

SIERRA LEONE

Date of Elections: May 6, 1977

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the elected members of Parliament following the premature dissolution of this body on April 4, 1977. General elections had previously taken place in May 1973.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Parliament of Sierra Leone, the House of Representatives, consists of the Speaker — elected by the members of Parliament from among its members or persons qualified to be elected as such — and 100 members. Of these Representatives, 85 are elected for 5 years by universal suffrage, 12 are Paramount Chiefs who represent Districts and are elected by members of the Tribal Authority of the specific District, and 3 are appointed by the President of the Republic.

Electoral System

Citizens who have attained the age of 21 and are ordinarily resident and registered in a particular ward (the territorial division for election purposes) are entitled to vote for popularly-elected members of the House. No person may be registered who is insane, serving a sentence of imprisonment or disqualified under any law relating to electoral offences.

Any citizen, whose father and father's father are or were persons of negro African descent, who has attained the age of 25 years, is a registered elector, and is able to speak and read the English language with a degree of proficiency sufficient to enable him to take an active part in parliamentary proceedings may be elected to Parliament. A person who has become a citizen by naturalization is qualified only once he has resided continuously in the country for 25 years after such registration, or has served in the civil or regular armed services for a continuous period of 25 years.

No person may be elected to Parliament if he owes allegiance to a foreign State, is disqualified from practising his profession within the country, is under a sentence of death or imprisonment exceeding 12 months, or has within the five previous years been sentenced to imprisonment for an offence involving dishonesty, for which he was not pardoned. Also disqualified are persons who are, or have been within 12 months prior to the election date,

members of any Commission established under the Constitution, public officers (subject to certain exceptions) or members of the armed forces. Ministers or Deputy Ministers cannot be elected as Speaker.

Electoral constituencies are established by an Electoral Commission. Each constituency returns one member by simple majority vote.

By-elections are held to fill elective seats of the House which fall vacant between general elections.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

President of the Republic Siaka Stevens called the elections one year ahead of schedule after a national state of emergency had been declared following student riots in early 1977.

The campaign was marred by violence. On polling day, the ruling All-People's Congress (APC) gained a reduced absolute majority, obtaining 62 of the 77 Representatives' seats filled by universal suffrage that day. Thirty-six ordinary members and 11 Paramount Chiefs, all belonging to the APC, were unopposed. Some 50 Representatives were newcomers to the House.

President Stevens named an enlarged 28-member Cabinet on May 13.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives

Voters 686,810 (41 contested seats)

Political Group	Votes obtained	„ %	Number of Seats
All-People's Congress (APC)	425,358	61.93	70 (-14)
Sierra Leone People's Party	205,976	29.99	15 (+ 15)
Democratic National Party .	478	0.07	- (=)
Independents	54,998	8.01	- (- 1)
			85