



Sierra Leone - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 14 July 2009

Treatment of homosexuals

Researching this issue in February 2007 the *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* reports that

“A graphic world map published by the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) to illustrate and update its 1999 world survey of legislation related to homosexuality indicates that homosexuality in Sierra Leone is illegal and can result in a prison sentence of up to 10 years (ILGA 26 May 2004). A more recent ILGA survey conducted in 2006 on the criminalization of same-sex sex acts highlights section 61 of Sierra Leone's 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, because it makes "buggery" an illegal act, carrying a penalty of life imprisonment (ILGA Nov. 2006a, 35). A third ILGA report notes that sex acts between women are not criminalized in Sierra Leone (ibid. Nov. 2006b, 4)” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (22 February 2007) *Sierra Leone: Treatment of homosexuals by society and government authorities; legal recourse and protection available to homosexuals who have been subjected to ill-treatment (2005 - 2006)*).

The paper also points out that

“In December 2006, the Sierra Leonean *Standard Times Press* reported that two homosexual women escaped their home just before they came under attack by a group of unknown persons (*Standard Times* 6 Dec. 2006). They managed to get away because a neighbour warned them of the impending homophobic attack (ibid.). One of the two women explained that her family has "shunned her" since the event and she has been forced to leave her home (ibid.). The *Standard Times Press* article describes the lesbian and gay community in Sierra Leone as "fearful and underground" (ibid.; see also 365Gay.com 18 July 2005).” (ibid)

Considering ‘Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination’ section 5 of the *US Department of State* report published in February 2009 covering events of the previous says “The law prohibits homosexual acts, and there was official and societal discrimination based on sexual orientation. Many homosexuals concealed their sexual orientation” (US Department of State, (25 February 2009), *2008 Human Rights Report: Sierra Leone*).

Page 37 of a paper by the *International Lesbian and Gay Association* in June 2009 cites the ‘Offences against the Person Act 1861’ and says “Section 61 of the above named act, criminalises buggery and bestiality, with a penalty of life imprisonment.” (International Lesbian and Gay Association (2 June 2009) *State Sponsored Homophobia*)

References

International Lesbian and Gay Association (2 June 2009, *State Sponsored Homophobia*
http://www.ilga.org/statehomophobia/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2009.pdf

(Accessed 14 July 2009)

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (22 February 2007) *Sierra Leone: Treatment of homosexuals by society and government authorities; legal recourse and protection available to homosexuals who have been subjected to ill-treatment (2005 – 2006)*

http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450954

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US Department of State (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Sierra Leone*

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/119023.htm>

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted

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BBC News

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ECOI

EIN

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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

Lexis Nexis

Minority Rights Group International

Norwegian Refugee Council

Online Newspapers

Refugee Documentation Centre Library

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Regional surveys of the world

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University Of Maryland Minorities At Risk