



## Ratification Kit

# Sierra Leone

### **Why is it important for Sierra Leone to accede to the United Nations Protocol to abolish the death penalty?**

Sierra Leone is an abolitionist country in practice. The last execution in Sierra Leone took place in 1998.

In 2012, President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma announced that "it is now government policy that the death penalty now operates as life imprisonment."

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission found that the Sierra Leonean civil war "resulted in the demeaning of human life and dignity," and that "the State must now set the example by demonstrating that it places the highest value on all human life." These conclusions lead the Commission to recommend the Sierra Leonean government abolish the death penalty "without delay."

Ratifying the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights is extremely important, both nationally and locally, because it is the only text with worldwide reach aiming to abolish the death penalty.

Acceding to the Protocol is a very symbolic act, reflecting the universal trend towards abolition of capital punishment, considered to be cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. **It is essential that the world's abolitionist countries, in law or in practice, ratify this Protocol.**

### **What are the international commitments already taken by Sierra Leone to accede to the Protocol?**

Sierra Leone also demonstrated its commitment as regards abolition of the death penalty by voting in favour of the last

three **United Nations General Assembly Resolutions** of 2012, 2014 and 2016 for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

Sierra Leone participated to the **Universal Periodic Review** of the **Human Rights Council** in 2011 and 2016. In 2011, it accepted the recommendation to ratify the Second Optional Protocol, subject to constitutional review. In 2016, Sierra Leone noted the recommendations to ratify the Protocol.

The **Human Rights Committee** and the **Committee against Torture** invited in 2014 the State party to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the ICCPR.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2014, Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Hon. Franklyn Bai Kargbo, told the United Nations Committee against Torture that Sierra Leone would shortly abolish the death penalty.

### **What are the steps to be taken as regards internal law?**

According to Article 7.3 of the Protocol, it “shall be open to accession by any State that has ratified the Covenant or acceded to it.”

**Sierra Leone ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1996** and it is therefore competent to accede to this Protocol.

Among the obligations incumbent upon Sierra Leone following accession to the Protocol are the **prohibition of executions**

and **withdrawal of the death penalty from internal criminal law**.

### **What are the legal obstacles to accession?**

There is **no legal obstacle** as Sierra Leone is an abolitionist country in practice and as the last execution took place in 1998.

We therefore encourage Sierra Leone to accede to the Protocol as soon as possible.

### **How can accession to the Protocol be applied?**

The Protocol shall come into force three months after the instruments of accession have been deposited with the UN Secretary General (Article 8.2 of the Protocol).

According to Article 3 of the Protocol, Sierra Leone must submit reports to the Human Rights Committee covering the measures it has adopted to give effect to the Protocol.

The World Coalition Against the Death Penalty also encourages Sierra Leone to abolish the death penalty in its legislation as soon as possible.

*For more information, contact the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty and visit its website: <http://www.worldcoalition.org/protocol>*