

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING SUSPENSION OF ISSUANCE OF IMMIGRANT VISAS:

- As of September 11, 2020, U.S. Embassy Freetown discontinued issuing all immigrant visas for Sierra Leonean citizens and nationals applying in Freetown, with limited exceptions. This action was taken pursuant to section 243(d) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).
- The Secretary of Homeland Security has notified the Secretary of State that Sierra Leone denies or unreasonably delays accepting the return of its citizens, subjects, nationals or residents subject to final orders of removal from the United States, and the Secretary of State has ordered consular officers in Sierra Leone to discontinue granting all immigrant visas for citizens and nationals applying in Freetown, with limited exceptions.
- Visa applications submitted before September xx, 2020, but not yet issued, will be subject to the discontinuation. Should an individual subject to the Secretary's order submit a visa application after September 11, 2020, the consular section will proceed with an interview. However, a consular officer will not be able to issue a visa to applicants subject to the Secretary's order until visa issuance is resumed.
- The Secretary of State authorized immigrant visa issuance in limited cases. To qualify for an exception to the order, the consular officer must determine that the applicant's entry would not pose a threat to the national security or public safety of the United States *and* that the applicant's entry would be in the national interest of the United States. Further, the Assistant Secretary for Consular Affairs must determine that not issuing a visa at this time would cause the applicant exceptional hardship.
- Visa issuance covered by the Secretary's order for Sierra Leone will resume once the Secretary of Homeland Security sends the Secretary of State the notice required by U.S. law, relating to the country's acceptance of its nationals.
- Once these sanctions have been lifted, the Embassy may issue immigrant visas to eligible visa applicants. The U.S. Department of State will provide information on how to continue with discontinued visa applications. Immigrant visa applicants who were previously found ineligible for a visa and whose visa applications were refused on such basis such as under INA 212(a), will not be reconsidered.
- Diversity Visa Program selectees are reminded that they remain eligible to receive a diversity visa only through the end of the specific fiscal year for which they were selected. If the suspension is not lifted by the end of the fiscal year, the diversity visa application will not be reviewed and any fees paid will not be refunded.
- Visa fees will not be refunded and a new processing fee will not be required for review of immigrant visa applications if and when Freetown resumes issuing immigrant visas.