

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: AFR 51/4353/2016

27 June 2016

Sierra Leone must protect and promote women and girls' human rights, including to education and physical integrity

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Sierra Leone

Amnesty International welcomes Sierra Leone's steps towards abolishing the death penalty,¹ including the current moratorium in place on executions and the commutation of several death sentences.

However, Amnesty International is deeply disappointed at Sierra Leone's rejection of recommendations aimed at protecting and promoting the human rights of women and girls, including by prohibiting by law female genital mutilation and removing the measures that exclude pregnant girls from the educational system.²

The ban on pregnant girls attending mainstream schools and taking exams has, in some cases, been enforced through humiliating and degrading physical checks. Girls have had to endure having their breasts and stomachs touched in public by adults at the schools to see if they are pregnant. This kind of procedure imposed on the girls is a serious violation of their right to physical integrity.

The ban on pregnant girls going to mainstream school and sitting exams not only stigmatizes the girls and discriminates against them, it also risks destroying their future life opportunities by violating their right to education. It fails to take into account the high levels of sexual violence in Sierra Leone and the difficulties girls face in accessing sexual and reproductive health services and information. There was a sharp increase in teenage pregnancies in Sierra Leone during the Ebola crisis and it is estimated that more than 10,000 girls have been impacted by this ban. Amnesty International calls on Sierra Leone to lift the ban on pregnant girls attending mainstream school and taking exams, as recommended during this UPR.³

Amnesty International wishes to express our regret that Sierra Leone rejected recommendations to adopt measures to guarantee the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex

¹ Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Sierra Leone, A/HRC/32/16, 14 April 2016, recommendations 111.1 (Spain), 111.2 (Switzerland, Belgium, Montenegro, France), 111.3 (Benin), 111.13 (Portugal), 111.16 (Djibouti), 111.91 (Djibouti), 111.92 (Germany), 111.93 (Portugal), 111.94 (Mozambique), 111.95 (Panama), 111.96 (Switzerland), 111.97 (Uruguay), 111.98 (Australia).

² A/HRC/32/16, 14 April 2016, recommendations 111.48 (Poland), 111.73 (Belgium), 111.74 (Ireland), 111.75 (Canada), 111.76 (Jamaica), 111.106 (Lebanon), 111.107 (Maldives), 111.108 (Zambia), 111.109 (Slovenia), 111.111 (Spain), 111.112 (Australia), 111.113 (Congo), 111.115 (Cabo Verde), 111.116 (Botswana), 111.117 (Switzerland), 111.118 (Czech Republic), 111.119 (Uganda), 111.120 (Angola), 111.121 (Algeria), 111.123 (Croatia), 111.124 (Czech Republic), 111.125 (Japan).

³ A/HRC/32/16, recommendations 111.73 (Belgium), 111.74 (Ireland), 111.75 (Canada), 111.76 (Jamaica), 111.201 (Germany).

persons and to decriminalize same-sex relations between consenting adults.⁴ Amnesty International calls on Sierra Leone to reconsider its position on these recommendations.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Sierra Leone on 24 June 2016 during its 32nd 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:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr51/2905/2015/en/>

Public Document

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK

www.amnesty.org

⁴ A/HRC/32/16, recommendations 111.80 (Canada), 111.81 (Netherlands), 111.82 (France), 111.83 (Argentina), 111.84 (Colombia), 111.85 (Chile).