

Commonwealth Must Work for the Practical Realisation of Rights

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative Press Release, 09 December 2011

This human rights day, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) regrets to reiterate that there continues to be serious distances between the Commonwealth's soaring proclamations on the value of human rights and their actual realisation. A third of the world's populations live in the 54 countries of the Commonwealth and many of them face dire poverty. Poor governance, widespread and entrenched corruption as well as routine abuse of power impunity ensure that remedies and redress for rights violation remain out of reach of most of the population.

Yet it is the primordial responsibility and legal obligation of states to ensure the promotion, protection and realisation of the human rights of all people – particularly those of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. We therefore urge the Commonwealth to make real in all ways and without equivocation, the promise of human rights through its own vigorous agendas of action. The Commonwealth should also spur member countries to work with civil society to increase respect and realisation of human rights at home.

CHRI therefore urges member states to work closely with civil society to:

- design and sincerely implement national human rights plans;
- strengthen and assist national human rights institutions to play a leading role in both ensuring remedies for human rights abuse and impunity as well as in the reduction of torture;
- put programs and resources into place towards widespread public education about human rights;
- sign and ratify all major international human rights conventions
- appoint a Commonwealth commissioner for human rights
- submit to a performance review against human rights commitments at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings

strengthen the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group into a body that can effectively address seriously or persistent violations of rights – a fundamental political value of the Commonwealth.