



Liberia
Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review

Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights,
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

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Founded in 1983, **The Advocates for Human Rights** (“The Advocates”) is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law. The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publication. The Advocates is the primary provider of legal services to low-income asylum seekers in the Upper Midwest region of the United States. The Advocates has a long history of assisting the Liberian diaspora community in the United States. From 2006 to 2009, The Advocates worked with the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Liberia to give the Liberian diaspora a voice in the process of investigating human rights abuses during the country’s long period of civil conflict and making recommendations to promote peace and reconciliation. This work resulted in the publication of a book-length report by The Advocates entitled *A House With Two Rooms*. Since then, The Advocates has continued its close connections to Liberia, including site visits, advocacy at the United Nations, work with the Liberian diaspora and representation of numerous Liberian refugees seeking asylum. Since 2011, a growing number of individuals fleeing harmful practices, gender-based violence against women, and violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity have requested legal assistance from The Advocates in applying for asylum in the United States.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Since the end of the Liberian Civil War in 2003, authorities have been slowly pursuing peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts, as well as a return to the rule of law.¹ Domestic violence and rape remain pervasive; rape and sexual assault are the most commonly reported violent crimes.² Strong laws and policies protecting women from gender-based violence exist, but leniency and corruption in government and in the Liberian National Police forces mar their enforcement.³ Most survivors cannot access available services.⁴
2. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) exists in Liberia as an initiation ritual into the Sande secret society (with the Poro society as the equivalent for men and boys), which operates primarily in “the bush” (i.e. rural areas). A report from 2017 estimates that 200 million Liberian women and girls alive today, living inside and outside of the country, have undergone FGM, including 44 million girls age 14 years and younger.⁵ Outright discussion of FGM is taboo, and people who speak out against it face violence and death threats.⁶ The National Traditional Council, the main governing body for customary law, has pledged to end FGM, but statutory measures have failed.⁷
3. The rights of LGBTI individuals are severely compromised. Individuals experience hate speech, harassment, violence, and abuse.⁸ Many victims avoid reporting crimes to police for fear they will face arrest because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, or due to fear of discrimination and violence from their community or family.⁹ Liberian law does not criminalize homosexuality, although political leaders have introduced bills proposing to designate same-sex sexual relations a felony.¹⁰
4. Harmful practices, gender-based violence against women, and violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity lead many men, women, and children to flee Liberia and seek refuge in the United States.¹¹ The Advocates represents hundreds of Liberian refugees seeking asylum. This report documents material The Advocates has compiled from interviews with Liberian asylum seekers between January 2011 and January 2018.¹²

II. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

A. 2015 Universal Periodic Review of Liberia

5. During the second cycle of Liberia’s Universal Periodic Review, the government accepted 147 recommendations and noted 39.¹³
 1. *Criminalize FGM and other harmful practices*

Status of Implementation: Accepted, Partially Implemented

6. The Government of Liberia accepted recommendations to adopt laws explicitly banning FGM and other harmful practices, to take all necessary steps to ensure its eradication, and to punish complicit officials in these practices.¹⁴ The legislature’s attempt to ban FGM failed and an executive order banning the practice expired after one year.¹⁵ Liberia has not implemented these recommendations.

2. *End sexual and gender-based violence against women*

Status of Implementation: Accepted, Partially Implemented

7. The government accepted recommendations to intensify efforts to further combat gender-based violence against women and build institutional capacity, as well as recommendations to improve access to justice for survivors.¹⁶ It also accepted recommendations to criminalize spousal rape and increase public awareness campaigns targeted at preventing gender-based violence against women and girls and domestic violence.¹⁷ The Penal Code still does not explicitly criminalize spousal rape.¹⁸ Liberia has partially implemented these recommendations.
8. Liberia accepted recommendations to sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) but has not yet ratified it.¹⁹

3. *End discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity*

Status of Implementation: Partially Accepted, Not Implemented

9. The Liberian Government accepted recommendations to condemn and combat discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.²⁰ It noted recommendations to repeal existing discriminatory provisions and to take legislative action to eliminate discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity.²¹ The Liberian Government noted recommendations to repeal articles in the Penal Code criminalizing consensual relationships between adults of the same sex.²²
10. During the interactive dialogue, the Liberian Government stated it is “not the policy of the State” to discriminate against LGBTI individuals, but affirmed its desire to “proceed with caution due to the religious and cultural climate” of Liberia before instituting any changes.²³ The Liberian Government has not implemented these recommendations.

B. Domestic Legal Framework

11. Liberia’s formal statutory law is modeled after Anglo-American common law and governs the State and non-traditional sectors.²⁴ Liberia’s customary law is grounded in unwritten cultural practices of Liberia’s indigenous peoples.²⁵
12. The Liberian Constitution of 1986 establishes the legal framework for the protection of human rights and the promotion of justice. All persons, regardless of their race, gender, beliefs, place of origin, or political opinion are born with inalienable rights (Art. 11), including the freedom of thought and religion (Art. 14), as well as the rights to life, liberty, property, and justice (Art. 20).²⁶ Any laws or customs inconsistent with the Constitution are legally void (Art. 2).²⁷
13. Article 14.74 of the Liberian Constitution criminalizes “Voluntary Sodomy” and “deviate sexual intercourse.”²⁸
14. On January 19, 2018 outgoing President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson issued an executive order on domestic violence temporarily criminalizing performing FGM on minors and nonconsenting adults.²⁹ In Liberian law, executive orders bind for only one year, and Sirleaf’s order has therefore expired.³⁰ The legislature eliminated from the Domestic

Violence Bill a provision that would have banned FGM after some lawmakers asserted that FGM is a “cultural” matter that takes place outside households.³¹

15. In 2019, the legislature passed the Domestic Violence Act, thereby criminalizing acts of violence including: physical, sexual, economic, emotional, and psychological abuse; spousal violence; and violence between other forms of intimate partners.³²

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

Right or area 2.1. Acceptance of international norms

16. As noted in paragraph 8, Liberia has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.³³

Right or area 6. Human rights education and training

17. As discussed below in paragraphs 22, 34, and 35, police enforcement of the 2019 Domestic Violence Act is lax, and judges lack training on how to interpret and apply the law.³⁴

Right or area 9. Racial discrimination

18. Members of ethnic or religious groups that prohibit FGM are sometimes kidnapped and forced to undergo FGM by relatives or neighbors who belong to ethnic groups that subject their own members to FGM.³⁵

Right or area 12.5. Prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

19. FGM is a form of torture, and its practice in Liberia involves prolonged torture. For example, an aunt took a thirteen year old girl to the bush, where elders tied her to a tree and subjected her to FGM. The elders left her there bleeding for three days and she still suffers complications.³⁶

Right or area 13. Right to liberty and security

20. Police target and harass people based on sexual orientation or gender identity, contributing to underreporting of crimes against the LGBTI community.³⁷ A client’s family arranged for a rebel leader to rape and forcibly marry her to “correct” her sexuality. After she continued to have relationships with women in secret, her husband conspired with her family to “teach her how to be with a man” to orchestrate further rape. Her family disowned her and sends death threats despite her fleeing the country.³⁸
21. As described in paragraphs 24 and 27 below, police are often indifferent to and sometimes participate in harassment of people based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Many victims flee, fearing further harassment or violence after police inform the harassers of the police report.³⁹
22. As described in paragraphs 26 and 33–35 below, survivors of gender-based violence against women lack legal redress. The 2019 Domestic Violence Bill lacks funding and authorities are not fulfilling its victim-services provisions.⁴⁰

Right or area 14.2. Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

23. In some cases an individual or family may object to FGM on religious grounds, but secret societies nonetheless commit kidnappings and subject women and girls to FGM. One

client who objected to FGM on religious grounds is fearful of returning to her ancestral village.⁴¹ When she and her daughter returned to the village for a funeral, family members attempted to kidnap her and her daughter to subject them to FGM.⁴² Multiple clients describe relatives of their spouses attempting to kidnap their children through trickery or intimidation.⁴³

Right or area 14.5. Freedom of association

24. LGBTI activists maintain low profiles due to death threats and violence.⁴⁴ A client who spoke out against an attack on a prominent gay rights activist experienced verbal and physical threats, including threats from two men who he believes were plain-clothes police officers. The same two men robbed the client's employee of his phone and computer. The client contacted the police on multiple occasions but received no help or protection.⁴⁵

Right or area 16. Right to an effective remedy, impunity

25. Widespread perceptions of police and government support for secret societies deter people from reporting FGM.⁴⁶ A client's husband heard from his family that if his daughter did not join the Sande society, the family would ostracize him and subject him to voodoo. When the family came for the daughter, the client hid her. In response, an aunt beat the client. The husband received a letter from village elders purporting to fine him and saying that both the client and her daughter would be taken and forced into the Sande society. The client never told police because she believes some police support the Poro and Sande Societies, and she feared police would tell people in her husband's village anything she reported.⁴⁷
26. Police fail to respond effectively to domestic violence.⁴⁸ A client demanded a divorce after learning her husband had been a fighter in the Liberian civil war and had another wife. In response he beat her, shot her in the leg, and confined her to the house. After the initial attack, he frequently beat and raped her. After he discovered she had tried to call a lawyer, he beat her again and confined her to just one room of the house. She escaped to a church, but the husband's bodyguards brought her back to him. After a neighbor reported the abuse to the police, police officers came to the home, but they left without doing anything. Once when she ran away, her husband beat her in public. After four years of violence, she was finally able to secure a visa and flee to the United States.⁴⁹
27. Also, as shown in paragraphs 20–21 and 24, people who face violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and people who speak out in favor of LGBTI rights, do not receive protection from law enforcement.⁵⁰

Right or area 24. Right to health

28. Knives used in FGM can transmit blood-borne diseases such as HIV and Ebola.⁵¹ One woman described seven women and girls dying from Ebola after a single Sande society initiation ceremony.⁵²
29. Medical treatment of victims of FGM is insufficient.⁵³ Complications from infections or blood loss frequently cause death.⁵⁴ Multiple survivors describe ongoing pain and the inability to become pregnant or give birth.⁵⁵

Right or area 29.1. Discrimination against women

30. In some communities, women who have not undergone FGM face stigma and the label of “Kpolo wa,” which translates as “sinner.”⁵⁶

Right or area 29.2. Gender-based violence

31. The National Traditional Council, the highest customary law authority, has agreed to eliminate FGM in its customary law system.⁵⁷
32. Nonetheless, FGM is practiced with impunity. Most FGM kidnapping charges never make it to court.⁵⁸ Police often refuse to arrest and charge Poro and Sande society members for their attacks and harassment of people who oppose or resist FGM.⁵⁹
33. As noted in paragraph 22 above, the Domestic Violence Act lacks the infrastructure, funding, and training necessary for enforcement.⁶⁰
34. The legal response to sexual violence and gender-based violence against women has fallen short. The government established a specialized court for cases of sexual violence (Court E), set up two shelters for victims of gender-based violence against women, and collaborates with a network of NGOs to provide comprehensive health and legal services for victims.⁶¹ Although infrastructure exists, the limitations of the justice system lead many survivors of gender-based violence against women, especially in rural areas, to pursue redress through the customary or traditional legal system.⁶² The Women and Children’s Protection Section of the Liberian National Police reported that 50% percent of domestic violence cases are abandoned due to lack of evidence.⁶³
35. Prosecutors rarely prosecute rape and other gender-based violence crimes perpetrated against women, and of cases prosecuted, few result in convictions.⁶⁴ A 2016 United Nations report found that only 2% of gender-based violence cases in Liberia resulted in a conviction of the perpetrator.⁶⁵

Right or area 36. Human rights defenders

36. Human rights defenders who oppose FGM face reprisals and threats of harm. One client, after being forced to undergo FGM, became a nursing assistant and warned girls and women of the risks of FGM. Villagers came to her house, threatening to take her to the bush and silence her. She quit and moved to Monrovia, but villagers tracked her down and beat her. She fled to the United States, fearing her daughter would be kidnapped and subjected to FGM.⁶⁶ Another client survived FGM and village elders told her if she revealed what the Sande society did she would be killed. Despite their threats she spoke out and subsequently received death threats. She found snakes placed inside her house and was forced to drink poison. Elders later kidnapped her and burned her leg and foot with a hot iron.⁶⁷ Another client spoke out against FGM founded a well-known group to oppose the practice. Men kidnapped him along with a colleague. The kidnappers attacked them, beat them, and threatened their lives. The client fled Liberia for his life.⁶⁸ A Liberian journalist fled the country after publishing an article about FGM and the Sande society.⁶⁹ One client became an anti-FGM activist after her friend told her she was the sole survivor of an initiation class of eight. The client founded an anti-FGM group on Facebook. She fled Liberia due to threats against her and her children.⁷⁰

37. Authorities have failed to prosecute multiple cases of arson perpetrated against human rights defenders.⁷¹

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

38. This stakeholder report suggests the following recommendations for the Government of Liberia:

- Criminalize FGM by statute and cooperate with the National Tribal Council to ensure enforcement of FGM bans in rural areas.
- Ensure prosecution of domestic violence and gender-based violence cases in the Liberian judiciary by providing courts and prosecutors with the resources necessary to obtain evidence and to hire legal staff to bring cases to trial without overload.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Explicitly criminalize spousal rape.
- Ensure law enforcement conducts prompt and thorough investigations of any reports of harassment, arson, or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity or targeting human rights defenders supporting LGBTI rights.
- Ensure law enforcement conducts prompt and thorough investigations of all reports of violence, harassment, kidnapping, and arson targeting people who speak out against FGM or who refuse FGM. Establish independent investigation and prosecution mechanisms to ensure that police officers who are complicit in kidnappings or harassment of FGM objectors are held accountable.
- End impunity for Sande and Poro society members who engage in kidnappings, murder, harassment, arson, and other forms violence to engage in or promote the practice of FGM.
- Dedicate substantial resources toward a national awareness-raising campaign focusing on the Domestic Violence Act. Collaborate with women's non-governmental organizations to train local law enforcement to conduct investigations and carry out other duties under the Domestic Violence Act.
- Stand by previous pledges to eliminate institutional discrimination and violence against LGBTI people and their defenders by working with LGBTI civil society groups.
- Decriminalize same-sex sexual relations between consenting adults.
- Ensure immediate and ongoing high-quality medical and psychological treatment for all victims of FGM to treat the physical and psychological effects of the practice.

¹ Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, "OHCHR in Liberia 2018-2024," Accessed October 1st, 2019. Also available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AfricaRegion/Pages/LRSummary2018_2024.aspx

² Overseas Security Advisory Committee, *Liberia 2019 Crime & Safety Report*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2019). Also available at <https://www.osac.gov/Content/Report/2dc447fa-38da-4fee-ad62-15f4aeb31b77>

³ Frieda M'Cormack, *Prospects for Accessing Justice Systems for Sexual Violence in Liberia's Hybrid Systems*, Stability International Journal of Security & Development, May 1, 2018, Also available at <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.603/>

⁴ Frieda M’Cormack, *Prospects for Accessing Justice Systems for Sexual Violence in Liberia’s Hybrid Systems*, Stability International Journal of Security & Development, May 1, 2018, Also available at <https://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.603/>

⁵ David S. Menjor, *Ban FGM, a Violation of Human Rights*, Liberian Observer, Jan. 29, 2018, Also available at <https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/ban-fgm-a-violation-of-human-rights/>.

⁶ Interviews are hereinafter referred to as “Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2011-2018).” Details have been removed to maintain confidentiality and to protect the identities of clients and their families.

⁷ David A. Yates, *Nat’l Traditional Council ‘Ready to End FGM’*, Liberian Daily Observer, (Feb. 8, 2019). Also available at <https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/natl-traditional-council-ready-to-end-fgm/>

⁸ Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2017/2018: The State of the World’s Human Rights*, (London: Amnesty International, 2018), Also available at <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/POL1067002018ENGLISH.PDF>

⁹ United States Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019). Also available at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>

¹⁰ Robbie Corey-Boulet, *The Trump Effect: Elections at Home and Abroad Dampen Liberia’s Gay-Rights Revival*, World Policy Journal, (Fall 2017), Vol. 34 Issue 3. Also available at <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/673272>

¹¹ The Advocates for Human Rights, *Liberia’s Compliance with the International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights: Harmful Practices and Violence against Women*, (Feb. 12, 2018). Also available online at https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/uploads/liberia_fgm.pdf

¹² Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2011-2018)

¹³ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia Addendum*, (May 19, 2016), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/4/Add.1. Also available online at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/217/44/PDF/G1521744.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁴ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia*, (May 19, 2016). U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/2 ¶100.138. Continue to criminalize and ultimately eradicate sexual and gender-based violence such as FGM and harmful traditional practices, including trials by ordeal (Republic of Korea); ¶100.60. Adopt a law that explicitly prohibits female genital mutilation (Uganda); ¶100.61. Adopt laws to forbid harmful traditional practices (Madagascar); ¶100.28. Continue its efforts to fight against violence against women and girls, in particular FGM, and adopt legislation criminalizing this harmful practice (Canada); ¶100.146. Criminalize FGM or cutting and spousal rape, and increase the number of public awareness campaigns focused on preventing violence against women and girls, with particular emphasis on rape, domestic violence, and FGM or cutting (United States of America); ¶100.132. Intensify efforts to eliminate sexual and gender-based violence and to specifically criminalize FGM as well as to take all necessary measures to ensure its eradication (Ireland); ¶100.63. Fast-track the enactment of its Domestic Violence Act, criminalize FGM...and prosecute and punish complicit officials (Australia). Also available online at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/LRIndex.aspx>.

¹⁵ Emma Batha, *Liberia bans female genital mutilation - but only for a year*, Reuters, Jan. 25, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-liberia-fgm-law/liberia-bans-female-genital-mutilation-but-only-for-a-year-idUSKBN1FE1N7>

¹⁶ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia*, (May 19, 2016), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/2 ¶100.134. Take further effective measures to address the continued high crime rates in the areas of violence against women and the trafficking of women and children (Japan); ¶100.142. Ensure the full enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, including through public awareness-raising and measures to improve investigation and prosecution of sexual and GBV (Sweden) ¶100.144. Ensure that perpetrators of gender-specific violence and rape of minors are held accountable for their actions and improve the access to health services and economic assistance for victims (Switzerland); ¶100.64. Build the capacity of existing institutions and sexual and GBV units to monitor in particular violence against women...in order to prevent violence, protect victims, and fully gather evidence, investigate and prosecute these crimes (Finland); and ¶100.69.. Strengthen the units for the protection of women and children, granting these the necessary capacity to gather all evidence and investigate all cases of sexual and GBV (Uruguay). Also available online at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/LRIndex.aspx>

¹⁷ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia*, (May 19, 2016), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/2 ¶100.146 Criminalize FGM or cutting and spousal rape, and increase the number of public awareness campaigns focused on preventing violence against women and girls, with particular emphasis on rape, domestic violence, and FGM or cutting (United States of America). Also available online at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/LRIndex.aspx>

¹⁸ Penal Law - Title 26 - Liberian Code of Laws Revised, ¶14.70

¹⁹ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia*, (September 25, 2015), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/2 ¶100.8 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Timor-Leste) (Tunisia) (Uruguay) Also available online at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/217/44/PDF/G1521744.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁰ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia*, (May 19, 2016), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/2 ¶100.121. Condemn discrimination, particularly that based on sexual orientation and identity (Madagascar); ¶100.123 Combat all forms of discrimination and abuse against LGBTI persons (Italy). Also available online at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/LRIndex.aspx>

²¹ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia*, (May 19, 2016), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/2 ¶100.79. Repeal the existing discriminatory regulation in its domestic law against the LGBT community (Spain); ¶100.80. Repeal 14.74 of the Penal Code and take all necessary legislative and other measures to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Ireland); ¶100.82. Take legislative and policy measures to prevent and fight violence and to combat discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity (Colombia); ¶100.123 Amend discriminatory provisions based on sexual orientation or gender identity, in particular with regard to equality of access to services and public office (Uruguay).

²² *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia*, (May 19, 2016), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/2 ¶100.77 Repeal the legal provisions which criminalize LGBT persons (France) ¶100.78. Revoke the law criminalizing consensual sex between adults of the same sex (Poland); ¶100.79. Repeal the existing discriminatory regulation in its domestic law against the LGBT community (Spain); ¶100.80. Repeal 17.74 of the Penal Code (Ireland) ¶100.81. Repeal sections of the Penal Code that criminalize sexual activities between consenting adults of the same sex and withdraw the two bills currently before the House of Representatives that would further criminalize same-sex relations (Canada); ¶100.122. Ensure to LGBTI persons the full enjoyment and equal treatment of their human rights by derogating norms that criminalize and stigmatize them (Argentina). Also available online at <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/LRIndex.aspx>

²³ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia Addendum* (September 25, 2015), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/4/Add.1. ¶75. It is not the policy of the State to discriminate based on LGBT status. However, the Government must proceed with caution due to the religious and cultural climate of Liberia in this regard. Robust awareness and sensitization on this matter, which is ongoing, will must inform the Government on the proper course of action before any such action is taken. Also available online at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/217/44/PDF/G1521744.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁴ Hanatu Kabbah, *A Guide to the Liberian Legal System and Legal Research*, New York University Hauser Global Law School Program, (July/August 2014). Also available online at <https://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/Liberia1.html>

²⁵ Shai Andre Divon and Moretn Bøas, *Negotiating Justice: Legal pluralism and gender-based violence in Liberia*, *Third World Quarterly*, (June 2017), Vol. 38, Issue 6.

²⁶ Constitution Project, *Liberia's Constitution of 1986*, (1986). Also available online at https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Liberia_1986.pdf?lang=en

²⁷ Constitution Project, *Liberia's Constitution of 1986*, (1986). Also available online at https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Liberia_1986.pdf?lang=en

²⁸ Liberian Code of Laws Revised, 14.74.

²⁹ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 22-23. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>

³⁰ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 24-25. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>

³¹ Leroy M. Sonpon III, *FGM Erased from Domestic Violence Law*, *Liberian Daily Observer*, (June 27, 2019). Also available online at <https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/fgm-erased-from-domestic-violence-law/>

³² United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 22-23. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>

³³ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review*, (September 25, 2015), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/30/4/Add.1 ¶100.8 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on the Elimination of All

Forms of Discrimination against Women (Timor-Leste) (Tunisia) (Uruguay).. Also Available online at <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/217/44/PDF/G1521744.pdf?OpenElement>

³⁴ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 22. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>

³⁵ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

³⁶ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

³⁷ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 31. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>

³⁸ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

³⁹ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁴⁰ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁴¹ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁴² Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁴³ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁴⁴ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 31. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁴⁶ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁴⁷ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁴⁸ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 22. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁵⁰ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 31. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>.

⁵¹ 28 Too Many, *Country Profile FGM in Liberia* (2014). Also available online at <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/54bcd574.pdf>.

⁵² Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁵³ 28 Too Many, *Country Profile FGM in Liberia* (2014). Also available online at <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/54bcd574.pdf>.

⁵⁴ 28 Too Many, *Country Profile FGM in Liberia* (2014). Also available online at <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/54bcd574.pdf>. These complications can include disfigurement, scarring, ongoing bleeding both internal and external, urine retention, psychological trauma, shock, and increased maternal and infant mortality.

⁵⁵ Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2011-2018).

⁵⁶ Interviews conducted by The Advocates (2011-2018).

⁵⁷ David A. Yates, *Nat'l Traditional Council 'Ready to End FGM'*, *Liberian Daily Observer*, (Feb. 8, 2019). Also available online at <https://www.liberianobserver.com/news/natl-traditional-council-ready-to-end-fgm/>.

⁵⁸ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 24-25. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>.

⁵⁹ 28 Too Many, *Country Profile FGM in Liberia* (2014). Also available online at <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/54bcd574.pdf>

⁶⁰ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 22-23. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>.

⁶¹ *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Liberia, (September 25, 2015)*, ¶49. U.N. Doc A/HRC/30/4/Add.1. The SGBV Crimes Unit of the Ministry of Justice oversees the prosecution of SGBV crimes at Criminal Court “E,” the specialized court for sexual offenses, and also at the circuit courts in the Justice and Security Hubs 1, 2, and 3 regions. Additionally, the Unit provides support to survivors and their families, including access to medical treatment, psychosocial services, temporary protective shelter at safe homes, education and

empowerment packages, and start-up grants for small business and farming activities., Also available online at <https://documents-ddsny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G15/217/44/PDF/G1521744.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁶² United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 23. There are only two specific units that have the jurisdiction to go after rape and domestic violence cases. These cases lack judges with jurisdiction over these specific cases as well, with less than ten judges in Liberia as of March. The entire system is overtaxed and many cases do not function as they should, as the resources allocated are so slim that many cases do not get evidence processed in time for court dates. Most cases that do end up in court are arbitrated by families outside due to the inefficiency and lack of action by the courts themselves. In effect the statutory system for these crimes is non-functional. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>

⁶³ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 22-23. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>.

⁶⁴ United States Department of State, *Liberia 2018 Human Rights Report* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, March 13, 2019), 22-23. Police are not trained to deal with domestic violence despite the new bill causing many crimes to be improperly managed or to go unnoticed. Jurists also have been given no training on how to handle the new laws in court, leading to improper trial procedures. Also available online at <https://www.state.gov/wpcontent/uploads/2019/03/Liberia-2018.pdf>.

⁶⁵ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Addressing Impunity for Rape in Liberia*, (October 2016), Available online at https://unmil.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/impunity_report_-_binding.pdf.

⁶⁶ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁶⁷ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁶⁸ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁶⁹ Mae Azango, *A Fierce Champion for Women Braves Death Threats and Job Loss*, Internews. Also available online at <https://women.internews.org/profile-mae-azango/>

⁷⁰ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).

⁷¹ Interviews conducted by the Advocates (2011-2018).