

How do I tell my story to the TRC?

Please call **612-766-7788** or **1-800-799-3688** to make an appointment to give a TRC statement.

Your statement will be confidential and private. No information about you or what you say in your statement will be given to the media or made public.

Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights
650 South Third Avenue, Suite 550
Minneapolis, MN 55402

Phone: 612-341-3302, ext. 113

Fax: 612-341-2971

E-mail: Liberia-TRC@mnadvocates.org

www.mnadvocates.org

Minnesota Advocates for
Human Rights and

The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the United States



Statement-taking by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

What is the TRC actually going to do? The TRC will collect thousands of statements from the Liberian people about human rights violations between 1979 and 2003. Statement-takers were deployed in all 15 counties in October 2006. After examining the statements, the TRC will hold public hearings, focusing on specific events, groups, or kinds of violations. Based on the statements and the hearings, the TRC will compile a final report at the end of its work. The final report will include a complete account of the TRC's activities, its findings about who did what to whom during the conflict in Liberia, and its recommendations.

How were statement-takers in Liberia selected? The TRC received 1200 applications for the job of statement-taker, with applicants coming from all 15 Liberian counties. Each applicant completed an aptitude test, and the highest scoring applicants were selected for interviews. Those who made the interview cut were given a week of training and then a second aptitude test. The names of the final 200 statement-takers were published in newspapers across Liberia so that anyone who had participated in human rights abuses during the conflict could be identified by the public.

How will statements be used? Statements from Liberians will form the basis for all of the TRC's work and will directly influence the final report. Statements are often quoted as part of national narrative and provide a starting point for future investigation and research. The statements gathered will help the TRC make decisions about when and where to hold public hearings and statements are used to influence final recommendations, including amnesties, prosecutions, reparations, and system reforms.



How will Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights help with statement-taking in the United States? Mirroring the TRC's work in Liberia, Minnesota Advocates is coordinating an effort to collect statements from Liberians living throughout the United States. Volunteers will conduct interviews with Liberians in the U.S. who voluntarily come forward to give statements to the TRC. Most statements will be taken at statement taking sites, where individuals will have access to counselors, immigration lawyers, and social service referrals. Information from interviews will be included in the TRC's historical record.

When will Minnesota Advocates be taking statements? Minnesota Advocates began taking statements in November 2006. The majority of the statement-taking in Minnesota will begin in January 2007. The Project is being piloted in Minnesota and will be extended to other parts of the U.S. depending on the financial, material and human resource capacity available.

Information About the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Frequently Asked Questions About the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and its Collaboration with Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights.

How did the TRC come about?

During the Accra peace talks in 2003, the Liberian Government, warring factions, and civil society groups negotiated a TRC as part of the peace agreement ending the conflict in Liberia. A law to establish the TRC (TRC Act) was passed by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly in June 2005. The TRC was officially inaugurated by President Sirleaf in February 2006.

What is the purpose of the TRC?

The purpose of the TRC is to promote national peace, security, unity and reconciliation in Liberia. In doing so, the TRC will:

- provide a forum that will address issues of impunity, as well as an opportunity for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences
- look into the root causes of the crises in Liberia
- recommend measures to be taken for the rehabilitation of victims of human rights violations

Why a TRC and not immediate prosecutions?

The TRC is the first step on the road to national healing in Liberia. It does not replace any need for a war crimes tribunal

or other prosecutions. For example, the TRC may recommend that certain perpetrators be prosecuted in Liberian courts.

What is the TRC's mandate?

The TRC Act authorizes the TRC to do the following:

- hold alleged perpetrators accountable
- investigate gross human rights and international humanitarian violations and abuses that occurred during January 1979 and October 2003
- determine those responsible for the commission of the violations and abuses as well as their motives and impacts on victims
- determine if the abuses committed were isolated incidents, part of a systematic pattern, or the result of deliberate planning on the part of the State, authority, political organizations, movement, or group of individuals
- investigate the root causes of the conflict, violations, and abuses in order to prevent future reoccurrences, thereby reconciling the Liberian society

Who are the commissioners and how were they selected?

The members of the Commission are: Cllr. Jerome J. Verdier, Sr., Chairman; Dolopie

Dedeh, Co-Chairman; Cllr. Pearl-Brown Bull; Bishop Arthur F. Kulah; Rev. Gerald Coleman; Mwalimu Sheik, Kafumba F. Konneh; Mr. John H.T. Stewart; Ms. Massa Washington; and Ms. Omu Syllah. The commission members come from a variety of professions, from lawyer to journalist, and have strong records as human rights activists. An official Selection Panel of seven national and international members screened more than 150 candidates nominated by the Liberian people and selected nine commission members. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf inaugurated the Commission on February 20, 2006.

How long will the TRC last?

The TRC Act allows the TRC to operate for two years, with two possible six month extensions. Statement-taking is underway across Liberia and public hearings are expected to begin in January 2007.

How is the TRC funded?

The TRC is funded by allocations from the Liberian government and by international donors, such as the UN and the U.S. Embassy in Liberia. The estimated budget for the TRC process is \$14 million. \$1.4 million in funding was received as of September 30, 2006 – the Liberian government was the largest funder as of that date.

What is the TRC's role in prosecuting perpetrators?

The TRC is not a court, so it cannot prosecute those responsible for violations. The TRC has the power to recommend continuing investigations and inquiries into specific matters, and can recommend prosecutions in particular cases.

Will the TRC provide compensation to victims?

The TRC does not have money of its own to give to victims. The TRC has the power to recommend reparations and rehabilitation for victims and perpetrators. Implementing the recommendations will be the responsibility of the government of Liberia.

If I am a perpetrator, will giving a statement and/or testimony mean automatic amnesty or immunity?

No. Neither the TRC nor Minnesota Advocates has the power to grant amnesty. The TRC may recommend amnesty if appropriate.

Visit the official Liberian Truth and Reconciliation website at:
www.trcofliberia.org

Thank you to our community partner



The Organization of
Liberians in Minnesota

