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EFSCRJ Welcomes with Concern the NHRC Report on the State of the Prisons

The Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice welcomes the timely and important report of the National Human Rights Commission on its 2025 monitoring of prisons and police stations. We commend the Commission for documenting detention conditions and providing recommendations to protect the dignity, safety and rights of persons deprived of their liberty. We also acknowledge the cooperation extended to the monitoring teams by the Prison Service and Police Force.

The report presents a deeply troubling picture of our detention system. Severe overcrowding, broken sanitation and sewage facilities, inadequate healthcare, poor nutrition, prolonged remand detention, and insufficient rehabilitation programs continue to undermine the rights and wellbeing of prisoners and detainees. These conditions demand urgent action from the Government and all institutions responsible for administering justice.

At Mile II, Main Yard cells intended to accommodate a maximum of 33 prisoners held between 59 and 88. Remand cells designed for five accommodated between 18 and 20 detainees. At Jeshwang, the adult remand population stood at 216, compared with 51 convicted prisoners. These findings expose both the inadequacy of prison infrastructure and the consequences of delays in investigations, prosecutions, and court proceedings.

The situation of children is particularly alarming. Of the 32 children in Jeshwang's Juvenile Wing, 28 were awaiting the determination of their cases. The report documents inadequate sanitation, constrained healthcare, poor bedding, and the absence of structured educational and rehabilitation programs. Children also reported prolonged confinement indoors following fights involving some inmates. Such conditions undermine their development and prospects for reintegration.

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These findings must also be examined against the Government's commitments under its May 2022 White Paper on the TRRC Report. The Government accepted the principal recommendations for reforming prison laws, improving accommodation, healthcare, and nutrition, addressing prolonged pretrial detention, strengthening inspections, and expanding rehabilitation. It also accepted recommendations for alternatives to imprisonment and better conditions for prison personnel.

The NHRC report demonstrates that the necessary transformation remains unfinished. Legal and institutional reforms have yet to deliver the humane detention system envisaged by those commitments. The Government must explain what has been implemented, what remains outstanding and why prisoners and officers continue to endure conditions repeatedly identified as unacceptable. Acceptance of recommendations must produce measurable improvements in people's lives.

While no torture was reported during the prison monitoring visits, the report records degrading living conditions. The State's responsibility extends to ensuring that people in its custody receive adequate food, healthcare, sanitation, accommodation, and protection. Families and individual officers should not have to compensate for failures in basic institutional provision.



EFSCRJ therefore calls for:

1. **A public implementation account** setting out progress on each accepted TRRC prison reform recommendation, supported by evidence, expenditure figures, and deadlines for outstanding actions.
2. **Immediate improvements in basic welfare**, including clean water, functional toilets and sewage systems, nutritious meals, safe bedding, essential medicines, and reliable medical referral transport.
3. **Completion and effective implementation of prison reforms**, with clear safeguards for accountability, independent inspection, and confidential complaints.
4. **Urgent review of remand cases**, especially those involving children, alongside stronger legal aid, timely trials, and appropriate alternatives to custody.
5. **Properly funded rehabilitation and officer welfare**, including education, vocational training, psychosocial support, adequate staffing, equipment, and accommodation.
6. **National Assembly scrutiny and independent monitoring**, including public examination of this report and facilitated access for EFSCRJ and other civil society organisations.

This report comes nine years after the Government launched security sector reform, including a review of the Prisons Act, as part of a broader transitional justice program anchored in the “*Never Again*” agenda. Yet degrading conditions persist across our prisons, exposing the failure to translate reform commitments into meaningful legal, institutional, and operational change. In EFSCRJ’s assessment, these persistent failures reflect inadequate political will, weak executive leadership and legislative oversight, and serious shortcomings in prison management.

Deprivation of liberty does not authorize deprivation of dignity. Prisons must serve the purposes of lawful custody, rehabilitation, and reintegration. They must enable those convicted of offences to take responsibility, acquire skills, and prepare to return to society. They must also protect the rights of remand detainees, who remain presumed innocent. No person should be condemned to squalor, neglect, or avoidable suffering because they are in State custody. The conditions documented in this report are an affront to human dignity and demand urgent reform.

EFSCRJ therefore urges the Government to publish a costed response to the report, identifying responsible institutions, implementation deadlines, and arrangements for regular public progress updates. The National Assembly must scrutinize that response, ensure adequate funding, and hold the responsible authorities accountable. Repeated monitoring must produce corrective action.

“*Never Again*” must be measured by the treatment of people in State custody. It requires institutions that prevent abuse, uphold rights, and protect human dignity every day. Prisoners retain their humanity. The Government must honour its commitments and make humane detention a reality.

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