



RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

22 February 2007

SLE102205.E

Sierra Leone: Treatment of homosexuals by society and government authorities; legal recourse and protection available to homosexuals who have been subjected to ill-treatment (2005 - 2006)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Information on the treatment of homosexuals and protection available to them in Sierra Leone was limited among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

A graphic world map published by the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) to illustrate and update its 1999 world survey of legislation related to homosexuality indicates that homosexuality in Sierra Leone is illegal and can result in a prison sentence of up to 10 years (ILGA 26 May 2004). A more recent ILGA survey conducted in 2006 on the criminalization of same-sex sex acts highlights section 61 of Sierra Leone's 1861 *Offences Against the Person Act*, because it makes "buggery" an illegal act, carrying a penalty of life imprisonment (ILGA Nov. 2006a, 35). A third ILGA report notes that sex acts between women are not criminalized in Sierra Leone (ibid. Nov. 2006b, 4).

Additionally, *Country Reports for 2005* indicates that during the course of an Inter-Religious Council meeting, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs "condemned" homosexual marriage (US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5).

A United States (US) State Department report on human rights conditions in Sierra Leone notes that, in 2005, "there was both official and societal discrimination based on sexual orientation" (8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). Like many other international observer organizations, the US State Department made note of the 2004 murder of a high-profile gay rights activist in Sierra Leone (8 Mar. 2006; Sec. 5; HRW 5 Oct. 2004; UN 2 Feb. 2005; 365Gay.com 18 July 2005). Just days after her murder on September 29, Human Rights Watch (HRW) expressed concern that the murder of FannyAnn Eddy, an activist for lesbian rights and the founder of Sierra Leone's Lesbian and Gay Association (SLLGA), was motivated by hatred (5 Oct. 2004; see also UN 2 Feb. 2005, 5). Several reports indicate she had been "raped repeatedly, stabbed and her neck broken" while at her organization's office (HRW 5 Oct. 2004; 365Gay.com; *Concord Times* 10 Jan. 2005). In January 2005, Sierra Leonean police charged a man, reported to be a former SLLGA employee, with Eddy's murder (ibid.). The accused had reportedly worked for the SLLGA as a janitor until Eddy dismissed him (365gay.com 18 July 2005). However, the accused escaped along with other inmates, from courthouse detention cells in Freetown in July 2005 and at year's end remained at large (ibid.; US 8 Mar. 2006, Sec. 5). A number of international human rights groups reportedly believe the motive for Eddy's killing was homophobia (365Gay.com 18 July 2005). The United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights notes that Eddy was allegedly targeted for her "sexual orientation and outspokenness in support of gay and lesbian rights" (UN 2 Feb. 2005, Sec. B para. 8). The High Commissioner also notes that prior to her death, Eddy advocated the rights of sexual minorities in Sierra Leone before the Sub-Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, based in Geneva (ibid.). It is unclear, however, whether the motive was "homophobia ... robbery or revenge" (365Gay.com 18 July 2005).

In December 2006, the Sierra Leonean *Standard Times Press* reported that two homosexual women escaped their home just before they came under attack by a group of unknown persons (*Standard Times* 6 Dec. 2006). They managed to get away because a neighbour warned them of the impending homophobic attack (ibid.). One of the two women explained that her family has "shunned her" since the event and she has been forced to leave her home (ibid.). The *Standard Times Press* article describes the lesbian and gay community in Sierra Leone as "fearful and underground" (ibid.; see also 365Gay.com 18 July 2005).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

365Gay.com. 18 July 2005. Beth Shapiro. "Lesbian Activist's Killer Escapes."

<<http://www.365gay.com/newscon05/07/071805eddyMurder.htm>> [Accessed 22 Feb. 2006]

Concord Times [Freetown]. 10 January 2005. "Killer of Lesbian Activist Charged." (Factiva)

Human Rights Watch (HRW). 5 October 2004. "Sierra Leone: Lesbian Rights Activist Brutally Murdered."

<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/10/04/sierra9440_txt.htm> [Accessed 21 Dec. 2006]

International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA). November 2006a. Daniel Ottosson. *With the Government in Our Bedrooms: A Survey on the Laws over the World Prohibiting Consenting Adult Sexual Same-Sex Acts*.

<http://www.ilga.org/statehomophobia/With_the_government_in_our_bedrooms_November_2006.pdf>

[Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

_____. November 2006b. Daniel Ottosson. *LGBT World Legal Wrap Up Survey*.

<http://www.ilga.org/statehomophobia/World_legal_wrap_up_survey_November2006.pdf> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

_____. 26 May 2004. "State Homophobia." <<http://www.ilga.org/statehomophobia/StateHomophobia3.jpg>>

[Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

Standard Times Press [Freetown]. 6 December. 2006. Saidu Kamara. "No Human Rights for Gays.....Lesbians

Attacked." <http://standardtimespress.net/cgi-bin/artman/publish/article_423.shtml> [Accessed 21 Dec. 2006]

United Nations (UN). 2 February 2005. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). *Advisory Services and Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights: Situation of Human Rights in Sierra Leone. Report of the High*

Commissioner for Human Rights. (E/CN.4/2005/113) <<http://www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/42d66e660.pdf>>

[Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

United States (US). 8 March 2006. Department of State. "Sierra Leone." *Country Reports on Human Rights*

Practices for 2005. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61591.htm>> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2006]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: Afrol News, Behind the Mask, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), *The Independent*, International Gay and Lesbian Association, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), The Patriotic Vanguard, Queer Resources Directory, Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission, Sierra Leone Lesbian and Gay Association, Sierra News, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, UN Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), United Kingdom Home Office, United States Department of State, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Sierra Leone Web


[Top of Page](#)

[Important Notices](#)

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.