

DCI files case to ECOWAS Court on school ban for pregnant girls in Sierra Leone

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Freetown – 17 May 2018. A West African court is to examine a ban on pregnant girls going to school in Sierra Leone in a landmark case that campaigners say could strengthen girls' rights across the region.

The case was filed by Defence for Children International – Sierra Leone (DCI-SL), Women Against Violence and Exploitation in Society (WAVES), Child Welfare Society-Sierra Leone (CWS-SL), Equality Now and The Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA).

Sierra Leone introduced the ban in 2015 after a rise in rape, abuse and poverty during the deadly Ebola outbreak that fuelled a spike in teenage pregnancies in the country. The law increased the stigma surrounding pregnant girls and set thousands back in their studies.

The plaintiffs asked the court among other things to determine if the refusal of the Sierra Leonean authorities to allow pregnant girls to attend mainstream education, makes the Sierra Leonean State responsible for the violation of international law under the human rights treaties to which is a State party to or not.

According to the joint statement, “the suit is on the refusal of the authorities of Sierra Leone to allow pregnant girls to attend mainstream education throughout the country.”

The statement further explained: “pregnant girls are being blamed and shamed and are being denied a chance to move forward with their lives, while the perpetrators walk scot free. This has made pregnant girls to suffer an act of a violation of their rights and never in their best interest. If there is no intervention, this will result in a lifetime of illiteracy, ignorance poverty and extreme violations for these girls.”

Sierra Leone is a State party particularly to The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture, among others.

To learn more about the case, please contact DCI-Sierra Leone at: info@dcisierraleone.org or by phone at: +232 88 818089