



International Service for Human Rights

The Reports in Short

ISHR's summaries of documents for the UN Commission on Human Rights
62nd Session and Human Rights Council 2nd Session

The Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Liberia¹

Mandate holder

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Mandate

The mandate was established in 2003² to assess the situation of human rights in Liberia. The Independent Expert is mandated to facilitate cooperation between the government of Liberia and the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the area of the promotion and protection of human rights by providing technical assistance and advisory services. The independent expert gathers information through country visits and discussions and consultations with representatives of the government, UN specialised agencies such as the UN Mission in Liberia and the UN Development Programme, members of the diplomatic community and civil society groups.

Activities

Mission to Liberia from 25 September to 6 October 2005.

Annual Report³

Scope

The report considers information on the situation of human rights in Liberia obtained during a mission to the country from 25 September to 6 October 2005, during which the Independent Expert met with government officials, representatives of UN specialised agencies, diplomatic missions and civil society groups. During the mission, the Independent Expert also facilitated a workshop on her report to the 61st session of the Commission and strategies for its implementation.

Summary and key conclusions

Developments since previous mission

- **Progress** has been made in several sectors since the last visit of the Independent Expert including improvements in the security situation, which have enhanced freedom of movement and facilitated the conduct of national elections and a presidential run off;
- Another significant achievement has been the enactment of legislation establishing the **Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)** and the **Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR)**.

Legal reform and rule of law

- There are serious **deficiencies** in the **national legal framework** and structures for the **administration of justice**. There have however also been a number of positive initiatives such as the government's accession to over 100 international instruments including all the core human rights treaties, and its efforts to establish a legal framework in compliance with international norms and standards;

¹ Summaries prepared by Cléa Thouin, Intern, ISHR, supervised and edited by Meghna Abraham, Information Program, ISHR.

² Commission *Resolution 2003/82*.

³ E/CN.4/2006/114, 6 February 2006.

- Many **challenges remain in the justice system**, which has been undermined by a weak human resource base, and years of neglect, political interference and corruption. Courts outside of Monrovia are especially affected by these problems. Another major problem is that the criminal justice system remains unable to respond effectively to the challenges of impunity.

Situation of human rights

- The human rights situation of **women, children and other vulnerable groups** remain dire in the face of limited government resources and capacity. Domestic violence and harmful traditional practices against women, such as female genital mutilation, are reportedly increasing and sexual violence, especially against children, is prevalent throughout the country.

Key recommendations

- Liberia must take increased actions to establish effective and functional mechanisms to **combat corruption** and the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), the incoming Government and the international community should agree on international assistance to reinvigorate the judicial system;
- International legal experts should be engaged, while the capacity of local personnel is restored and the international community should prioritise the **capacity-building** of government officials and parliamentarians and continue to support civil society groups;
- Priority attention should be given to the **reform of the judicial system and national legislation**, particularly the civil and criminal code;
- The implementation of the **Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program** agreed upon by NTGL and its international partners should commence without delay;
- The TRC and the INHRC should be established without delay with the support of the international community.
- The **mandate of UN Mission in Liberia should be strengthened** to include assistance in the implementation of all human rights instruments to which the Government is a party;
- The Commission on Human Rights should remain informed of developments within Liberia to ensure continuing attention to the human rights needs of Liberia.