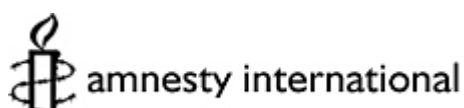


**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

|                                    |                        |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Bilagsnr.:</b>                  | <b>136</b>             |
| Land:                              | Sierra Leone           |
| Kilde:                             | Amnesty International. |
| Titel:                             | Report 2009.           |
| Udgivet:                           | 28. maj 2009           |
| Optaget på<br>baggrundsmaterialet: | 12. juni 2009          |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title            | Amnesty International Report 2009 - Sierra Leone                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Publisher        | Amnesty International                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Country          | Sierra Leone                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Publication Date | 28 May 2009                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Cite as          | Amnesty International, <i>Amnesty International Report 2009 - Sierra Leone</i> , 28 May 2009, available at:<br><a href="http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a1fadc4c.html">http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a1fadc4c.html</a> |



## Amnesty International Report 2009 - Sierra Leone

**Head of state and government:** Ernest Bai Koroma

**Death penalty:** retentionist

**Population:** 6 million

**Life expectancy:** 41.8 years

**Under-5 mortality (m/f):** 290/264 per 1,000

**Adult literacy:** 34.8 per cent

The security situation was generally stable, despite violence before and after local elections in July. The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor resumed in January in The Hague. Two of the three trials on appeal before the Special Court for Sierra Leone were completed and one was due to be completed by the end of 2008. The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone released its first countrywide report. Little progress was made in implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Appeals for 11 people convicted of treason, 10 of whom had been sentenced to death, were upheld and all 11 were released in November.

Sierra Leone remained an extremely poor country, with maternal and infant mortality rates among the highest in the world. An estimated one in eight women died in childbirth and one in four children died before their fifth birthday.

### Background

In February the President launched a Reproductive and Child Health Strategic Plan aimed at reducing maternal and child mortality rates by 30 per cent by 2010. Donors committed funds to addressing maternal mortality over the next 10 years.

The Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone's first report released in July covered a range of human rights violations including police brutality and excessive use of force as well as numerous cases of prolonged detention without charge. The report had a particular focus on the rights of women and girls, highlighting high rates of both infant and maternal mortality as well as sexual and gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation.

Local council elections took place in July. Women candidates suffered harassment, including death and rape threats, from members of the community. Overall, 13 per cent of those contesting seats were women.

There were violent clashes between youths supporting the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) and the All People's Congress (APC) throughout the year. In January, four people were killed in such clashes in Port Loko and 11 houses were burned down. In June, July and August there was further political violence between the groups. In July, ahead of the elections, the army was deployed in Kenema district as a precautionary measure. Unrest was reported in various districts, as a result of which 71 candidates out of 1,324 withdrew.

The Anti-Corruption Act 2000 was replaced by a new Anti-Corruption Act 2008. In February a new national anti-corruption strategy was adopted by the government.

As part of this strategy, the Anti-Corruption Commission established a department of investigation, intelligence, and prosecution. Three senior public officials were charged with various offences under the new Act in November.

In January a Constitutional Review Commission was established by the government. It submitted 136 amendments to the 1991 Constitution, largely not human rights related, requiring approval by referendum.

In October the UN Peacebuilding Office (UNIPSIL) replaced the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). Human rights and gender issues were to remain priorities for the office. In July the UN Peacebuilding Fund approved over US\$17 million in social reform projects for Sierra Leone.

### **Special Court for Sierra Leone**

The trial of Charles Taylor in The Hague resumed in January. He faced 11 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Sierra Leone, including unlawful killings, rape and use of child soldiers. The prosecution case was completed by the end of the year.

In the cases against Revolutionary United Front (RUF) members Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao, the defence cases were heard. Judgments had not been issued by the end of 2008.

In February the Appeals Chamber upheld the original sentences passed in the cases of Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) members Alex Tamba Brima (50 years' imprisonment), Ibrahim Bazzy Kamara (45 years' imprisonment) and Santigie Borbor Kanu (45 years' imprisonment).

The case against Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa, members of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), concluded in May. Doubling their original sentences, the Appeals Chamber sentenced them to 15 and 20 years' imprisonment respectively.

### **Freedom of expression**

Several journalists were harassed, and some arrested, during 2008.

- In February Jonathan Leigh, managing editor of The Independent Observer, was arrested on libel charges and accused of defaming the Minister of Transport and Aviation. He was released on bail and later retracted the articles.
- In March, Sylvia Blyden of The Awareness Times was arrested and accused of "ridiculing the President". She was released the same day.

In May, the authorities threatened The New Vision newspaper with legal action if the newspaper failed to retract stories deemed critical of the government.

In October, Emmanuel Saffa Abdulai, Director of the Society for Democratic Initiatives (SDI), and John Baimba Sesay, the SDI's Information Officer, received death threats from an unknown caller every day for one month. They had published a report on press conditions in Sierra Leone. Staff of The New Vision, who printed the story in September, also received death threats.

### **Transitional justice**

Despite a presidential promise in February to implement the TRC recommendations, little progress was made during the year. No steps were taken to create a TRC follow-up committee.

The mandate of the National Commission for Social Action, the agency in charge of reparations, was extended. It was given responsibility for overseeing the setting up of a Special Fund for War Victims. The Reparations Task Force was reconstituted as a Reparations Steering Committee and included one female NGO representative.

### **Police and security forces**

Police brutality, excessive use of force and reported cases of sexual violence by police continued.

- In August security personnel and police violently assaulted eight journalists who were covering meetings of the SLPP and APC, along with supporters of the two groups. An investigation was initiated after the SDI and the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) called on the government to bring those responsible for the violence to justice, but by the end of the year no conclusive findings had been issued.

### **Justice system**

Little progress was made in reducing excessive delays in hearing criminal cases and prolonged pre-trial detention due to repeated adjournments and remands in custody.

- Eleven men convicted of treason who appealed against their conviction in January 2005 finally appeared in court in April 2008. It was then determined that there was no case against them, but they were only released in November.

Courts remain understaffed and underequipped with only 19 magistrates and 13 prosecution lawyers for the entire country.

### **Women's rights**

The government approved a plan to implement the 2007 gender acts, namely the Domestic Violence Act, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act and the Devolution of Estates Act. Copies of the gender acts were made available and training sessions took place throughout 2008 with women, traditional leaders and religious leaders. Despite the entry into force of the acts in 2007, high rates of sexual and gender-based violence and domestic violence continued to be reported. There was little progress in reducing the incidence of female genital mutilation.

### **Death penalty**

In November, 10 men who had been on death row for treason were released after their convictions were overturned on appeal. The 10 were Lance Corporal Daniel Sandy, Private Issa Kanu, Captain Hindolo Trye, Alhajie Kamanda, Abdulia Taimu Tarawally, Richard Sellu Bockerie, Alhaji Mohamed Kondeh, Alhagie Kargbo, Ibrahim Koroma and Kai Mattia.

In May, three new death sentences were passed on Tahimu Sesay, Gibrilla Dumbuya and Mohamed Tarwalie. The three were convicted of beating a man to death.

At the end of 2008, there were 13 people on death row, of whom three were women.

In August, civil society groups unsuccessfully lobbied the Constitutional Review Commission to abolish the death penalty.

In December, Sierra Leone abstained on a UN General Assembly resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on executions.

### **Amnesty International visits**

Amnesty International delegates visited Sierra Leone in March/April.

|                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Copyright notice: © Copyright Amnesty International |
|-----------------------------------------------------|

---