

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## PUBLIC STATEMENT

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### **Deficiencies in the Liberian judicial system lead to prolonged pre-trial detention and impunity for sexual and gender-based violence**

#### ***Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Liberia***

Amnesty International appreciates efforts by the Liberian authorities to uphold human rights despite challenges arising from the Ebola outbreak, including its engagement with the Universal Periodic Review.

However, despite policy reform and other positive initiatives, Amnesty International shares the concerns expressed by several States during the review, regarding shortcomings in the justice sector, including prolonged pre-trial detention,<sup>1</sup> and poor conditions in detention.<sup>2</sup>

Amnesty International urges Liberia to improve the conditions of detainees in all places of detention, in line with international standards, and to ensure access to gender-specific medical care, adequate food, hygiene and exercise. Liberia must ensure that pre-trial detention is used only as a measure of last resort, including by expanding the availability of mediation and other options to reduce pre-trial detention for minor offences.

As was highlighted by several States during the review, deficiencies in the judicial system has led to impunity for sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>3</sup> Despite an increasing rate of violence against women and girls, only a few cases have been conclusively prosecuted. Amnesty International reiterates its call on Liberia to increase resources and improve coordination and cooperation within the justice system on cases of gender-based violence, including by creating a tracking system to monitor case progression.

As in the first UPR of Liberia, a number of States made recommendations that it ratify a range of international human rights instruments.<sup>4</sup> In this regard,

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review – *Liberia*, 13 July 2015, A/HRC/30/4, recommendations 100.159 (Czech Republic), para. 100.162 (France)

<sup>2</sup> A/HRC/30/4, recommendation 100.156 (Spain).

<sup>3</sup> A/HRC/30/4 recommendations 100.68 (Uruguay), 100.69 (Slovenia), 100.126 (Angola), 100.132 (Ireland), 100.142 (Sweden).

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/30/4, recommendations 100.1 (Chad), 100.2 (Côte d'Ivoire), 100.3 Democratic Republic of the Congo), 100.4 (Madagascar), 100.5 (Philippines), 100.6 (Portugal) (Sierra Leone), 100.7 (Spain), 100.8 (Timor-Leste), (Tunisia) (Uruguay), 100.9 (Iraq) (Portugal), (Uruguay), 100.10 (Sudan), 100.11 (Estonia) (Poland), 100.12 (Slovakia), 100.13 (Brazil), 100.14 (Cabo Verde), 100.15 (France), 100.16 (Indonesia), 100.17 (France), 100.18 (Montenegro) (Portugal) (Tunisia) (Sierra Leone), 100.19 (Ghana), 100.20 (Sierra Leone), 100.21 (Indonesia), 100.22 (Mali) (Uruguay).

Amnesty International calls on Liberia to accelerate the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In closing, Amnesty International also urges Liberia to immediately abolish the death penalty,<sup>5</sup> as recommended in the review, in line with its obligations under the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In the meantime, Liberia is urged to commute all death sentences to terms of imprisonment without delay.

**Background**

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Liberia on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015 during its 30<sup>th</sup> session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above.

Public Document

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<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/30/4, recommendations 100.23 (Australia), 110.24 (Congo), 110.25 (Montenegro), 100.26 (Germany), 100.27 (Spain), 100.28 (Rwanda), 100.35 (Switzerland), 100.36 (Uruguay), 100.37 (France).