

*By Dispatch Reporter;*

The National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) on Thursday met key stakeholders to raise awareness to its new mandate as the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) of torture and other cruel, degrading treatment or punishment.

The Chairperson of NCHR, Madam Madeleine Nirere said that her commission was by law designated as the NPM in accordance with the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture (OPCAT) to which Rwanda became a party since 2014.

According to Madam Nirere, the new mandate is to ensure that no torture is done to people and uphold everyone's human rights. She cited areas that convene people like in prisons, mental hospitals, airports and boarder crossings among other places to ensure that their no torture is carried out.

She explained that the commission will be visiting prisons to see that prisoners receive visitations from their families and other places people are getting their rights.

Among the new responsibilities, NCHR will ensure that prisoners have their rights according to law like to ascertain that foreign prisoners' families have been notified, there is no language barriers and children in prison with their mothers have their full rights.

"This is another good step that Rwanda has taken towards curbing down torture," said Jean Baptiste Niyizurugero, the Africa Program Officer of the Association of Prevention of Torture (APT), which collaborated with NCHR to organise the event.

Another purpose for the meeting with stakeholders was to reflect on methodology of monitoring places of deprivation of liberty with a view on what and how the Commission can in the best way achieve its mandate.

The National Commission for Human Rights is provided for by Rwanda's constitution as an independent body in charge of promotion and protection of human rights. The commission was established in 1999 by law n° 04/99 of 12th March 1999.