



## Liberia

April 25, 2010

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### Notice: Notice Concerning Adoption Processing In Liberia

On January 26, 2009, the Government of Liberia suspended adoptions because of allegations of mismanagement and corruption in the adoption process. The U.S. Department of State cautions American citizens against filing an application to adopt a child from Liberia while the moratorium on adoption remains in effect. The U.S. Embassy remains in frequent contact with adoption officials, but there is no indication when the moratorium might be lifted.

Since the suspension went into effect, the Liberian Government has formed an Ad-hoc Central Adoption Authority to have oversight over adoptions and is working to pass adoption legislation focused on strengthening existing laws and preventing abuses of the system. The U.S. government strongly supports the Liberian Government's efforts to strengthen its adoption laws and regulations to provide greater transparency and safeguards for prospective adoptive children, their birth parent(s) and prospective adoptive parents.

The Government of Liberia has informed the U.S. Embassy that it will not process any adoption cases during the suspension, including those that were in progress before the suspension was announced, and that it will not permit adopted children depart Liberia. They have also indicated that no new adoption applications should be accepted by adoption service providers, no referrals of children to prospective adoptive parents made, and no adoption petitions filed with the Liberian court while the suspension is in effect. The Liberian Government has made no provisions for the grandfathering of cases under the existing laws. Therefore any case in which a full and final adoption had not been completed prior to January 26, 2009 is effectively on hold.

The U.S. Embassy in Monrovia has been informed by the Government of Liberia that it will issue exit clearances, on a case-by-case basis, to children whose full and final adoption had been completed prior to January 26, 2009 and approved by Liberia's Ad-hoc Central Adoption Authority. Prospective adoptive parents who believe their case might fall into this category should contact the Consular Section at [adoptionsmonrovia@state.gov](mailto:adoptionsmonrovia@state.gov) to discuss next steps in the visa process and any gaps in their adoption file. Additionally, the Government of Liberia is requiring that all adoptive parents appear personally for the exit clearance interview. Processing the visa and obtaining the exit clearance takes about a week of time, but adoptive parents are advised to purchase open-ended return tickets, as there is no guarantee as to how quickly the exit clearance can be obtained.

Prospective adoptive parents and adoption service providers are reminded that a consular officer is required, by law, to complete a For I-604 (determination of orphan status) before issuing a visa in all IR-3 and IR-4 adoption cases. In some cases, this may require only a conversation with the birth parent, but in others it may require a full field investigation, possibly lasting several weeks. Since verifying the parent-child relationships in Liberia is difficult, we also expect that in most cases where the child was relinquished by the birth parent, DNA testing will be recommended in order

to establish a blood relationship between the adopted child and claimed birth parent(s).

Please continue to monitor this site for updated information.