

Sierra Leone commits to legislate to abolish the death penalty

24 May 2021

AdvocAid congratulates the Government of Sierra Leone on its commitment to bring forward legislation to Parliament to abolish the death penalty. The organisation has campaigned to end this cruel practice for 15 years.



AdvocAid welcomes the commitment the Government of Sierra Leone repeated at the UN Universal Periodic Review this month to abolish the death penalty. Passing legislation to abolish the death penalty will be historic step forward for Sierra Leone. AdvocAid encourages Government and Parliament to take forward this legislation at the earliest opportunity, without unnecessary delay.

Since 2006, AdvocAid has actively campaigned for abolition of the death penalty and provided free legal representation for women and men on death row to challenge their convictions and death sentences. [AdvocAid](#) has secured the release of six women and three men on death row through appeals or presidential pardon applications.

AdvocAid in partnership with the University of Oxford and the Death Penalty Project, submitted a memorandum on capital punishment to the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone setting out the legal arguments and evidence base for abolishing the death penalty. In May 2021, AdvocAid and our partners also submitted a memorandum setting out alternative sentences that could be used to replace the death penalty. Guided by international best practice, a mandatory death sentence should be replaced with maximum, non-mandatory, penalties of life imprisonment. Sentencing guidelines can be issued to clarify the range of penalties appropriate for specific offences, making clear where the Judiciary has discretion to consider aggravating and mitigating factors.

The legislation to replace the death penalty should also set out what happens to those who have already been sentenced to death. Holding resentencing hearings for the men and women currently on death row would ensure justice and allow proper consideration of any mitigating circumstances that were not able to be taken into consideration during their original trials.

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Aminata's story (name changed)

AdvocAid successfully appealed the sentence of Aminata, a survivor of gender-based violence. Aminata was convicted of the murder of her abusive boyfriend when she was 17 years old. Her legal journey from death sentence to freedom took 9 years. In 2011, her death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment during pardons to mark the country's 50th independence anniversary.

Aminata's case was heard by the Court of Appeal in 2014, and closed for judgement in February 2015. Nearly four years later, her appeal was granted and her sentence was quashed in January 2019.