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10 December 2003

SLE42226.E

Sierra Leone: The situation of homosexuals and bisexuals
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Behind the Mask, a Website on gay and lesbian affairs in Africa, and the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) claim that homosexuality is illegal in Sierra Leone (ILGA 18 July 2003; Behind the Mask n.d.). However, Behind the Mask's profile for Sierra Leone includes a report from 22 August 2003 which states that the Sierra Leone Lesbian and Gay Association (SLLAGA) has been registered with the Sierra Leone Ministry of Development and Economic Planning and the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs.

Documentary references to the situation of gays, lesbians and bisexuals in Sierra Leone are scarce. One recent article by Agence France Presse (AFP) describes the critical views that some Sierra Leoneans have of the Archbishop of Canterbury's tolerance of gay ministers and homosexual relationships (27 July 2003). The Archbishop's 23-31 July 2003 trip to Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia, to promote solidarity amongst Anglican communities (Archbishop of Canterbury 21 July 2003) was, according to AFP, clouded by controversy over the appointment of gay ministers in the Anglican church (AFP 27 July 2003). AFP reported that local African churches have "denounced homosexuality as an abomination" (ibid.).

AFP also reported that Sierra Leonean media sources published, in advance of the Archbishop's arrival, commentaries submitted by their readers that "overwhelmingly condemn[ed] homosexuality in the church" (ibid.). The government-run Sierra News wrote that "[h]omosexuals should not be rewarded with leadership and their perverse lifestyles endorsed" (AFP 27 July 2003).

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 to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Agence France Presse (AFP). 27 July 2003. "Anglican Church Leader Faces New Criticism in Sierra Leone Over Gays." (Dialog)

Archbishop of Canterbury. 21 July 2003. "Archbishop of Canterbury to Visit West Africa."
<<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/releases/030721.html>> [Accessed 10 Dec. 2003]

Behind the Mask. 22 August 2003. "Lesbian and Gay Organisation Registered."
<http://www.mask.org.za/SECTIONS/AfricaPerCountry/ABC/sierra%20leone/sierra%20leone_3.htm> [Accessed 4 Dec. 2003]

_____. n.d. "About Sierra Leone."
<http://www.mask.org.za/SECTIONS/AfricaPerCountry/ABC/sierra%20leone/sierra%20leone_index.html>

[Accessed 4 Dec. 2003]

International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGSA). 18 July 2003. "World Legal Survey: Sierra Leone." <http://www.ilga.org/Information/legal_survey/africa/sierraleone.htm> [Accessed 4 Dec. 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

Dialog

IRB Databases

Unsuccessful attempts to contact the Sierra Leone Lesbian and Gay Association and the International Gay (SLLAGA) and Lesbian Human Rights Commission within the time constraints of this Response.

Academic sources were unable to provide information on the above-mentioned topic.

Internet sites, including:

Africa Online

The African

Afrol.com

Al-Fatiha

AllAfrica.com

Amnesty International

Archbishop of Canterbury

BBC Africa

Behind the Mask

Global Gayz.com

Human Rights Watch

International Lesbian and Gay Association

International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission

Republic of Sierra Leone, State House Online

Republic of Sierra Leone, Ministry of Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs

World News Connection

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