Sierra Leone is set to become the 23rd country on the African continent to abolish the death penalty.

Lawmakers in the West African nation voted unanimously Friday to outlaw capital punishment and replace it with life imprisonment or a minimum 30-year sentence for such crimes as murder or treason and grant judges additional discretion when handing down a sentence.

Sierra Leone has not executed anyone since 1998, when 24 soldiers were put to death by firing squad for taking part in a coup attempt the previous year. At the time the country was in the throes of a bloody civil war that lasted from 1991 to 2002. But more than 80 people have been sent to death row since then.

President Julius Maada Bio is expected to sign the legislation into law.

More and more Africa countries have abolished the death penalty, which human rights groups consider a cruel remnant of centuries of brutal colonial rule. Malawi's Supreme Court ruled the practice unconstitutional in April, while Chad outlawed it in 2020.

16 people were executed across sub-Saharan Africa last year compared to 25 people in 2019, a drop of 36%, according Amnesty International, a human rights advocacy group.

Samira Daoud, Amnesty International's West and Central Africa Director, praised the vote by Sierra Leone's lawmakers in a statement saying it is "a major victory for all those who tirelessly campaigned to consign this cruel punishment to history and a strengthening of the protection of the right to life."

Daoud urged President Maada Bio to immediately sign the bill and that the "inhuman and degrading punishment," she added, "has no place in our world."