



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Sierra Leone
Question(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information on demonstrations against the 'Sierra Leone People's Party' (SSLP) and the 'All People's Congress' (APC), in November and December 2017, in Bumbuna; Information on whether persons who participated in these demonstrations were wanted by authorities2. Information on whether participation in political demonstrations is a punishable offense3. Information on the treatment of political opponents by authorities
Date of completion	5 June 2018
Query Code	Q80
Contributing EU+ COI units (if applicable)	

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This response to a COI query has been elaborated according to the [Common EU Guidelines for Processing COI](#) and [EASO COI Report Methodology](#).

The information provided in this response has been researched, evaluated and processed with utmost care within a limited time frame. All sources used are referenced. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive neither conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

The information in the response does not necessarily reflect the opinion of EASO and makes no political statement whatsoever.

The target audience is caseworkers, COI researchers, policy makers, and decision making authorities. The answer was finalised on the 5 June 2018. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this answer.



COI QUERY RESPONSE

1. Information on demonstrations against the 'Sierra Leone People's Party' (SSLP) and the 'All People's Congress' (APC), in November and December 2017, in Bumbuna; Information on whether persons who participated in these demonstrations were wanted by authorities

Bumbuna is a small town, located in the Tonkolili District, in the Northern Province¹.

Amongst all sources consulted and within the timeframe allocated for this research, no information could be found on demonstrations which took place, in November and December 2017, in Bumbuna.

2. Information on whether participation in political demonstrations is a punishable offense

Article 26 of the Constitution of Sierra Leone protects the freedom of assembly:

'Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of assembly and association, that is to say, his right to assemble freely and associate with other persons and in particular to form or belong to any political party, trade unions or other economic, social or professional associations, national or international, for the protection of his interests'².

According to the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL), 'the exercise of freedom of assembly is regulated by the Public Order Act (POA)³, 1965 and the Police Act, 1964, as amended'⁴. More specifically:

'Part III of The POA on "Processions" requires organizers of assemblies to obtain a permit from the Sierra Leone Commissioner of Police in advance of a "procession" (processions are undefined in the Act). Failure to obtain permission before carrying out a procession is grounds for the police to disperse the procession. Anyone who refuses to obey an order to disperse or anyone who carries out an action that violates the conditions of the permit is liable to a fine not exceeding \$12 or six months in prison, or both (Section 17(4)). No exceptions to the permit requirement are made for spontaneous processions, except in the case of events such as circumcisions, funerals, marriages, scouts or girl guide outings, and school activities (Section 17(5a-e)).

In addition, "Any person who intends to convene or hold a public meeting at any place in the provinces shall first notify in writing the Paramount Chief of the Chiefdom (Section 24(1))." The Paramount Chief may "disallow the convening or holding of the public meeting in any place in the Provinces or impose such conditions as he may consider necessary on any such

¹ Human Rights Watch, *Whose Development?: Human Rights Abuses in Sierra Leone's Mining Boom*, p.1, 19 February 2014, ([url](#)). To locate Bumbuna on the map of Sierra Leone, see page 1 of the report.

² Sierra Leone, *Constitution of Sierra Leone*, 1991 [Sierra Leone], 1 October 1992, ([url](#)).

³ Sierra Leone, *The Public Order Act*, 1965, ([url](#)).

⁴ ICNL, *Civic Freedom Monitor: Sierra Leone*, Last updated 7 February 2018, ([url](#)).

meeting where the interests of defence, public order, public safety or public morality reasonably so require (Section 24(2))." Under Section 24(4), "Any person found guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding two hundred leones or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months or both." "Public Meetings" are undefined in the POA⁵.

The POA further details the conditions under which an authorised procession may take place, and the penalties for not following these (such as penalties for not following the prescribed route or traffic rules; maintaining a procession after it was disallowed; penalties for not respecting the prescribed distance from the House of Representatives, penalties for prohibited conduct, etc.)⁶.

3. Information on the treatment of political opponents by authorities

According to a report published by the International Growth Centre (IGC) in April 2018, on the causes of fragility and instability in Sierra Leone, 'the focus of the international intervention after the conflict [1991-2001] was to strengthen the security of the state in ways that would make it harder for a similar civil war to emerge'⁷. As a result, the authors note that this focus:

'has increasingly been used to repress dissent and opposition to government' while 'allegations (documented by the Human Rights Commission and others) of the use of excessive force on protesting civilians, reports of harassment of opposition, and denial of rights or abuse of discretionary power by the justice system reported by the media have all gone unheeded'⁸.

In the below paragraphs, information is provided on the treatment of political parties by authorities, in 2017, as well as on election-related violence in 2018.

2017

In its annual report on human rights practices, the US Department of State (US Dos) mentions the arrest and detention, on 24 March 2017, of the interim leader of the National Progressive Democrats (NPD) party for allegedly inciting a students 'demonstration; the arrest and detention, on 2 June, of the leader of the Alliance Democratic Party (ADP) for possessing a stun gun⁹. The ADP party claimed that this arrest was politically motivated and part of a larger intimidation campaign¹⁰.

In December 2017, the Inspector general of Police, Francis Munu, was replaced amid accusations that, on 6 November 2017, he gave orders to police officers to tear gas at the SLPP party's office, causing

⁵ ICNL, *Civic Freedom Monitor: Sierra Leone*, Last updated 7 February 2018, ([url](#)).

⁶ ICNL, *Civic Freedom Monitor: Sierra Leone*, Last updated 7 February 2018, ([url](#)).

⁷ M'cleod H., Ganson B, *The underlying causes of fragility and instability in Sierra Leone*, International Growth Centre, 18 April 2018, pp. 22-23, ([url](#)).

⁸ M'cleod H., Ganson B, *The underlying causes of fragility and instability in Sierra Leone*, International Growth Centre, 18 April 2018, pp. 22-23, ([url](#)).

⁹ US DoS, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2017 - Sierra Leone*, p. 20, 20 April 2018, ([url](#)).

¹⁰ Carter Centre, *March 7, 2018 – Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone, Final Report*, 23 March 2018, p. 41, ([url](#)).

injuries and leading to multiple arrests¹¹. It should be noted that, in December 2017, the SLPP was the main opposition party. However, in March 2018, the contender for the SLPP, Julius Maada Bio, won the election and became Sierra Leone's president. The outgoing president, Ernest Bai Koroma, had been serving two five-year terms for the APC¹².

2018

Although incidents were reported during the election period, international observers noted that 'the election was largely peaceful with heavy security presence in few polling centres'¹³. On 5 April 2018, the United Nations Secretary-General applauded the people of Sierra Leone 'for the sense of responsibility that they have demonstrated in successfully completing the elections in a peaceful manner'¹⁴.

Election-related violence was nonetheless documented, as indicated previously, before the election and in the period between the first and second round of elections, notably between supporters of the APC and the SLPP¹⁵, but also between other opposition parties¹⁶. The European Union election observation mission (EU EOM) in Sierra Leone indicated that 'In some areas, campaigners faced threats of violence and elements within the two main political parties mobilised harsh rhetoric and groups of young supporters which had an intimidating effect on some voters'¹⁷. Other inter-parties clashes have been documented by the 'Sierra Leone Open Election Data Platform' (SLOEDP)¹⁸, and by the Carter Center, during its mission in Sierra Leone in February-March 2018¹⁹.

In January 2018, Amnesty international issued a note to express its concern over the 'use of firearms to police assemblies' following incidents in the lead-up to the presidential and general elections²⁰. The organisation notes:

'Given the pattern of excessive use of police force in Sierra Leone during assemblies or episodes of civil unrest, the police need to make sure that these hotly contested elections are not marred by state violence. We call on the Inspector General of Police to publicly declare

¹¹ AFP, *Sierra Leone opposition 'satisfied' with police chief sacking*, 4 December 2017, in Daily Mail Online (UK), ([url](#)). Global Times (Sierra Leone), *Police Attack SLPP HQ*, 8 November 2017, ([url](#)).

¹² BBC, *Sierra Leone election: Julius Maada Bio fast-tracks presidential oath in a hotel*, 5 April 2018, ([url](#))

¹³ Premier Times (Sierra Leone), *Sierra Leone: Heads of Int'l Observation Missions Meet Ahead Result Announcement*, 1 April 2018, ([url](#)).

¹⁴ UN, UN News, *UN chief applauds Sierra Leoneans for peaceful elections; congratulates new President*, 5 April 2018, ([url](#)).

¹⁵ Guardian (The), *Sierra Leone: Violence fears as tense election reaches runoff*, 21 March 2018, ([url](#)); France 24, *Sierra Leone votes for new president after bitter campaign*, 31 March 2018, ([url](#)); Carter Centre, *March 7, 2018 – Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone, Final Report*, 23 March 2018, p. 42, ([url](#)).

¹⁶ Carter Centre, *March 7, 2018 – Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone, Final Report*, 23 March 2018, p. 42, ([url](#)).

¹⁷ EEAS, *Well-administered election conducted under the shadow of political attacks on the electoral commission*, 3 April 2018, ([url](#)).

¹⁸ Sierra Leone Open Election Data Platform' (SLOEDP), *Electoral Violence Reports*, various dates, ([url](#)). The page on electoral violence is searchable by date, victim type, perpetrator type and impact type.

¹⁹ Carter Centre, *March 7, 2018 – Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone, Final Report*, 23 March 2018, pp. 41-42, ([url](#)).

²⁰ The presidential election took place on 7 and 31 March 2018.



that his units will not use excessive force to police assemblies and rallies ahead of the elections²¹.

Similarly, the Carter Center indicated that several political parties claimed that the police 'misused their powers in the election process', raising cases of arbitrary arrests and unruly detention of opposition supporters²².

On 10 April 2018, the BBC reports that there had been complaints of political violence and intimidation in the wake of the recent elections, forcing civilians living in the northern part of the country to flee their homes after reprisal attacks²³.

²¹ Amnesty International, *Sierra Leone Avoid use of excessive force in the lead-up to elections and protect civic space*, 31 January 2018, ([url](#)).

²² Carter Centre, *March 7, 2018 – Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone, Final Report*, 23 March 2018, p. 41, ([url](#)).

²³ BBC, *Civilians displaced by post-election violence in Sierra Leone*, 10 April 2018, ([url](#)).

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