

SIERRA LEONE ASSESSMENT

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Country Information and Policy Unit

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1. SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

1.1 This assessment has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a wide variety of recognised sources. The document does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.

1.2 The assessment has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom.

1.3 The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain.

1.4 It is intended to revise the assessment on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum-seeker producing countries in the United Kingdom.

2. GEOGRAPHY

2.1 The Republic of Sierra Leone covers an area of 71,740 sq km (27,699 sq miles) and borders Guinea and Liberia. Sierra Leone is divided into four regions, three are the Northern, Eastern and Southern

provinces. The other is the Western Area, the capital Freetown is in this region. There are two distinct seasons: from November to April is the dry season and from the end of May to October is the rainy season with the heaviest rains from July to September. Sierra Leone has a population of approximately 4.5 million. Extended family groups and the paramount Chieftancies dominate a substantial rural population. However, urbanisation is expanding. Diamond mining has attracted settlers to many villages in the mining areas. As a result of rebel activity there has been a massive influx of the rural population to the towns. The official and commercial language of the country is English, while Krio (Creole) Mende, Limba and Temne are also spoken. [1][2][93]

3. ECONOMICS

3.1 Sierra Leone is an extremely poor country with a market-based economy. Per capita earnings are less than \$150 (300,000 Leones) per year, and have declined approximately two-thirds since 1970. Although the country is rich in natural resources and minerals (particularly diamonds, gold, rutile, and bauxite) and has large areas of fertile land suitable for farming, civil conflict has brought mineral extraction and agricultural production almost to a standstill, except for illicit diamond mining. There is little manufacturing, and there are few exports. Approximately 70% of the Government's budget is from foreign assistance. Years of fighting, corruption, and mismanagement have resulted in a crumbling infrastructure. [2] For further information on geography and economics, refer to Europa Yearbooks, source [1]

4. HISTORY

4.1 Sierra Leone became an independent state within the Commonwealth on 27 April 1961 with Milton Margai of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) remaining as Prime Minister. The SLPP retained power until March 1967 when the All People's Congress (APC) led by Dr Siaka Stevens gained a majority. However the APC was prevented from taking power by a military coup until April 1968. In April 1971 Sierra Leone became a republic with Dr Stevens as executive president. Following the deterioration of the economy and political unrest the country moved to a one party system in June 1978 and the APC became the sole legal party. There followed a series of Government financial scandals which resulted in demonstrations and outbreaks of violence and on 28 November 1985 Major General Joseph Momoh, a cabinet minister in the APC and commander of the armed forces, became president. However, the new administration failed to improve the serious economic situation. [1]

4.2 President Momoh declared an economic state of emergency in November 1987 when severe penalties were introduced for the publication of defamatory articles in newspapers; Government censorship was imposed and private mail became subject to inspection. In September 1991 a new constitution came into force, but the 1978 Constitution officially remained in force, and legislation was introduced which provided for the registration of political associations. In December 1991, President Momoh and leaders of other registered parties agreed to co-operate in the establishment of a multi-party system. On 29 April 1992 members of the armed forces seized power. Captain Valentine Strasser, who later established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), led them. In July 1992 legislation was introduced which imposed severe restrictions on the media and authorised state censorship. After foiling a coup attempt in late December 1992 nine of those alleged to have been involved in the conspiracy were summarily executed together with 17 prisoners previously convicted of treason. In January 1996, Captain Strasser was deposed in a bloodless coup, and replaced by Captain Julius Maada Bio. Presidential and legislative elections took place in 1996, but according to opposition parties these were marred by widespread manipulation and rigging in favour of the SLPP. This was acknowledged by the National Election Commission, but international monitors declared the elections 'largely' free and fair, despite efforts by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to disrupt the electoral process through violence. [1][5] For further information on history prior to 1961, refer to Europa Yearbooks, source [1].

5. STATE STRUCTURES

THE CONSTITUTION

5.1 In September 1991 a new constitution came into force, but the 1978 Constitution officially remained in force. On 25 May 1997, following the military coup, the 1991 Constitution was suspended, political parties were banned and all demonstrations were prohibited. An Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was created to govern the country, and during its period in office the AFRC was responsible for many human rights abuses. [1]

5.2 Following the overthrow of the junta forces and President Kabbah's return in March 1998, the 1991 Constitution was re-instated. President Kabbah re-iterated his Government's respect for human rights and the need for national unity, reconciliation and social and economic progress within the framework of the legal system. [11a][11b] The State of Emergency laws imposed in 1998, that had limited some of the Constitutions provisions, was lifted on 1 March 2002. [4]

CITIZENSHIP

5.3 The requirements for citizenship are set out in the Sierra Leone Citizenship Act 1973. Citizenship by birth would appear to be acquired by birth in Sierra Leone, with a father or grandfather being born in Sierra Leone. Citizenship by decent would appear to be acquired by a person born outside Sierra Leone, whose father was a Sierra Leonean citizen. Citizenship can also be acquired by descent through the maternal line, provided that the mother was a Sierra Leonean citizen, and that the child did not acquire any other nationality by birth in a foreign country. There are provisions to acquire citizenship by naturalisation. [9]

5.4 One of the requirements to acquire citizenship by birth or descent, is that a person is of "Negro African descent". This provision effectively bars Sierra Leone's Lebanese community from automatically acquiring citizenship by birth or descent. [2][9]

POLITICAL SYSTEM

5.5 Parliamentary and presidential elections were held on 14 May 2002. They were conducted in a peaceful atmosphere, but there were a few incidents of violence. The elections appear to have been generally free and fair. [33][34][35]

5.6 There were nine candidates in the presidential elections. The incumbent President Ahmad Tejen Kabbah, Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), received 70.06% of the votes cast. Ernest Bai Koroma, All People's Congress (APC), received 22.35% of the votes cast. Former military ruler John Paul Koroma also stood for the presidency, as the candidate for the People's Liberation Party (PLP), he came third, with 3% of the votes cast. While he did not win the presidential election, he has been elected to the Parliament, taking one of the two seats won by the PLP. [1][36][37][39]

5.7 The Sierra Leonean Parliament elections were also held on 14 May 2002. The Parliament is to be formed of 124 members, with Paramount Chiefs being appointed to 12 seats. In the parliamentary elections, the SLPP obtained 83 seats, the APC 27 seats, and the PLP 2 seats. The Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF), which is the political party of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), fielded both a presidential candidate, and parliamentary candidates. Their presidential candidate, Pallo Bangura, received 1.73% of the votes cast. In the parliamentary elections, the RUF received approximately 1% of the vote cast. [1][36][38] A full cabinet has been formed. However, no political opponents, or former members of rebel groups, have been appointed to any of the cabinet posts. [39]

JUDICIARY

5.8 The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and the Government respects this provision in practice. However, the judiciary functioned only in part of the country, but demonstrated substantial independence in practice when it did function. The judicial system consists of the Supreme Court, appeals courts, and a high court whose justices are chosen by the Head of State. Local courts administer traditional law with lay judges; appeals from these lower courts move to the superior courts. Although there often are lengthy delays between arrests, the impositions of charges, and judicial proceedings, trials are usually free and fair; however, there is evidence that corruption has influenced some cases. Traditional justice systems continued to supplement the central Government judiciary extensively in cases involving family law, inheritance, and land tenure, especially in rural areas. The right of appeal from a court-martial to the Court of Appeal was deleted from the Armed Forces Act of 1961 by the Royal Sierra Leone Military Forces Act of 1971. However, in July 2000 Parliament approved the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (Amendment) Act, which reinstated the right of members of the armed forces to appeal a sentence handed

by a court-martial to the Court of Appeal. [2] On 22 February 2000, Parliament approved the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Bill which would create a TRC to provide a forum for publicly airing the grievances of victims and the confessions of perpetrators from the civil war; however, the Commission has yet to be established. [2][32]

5.9 In a broadcast to the nation on the day of the executions of those involved in rebel activity, 19 October 1998, President Kabbah outlined some of the matters taken into consideration in the decision to carry out the sentence of the courts martial. These included the degree of involvement and participation in the planning, instigation and execution of the 25 May 1997 mutiny. Included were their activities thereafter until the junta was overthrown; failure in their duty to prevent the mutiny; the level of human rights abuses and mayhem perpetrated; the absence of any remorse during or after the trial and the fear that they would not hesitate to repeat the same conduct. There was no proper appeals process for the military courts martial at this time. However, the President could grant clemency after confirmation of the sentence and deliberation by the Prerogative of Mercy Committee. [12e]

5.10 Although the Constitution and law provide for a speedy trial, in practice the lack of judicial officers and facilities often produced long delays in the judicial process. Due to the civil conflict the judicial system did not function in some parts of the country at any time during 2001, and functioned in other parts of the country only during some of that year. However, the judiciary demonstrated substantial independence in practice when it did function. [2]

5.11 Following the overthrow of the military junta in February 1998 many of those associated or perceived to be associated with the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and the RUF were arrested. Some were subsequently released but others were charged with offences ranging from treason, murder and arson and there were death sentences and some executions. Following the signing of the Lome Accord on 7 July 1999 the Government pardoned 98 former ministers and officials who had been jailed or sentenced to death for collaboration with the junta. [27]

5.12 The pardon, granted under the Lome accord, did not apply to human rights abuses, perpetrated during the period of civil conflict. The UN and the Sierra Leonean Government have taken steps to create an international war crimes tribunal to try those responsible for serious human rights abuses during this conflict. RUF leader Foday Sankoh has already been indicted for murders that occurred outside his Freetown home in May 2000, but may face other charges. A number of other defendants will also face charges before this court. The form of the court, its remit and its members have yet to be announced. [4][28][29]

5.13 Many children were involved in these human rights abuses. The court will have to address this issue, but will have difficulty in determining their culpability for any crimes that they may have committed. The court will have to take into account, that, in most cases, these acts were committed under extreme duress, while those involved were subject to physical and mental abuse, and, in some cases, under the influence of narcotics; forcibly administered to encourage them to participate in these crimes. [30]

LEGAL RIGHTS/DETENTION

5.14 Government forces continued to arbitrarily arrest and detain. Prolonged detention and long delays in trials remain common, but this is due to the inability of the judicial system to function in some parts of the country. [2]

DEATH PENALTY

5.15 Sierra Leone retains the death penalty. However, there are no reports that it was used in 2001. [23]

INTERNAL SECURITY

5.16 RUF was formed as an armed rebel group in 1991 led by Foday Sankoh. Fighting between the Government and the RUF continued over the next few years. Following the replacement of President Strasser by President Bio the RUF and Government delegations met in February 1996 but Bio refused to accede to the RUF's demand for a postponement of multi-party elections pending a peace agreement. The rebels therefore abandoned a cease-fire and launched a series of attacks in various parts of the country killing large numbers of civilians. However, after the elections took place a further cease-fire was imposed in March 1996 whilst negotiations continued between the rebels and the civilian Government. Although agreement was reached on some issues in July the RUF resumed concerted attacks on villages in the

centre of the country, killing more civilians. [1]

5.17 In November 1996 a peace agreement was signed between the Government and the RUF in Abidjan. However, on 25 May 1997 President Kabbah was overthrown by a group of soldiers who had formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The leader of AFRC, was Major Johnny Paul Koroma. Major Koroma was sworn in as head of state on 17 June 1997. The armed forces were joined by RUF forces and formed the People's Army and Foday Sankoh was named as Vice Chairman of the AFRC. Violence, including murders and rape, and extensive looting including from UN and humanitarian agencies broke out in Freetown following the coup. The situation was further exacerbated by the arrival of large numbers of RUF forces in Freetown who flagrantly abused their power. Lack of effective control over both soldiers and members of the RUF resulted in human rights violations being committed with impunity. Hundreds of people were arbitrarily arrested and detained, many were tortured and ill-treated. Immediately after the coup Nigerian forces already present in Sierra Leone under the provisions of a defence agreement between Sierra Leone and Nigeria were significantly reinforced by more ECOMOG troops. In early June 1997 Nigerian vessels bombarded military targets in Freetown and fighting ensued between Nigerian soldiers and Sierra Leonean soldiers, together with RUF forces. Many people were killed during this fighting. The civilian Government and resident foreign nationals were evacuated because of this unrest. [1]

5.18 In February 1998 Nigerian led ECOMOG forces liberated the capital, Freetown, and went on to take control of most major towns and roads in the country. Fighting continued in the east resulting in casualties and large numbers of displaced civilians. Thousands are said to have been killed or mutilated by junta forces and many others have been taken hostage. President Kabbah returned to the country on 10 March 1998. [1]

5.19 Following the overthrow of the junta forces the remnants of the AFRC together with the RUF embarked on a campaign, which resulted in many deaths, casualties and large numbers of displaced civilians. Thousands are reported to have been killed or mutilated by junta forces and many others have been taken hostage. The rebels indiscriminately killed and destroyed largely in the south east, east and north of the country; there were also attacks in the northwest. Their civilian victims, men, women and children, had their feet, hands or ears crudely amputated. [1][25] An additional number were abducted for use as combatants, forced labourers or sexual slaves. [12a] Many of those killed had first been subjected to torture and sexual abuse; others, including entire families, had been burned alive. Survivors of attacks consistently described mutilation, rape, torture, killing and the burning of houses. [25]

5.20 A state of emergency was proclaimed and ratified by Parliament on 26 March 1998. After the AFRC were forced from power more than one thousand people were arrested and detained. A significant number of those arrested were former combatants, who were considered to be prisoners of war. Others were associated or perceived to be associated with the AFRC and RUF. Many of those detained were suspected of being responsible for criminal offences, which included gross human rights abuses such as torture and deliberate and arbitrary killing of civilians. Some 50 people were released in March 1998. [24] The UN established an observer mission - UNOMSIL, which reports on the military, and security situation, and the disarmament and demobilisation programme. It also reports on violations of international humanitarian law and human rights and assists the Government in its efforts to address the country's human rights needs. [11c]

5.21 In July 1998 RUF's leader Foday Sankoh was returned to Sierra Leone from detention in Nigeria. On 23 October 1998 he was found guilty of 7 counts of treason and sentenced to death. He appealed against the conviction. [12a][12b][12f] On 25 August 1998, 16 civilians, including 5 journalists, were found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. Those condemned to death were among 58 civilians being tried for treason and other offences in three separate trials. All 16 lodged appeals. [12d] On 12 October 1998, a military court convicted 34 military officers on charges of treason, murder and collaborating with the enemy and sentenced the men and one woman to death by firing squad. Three other defendants were acquitted and one defendant died during the two-month trial. Military law provides no mechanism for appeal. On 19 October 1998, 24 of the 34 soldiers were executed by firing squad. President Kabbah exercised the Prerogative of Mercy in respect of the 10 others whose sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. In a broadcast to the nation on the same day President Kabbah outlined the reasons for the executions and renewed an offer of an amnesty to AFRC/RUF members still in the bush. He appealed to them to join the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme. [12c][12e] Numerous protests were made following the announcement of the death sentences and the executions. However, international observers have indicated that fair trials had been conducted under difficult circumstances. [13] On 21 October 1998, 11 more civilians were sentenced to death for their role in the May 1997 coup. [12e] On 27 October 1998 it was announced that another 50 people would stand trial on charges of collaboration with the junta. [12g] On 5 November 1998, a further 15 civilians were convicted of treason; they were sentenced to death the following day. One, Joseph Momoh, the former President of Sierra Leone, was found not guilty of treason,

but guilty of 3 other counts, and sentenced to 2 concurrent terms of 5 years imprisonment; 4 other civilians were acquitted and discharged. Most of the civilians convicted were found guilty by virtue of having taken jobs with the military junta. [14] On 11 December 1998, 22 civilians went on trial for treason, they included 2 women and 3 journalists. [18a]

5.22 Rebel leaders vowed to intensify their campaign following Foday Sankoh's death sentence. [18b] Fighting continued in the west, north and northeast of the country and by December the rebels had come within 30kms of Freetown. On 6 January 1999 rebel forces entered Freetown and took control of the centre and east of the city. On 7 January 1999, President Kabbah announced a 7-day cease-fire after discussions with rebel leader Sankoh, but this did not hold. [20] On 11 January 1999 reinforced ECOMOG troops launched an offensive and pushed the rebels back to the eastern suburbs of the city. As they retreated the rebels burned and destroyed buildings and took hostages. [21][22]

5.23 On 18 May 1999 a cease-fire was signed between the Government and the rebels that came into force on 24 May 1999. Peace talks between the two sides were launched on 25 May 1999. [31] On 7 July 1999 President Kabbah and Foday Sankoh signed a peace agreement, the Lome Accord, which effectively ended 8 years of hostilities. In a speech made prior to signing the peace accord President Kabbah called upon Sierra Leoneans to learn to forgive and forget and pool their efforts in achieving a true national reconciliation. [32]

5.24 Under the Lome agreement the RUF would be transformed into a political party and would join a broad-based Government of national unity. The party was to receive 4 ministerial and 4 deputy ministerial posts. Foday Sankoh was granted absolute and free pardon that also applied to all combatants for acts carried out prior to the accord. This pardon also applies to those currently outside the country. The agreement provides for the disarmament and demobilisation of all ex-combatants and the facilitation of delivery of humanitarian assistance. Under the agreement a Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources will be created to enable the Government to exercise full control of the exploitation of gold, diamonds and other resources for the benefit of the people of Sierra Leone. The agreement also provides for the establishment of a quasi-judicial national Human Rights Commission. Human Rights education will be promoted throughout the various sectors of society including schools, media, the police and the military and religious community. Following the signing of the Lome accord the Government ordered the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) comprising traditional hunters to disband. [32][42] However, following an upsurge in violence in May 2000, Foday Sankoh was again detained. [61][67]

5.25 On 23 July 1999, the Government pardoned 98 former ministers and officials who had been jailed for their collaboration with the military junta. 36 of the prisoners had been sentenced to death. Those pardoned included former president Joseph Momoh. Presidential spokesman Septimus Kaikai said that the president had pardoned the 98 in the spirit of national reconciliation and peace and also as a sign that the Government will follow the Lome peace agreement to the letter. [40] However, on 5 August 1999 rebel soldiers from the AFRC junta kidnapped members of a UN led mission in order to bring attention to their grievances. They claim to have been excluded from the peace deal and complained that they had no food or medicine and had received no international assistance. [43] The hostages were released safely on 10 August 1999 together with about 200 women and child prisoners. [44] The AFRC soldiers returned home on 22 August 1999 after talks in Liberia with their leader Johnny Paul Koroma, saying they no longer felt excluded from the peace process. [45]

5.26 There was an upsurge in violence in Sierra Leone for most of 2000. However, following the Abuja cease-fire agreed in November 2000, and rebel groups showed an increased willingness to advance the peace process and co-operate with the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process. [4]

5.27 In the unrest after May 2000, it was reported that children were still being used as soldiers by all sides. In a statement issued by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on 24 May 2000, the Government of Sierra Leone acknowledged "that there are some children who are in the fighting alongside forces loyal to the Government of Sierra Leone or are being allowed to remain in frontline position with the loyal forces. The Government wishes to state that this practice is totally against Government's policy which stipulates that 18 years is the minimum age for bearing arms in Sierra Leone." The statement added, that "the acting chief of defense staff has been instructed to ensure that all those below the age of 18 years currently involved in fighting on the side of Government should be immediately withdrawn, demobilized and handed over to competent institutions for rehabilitation". The statement concluded, "any commander who allows a child below 18 years to carry arms within his area of operation or allows children to remain in areas of active conflict will face severe disciplinary action". [26]

BORDER SECURITY AND RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

5.28 In 2001, Guinea launched cross-border attacks on rebel positions in Sierra Leone. Guinean soldiers and artillery have been used in these attacks, and there have been reports that civilians were injured. The Sierra Leone Government did not condemn these attacks, but took the view that they were a response to provocation by RUF. [47][48]

5.29 In this fighting, civilians were killed and injured, and tens of thousands of Sierra Leonean refugees and Guineans displaced. Sierra Leone has shown restraint regarding these incursions, which were aimed at RUF held areas in the North and East, and part of a wider conflict between Liberia and Guinea on their common border. This violence caused the displacement of Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea and RUF held areas, particular around the Parrots Beak, a region of Guinea that juts into the north east of Sierra Leone. [47][48] Guinea still holds areas of Sierra Leone, on their common border, claiming that this is necessary for its defence. [15a][15b] The border area with Guinea, has been reported as being calm, and that there has been an improvement in conditions there. [15c]

5.30 Unrest in Liberia has increasingly been a problem, with raids by rebel force into Sierra Leone across the common border. Units of the Sierra Leone Army have been deployed to the region to deter such incursions. The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), a military and civilian force working to bring stability to the country, assisted in this deployment by providing diplomatic support through contacts with the Liberian authorities. [16a][16b]

PRISONS AND PRISON CONDITIONS

5.31 Prison and police lockup facilities conditions are generally harsh; and are at best Spartan, and at worst life threatening. The Pademba Road maximum-security prison, which was designed for 325 prisoners, routinely houses hundreds more. Diet and medical care were inadequate, and only a handful of toilets were available for use. Other prison facilities were equally rudimentary, and conditions in the holding cells in police offices were extremely poor. Pre-trial detainees are held with convicted prisoners. [2]

5.32 In July 2001, RUF Secretary-General Solomon Rogers died in prison. The BBC reported prison officials as saying he died of hypertension and malaria. One humanitarian source told IRIN he was hospitalised in May, but could not say for what reason. RUF had voiced its concern about the welfare of its detainees, in light of the number of reported deaths. Human Rights Watch has also expressed concern about the high levels of deaths of all prisoners in Sierra Leonean prisons. Nine other prisoners have already died this year in Pademba Prison. Human Rights Watch is yet to investigate extensively into the cause of the deaths and how many are RUF. Secretary-General Rogers and several other RUF officials were imprisoned after the violence in May 2000. Also in July 2001, police arrested three prison wardens for trafficking "subversive documents" and money to and from RUF detainees held in the Pademba Prison. A sergeant who was in charge of RUF detainees and the condemn cell has admitted trafficking medicines, money and provisions from relatives of RUF detainees. Another warden was arrested for taking \$400 from a relative of an RUF prisoner, the acting director of the Criminal Investigation Division, Mr. F.U.K. Daboh, told reporters. The third prison warden was caught at the main gate of the prison with some cannabis and has been charged to court. [6][7]

5.33 The RUF alleged that prison guards beat and tortured members of the RUF. RUF also claimed that 11 RUF members had died at Pademba Road prison since May 2000; however, Government officials said only 8 RUF members had died in custody during the period. During 2001, many RUF prisoners were held incommunicado at undisclosed locations. However, at end of 2001, only RUF leader Foday Sankoh remained in a secret location. [2]

5.34 The Sierra Leone authorities are aware of these problems in the prison system, and have taken some measures to alleviate them. Human Rights groups have been allowed access, and a number of inmates from Pademba Prison have been released. These included some high-ranking RUF officials. Mr Mike Lamin, former minister for trade and industry, and former RUF spokesman Mr Eldred Collins were among those released, they had been held since May 2000. [8][85]

5.35 The Government generally has permitted prison visits, but has frequently attempted to place conditions on such visits. The Government granted UNAMSIL human rights officials unrestricted access to Pademba Road Prison in June 2001, but only after the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General intervened personally in the matter. In January 2001 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited Pademba Road prison after obtaining assurances from the Government that there would be no restrictions placed on the visit. Both groups made several visits to various prisons and detention facilities during 2001. The National Forum for Human Rights, an umbrella group of local NGO's, reportedly did not

visit Pademba Road Prison because the Government placed unreasonable restrictions on the proposed visits. The Government did not allow any international organizations to have access to Foday Sankoh or to monitor the conditions under which he was being held. [2]

ARMED FORCES

5.36 Following the overthrow of the AFRC, security in the country was provided largely by the Economic Organisation of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) troops acting on behalf of the legitimate Government. In January 2000 ECOMOG began to withdraw its troops. [41] The AFRC, which staged the 1997 military coup, no longer exists. [2]

5.37 The police officially had primary responsibility for internal order; however, due to the continuing insurgency, the Sierra Leone Army (SLA), the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), and UNAMSIL shared de facto responsibility with the police for security matters. The CDF were traditional hunting societies loyal to paramount chiefs, traditional leaders with administrative and judicial powers, which assembled into independent militias under a national structure. In 2000 SLA units were reorganised and began undergoing a training program with the assistance of foreign Governments; the program is ongoing. During the civil conflict, both Government forces and rebel groups committed serious human rights abuses; however, the incidences of abuses were significantly less in 2001 than in previous years. [2][17]

5.38 In January 2000, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called for the rapid expansion of the UN force from 6,000 to over 11,000. This proposed increase would offset the withdrawal of the ECOMOG troops. [54] UNAMSIL, the UN peacekeeping force, is now the largest such force in the world, with over 17,000 members deployed in country. [85]

5.39 The SLA has, with the assistance of foreign military force and UNAMSIL, become a professional military body, and is increasingly being deployed throughout the country to promote internal security. SLA units have also been deployed on the Liberian border to prevent incursions from there. [16a][16b]

MILITARY SERVICE

5.40 There is no conscription in Sierra Leone. However, both rebel, and groups backing the Government, forcibly recruited people into their ranks during the civil war. Large numbers of children were also forcibly recruited during the civil war. As these groups have disarmed, this has now largely ceased. [17]

MEDICAL SERVICES

5.41 As a result of the civil conflict the health care infrastructure has broken-down. NGOs and humanitarian groups provide care, but this is insufficient to meet all demands, especially among groups like Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Life expectancy is 34 years. Sierra Leone's child and maternal mortality rates of 316 per 1,000 live births and 1,800 per 100,000 live births respectively are among the highest in the world. [4][49][60]

5.42 Clinics and hospitals were destroyed through out the period of civil conflict, and there is a lack of resources to permit rebuilding. There have also been strikes by medical staff because of the poor working conditions and pay. [2][59]

5.43 AIDS and HIV are an increasing problem in Sierra Leone, but there is no reliable estimate of the number of people living with AIDS and HIV. While the Government is aware of this growing problem, it has yet to formulate an effective strategy to address this, because of the damage done to the countries medical infrastructure. However, some funding has been put aside to monitor AIDS/HIV, and help the Government to develop an AIDS/HIV policy. [50][51][52]

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

5.44 Public facility access and discrimination against persons with disabilities are not considered to be public policy concerns. No laws mandate accessibility to buildings or provide for other assistance for persons with disabilities. Although a few private agencies and organisations attempted to train persons with disabilities in useful work, there was no Government policy or program directed particularly at persons with disabilities. There does not appear to be outright discrimination against persons with disabilities in housing or education; however, given the high rate of general unemployment, work opportunities for persons with disabilities are few. [2]

5.45 Some of the many individuals who were maimed in the fighting, or had their limbs amputated by rebel forces, are receiving special assistance from various local and international humanitarian organisations. Such programs involve re-constructive surgery, prostheses, and vocational training to help them acquire new work skills. Although the Lome Accord also called for the creation of a special fund to implement a program for rehabilitation of war victims, by the end of 2001, it had yet to be established. Attention to amputees increased the access of other persons with disabilities to health care and treatment. [2]

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

5.46 The Government is committed to improving children's education and welfare, but lacks the means to provide basic education and health services for them. The law requires school attendance through primary school. However, schools throughout the country were looted and destroyed during the years of civil conflict, and most have not been rebuilt. A large number of children receive little or no formal education. There are formal and informal fees finance schools, but many families cannot afford to pay them. [2]

6.A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

OVERVIEW

6.1 President Kabbah's Government, during its first term in office, generally respected human rights, and attempted to abide by the safeguards within the constitution. Where these rights have been curtailed, it has usually been because of security considerations or because of a lack of funds or trained personnel to ensure that they are respected. However, the Government appears to be responsive to representations made to it, and has attempted to address the issue of human rights, and abuses when these have been reported to it. [2]

6.2 In the past, both groups backing the Government and rebel groups have failed to respect human rights. The CDF, a militia that supported the Government, were involved in human rights abuses during the civil conflict, but there have been no recent reports of systematic CDF involvement in such crimes. The Sierra Leone Government was also hampered in addressing human rights abuses, by its inability to extend its rule to all parts of the country. However, with the improved security situation, there are grounds to believe that there may now be a sustained improvement in the human rights situation. [2][4][10]

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND THE MEDIA

6.3 The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press. The written press and radio reported freely on security matters, corruption, and political affairs generally without interference. Over 50 newspapers were published in Freetown alone in 2001, covering a wide spectrum of interests. Most of the newspapers were independent of the Government, and several were associated with opposition political parties. The number of newspapers fluctuated weekly; many contained sensational, undocumented stories and repeated items carried by other newspapers. Newspapers openly and routinely criticised the Government and its officials, as well as the rebel forces. [2]

6.4 Due to low levels of literacy and the relatively high cost of newspapers and television, radio remained the most important medium of public information. There were several Government and private radio and television stations, which featured both domestic news coverage and political commentary. The Government controlled Sierratel communications company provided Internet access in Freetown although the condition of its landlines often made Internet reception problematic. [2]

JOURNALISTS

6.5 There have been some reports of infringements of press freedom. In February 2001 police interrogated the editor of the Democrat newspaper and searched his office after he published an article about the President's security detail. The editor was detained and interrogated for 4 hours. In September 2001 a list of seven journalists allegedly targeted by "killing squads" was circulated in Freetown. The list said of the seven: "All must die before elections. All are enemies of the State." There has been no further action or subsequent threats. The Government and police denied any involvement and publicly criticised the targeting as an attempt to intimidate journalists. There were no developments in the February 2000 arrest of Ayodele Lukobi Johnson, the managing editor of Rolyc newspaper, and reporter Ayodele Walters. The authorities

charged them with "sedition, libel, and publishing false news" after they published a negative article about President Kabbah. However, there were unconfirmed reports that the journalists were released in 2000. [2]

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

6.6 The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Sierra Leonean Government respects this right in practice. There are requirements for the recognising, registering, or regulating religious groups. The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. Students are allowed to choose whether they attend either Muslim or Christian oriented classes. [3]

6.7 There are amicable relations between the various religious communities, and interfaith marriage is common. The Inter-Religious Council (IRC), composed of Christian and Muslim leaders, plays a vital role in civil society and actively participates in efforts to further the peace process. The IRC criticises the use of force and atrocities committed by the rebels, endorse reconciliation and peace talks, and facilitate rehabilitation of the victims affected by the war, including former child soldiers. [3]

6.8 Prior to the peace process, rebel forces have attacked both churches and mosques and targeted Christian and Muslim religious leaders, but such crimes have not recently been reported. Rebel forces also targeted members of religious orders, and those identified with religious groups, on the assumption that they would be paid a ransom for their return. [3]

RELIGIOUS GROUPS

6.9 Reliable data on the exact numbers of those who practice major religions are not available. However, most sources estimate that the population is 60% Muslim, 30% Christian and 10% practitioners of traditional indigenous religions. Historically, most Muslims have been concentrated in the northern areas of the country, and Christians were located in the south. However, the civil war resulted in movement by major segments of the population. According to sources, many syncretistic practices exist, with up to 20% of the population practising a mixture of Muslim and traditional indigenous practices or Christian and traditional indigenous practices. [3]

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY & ASSOCIATION

6.10 The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, and this is generally respected this right in practice. The Government did not deny requests to use public areas for meetings or demonstrations, and many of which took place throughout 2001. [2]

6.11 The Constitution provides for freedom of association, and the Government respected this right in practice. There were numerous civic, philanthropic, and social organisations, and the registration system was routine and apparently non-political. No known restrictions were applied to the formation or organisation of the 18 opposition political parties and 60 registered civic action non-governmental organisations. A number of domestic and international human rights groups operated without restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were generally co-operative and responsive to their views. Representatives of various local and international NGO's, foreign diplomats, the ICRC, and UN human rights officers are able to monitor trials and to visit prisons and custodial facilities. [2]

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

6.12 The Constitution provides for the right of association, and in practice workers had the right to join independent trade unions of their choice. Approximately 60% of the workers in urban areas, including Government workers, are unionised, but attempts to organise agricultural workers and mineworkers have met with little success. By custom all labour unions join the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC), but such membership is voluntary. Police and members of the armed services are prohibited from joining unions. There are no reliable statistics on union membership, but membership numbers have declined as a percentage of all workers because of the virtual collapse of the small manufacturing sector. [2]

6.13 The Trade Union Act provides that any five persons may form a trade union by application to the registrar of trade unions, who has statutory powers under the act to approve the creation of trade unions. The registrar may reject applications for several reasons, including an insufficient number of members, proposed representation in an industry already served by an existing union, or incomplete documentation. If the registrar rejects an application, the decision may be appealed in the ordinary courts, but applicants seldom take such action. [2]

6.14 Workers have the right to strike, although the authorities can require 21 days' notice. There were several significant strikes in the public sector during 2001. Most notably teachers and doctors struck over wages and unpaid salaries in the form of work stoppages. No laws prohibit retaliation against strikers, even for a lawful strike; however, the Government did not take adverse action against the employees and paid some of them back wages. An employee fired for union activities may file a complaint with a labour tribunal and seek reinstatement. Complaints of discrimination against trade unions are made to a tribunal. Unions are free to form federations and to affiliate internationally. The SLLC is a member of the International Confederation of Free Trade Union. [2]

PEOPLE TRAFFICKING

6.15 No law prohibits trafficking in persons, and there were reports that rebel groups abducted young boys and girls and forced them to work as servants. Women and girls were also forced to act as sexual slaves. Rebel forces also forced civilians, including children, to work as porters and in diamond fields. The Government has attempted to combat these practices by compelling the RUF to disarm and demobilise and by its emphasis on the release of child soldiers. Traffickers sent many victims to the rebel-held diamond fields in eastern Sierra Leone to work as forced labourers. There were no figures available on the extent of the trafficking problem. There were no confirmed reports of persons trafficked outside of the country. [2]

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

6.16 The Constitution provides for citizens to travel within the Sierra Leone, and to leave the country, and the Government generally respected these rights. Citizens were required to get a police clearance within 72 hours before international travel, but such clearance was usually issued non-restrictively, and is no longer required. The Government does not attempt to limit citizens' departure or return for political or discriminatory reasons. [2]

6.17 However, it is reported that in 2001 Government troops set up roadblocks within the country in an attempt to extort food or money from travellers, as did the RUF and other groups for the same purpose. RUF rebels also manned roadblocks to extort money and goods from travellers. In April 2001, a driver reportedly spent approximately \$35 (70,000 Leones) getting through a series of RUF roadblocks between Mile 91 and Makeni, a distance of approximately 45 miles. In previous years, an ex-SLA splinter group called the West Side Boys also manned roadblocks. In late 2000, this group was disbanded, and there were no reported incidents during 2001. [2]

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDP)

6.18 An estimated 600,000 citizens remained displaced within Sierra Leone, but the true figure is probably much higher. In 2001 thousands of citizens returned to the country from Guinea, following attacks and ill treatment by RUF and Guinean forces that began in late 2000. The RUF's cross-border actions forced the return of refugees in Guinea, who then became displaced within Sierra Leone, as it was still unsafe for them to return to their original homes. Some of these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were housed in camps, but many are living in Freetown. [2][55]

6.19 An estimated 80,000 Sierra Leoneans have returned to the Sierra Leone in 2001. This large influx, together with a lack of resources to deal with them, has caused tension between local residents and the returning IDPs. As more of the country has come under government control, there has been a concerted effort to resettle IDP in the areas that they had fled from. However, provision to assist them in these areas remains poor, and in some case their needs for medical care, clean water and supplies are not being adequately met. [55][56]

6.20 A number of NGO and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have expressed concerns regarding the provisions for care for the numbers returning. However many of the returns are voluntary, and, where IDPs returns from Liberia, there is a perception that returning to Sierra Leone would be safer than remaining in that country. [55][56]

6.21 There have been reports that IDPs have been subject to sexual exploitation by workers for international agencies. This has been widely condemned, and the subject of investigation by both the UN and agencies involved. [57][86][87]

6.B HUMAN RIGHTS - SPECIFIC GROUPS

ETHNIC GROUPS

6.22 The Constitution provides protection against discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity, except for the long-time prohibition against citizenship for persons with a non-African father. This provision effectively blocks citizenship for much of the sizeable Lebanese community and for other persons with non-African fathers. [2] The Lebanese community has traditionally been involved in business, particularly the diamond trade. [88]

6.23 The country's population is ethnically diverse and consists of at least 13 ethnic groups. These groups generally all speak distinct primary languages and are concentrated outside urban areas. However, all ethnic groups use Krio as a second language, little ethnic segregation is apparent in urban areas, and interethnic marriage is common. The two largest ethnic groups are the Temne in the northern part of the country and the Mende in the southern part; each of these groups is estimated to make up about 30% of the population. [2]

6.24 Ethnic loyalty remained an important factor in Government, the armed forces, and business. Complaints of corruption within ethnic groups and ethnic discrimination in Government appointments, contracts, military commissions, and promotions are common. There did not appear to be a strong correspondence between ethnic or regional and political cleavages. Ethnic differences also did not appear to contribute appreciably to the RUF rebellion, the 1997 coup, or the civil conflict. No ethnic or regional base of voluntary popular support for the rebels was identifiable, and they controlled territory by terror and coercion rather than by popular consent. [2]

6.25 There was a violent riot involving the Nigerian community and local youth in Freetown in July 2002. The cause was the murder of a local businessman, which it was believed Nigerian fraudsters were responsible for. The police acted rapidly and impartially to restore order. [58]

WOMEN

6.26 Violence against women, especially wife beating, is common. Police are unlikely to intervene in domestic disputes except in cases of severe injury or death. Domestic violence is not recognised as a societal problem. However, rape is recognised as a societal problem punishable by up to 14 years imprisonment. There is a significant amount of prostitution. Many women, especially those displaced from their homes and with few resources resort to it to secure income for themselves and their children. Rebel forces used rape as a terror tactic. [2]

6.27 The Constitution provides for equal rights for women but in practice women face both legal and societal discrimination. In particular their rights and status under traditional law vary significantly depending upon the ethnic group to which they belong. The Temne and Limba tribes of the north afford greater rights to women to inherit property than does the Mende tribe that gives preference to male heirs and unmarried daughters. However, in the Temne tribe women cannot become paramount chiefs. In the south the Mende tribe has a number female paramount chiefs. Women are nevertheless very active in civic organisations and NGOs and were instrumental in pressuring the previous government to allow free and fair multiparty elections in 1996 and were vocal representatives of civil society during the peace talks in Lome. [2]

6.28 Women do not have equal access to education, economic opportunities, health facilities or social freedoms. In rural areas women perform much of the subsistence farming and have little opportunity for formal education. The average educational level for women is markedly below that of men; only 6% are literate. At university level men predominate. Women are very active in civic and philanthropic organisations and a significant number are employed as civil servants. [2]

6.29 The signatories to the Lome Peace Agreement have committed themselves to paying special attention to the needs of women in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programmes. This will enable them to play a central role in the moral, social and physical reconstruction of Sierra Leone. [32]

6.30 The relatively stability in Sierra Leone has done little to diminish crimes against women. There has been an increase in the number of rapes reported, to the authorities. These crimes are increasingly because of general lawlessness, and not as a result of rebel activity. [77a][77b]

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

6.31 Female genital mutilation (FGM) is widely practised among all levels of society, although with varying frequency. The form practised is excision. Some estimates of the percentage of women and girls who undergo the practice range as high as 80-90%. While the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates the percentage of females who have undergone this procedure to be as high as between 90% local groups believe this figure is overstated. FGM is practised by almost all of Sierra Leone's ethnic groups, and there is no law prohibiting it. There are a number of NGOs working to inform the public about the harmful health effects of FGM and to eradicate it. However, an active mass campaign by secret societies opposes international efforts aimed at ending FGM. [2][62a] Such groups see FGM as a rite of passage, and support the practise on cultural grounds, usually FGM is conducted at puberty in mass ceremonies in the bush. However, the displacement that result during the civil war has meant that this can be conducted on older girls and women. [2][62a][62b]

6.32 The best known of these societies would appear to be the Bondo society, but various interchangeable names are used for these groups such as Temne or Sande. Bondo has members from all parts of society, and would appear to have considerable social and political influence. [62a][62b] The Bondo have shown a willingness to agitate in favour of FGM, and have, on a number of occasions, sought political support. [62c]

6.33 The Bondo society appears to be organised at both a local and a national level, and it holds rallies and meetings in support of its aims. The leaders of the groups are usually referred to as Soweis, a term that means initiators, and there are reports that suggest that this position is hereditary. [62a][62b] As the Bondo is a secret society, reliable information regarding their organisation, leadership and ceremonies is limited. During the ceremony, where FGM is performed, the initiates are sworn to secrecy, and these societies have taken action against those who they believe to have revealed their secrets. [62b][63b]

6.34 While the Sierra Leone authorities investigate case of FGM, that have resulted in death, and Bondo members who break the law, there appears to be little political will or inclination to challenge this practise. [63a][63b][64] Some politicians, reportedly including President Kabbah, would appear to support the Bondos, or at least be ambivalent in their attitude to it. [62c][64]

CHILDREN

6.35 The Constitution prohibits forced and bonded labour, including that performed by children. However, this remains a problem, and there were reports of children in rural areas being forced to work. The minimum age for employment is officially 18 years, although children between the ages of 12 and 18 years may be employed in certain non-hazardous occupations, provided they have their parents' consent. In practice this law is not enforced because there is no government entity charged with the task, and parents have required the income that the labour of their children provides. Children routinely assist in family businesses and work as petty vendors. In rural areas, children work seasonally on family subsistence farms. Rebel forces also forced civilians, including children, to work as porters and in diamond fields. The authorities are attempting to combat this practice through its efforts to compel the RUF to disarm and demobilise. [2]

6.36 Up to an estimated 5,000 child soldiers at a time served alongside adults on both sides during the civil conflict, but in greater numbers on the RUF side.. However, in light of the improved security situation, there has been a reduction in the reports of forced recruitment by all groups. [2]

6.37 In a report of August 2000 Amnesty International stated that all groups, including those allied to the Sierra Leone Government, had continued to recruit children into their ranks. Amnesty called upon all groups to end this practice, and encouraged the Sierra Leone Government to stand by its commitments to address this issue. [26] During the upsurge in fighting in 2000, there were credible reports of human rights abuses by RUF, including the abuse of children, and their recruitment into RUF. [78][79][80]

6.38 Rebels groups in Sierra Leone have in past kidnapped children to augment their forces and to abduct other children. Girls who were kidnapped were made to act as porters, and sexual abuse is common. In some cases children have been forced to commit atrocities involving family members. Children, who manage to escape, are sometimes rejected by their families, and local communities, because of the atrocities that they were forced to commit when held by the rebels. There are programs for the reintegration of children into society, and centres for their care, these are supported by the Government, and assisted by NGOs. [2][89]

6.39 The Lome peace accord states that particular attention must be paid to the issue of child soldiers in the existing disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process. A UNICEF supported programme is being run on the Freetown peninsula for children associated with the fighting forces. [46][89] Following the completion of the DDR process, it is reported that various rebel groups released 7,000 children, and most of these are not being adequately cared for. [82]

6.40 There has been treatment provided for children on whose faces and bodies members of rebel groups carved their acronyms. Plastic surgeons from the International Medical Corps visited Sierra Leone in July 2001, in order to assist in removing these scars. These scars have resulted in social and psychological problems for these children. According to the official many hid their markings while playing at school. "Some tried to hide the scars and others tried to remove them with caustic soda". Others refuse to return to their parents because of the stigma of being associated with rebel groups who committed atrocities. [90]

6.41 In February 2002, there were reports by NGOs, UNHCR and Save the Children UK, that workers in refugee camps in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone have been sexually abusing children in their care. Peacekeepers within Sierra Leone have also been accused of such abuses. The UN has acted to investigate these allegations, but no action had been taken as a result of these enquiries. [86][87]

CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS

6.42 In light of the large numbers of children separated from their families, the provisions for childcare have been a priority. However, this care appears to be mostly provided by international NGOs, religious or charitable organisations. Government provisions for childcare are limited, but this would appear to be due to a lack of resources, rather than from an unwillingness to address this problem. [82][83][84]

6.43 There have also been reports that international aid workers have sexually abused children. These reports are being investigated, but no action has been taken, and the UN has express its concern at these reports. [86][87]

HOMOSEXUALS

6.44 There is limited information on the attitude to homosexuality in Sierra Leone. Under laws that pre-date independence, male homosexuality would appear to be illegal, but there is no information on how the law is applied. [19]

REVOLUTIONARY UNITED FRONT (RUF)

6.45 In late April/early May 2000, RUF forces appeared to be preparing to attack Freetown, their attitude to the peacekeepers and close proximity of their forces to the city, were interpreted as a threat. ECOMOG withdrew the majority of its troops on 2 May 2000, as it was believed that the UN peacekeepers could take over its place. [68] On 9 May 2000, in light of the deteriorating situation, the British High Commission advised British citizens to leave, and British forces were deployed to hold Lungi airport, assist in the evacuation of foreign nationals, and to provide support to the legitimate Sierra Leone authorities and the UN. On 8 May 2000, members of RUF fired on demonstrators outside Foday Sankoh's house in Freetown. Five people were killed, and Foday Sankoh is believed to have sanctioned this action. He attempted to evade arrest, by going into hiding in Freetown, but was detained on 17 May 2000. [65][67] During this outbreak of violence, RUF took approximately 500 UN peacekeepers hostage, they were soon freed, but a number were killed. [1][25] British forces have now been withdrawn, except for those involved in training, peace monitoring and advising the Sierra Leone Government and the UN. The United Kingdom Government continues to provide support for the Sierra Leone army and Government, and is considering further requests for assistance, and the appropriate means for its provision. [4][66][69][70] Following a change in RUF's leadership in August 2000, General Issa Sesay took command and replaced Foday Sankoh. [71]

6.46 On 10 November 2000 Sierra Leone's Government and RUF agreed to end hostilities and revive the derailed peace process. The two sides decided at a meeting in Abuja, "to declare and observe a cease-fire and to halt hostilities with effect from the 10th Day of November, 2000, starting at 12.00 midnight". They also agreed that the UN Mission in Sierra Leone would be allowed to deploy freely even in rebel-held diamond producing areas so as to supervise and monitor the cease-fire or investigate reports of violations. A disarmament process under which rebel soldiers would be demobilised or reintegrated into the armed forces would also be resumed. "The ultimate objective of the present agreement is to ensure a cease-fire

and to bring an end to the hostilities," the document said. As a result, the implementation will be reviewed 30 days after the agreement has been in effect "to evaluate the timeliness of commencing fresh application of the Lome Peace Agreement". There was no reference in the agreement to Foday Sankoh. Discussions involved observers from the UN and the ECOWAS committee of mediation comprising Ghana, Nigeria, Guinea, Liberia, Togo and Mali. This agreement has yet to be reviewed, but a de facto cease-fire remains in operation. [53]

6.47 In February 2001, RUF set up a "Political Council" to explore ways of advancing Sierra Leone's stalled peace process. Former RUF spokesman Mr Omrie Golley said that he had been appointed to head the council, which would include combatants and members of civil society organisations in rebel-held areas. "The idea would be obviously to revisit and find a way to move the process forward and more expeditiously". [75] In March 2001, The High Command of RUF in Makeni endorsed all six members of its newly formed Political and Peace Council, according to Mr Golley. Mr Golley added that the objective of the council was to start "formal dialogue" with the government and the international community so as to resume the peace process that had been suspended following the violence in May 2000. [76]

6.48 In early September 2001, President Kabbah visited the Kono region, and there met with Gen. Issa Sesay, and he stated that the 10-year old war had ended. He was accompanied by Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Alpha Oumar Konare of Mali, who came to assess the disarmament process in this former RUF stronghold and help build confidence among the district's residents. [94]

6.49 There are still isolated acts of violence, usually not endorsed by RUF's leadership. UNAMSIL has now extended its patrols to all parts of Sierra Leone, including the volatile border region and diamond mining areas. [95] Prior to the elections in May 2002, all militia and rebel groups were to disarm. The UN reported that this had been achieved in January 2002, with over 40,000 rebel and Government militia forces being disarmed. Funds have also been provided to reintegrate members of such groups into society. RUF still has influence within the community, and it is likely that all groups have retained weapons caches. [85][96] RUF has re-organised as a political party, and it contested the parliamentary elections, and fielded a presidential candidate. [1][36][97]

6.50 Foday Sankoh rejected the recent election results, when interviewed at a court appearance on 5 June 2002. He faces charges in connection with the killing of anti-rebel demonstrators in May 2000. He failed to appear at a hearing in September 2002, as he was reported to be in ill health. [91][92]

CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE (CDF)

6.51 The Civil Defence Forces (CDF), is a coalition of militias that supports the Government base on traditional hunting society. They are also referred to as Kamajors. They are nominally under military discipline, and though independent are responsible to the Government. [1][2][4]

6.52 There were reports in the first half of 2000 that both SLA and CDF forces summarily executed suspected rebels and rebel collaborators. However, in view of the insecurity in most of the country, it was difficult to gather detailed information on abuses or to corroborate reports. [2]

6.53 Prior to the elections in May 2002, all militia and rebel groups were to disarm. The UN reported that this was achieved in January 2002, with over 40,000 rebel and Government forces being disarmed. Funds have been provided to reintegrate members of such groups into society. However, this does not mean that such groups no longer have influence within the community, and it is likely that all groups have retained caches of weapons. [85][96][97]

6.C HUMAN RIGHTS - OTHER ISSUES

UNITED NATIONS

6.54 On 5 July 2000, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1306 (2000) imposing a ban on the import of rough diamonds from Sierra Leone, it also requested that a system of certification be set up by the Sierra Leone Government. This certification would confirm the provenance of diamonds exports that were approved by the Sierra Leone Government. This resolution also called for monitoring of any reports of violations of this prohibition. Liberia has been accused of supporting RUF by providing supplies, and involvement in RUF's illicit diamond exports, a charge that has been denied. Diamond trader groups have

undertaken to abide by this resolution and assist the Sierra Leone Government. [72][73][74] In October 2000, the Sierra Leone Government lifted its ban on the export of diamonds, after taking delivery of specially printed certificates. These certificates should guarantee that gems have been sold through officially approved channels. [81]

6.55 While progress has been made on the control of the illicit diamond trade, it still remains a problem. The low bulk and high value makes diamonds an easy commodity to smuggle, there are also established networks for this trade, and diamonds are an ideal way to finance rebel or criminal activity. In December 2001, the UN re-affirmed its commitment to ending this trade, and approved a resolution to retain the measures already taken to reduce it. [74]

6.56 In August 2000 the Security Council adopted Resolution 1315 (2000). This recommended that the Sierra Leone Government assist in the creation of an independent special court with jurisdiction over cases relating to "notable crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of humanitarian law, as well as crimes under relevant Sierra Leonean law committed within the territory of Sierra Leone". The court would also have jurisdiction over individuals accused of bearing the greatest responsibility for the crimes listed above. [74]

6.57 The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) has now been completed with over 47,000 fighters from various groups of rebels been processed. Training for those who have been demobilised is being provided, and some of the ex-fighters are to be reintegrated into the SLA. [85] Funding for the reintegration of former fighters has been limited, but over 6,000 had completed this programme by June 2002. [98][99]

6.58 In September 2002, The UN Security Council voted unanimously to extend the mandate of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone by six months. However, it is intended that the mission will be considerably reduced in the coming months, in light of the improved country situation. [100] President Kabbah has welcomed this, but has stated that his preference would be for the UN mission to retain a large presence within Sierra Leone for another few months. He has sighted concerns over the security of the border with Liberia. [101]

ANNEX A - CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

1961 27 April Sierra Leone becomes an independent state within the Commonwealth led by Dr Milton Margai of the SLPP.

1962 SLPP retain power in elections.

1964 Sir Milton Margai dies and is succeeded as Prime Minister by his half brother Dr Albert Margai.

1967 In March the APC led by Dr Siaka Stevens wins the general election but is prevented from taking power by a military coup.

1968 In April following an army mutiny a civilian government is restored with Dr Stevens as Prime Minister. A period of political instability followed culminating in an attempted military coup in March 1971 that was put down with the aid of troops from Guinea.

1971 In April Sierra Leone is declared a republic with Dr Stevens as executive president.

1976 Dr Stevens re-elected to presidency for a second 5 year term of office in March.

1977 Elections held in May a year early because of political unrest. SLPP secured 15 of the 85 elective seats in the legislature.

1978 The new constitution was approved in June which provided for a one party system. APC thus became the sole legal party. On 14 June Stevens was sworn in for a 7-year presidential term. SLPP MPs joined the APC.

1981 State of emergency declared in August in an attempt to suppress a general strike following a government financial scandal.

1982 General election held in May under the one party constitution amid serious outbreaks of violence.

1982 - 1985 Continuing unrest and demonstrations against food shortages, the rise in prices and failure to pay salaries.

1985 Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh inaugurated as president.

1987 Government foils an attempted coup in January. State of emergency declared in November following a series of strikes by public sector workers. Under new measures corruption was re-defined as a criminal offence and people accused of any crime could be tried in absentia. Severe penalties were introduced for the publication of defamatory articles in newspapers; government censorship was imposed and private mail became subject to inspection.

1989 October Francis Minah, the first vice-president, and 5 others executed for plotting to assassinate Momoh and to overthrow government.

1991 September a new constitution was formally adopted although the 1978 constitution also remained officially in force. In late September 6 newly created political associations allied themselves as UNIFOM and demanded that the government give way to an interim administration.

1992 April 29 Government replaced in armed coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser. Momoh fled to Guinea on 30 April and Strasser announced the formation of the NPRC, which suspended the 1978 and 1991 constitutions; dissolved the House of Representatives; suspended all political activity and imposed a state of emergency and curfew.

1992 May 6 Strasser was sworn in as head of state.

1992 July legislation introduced which imposed severe restrictions on the media and authorised state censorship.

December the government foiled a coup attempt by the Anti Corruption Revolutionary Movement. Nine of those who were accused of involvement in the conspiracy, together with 17 prisoners previously convicted of treason, were executed.

1993 January several former members of the Momoh government who had been detained since May 1992 were released. Further press restrictions were imposed.

February the commission of enquiry which had been established in May 1992 published report containing evidence of corruption on the part of former members of the Momoh administration.

March the European Parliament adopted a resolution demanding that the government submit records of the trials of those executed in December 1992; remove press restrictions; release prisoners detained without trial and initiate a programme for the transition to civilian rule.

July government re-organisation - Musa replaced as deputy chairman of NPRC by Captain Bio. A number of political prisoners were released.

December A five member Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established to organise the registration of voters and establish the demarcation of constituency boundaries. At the end of the month the state of emergency which had operated since April 1992 was ended. g their service.

1995 March Musa ordered to retire after Strasser rejected his proposal for the installation of a transitional civilian government.

June the ban on political parties was formally rescinded. 15 parties were subsequently granted registration although the RUF refused to participate in the political process.

1996 January Strasser deposed by military officers led by Bio in a bloodless coup. Bio assumed the office of head of state.

February 26 Presidential and legislative elections took place

March 15 A second round of presidential elections took place.

March 29 Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP inaugurated as president.

July Constitution of 1991 formally re-instated.

November signing of the peace agreement in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. Known as the Abidjan Accord it provided for the immediate cessation of hostilities and a schedule for disarmament, demobilisation and reconstruction. A Neutral Monitoring Group from the international community was to be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the peace agreement. There were, however, major setbacks and delays in implementation.

1997 May 25 President Kabbah's government overthrown by a group of low ranking army officers who formed the AFRC. Major Johnny Paul Koroma, who was set free from prison on the day of the coup, headed the AFRC. The constitution was suspended, political parties were banned and all demonstrations were prohibited.

June 17 Major Koroma was sworn in as head of state. The RUF joined forces with the AFRC to form the People's Army. Foday Sankoh was named vice-chairman of the AFRC and prominent members of the RUF were appointed to the AFRC's ruling council.

October 23 Conakry Communiqué signed which, over a 6-month period, would provide inter alia for the re-instatement of Kabbah's civilian government and the disarmament of all combatants and immunity for the leaders of the May coup.

1998 Mid February ECOMOG troops liberate Freetown. Go on to secure most major towns and roads in the country.

March 10 President Kabbah returns to country.

July RUF rebel leader Foday Sankoh returned to Sierra Leone from detention in Nigeria. New press regulations introduced.

August 25 16 civilians found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) Programme formally launched.

October 19 24 soldiers executed by firing squad

October 21 11 more civilians sentenced to death.

October 23 Sankoh found guilty of 7 counts of treason and sentenced to death.

November 5 15 civilians convicted of treason and sentenced to death the following day.

December 11 22 civilians go on trial for treason.

December 29 former junta prime minister, Solomon Musa, killed in fighting.

1999 January 6 rebels enter parts of Freetown.

January 11 ECOMOG troops launch offensive - rebels retreat to east.

January 31 ECOMOG re-taken all of Freetown.

January ICRC evacuates expatriate staff from Freetown after being accused of collaboration with rebels.

February 2 President Kabbah announces plan to build a new army and national militia.

May 18 Cease-fire Agreement signed by Government of Sierra Leone and RUF

July 7 Peace agreement signed in Lome by Government of Sierra Leone and RUF.

October fighting between RUF and AFRC forces in Makeni and Lunsar.

November 2 President Kabbah forms his new cabinet that incorporates members of the RUF.

November RUF provisionally registers as a political party - the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF).

November Former President Joseph Saidu Momoh released from RUF captivity after being held by them since August

November United Nations begin deploying peacekeeping troops

December RUF guerrilla commander Sam Bockarie executes 8 senior aides and then flees his jungle stronghold

2000 January ECOMOG begin to withdraw its troops from Sierra Leone

May 2 ECOMOG completes withdrawal.

May RUF took 500 UN, peacekeepers hostage, they have since been freed, but a number were killed.

May 9 in light of the deteriorating situation, the British High Commission advised British citizens to leave, and British forces were deploy to hold Lungi airport, assist in the evacuation of foreign nationals, and to provide non-combat support to the legitimate Sierra Leone authorities and the UN.

May 8 members of RUF, fired on demonstrators outside Foday Sankoh's house in Freetown. Five people were killed, and Foday Sankoh is believed to have sanctioned this action. He attempted to evade arrest, by going into hiding in Freetown, but was arrested on 17 May.

June 14 Britain began pulling out the last of its troops from Sierra Leone ending a month-long mission to evacuate its nationals and support UN forces in the country.

July 5 The UN Security Council imposed an 18-month ban on the trade in uncertified rough diamonds from Sierra Leone in a bid to stop their sale from funding RUF.

August 21 RUF 's Leader Foday Sankoh was replace by Gen. Issa Sesay.

September British forces stormed a jungle hideout on 11 September, freeing six British soldiers and one Sierra Leonean officer who had been seized by a rebel group calling itself the West Side Boys (WSB) on 25 August. One British soldier and 25 rebels were killed, and another 12 British troops were wounded, in the assault on Geri Bana in the Occra Hills.

November. The Lome peace accord is revisited. A cease-fire agreement is signed between the government and RUF that is to be reviewed each 30 days. A taskforce of 500 British Royal Marines arrive in Freetown to reinforce British troops who are already training the Sierra Leonean military.

2001 February - Parliament approved the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Bill.

September - UNAMSIL deployed an advance party of some 300 Zambian peacekeeping troops into the diamond-rich Tongo Fields area in eastern Sierra Leone.

2002 January - Disarmament process completed.

February - Voter registration completed.

2002 May presidential elections held, President Kabbah re-elected. The Sierra Leonean Parliament elections were also held on 14 May 2002. The Parliament is to be formed of 124 members, with Paramount Chiefs being appointed to 12 seats. In the parliamentary elections, the SLPP obtained 83 seats, the APC 27 seats, and the PLP 2 seats.

ANNEX B - POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

All People's Congress (APC)

The governing party from 1968. It was the sole legal party from 1978 until 1991 and merged with the DPP in March 1992. It was reconstituted in 1995 and was led by Edward Turay. The APC came second in the May 2002 election received 22.352%, and has 27 seats of the seats in parliament. The APC leader Ernest Bai Koroma was its presidential candidate.

Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)

A military organisation headed by Major Johnny Paul Koroma. Removed President Kabbah's government in a coup on 25 May 1997. Joined forces with the RUF to form the People's Army. The AFRC has now been dissolved. However, splinter groups like the West Side Boys, have proved difficult to control.

Civil Defence Force (CDF)

A local defence force organised to resist RUF. The most significant grouping in the CDF is known as Kamajors (traditional hunters). They are allied to the Sierra Leonean government, but are highly independent and not fully under government control.

ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)

Nigerian led West African peacekeeping force whose main base is in Liberia. ECOMOG withdrew in May 2000, and its departure may have encouraged RUF to challenge the UN force in Sierra Leone.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

An intergovernmental organisation of 16 West African states with headquarters in Nigeria whose aim is to promote economic development and regional co-operation.

National Co-ordinating Committee for Peace (NCCP)

A coalition of some 60 organisations that was formed in April 1995, to facilitate a negotiated peace settlement between the NPRC and the RUF.

National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC)

Established by Captain Valentine Strasser who seized power in a military coup in April 1992. It comprised 18 military officers and 4 civilians. The NPRC suspended the 1978 and 1991 Constitutions, dissolved the House of Representatives and imposed a state of emergency and curfew. All political activity was suspended and in July 1992 it was designated the supreme council of state. It also imposed severe restrictions on the media and authorised state censorship. In January 1996 Maada Bio, who officially relinquished power to Kabbah's civilian government on 29 March 1996, replaced Strasser.

Organisation of African Unity (OAU)

Founded in 1963 to promote unity and solidarity among African states, 52 of which are members.

People's Democratic Party (PDP)

Led by Osman Kamara. Obtained 12 seats in February 1996 elections. Supported the SLPP in the May 2002 elections.

People's Liberation Party (PLP)

Founded in 2002, and led by John Paul Koroma, who was also the PLP's presidential candidate in the May 2002 elections. He came third, with 3% of the votes cast. The party has 2 seats in the present Sierra Leone Parliament.

Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

Joined forces with NPFL and commenced insurgency in 1991. Remained in conflict with the government despite cease-fires. RUF's Leader Foday Sankoh was replaced in August 2000 by Gen. Issa Sesay as interim leader. He is also the leader of the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUFPP), which is RUF's political party. RUFPP fielded both a presidential candidate, and parliamentary candidates in the May 2002. Their presidential candidate, RUFPP's General Secretary Pallo Bangura, received 1.73% of the votes cast. In the parliamentary elections, the RUFPP received approximately 1% of the vote cast, and holds no seats in Parliament.

Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP)

Led initially by Dr (later Sir) Milton Margai. It remained the governing party until 1967 and was then the official opposition party from 1968 to 1978. SLPP members of parliament merged with the APC in 1978. It emerged as the largest party in Parliament following elections in February 1996. Led by President Kabbah. The SLPP obtained 83 seats in the May 2002 election. President Kabbah was re-elected with 70.06% of the votes cast.

United Front of Political Movements (UNIFOM)

Formed in late September 1991 and consisted of 6 newly created political associations who demanded that the government give way to an interim administration.

United National People's Party (UNPP)

Led by John Karefa-Smart. Obtained 17 seats in February 1996 elections.

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, (UNAMSIL)

An international peace keeping force deployed to Sierra Leone, and mandated by the UN Security Council.

ANNEX C - PROMINENT PEOPLE

CAPTAIN JULIUS MAADA BIO

Replaced Musa as deputy chairman of NPRC and chief secretary of state in July 1993. Led the coup that deposed Strasser in January 1996.

AHMED TEJAN KABBAH

Leader of the SLPP and elected president in March 1996. Overthrown by a military coup on 25 May 1997. Re-instated March 1998. He was re-elected President in May 2002.

JOHNNY PAUL KOROMA

Chair of the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace, established under the Lome Peace Agreement. He was the Leader of the AFRC, the military junta that deposed the civilian government of President Kabbah.

ALBERT MARGAI

Milton Margai's half-brother. Minister of Finance until he became Prime Minister in 1964 upon his half brother's death.

MILTON MARGAI

Leader of the SLPP he became Chief Minister in 1953 and Prime Minister in 1958. Under his leadership Sierra Leone became an independent state within the Commonwealth on 27 April 1961.

JOSEPH SAIDU MOMOH

A cabinet minister in the APC and commander of the armed forces. He became leader of the party and president on 28 November 1985. Overthrown in a military coup on 29 April 1992. Fled to Guinea on 30 April 1992.

CAPTAIN SOLOMON MUSA

Acting head of state during Strasser's temporary absence in September 1992. He was appointed chief secretary of state in December 1992 and was widely blamed for the repressive measures undertaken by the government. He was replaced in July 1993 and initially took refuge in the Nigerian High Commission in Freetown before ultimately seeking refuge in the UK. Served as Prime Minister under the military junta from 1997-1998. Killed in fighting at Panguma on 29 December 1998.

SAM HINGA NORMAN

Deputy Defence Minister and leader of the CDF, an informal force opposed to RUF.

FODAY SANKOH

Leader of the RUF, but is at present in detention. He has been replaced by Gen. Issa Sesay as interim leader.

GEN. ISSA SESAY

Interim leader of RUF since August 2000, and is also leader of the RUFP.

SIKA STEVENS

Former leader of the APC who won the general elections of March 1967 but was prevented from taking power until April 1968. Dr. Stevens became executive President when Sierra Leone became a republic in April 1971. He remained president until 1985.

VALENTINE E.M. STRASSER

The leader of the coup which seized power on 29 April 1992. Established the NPRC. As head of state and chairman of the NPRC Strasser suspended all political activity; suspended the 1978 and 1991 constitutions; dissolved the House of Representatives and imposed a state of emergency. In July 1992 Strasser's regime introduced severe restrictions on the media and authorised state censorship. Strasser was deposed in a bloodless coup in January 1996. He has since returned to Sierra Leone from the United Kingdom.

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