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Malawi making progress on human rights—judge

BY ALICK PONJE

HIGH Court Judge Chifundo Kachale has said his experience in the courtroom has informed him that Malawi is making progress in so far as the issue of human rights is concerned.

In an interview at Kachere Rehabilitation Centre in Lilongwe on Friday where he presided over the commemoration of Human Rights Day organised by the Irish Rule of Law, Kachale said most suspects who appear

before him show that they understand their rights.

"There is a lot of awareness nowadays. If you are sitting in a court of law and you have an alleged offender in front of you, most likely they will be able to apply for bail on their own without a lawyer, which means that the civic education programmes by government and other stakeholders are having an impact," said Kachale.

He added: "When you talk about sexual offences now, there is much more awareness about the rights

of the victims as opposed to the ordinary approach where you just look at the rights of the offenders. So as a sentencing court, you are made to be more aware and take into account the impact of the crime on the person who has been abused."

The High Court Judge further referred to the report prepared by the Malawi Human Rights Commission and the comments made during the commemoration of the Human Rights Day as showing that Malawi is making progress on human rights.

Irish Rule of Law Project Coordinator Jane O'Connell said with funding from the Irish Aid, her institution has been able to work with different stakeholders including the police, the judiciary and the social welfare department to reinforce the rights of young prisoners.

"We teach the children how to take responsibility for their actions, to learn how to make better choices and not to succumb to peer pressure, among others," said O'Connell.