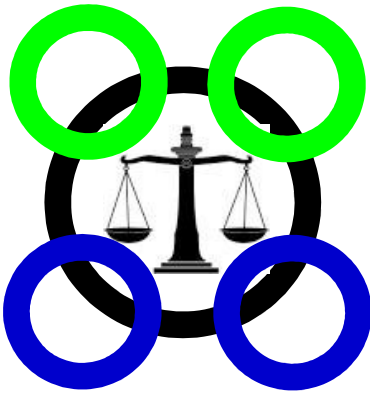


Human Rights Defenders Network



Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL)

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PRESS RELEASE

FREETOWN, 14 OCTOBER 2026: HRDN-SL Expresses Concern over Arrival of Eight More Deportees from the United States and Calls for Human Rights Safeguards

The Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL) is deeply concerned by the arrival of eight additional deportees in Sierra Leone on 13 October 2026, under the Third Country National Agreement between Sierra Leone and the United States.

The eight individuals include two from Ghana, two from Nigeria, and one each from Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Senegal, and Togo. Several have lived in the United States for more than 20 years and have been separated from their partners and children following their detention by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Some reportedly have sole custody of their children left behind in the United States, including children as young as three years old.

HRDN-SL is concerned that onward removal could expose some of these individuals to persecution, torture or other serious human rights violations. Reports indicate that several of the deportees fear persecution if returned to their countries of origin. Seven of them had reportedly been granted withholding of removal under the United States' obligations under the Convention against Torture (CAT). For those who have spent decades outside their countries of origin, return may also mean being sent to places where they have limited support networks and few remaining ties.

Sierra Leone's participation in these arrangements must not come at the expense of its constitutional, international human rights and refugee protection obligations. The transfer and onward removal of individuals raise serious concerns regarding refoulement, arbitrary detention and violations of the right to family life. The

Government must ensure that these arrangements comply with the Constitution of Sierra Leone, the 1951 Refugee Convention, the Convention against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The existence of a bilateral agreement cannot displace these obligations.

HRDN-SL calls on the Government of Sierra Leone to:

- Suspend any onward removal until the protection needs and individual circumstances of each person have been independently and thoroughly assessed.
- Ensure access to legal assistance and due process, including the opportunity to challenge removal decisions and raise protection concerns.
- Guarantee access for independent human rights monitors to the individuals concerned, including confidential access where necessary.
- Ensure transparency and accountability regarding the legal basis for the transfers, the individuals' circumstances, and the safeguards in place to protect their rights.

Sierra Leone should have no part in arrangements that compromise fundamental human rights protections. The Government must ensure that its cooperation with the United States does not come at the expense of the rights, safety and dignity of those transferred to Sierra Leone.

The Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone (HRDN-SL) is a coalition of civil society organizations and individuals working to promote and protect human rights with a specific focus on defending human rights defenders.

END