

Liberia

Response to Information Request Number:	LBR98-001.aau
Date:	9 April 1998
Subject:	Ability to travel into and out of Liberia from April 1995 to April 1997
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
Keywords:	Armed Conflict / Democratic Development / Elections / Freedom Of Movement / Government / Liberia / Right To Leave And Return To One's Country / Right To A Passport / Travel Documents / Vulnerable Groups

Query:

Would it have been possible for a US citizen fiancé visa petitioner to travel to Liberia from April 1995 to April 1997?

Would it have been possible for a Liberian citizen, who resided in Monrovia, to travel out of Liberia to a neighboring country from April 1995 to April 1997?

Are Liberians still extended benefits under the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Program in the US?

Response:

During the period of April 1995 to April 1997, the US Department of State had issued travel warnings to US citizens cautioning against travel to Liberia. During most of this time period, the US Embassy in Monrovia was fully staffed, and missionaries and businessmen traveled into and out of Liberia on commercial flights. Intense fighting resumed in Liberia in April 1996 and same continued during the rest of the year, making security and travel more uncertain. As a result of the April 1996 fighting in Monrovia, there was a partial drawdown of Embassy personnel and an evacuation of US citizens and third country nationals from Liberia. (US DOS 1 April 1998)

The most recent US Department of State Travel Advisory issued 6 February 1998 continues to warn US citizens against travel to Liberia despite the installation of a democratically elected government in August 1997. The advisory warns that the government does not maintain full control of the countryside and that lawlessness is a potential threat. Ongoing rebel activity is reported in the northwest region of the country and the area bordering Sierra Leone is unstable. (US DOS *Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings* 6 Feb. 1998, 1)

During the period of April 1995 to April 1997 many Liberian nationals traveled out of the country. The fighting that resumed in April 1996 made such travel more difficult for Liberians. (US DOS 1 April 1998) The fighting which erupted in April 1996 was reported to be the worst in three years and was centered on Monrovia and left an estimated 3,000 dead and 80,000 displaced. (HRW November 1997, 12)

It would have been possible for a Liberian national to travel to neighboring countries in West Africa for most of 1995 and the rest of 1997. Although a Liberian national could have

experienced delays in securing travel documents, it was possible to obtain them. Residence in Monrovia, rather than in the Liberian countryside, would have further facilitated an individual's ability to leave the country due to the close proximity to an airport. One note of caution - if an individual had connections to various fighting factions this could have complicated efforts to leave the country. (US DOS 1 April 1998)

The ability of a Liberian national to travel outside of Liberia during the period in question would be dependent upon that individual's particular circumstances. The INS Resource Information Center (RIC) is unable to reach a blanket conclusion on the ability of any specific Liberian national to travel outside of Liberia or on the ability of a particular US citizens to travel to Liberia between April 1995 and April 1997.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Liberian nationals has been extended for a final six month period, from 29 March 1998 to 28 September 1998. Termination of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) is effective 28 September 1998. Re-registration procedures became effective on 31 March 1998, and will remain in effect until 29 April 1998. (*Federal Register* 31 March 1998, 1)

References:

Federal Register. 31 March 1998, Vol. 62, No. 61. Department of Justice (DOJ), Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS): Washington, DC.

Human Rights Watch (HRW)/Africa. November 1997, Vol. 9, No. 7 (A). *Liberia Emerging From the Destruction: Human Rights Challenges Facing the New Liberian Government*. New York: Human Rights Watch/Africa

US Department of State (DOS). 1 April 1998. Telephone interview DOS Official.

US Department of State (DOS). 6 February 1998. *Consular Information Sheets and Travel Warnings*. [Internet] URL: http://travel.state.gov/liberia_warning.html.

Attachments:

Federal Register. 31 March 1998, Vol. 62, No. 61. Department of Justice (DOJ), Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS): Washington, DC.

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