

NETWORK OF EX-ASYLUM SEEKERS SIERRA LEONE (NEAS-SL)

REPORT ON THE PARTICIPATION OF TWO NEAS MEMBERS IN THE NGO FORUM ORGANIZED BY THE AFRICAN CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHT STUDIES (ACDHRS) DURING THE 53 ORDINARY SESSIONS OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES RIGHTS AND THE 27TH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHT BOOKFAIR FROM THE 6-8TH APRIL, 2012 IN BANJUL THE GAMBIA.



Compiled by:

Paul Brima Bangura, Secretary for the Network of Ex- asylum seekers Sierra Leone (NEAS-SL)

30th/April, 2013.

1. Background Information.

Two representatives from the Network of Ex- Asylum Seekers Sierra Leone participated in the NGO Forum organized by the African Center for Democracy and Human Right Studies (ACDHRS) in Banjul, the Gambia from 6th to 8th April 2013 during the 53rd ordinary session of the African Commission on human and people's rights in Africa.

The purpose of this forum is to give opportunity to NGOs working in the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa to present human right situations from various countries, discuss special interest areas (**interest groups**) and make recommendations to the Commission for action. This is a period that several NGO platforms report human right violations perpetrated by individuals, governments or cooperate institutions from various countries in Africa. The participation of the Forum in the Ordinary sessions of the African Commissions on Human and peoples' Rights is one of the main advocacy tools that the African center uses to advance networking among and between Human Rights NGOs and networks for the promotion and protection of human rights in Africa. Over hundred resource persons who are eminent activist and expert dealing with human right issues in Africa facilitated this exercise. The African canter also organized the 23rd African Human Rights Book Fair which facilitated the exchange of materials and information as well as publications that publicize NGOs' activities across Africa.

2. Participation of NEAS-SL

On the fifth of April, 2013, Paul and Daramy, network members left the



Paul and Daramy at the NGO forum in Banjul

shores of Sierra Leone for the Gambia to attend the event. The participation of Neas was a great opportunity to emphasize, with personal experiences, the shortcomings of the European asylum regime and the human rights violations that occur during deportation of Africans. The participation was timely and vital, because linkages and partnerships were made with other networks and NGOs across Africa that are working on the promotion of human rights. The session ran for three days and Neas was given the opportunity to do a presentation on the second day.



Paul doing a presentation during the NGO forum

A Presentation on asylum and deportation was made during the NGO Forum in Banjul by Mr. Paul Brima Bangura, secretary of the Network of Ex-asylum seekers Sierra Leone and Abdulai Daramy president of the network. The presentation highlighted the challenges faced by asylum seekers in Europe, the manner of deportation and the stereotype and stigmatization they face at home country.

The presentation singled out restrictive asylum policies in Europe as the main cause for deportation because the restriction increases the number of people who are denied asylum protection and who could subsequently face deportation.

The presentation also categorized a number of difficulties in the form of stigmatization and discrimination faced by deportees in Sierra Leone which adds extremely to the already traumatic experiences they had gone through in Europe.

The background to the formation of NEAS, its activities, achievements made so far and the challenges were also discussed.

3. Achievements of Participation

- We were able to share our first hand experiences of gross human rights violations during asylum in and deportation from Europe and the rejection and discrimination we faced back home with over

200 participants across Africa and the Commissioners of the Human Right Commission.

- Networking and potential collaboration with NGOs interested in asylum issues and the UN Rapatour on asylum and refugees established.
- Human right materials and contacts were shared among us with civil society organizations and research institutions across Africa which will give the network more opportunity to communicate their problems extensively.
- Our concerns were written down for inclusion and discussions of commissioners of the African Commission.



Side events on human right defenders organized by Conscience International in the Gambia to which Neas was invited

4. Challenges

There was a high competition from NGOs, networks and individuals to present human right violations from their countries and this resulted to the allocation of limited time for presentations. As a result, we were unable to adequately present all what we intended presenting. However we were able to use the limited time to share the most important information on asylum and deportation.

Another challenge was language barrier. Communicating with other nationals especially the French and Portuguese participants who were also interested in the issue of asylum and brutal deportation was difficult.

5. Conclusion

Despite the above challenges, we were able to share the main information to participants. NEAS also received booklets, newsletters, magazines and posters. These materials contained information on human rights violations, the operations of the African Commission on human and people's rights and the work of the African court. Information that enhances access to African networks, donor agencies and research institutions on different areas were also part of the materials received. It is our intention to make follow ups to the commission from time to time to check our consideration on the issues presented. We hope to maintain constant link with the new contacts we have established.

In conclusion we want to thank medico international for supporting this worthwhile venture.



Listening to presentations during the NGO forum



Chairman of Neas sharing his experience from deportation