



TAS / CAS

TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DU SPORT
COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT
TRIBUNAL ARBITRAL DEL DEPORTE

CAS 2025/A/11613 Aminata Bangura v. Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA)

ARBITRAL AWARD

issued by the

COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

sitting in the following composition:

Sole Arbitrator: Mr Mark Andrew Hovell, Solicitor in Manchester, United Kingdom

in the arbitration between

Aminata Bangura, Sierra Leone

Represented by Mr Paolo Torchetti, Attorney-at-law in Valencia, Spain

- Appellant -

and

Sierra Leone Football Association, Sierra Leone

Represented by Messrs Africanus Sorie Sesay, Brima Koroma, Siman Allie Mans-Conteh, Emmanuel Wanna Conteh, Ibrahim Shaw and Alpha Umaru Ba, Attorneys-at-law in Freetown, Sierra Leone

- Respondent -

I. THE PARTIES

1. Madame Aminata Bangura is a Sierra Leone national born in Freetown on 15 November 1987 (the “Appellant”).
2. The Sierra Leone Football Association (the “SLFA” or the “Respondent”) is the national governing body of football in the territory of Sierra Leone and its headquarters are located in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The Respondent is affiliated to the Confederation of African Football (“CAF”) and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (“FIFA”).
3. The Appellant and the Respondent shall collectively be referred to as the “Parties”.

II. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

4. On 5 June 2025, the SLFA Electoral Committee announced the roadmap for its Ordinary Elective Congress, scheduled on 2 August 2025, in which a new President of the SLFA would be elected.
5. On 12 June 2025, the Appellant submitted her application to contest the position of President of the SLFA. This included a police clearance certificate issued by the Sierra Leone Police (Criminal Investigations Department) dated 10 June 2025 stating she had no criminal record.
6. On 19 June 2025, the SLFA Electoral Committee declared the Appellant eligible to participate in the elections, subject to the integrity checks to be carried out by the SLFA Ethics Committee. The actual checks were carried out by the SLFA Ethics Board, which was composed of the same individuals as the SLFA Ethics Committee.
7. On 23 June 2025, various petitions against candidates were received by the SLFA Ethics Board, including one against the Appellant from Mr Abdul Ahmed Bangura on behalf of the Bo District FA that suggested, amongst other things, that there was an irregularity with the Appellant’s police clearance certificate.
8. On 27 June 2025, upon a previous request dated 23 June 2025, the Appellant submitted a “Questionnaire for Integrity Checks” to the SLFA Ethics Board, including her police clearance certificate.
9. On 30 June 2025, the SLFA Ethics Board carried out various checks on the information provided to it by all candidates, including the Appellant. On 4 July 2025, it made a general enquiry to the Sierra Leone Police (Criminal Investigations Department) regarding all 13 candidates.
10. On 7 July 2025, the SLFA Ethics Board again contacted the Sierra Leone Police (Criminal Investigations Department) to specifically enquire about the Appellant’s police clearance certificate.

11. On 9 July 2025, the Sierra Leone Police (Criminal Investigations Department) responded and stated that it had rescinded the Appellant's police clearance certificate, as follows:

"I write with reference to your correspondence on the subject matter dated 7 July 2025 and to inform you that it has received the attention of the Inspector General of Police.

Ms. Aminata Bangura was not seen in person at Finger Print Bureau and therefore did not go through the finger print examination.

The Clearance Certificate No. 30425 here referred to was issued by the CID in default done on false declaration of a proxy.

The CID Team has called the telephone number 03002274 submitted by the proxy on several occasions to clarify the matter but no response.

In view of that, the Certificate No. 30425 bearing the name and photograph of Ms. Aminata Bangura is hereby rescinded with immediate effect; and we regret any inconvenience it may have caused."

12. On 12 July 2025, the Appellant appeared before the SLFA Ethics Board to be interviewed and to respond to the petition against her. She was then presented with the letter from Sierra Leone Police (Criminal Investigations Department), stating that the Appellant *"was not seen in person"* at the Finger Print Bureau and *"did not go through the finger print examination"*. Therefore, the police clearance certificate of the Appellant had been *"rescinded with immediate effect"*. At the end of the SLFA Ethics Board hearing, the Appellant was given leave to respond further on the allegations made at the hearing.
13. On 13 July 2025, the SLFA Ethics Board reconvened and discussed the Appellant's case. The voting outcome was: *"Chairman exercised casting vote (Article 67 of Code) to disqualify Aminata Bangura on grounds of forgery and falsification (Article 15)"*.
14. On 16 July 2025, the Appellant responded to those allegations in writing. Also on that day, the Sierra Leone Police (Criminal Investigations Department) sent a report produced by Mr Brima Turay, the Line Manager of the Finger Print Bureau (the "Report"), which confirmed that 11 of the candidates presented themselves in person at the Bureau and their prints were obtained and analysed. However, the Appellant was one of the two candidates that *"were not available for their finger prints to be obtained for analysis."*
15. On 19 July 2025, the SLFA Ethics Board notified the Appellant of its decision to declare her ineligible to stand the presidential elections, asserting that she had used an allegedly forged or falsified police clearance certificate (the "SLFA Ethics Board Decision").

16. The SLFA Ethics Board Decision decided, *inter alia*, as follows:

“73. The Committee is of the considered view, and rightly so, that persons coming before the Ethics Committee must make frank and full disclosure to any material evidence sought by the Committee that speaks to their integrity. Thus, anyone who subjects themselves to the integrity test is bound to be in fidelity with the SLFA Code, which is mutatis mutandis the FIFA Code, and all relevant Statutes.

[...]

77. The issue before this Committee now is not about [the Appellant]’s criminal record. What is crucially important is the manner in which [the Appellant] obtained the rescinded police clearance. [The Appellant] never went to the Criminal Investigations Department to obtain the certificate herself, but used a proxy. Hence the said clearance was improperly obtained.

78. In addition, when asked whether she went to the CID and did her finger prints, she responded in the affirmative, while knowing she never went there. By the [Appellant] answering “yes” when asked whether she was physically present at the Criminal Investigations Department and went through the screening process, including name-checking and finger printing, knowing to be false, she was untruthful.

[...]

*80. The Committee will stress that the issue goes to the heart of integrity of the candidate in that it offends Article 15(1) of the Code, which states that “**Officials and or persons bound by this code are forbidden from forging a document, falsifying an authentic document or using a forged or falsified document.**” [Emphasis ours] [The Appellant] uttered a forged document with intent to deceive. This, the Committee holds, is not a minor irregularity, but a serious infraction of the Code.*

[...]

82. As such, [the Appellant]’s act of irregularly obtaining the said police clearance and her answering “yes” to the Committee when confronted with it sums up her lack of integrity to run for such a high office in football. The Committee, therefore, declares [the Appellant], Aminata Bangura, ineligible to run in the 2 August 2025, Elective Congress.

[...]

95. Ms. Aminata Bangura is barred from contesting as president in the forthcoming SLFA Elective Congress, fined the sum of NLe5000.00 (Five Thousand New Leones) and banned from taking part in any football-related activity for a period of one (1) year, pursuant to Article 15(2) of the Code.”

17. On 21 July 2025, the Appellant, together with the other candidate referred to in the Sierra Leone Police (Criminal Investigations Department) report of 16 July 2025, filed an *ex parte* notice of motion in the High Court of Sierra Leone (the “High Court”), seeking interim relief from the execution of the SLFA Ethics Board Decision. Shortly after that, on 24 July 2025, the Appellant lodged her appeal (which included an application for provisional measures) before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (the “CAS”) (see paragraph 21 below).
18. On 29 July 2025, the High Court dismissed the Appellant’s application for interim relief. The Appellant subsequently sought to appeal the High Court order, but solely on the issue of costs.
19. On 31 July 2025, the Division President of the CAS Appeals Arbitration Division granted the Appellant’s application for provisional measures (see paragraph 25 below).
20. On 2 August 2025, the SLFA elections were conducted at the SLFA Congress. The Appellant was able to stand in the SLFA elections for the position of SLFA President but was ultimately not elected.

III. PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE CAS

21. On 24 July 2025, the Appellant filed a Statement of Appeal (also serving as her Appeal Brief) with the CAS against the Respondent with respect to the SLFA Ethics Board Decision, in accordance with Article R47 of the CAS Code of Sports-related Arbitration (the “CAS Code”).
22. The Statement of Appeal contained a request for stay of execution of the SLFA Ethics Board Decision in accordance with Article R37 of the CAS Code, with the following prayers for preliminary relief:

“1. [...] that the CAS issue a preliminary decision to stay the effects of the SLFA Ethics Board Decision immediately declaring her eligible to stand in the upcoming SLFA elections to be held the 2 August 2025.

2. In the alternative, the Appellant requests that the CAS suspend the SLFA elections scheduled for 2 August 2025, pending the final resolution of this case.”
23. On 25 July 2025, the CAS Court Office acknowledged receipt of the Statement of Appeal, initiated the procedure CAS 2025/A/11613 *Aminata Bangura v. Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA)* and, *inter alia*, invited the Respondent to file its position on the request for stay of execution by 29 July 2025.
24. On 29 July 2025, the Respondent set out its position on the Appellant’s request for a stay:

“The Respondent is averse to suspending the SLFA presidential elections on the

basis that the interest of the Appellant does not outweigh that of the Respondent. Furthermore, the Respondent has already undertaken significant logistical arrangements to conduct its elective congress on Saturday 2nd August 2025. The Respondent is under enormous pressure to stick to the electoral timeline given that the mandate of its Executive Committee expired 2 months ago.

However, on staying the effects of the SLFA Ethics Board Decision, whilst the Respondent disputes the submissions of the Appellant which it will elaborate on extensively in its Answer, the Respondent is not opposed to CAS staying the effects of the decision enabling the Appellant to contest the elections.”

25. On 31 July 2025, the President of the CAS Appeals Arbitration Division issued the following decision on the Appellant’s request for provisional measures:

“a. The request for stay of execution filed by Ms Aminata Bangura on 24 July 2025 in the matter CAS 2025/A/11613 Aminata Bangura v. Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA) is granted.

b. Ms Aminata Bangura is declared eligible to stand in the presidential election of the Sierra Leone Football Association, to be held on 2 August 2025.

c. The costs of the present Order shall be determined in the final award or any other final disposition of this arbitration.”

26. On 5 August 2025, the Appellant requested the CAS Court Office to exempt her from the payment of the advance of costs on the basis that the SLFA Ethics Board Decision was a disciplinary decision issued by a federation, applying Article R65.2 of the CAS Code.
27. On 6 August 2025, the CAS Court Office notified the Appellant that for Article R65.2 of the CAS Code to apply, a disciplinary decision needed to be issued by an international federation or sports body. In circumstances where the SLFA Ethics Board Decision was issued by the SLFA (i.e. not an international federation) Article R65 of the CAS Code does not apply. The Appellant was invited to pay the advance of costs in accordance with Article R64 of the CAS Code, which was received on 16 October 2025.
28. On 20 October 2025, the CAS Court Office invited the Respondent to file its Answer to the Appellant’s Appeal Brief. It also notified the Parties that pursuant to Article R54 of the CAS Code, the Panel was constituted as follows:
- Sole Arbitrator: Mr Mark Andrew Hovell, Solicitor in Manchester, United Kingdom
29. On 18 November 2025, the Respondent filed its Answer with the CAS Court Office in accordance with Article R55 of the CAS Code, following extensions granted by

the CAS Court Office.

30. On 10 December 2025, following a period of consultation with the Parties, the CAS Court Office confirmed that the matter would be heard by the Sole Arbitrator at a virtual hearing on 21 January 2026.
31. On 11 December 2025, the CAS Court Office circulated a copy of the Order of Procedure to the Parties.
32. On 12 December 2025 and 16 December 2025 respectively, the Respondent and the Appellant returned their signed copies of the Order of Procedure to the CAS Court Office.

IV. THE HEARING

33. On 21 January 2026, a hearing was held by video conference. At the outset of the hearing, the Parties confirmed that they had no objection to the appointment of the Sole Arbitrator, nor how the procedure had been conducted to that point. However, the Respondent complained about late evidence which it claimed the Appellant had introduced, in breach of Article R57(3) of the CAS Code. This matter is dealt with below, at Section X.
34. In addition to the Sole Arbitrator and Mr Andrés Redondo (CAS Counsel), the following people attended the hearing by videoconference:

- i. For the Appellant : Madame Aminata Bangura (the Appellant)
Mr Paolo Torchetti (lead counsel)
Mr Alusine Conteh (witness)
Mr Ibrahim Kamara (expert witness)
Mr Benjamin Gordon (observer)
- ii. For the Respondent : Mr Siman Allie Mans-Conteh (lead counsel)
Mr Africanus Sorie Sesay (counsel)
Mr Babadi Kamara (SLFA president)
Mr Mohamed Benson Bawoh (SLFA Acting General Secretary)
Mr Kewku Lisk (SLFA Executive Committee Member)

Mr Brima Koroma (counsel)

Mr Abu Bakarr Sheriff (witness)

Mr Brima Turay (witness)

Mr Emmanuel Wanna Conteh (counsel)

Mr Ibrahim Shaw (counsel)

Mr Alpha Umaru Ba (counsel)

35. The Sole Arbitrator heard opening and closing submissions from the legal representatives for the Parties. The Sole Arbitrator instructed the witnesses and the expert to tell the truth, subject to the sanctions of perjury under Swiss law. The Parties and the Sole Arbitrator had the opportunity to examine and cross-examine the Appellant, the witnesses and the expert.
36. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Parties stated that they had no objections in respect of their right to be heard and equal treatment in the arbitration proceedings.

V. SUBMISSIONS OF THE PARTIES AND REQUESTS FOR RELIEF

37. This section of the Award does not contain an exhaustive list of the Parties' contentions, its aim being to provide a summary of the substance of the Parties' main arguments. In considering and deciding upon the Parties' claims in this Award, the Sole Arbitrator has accounted for and carefully considered all of the submissions made and evidence adduced by the Parties, including allegations and arguments not mentioned in this section of the Award or in the discussion of the claims below.

A. The Appellant's Position

38. As to the merits of her appeal, the Appellant made the following requests for relief in her joint Statement of Appeal and Appeal Brief:

"[...]"

3. *On the merits, to accept this appeal against the Decision rendered by the SLFA Ethics Board:*
 - a. *vacating the decision of the 18/19 July 2025;*
 - b. *finding that the Appellant satisfied the eligibility criteria and passed the integrity check;*
 - c. *declaring that the Appellant is eligible to stand for the elections for the 2025 SLFA presidency;*

- d. declaring that the Appellant never violated the SLFA Code of Ethics; and*
- e. eliminating all fines and penalties in that Decision.*

4. *In any event the Appellant requests that the Panel issue an award where:*

- a. the Respondent pays the entire cost of the CAS proceedings;*
- b. the Respondent pays the legal fees and costs in the amount of 20,000 CHF.”*

39. A summary of the Appellant’s position follows.

a. The Appellant has satisfied the Eligibility and Integrity Check

- 40. The applicable eligibility requirements stem from Article 9 of the SLFA Electoral Code and Annex A of the SLFA Constitution.
- 41. The eligibility criteria fall into two categories: first, the formal requirements (namely, citizenship, 5-year residence, 5-year football involvement, sound mind); and second, integrity check requirements (i.e., no criminal conviction or sanction, no sanction by FIFA/other sporting bodies raising doubts about suitability).
- 42. The SLFA Electoral Committee had previously confirmed that the Appellant met all formal requirements (the first set of criteria).
- 43. The only issue before CAS is whether the integrity check was satisfied (the second set of criteria).
- 44. Under Annex A of the SLFA Constitution, integrity check failures arise only where:
 - a. The candidate has criminal convictions/sanctions; or
 - b. Has been found guilty or sanctioned by FIFA or another sporting body.
- 45. The Appellant:
 - a. Has never been convicted, sanctioned, or found guilty by any state court or sporting body;
 - b. Has no criminal record, subsequently confirmed by the Sierra Leone High Court;
 - c. Has never been sanctioned by FIFA, CAF or the SLFA.
- 46. Therefore, she passed the integrity check and ought to have been declared eligible.

b. There was no forgery or falsification

47. The SLFA Ethics Board accused the Appellant of violating Article 15 of the SLFA Code of Ethics (forgery/falsification).
48. Under the SLFA Code of Ethics, the standard of proof is “comfortable satisfaction” and the burden of proving the alleged violation lies entirely on the SLFA Ethics Committee/Board.
49. It is the Appellant’s position that:
- a. The SLFA’s factual assertions are false.
 - b. She personally attended the police bureau on 9 June 2025; her fingerprints were taken while she was in her car, as instructed by the police.
 - c. Her driver collected the certificate the next day.
 - d. The rescission letter relied on by SLFA is either incorrect or fabricated, particularly because:
 - The official simply “did not see” her, which does not mean she was not present.
 - The same official signed both the original certificate and the rescission.
50. The Appellant set out the events of 9 and 10 June 2025 in her Statement of Appeal, as follows:

“The Appellant was collected by her driver, Mr. Alusine Conteh the 9 June 2025.

The Appellant was first taken to the polices services [sic] division to pay the required fee to undertake the police clearance check.

The Appellant paid the required fee the 9 June 2025.

Unfortunately, the Appellant cannot locate the receipt as at the time did not think that her presence on 9 June 2025 would be in issue.

From there, it was necessary to attend to the particular department where fingerprints shall be taken, and the actual police clearance will be undertaken.

The Appellant was driven to the Name Check and Fingerprints Classification Test at the Criminal Investigations Department Headquarters (C.I.D. HQ.) -Freetown, driven by Mr. Alusine Conteh.

On that day it was quite busy and it appeared that there was police training occupying the grounds.

The driver, Mr. Alusine Conteh, walked into the building to ask and enquire how

the process would be completed.

This was done while the Appellant waited in the car.

An official from the Name Check and Fingerprints Classification Test at the Criminal Investigations Department Headquarters (C.I.D. HQ.) exited the building and came to the car where the Appellant was waiting.

There, the Appellant provided all information and documents to the official directly, from the car, where she was waiting.

Specifically, the official took the Appellant's fingerprints, the 9 June 2025, from the car, at the Name Check and Fingerprints Classification Test at the Criminal Investigations Department Headquarters.

The Appellant never entered the building as she was instructed by officials of the Name Check and Fingerprints Classification Test at the Criminal Investigations Department Headquarters, from the car.

Once the Appellant provided the documents and fingerprints, the official from the Name Check and Fingerprints Classification Test at the Criminal Investigations Department Headquarters told her that it was not necessary to wait to receive the issued physical police clearance document.

The police official told the Appellant that she can go on with her day, and that her driver can return to pick up the police clearance form when it is ready.

The Appellant driven by her driver left the headquarters on this advice the 9 June 2025.

The Appellant's driver returned to the Name Check and Fingerprints Classification Test at the Criminal Investigations Department Headquarters to pick up the police clearance certificate on behalf of the Appellant the 10 June 2025. "

51. Additionally, the High Court letter (4 July 2025) further confirms no criminal proceedings, supporting the Appellant's credibility.
52. CAS jurisprudence (e.g., CAS 2011/A/2426 and CAS 2011/A/2625) establishes that where multiple plausible explanations exist, the SLFA Ethics Committee cannot reach comfortable satisfaction. Specifically, the SLFA's factual findings in an integrity-check case was previously overturned in CAS 2021/A/7875.
53. The Appellant's evidence is therefore corroborated, contemporaneous and reliable. The Respondent has not met the burden of proof, and therefore no forgery or falsification can be established.

c. Article 15 of the SLFA Code of Ethics

54. Article 15 SLFA Code of Ethics is identical to Article 25 of the FIFA Code of Ethics (forgery/falsification).
55. As per CAS jurisprudence:
 - a. Interpretation must follow the plain wording (CAS 2017/A/5356).
 - b. CAS jurisprudence states that forgery cannot be committed negligently (CAS 2018/A/5769).
56. There is no evidence that the Appellant forged a document, falsified a document, or used a forged or falsified document.
57. Since she did attend the police bureau and obtained the certificate properly, the conditions for Article 15 cannot be met. Her position was that the police clearance certificate was validly issued and should not have been rescinded.
58. Therefore, the Appellant did not violate Article 15 – neither intentionally nor negligently.

d. No forgery or falsification under Sierra Leone Law

59. The Appellant submitted a legal opinion by Ibrahim A. Kamara on Sierra Leone Law. The opinion confirms that, under Sierra Leone domestic law, the facts do not constitute forgery or falsification.
60. This supports the conclusion that the accusation is legally unfounded both under sporting regulations and domestic law.

B. The Respondent's Position

61. The Respondent made the following requests for relief in its Answer:

“Prayer 1: CAS shall declare the Appeal inadmissible.

Prayer 2: In the alternative of Prayer 1, the Appeal shall be dismissed.

Prayer 3: In any event, the decision of the SLFA Ethics Board shall be confirmed in its entirety.

Prayer 4: Aminata Bangura shall be ordered to bear the costs of the arbitration and she shall be ordered to contribute to the legal fees incurred by the Respondent.”

62. On a preliminary basis, the Sole Arbitrator notes that, although the Respondent requested in its Answer that the appeal be declared inadmissible (see Prayer 1 above), it did not advance any argument capable of rendering the appeal inadmissible under the provisions of the CAS Code.

63. Having clarified the above, a summary of the Respondent’s position follows.

a. Scope of Integrity Checks and powers of the SLFA Ethics Board

64. The Appellant failed to demonstrate compliance with the SLFA Code of Ethics, which is why she failed the integrity check.
65. Article 32(2) of the SLFA Constitution mandates that all candidates undergo an integrity check conducted by the SLFA Ethics Board.
66. Annex A confirms that integrity checks cover not just criminal wrongdoing but ethical conduct and integrity generally, a point emphasised in the SLFA Ethics Board Decision.
67. Paragraph 72 of the SLFA Ethics Board Decision stresses that forgery/falsification under Article 15 is an ethical matter, not a criminal one, and the purpose of the SLFA Code of Ethics is to uphold high ethical standards.
68. Articles 4(1) and 3(3) of the SLFA Code of Ethics emphasise that only persons with a high degree of ethics, integrity, credibility and dignified conduct may serve as officials. The Respondent rejects the Appellant’s argument that integrity checks should be confined to the narrow items in Annex A(4) of the SLFA Constitution.
69. Under Annex A(3) of the SLFA Constitution, candidates must act in good faith, fully collaborate, and adequately explain irregularities. Failure to cooperate results in an automatic failure of the integrity check.
70. The SLFA Ethics Board was “*comfortably satisfied*” (the applicable standard in disciplinary cases) that misconduct occurred in the way the police clearance was obtained.

b. Using a falsified document

71. The Respondent clarifies that it was an independent petitioner Mr Abdul Ahmed Bangura on behalf of the Bo District Football Association, and not the SLFA, who invoked Article 15 of the SLFA Code of Ethics (forgery/falsification), and the SLFA Ethics Board was duty-bound to consider it.
72. The SLFA Ethics Board applied a purposive interpretation of Article 15 of the Code of Ethics and concluded that serious doubts existed concerning the validity of the police clearance, which legally barred the Appellant from passing the integrity test.
73. Using a forged or falsified document is itself a standalone violation — even if the candidate did not personally forge it.
74. The police confirmation that the Appellant did not undergo fingerprint examination and that the certificate was issued based on a false declaration of a proxy was central evidence.

75. Procedures for fingerprinting must be done in a police facility, not in a car; therefore the process described by the Appellant could not be considered “regular”.
76. CAS jurisprudence (*TAS 2022/A/9175 and 9176*) confirms that falsified documents include both materially false documents and documents containing false information (*faux matériel and faux intellectuel*).

c. Duty of honesty

77. Individuals are required to act with truthfulness, full cooperation, and good faith under Article 20(1) of the SLFA Code of Ethics.
78. The Appellant did not disclose her “fingerprinting-in-a-car” account at the SLFA Ethics Board hearing; this explanation appeared for the first time in the Appeal, undermining her credibility.
79. Article 20(4) of the SLFA Code of Ethics prohibits concealing material facts or making misleading statements – the Appellant breached this by giving inconsistent explanations and by answering “yes” when asked if she attended CID Headquarters in person. This was found to be untruthful; and dishonesty seriously undermines integrity in football governance.
80. The combination of (i) using an invalid/falsified clearance and (ii) giving untruthful answers justified the finding that she was ineligible to hold office.

d. Failure to pass due diligence requirements

81. The Appellant failed to follow the established procedures for fingerprinting/biometric checks. Claims that she “*followed correct procedures*” are therefore inaccurate.
82. Fingerprinting in a car is not a recognised or lawful method except in circumstances relating to arrest, which was not the case.
83. No details were provided of the police officer allegedly involved (name, rank, ID), undermining reliability. The SLFA Ethics Board never received this information.
84. The Appellant stated she lost the original receipt but did not attempt to obtain a certified copy—something considered a basic step if she genuinely paid. This omission was highlighted as demonstrating lack of due diligence.
85. The Respondent submits the Appellant failed to provide comfortable satisfaction that she underwent authentic fingerprinting or that payment was made on 9 June 2025.

e. Final submissions

86. Disciplinary proceedings are not criminal; the standard is “comfortable satisfaction,” which the SLFA Ethics Board applied correctly.

87. The Appellant breached Article 15 of the SLFA Code of Ethics (falsification) and Article 20 of the SLFA Code of Ethics (duty of honesty).
88. The SLFA Ethics Board afforded procedural fairness and complied with all applicable rules.
89. CAS jurisprudence (CAS 2017/O/5264, 5265 & 5266) grants deference to sports bodies' factual findings unless manifestly unreasonable; the SLFA Ethics Board's decision and sanctions fall within this accepted margin. A one-year ban (i.e., within the two-year maximum) was proportionate and consistent with CAS principles (CAS 2016/A/4921 & 4922). Sanction levels should only be modified by CAS if "evidently and grossly disproportionate".

VI. Summary of the evidence at the Hearing

90. At the Hearing, the Sole Arbitrator heard from the Appellant herself, Mr Alusine Conteh (her driver), Mr Abu Bakarr Sheriff (the Chair of the Ethics Board), Mr Brima Turay (a retired policeman) and Mr Ibrahim Kamara (an expert on Sierra Leone law). What follows is a brief summary of key points taken from their testimony at the Hearing and a comparison with the written testimony.

A. The Appellant

91. Before the Hearing, the Appellant provided a written affidavit, which set out her version of the events of 9 and 10 June 2025:

"That on 9th June 2025, I went with my driver to the Central Police Station to make the necessary payment to enable me to obtain a police clearance form. A payment of Nle 50 (Fifty New Leones) was made and a receipt for the said payment issued to me.

That after payment of the said amount and issuance of the said receipt, my driver and I proceeded to the CID HQ at Pademba Road, Freetown where I was meant to obtain the Police Clearance.

That on reaching at CID HQ, it was very busy and crowded and my driver went in and brought along a gentleman in plain clothes who presented himself to be a police officer.

That the said Police officer took me into the compound but since the place was so crowded he asked for us to stay downstairs. He then took all my necessary documents and the receipt for the clearance.

That after some time, the officer came with a form for the police clearance. I filled in all the necessary information and signed.

That he went upstairs and later brought a thumbprint ink pad and took my thumbprint, he informed me that he will get back to me shortly after the clearance

is ready.

That after a day he called me and told me that the police clearance was ready, I was really tied up then and I asked if my driver could pick it up and he agreed.

That I later sent my driver to collect the police clearance dated 10th June 2025 with No. 30425, which he did [...]

[...]

That I will state in no uncertain terms that contrary to what the Ethics Board said in paragraph 78 of its decision, all through the Ethics Board interview no panel member asked me whether I did fingerprint at CID HQ or not.”

92. At the Hearing, her version of events of 9 and 10 June 2025 was largely consistent with the affidavit, however:

- She paid the Nle 50 (Fifty New Leones) in cash and was given a receipt.
- When she went to the CID headquarters, the car parked outside and she went in and got one of the police officers to come to the car, as the place was packed – full of new recruits. She gave him the receipt.
- He brought the application form and they completed it in the car. He went back in the building for an ink pad. He returned and took her fingerprints in the car. The police officer told her everything was done and she could get the certificate the next day. She asked if that was the end of the process and he said “yes”.
- Her driver returned on 10 June 2025 to collect the certificate. He had exchanged numbers with the police officer. The officer had called him to say the certificate was ready to collect.
- When questioned about losing the receipt, as opposed to giving the receipt to the police officer, she stated that she had lost the copy of the receipt. When asked how she copied the receipt, she stated that the driver stopped between the police station and the CID headquarters to copy it at an internet café.
- After the hearing with the SLFA Ethics Board she rang the police officer’s number to obtain a copy of the receipt she gave him. He never answered his phone/it didn’t go through. She did not take a note of his name or ID number, as she did not think there was an issue with the process he followed.
- She was asked to clarify whether she stayed in the car or went into the CID headquarters building. She confirmed that she was initially inside the building. It was the police officer’s suggestion to go back to the car, as the building was packed.

93. On other matters, the Appellant explained that she had been involved in football since 2011 and was looking to become the SLFA President, as she felt the SLFA was too close to the country's ruling party and that it was a male dominated space.
94. At the hearing before the SLFA Ethics Board, whilst being heard on the petition against her (she had confirmed her residency and experience in football already) she was questioned about the police clearance process. She was asked if she was present at the CID headquarters and she answered "yes". She also answered "yes" when asked if she had provided her fingerprints. She was never specifically asked where the fingerprints were taken.
95. There was then a break and she saw the Chair of the Ethics Board go to the toilet with the lawyer of the petitioner and return with a brown envelope. After the break, the Chair handed a copy of the Police letter rescinding her certificate. Her lawyer stated that they would get a new police certificate within 48 hours. It should have taken 24 hours to get it, yet she's been waiting 6 months for it.
96. She did go back to the police station, pay the Nle 50 (Fifty New Leones) fee again, then went back to the CID headquarters, she gave her fingerprints again. She also spoke with the Head of the CID, who told her he had made a mistake, but also wanted to speak to her driver. He was ill that day and was in Liberia. A sick letter was sent to him the next day to verify this.
97. When asked about the process the second time, she maintained that her fingerprints were taken manually, not electronically.
98. Finally, there were minutes taken of the SLFA Ethics Board hearing, but she never got to approve them, nor saw them until they were disclosed to her counsel, as part of the process at CAS.

B. Mr Conteh

99. Before the Hearing, Mr Conteh provided a short written witness statement:

"That on the 9th of June 2025, I drove Ms. Bangura to the Central Police Station for the purpose of making payment to obtain a police clearance form.

That according to her, the form was paid for at the cost of NLe 50 (Fifty New Leones).

That after the payment was made, I drove Ms. Bangura to the CID Headquarters at Pademba Road, Freetown, where the police clearance was to be processed.

That upon arrival, the premises were heavily crowded, and I entered the compound to inquire about the process. I returned with a gentleman in plain clothes who introduced himself as a police officer and offered to assist with the clearance procedure.

That the said officer and I entered the CID compound, and he instructed me to remain downstairs. He collected all necessary documents from Ms. Bangura, including the receipt for the clearance payment.

That after some time, the officer returned with the police clearance form, which Ms. Bangura completed and signed in my presence.

That the officer subsequently brought an ink pad and took her thumbprint, informing her that he would contact her once the clearance was ready.

That I obtained the officer's personal contact number (033002274) in order to follow up on the status of the document.

That on the following day, Ms. Bangura requested that I return to the CID Headquarters to collect the completed police clearance on her behalf.

That I collected the police clearance dated 10th June 2025.”

100. At the Hearing, his version of events of 9 and 10 June 2025 developed, as follows:

- He remembered stopping to take a photocopy of the payment receipt;
- He was the one to enter the CID Headquarters, having parked his car outside the compound. He found the police officer, who then took him back to the car and guided him into the compound where he parked the car.
- He mentioned that the Appellant was not well, so she stayed in the car. He went back into the building with the police officer and they then returned to the car with the application form and ink stamp. Everything was done in the car and in front of him.
- He exchanged numbers with the police officer and called him the next day. He was told the certificate was ready, so he collected it.

C. Mr Abu Bakarr Sheriff

101. Before the Hearing, Mr Sheriff provided a written witness statement, which stated, *inter alia*, the following:

“While waiting for the petition hearing date for Ms Aminata Bangura, we resolved to pursue the question of the authenticity of the police clearance.

As part of this process, and upon agreement with entire Board I wrote a letter dated 7 July 2025 to the Inspector General of Police.

[...]

I received a reply letter dated 9 July 2025 from ACP Allieu Jalloh, Head of Criminal Investigations Department. The reply letter stated inter alia:

"Ms. Aminata Bangura was not seen in person at Finger Print Bureau and therefore did not go through the finger print examination'.

[...]

That reply came to me and I kept custody of this letter until the date for the hearing.

[...]

I recall that during the interview with other candidates they all mentioned they went to a specific room in the CID Building and got their fingerprints done.

After laying out to Aminata Bangura the allegations in the petition I asked her to guide the Ethics Board on the process of how she obtained the police clearance.

She explained to the Board that she did attend in-person at the CID headquarters and followed the usual regular process of fingerprint examination, which included having her name checked and finger print done in a specifically assigned room.

I presented the Letter rescinding the police clearance that she had submitted to the Board.

Her team of 2 Lawyers immediately asked for a 5-minutes stand down, but I told them to take as long as they need. I estimate it lasted for around 15 minutes.

On their return they insisted she presented herself for the police clearance.

They also made a statement that 'if the Police had revoked the first clearance, they will take steps to procure another one'.

I told them it was their prerogative, but considered this as an admission that the police clearance had been obtained outside of the regular process. ”

102. At the Hearing, his version of events was examined and he stated the following:

- Having initially stated that he did not believe he was duty bound to have shared the rescission letter of 9 July 2025 from the police with the Appellant before the hearing on 12 July 2025, he admitted that he had kept it to himself (not even shared with the rest of the SLFA Ethics Board) to confront the Appellant with it during the hearing.

- He had asked each of the candidates about the process they undertook as regards having their fingerprints taken. The Appellant said she was present at the CID headquarters and that she went to a specific room to have the finger prints taken. She never mentioned that she had this done in her car.
- Once he had produced the rescission letter, the Appellant's legal team asked for and were granted a break. He was surprised that they said they would obtain a new clearance certificate.
- He explained that it was usual practice to impose disciplinary sanctions whilst considering candidates integrity checks, if they had breached the SLFA Code of Ethics.
- He confirmed that whilst he did not draft the minutes of the hearing, he had approved the minutes. When asked why there was no reference to her saying she had gone into a specific room and the like in the minutes, he felt that the reference to her stating she had followed "*the regular process*" accurately summarised what she said. Also, she never mentioned the car.
- He and the SLFA Ethics Board were comfortably satisfied that she had not been truthful with them. When asked what it was that enabled him to arrive at this decision he stated that it was the outcome of his investigation after the petition that resulted in the rescission letter and the Report (that stated that all but 2 of the candidates were properly seen at the CID and had their fingerprints taken there) from the police; along with her untruthfulness when asked about the process she had followed.

D. Mr Brima Turay

103. Before the Hearing, Mr Turay provided a written witness statement, which stated, *inter alia*, the following:

"Before applying for a police clearance at the Criminal Investigations Department located at Pademba Road, Freetown. an applicant must have paid at the Central Police station located at Wallace Johnson Street, Freetown.

At the CID, applicants seeking a police clearance register their name, address, and telephone number and a column for signature.

Upon presentation of the payment receipt, the CID will then issue a police clearance application form.

There is a section on the form requiring the purpose of the clearance. In the case of Ms Aminata Bangura, it was for vetting purposes.

Thereafter, you proceed to Room 22 on the 1st floor. A manual finger print examination is conducted whereby your fingers are then laid on an ink slab from

the thumb to last finger on both hands.

The Applicant is then expected to proceed next door to Room 23 to obtain an electronic finger print examination done on a screen.

Officers in charge of both manual and electronic section endorse and sign on the application form.

The documents are then taken to the Chief Clerk's Office in Room 27 on the 2nd floor. These documents are catalogued in a book and sent to the Secretaries' Pool for the actual police clearance to be typed using information obtained from the manual & electronic fingerprint records.

[...]

I did not see Aminata Bangura submit herself for the finger print & name check. I did not also see the form she submitted to commence the process.

When this issue became a matter of national concern I was summoned by the Head of CID after he received an enquiry letter from the Sierra Leone Football Association.

I informed him that I never set eyes on Ms Aminata Bangura.

In that meeting he demanded that I prepare a report on all of the SLFA applicants who were to have reported in person for their police clearance.

In the police line of duty, I am the Head of my unit and I was the only person authorised to sign police clearance application forms.

I was on duty and available during the period of 9 to 10 June 2025 when it is reported that Ms Aminata Bangura came to the CID and was issued with a police clearance.

An investigation was conducted and it was determined that Ms Aminata Bangura had breached our system and obtained a police clearance without submitting herself in person for a fingerprint and name check."

104. At the Hearing, his version of events of 9 and 10 June 2025 was examined and he made the following additional points:

- He had recently retired from the police.
- He restated that the fingerprint tests are both the manual ink pad version and the electronic version, carried out in 2 separate rooms. In his 35 years as a police officer and as head of the unit responsible for taking fingerprints, he

had never taken them from someone sat outside in a car.

- He was the person with responsibility for the fingerprinting. When he was away or on holiday, he would then delegate that to a colleague, but he was present and working on 9 and 10 June 2025.
- He was shown a copy of the clearance certificate. He acknowledged that it was on the proper headed notepaper of the CID, it had the official CID stamps applied to it, it bore a typical reference number, the wording within it were as he would expect to see and it had been signed by the Head of the CID. He could not say how all this had been done, but he maintained the proper process was not followed, as she failed to pass through his department.

E. The Expert

105. Finally Mr Ibrahim Kamara was also heard as an expert on Sierra Leone law, however, his testimony was withdrawn by the Appellant's counsel towards the end of the Hearing, so it has not been summarised.

VII. JURISDICTION OF THE CAS

106. The jurisdiction of the CAS is derived from Article R47 of the CAS code, which provides that:

“An appeal against the decision of a federation, association or sports-related body, may be filed with the CAS insofar as the statutes or regulations of the said body so provide or as the parties have concluded a specific arbitration agreement and insofar as the Appellant has exhausted the legal remedies available to him prior to the appeal, in accordance with the statutes or regulations of the said sports related body”

107. The Appellant relies on Article 65(1) of the SLFA Constitution (Ed. 2019), which provides, *inter alia*, as follows:

“1. Disputes within SLFA or disputes affecting Members of SLFA, leagues, members of leagues, clubs, members of clubs, players and officials may only be referred in the last instance (i.e. after exhaustion of all internal channels within SLFA) to CAS, which shall settle the dispute definitively to the exclusion of any ordinary court, unless expressly prohibited by the legislation in the Republic of Sierra Leone.”

108. Additionally, the Appellant relies on Article 72 of the SLFA Code of Ethics (Ed. 2020), which provides, *inter alia*, as follows:

“Article 72. Court of Arbitration for Sport

- (i) With the exception of Article 69 par. 1 above, decisions taken by the Ethics Committee in its Adjudicating capacity are final, subject to appeals lodged with*

the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in accordance with the relevant provisions of the FIFA Statutes.

(ii) *The aforementioned decisions may also be appealed at CAS by the aggrieved party.”*

109. Finally, the Appellant refers to paragraph 97 of the SLFA Ethics Board Decision, which reads as follows:

“All aggrieved persons are at liberty to lodge an appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sports in that the Committee sat in its adjudicatory capacity, pursuant to Article 72(1) and (2) of the Ethics Code.”

110. The Respondent has not challenged the jurisdiction of the CAS to hear the present matter.

111. It therefore follows that the CAS has jurisdiction to determine this matter.

VIII. ADMISSIBILITY

112. According to Article R49 of the Code, “[i]n the absence of a time limit set in the statutes or regulations of the federation, association or sports-related body concerned, or in a previous agreement, the time limit for appeal shall be twenty-one days from the receipt of the decision appealed against”. None of the SLFA regulations provides for any other specific time limit.

113. The SLFA Ethics Board Decision was notified to the Appellant on 19 July 2025. The Appellant filed her Statement of Appeal (serving as Appeal Brief) on 24 July 2025.

114. Although the Respondent sought a declaration of inadmissibility, it advanced no argument capable of sustaining that request under the Code (see para. 62 above). The Sole Arbitrator has verified that the Appellant filed her Statement of Appeal within the time limit prescribed by Article R49 of the Code and, having conducted a careful examination, has identified no potential admissibility defects.

115. The appeal is therefore admissible.

IX. APPLICABLE LAW

116. Article R58 of the CAS Code provides that:

“The Panel shall decide the dispute according to the applicable regulations and, subsidiarily, to the rules of law chosen by the parties or, in the absence of such a choice, according to the law of the country in which the federation, association or sports-related body which has issued the challenged decision is domiciled or according to the rules of law the Panel deems appropriate. In the latter case, the Panel shall give reasons for its decision.”

117. The Appellant submits that the applicable regulations are the SLFA Constitution, the SLFA Ethics Code and the SLFA Electoral Code and that the SLFA Constitution cross-refers to the “*codes of ethics of FIFA, CAF and SLFA*”. As such, the applicable laws are the SLFA Constitution, SLFA Electoral Code, the SLFA Code of Ethics and, subsidiarily, Swiss law. The Appellant initially submitted that Sierra Leonean domestic law on forgery should also apply, however, the reference to this was withdrawn at the Hearing.
118. The Respondent submits that “*Article 66 paragraph 1 of the SLFA Statutes stipulate that the Regulations of FIFA, CAF and SLFA are applicable on the merits*” and that as a result, the “*various Regulations of FIFA, CAF or SLFA will be applicable [...] and if need be Swiss law as a last resort*”.
119. The Sole Arbitrator notes that it is undisputed that the various regulations of SLFA apply to this appeal. Sierra Leonean law will apply subsidiarily on the basis that the SLFA and the SLFA Ethics Board are domiciled in Sierra Leone, however, the Appellant’s reliance on Sierra Leone law were abandoned at the Hearing. Whilst FIFA and CAF regulations were referred to in passing by the Parties, it is only the SLFA Statutes (2019 edition) and Regulations (the SLFA Code of Ethics, 2020 edition) that have any bearing in the case at hand.

X. PRELIMINARY ISSUE

120. The Respondent objected to the admission of late evidence that would have been available to the Appellant at the first instance hearing, citing Article R57(3) of the CAS Code.
121. The Respondent alleged that the Appellant would have been aware that she allegedly had her fingerprints taken by the police in her car on 9 June 2025, yet failed to disclose this to the SLFA Ethics Board on 12 July 2025. She should not be able now to advance this version of events and look to have it supported by the evidence of her driver, Mr Conteh.
122. The Sole Arbitrator notes that it is of great importance for the Sole Arbitrator not to be fettered in his ability to understand the sequence of events to the matter at hand and to hear both Parties with their respective versions.
123. The Appellant denies that she was asked about where she had her fingerprints taken, whereas Mr Sheriff claims he asked her that question. The Appellant has provided evidence (her affidavit and Mr Conteh’s written statement) to advance her position. Likewise, Mr Sheriff has produced a written statement, with copies of correspondence with the CID, which the Respondent relies upon.
124. There is no “bad faith” in producing these at this stage, by either Party. Rather, a disputed issue has arisen out of the Appealed Decision. This needs reviewing.
125. This is not a case where Article R57(3) of the CAS Code applies. It is simply a case

of the Parties advancing points that have become relevant as a result of the Appealed Decision. The Respondent's objection is denied.

XI. MERITS

126. At the outset, the Sole Arbitrator would like to stress that there was no evidence before him that the Appellant has a criminal record. It seemed undisputed that there was a High Court clearance confirming that she had no criminal record.
127. However, she sought to rely upon the police clearance certificate, that was subsequently rescinded. There are allegations that this was forged or falsified. Again, it seems undisputed that the Appellant is not being accused of physically forging or falsifying a document herself, rather using a document that was forged or falsified. In the Appealed Decision this had two implications. One was that this use was itself a breach of the SLFA Code of Ethics and she was sanctioned pursuant to Article 15 of the SLFA Code of Ethics; and secondly her version of events concerning how she procured this document, which was not believed by the SLFA Ethics Board, struck at her integrity and was a breach of Article 20 of the SLFA Code of Ethics, providing the grounds for finding her ineligible to contest the Presidential elections.
128. The Sole Arbitrator notes that there was a fair amount of “noise” during the Hearing. References to political influence, brown envelopes, knowledge of the structure of the grass roots football in Sierra Leone and the like. The key issues were whether a falsified document was used by the Appellant and whether she should have passed her integrity checks or not. The noise was of no assistance to the Sole Arbitrator, and it was disregarded.
129. As such, the Sole Arbitrator considers that the following issues are to be determined on the merits:
 - a. In relation to Article 15 of the SLFA Code of Ethics, did the SLFA Ethics Board have the power to issue disciplinary sanctions on the Appellant?
 - b. If so, was the police clearance certificate forged or falsified?
 - c. If so, did the Appellant use it?
 - d. If so, were the sanctions issued proportionate?
 - e. In relation to the integrity/eligibility tests, which were to be applied to the Appellant?
 - f. Did she pass those tests?
 - g. If not, what are the consequences for the Appellant?
- i. The powers of the SLFA Ethics Board

130. The SLFA Ethics Board subjected the Appellant to the SLFA Code of Ethics and to its Constitution.

131. The SLFA Code of Ethics states as follows:

“2.0 SCOPE OF APPLICATION

Article 2.0 Natural persons

1. This Code, applies to all officials and or persons. Officials and or persons includes SLFA Executive Members, all board members of SLFA and regional accredited leagues, committee including judicial bodies, members, referees and assistant referees, coaches, trainers and any other persons responsible for technical, medical and administrative matters in SLFA and other regional bodies, association, league or club. This also covers all other persons obliged to comply with the SLFA Codes and Regulations.” [emphasis added]

132. The Sole Arbitrator notes that “*all officials and or persons*” is defined in the SLFA Code of Ethics as:

“These are officially assigned persons or individuals who partake in accredited SLFA, CAF and FIFA, league, club competitions, Local confederations, and football related activities” [emphasis added].

133. The Sole Arbitrator notes that the Appellant is the General Manager of SLIFA Football Club, a Premier League Club in Sierra Leone. Additionally, the Sole Arbitrator notes that the Appellant signed and filed with the Ethics Board the Questionnaire for Integrity Checks (which appears as Part 3 of Annex A to the SLFA Constitution), which states:

“4 I am fully aware that I am subject to the provisions of the Disciplinary and Ethics Code of SLFA and to the provisions of the Statutes and other regulations of SLFA that may address integrity issues, and I fully comply with such provisions” [emphasis added].

134. Whether by virtue of her role at the club or by virtue of her application to stand as President of the SLFA and signing Annex A, the Appellant bound herself to comply with the SLFA Statutes and the SLFA Code of Ethics.

135. Pursuant to the SLFA Constitution, Article 20(2):

“The President, the Vice-presidents and the members of the Executive Committee shall be elected in accordance with article 25 of these statutes. They shall undergo an integrity check in accordance with Annex A of this Constitution, to be conducted by the Ethics Board, prior to their election or re-election” [emphasis added].

136. As such, the Appellant was subject to the integrity checks as detailed in Annex A, as

follows:

“Part 1: General provisions

1 The integrity checks with regard to candidates for, and holders of, official positions within SLFA that are subject to such checks (“candidates or holders”) shall be conducted by the relevant body in accordance with the provisions of these Statutes and this annexe.

2 Candidates or holders are obliged to comply with the screening and self-disclosure process as outlined in parts 2 and 3 below. Prior to the screening process, every candidate or holder shall give his written consent to said process through a form provided by the relevant body conducting the integrity check. If such written consent is not provided, the candidate or holder shall be deemed not to have passed the integrity check.

3 Candidates or holders shall act in good faith at all times and shall fully collaborate to establish the relevant facts upon reasonable notice. If the candidate or holder concerned does not cooperate with the body competent to conduct the integrity check, the candidate or holder shall be deemed not to have passed the integrity check.

4 The candidate or holder shall be deemed not to have passed the integrity check, if he:

a) has been subject to criminal convictions or disciplinary sanctions by a state court, in particular if the offence in question was a substantive issue and not a minor infraction or procedural misconduct;

b) has been found guilty and/or sentenced by the FIFA Ethics Committee or any other sporting body with a sanction that would seriously put into question the discharge of the office concerned.

[...]

Part 2: Screening process

[...]

3 The body in charge of performing the integrity check may conduct independent research and/or investigations in order to obtain further relevant information on a particular candidate or holder, which may include information on intermediaries and related parties, mandates, potential conflicts of interest and significant participations as well as civil and criminal proceedings/investigations.

[...]

Part 3: Questionnaire

[...]

9 I am fully aware and confirm that I must notify the body conducting the integrity check of any relevant facts and circumstances arising after the integrity check has been completed.

10 I am fully aware and confirm that I am obliged to collaborate fully to establish the relevant facts with regard to the integrity check to which I am subject. In particular, I will comply with requests for any documents, information or any other material of any nature held by me. In addition, I will comply with the procurement and provision of documents, information or any other material of any nature not held by me but which I am entitled to obtain. [...]”

137. The Appellant was also bound by the Code of Ethics, which included the following relevant provisions:

“3.3. Officials and or persons shall show commitment to an ethics attitude while performing their duties. They shall pledge to behave in a dignified manner. They shall behave and act with complete credibility and integrity.

[...]

4.1. Only those persons who demonstrate a high degree of ethics and integrity and pledge to observe the provisions of this Code without reservation are eligible to serve as officials and or persons at all levels of administration of football.

4.2. Persons with criminal record are not eligible if the offence is incompatible with their ability to perform their duties.

4.3. Persons who do not comply with the Code or severely fail to fulfill, or inadequately exercise, their duties and responsibilities, particularly in financial matters, are no longer eligible and shall be removed from office.

4.4. The Ethic committee shall conduct probity test to ensure that all person who intend to participate in the administration and management of football are fit and proper persons to be appointed or to contest for any elected position within the Executive of the Sierra Leone Football Association, regional executive, judicial bodies and all clubs licensed and certified by the SLFA.

[...]

15.1. Officials and or persons bound by this code are forbidden from forging a document, falsifying an authentic document or using a forged or falsified document.

15.2. Violation of this article shall be sanctioned with an appropriate fine of at least Le 5,000,000 (Five Million Leones) as well as a ban on taking part in any football-related activity for a maximum of two years.

[...]

20.1. Persons Bound by this Code shall assist and Cooperate truthfully, fully and in good faith with the Ethics Committee at all times, regardless of whether they are involved in a particular matter as a party, as a witness or in any other role. This requires, inter alia full compliance with the Ethics Committee's requests including without limitation request to clarify facts; provide oral or written testimony; submit information, documents or other material; and disclose details regarding income and finances, if the Ethics Committee deems it to be necessary.

[...]

20.4. In connection with any actual or potential Ethics Committee proceedings, person bound by this Code shall not conceal any material fact; make any materially false or misleading statement or representation; or submit any incomplete, materially false or misleading information or other material.” [emphasis added]

138. The Arbitrator notes that the Appellant has focused on whether she has a criminal record or whether she has been sanctioned by a sporting body, however, it is clear that the Ethics Committee/Board is tasked with upholding the SLFA Code of Ethics. As emphasised above, this involves a wide assessment of candidates. It involves assessing the honesty of candidates, the probity of documents candidates use/rely upon, whether candidates are truthful and act in good faith, and whether the candidates act with integrity and abide the provisions of the SLFA Code of Ethics.
139. The declarations made by the Appellant to be bound by the Code of Ethics (see paragraph 4 of Annex A) is open to be examined by the Ethics Board, as was the validity of the police clearance certificate.
- ii. Was the police clearance certificate forged or falsified?
140. The Sole Arbitrator notes that neither Party was able to explain how the police clearance certificate was produced. Mr Turay, as the former Head of the Fingerprint Bureau at the CID, had undoubtedly seen many such certificates in his time and was able to confirm that the notepaper, the typical reference number, the wording, the stamps, etc. all looked genuine. It appears that the certificate was passed to the Head of the CID to sign, which he did. So to all intents and purposes the certificate looked genuine.
141. However, it seems that an important part of the process to procure a genuine certificate was missed. It was only with the detailed evidence of Mr Turay that the Sole Arbitrator could understand the process to procure a genuine certificate. He clearly submitted that, as far as the fingerprint aspect of the clearance was concerned, all applicants would firstly need to have their fingerprints taken by placing the fingers in an inkpad and then pressing them onto the form, where the print would remain. However, secondly, there needed to be an electronic process, where the applicant puts their fingers onto a screen, which records their fingerprints.

142. Mr Turay additionally prepared the Report and compared the process followed by the other candidates with the Appellant.
143. These two processes are carried out in the CID headquarters, in two different rooms. Only when this has been done, is the process confirmed by Mr Turay (or if he was not present that day, then by a colleague he would delegate the task to. However, he was present on both 9 and 10 June 2025).
144. He was clear that he had never heard of anyone having their fingerprints taken in a car.
145. The Sole Arbitrator could perhaps accept that the manual fingerprinting could have been done in a car, but the applicant would still need to go to the other room inside the building for the electronic fingerprint process. In none of the various accounts given by the Appellant of the events of 9 and 10 June 2025, did she submit that she had been inside the CID headquarters in the room where the electronic test was carried out. Mr Conteh's evidence was that she remained in the car. The Appellant's testimony was eventually that she had her prints taken in the car. There was no evidence that the electronic machine was brought to her, if that might even be possible.
146. The Sole Arbitrator notes that the Appellant's counsel challenged the credibility of Mr Turay. He alleged that Mr Turay could not prove that the certificate was forged. The Sole Arbitrator found him a credible witness. He was not an expert in the field of forgeries, rather he was the Head of the Bureau that dealt with fingerprinting at the CID and he was able to testify in detail on the proper process that should be undertaken.
147. It therefore seems to the Sole Arbitrator, from Mr Turay's evidence, that an important step in the proper process was missed in the Appellant's case, yet the certificate was produced by someone and put before the Head of the CID (Mr Allieu Jalloh) to sign. If the true situation about the missed step had been put to the Head of the CID, he would not have signed the certificate. This is supported by the fact that it was rescinded by him when things were made clear to him.
148. The Sole Arbitrator notes that the Parties agreed that the matter at hand concerned eligibility and an alleged breach of a sporting body's regulations, rather than any criminal proceedings. As such, the Parties ultimately (once the expert's evidence was withdrawn) agreed that the words "forgery" and "falsified", should be given their ordinary meanings.
149. The Sole Arbitrator did not have enough evidence before him to determine whether the certificate had been forged or not. It appeared to be a genuine certificate, but one that was issued in error, as someone along the line had made a false declaration that the Appellant had completed both of the fingerprint tests. There was no evidence that there had been some form of negligence either. The Sole Arbitrator is satisfied that someone interfered with the usual process to procure a certificate without the two-

stage fingerprint process having been followed. The Sole Arbitrator did not see the Appellant's completed application form. It may have required the signature of Mr Turay to state that the fingerprint tests had both been completed; it may have simply required a box to be ticked. Either way, Mr Turay's position is that he never saw the Appellant and would not have confirmed that she had completed the process. It therefore appears that someone else provided that confirmation to the satisfaction of the Head of the CID, resulting in him signing the certificate. When the truth was discovered, the certificate was rescinded by the Head of the CID.

150. The process was flawed, a false declaration was made and/or the application form was falsely completed. The certificate was tainted with that flaw and, as such, the Sole Arbitrator determines that it was "falsified".

iii. Did the Appellant use the falsified certificate?

151. The Sole Arbitrator notes that the police clearance certificate was collected by Mr Conteh on 10 June 2025 and it was then included in the pack of documents that accompanied the Appellant's completed questionnaire (Annex A) that she sent to the SLFA Ethics Board on 27 June 2025.
152. She included the certificate as a means of demonstrating that she had no criminal record and could therefore satisfy paragraph 4.a. of the General Conditions of Annex A.
153. Article 15.1 of the SLFA Code of Ethics, as set out above, is breached if someone bound by the SLFA Code of Ethics (as the Appellant was) "uses" a falsified document. The Sole Arbitrator notes that before the CAS, she continued to maintain that the certificate should not have been rescinded and was therefore continuing to seek to use it.
154. The Sole Arbitrator determines that the Appellant used a falsified document in breach of Article 15.1 of the SLFA Code of Ethics.

iv. Were the sanctions issued proportionate?

155. Whilst the main purpose of the interview/hearing with the SLFA Ethics Board on 12 July 2025 was to consider the petition made by the Bo District FA and to verify the Appellant's integrity and eligibility to contest the elections for the Presidency of the SLFA, the SLFA Ethics Board did (correctly) make a finding that she had breached Article 15.1 of the SLFA Code of Ethics.
156. During the Hearing, the Sole Arbitrator did press Mr Sheriff on whether the SLFA Ethics Board could sanction a candidate during that interview/hearing. His position was clear – the Ethics Board had always done so.
157. The Sole Arbitrator notes that the Appealed Decision dealt with all the candidates, not just the Appellant. In the decision, the Sole Arbitrator notes that many candidates

were petitioned against. Where the petitions were rejected, the SLFA Ethics Board sanctioned the petitioners with fines pursuant to breaches of Article 20 of the SLFA Code of Ethics (Duty to Cooperate). Additionally, another candidate was sanctioned for a breach of Article 15.1 of the SLFA Code of Ethics too.

158. The Appellant did not cite any provision of the regulations or any previous cases that might indicate that the SLFA Ethics Board was operating outside of its powers.
159. Ultimately, the SLFA Code of Ethics provides the SLFA Ethics Board with the power to consider possible breaches. The Appellant was aware that there was an allegation that she had not fulfilled the proper process to obtain the police clearance certificate and was represented by her lawyers on 12 July 2025. Having found a breach of Article 15.1, the SLFA Ethics Board then proceeded to consider the sanction, pursuant to Article 15.2.
160. The procedure was in line with the SLFA Code of Ethics.
161. The sanction was a fine in the sum of Le 5,000.00 (Five Thousand New Leones) and a ban from taking part in any football-related activity for a period of one (1) year. The Sole Arbitrator notes that Article 15.2 of the SLFA Code of Ethics (as set out above) provides for a fine up to Le 5,000,000 (Five Million New Leones) as well as a ban on taking part in any football-related activity for a maximum of two years.
162. The fine was at the lower end of the range set by the SLFA in its Code of Ethics; with the ban at the mid-point.
163. The test for the Sole Arbitrator is whether the actual sanction is “*grossly and evidently disproportionate*”, as it is important that sports bodies are afforded an element of discretion when sanctioning.
164. The threshold has not been met for the Sole Arbitrator to disturb these sanctions. The Sole Arbitrator (as seen from what follows) struggles to believe that the Appellant did not know that the regular process for obtaining the certificate had not been followed and/or the certificate was falsified, yet she chose to use it. The sanctions for this are clearly set out in the SLFA Code of Ethics and she received a lower-end fine and a mid-point ban. Neither are “*grossly and evidently disproportionate*”.

v. What were the integrity tests to be applied to the Appellant?

165. The Appellant focused on Part 1, paragraph 4 of the Annex (as set out in full above) which directs the SLFA Ethics Board to check to see if the candidate has a criminal record or has been sanctioned by a sporting body. The SLFA Ethics Board needed to (and did) consider these issues. However, the Sole Arbitrator notes that within Annex A are other matters that the SLFA Ethics Board should consider:
 - a. Part 1, paragraph 3 of the Annex A refers to the need for cooperation from the candidate, failing which the integrity test would not be satisfied; and

- b. Part 3, paragraph 4 of Annex A (set out in full above) contains a declaration from each candidate that they are aware of the provisions of the SLFA Code of Ethics that address integrity issues and that they “fully comply with such provisions”.
166. Further, it was not disputed that the SLFA Ethics Board should consider matters such as the involvement each candidate had with football in Sierra Leone, their residency requirements etc too. These were duly carried out in the case of the Appellant.
167. The Sole Arbitrator notes that the SLFA Ethics Board did consider both Articles 15 and 20 of the SLFA Code of Ethics. These both address integrity issues and the Sole Arbitrator agrees that it should have considered these with the Appellant, as it did on 12 July 2025.

vi. Did the Appellant satisfy the integrity tests?

168. The Sole Arbitrator notes that the key issue here is whether the Appellant cooperated with the SLFA Ethics Board and was truthful with them or not. The Sole Arbitrator effectively stands in the shoes of the SLFA Ethics Board, so her honesty before the CAS is an important factor too. The use of a falsified certificate can be put to one side, as she has been sanctioned for that under Art 15 of the SLFA Code of Ethics; what remains is whether she should have passed the integrity checks in the light of Article 20 of the SLFA Code of Ethics.
169. The minutes of the part of the hearing on 12 July 2025 that concerned the Appellant, stated as follows [emphasis added]:

“Football Journey

- *Ms Bangura narrated her journey*

[...]

- *Police Clearance: She explained she obtained her police clearance by paying the official fee, completing her fingerprinting, and receiving the document from the police station.*

[...]

Police Clearance

- *She was asked by the committee to take the committee through the process of obtaining the Police Clearance*
- *Stated she was in Sierra Leone 8th-11th June 2025 as evidence from her passport records and presented herself at the CID Headquarters to obtain*

the Police Clearance. She told the committee she did the finger print herself by following the usual, regular process.

Petition Against Her

- *Petitioner: Bo District FA represented by Chairman Abdul Bangura with Musa Mewa Esq as legal counsel.*
- *Grounds: [...]; forgery and falsification of police clearance.*

Petitioner's Submissions

[...]

- *Alleged police clearance was obtained irregularly while she was out of the country.*

Evidence Review

- *Committee provided with passport copies indicating her travel history.*
- *Mr. Mewa requested the Committee to write to the police for verification*

Defense by Ms. Bangura's Team

- *Written defense prepared addressing all petition grounds.*
- *Submitted passports covering five years, showing frequent.*

[...]

- *Mr. Marrah argued:*

[...]

- *Forgery claim unproven as police did not indicate her document was fake or criminally obtained.*

Police Response: the chairman confronted her with a letter from the police rescinding her police clearance. Her lawyers requested a standdown to confer with their client. The chairman stood down the hearing down. Her and lawyers returned to the hearing after hanging heads outside.

- *Police informed the committee that Ms. Bangura was not present to be fingerprinted herself; that a proxy obtained the clearance on her behalf, leading to rescission of the police clearance.*

Mr. Marrah's Final Submissions

- *Police did not state the clearance was forged nor attribute any criminal record to Ms. Bangura.*
- *Argued failure in police procedural recording should not be held against her.*
- *Submitted that rescinding the clearance does not imply criminality or forgery.”*

170. The Sole Arbitrator notes a number of inconsistencies within the evidence provided by the Appellant and Mr Conteh, on the one hand, and by Mr Sheriff on the other.
171. In the Appealed Decision, it is recorded that the Appellant was asked if she went to the CID and had her fingerprints taken. She answered “yes”. It is also recorded that she was asked if she was physically present at the CID and went through the screening process. Again, she said “yes”.
172. However, in the minutes of the hearing on 12 July 2025, as set out above, there is no record of those precise questions being asked. Mr Sheriff was asked at the Hearing by the Sole Arbitrator whether he had approved the minutes and he said “yes”.
173. It appears she was asked if she followed the usual process. This was what she confirmed. There is no mention within the minutes as to what the usual process is.
174. In his witness statement, Mr Sheriff stated that he asked all candidates about the process they followed and he noted that they all said they had gone into a specific room within the CID headquarters for their fingerprints to be taken. However, the minutes do not record that either. There is the exact same paragraph for all candidates (that only varies with their gender), as follows:

“Police Clearance: He explained he obtained his police clearance by paying the official fee, completing his fingerprinting, and receiving the document from the police station.”

175. The Sole Arbitrator notes that the very same passage is in the section of the minutes relating to the Appellant too. However, it does appear from the minutes that there was some further questioning of the Appellant and she states that she followed the usual, regular process.
176. It was clear to the Sole Arbitrator that Mr Sheriff was keen to trap the Appellant. He deliberately kept the rescission letter to himself to ambush the Appellant and her lawyers with it at the hearing on 12 July 2025. It is somewhat surprising therefore that he approved the ambiguous minutes and did not include within those the detail of the specific questions he set out in the Appealed Decision. After all, it was the Appellant’s answer to those questions which resulted in him and others on the SLFA Ethics Board being comfortably satisfied that the Appellant had lied to them and that this dishonesty was the reason to deem her ineligible to contest the elections.

177. Further, at the Hearing, Mr Sheriff stated that he also relied upon the rescission letter and the Report. Whilst the Appealed Decision was dated 18 July 2025 and the Report was dated 16 July 2025, the minutes state that the Ethics Board voted on the Appellant's eligibility on 13 July 2025 i.e. before the Report had been produced to it.
178. The Sole Arbitrator was left with the impression that Mr Sheriff was eager to find that she was dishonest, but should have waited for the Report and should have properly reviewed the draft minutes before approving them.
179. The Sole Arbitrator also noted numerous inconsistencies between the Appellant's affidavit, Appeal Brief and statements made at the Hearing.
180. The Sole Arbitrator does wonder why the Appellant never mentioned having her prints taken in her car. What was there to hide? If a police officer had genuinely told her to do this and both she and her driver had his phone number, why not state that when being asked about process she followed? Why not state it once she knew the certificate had been rescinded?
181. Her position is that she was only asked a generic question and she answered in the affirmative. If anything, the minutes support her.
182. However, the Sole Arbitrator notes that her affidavit was dated 22 July 2025. In that there is no mention of her being seen in the car, rather the police officer takes her inside and tells her to stay downstairs. He takes her documents from her (including the payment receipt) and brings the ink pad to her and takes her fingerprints. The Statement of Appeal was filed at the CAS Court Office on 24 July 2025, however, within 2 days the version of events on 9 and 10 June 2025 had changed. She make no mention of entering the CID building and instead says that the police officer comes out to her car and completes the application form there. He also brings the ink pad and takes her fingerprints there. He tells her not to enter the building. At the Hearing, a hybrid version is given. She starts in the building, but it is so busy that the police officer goes with her to the car, where the fingerprints are taken.
183. There were also inconsistencies regarding the payment receipt. Initially it was lost, however, by the time of the Hearing, the Appellant explained that on the drive between the police station where the payment was made and the CID station where the receipt was handed over to the police officer, she stopped and her driver made a photocopy of the receipt at a café. This was confirmed at the Hearing by Mr Conteh. However, he had not mentioned this in his written statement either.
184. There was also some inconsistency regarding the police officer's phone number. As set out before, Mr Conteh stated that he swapped numbers with the police officer and called him on 10 June 2025 to see if the certificate was ready for him to collect. However, the Appellant states in her affidavit that the police officer rings her on 10 June 2025 and she asks if her driver can pick the certificate up, as she's busy.

185. It therefore seems that the police officer had both the Appellant's number and Mr Conteh's too. Having rang the Appellant, presumably she then had the police officer's number too.
186. The Sole Arbitrator notes that Mr Conteh states in his witness statement that the Appellant was always in the car. At the Hearing he confirms this was the case, which contradicts the Appellant's statement at the Hearing that she was inside the CID headquarters with him.
187. Overall, the evidence did little to support the submission made. Other than Mr Turay, the oral evidence was not particularly helpful for the Sole Arbitrator. However, from what he read and heard, he determines that:
- a. Mr Sheriff was keen to trip the Appellant up.
 - b. Mr Sheriff did ask all candidates what process they followed, again with the hope that this would differ from how the Appellant would answer the same questions.
 - c. The Appellant was asked additional questions about the process she followed, however, the Sole Arbitrator cannot be sure she was specifically asked if she followed the process Mr Turay set out. Perhaps she was asked if she followed the "regular process", but it is not clear that was explained to her in detail and she then dishonestly said "yes", as set out in the Appealed Decision.
 - d. The process she should have followed would involve the manual test in one room inside the CID headquarters, followed by a second test on a screen in a separate room.
 - e. She did not comply with the process, as even if the Sole Arbitrator was to disregard the versions of events where she is in the car and accepts the one where she is inside the CID headquarters, or even if she was not aware of the two-step process, she never goes upstairs and she never refers to the second on screen test.
 - f. After Mr Sheriff presented the Appellant with the rescission letter, the response was to go and get a new certificate. There was no challenge to the rescission letter, rather an acceptance. If the Appellant believed that the regular process had been followed, one might have expected a different reaction.
 - g. It would seem that the Appellant and her driver had the police officer's number. A complaint to his superiors could have been a possibility as the police could have investigated who's phone it was.
 - h. There is a duty of compliance on all candidates, which is set out in the Annex A questionnaire. The Appellant had signed this, so one wonders why she was not forthcoming with the "car version" of events at the hearing on 12 July

2025.

- i. Mr Sheriff and the SLFA Ethics Board took the decision before they were in possession of the Report.
188. As stated above, the Sole Arbitrator deals with the matter at hand on a *de novo* basis. This means that he has the ability to consider the evidence of the Appellant and her driver but he also can consider the contents of the Report.
 189. The evidence of the Appellant and her driver did not ultimately help her. Her version of the events of 9 and 10 June 2025 were not a little inconsistent, at times they went in completely the opposite direction. Was the Appellant ever in the CID headquarters? Did she stay in the car the whole time? Was she ill? Was her driver later ill? Who was the mysterious police officer? Why would any police officer familiar with the process only do half of it? Why would a police officer carry out tests in a car or even downstairs in the headquarters; why not in the proper rooms?
 190. The Sole Arbitrator additionally noted that Mr Conteh stated that the police officer's phone number was 03002274 and that he had rung it to make the arrangements on 10 June 2025 to collect the certificate. The Appellant says she rang the officer too, but did not provide his number. However, the Head of the CID, when rescinding the certificate, said he had rung the Appellant's proxy (presumably her driver, Mr Conteh) on the same number, 03002274. Finally, the certificate itself gave the Appellant's contact number as +23230022794, which is remarkably similar to that number. The country code for Sierra Leone is +232, as such the only difference is an additional 9. This was simply another inconsistency.
 191. Ultimately the Sole Arbitrator will never know exactly what went on over 9 and 10 June 2025, but he is comfortably satisfied that the Appellant did not undergo the regular or proper process, as was set out by Mr Turay. However, it is not whether she undertook the correct process or not that matters; rather whether she should have fully cooperated with the SLFA Ethics Board and clearly explained the actual process she followed. At the Hearing she maintained that she had followed the regular process and the certificate should not have been rescinded. But it was far from clear what process she had undertaken, as her versions did not tally with each other or with what Mr Conteh said. So, weighing up the evidence she has provided, the Sole Arbitrator can understand why the SLFA Ethics Board would have found her untruthful.
 192. The situation only got worse for the Appellant before the CAS. Her version of the events changed again and then again. If someone is telling the truth, they tend to find it quite easy to do so, they just repeat what happened. The Appellant's version of events simply changed too much to be credible. She also has "drip fed" her version of the events. It appears she only provided yes/no answers to the SLFA Ethics Board on 12 July 2025 and whilst she provided an affidavit, written submissions and oral testimony at the Hearing before the CAS, the Sole Arbitrator has not found her truthful. Counsel for the Respondent accused her at the Hearing as making her story

up as she went along. The Sole Arbitrator felt that was the case too.

193. The Sole Arbitrator is comfortably satisfied that she has breached Article 20 of the SLFA Code of Ethics. She had a duty to cooperate with the SLFA Ethics Board, her answers needed to be complete and neither false or misleading. She was not complete or truthful with them and her version of events simply kept changing before the CAS. She was asked by the SLFA Ethics Board about the process she followed in obtaining the certificate and whilst the precise questions cannot be ascertained, the Sole Arbitrator is comfortably satisfied that she was examined in more detail than the other candidates, given that her certificate had been rescinded. She did not explain what process she did follow. When she gave the more complete explanation to the CAS, it was simply not credible. There were too many changes and too many inconsistencies.
194. The Sole Arbitrator agrees with the SLFA Ethics Board that, in accordance with Annex A and Article 20 of the SLFA Code of Ethics, she needed to be truthful and to co-operate fully with the body assessing her to pass an integrity test. She was not before the SLFA Ethics Board nor before the Sole Arbitrator.

vii. What are the consequences for the Appellant?

195. Having come to such conclusion, the Sole Arbitrator deems that the Appellant did not pass the integrity tests established in Annex A and she breached both Articles 15 and 20 of the SLFA Code of Ethics. As this was the finding of the SLFA Ethics Board, there is no need to disturb the Appealed Decision. As such, the Appellant's appeal is dismissed and the Appealed Decision is confirmed.
196. All other prayers for relief are dismissed.

XII. COSTS

(...)

* * * * *

ON THESE GROUNDS

The Court of Arbitration for Sport rules that:

1. The appeal filed on 24 July 2025 by Madame Aminata Bangura against the decision rendered by the Sierra Leone Football Association's Ethics Board dated 19 July 2025 is dismissed.
2. The decision rendered by the Sierra Leone Football Association's Ethics Board dated 19 July 2025 is confirmed.
3. (...).
4. (...).
5. All other and further motions or prayers for relief are dismissed.

Seat of the arbitration: Lausanne, Switzerland

Date: 5 October 2026

THE COURT OF ARBITRATION FOR SPORT

Mark A. Hovell
Sole Arbitrator