

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

Notice: Trying to access array offset on value of type null in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1216

SIERRA LEONE: Discriminatory ban on pregnant girls attending school is lifted

Amnesty International (30.03.2020) – <https://bit.ly/3bGXJmq> – Following today's ministerial statement to overturn with immediate effect the ban on pregnant girls attending schools, Marta Colomer, Amnesty International's Acting Deputy Regional Director for West and Central Africa said:

"Today we have cause to celebrate as thousands of pregnant girls across Sierra Leone will be allowed back into classes nationwide when schools reopen after COVID-19.

“This inherently discriminatory ban which was formalized for almost five years now has already deprived too many young women of their right to education, and the choice as to what future they want for themselves. It has now rightly been consigned to the history books.

“Indeed, pregnant girls are given back their dignity and we welcome the government announcement to overturn with immediate effect the ban on them attending school. It’s a victory for all those who campaigned tirelessly to make such a great change happen.

“We now hope that authorities in Sierra Leone will develop strategies to address the negative societal attitudes and stigmatization that pregnant girls have been facing for years. This decision gives also hope to other pregnant girls in Africa who have been stigmatized, discriminated against and, in some countries, also banned from school.”

Background

Today, Sierra Leone’s Minister of Basic and Senior Secondary Education issued a statement announcing that the 2010 government decision preventing pregnant girls from attending school and sitting exams was overturned with immediate effect. It is to be replaced by two new policies focused on the ‘Radical Inclusion’ and ‘Comprehensive Safety’ of all children in the education system. President Julius Maada Bio made it clear that his ‘New Direction’ Government makes decisions based on both evidence and constitutional due process.

On 12 December 2019 the regional Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) Community Court of Justice ruled that the ban should be revoked. The case challenging the ban was brought by Sierra Leonean NGO (WAVES) in partnership with Equality Now and the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA). Amnesty International intervened as an amicus curiae ("friend of the court").

The organization has previously documented how the ban put the rights of thousands of girls under threat. The ban was formally issued in April 2015 during the Ebola crisis. Due to Ebola, there was a sharp increase in teenage pregnancies and government should put measures in place to ensure this doesn't happen in this time of COVID-19.

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Notice: Undefined index: et_template in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1268