (HRPS) and installed three (3) Suggestion Boxes on the compound of the Monrovia Central Prison (MCP). The suggestion boxes are meant to serve as means through which inmates can communicate and relate their conditions to the relevant institutions.

In an effort to provide viable working environment for its employees, INCHR in December 2015 relocated its Headquarters in Congo Town, adjacent Zone Three (3) of the Liberia National

Police (LNP) where it is presently conducting daily official functions. Pasted below are photos from the INCHR capacity assessment.



Vice Chairperson, Atty. Boakai Dukuly making statement during the presentation of INCHR Capacity Assessment Report



Cross section of Representatives from Partner Institutions at the Capacity assessment report, NEC Conference Hall.

3.3 International Human Rights Day

On December 10, 2015, INCHR and the Civil Society Organizations in collaboration with the United Nations Women, UNMIL HRPS and other Human Rights related institutions of the Government of Liberia successfully commemorated the International Human Rights Day in Monrovia. The Program consisted of indoor and outdoor activities; held under the Theme “Our Rights, Our Freedoms, Always”. Phase one of the program witnessed the official groundbreaking on the site chosen for the construction of the First National Memorial in Du Port Road, Paynesville. Phase two was marked by indoor activities which began with the grand parade commencing at Monrovia City Hall to the Auditorium of the University of Liberia main Campus.

At the indoor program, the President’s statement proclaiming the International Human Rights Day was read, followed by the reading the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), and the Statement from the United Nations Secretary General through the UN Office in Liberia. Also read were the Statements from the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, the European Union Representative accredited near Monrovia. The Keynote Address was delivered by Sen. Conmany B. Wesseh. A special statement was delivered by Her Honor, Justice Gladys K. Johnson, Chairperson of the INCHR. Remarks came from the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the African Union (AU) Office in Liberia. Other remarks came from the Ministry of Justice, Civil Society Organizations (CSO), Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law, University of Liberia, and the Representatives of the participating Schools.

INCHR Major Achievements in 2015

Despite budgetary constraints, INCHR in 2015 made notable gains. Amongst them are the following:

- Established three (3) of the five statutory departments;
- Contracted two (2) consultants to conduct capacity assessment of the INCHR;
- Developed administrative documents including Standard Operation Procedures, Staff Hand Book with Code of Conduct, Organogram, Job Descriptions and Terms of Reference for existing and future post of the INCHR;
- Employed sixteen (16) personnel including two (2) Directors, 1 Chief Finance Officer, 1 Procurement Officer, 1 Accounts Clerk, 1 Research and Documentation Officer, 1 Human Rights Coordinator, 10 Human Rights Monitors, and 1 Human Rights Investigator;
- Contracted three (3) Technicians: 1 Program Officer, 1 Legislative Officer and 1 Research Analyst and eleven (11) Human Rights Monitors;
- Deployed twenty seven (27) Human Rights Monitors in the 15 Counties;
- Received and investigated seventeen (17) complaints of human rights violation;
- Investigated the Paynesville Motorcyclists Riot and made recommendations thereof to the Government of Liberia;
- Investigated Butaw Youth Riot perpetrated on the premises of Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL), Sinoe County;
- Inspected seventy seven (77) detention facilities throughout the Country;
- Developed the Palava Hut Methodology and operational guidelines;
- Conducted Ethnographic Studies for the four (4) linguistic groupings of Liberia;
- Validated the reports of the Ethnographic Study;
- Celebrated the International Human Rights Day in collaborated with CSOs and UN Women in Liberia;
- Acquired land in Du Port road for the construction of the First National Memorial as recommended by TRC;
- Conducted groundbreaking for the construction of the First National Memorial on Du Port Road, Paynesville;
- In collaboration with UNMIL HRPS, installed three (3) suggestion boxes at the Monrovia Central Prison for used by inmates to communicate their conditions with appropriate institutions.

3.4. Human Rights Monitoring and Investigation 2015

a. Complaints handling process

A complaint is lodged to the INCHR by written communication, through a representative (third party), or by telephone call if such a person cannot personally and physically appear to the Commission. Complaints of alleged violations of human rights are received and assessed by using the admissibility criteria. They are either registered or referred to other appropriate institutions for actions. Complaints of allegations that meet the INCHR admissibility criteria are registered and investigated accordingly without referral.

b. Complaints received, registered and investigated in 2015

In 2015, INCHR received a total of twenty (20) complaints amounting to 52% decrease from the previous year, 2014 (See table below). They ranged from motorcyclists riots, Butaw GVL Compound riot, sexual harassments, pretrial detentions, land disputes among others. During the period under review, the Commission investigated seventeen (17) of the twenty (20) complaints. Of the seventeen (17) investigated, six (6) were concluded, seven (7) referred to relevant Ministries including Justice, Labor and Gender for further actions based on the criminal /legal status they contained. A highly contested land dispute between two family members was investigated and satisfactorily resolved; investigations into complaints from concession workers against Sime Darby are still ongoing at the Commission. Seven (7) out of the total (20) complaints were unresolved during the period under review. This was due to non-cooperation from parties to appear on the scheduled time and in some cases logistical constraints (table 2 below *shows type of complaints status and actions instituted*).

Table 1: Number of Complaints by Counties

County	Number of Complaint
Bomi	1
Bong	0
Grand Bassa	0
Grand Cape Mount	0
Grand Gedeh	0
Grand Kru	0
Gbarpolu	0
Lofa	0
Margibi	0
Maryland	0
Montserrado	18
Nimba	0
Sinoe	1
River Cess	0
River Gee	0
Total	20

[The columns marked with zeros do not negate the occurrences of violations in those counties rather, they were not reported.]

Table 2: Type of complaints status and actions instituted

Description of complaint	Action Instituted	Status
Butaw GVL Compound riot Sinoe County	Intervened, resolved the crisis and made recommendations to Government.	Completed
Paynesville Motorcyclist Riot Montserrado County	Investigated the cause of the riot and made appropriate recommendations to the Government via the Ministry of Justice	Completed
Mass arrest of persons as a	Currently liaising with the appropriate	Pending

consequence of the Paynesville Motorcyclists Riot, Montserrado County	Institutions to ensure their trial or release.	
Arbitrary arrest and Detention of a 13 year old girl in LNP Zone Five Depot One Montserrado County	Intervened and secured the release of the girl from further detention.	Completed
Sexual harassment complaint by a local bank employee	Investigated, exonerated the accused.	Completed
Disputed land complaint: brother vs. sister Montserrado County	Investigated and satisfactorily resolved.	Completed
Community pollution Complaint Dixville Residents vs. Chinese Construction Company Montserrado County	Collaborated with UNMIL Human Rights Session investigated the complaint and the outcome is pending.	Pending
Sexual exploitation complaint Dixville Residents vs. Butoe Security Firm Montserrado County	Initiated the investigation, yet to receive the respondent's cooperation.	Referred
Two (2) pretrial detainees held in the Monrovia Central Prison; from Criminal Court E	Intervened and recommended speedy trial.	Pending
One pretrial detainee held in the Monrovia Central Prison; from Criminal Court D Montserrado County	Gathered information leading to said pretrial detention and recommended speedy trial.	Pending
Illegal trespass of private owned land Montserrado County	Complaint documented and referred	Referred
Gang rape resulting to the death of a 13 years old girl in the Hotel Africa Community Montserrado County	Commenced the investigation, discontinued due to its criminal implication but referred to the Ministry of Justice for the appropriate actions.	Referred
Death of a 21 year old woman in the custody of the LNP, Dixville. Montserrado County	Could not proceed with the investigation due to its criminal status.	Referred
Highly contested family land dispute Montserrado County	Resolved through mediation leading to peaceful settlement between the contesting parties	Completed

Persistence non support Montserrado County	Conducted the preliminary investigation and referred complaint to the Ministry of Gender, Development and Children Protection.	Referred
Injury sustained by SSF employee while on active duty	Initiated the investigation and later referred it to the Ministry of Justice due to the unwillingness by the Management of Security Firm (SSF) to cooperate with the investigation.	Referred

d. Harassment and Assaults of persons by State Security Apparatus

In 2015, INCHR received reports and in some instances follow up on several other reports of harassment and assaults perpetrated against unarmed persons by State Security officers. Some instances of harassment and brutalities in catalogue as follow:

- In the Omega Community Paynesville, a girl aged thirteen (13) was arbitrarily arrested and subsequently detained in the Liberia National Police Cell in Paynesville, Zone Five;
- At Soul Clinic Junction Paynesville, there was another instance where a motorcyclist was severely brutalized resulting to body injury by two officers of LNP. Reason given for their action was that the bike rider has ruthlessly crossed in front of the car which drove them without regards to his own life or the lives of those on board the car he earlier crossed in front.
- At the Du Port Road intersection in Paynesville, there was also a related incident which caused the death of a motor cyclist and unfortunately this led to rioting by motor cyclists leading to destruction of both private and public properties in the Paynesville area.

e. Respondents in the complaints received, registered and investigated in 2015

INCHR Complaint and Investigation record indicated that 25% of the complaints received in 2015 were against the LNP, 25% against private persons, 20% against the Judiciary, 20% against the Ministry of Health and 20% against Non-Governmental Institutions (see table 3 below).

Table 3: Respondents in Complaints Received

Respondent in the complaint received	Number of violations	Percentage of violations
LNP	5	25 %
Private persons	5	25%
Judiciary	4	20%
Non-Governmental institutions	4	20%
MOH	1	5%
Total	20	100%

f. Complaint: number, description and institution referred

Of the twenty (20) complaints received in 2015, Seven (7) were referred to the relevant institutions upon completion of preliminary investigation, six (6) investigated and completed and seven (7) remained at the Commission pending completion of the investigation (see table 4 below).

Table 4: Complaints Referred and Institutions

Complaint Description	Number of Complaint	Institution Complaint referred
Injury sustained SSF employee while on active duty	1	Ministry of Labor
Persistence non support	1	Ministry of Gender & Dev.
Gang rape resulting to the death of a 13yrs girl in HotelAfrica Community	1	Ministry of Justice
Death of a woman aged 21 w in the LNP Cell, Dixville	1	Ministry of Justice
Sexual exploitation Dixille Residents vs. Butoe Security Firm	1	Ministry of Justice via LNP

3.5 Assessment of Conditions in Places of Detention

INCHR Act of 2005, Article III (3) (e), states that the Commission is empowered to conduct unfettered, on-site inspections and investigations, if necessary without the prior consent of any authority. The places of inspection include all civil, military and paramilitary detention facilities in the Republic of Liberia. In fulfillment of this mandate, the INCHR in 2015 assessed conditions in sixty five (65) paramilitary (Police holding cells), twelve (12) prison facilities across the Country. The assessment which covered the Justice and Security Regional Hubs, including Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee, Grand Gedeh and Sinoe counties, was geared toward ensuring that all persons denied of their freedoms by detention were treated with dignity.

The findings indicated generally that most facilities assessed did not meet the minimal standards set for prisons as provided in various national, regional and international human rights frameworks. Also, interactions with inmates during the assessment provided information of the lacked of basic necessities in most of the prison facilities in Liberia ranging from: sufficient food allotment, good health care delivery, decent dwelling facility, more especially an effective rehabilitation program.

In addition, lack of electricity in one detention facility was the same with other facilities. Majority of detention facilities assessed were without bathrooms and those with bathrooms were in deplorable state. Poor sanitation condition was common. In some of the facilities, there existed too little or poor ventilations; as the paths to ventilations were narrowly constructed. Also gathered during the tour was information that inmates and pretrial detainees were concentrated or placed together and were fed only once in a day. Poor health care delivery existed in majority of the facilities. Essential medications and other medical supplies were unavailable. For example, in Bomi and Grand Cape Mount Counties, the wide spread and continuous existence of rash disease

which affected the inmates grew out of proportion during the period under review. With the timely and continual intervention by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) the spread of the disease decreased. For example, in 2015, ICRC provided several packs of medication (Mycoril Cream) for use by the inmates during the period in review. Also, in Nimba County, prison facilities visited were overcrowded, with poor sanitation condition and poor water facility. The building that was erected to host seventy five (75) detainees was overcrowded with one hundred seventy eight (178) detainees. Table 5 below illustrates the detention facilities and institutions assessed.

Paradoxically, detention facilities in River Cess County were much improved; as water (hand pump), toilet facility, desirable ventilation and three (3) times daily provision of meal to the inmates were constant during the period 2015.

Table 5: Detention Facilities Visited in Counties

County	Detention facilities assessed		
	LNP	AFL	Prison
Montserrado	15	0	1
Margibi	6	0	0
Bomi	4	0	1
Bong	4	0	1
Grand Bassa	3	0	0
Grand Cape Mount	6	0	1
Grand Gedeh	0	0	0
Grand Kru	3	0	N/A
Gbarpolu	1	0	1
Lofa	2	0	1
Nimba	3	0	1
Sinoe	1	0	1
Maryland	6	0	1
River Cess	4	0	1
River Gee	7	0	N/A
Total	65	0	12

4. Human Rights Concerns in Liberia – 2015

4.1 Harmful Traditional Practices in Liberia

Tradition as an element of culture is as old as the cradle of human beings and the society in which they live. In this report, tradition is referred to as the “shared patterns of way of life of group of people in a given society which is transmitted from one generation to the other”. In Liberia, traditional and cultural practices continue to play vital role among the citizenry as they permeate many aspects of life. Traditional societies such as *Sande* (for female) and *Porro* (for male) constitute an important part of the Liberian society.

These practices have historically provided trainings for young people in the absence of formal educational structures and have been held in high esteem among them; as they are the medium through which values and skills are transmitted from one generation to the next.

The vast majority of Liberians seem to affirm African Traditional Religious beliefs and practices which strongly believe in the supernatural world, and ancestral spirits that impact their daily lives. Their beliefs and practice in secret societies include rituals and rites which often come in conflict with basic human rights norms and standards. In Liberia, culture and traditional religions are characterized by concept towards secrecy (“do not speak it, do not reveal it”), an embedded belief of the intervention with mysterious spirits in human affairs. Most Liberians usually attribute events to the activities of secret powers and spirits. This belief includes the conviction that there are deep and hidden attributes about an individual that only spiritualists such as priests and other spiritually qualified persons can unveil them. This belief presupposes that whatever exists or happens in the physical realm has foundations in the spiritual world.

a. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Most ethnic groupings of Liberia practice the tradition of FGM. In 2015, INCHR through its Human Rights Monitors carried out vigorous human rights awareness in Hubs one, two and three including the Western region of Bomi County. From the onset of the exercise, people were hesitant to openly complain against their offenders for fear of reprisal. Through vigorous human rights education carried out by the INCHR Human Rights Monitors, people eventually began to freely complain as the program progressed.

b. Forced Initiation into Secret Societies

In Bomi County, INCHR investigated complaints of abduction and subsequent initiation of non-members into secret societies (Sande and Poro). In some instances those abductions affected both males and females especially boys and girls who were forcibly initiated into secret societies without their consent. In most cases, reasons given for the abduction and subsequent forced initiation were that victims acted in violations of their rules (trespassing on the sacred grounds and for being caught outdoor while the sacred society activities were ongoing).

c. Trial by ordeal

In Liberia, trial by ordeal is considered by many as a means of administering justice, especially in matters such as witchcraft or in the case where a married woman is accused of extramarital affairs. INCHR in its usual human rights monitoring gathered series of information and reports from the various Hubs which indicated that trial by ordeal was still widely practiced by local Chiefs, Zoes, Bodios and Traditional Priests in most parts of rural Liberia.

In 2015, INCHR launched an investigation into these reports with the objective to ascertain the merit and demerit. Findings of said investigation confirmed the act being perpetrated especially in most part of rural Liberia. The findings showed that the Government in one way or the other supports this scheme; evidenced by the placement of traditional leaders and cultural coordinators on its payroll through the Ministry of Internal Affairs which has the final jurisdiction for all

cultural/traditional matters in Liberia. The report further revealed that at times traditional investigators charged and extorted substantial amount of money from the accused persons prior to performing their assigned duties; a situation which adversely affect the accused persons. For example, in Wlegboken Town, River Gee County, two (2) women (petty traders) were accused of selling poisonous cooking salt and for this reason they were mercilessly beaten and their belongings including cash and goods confiscated on the order of the traditional authority without due process.

Moreover, the practice of trial by ordeal grossly violated social justice and principles of human dignity and respect for human life in most parts of the Country during the period, 2015. In all forms and manner, it violated the principles of presumption of innocence of an accused person as well as the right to appeal.

Additionally, INCHR investigations also gathered from counties covered by Regional Hubs one, two and three including Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Kru, Maryland and River Gee, and Gedeh and Sinoe, revealed that in most cases, methods used during most of the ordeal trials are cruel and inhumane.

d. Accusations of witchcraft

In most parts of Liberia, especially in the South Eastern Counties of Maryland, River Gee and Grand Kru, persons of all ages and status were often accused of witchcraft resulting into exorcism rituals, trials by ordeal, expulsion or even death. Criminal offences perpetrated through such harmful traditional practices often go unpunished due to their perceived cultural dimensions and interventions by some Government officials or employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In 2015, INCHR gathered reports of accusation of witchcraft which emanated from Grand Cape Mount, River Gee and Nimba Counties. INCHR Human Rights monitors report estimated at least eighty six (86) children (some of whom were as young as four (4) years were reportedly accused of practicing witchcraft. The nature of those accusations is usually violent and the experience is both physically and psychologically traumatizing. In some instances, children were separated from their families and sent to live with Zoes, Priests and Bodios to undergo ritual cleansings. Often, such decisions caused most of those children not be able to pursue formal education. In most cases, children who fall victims to these kinds of decisions risked physical, mental, sexual abuses and other forms of exploitations. During the period under review, Human Rights Monitors also reported that in many instances, children accused of witchcraft were abandoned by their families and communities as many of them ended up in the hands of traffickers or emerged into streets families in larger cities and towns.????

e. Ritualistic Killings

Ritualistic killings are prevalent in the Liberian Society especially during elections. In order to minimize or curtail this kind of human rights violations especially in most parts of rural Liberia, local authorities warned citizens against travelling alone from one place to the other; rather encouraged group interaction during the period of the elections. For example, the measures encouraged people to walk in group to and from the farms, creeks, and market places or elsewhere to avoid being victimized.

In Ganta, Nimba County, the killing of a motorcyclist aged 22 was an instance of many ritualistic killings that occurred in the Country during the period under review. INCHR investigation into the death of this cyclist revealed that he was killed for ritual purposes as evidenced by the extraction of his body parts including the eyes.

Perpetrators of ritualistic killing often hunt for humans and extract body parts to be used in sacrifices for personal aggrandizement or promotions to some positions.

4.2. Social, Economic and Cultural Rights

a. Right to Health

Lack of access to primary health services by low income earners and ordinary citizens especially in rural communities remains serious concern. Essential drugs and other medicines are either not available or are expensive. Health facilities are not equipped with necessary medicines, laboratory and other equipment to properly diagnose causes of ailments and health problems.

b. Right to Education

Liberian law guarantees free and compulsory primary education; however, this is not yet full actualized across Liberia. Until today a good number of school age children is still being used by parents or guidance as bread winners for the homes. In addition, poor educational facilities coupled with poor learning conditions continue to be pervasive. In most cases, where education facilities do exist, the disparity in the educational system remains alarming, and quality education is still illusive to many children. In addition, the numbers of school drop outs especially girls after the elementary level remain of grave concern and this is compounded by early marriage, and in some cases, Sande activities which dispute the school calendar thereby affecting formal education etc,

c. Right to Employment Opportunities

A large number of youths have no jobs – while at the same time, there are no effective programs to create jobs. While there are a few notable efforts on the side of the government to provide skills training and create jobs as in the case of the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Program, and the Joint Program for Employment and Empowerment of Young People in Liberia (JP-YEE) a critical review of the Liberian situation and context will show that youth programs have not been holistic and comprehensive. Since 2006, hitherto, most of the interventions have only been short-term. Most times the focus is on labor intensive work programs targeting vulnerable youths and last between three to six months. Where some forms of trainings have been provided, the trainings are often not intensive and there are little or no incentives to both attract young people and keep them in these programs.

In addition, the government has not created a market where most of these young people, after training can get immediate employment. While much talk has been about forming cooperatives,

nothing tangible has been achieved in this regards. Another compounding problem has been that several of these trainings have been either in areas where there are less demands for jobs, or where the trainings are inadequate and trainees have little or no proficiency and experience. Also, there has been little or no psychosocial support provided alongside trainings and other interventions. Moreover, interventions or programs do not have a well-defined exit and sustainability plan.

d. Rights of Children and Women

The government has taken notable steps and actions to help address violations of the rights of children and women; however these steps and actions have been more at the socio-political level, with little or no corresponding change at the individual level. For example, the government has reported that it is considering the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and has already taken a number of legislative and policy measures to comply with the provisions of both instruments. The Children’s Law, which was passed in 2011, enshrines the right of the child to be protected from involvement in armed conflicts and violence. With regard to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, the Children’s Law provides for the right of the child to be protected from harmful work and from sexual abuse and exploitation. In addition, Women and Child Protection Section has been established within the Liberia National Police, while at the Ministry of Gender and Social Protection several efforts are being employed not only to protect women and children but to also ensure their social, economic well-being. Notwithstanding these efforts policy measures and legislations developed or enacted have not translated into concrete actions by being able to address various human rights violations that women and children suffer. To date the vast majority of female raped are children below the age of 18 years – in most case they are minors. Little girls still suffer from harmful traditional practices including genital mutilation. Further, sexual exploitation and abuse as well as domestic violence against women and children still persist in many quarters across the country, while in most cases, their perpetrators go with impunity. Another recent form of violence against children is where children are accused of being witch-craft and are being hypnotized to confess, by so called spiritualists or “man of God”. The INCHR frowns of this primitive notion of bedevilment and bewitchment – and the so called “deliverance” that follows. These are forms of exorcism and shamanism that at the end encourage stereotypes in the community and or school against the child or children accused.

4.3. Other Human Rights Issues

a. Freedom of Speech

As much as the Constitution of the Republic of Liberia guarantees freedom of speech and press, the INCHR during the period under review recorded instances of police brutalities of journalists in Liberia. Such acts are inconsistent with the law; as acts of brutality against media practitioners and in some cases ordinary persons have a propensity of undermining the growth, development and sustainability of not only the free press but also the lasting peace in Liberia. In 2015, INCHR monitored at various scenes in Paynesville Montserrado County, a number of harassments and brutalities of persons by some State Security officers. For instance, journalists Leila Gbati of the Women Voices Newspaper and Aloysius David of the News Newspaper were ruthlessly beaten

by officers of the Police Support Unit of the Liberia National Police as they reported the event where private schools teachers converged at the Foreign Ministry to draw President Sirleaf's attention to the delay in the payment of their Ebola hazard benefits. The third instance occurred on September 22, 2015 in Barnesville Estate when a lady named Esther Glain was severely brutalized by the Deputy Director of the Executive Protection Service (EPS).

The operations of privately owned newspapers, websites, radio and television stations are cleared manifestations of free speech and press enjoyed in Liberia during 2015. A good number of media institutions in Liberia are owned or associated with some interests ranging from powerful business houses to political gurus who oftentimes produce contents that reflect the views of their supporters rather than an objective reporting consistent with the journalism profession. This situation however, led to the publications and broadcast of hate messages.

b. Youth Related Violence

In 2015, youth related violence became more prevalent than was in the previous year, 2014. During this period, INCHR monitors' reports indicated that majority of Liberia's youth lacked requisite skills and trainings, a situation primarily responsible for wide array of youth unemployment and discontent. On the other hand, youth unemployment in Liberia created a situation of vulnerability in the sector thereby exposing some of them to negative influences and criminal activities such as drug, trafficking, armed robbery and other negative vices. In the period under review, several youth related mob violence occurred in nearly every region of the Country. This situation poses serious threat to the sustainability of the Country's relative peace and the Liberian Government commitment to the rule of law.

c. Corruption

The high rate of corruption in the country still remains an issue. In the President State of the Nation Address delivered to the Legislature on January 25, 2015, the President informed the nation that "corruption obviously threatens the rule of law and impedes national development. It frustrates efforts to fairly distribute our resources, undermines essential democratic values, renders institutions ineffective, and retards our socio-economic and political development." These allusions to corruption are not new and have been stated repeatedly not only by the President but ordinary Liberians most of whom bear the adverse consequences of corruption. While corruption remains alarming, prosecution, on charges of corruption remains very poor and disproportionate. The INCHR acknowledges little efforts being made in the fight against corruption but calls on the Government including all its three branches to do all within their powers to ensure corruption is minimized if not eradicated.

d. The rights of persons with disability

Liberia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2012. However, little or no progress has been made in domesticating the provisions into laws and policies. Persons with disabilities continue to face various kinds of discrimination in public places due to lack of infrastructure friendly to this group of people. The National Commission on Disabilities

is severely under resourced to advocate for the rights of these vulnerable population. The lack of access to health facilities and formal education due to lack of appropriate infrastructure and reading materials remains a serious concern. In addition, persons with disability in Liberia encounter several challenges including: lack of support to attend school, little or no means of feeding and shelter, little or no employment opportunities as well as their exclusion from decision making processes amongst others. Despite persons with disabilities have been vocal informing of their plight and call for concrete actions from the Government their conditions still remain very appalling. The Government should put in place mechanisms to implement the provisions of the Convention through law, policies and planning.

Of equal concern is the printing into handbills and publication of the Act enacted by the National Legislature on the use of the White Cane to safe guide the rights of the Blind. INCHR also joins the Commission for Persons with Disabilities, the Christian Association of the Blind and related institutions to encourage the government to deposit with the Headquarters of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) the MARRAKESH Treaty ratified by the government of Liberia in 2016. The MARRAKESH Treaty is intended to facilitate access to published works for the use of visually impaired persons and persons with print disability.” Once deposited with WIPO, the visually impaired persons of Liberia will can engage institution for intellectual materials thereby causing an exchanged of material for the Country especially since Liberia has already ratified the treaty.

e. Sexual and Gender Based Violence

In 2015, there was an alarming increase in sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) in Liberia; especially the rape of minors. During the period under review, INCHR monitors assigned in the Hubs and other Counties described SGBV as alarmingly increased across the Country. Despite funding being provided to select institutions from Government of Liberia and other partners; with the objective of reducing sexual and gender based violence in the Country, rape remains high among other areas of gender based violence. While there are several reasons responsible for the continuous rise in the SGBV offenses, societal discernment about the crime (rape, and other domestic violence such as wife beating) are easily purged and compromised by chiefs and victims’ families while the police usually waive charges with little or no concern for the wellbeing and rehabilitation of the defenseless victims leaving them often frustrated and traumatized.

Sexual violence is a human rights violation and a serious public health problem. It has a profound impact on the physical and mental health of the victims, immediately and years to come after the assault. Compared to the number of cases reported, very few cases are brought to the justice system. The conviction rate is very low one or two percent. Prevalence of impunity for rape and serious sexual violence remains a concern. Poor investigation, non-cooperation by communities, and poor prosecution are some of the reasons. Government should exert concrete efforts to address these issues.

Liberia’s International Treaty Obligations

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Recommendations on Liberia

Liberia timely met her reporting obligation schedule of 2nd February 2015 of the United Nations Human Rights Council Universal Periodic Review (second circle). In the report that covers the period of September 2010 to December 2014, a number of notable achievements were highlighted. For instance, on the UPR recommendation for ratification of international human rights instruments the following were highlighted: (1) that the Republic of Liberia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2012. (2) The National Commission on Disabilities (NCD) has been designated as the Secretariat for the CRPD and is responsible for leading the treaty reporting and implementation processes for the CRPD. (3) In 2013, the Government adopted a national strategy on implementation of the CRPD. (4) Liberia signed the Optional Protocol to the CRPD and favorably considers its ratification.

In the same report Liberia also indicated that she considers the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and has already taken a number of legislative and policy measures to comply with the provisions of both instruments. The Children's Law, which was passed in 2011, enshrines the right of the child to be protected from involvement in armed conflicts and violence. With regard to the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, the Children's Law provides for the right of the child to be protected from harmful work and from sexual abuse and exploitation.

In 2014, Liberia also launched its Five-Year National Action Plan in the Fight against the Trafficking of Human Beings, and the Government has established a National Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force co-chaired by the Ministries of Labor and Justice. Furthermore, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has placed a moratorium on international adoptions due to concerns about the trafficking of children and has submitted a proposed Child Adoption Act to the Legislature to improve the regulation of international adoptions. Reporting further, Liberia indicated that it favorably considering the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and Their Families (ICRMW), the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED), and the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In order to facilitate the ratification of human rights instruments, and to promote greater coordination among government actors in the areas of treaty ratification, reporting, domestication, and implementation, the Ministry of Justice has submitted a National Strategy for Meeting Regional and International Human Rights Treaty Obligations (the "National Strategy") to the Office of the President for endorsement by the Cabinet. The National Strategy highlights the instruments recommended for ratification by the previous UPR cycle and encourages their ratification at a suggested timetable. It also proposes the establishment of a National Body on Treaty Obligations to coordinate efforts to ratify human rights treaties and to meet existing treaty obligations through the appointment of high-level human rights focal persons at all relevant line ministries and agencies.

However, since the last report to the United Nations Human Rights Council second circle Universal Periodic Review, Liberia has continued to face a variety of political, economic, and social challenges inherent to its status as a post-conflict nation. These challenges include

prevalent corruption and a culture of impunity; high illiteracy and unemployment rates; low professional development; a lack of awareness of human rights particularly among the society at large; discriminatory laws and practices; a lack of public trust in the judiciary and law enforcement, often leading to mob violence; residual delays in domesticating regional and international human rights norms; inadequate human and financial resources to fully implement crucial human rights initiatives; and a still-fragile general Human Rights situation.

Another major challenge is the cultural and traditional practice which seems to bar progress on the implementation of some major human rights instruments especially those affecting the rights of women and girls. For example, the issue on female genital mutilation is still a serious taboo and practiced widely across Liberia. A draft bill on domestic violence which included a section of FGM was submitted to the house of legislature indicative of attempts to address the recommendation on FGM but this attempt was squashed and thrown out the House of Representatives.

Liberia has ratified the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women but still has to enforce it and harmonize this with our other laws. One could also use the treaty on torture as reliance since FGM is now classified as a form of torture. But this has to be recognized by the Government. The INCHR faces the challenge of getting the government to recognize and relay on international treaties and conventions in the execution of laws.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the Executive Summary, this 2015 Annual Report focuses on the achievements and challenges of the INCHR in 2015, and reports on the human rights situation in Liberia from January – December 2015. The Report notes a number of achievements made by the INCHR ranging from capacity assessments to capacity building and training, and recruiting of a few key staff for the setting up of two of the INCHR Five Departments: the Departments of Budget and Administration; and Education, Training and Information. The INCHR also recruited and deployed Human Rights Monitors the some of the Counties. In addition, the INCHR revised/updated and developed key institutional documents including the INCHR Staff Handbook, Standard Operating Procedures, Jobs Description and Terms of Reference Manual, as well as the INCHR Financial Policy and Procedures Manual, and also elaborated its Organogram.

In addition, the INCHR conducted investigations and submitted reports on few key incidences including the riot involving Motor Cyclists and the LNP, in the Paynesville suburb of Red Light, Montserrado County, as well as the riot in Butaw, between the citizens and Golden Veroleum Liberia concession workers and the company management in Sinoe County.

With regards to transitional justice issues the INCHR also started the implementation of the National Palava Hut talks as recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and as assigned in the National Reconciliation Roadmap beginning with an ethnography study.

However, while the INCHR has made countable achievements in 2015 the Commission could have accomplished much more if adequate funding was available and the requisite staff recruited to set up the rest of the Departments, regional offices, recruit, train and deploy additional monitors, and investigators in the counties, and provide human rights education and training for CSOs , traditional chiefs and elders and the general population – thereby further reducing human rights violations across Liberia.

Regarding the human rights situation in the Country, the INCHR Human Rights Monitors’ reports as well as reports from secondary sources (all of which have been authenticated) there is still much to be desired to protect the rights and dignity of all Liberians and those within its borders. Despite some efforts on the side of the government to put in place measures to curb gender based violence, trial by ordeal and other harmful traditional practices, the intolerable status quo that perpetuates these and other forms of violations especially against women and girls continues unabated. Women and girls across the Country are still subjugated and sometimes humiliated as a result of rape, genital-mutilation and torture leaving them with not only physical wounds but also psychological and emotional trauma. Most regrettably, rape of minors is still on the increase. Unfortunately, rape cases in some instances have been compromised and perpetrators allowed to go with impunity.

In addition, 2015 witnessed several mysterious deaths of citizens most of which, until today, are not concluded. Worst still, in most of these cases, no one has been arrested or brought to justice.

INCHR recognizes that there were improvements in the areas of press freedom and freedom of speech. Nevertheless, in other human rights conditions, the record in 2015 suggests that much remains to be achieved. For example, conditions of prisons and holding cells remain substandard; prolonged pretrial detentions still overwhelmed prison space; health services remain very inadequate especially in rural areas; and access to quality education as well as the disparity in the education system continue to present major violation of human rights that requires the full attention of government.

Finally, the INCHR concludes with a call on the government to work very rigidly to ensure the protection of human rights of all its citizens and aliens within Liberia. The government must galvanize and practically demonstrate its expressed ‘political will’ to fight human rights violations in the country no matter where it is found and who is responsible. In addition, the Commission recognizes the socio-cultural and traditional context of Liberia, notwithstanding, however, in most cases these have only led to cultural and traditional prejudices and biases against women and girls.

Meanwhile, the Commission will continue to perform its statutory functions and also execute its mandate in accordance with the Paris Principles: to protect and promote the human rights of the people and residents of Liberia. The INCHR will also continue to work to help educate the people about human rights, especially in the wake of the UNMIL consolidated drawdown and

withdrawal as Liberia moves toward the 2017 Legislative and Presidential Elections. The INCHR calls on the government (Legislature and Executive) for continuous support especially through adequate budgetary allocation to enable the Commission performs its duties and functions. The Commission looks forward to engaging with and lending support to the Government during the course of the next reporting year.

Recommendations

The INCHR does not only monitor, but investigates, documents, and submits Quarterly and Annual Reports on the Human Rights Situation of the Country, and also advises and assists the government in this regard. This includes making key recommendations to the government intended to help protect and promote human rights of all the citizens of Liberia and all those within its borders. Assisting and advising the government is also consistent with the Paris Principles which requires NHRIs to:

- Protect human rights, meaning to exercise powers to handle such complaints, investigate violations, conduct hearings consistent with due process of law, mediating conflicts and monitoring activities; and
- Promote human rights, through education, outreach, the media, publications, training and capacity building, as well as advising and assisting the Government.

In this regard, these recommendations are put forward for concrete and practical actions. The recommendations below are in two-folds: 1) General recommendations and 2) Specific recommendations, amongst which, are separate recommendations made to key institutions of the Government including: the Legislature, the Executive including Ministry of Justice (Liberia National Police, Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation and other Law Enforcement Agencies), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the Judiciary. There are a few recommendations on treaties obligations which Liberia must achieve. A few recommendations are also made for follow-up actions, to the Press Union of Liberia. Several of the recommendations in the 2015 Annual Report have been repeated from the 2014 Annual Report, however have been revised and/or further expounded. The Commission is concerned that there has been little or no concrete actions on the side of the Government to implement some of those recommendations; thus they are brought forward again with a glaring call for implementation and actions. Finally, the INCHR is convinced that these recommendations when implemented will certainly put Liberia high in meeting its international human rights obligations, leading to the full protection of the rights of all persons in the territorial confines of Liberia.

To the Government of the Republic of Liberia

Treaty obligations

- The INCHR notes and recognizes the efforts on the side of the Government of Liberia to ratify, or join by accession international conventions, treaties and protocols. At the moment the government has ratified or joined by accession at least thirty three (33) treaties. These are

listed in the National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP). However, several of these treaties acceded to still require domestication. A few include Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women. The INCHR encourages the Government to continue the domestication process and also ensure compliance with these international conventions and treaties.

- The INCHR also calls on the Government to regularize its reporting on the implementation of the various treaties, conventions and protocols the government has ratified or acceded to as required by Treaty Bodies. The reports from the OHCHR indicate that the Government of Liberia is behind with reporting on various treaties obligations. In its report to the Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the Liberian Delegation informed the working group that “Liberia was taking steps to address its backlog in treaty reporting,” but was currently in good standing with regards to reports due under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- The INCHR recognizes the efforts of the Government in meeting its treaties obligations and calls on the government to organize a more open and inclusive review process of its achievements in meeting the UPR recommendations and also its treaty obligations. Where necessary the government must clearly demonstrate the political will to meet its treaty obligations, but must also explain and articulate how full compliance would be achieved over time.
- The Commission calls on the government to provide information and education to all justice and security actors personnel on its regional and international obligations, treaties and conventions to which the Government of Liberia is a party. The INCHR stands ready to support the Government by providing awareness on various treaties, protocol and conventions and help provide training on how to work in compliance with these instruments.

To the Liberia National Police and other Law Enforcement Agencies:

- Whilst the authorities of the Liberia National Police and other Law Enforcement Agencies are investing in training and recruitment of additional security personnel especially in the wake of UNMIL transitioning, efforts must be accelerated to also train and re-train law enforcement officers in modern investigation skills, in a bid to avoid the use of torture in obtaining information. In addition, training of both in-coming officers and those already in service on human rights based approaches in the execution of their duties is essential for the observance and respect for the human rights of all. Basic training in human rights and human rights based approaches and the role of law enforcement officers may not be exhaustive at the Liberia National Police Training Academy (LNPTA). The INCHR recommends the rolling out of this and other forms of relevant human rights training

quarterly at the Justice and Security Regional Hubs. The INCHR stands ready to provide technical support to the LNP and other para-security institutions in this regards.

- The INCHR also calls on the Liberia National Police to intensify its community policing initiatives so as to enhance the relationship between the LNP and the community. This will also help reduce negative perception of the LNP amongst the citizens and foster appreciation and support for the police in the execution of their duties. The Commission acknowledges and applauds efforts being employed by the Government and her partners to strengthen the capacity of the LNP and the BIN especially through the Justice and Security Joint Program and now the GoL/UNMIL Transition Plan. The Commission is encouraged by the enactment into law of the LNP Act and BIN Act. Nevertheless the INCHR points out and urges that as good as institutional frameworks, legislations and capacity building are, they will be of no importance if these do not translate into practical actions at the individual levels. This speaks to the relationship between security officers and ordinary citizens which is cardinal to building the needed trust in security institutions, the citizens and personnel. The citizens of Liberia are not just interested in policies and legislations as in this regard, but more in how they are treated by justice and security officers in their communities.
- The INCHR calls on the Government to fully resource the Professional Standard Division which has responsibility to investigate complaints on police atrocities against civilians and ensure all complaints against a police officer is thoroughly investigated and appropriate action taken including prosecution for serious violations of human rights.

To the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation

- The INCHR recommends proper record keeping system and coordination between the courts and the prisons as well as the police. In addition the government needs to provide resources to continue and expand the magistrate-sit-in program to review the cases of persons in detention so as to determine causes of incarceration and take appropriate actions to address them. The INCHR also stands ready to assist in this respect.
- Finally the INCHR encourages the BCR to provide adequate and proper feeding to prisoners and ensure prison conditions are progressively improved with the provision of bedding, healthcare facilities and vocational training.

The Rape Court: Criminal Court E, Temple of Justice

- Those prosecutors are held with contempt of court for failure to proceed with the prosecution of cases and bring same to a logical conclusion, after an unreasonable period of detention of suspects or defendants. It is noticed in most instances that after suspects are held in detentions for a prolonged period, prosecutor subsequently appear before the court to *nolle-*

prosequoi on grounds of lack of evidence to prosecute. This is a violation of human rights and the Liberian Constitution to deprive a person of his right to liberty.

- That public defense counsels be warned in open court against requesting for any form of remuneration from their indigent clients. Public defense counsels are compensated by the Government for their services. The Chief Justice should give strong warning to violators with penalties, including dismissal and disbarment from the practice of law in Liberia,
- The Commission calls on all the citizens not to compromise rape and other forms of violence against women and children. By protecting and covering-up violations of human rights when they occur in communities, either because of relationship/connections or bribery will be aiding and abetting the commission of crime or obstruction of justice. Despite efforts to put an end to rape, the raping of young girls by grown men in communities, spousal abuse, torture or injury to a minor by parents or guardians continue unabated. These acts should not be compromised. The public should seek justice when rights are violated and not condone impunity.

The Judiciary

- That rape cases be vigorously adjudicated without favor, fear or bribery influences and that the provisions of the Rape Law are indiscriminately adhered to regardless of personalities;
- That the magistrates in the counties be regular in convening sections and hearing cases. The irregular convening or sometimes non-convening for months is in violation of the rights of person(s) that appear in court to have access to justice and a speedy trial;
- That the Judiciary employs and deploys additional competent defense counsel and pays them reasonably well and provide them the logistics necessary for the performance of their duties to their indigent clients, e.g. means of transportation,
- That public defense counsels remain in their assigned jurisdictions and defend, to the best of their ability, the clients they represent as indigent defendants who are vulnerable.
- That magistrates desist from abusing the rights of persons that appear before them i.e., their rights to legal bail, to prevent uncalled for detentions, to be treated with dignity and have a fair trial;
- Magistrates should adhere to the rules governing illegal detentions of persons accused of a bailable offense without granting them a bond or hearing within a reasonable time and subsequently releasing them, or after an approved bond has been granted by the magistrate;

- That corruption in the judiciary, whenever uncovered, be decisively dealt with and made public in order to restore public trust in the system and serve as a deterrent;
- That the Judiciary through the Chief Justice and judges of the lower courts state their positions of the issue of judicial corruption. The Liberian public and the international partners need to know what the Judiciary is doing to arrest judicial corruption.

Ministry of Internal Affairs

- The INCHR encourages the MIA to ensure traditional leaders do not take the law into their own hands. The MIA is urged to make sure that traditional leaders facilitate police investigations of crimes in their communities. They should be reminded that all crimes that may be committed in the exercise of traditional practices such as rape, murder, torture, extortion, practicing of *sasaywood*, accusation of witchcraft, forceful initiation, must be investigated and prosecuted by the formal justice system consistent with due process of law;
- In line with the Government of Liberia treaties obligation and international standards ensure that FGM is abolished
- Sensitize communities and traditional actors on the impact of harmful traditional practices human rights impact of some practices and their role to respect and promote human rights.

To the press and Media

- Article 15 of the Liberian Constitution guarantees Freedom of the Press and Speech but with caution that abuse of the freedom has consequences. The INCHR supports free speech and press “that Government should make no such laws or regulations or do anything to curtail the exercise of free speech”. However, the INCHR is recommending that when a journalist exercises his/her constitutional right to speak or print a story, the allegation must be verifiable and truthful. Wild allegations or accusations as well as mis-information that tarnish somebody’s reputation is a violation of the person’s right to his/her dignity and hard earned reputation.
- The INCHR advises and encourages the press especially the Press Union of Liberia to continue its strong leadership to ensure that the Liberian Media maintains a high degree of responsibility, professionalism and integrity. The media can count on the INCHR for its support in this endeavor.

Appendices

Appendix A. Financial Report 2015

Appendix B. Report from the Paynesville Red Light Riot involving Moto-Cyclist and LNP Officers

Appendix C. Report from the Riot in Butaw District, Sinoe County, involving Concession Workers and Community Residence and the Golden Velorem Company

Appendix D. INCHR Organogram