

# U.S. Travel Restriction on Sierra Leone – Separating Facts from Fictions

*Travel Restrictions on Sierra Leone: What Facts are Saying*

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE, June 7, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In keeping with his July 2024 campaign promise to restore the travel ban and refugee admission into the United States upon election, the United States President, Donald Trump, announced a full and partial ban for some countries in Africa and the Middle East.



President Julius Maada Bio of Sierra Leone

President Trump, whose first term presidency in 2017 was marked by a similar ban on selected countries, recently announced a full ban for 12 countries: Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, The Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and a partial ban on seven countries, Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, Venezuela.

Citing Sierra Leone's high B-1/B-2 visa overstay rate of 15.43% and a higher overstay rate of 35.83% for student and exchange visas, the Trump administration justified the country's inclusion, stating that the country posed a national security risk to the United States, mainly because of its reluctance to accept citizens ordered removed from the U.S.

Not surprisingly, members of the opposition and their sympathizers, hiding behind the guise of activism, have chosen to exploit the populace's ignorance by distorting the facts.

While some claimed it was a result of the false claim that Sierra Leone has been named as a narcotics transshipment hub, others argue that it was due to the rise in corruption and other related vices.

Nothing can be farther from the truth, as available data presents a stark contrast to their claims.

These claims are misleading and fail to reflect the facts surrounding the matter and the broader trajectory of Sierra Leone's international engagement under President Julius Maada Bio.

Facts as they Stand:

### Anti-Corruption and Governance

Under President Bio's leadership, Sierra Leone has made notable strides in combating corruption. The country's score on the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Control of Corruption indicator improved from 49% in 2017 to an average of over 70% since 2018, reaching a high of 81% in 2020.

This consistent progress led to Sierra Leone passing the MCC scorecard for six consecutive years, making it eligible for substantial development assistance, including a \$480 million compact aimed at revolutionizing the energy sector

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index also reflects this improvement.

Sierra Leone's score increased from 30 in 2018 to 35 in 2023, surpassing the sub-Saharan African average and moving the country up 22 places in the global rankings, from 129th to 108th

### Human Rights and Legal Reforms

In 2021, three years after President Bio's election, the government abolished the death penalty.

President Bio signed the legislation into law, fulfilling a longstanding pledge and aligning the country with international human rights standards.

This action positioned Sierra Leone as the 23rd African nation to eliminate capital punishment

### Press Freedom

The Bio administration has also prioritized media freedom. Sierra Leone climbed to the 56th position out of 180 countries in the 2025 World Press Freedom Index, an eight-place improvement from the previous year. This advancement is attributed to strengthened legal protections, support for the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists, and a commitment to transparency and accountability

### United Nations Security Council Engagement

In June 2022, Sierra Leone was elected as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council

(UNSC) for the 2024–2025 term, marking its return after a 53-year absence. This election, supported by 188 out of 193 UN member states, signified international recognition of Sierra Leone's commitment to global peace and security

During its presidency of the UNSC in August 2024, President Bio emphasized the need for reform within the Council. He advocated for Africa to receive two permanent seats with veto power and two additional non-permanent seats, highlighting the continent's underrepresentation despite being the subject of over 60% of the Council's agenda

### Advocacy for African Representation

As the Coordinator of the African Union's Committee of Ten (C-10) on UNSC Reform, President Bio has been a vocal proponent for equitable African representation. He has consistently called for the restructuring of the UNSC to reflect contemporary global realities, arguing that the current configuration is outdated and unjust towards Africa

In various international forums, including the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, President Bio reiterated the urgency of these reforms, emphasizing that Africa's exclusion from permanent representation undermines the Council's legitimacy and effectiveness .westafricawire.com+1eu-africa-chamber.org+1

### Economic Reforms and International Financial Engagement

On the economic front, Sierra Leone has re-engaged with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to support its development agenda. In September 2024, the IMF and Sierra Leone reached a staff-level agreement on a 38-month Extended Credit Facility (ECF) arrangement, granting access to approximately US\$253 million. This program aims to restore macroeconomic stability, reduce inflation, rebuild international reserves, and promote inclusive growth through structural reforms

### Fiscal Policy

Since his re-election in 2023, President Bio has continued with his implementation of a comprehensive fiscal policy, which began in 2018, when he first came to power. These policies are aimed at stabilizing the economy, enhancing public financial management, and promoting inclusive growth.

Upon assuming office in 2018, the Bio-led administration prioritized overhauling the country's financial systems. A significant reform was the establishment of a consolidated Single Treasury Account, centralizing public funds to improve oversight and reduce excesses. This move curtailed the previous practice where Ministries, Departments, and Agencies managed their finances independently, often leading to inefficiencies .

The government has focused on increasing domestic revenue collection. Tax revenue as a

percentage of GDP rose from just over 11% to approximately 15% within 11 months of President Bio's tenure, with a target of reaching 20% in the coming months.

In December 2024, the World Bank approved an \$80 million financing package to enhance macroeconomic stability and resilience. This support aligns with the government's Medium-Term National Development Plan (2024–2030), focusing on fiscal management, access to finance, and climate resilience .

The U.S. visa restrictions were not a political indictment of President Bio's administration. Instead, the facts show a growing appreciation and respect for Sierra Leone under his leadership.

Sierra Leone is increasingly viewed as a beacon of democratic progress and policy innovation in West Africa.

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