

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

Index: AFR 51/003/2011
22 September 2011

Sierra Leone: Amnesty International welcomes the acceptance in principle of a moratorium on the death penalty and the commitment to improve healthcare in connection with birth delivery and to address other causes of maternal mortality

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Sierra Leone

Thirteen states raised the issue of the death penalty during the review of Sierra Leone, calling for a moratorium on executions, abolition of the death penalty, and ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.¹ Amnesty International congratulates Sierra Leone on accepting these recommendations in principle and urges it to immediately take all necessary steps to abolish the death penalty in national legislation and to commute existing death sentences to terms of imprisonment.

Amnesty International welcomes Sierra Leone's commitment to improve healthcare in connection with birth delivery and to address other causes of maternal mortality.² It is pleased to note that Sierra Leone is reviewing maternity healthcare policies and improving access to confidential family planning and sexual health and reproductive services.³ While the organization notes important reforms in this area, including a free healthcare policy covering pregnancy and childbirth, it urges Sierra Leone to ensure that gaps in monitoring and accountability do not undermine the success of these reforms. Amnesty International recently published a report highlighting continuing challenges faced by pregnant women and girls in Sierra Leone.⁴ Women and girls report that drugs and other essential medical supplies are often not available at health facilities, or they are charged for medicines and care that are supposed to be free. Amnesty International's research also reveals serious deficiencies in accountability across critical areas of the health system.

Amnesty International calls on Sierra Leone to reinforce transparency and accountability by monitoring and investigating shortcomings in the national health systems, and to respond robustly to allegations of corruption and systematic malpractice. The organization urges Sierra Leone to make grievance redress mechanisms available within the health systems and inform patients about their right to redress. Sierra Leone must also commit to conducting a periodic assessment of progress using "UN process indicators" to monitor the availability, utilization and quality of emergency obstetric care.

Amnesty International urges Sierra Leone's prompt implementation of the many recommendations on the elimination, prohibition and criminalization of female genital mutilation.⁵

¹A/HRC/18/10, recommendations 82.1 (Ecuador), 82.2 (Portugal), 82.3 (France), 82.4 (Belgium), 82.14 (France), 82.15 (Ireland), 82.16 (Spain), 82.17 (Austria), 82.18 (Germany), 82.19 (Argentina), 82.20 (Brazil), 82.21 (Chile), 82.22 (Switzerland), 82.23 (Portugal), 82.24 (United Kingdom), 82.25 (Ecuador).

²Ibid., recommendation 80.21 (Sweden).

³Ibid., recommendations 81.34 (Norway), 81.35 (Norway).

⁴ *At a crossroads: Sierra Leone's free health care policy* (Index: AFR 51/001/2011).

⁵ Ibid., recommendations 80.19 (Argentina), 80.20 (Slovenia), 81.24 (Austria), 81.25 (Japan), 81.26 (Canada), 81.27 (Germany), 81.28 (Switzerland), 81.29 (Portugal), 81.30 (United Kingdom), 81.31 (Italy), 82.12 (Costa Rica).

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Sierra Leone on 22 September 2011 at its 18th session. Prior to the adoption of the report of the review Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International also contributed to the information basis of the review through its submission on Sierra Leone: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR51/008/2010/en>

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