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SIERRA LEONE: Public statement



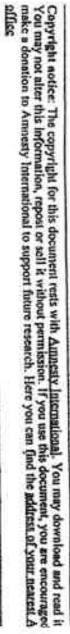
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Amnesty International - News Release - AFR 51/11/9

Public stateme SIERRA LEON



6 MAY 1998 News Service 80/98 AI INDEX: AFR 51/11/98

PUBLIC STATEMENT

SIERRA LEONE

opposition Revolutionary United Front (RUF), following the military coup in May 1997 was characterized by gross human rights abuses, including torture and killing of unarmed civilians. The abuses have continued and worsened as the AFRC and RUF have retreated from Freetown toward the east of the country after being forced from power by West African troops, known as ECOMO. in mid-February. the east of the country after being forced from power by The period of rule of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), joined by the armed

Amnesty International documented some of the many cases of arbitrary arrest and detention, tortt and ill-treatment and deliberate killings by the AFRC and RUF. Amnesty International repeatedly called for an end to these abuses. Since October, and, in particular since the AFRC and RUF were removed from power, the catalogue of abuses has become horrific In a report published in October 1997 - Sierra Leone: A disastrous set-back for human rights

Lunsar and Makeni and other towns and surrounding villages. In April, as ECOMOG forces advanced towards Koidu, in Kono District, in the east, the AFRC and RUF deliberately killed any mutilated unarmed civilians. More than a hundred victims with their arms, feet or cars cut off, or suffering from bullet or machete wounds, have been brought to Connaught Hospital in Freetown. The AFRC and RUF have killed, tortured and raped as they have retreated through Bo. Kenema.

It is a critical time in Sierra Leone for rebuilding the country and laying the foundations for a sec and peaceful future. Effective institutions and mechanisms for protecting and respecting human r such as an efficient and independent judiciary, a well trained and disciplined police force and a and an independent human rights commission -- must be established

It is also essential to ensure that there is accountability for the atrocities which have been comming in Sierra Leone, both since Sierra Leone's internal armed conflict began in 1991 and also while to AFRC and RUF were in power. There should be proper investigations into these abuses and those responsible brought to justice. Reconciliation and peace in Sierra Leone cannot be achieved if the right of victims and their families to truth and justice are ignored.

Since the AFRC was removed from power in February more than 1,500 people suspected of supporting or collaborating with the AFRC have been detained; 59 of them had been charged wit treason, some also with other offences including murder, by the end of April. Those charged she be given a fair trial, in accordance with international standards, and without recourse to the deal penalty. Anyone among the many hundreds of people who remain held who is not to be charged

Source: Amnesty International, International Secretariat, I Easton Street, WCIX 8DJ, Lond United Kingdom



Amnesty International - News Release - AFR 51/13/98 8 May 1998 SIERRA LEONE

Amnesty International receives shocking information about mounting atrocities in Sierra Leone

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News Service 82/98 AI INDEX: AFR 51/13/98 8 MAY 1998

SIERRA LEONE

Amnesty International receives shocking information about mounting atrociti in Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone are being brutally killed and mutilated by forces of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the armed opposition Revolutionary United Front (RUF) — which were forced from power by West African troops in mid-February. Amnesty International has just received horrifying information that hundreds of unarmed civilians in

"Victims have reported women and children being rounded up, locked into a house which was then set alight. Women have been raped and have suffered other forms of sexual assault. Men who refused to rape members of their own family were reported to have had their arms hacked off," Amnesty International said today.

In the last few days another 13 victims from Kono District in the east of the country have been admitted to Connaught Hospital in the centre of the capital, Freetown. The victims include a 60-year-old woman whose arm had been deliberately amputated, and three men who had both arms cut off and others who had one arm cut off

These victims joined more than a hundred civilians - housewives, traders, farmers, miners - already being treated for crude amputations, bullet and machete wounds in Connaught Hospital by a Médecins Sans Frontières surgical team. They have arrived since early April as retreating AFR and RUF forces in Kono District have killed, tortured and raped. Some people have also had ears cut off

It had taken some of the victims days, if not weeks, to reach medical assistance. One man who had both arms cut off walked from village to village until he was able to find a vehicle to bring him to Freetown. Many others -- possibly hundreds -- have fled into the bush.

recommendations public. "There is an urgent need to protect civilians from these atrocities, " the organization said, "The international community should urgently establish a human rights presence in Sierra Leone which would be able to independently monitor human rights violations and make its findings and

of mutilation and other forms of torture. All steps should be taken to minimise the risk to civilians and to speedily evacuate to safety victims

Villages between Njajama-Sewafe and Koidu have been repeatedly attacked by armed men. More recently villages around Alikalia and Yifin in Koinadugu District have been attacked.

Source: United Kingdom Amnesty International, International Secretariai, I Easton Street, WCIX 8DJ, London

Al News | Al Publication Index | Home