



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	Sierra Leone
Title	Situation of lesbian women
Reference period	January 2022 to 26 October 2025
Topic(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Legislation and implementation2. Treatment by the state3. Treatment by society4. Access to justice5. Access to support services
Date of completion	27 October 2025
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All sources used are referenced and cited in the bibliography section. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned COI methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive or 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.

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Cite as: EUAA, Country of Origin Information Query, Sierra Leone, Situation of lesbian women, 27 October 2025, [url](#)



COI QUERY RESPONSE – Sierra Leone

Situation of lesbian women

1. Legislation and implementation

Section 61 of the British Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 states that ‘Whosoever shall be convicted of the abominable Crime of Buggery, committed either with Mankind or with any Animal, shall be liable, at the Discretion of the Court, to be kept in Penal Servitude for Life or for any Term not less than Ten Years’.¹ Although Sierra Leone gained independence in 1961,² the Act remains in effect and criminalises homosexuality and same-sex activity.³ Sources indicated that this law specifically prohibited same-sex sexual acts between men.⁴

Human Dignity Trust, a legal organisation focused on defending human rights, described that ‘there is limited evidence of the law being enforced in recent years, with LGBT people being occasionally subject to arrest and arbitrary detention in recent years, though there appear to be no prosecutions, successful or otherwise, under the law’.⁵ Sources further added that the law was not enforced,⁶ however ‘it has not been repealed by the State and has hindered the protection of the rights of the LGBT community’.⁷

In 2023, the Employment Act was enacted, in which Section 92 (1.f) explicitly references sexual orientation, stating that ‘the dismissal of an employee shall be deemed to be unfair if it results wholly or mainly from’ this ground.⁸

Further information specifically on the legislation and implementation on relations and sexual activity between women could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

2. Treatment by the state

¹ Sierra Leone, British Colonial Offences against the Person Act, 1861, [url](#)

² Human Dignity Trust, Sierra Leone, last updated 17 December 2024, [url](#)

³ Human Dignity Trust, Sierra Leone, last updated 17 December 2024, [url](#); UNDP, Capturing the Socioeconomic and Cultural Drivers of Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Sierra Leone, 12 October 2022, [url](#), p. 24

⁴ Human Dignity Trust, Sierra Leone, last updated 17 December 2024, [url](#); Equaldex, LGBT Rights in Sierra Leone, n.d., [url](#)

⁵ Human Dignity Trust, Sierra Leone, last updated 17 December 2024, [url](#)

⁶ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Sierra Leone, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 20; UNDP, Capturing the Socioeconomic and Cultural Drivers of Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Sierra Leone, 12 October 2022, [url](#), p. 24

⁷ UNDP, Capturing the Socioeconomic and Cultural Drivers of Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Sierra Leone, 12 October 2022, [url](#), p. 24

⁸ Sierra Leone, Employment Act - 2023, 11 May 2023, [url](#)



According to the local news outlet Sierraloaded from July 2024, the Speaker of Parliament, Honourable Segepor Solomon Thomas, condemned ‘same-sex marriage’ and informed Members of Parliament and citizens ‘that there is no same-sex marriage in Sierra Leone’.⁹

The 2023 Country Report by USDOS stated that LGBTIQ people faced discrimination in policing, although ‘police acceptance of LGBTQI+ activities increased’.¹⁰

According to a public statement made by Amnesty International in March 2023, LGBTIQ persons including lesbians were ‘disproportionately affected by criminal laws proscribing loitering and petty offences’.¹¹

Further information on the treatment of the state towards lesbian women could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

3. Treatment by society

A 2025 local news article by Sierraloaded, citing a news report from the Coalition for Equality, a network of nine civil society organizations, estimated that over 5 000 lesbians were ‘actively organized in Freetown’, the capital of Sierra Leone.¹² The same article stated that ‘this figure marks a dramatic increase in visibility for a community that has long operated in the shadows due to severe legal and social stigma’ and the number could be higher but ‘individuals remain hidden due to fear of reprisal’.¹³

According to a 2023 public opinion study cited by Equaldex, an online publication resource on LGBTIQ rights, 94 % of respondents opposed accepting homosexuals as neighbours, whilst 6 % responded that their local area was a ‘good place’ for gay and lesbian people.¹⁴

Bertelsmann Stiftung described women and LGBTIQ individuals were within ‘the marginalized majority’ and faced discrimination.¹⁵ Further, Freedom House noted that LGBTIQ individuals were ‘vulnerable to violence’.¹⁶

The 2023 Country Report by USDOS, in describing significant human rights abuses throughout the year, stated that there were ‘crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons’.¹⁷ Human Dignity Trust affirmed that there were consistent ‘reports of discrimination and violence’ against LGBTIQ people in recent years, including ‘assault, threats, harassment, blackmail, familial

⁹ Sierraloaded, Parliament of Sierra Leone Condemns Same Sex Marriage, 11 July 2024, [url](#)

¹⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Sierra Leone, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

¹¹ Amnesty International, Criminalizing Loitering Is Discriminatory and Contrary to the Right to Dignity: Third-Party Intervention Filed at the Community Court of Justice of ECOWAS, 23 March 2023, [url](#), p. 2

¹² Sierraloaded, Over 5,000 Lesbians Confirmed in Freetown, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

¹³ Sierraloaded, Over 5,000 Lesbians Confirmed in Freetown, 27 August 2025, [url](#)

¹⁴ Equaldex, LGBT Rights in Sierra Leone, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵ Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2024 Country Report Sierra Leone, 19 March 2024, [url](#), p. 23

¹⁶ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 –Sierra Leone, 29 February 2024, [url](#)

¹⁷ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Sierra Leone, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 1



rejection, and the denial of basic rights and services'.¹⁸ Furthermore, LGBTIQ persons faced 'discrimination' in health care, employment,¹⁹ housing, education, and family life.²⁰ USDOS also stated 'rape of LGBTIQ+ women was common, and activists found "corrective" rape to be one of the prevalent abuses committed against lesbian, bisexual, and queer women'.²¹

The 2022 Country Report by USDOS added that 'advocates estimated 17 cases of violence occurred between January and September' 2022 towards LGBTIQ persons.²² Moreover, the same report added that 'women in the LGBTIQ+ community reported social discrimination from male LGBTIQ+ persons and the general population'.²³

The following incidents of assault or harassment against lesbians were reported among sources consulted between 2023 and 2025:

- A December 2023 article by the local news source, The Times Sierra Leone, described the case of Massah Moi Mansaray, a Freetown resident, who was reportedly fleeing 'irate youth within the community' who were on a 'manhunt for her and her Lesbian partner'.²⁴ The article further stated that lesbianism was 'not accepted' in Sierra Leone, 'she has been caught on several occasions with her colleagues doing same sex which is against the laws of the state' and had faced 'death threats'.²⁵
- A February 2023 article by the local news source, Tribune Times, described that the Sierra Leone Police were offering a financial reward for any information leading to the arrest of Abdulai Jalloh, Ansu Osman Kamara, and Sheka Conteh for their 'alleged involvement in clandestine gay activities', specifically in organizing 'a secret gay and lesbian gathering' held along a popular tourist area of Freetown.²⁶
- A July 2024 article by the local news source, Politico SL, stated that community stakeholders in Moriba Town, Sierra Leone were 'set to banish a lesbian couple from the community following a matrimonial agreement ceremony'.²⁷
- A March 2023 article by the local news outlet, Global Times, described the case of Miss Rebecca Kafo Mandewa, who 'was on the run' from anti-homosexual activists, who had 'stormed' her lesbian wedding and 'physically attacked the people who gathered there'.²⁸

¹⁸ Human Dignity Trust, Sierra Leone, last updated 17 December 2024, [url](#);

¹⁹ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2024 –Sierra Leone, 29 February 2024, [url](#); USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Sierra Leone, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

²⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Sierra Leone, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

²¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Sierra Leone, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 25

²² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Sierra Leone, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 20

²³ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Sierra Leone, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 21

²⁴ Times Sierra Leone (The), Massah Moi Mansaray faces Death Threat, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁵ Times Sierra Leone (The), Massah Moi Mansaray faces Death Threat, 23 December 2023, [url](#)

²⁶ Tribune Times, Sierra Leone Police Declare Popular Gay Abdulai Jalloh Wanted After Death of Secret Lover Sulay Mansaray in Bo, 13 February 2023, [url](#)

²⁷ Politico SL, Lesbian Couple be Banished Community in Southern Sierra Leone, 3 July 2024, [url](#)

²⁸ Global Times SL, As she is accused of murder, arson and incitement...Rebecca Kafo Mandewa declared wanted, 15 March 2023, [url](#)



Further information on the treatment of society towards lesbian women could not be found among the sources consulted by EUAA within time constraints.

4. Access to justice

Information on access to justice concerning violations against LGBTIQ individuals in Sierra Leone was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

USDOS noted that while police generally ‘did not incite, perpetrate, or condone violence or harassment’ and typically refrained from abusing or harassing those who reported such incidents, they nonetheless often showed reluctance to act upon these reports.²⁹ According to the same source, there were no reports of action taken by government authorities ‘to investigate or punish state or nonstate actors complicit in violence or abuses’ against LGBTIQ individuals.³⁰ Further, ‘the government made limited efforts to address discrimination and bias against LGBTIQ+ persons’.³¹

Furthermore, in a December 2024 article, Tribune Times, a local online media outlet, reported that ‘most if not some same sex pairs who are assaulted for their beliefs are always afraid to report to the Police for fear of legal actions’.³² According to the same source, ‘the Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission does not handle cases related to LGBTQ+ rights because the law does not grant them the mandate to advocate for these rights’.³³

5. Access to support services

Information on access to support services for LGBTIQ individuals in Sierra Leone was scarce among the sources consulted by EUAA within the time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

USDOS indicated that, according to NGOs supporting LGBTIQ rights, LGBTIQ individuals faced discrimination in accessing health services, while many did not seek medical care ‘due to the risk their right to confidentiality would be violated and their sexual orientation would be revealed’.³⁴

²⁹ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

³⁰ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

³¹ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 24

³² Tribune Times, Sierra Leonean Youth faces Molestation and life-threatening attacks while practicing same sex activities, 26 December 2024, [url](#)

³³ Tribune Times, Sierra Leonean Youth faces Molestation and life-threatening attacks while practicing same sex activities, 26 December 2024, [url](#)

³⁴ USDOS, 2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Sierra Leone, 23 April 2024, [url](#), p. 25



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