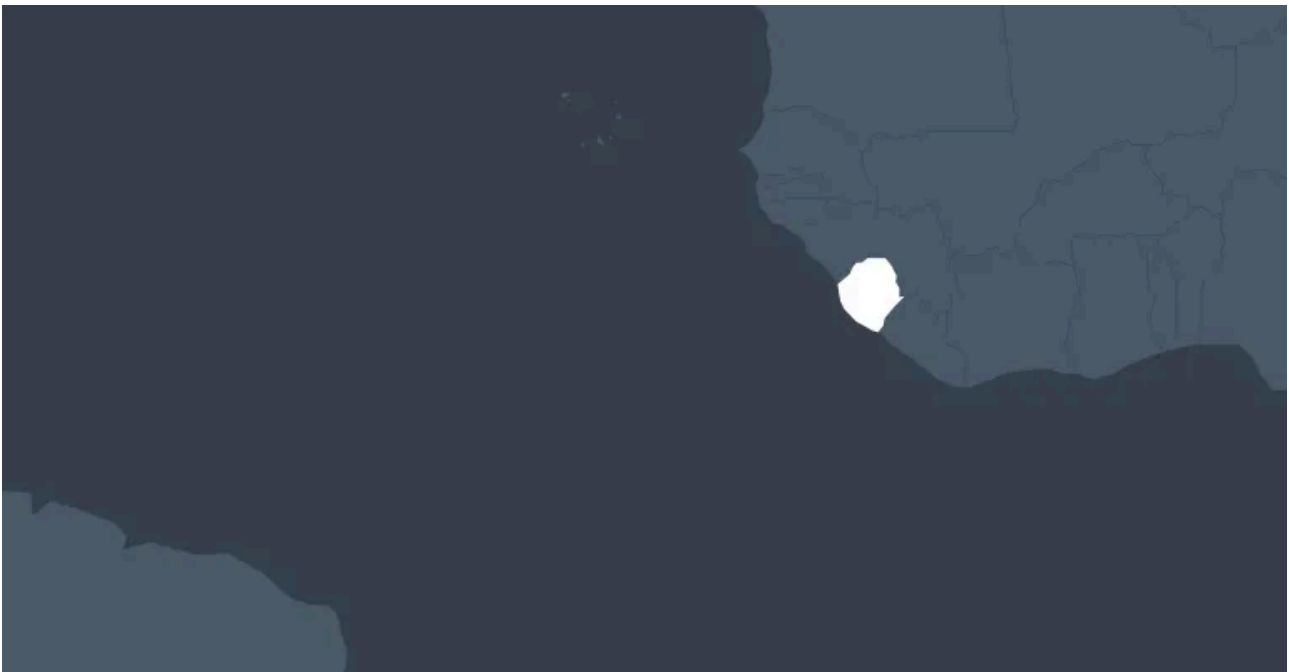


Sierra Leone



header1 Overview

Sierra Leone has held regular multiparty elections since the end of its civil war in 2002, though the results have sometimes been contested. Demonstrators and opposition parties have faced police violence and restrictions on assembly. Civic groups are constrained, and corruption remains pervasive.

header2 Key Developments in 2024

- In January, former President Ernest Bai Koroma (2007–18) was charged with treason for his alleged role in an unsuccessful November 2023 coup d'état. However, under an agreement that was reportedly brokered by the Economic Community of West African States, he was released later that month to seek medical treatment in Nigeria, and he remained there at year's end.
- In June, the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the opposition All People's Congress (APC) agreed on a roadmap for electoral reforms in keeping with the Agreement for National Unity (ANU), which had been signed in October 2023 to help resolve a dispute over that year's election results.

Implementation of the planned reforms and consensus on their details were still pending as of December.

- In December, Parliament voted to remove the country's respected auditor-general, Lara Taylor-Pearce, and her deputy at the Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL), endorsing a specially constituted tribunal's July finding that the two had engaged in professional misconduct in 2021, when they were first suspended. Critics of the move, including international and domestic experts, questioned the credibility of the tribunal process, and opposition lawmakers argued that the vote threshold should have been two-thirds of all members rather than two-thirds of those present. While the ASSL continued to uncover mismanagement of public finances and procurement contracts despite the controversy over its leadership, the transparency of anticorruption efforts and government decisions in general was lacking during the year. For example, the Anti-Corruption Commission sought to collect legally required asset declarations from all public officials, but the content of the declarations remained confidential and not subject to public scrutiny.
- A significant faction of the Sierra Leone Bar Association argued that the group's leadership elections in May had been fraudulent and politically skewed to favor the interests of the SLPP. In June, a young female lawyer was arrested and detained overnight on charges of online stalking—under the 2021 Cyber Security and Crime Act—after she used social media to criticize President Julius Maada Bio in connection with the disputed Bar Association election.
- A new Criminal Procedure Act, passed in July and signed by the president in September, included a number of provisions aimed at reducing large case backlogs, judicial corruption, and prolonged pretrial detention. Among other changes set to be implemented, the law would eliminate jury trials, impose time limits on pretrial detention, and encourage alternative forms of dispute resolution. Separately in July, the president signed the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, which criminalized all forms of marriage for those under age 18 and assigned penalties for aiding and abetting such marriages.

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For additional background information, see last year's [full report](#).

PR Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

2.002
4.004

A2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

2.002 4.004

A3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

3.003
4.004

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

2.002
4.004

B2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?	3.003 4.004
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B3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?	3.003 4.004
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B4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?	3.003 4.004
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C Functioning of Government

C1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?	2.002 4.004
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C2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	1.001 4.004
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C3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?	2.002 4.004
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Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the country's auditor-general, who had overseen the exposure of significant financial malfeasance, was removed from office through a process that drew criticism for alleged political bias and lack of credibility.

CL Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	2.002 4.004
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D2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	4.004 4.004
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D3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	3.003 4.004
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D4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	3.003 4.004
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E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? | 1.001 4.004

E2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work? | 2.002 4.004

E3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? | 2.002 4.004

F Rule of Law

F1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? | 2.002 4.004

F2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? | 2.002 4.004

F3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? | 3.003 4.004

F4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? | 2.002 4.004

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education? | 3.003 4.004

G2 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors? | 3.003 4.004

G3 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance? | 2.002 4.004

G4 1.00-4.00 pts0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation? | 2.002 4.004

