

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 548

Encouraging the Government of Sierra Leone to abide by their promise
to a peaceful and credible electoral process.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JUNE 23, 2023

Mr. ALLRED (for himself and Ms. KAMLAGER-DOVE) submitted the following
resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Encouraging the Government of Sierra Leone to abide by
their promise to a peaceful and credible electoral process.

Whereas Sierra Leone held four successful elections, includ-
ing two transfers of power to the opposition since 2002,
following the end of a decade-long civil war that claimed
more than 50,000 lives and countless casualties;

Whereas the people of Sierra Leone will return to the polls
in 2023 for the country's fifth general election, which will
include a Presidential, parliamentary, and local council
races;

Whereas the upcoming elections will take place amid the
country facing economic challenges and rising inflation;

Whereas the African Development Bank (AfDB) reported Si-
erra Leone's inflation rose to 26.1 percent in 2022 from

11.9 percent in 2021, driven by food and fuel inflation, and depreciation of the leone as a function of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic;

Whereas Sierra Leone has a long history of politicization along ethnic lines with ethnopolitical cleavages identified in electoral results;

Whereas the Afrobarometer reported a noticeable decline in welcoming attitudes toward people of different ethnicities and political affiliations over the last two years;

Whereas, in 2020, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) found that Sierra Leone has been experiencing a slow increase in political violence as early as 2014, peaking around the 2018 elections and remaining at high levels since;

Whereas the country's police force has been implicated in the excessive use of force, notably during an August 2022 protest in which more than 20 protesters and several officers were killed in Freetown;

Whereas, since 2018, the International Republic Institute reported trust in the Sierra Leone's National Electoral Commission (NEC) has fallen by 49 percent with only 18 percent of Sierra Leoneans polled identifying they trust the NEC "a great deal";

Whereas independent journalists, media outlets, and press freedom advocates expressed their ongoing concerns over political elites' use of libel and sedition laws to subvert reporting on elections and high-level corruption;

Whereas women's participation in politics, including representation in Parliament, key appointments as ministers or other senior administrative positions in the government,

remains at unequal levels and “a big issue”, according to the country’s Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs;

Whereas women who participate politically in the country report “suffocating intimidation” by the country’s security forces, including through arbitrary arrests and other forms of intimidation by police presence;

Whereas despite upticks in political and social challenges, the Global Peace Index still rates the country as the fifth-most peaceful country in Africa and 50th in the world as of 2022;

Whereas Afrobarometer reported that among 30 African countries regularly surveyed since 2011, Sierra Leone is the only country where support for democratic elections increased significantly by 11 percentage points over the recent decade;

Whereas, in February 2023, Sierra Leone signed into law the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act (GEWE), a historic and monumental bill that establishes a 30-percent quota for women’s participation in government for both appointed administrative positions, ambassador roles, and elected positions in Parliament and local council seats;

Whereas the United States and Sierra Leone share a deep and entwined relationship with thousands of Sierra Leoneans and their descendants residing in the United States today;

Whereas the United States and Sierra Leone are linked by a complex history stemming from the Atlantic slave trade in which large numbers of African slaves from present-day Sierra Leone were sent to the then-colonies of Georgia and South Carolina;

Whereas many descendants of former slaves in the United States, known as the Gullah, still reside in the same region of the former southeastern colonies that were able to preserve much of their Sierra Leonean cultural heritage such as a dialect of creole similar to Sierra Leone Krio, and other customs;

Whereas Sierra Leone is a recipient of significant United States foreign assistance to improve the lives of Sierra Leoneans through strategic investments in democracy and governance, health service delivery, and economic growth; and

Whereas the United States underscored its commitment to expanding and deepening its partnership with African countries and working to bolster democracy and strengthen electoral processes during the 2021 Summit for Democracy and the 2022 United States-Africa Leaders Summit: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) reaffirms its long standing commitment to
3 deepen relations between the people and the Govern-
4 ments of the United States and Sierra Leone;

5 (2) supports the continued efforts of the people,
6 civil society, and members of the diaspora of Sierra
7 Leone in their undeniable rights to free, fair, cred-
8 ible, and transparent elections;

9 (3) urges all parties to pursue electoral peti-
10 tions through appropriate channels in an impartial,
11 efficient, and timely manner;

1 (4) strongly encourages all parties to monitor
2 and mitigate the use of inflammatory rhetoric that
3 could incentivize political violence and contribute to
4 greater ethnopolitical rifts;

5 (5) calls on the Government of Sierra Leone to
6 uphold its commitments to transparency, account-
7 ability, and good governance, including by—

8 (A) resolving any potential administrative
9 hurdles to effectively allow elections to take
10 place in a timely fashion;

11 (B) implementing necessary mechanisms to
12 monitor and curb dissemination of misinforma-
13 tion and mitigate inflammatory rhetoric; and

14 (C) ensuring that statutes established by
15 the Gender Equality and Women’s Empower-
16 ment Act (GEWE) are adhered to; and

17 (6) encourages the United States Government
18 to continue necessary engagements with the Govern-
19 ment of Sierra Leone, underscoring the need to up-
20 hold free and fair elections in accordance with the
21 country’s constitution.

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