



## COI QUERY

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>LIBERIA</b>
<b>Title</b>	<b>Gender-based violence, including domestic violence and rape; information on prevalence, legislation, societal attitudes, access to state protection, and availability of support services; information on access to employment, housing and public services for victims who are single women without support network</b>
<b>Reference period</b>	June 2021 – July 2024
<b>Topic(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><a href="#">1. Prevalence</a></li><li><a href="#">2. Legislation</a></li><li><a href="#">3. Societal attitudes</a></li><li><a href="#">4. Access to state protection</a></li><li><a href="#">5. Availability of support services</a></li><li><a href="#">6. Access to employment, housing and public services</a></li></ol>
<b>Date of completion</b>	17 July 2024
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## COI QUERY RESPONSE - Liberia

### **Gender-based violence, including domestic violence and rape; information on prevalence, legislation, societal attitudes, access to state protection, and availability of support services; information on access to employment, housing and public services for victims who are single women without support network**

#### **1. Prevalence**

In 2020, president of Liberia declared rape a ‘national emergency’.<sup>1</sup> In a report covering 2023, the European Union noted that ‘Liberian women and girls continue to suffer from different forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).’<sup>2</sup> Sources indicated that instances of rape remained prevalent in Liberia.<sup>3</sup> The US Department of State (USDOS) described rape in Liberia as ‘a serious and pervasive problem.’<sup>4</sup> Domestic violence in Liberia has been described as widespread.<sup>5</sup>

According to the statistics provided by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2 708 cases of gender-based violence (GBV) were recorded in 2019 and 2 240 cases in 2020.<sup>6</sup> In 2022, the government of Liberia recorded 1 975 cases of GBV.<sup>7</sup>

A study published in June 2022 by the BioMed Central (BMC) Women's Health<sup>8</sup> found that the prevalence of intimate partner violence in Liberia in the previous 12 months was 45 %.<sup>9</sup> The study has also identified regional differences, namely that women in south central Liberia were less likely to experience violence from their partners as compared to women in the north western part of the country.<sup>10</sup> Other factors impacting intimate partner violence in Liberia,

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<sup>1</sup> Afrobarometer, Gender-based violence tops women’s-rights issues in Liberia; citizens say it is a criminal matter, 25 August 2023, [url](#), p. 1; UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>2</sup> EEAS, EU Annual Report On Human Rights And Democracy In The World 2023 Country Updates, 24 May 2024, [url](#), p. 115

<sup>3</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 - Liberia, 2024, [url](#); UNHRC, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review; Liberia, 4 January 2021, [url](#), para. 21

<sup>4</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>5</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Liberia, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 11; USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#); USDOS (US Department of State), 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>6</sup> UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>7</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 - Liberia, 2024, [url](#); UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>8</sup> According to the BMC Women's Health's About section on their website: ‘BMC Women's Health is an open access, peer-reviewed journal that considers articles on all aspects of the health and wellbeing of adolescent girls and women, with a particular focus on the physical, mental, and emotional health of women in developed and developing nations.’ See: BMC Women's Health, About, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>9</sup> Tsegaw, M., Mulat, B., Shitu, K., Intimate partner violence and associated factors among reproductive age women in Liberia: a cross-sectional study using a recent Liberian demographic and health survey, 17 June 2022, [url](#), p. 1

<sup>10</sup> Tsegaw, M., Mulat, B., Shitu, K., Intimate partner violence and associated factors among reproductive age women in Liberia: a cross-sectional study using a recent Liberian demographic and health survey, 17 June 2022, [url](#), p. 6



according to the study, included the age and decision making power of women, as well as their husbands' education.<sup>11</sup> However, sources reported that precise figures of prevalence of gender-based violence GBV in Liberia are not known due to underreporting by the victims.<sup>12</sup> Reasons for unreported cases included fear of reprisal from the attacker<sup>13</sup>, 'fear of a negative response by others, and the belief that authorities won't take the case seriously,'<sup>14</sup> as well as 'lack of support, breakdown or unreliability of public services.'<sup>15</sup>

## 2. Legislation

Following the end of the civil war in Liberia, reforms aiming at promoting gender equality and women rights have been introduced.<sup>16</sup> According to estimates, more than half of Liberian women experienced GBV during the civil war.<sup>17</sup>

The laws aimed at promoting women's rights<sup>18</sup> and preventing SGBV in Liberia included the Rape Law, the Domestic Violence Law, and the Inheritance Law.<sup>19</sup> The Rape Act was enacted in 2005<sup>20</sup> and the Domestic Violence Act was enacted in 2019.<sup>21</sup> Liberia acceded to the Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) in 1984.<sup>22</sup>

According to the Act to Amend the New Penal Code Chapter 14 Sections 14.70 and 14.71 and to Provide for Gang Rape, also known as the Rape Law, rape is defined as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> Tsegaw, M., Mulat, B., Shitu, K., Intimate partner violence and associated factors among reproductive age women in Liberia: a cross-sectional study using a recent Liberian demographic and health survey, 17 June 2022, [url](#), p. 7

<sup>12</sup> Afrobarometer, Gender-based violence tops women's-rights issues in Liberia; citizens say it is a criminal matter, 25 August 2023, [url](#), p. 5; NRC, Violence Against Women, and Housing, Land and Property in Monrovia, n.d., [url](#), p. 19; OHCHR, Evaluation of the project "Strengthening the Capacity of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights in Liberia", March 2022, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>13</sup> Afrobarometer, Gender-based violence tops women's-rights issues in Liberia; citizens say it is a criminal matter, 25 August 2023, [url](#), p. 5; NRC, Violence Against Women, and Housing, Land and Property in Monrovia, n.d., [url](#), p. 19; OHCHR, Evaluation of the project "Strengthening the Capacity of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights in Liberia", March 2022, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>14</sup> Afrobarometer, Gender-based violence tops women's-rights issues in Liberia; citizens say it is a criminal matter, 25 August 2023, [url](#), p. 5

<sup>15</sup> NRC, Violence Against Women, and Housing, Land and Property in Monrovia, n.d., [url](#), p. 19;

<sup>16</sup> M'Cormack, F., Prospects for Accessing Justice for Sexual Violence in Liberia's Hybrid System, 2018, available at: [url](#), p. 1; The Yale Review of International studies, Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Efficacy of National Action Plans in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>17</sup> The Yale Review of International studies, Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Efficacy of National Action Plans in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>18</sup> FPA, Liberia: OHCHR and Partners Conduct Awareness-Raising And Local Consultation on Human Rights And National Legislations Relating to Women And Girls, 14 April 2021, [url](#)

<sup>19</sup> Spotlight Initiative, Annual Narrative Programme Report [Liberia/Africa], 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022, n.d., [url](#), p. 37

<sup>20</sup> M'Cormack, F., Prospects for Accessing Justice for Sexual Violence in Liberia's Hybrid System, 2018, [url](#), accessed 8 July 2024, p. 5; UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>21</sup> FPA, Liberia: Domestic Violence Act Signed into Law, 15 August 2019, [url](#); Wilson, P. B., Increasing Accountability for Rape in Liberia: The Need for a Forensic System to Increase the Success Rates of Prosecution, June 2021, [url](#), p. 838; UNHRC, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review; Liberia, 4 January 2021, [url](#), paras. 21, 40; UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>22</sup> Wilson, P. B., Increasing Accountability for Rape in Liberia: The Need for a Forensic System to Increase the Success Rates of Prosecution, June 2021, [url](#), p. 851



'1. Offence: A person who has sexual intercourse with another person (male or female) has committed rape if:

a) (i) He intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus, mouth or any other opening of another person (male or female) with his penis, without the victim's consent; or,

(ii) He/She intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus or another person with a foreign object or with any other part of the body (other than the penis), without the victim's consent.

b) The victim is less than eighteen (18) years old, provided the actor is eighteen (18) years of age or older.<sup>23</sup>

The same Law provides for the following punishment in Section 14.70, 4. Grading and Sentencing:

'(a) Rape is a felony of the first degree where:

(i) The victim was less than 18 years of age at the time the offense was committed; or,

(ii) The offense involves gang rape as defined in sub-paragraph 2 above; or

(iii) The act of rape complained of results in either permanent disability or serious bodily injury to the victim; or

(iv) At the time of the relevant act or immediately before it began, the defendant threatened the victim with a firearm or other deadly weapon;

(b) The maximum sentence for first-degree rape shall be life imprisonment. And for the purposes of bail, it shall be treated as per capital offenses under Section 13.1.1; Capital Offenses of the Criminal Procedure Law.

c) Rape is second degree felony where the conditions set out in Section 4(a) (i) – (iv) above are not met. The maximum sentence for second-degree rape shall be ten (10)-year imprisonment.<sup>24</sup>

The Law sets the age of consent to 18.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Liberia, An Act to Amend the New Penal Code Chapter 14 Sections 14.70 and 14.71 and to Provide for Gang Rape, published by UNHCR, 29 December 2005, [url](#), sec. 14.70 (1)

<sup>24</sup> Liberia, An Act to Amend the New Penal Code Chapter 14 Sections 14.70 and 14.71 and to Provide for Gang Rape, published by UNHCR, 29 December 2005, [url](#), sec. 14.70 (1)

<sup>25</sup> UNMIL and OHCHR, Addressing Impunity for Rape in Liberia, October 2016, [url](#), para. 24



While the Law originally did not provide for bail,<sup>26</sup> sources indicated that the amendment adopted in 2017 made the offence bailable.<sup>27</sup> In a report covering 2021, Freedom House noted on the matter that ‘in 2017, the Senate voted to make rape a bailable offense, prompting protests by women’s rights activists. Despite the vote, rape remains a nonbailable offense.’<sup>28</sup> According to the director of Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy (FOHRD), a Liberian human rights NGO,<sup>29</sup> ‘[e]ven though rape is a non-bailable offence, several rape cases in Liberia continue to get bailed since the law was passed, for instance, the 42-year-old perpetrator in the 2018 case involving the raping of a nine months old child in Bahn, Nimba County, was let out on bail.’<sup>30</sup>

An article published by the Cornell Law School states that following the 2006 amendment to the Penal Code, the Law ‘no longer exempts “marital rape” from prosecution.’<sup>31</sup> However, sources indicated that the Law does not explicitly prohibits marital rape.<sup>32</sup> Additional information specifically on the issue of marital rape could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

Regarding domestic violence, the 2019 Domestic Violence Act defines it as follows in Chapter 16 Section 16.20:

‘any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, men, or children, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life between parties in an existing or former domestic relationship.’<sup>33</sup>

In Chapter 16 Section 16.21, the Law further stipulates that:

‘A person in a domestic relationship who engages in an act or omission which amounts to Domestic Violence as defined by this Act commits an offence of domestic violence and shall be guilty of the crime of domestic violence. The mensrea and/or actus reus of domestic violence shall constitute the following withing a domestic relationship if:

(a) there are threats to commit or committing acts of physical or sexual violence;

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<sup>26</sup> TNH, Liberia: Rapists go free, 19 October 2006, [url](#); UN Women, Reversing the tide of rising violence against women in Liberia, 16 November 2017, [url](#)

<sup>27</sup> FPA, Liberian Senate Amends Rape Law – Makes It Bailable Offense, 5 October 2017, [url](#); The Advocates for Human Rights, Liberia’s Compliance with the International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights: Harmful Practices and Violence against Women, 12 February 2018, [url](#)

<sup>28</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 - Liberia, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

<sup>29</sup> See: Grassroots Justice Network, Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy (FOHRD), n.d., [url](#)

<sup>30</sup> FPA, Liberia’s Inexcusable Cases of Rape, 25 September 2020, [url](#)

<sup>31</sup> Cornell Law School, Liberia, Domestic Case Law, Williams v. Republic of Liberia Supreme Court of Liberia (2014), n.d., [url](#)

<sup>32</sup> UNHRC, Compilation on Liberia; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 6 March 2020, [url](#), para. 61; UNHRC, Summary of Stakeholders’ submissions on Liberia; Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 25 February 2020, [url](#), para. 73; USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>33</sup> Liberia, The Domestic Violence Act of 2019, 2019, [url](#)



- (b) there are patterns causing emotional, verbal, or psychological abuse, [...];
- (c) there are threats to commit or committing acts constituting economic abuse;
- (d) the person is deliberately prevented from engaging in any legitimate profession, occupation, business or activity;
- (e) the person is deprived of the right to the use and enjoyment of conjugal property or property owned in common;
- (f) there are threats to deprive or depriving a person of a legal right;
- (g) causing or attempting to cause a person to engage in any sexual activity which does not constitute rape by force, threat or intimidation;
- (h) attempting to unlawfully restrict or restricting a person's freedom of movement or conduct;
- (i) stalking or repeatedly following, pursuing, or accosting a person;
- (j) harassment;
- (k) dowry--related violence,
- (l) all other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a person, where the conduct harms, or may cause imminent harm to the safety, health or wellbeing of the person in a domestic relationship.<sup>34</sup>

The Law provides for the maximum penalty of an imprisonment for six months.<sup>35</sup>

Following a declaration of rape a national emergency in 2020, President Weah established Inter-Ministerial Taskforce on Sexual and Gender Based Violence under a 2020-2022 roadmap on how to address GBV.<sup>36</sup> The taskforce has presented recommendations to the government on how to end GBV in the country,<sup>37</sup> however, it remained 'largely powerless', according to Freedom House.<sup>38</sup> Other measures adopted by President Weah included a creation of a special office of prosecutor for rape, creation of a national registry of sex offenders, and establishment of a National Security Task Force on SGBV.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Liberia, The Domestic Violence Act of 2019, 2019, [url](#)

<sup>35</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>36</sup> Liberia, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, President Weah declares Rape and all forms of SGBV as a National Emergency, 13 September 2020, [url](#)

<sup>37</sup> ELBC Radio, Inter-Ministerial Task force on Sexual, Gender Based Violence presents recommendations ....., [url](#)

<sup>38</sup> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2022 - Liberia, 24 February 2022, [url](#)

<sup>39</sup> Liberia, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, President Weah declares Rape and all forms of SGBV as a National Emergency, 13 September 2020, [url](#)

The authorities have established a special unit within the police called the Women and Children's Protection Service (WACPS) tasked with crimes related to GBV, as well as a specialised court, also known as Court E (created in 2008<sup>40</sup>), that handles cases of sexual violence.<sup>41</sup> The court has exclusive jurisdiction over sexual violence offences<sup>42</sup> and the offences under the Court E include 'rape, gang rape, aggravated involuntary sodomy, involuntary sodomy, voluntary sodomy, corruption of minors, sexual abuse of wards, and sexual assault and trafficking in persons (if it involves sexual servitude).'<sup>43</sup> Court E covers the Montserrado County, where the capital Monrovia is located, and additionally, the law provides for a creation of Sexual Crimes Division within courts in the other 14 counties of Liberia to deal with sexual offences.<sup>44</sup> Up to June 2021, these divisions were established in two counties, namely in the Nimba and Bong County, while in other counties sexual offences were handled by the circuit courts.<sup>45</sup> More recent information on the availability of the specialised courts could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

In 2009, the Sexual and Gender Based Violent (SGBV) Crimes Unit was established at the Ministry of Justice 'to provide rapid investigative and prosecutorial response to complaints of rape, gang rape, sexual assaults, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and incest particularly those committed against children.'<sup>46</sup> The SGBV Crimes Unit, together with the WACPS, are the bodies of the Liberia National Police established to work on justice and security for the victims of sexual offences.<sup>47</sup> WACPS's role is to register a victim's statement, proceeding with an arrest, and taking the case to the court.<sup>48</sup>

Regarding the state policy to combat GBV, in 2009, the Liberian government adopted the National Action Plan, which was replaced in 2019 with a new National Action Plan.<sup>49</sup> The new Action Plan aimed at constructing of new healthcare and housing units as well as offices offering legal services.<sup>50</sup> The Plan also foresaw to increase training of law enforcement officials and to expand accessibility to Criminal Court E outside Monrovia.<sup>51</sup> Information on

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<sup>40</sup> M'Cormack, F., Prospects for Accessing Justice for Sexual Violence in Liberia's Hybrid System, 2018, [url](#), pp. 5-6

<sup>41</sup> Yale Review of International studies (The), Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Efficacy of National Action Plans in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>42</sup> UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>43</sup> Wilson, P. B., Increasing Accountability for Rape in Liberia: The Need for a Forensic System to Increase the Success Rates of Prosecution, June 2021, [url](#), p. 836

<sup>44</sup> UNMIL and OHCHR, Addressing Impunity for Rape in Liberia, October 2016, [url](#), para. 27

<sup>45</sup> Wilson, P. B., Increasing Accountability for Rape in Liberia: The Need for a Forensic System to Increase the Success Rates of Prosecution, June 2021, [url](#), p. 836

<sup>46</sup> M'Cormack, F., Prospects for Accessing Justice for Sexual Violence in Liberia's Hybrid System, 2018, [url](#), pp. 5-6

<sup>47</sup> Spotlight Initiative, Annual Narrative Programme Report [Liberia/Africa], 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022, n.d., [url](#), p. 19

<sup>48</sup> Liberia, Ministry of Health, Institutional Foundations to Improve Services for Health (IFISH), Gender Based Violence Action Plan, 7 December 2022, [url](#), p. 27

<sup>49</sup> Yale Review of International studies (The), Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Efficacy of National Action Plans in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>50</sup> Yale Review of International studies (The), Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Efficacy of National Action Plans in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>51</sup> Yale Review of International studies (The), Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Efficacy of National Action Plans in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, 15 April 2024, [url](#)





practical implementation of the 2019 policy could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query.

A Facebook post by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Liberia indicated that a simplified version of laws in ‘everyday Liberian English’, including the Rape Law and the Domestic Violence Law, were available online.<sup>52</sup>

### 3. Societal attitudes

Sources reported that GBV may be associated with stigma.<sup>53</sup> According to an article dated December 2021 by the Christian Recorder, the official newspaper of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, ‘[g]ender biases and discrimination, and violence face women and girls as a normalized part of Liberian society.’<sup>54</sup>

In August 2023, Afrobarometer, an independent African network conducting public attitude surveys,<sup>55</sup> published a study on women rights in Liberia that found that:

- 56 % of respondents said that it is never justified for a man to use physical violence against his wife, while 44 % thought that it is sometimes or always justified;
- 63 % of respondents indicated that victims of GBV will be likely stigmatised by their communities if they report GBV crimes;
- 89 % said that the police are ‘likely to take cases of GBV seriously’;
- 65 % of respondents answered that domestic violence should not be treated as a family matter but rather as a criminal matter.<sup>56</sup>

### 4. Access to state protection

A UNDP report described the prosecution of sexual offences as ‘remarkably inadequate’.<sup>57</sup> The report quoted findings of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INHCR) as saying that ‘that rapists continue to benefit from a deeply entrenched culture of impunity while survivors languish with slim hopes for justice.’<sup>58</sup> According to USDOS, quoting an INHCR report, ‘perpetrators of rape enjoyed widespread impunity.’<sup>59</sup> A study on GBV and

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<sup>52</sup> OHCHR Liberia, [Facebook], posted on: 28 March 2021, [url](#); translations of the laws are available at: [url](#)

<sup>53</sup> Liberia, Ministry of Health, Institutional Foundations to Improve Services for Health (IFISH), Gender Based Violence Action Plan, 7 December 2022, [url](#), p. 39; Medica Mondiale, Raising communities’ awareness on women’s rights and assistance to survivors of sexualised and gender-based violence in South East Liberia, February 2021, [url](#), p. 1; Spotlight Initiative, How women peace huts are transforming lives and communities in Liberia, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>54</sup> Christian Recorder (The), Domestic Violence Awareness In Liberia, 20 December 2021, [url](#)

<sup>55</sup> Afrobarometer, About, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>56</sup> Afrobarometer, Gender-based violence tops women’s-rights issues in Liberia; citizens say it is a criminal matter, 25 August 2023, [url](#), p. 2

<sup>57</sup> UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>58</sup> UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>59</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 20 March 2023, [url](#)



domestic violence in the context of COVID-19 pandemic found that due to the inadequate access to protection, ‘the majority of women still live with their abusers.’<sup>60</sup>

Obstacles when seeking justice in cases of sexual offences, as reported by sources, included:

- Lack of financial resources, inadequate court infrastructure and staffing.<sup>61</sup>
- Restriction on a number of cases that could be heard, delays, and dismissal of cases due to a lack of evidence.<sup>62</sup>
- Pressure by communities and families to drop the case.<sup>63</sup>
- Unwillingness of the police to investigate rape cases.<sup>64</sup>
- High costs of accessing justice for the victims.<sup>65</sup>

In a report covering 2023, UNDP reported on women civil society organizations that worked to raise awareness concerning GBV, monitored performance of the justice system, and recorded specific cases of SGBV, out of which some were settled out of court, and some were submitted to Court E.<sup>66</sup>

A report by Spotlight Initiative, a UN initiative to end violence against women and girls,<sup>67</sup> covering 2022, found that some traditional community leaders started to impose penalties to perpetrators of domestic violence which served as ‘as deterrent factor for perpetrators.’<sup>68</sup> OHCHR stated that ‘there was evidence that the awareness-raising efforts with the local and traditional leaders about reporting rape and sexual violence crimes were gaining traction.’<sup>69</sup>

A study published in Yale's Undergraduate Global Affairs Journal in April 2024 found that there is a ‘widespread belief’ of Liberian women that they can seek formal justice, even though informal community settlements are still more common.<sup>70</sup> The report also noted that

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<sup>60</sup> GAA, Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences in response to the call for inputs on the increase of GBV against women and domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, n.d., [url](#), p. 11

<sup>61</sup> UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>62</sup> USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>63</sup> OHCHR, Evaluation of the project “Strengthening the Capacity of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights in Liberia”, March 2022, [url](#), p. 21; Spotlight Initiative, Annual Narrative Programme Report [Liberia/Africa], 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022, n.d., [url](#), p. 41

<sup>64</sup> OHCHR, Evaluation of the project “Strengthening the Capacity of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights in Liberia”, March 2022, [url](#), p. 21

<sup>65</sup> GAA, Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences in response to the call for inputs on the increase of GBV against women and domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, n.d., [url](#), p. 12; Yale Review of International studies (The), Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Efficacy of National Action Plans in Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire, in: 15 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>66</sup> UNDP, Strengthening Governance And Inclusive Green Growth Liberia Annual Report, 2023, 27 May 2024, [url](#), p. 16-17

<sup>67</sup> Spotlight Initiative, Who We Are, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>68</sup> Spotlight Initiative, Annual Narrative Programme Report [Liberia/Africa], 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022, n.d., [url](#), p. 35

<sup>69</sup> OHCHR, Evaluation of the project “Strengthening the Capacity of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights in Liberia”, March 2022, [url](#), p. 43

<sup>70</sup> Yale Review of International studies (The), Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Efficacy of National Action Plans in Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire, 15 April 2024, [url](#)



despite the faith in the legal system, the conviction rates remained ‘negligible’ in practice.<sup>71</sup> According to Humanium, an international NGO dedicated to the promotion of children’s rights,<sup>72</sup> ‘the prosecution and conviction of rape remains low (approx. 2%).’<sup>73</sup> According to USDOS, the rape law, as well as domestic violence law, were not effectively enforced in practice.<sup>74</sup>

In reports covering 2022 and 2023, USDOS reported cases of ‘rape and sexual abuse by government agents.’<sup>75</sup> In February 2022, a female police officer submitted a complaint against a senior police officer for an alleged rape that occurred in November 2021.<sup>76</sup> In June 2020, a case was reported about a 15-year girl seeking help at a police station in Monrovia following an attempted rape, who was allegedly raped by the police officer at the said police station.<sup>77</sup>

## 5. Availability of support services

Government provided access to health services to victims of sexual violence, including emergency contraception.<sup>78</sup> Some shelters for GBV victims were run by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP).<sup>79</sup> Additional information on these shelters could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query. The MOGCSP also operates transit centres providing accommodation and medical care.<sup>80</sup> According to USDOS, each centre should have a specialised nurse, a social worker, and a police officer, but most operated with limited resources and ‘were unable to provide adequate services.’<sup>81</sup>

UNDP has highlighted the role of civil society organisations that ‘raise awareness about sexual violence, providing frontline support to survivors, and advocating for the rights of women and girls at the grass root levels.’<sup>82</sup> A report by the government of Liberia released in 2022 stated that ‘there are public and private Safe Homes that may host survivors on a need’s basis,’ without providing further information.<sup>83</sup> An undated submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women by the Girls Advocacy Alliance (GAA), a joint civil society initiative,

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<sup>71</sup> Yale Review of International studies (The), Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Efficacy of National Action Plans in Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire, 15 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>72</sup> Humanium, About, n.d., [url](#)

<sup>73</sup> Humanium, Liberia at glance, last updated 8 March 2021, [url](#)

<sup>74</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>75</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#); USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 20 March 2023, [url](#)

<sup>76</sup> New Dawn (The), Investigate Police officer accused of rape-Human Rights Commission urges MOJ, 14 April 2022, [url](#)

<sup>77</sup> FPA, Liberia: Police Officer Allegedly Rapes Girl, 15, Who Reported an Attempted Rape, 28 June 2020, [url](#); Wilson, P. B., Increasing Accountability for Rape in Liberia: The Need for a Forensic System to Increase the Success Rates of Prosecution, in: William & Mary Journal of Race, Gender, and Social Justice, June 2021, [url](#), p. 841

<sup>78</sup> USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 23 April 2024, [url](#)

<sup>79</sup> USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Liberia, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>80</sup> USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Liberia, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>81</sup> USDOS, 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report: Liberia, 24 June 2024, [url](#)

<sup>82</sup> UNDP, Sexual Violence in Liberia: End the Silent Epidemic, 19 June 2023, [url](#)

<sup>83</sup> Liberia, Ministry of Health, Institutional Foundations to Improve Services for Health (IFISH), Gender Based Violence Action Plan, 7 December 2022, [url](#), p. 28



mentioned that there were safe homes for survivors of GBV in Margibi and Montserrado Counties.<sup>84</sup> In 2020, UNFPA reported on two safe homes, namely in Lofa and Nimba Counties.<sup>85</sup> The Foundation for International Dignity (FIND) operated a One-Stop Center providing legal, psychosocial and reintegration services in Montserrado County, as reported by a January 2024 article.<sup>86</sup> A report by the government of Liberia released in 2022 mentioned five such One-Stop Centers operating in Liberia,<sup>87</sup> and a report covering 2020 by UNFPA indicated that there were 12 One-Stop Centers in Liberia that provided support to 1 659 victims of SGBV.<sup>88</sup>

In nine locations across Liberia, so-called Peace Huts provided space to mediate disputes, raise awareness and inform victims of GBV about the available services and their legal rights.<sup>89</sup>

In 2022, services for women who were victims of sexual violence provided by the Spotlight Initiative included healthcare services, legal services, psychological support, and safe homes.<sup>90</sup> The services included 27 healthcare facilities, 5 safe homes and 4 social coping and rehabilitation centres.<sup>91</sup> The report indicated that once this project is finished, the government will take it over.<sup>92</sup> Additional information on this transition could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints of this query.

## 6. Access to employment, housing and public services

Information on access to employment, housing and public services could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints of this query.

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<sup>84</sup> GAA, Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences in response to the call for inputs on the increase of GBV against women and domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, n.d., [url](#), p. 10

<sup>85</sup> UNFPA, Annual Report 2020, Ensuring Rights and Choices for all in Liberia in the Face of COVID-19, 2020, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>86</sup> The New Dawn, FIND strengthens support to SGBV survivors, 18 January 2024, [url](#)

<sup>87</sup> Liberia, Ministry of Health, Institutional Foundations to Improve Services for Health (IFISH), Gender Based Violence Action Plan, 7 December 2022, [url](#), p. 28

<sup>88</sup> UNFPA, Annual Report 2020, Ensuring Rights and Choices for all in Liberia in the Face of COVID-19, 2020, [url](#), p. 15

<sup>89</sup> Spotlight Initiative, How women peace huts are transforming lives and communities in Liberia, 2 May 2024, [url](#)

<sup>90</sup> Spotlight Initiative, Annual Narrative Programme Report [Liberia/Africa], 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022, n.d., [url](#), p. 32

<sup>91</sup> Spotlight Initiative, Annual Narrative Programme Report [Liberia/Africa], 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022, n.d., [url](#), p. 113

<sup>92</sup> Spotlight Initiative, Annual Narrative Programme Report [Liberia/Africa], 1 January 2022 – 31 December 2022, n.d., [url](#), p. 62



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