

## Sierra Leone begins voting in presidential runoff election between Maada Bio and Kamara

Sierra Leone voted on Saturday in a poll delayed by fraud allegations to choose a successor to President Ernest Bai Koroma who leaves a country still struggling with the Ebola epidemic.

The face-off between opposition leader Julius Maada Bio and ruling party standard-bearer Samura Kamara was supposed to take place on Tuesday but was rescheduled after a complaint about fraud in the first round of voting this month from a member of Kamara's All People's Congress.



Julius Maada Bio, the presidential candidate for the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), carries his daughter as he casts his vote during Sierra Leone's general election in Freetown, Sierra Leone. REUTERS/Olivia Acland

The successor to Koroma, who is stepping aside after his maximum two five-year terms in office, faces an uphill struggle to overturn years of hardship caused by a slump in the price of its commodity exports and Ebola.

Whoever wins this time, one of the greatest challenges for the new leader will be to improve healthcare following the devastating Ebola outbreak in 2014.

It killed nearly 4,000 people yet there are still only 200 doctors serving the country of seven million people.

The run-off was originally due to take place on Tuesday but the High Court ordered a delay after a member of the ruling party alleged there had been electoral fraud in the first round.

But the court rejected a petition by the ruling APC seeking an indefinite suspension of the run-off to allow for a forensic audit of the 7 March vote.

Politics in the West African country of over seven million people have been dominated by two parties since independence from Britain in 1961: the ruling All People's Congress, now fielding ex-foreign minister Samura Kamara, and the Sierra Leone People's Party behind Julius Maada Bio, who briefly ruled as head of a military junta in 1996.

"As a citizen of this country I would like to exercise my right...in a very peaceful

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atmosphere,” said Negadi Ansu, a voter at the Juba polling station. “We are looking forward to a free, fair election and with credible results.”

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Source: BBC, Reuters, Africa News  
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