SIERRA LEONE ASSESSMENT

OCTOBER 2000

Country Information and Policy Unit

Asylum Appeals Policy Unit

CONTENTS

Scope of Document	1.1 - 1.5
II GEOGRAPHY A. Location, Climate, Population and Language B. Economy	 2.1 2.2
III HISTORY A. 1961 - 1996 B. Armed Insurrections C. 1996 - 1997	 3.1 - 3.5 3.6 - 3.8 3.9 - 3.16
IV INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE A. Judiciary B. Security Forces C. Police and Prisons D. Civil Defence Force	 4.1 - 4.8 4.9 4.10 - 4.11 4.12
V HUMAN RIGHTS A. Introduction B. Security situation (i). Recent event (ii). Revolutionary United Front (iii). United Nations	 5.1 - 5.4 5.5 - 5.37 5.38 - 5.39 5.40 - 542 5.43 - 5.47
C. SPECIFIC GROUPS Minorities/Ethnicity	 5.48 - 5.51

Women Children	5.52 - 5.57 5.58 - 5.62
OTHER ISSUES Freedom of Association and Assembly Freedom of the Press Freedom of Religion Freedom to Travel and Internal Flight	5.63 5.64 - 5.69 5.70 - 5.72 5.73 - 5.75
ANNEX A: Common Abbreviations/Political Parties	
ANNEX B: Prominent People	
ANNEX C: Chronology of Major Events	
Bibliography	

I. SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

1.1 This assessment has been produced by the Country Information & Policy Unit, Immigration & Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a variety of sources.

1.2 The assessment has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to catalogue all human rights violations. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum 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 6-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom.

1.5 The assessment will be placed on the Internet (http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/asylum/asylum_contents02.html). An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to the following organisations:

Amnesty International UK
Immigration Advisory Service
Immigration Appellate Authority
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
JUSTICE
Medical Foundation for the care of Victims of Torture
Refugee Council
Refugee Legal Centre
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

II. GEOGRAPHY

A. Location, Climate, Population and Language

2.1. The Republic of Sierra Leone covers an area of 71,740 sq km (27,699 sq miles) and borders Guinea to the North and West and Liberia to the East. 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 regions . 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 a majority of whom are Muslim although there is a significant Christian community and animist beliefs are still widely followed. 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] [5]**

B. Economy

2.2. Despite being rich in minerals, including titanium bearing rutile, bauxite, gold and diamonds, Sierra Leone's economy is poorly developed and the majority of the population survives by subsistence agriculture and informal trading. Poor implementation of economic policies has meant that modernisation projects have failed. Political instability and the activities of rebel groups have caused severe disruption to the economy and to the few high value mining operations that provide foreign exchange. With the disruption of nearly all export activity Sierra Leone has become increasingly dependent on foreign assistance and emergency humanitarian aid. **[1][9]** Wholesale trade, historically dominated by Europeans, was controlled by a small number of influential Lebanese (who were also prominent in retail trade) and Indians. Africans carry out market and itinerant trading. **[52]**

III. HISTORY

1961 - 1996

3.1. 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]**

3.2. Following an attempted coup the first vice president, Francis Minah, was arrested in April 1987 and was executed together with 5 others in October 1989. 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 although the 1978 constitution also remained in force and legislation was introduced which provided for the registration of political associations. In December Momoh and leaders of other registered parties agreed to co-operate in the establishment of a multi party system. **[1]**

3.3. 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. Momoh sought assistance from Guinea, which despatched troops to Freetown and more than 100 people were killed in the ensuing violence. On 30 April Momoh fled to Guinea. All political activity was suspended and some members of the former regime were arrested. In July 1992 legislation was introduced which imposed severe restrictions on the media and authorised state censorship. In November 1992 approximately 30 alleged supporters of Momoh were arrested and charged with subversion. 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. Following international protest the military regime released several former members of the Momoh government. **[1]**

3.4. In a government re-organisation in July 1993 the deputy chairman of the NPRC and chief secretary of state, Captain Julius Maada Bio replaced Captain Solomon Musa. Musa was widely blamed for the repressive measures undertaken by the government and subsequently took refuge in the United Kingdom. In December 1993 the state of emergency ended although additional security measures remained in force and a series of measures were set up as the first steps towards establishing a civilian government, which Strasser had announced, would be in place by January 1996. There followed a number of government reshuffles, and the ban on political parties was rescinded on 21 June 1995. **[1]**

3.5. In January 1996 military officers led by Maada Bio deposed Strasser. On 26 February 1996 presidential and legislative elections that were contested by 13 political parties and monitored by international observers, took place as scheduled. Voting was extended for one day following the deaths of 27 people which were attributed to efforts by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to disrupt the electoral process. As none of the candidates achieved the requisite majority a second round of the presidential election was held on 15 March 1996. The SLPP leader, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was elected president and later in March seats in the new 80 member parliament were allocated on a basis of proportional representation with the SLPP securing 27, the United National People's Party (UNPP) 17, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) 12 and the reconstituted APC 5. The 12 provincial districts were represented by paramount chiefs. Kabbah was inaugurated on 29 March when the military government officially relinquished power to the new civilian administration. **[1]**

ARMED INSURRECTIONS

3.6. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) emerged in 1991 led by Foday Sankoh. It was said to have links with the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) which joined it in attacks against the Sierra Leone government. Fighting between the government and the RUF continued over the next few years. Later in 1994 fighting in the south and east of the country intensified and in April it was reported that the RUF, which had been joined by disaffected members of the armed forces, had initiated attacks in the north of the country. Civilian casualties remained high

and in January 1995 the RUF gained control of the Sieromco and Sierra Rutile mining installations. **[1]**

3.7. Continued atrocities were increasingly attributed to "sobels" - disaffected members of the armed forces who engaged in acts of looting, banditry and indiscriminate killing. By mid - February some 900,000 civilians had been displaced as a result of the increase in the civil conflict, of which about 185,000 had fled to Guinea, 90,000 to Liberia and some 500,000 had settled around the capital. In March government forces regained control of the mining installations and the principle town of Moyamba but despite this by April the RUF had made further advances towards Freetown. The Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) was responsible for external defence but during the civil war the RSLMF and the police force provided internal security. The RSLMF was supported by Nigerian and Guinean military contingents and by Executive Outcomes, a private South African mercenary firm. Executive Outcomes has been in Sierra Leone since May 1995. The military government in Freetown turned to the Pretoria based firm after the RUF overran key bauxite and diamond mining centres and attacked close to the capital. At the height of their operations the mercenaries numbered about 300. The mercenaries helped train the West African country's army, which retook the initiative in the war and forced RUF rebels to negotiate. In May 1995 government soldiers assisted by troops from Guinea and Nigeria managed to repulse some of the rebel advances but large numbers of civilians were killed and reports emerged of massacres and other human rights abuses. **[1][2][7a]**

3.8. Following the replacement of Strasser by 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 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]**

1996 -1997

3.9. In September 1996 President Kabbah survived an attempted coup by dissident members of the armed forces and on 30 November he signed a peace accord with the RUF known as the Abidjan Accord. Joint government and RUF committees were to oversee disarmament and demobilisation of RUF and government forces. In reaching this juncture President Kabbah was supported not only by Executive Outcomes but also by a tribal militia group known as the Kamajors. Historically the Kamajors evolved as the first line of defence against the RUF in 1991. On 25 May 1997 the democratically elected civilian government of President Kabbah was overthrown by a group of soldiers who had formed the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). Their leader Major Johnny Paul Koroma had been among nine soldiers charged but not yet tried with conspiring to overthrow President Kabbah in September 1996. **[3][7b]**

3.10. Following the coup the constitution was suspended, political parties were banned and all demonstrations were prohibited. The AFRC gave itself far-reaching powers of detention. The AFRC claimed that they had overthrown the government because it had failed to consolidate peace in Sierra Leone following the peace agreement of November 1996. They claimed that the government was undemocratic and had promoted tribalism by appointing people mainly from the Mende ethnic group from the south and east to prominent government positions. They claimed

that the Kamajors who were of the Mende ethnic group had been particularly favoured. There was another civilian militia of the Temne ethnic group, the Kapras, who had also fought against the RUF. **[3]**

3.11. 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 despite being under house arrest in Nigeria. Violence, including murders and rape, and extensive looting including from UN and humanitarian agencies broke out in Freetown following the coup. Hundreds of prisoners were freed from Pademba Road prison, many were given arms and army uniforms. The situation was further exacerbated by the arrival of large numbers of RUF forces in Freetown who were not paid a regular salary and flagrantly abused their power. While Major Koroma called on soldiers to refrain from illegal activity and indeed stated that any looters would be executed, 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. **[3]**

3.12. 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 from Nigeria, Guinea and Ghana. On 2 June 1997 Nigerian vessels bombarded military targets in Freetown and fighting ensued between Nigerian soldiers and Sierra Leonean soldiers together with RUF forces. As many as 100 people were reported to have died and many others were injured during the bombardment on 2 June. Efforts in September and October 1997 to enforce an economic embargo imposed by ECOWAS resulted in further bombardments of Freetown. **[3]**

3.13. Extensive programmes for the resettlement and rehabilitation within Sierra Leone of hundreds of thousands of returning refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) - nearly half the population of Sierra Leone - were put into place following the peace agreement signed by President Kabbah and the RUF in November 1996 (the Abidjan Accord). By the beginning of 1997 large numbers of Sierra Leoneans had returned to their homes. However, the resumption of attacks by RUF forces before the military coup and violence and insecurity following it forced thousands of Sierra Leoneans to once again flee their homes. Resettlement and rehabilitation projects were suspended. **[3]**

3.14. On 29 March 1997 members of the RUF abducted at least five of their own members, a Sierra Leonean diplomat and also members of the Guinean security forces in Kailahun District Eastern Province. The abductions followed the announcement two weeks earlier by prominent members of the RUF that its leader, Foday Sankoh, had been removed as leader because he was deliberately obstructing the peace process in Sierra Leone. When members of the newly emerged RUF leadership travelled to Kailahun District to meet RUF forces they were abducted together with the Sierra Leonean ambassador to Guinea. He was released shortly after the military coup when the RUF joined forces with the AFRC but the others were still being held in October 1997 for having conspired against the legitimate leader of the RUF. **[3]**

3.15. President Kabbah fled to Guinea on the day of the coup together with other members of his government but known supporters of Kabbah were subject to harassment. Following the coup Sierra Leone's borders were sealed and British Diplomatic staff, together with at least 160 British civilians, were evacuated from the country on 3 June 1997. In total approximately 2000 foreign

nationals were evacuated from Sierra Leone after the coup. On 8 October the UN Security Council adopted a resolution providing for a ban on the supply of arms, petroleum and petroleum products and restricting the travel of members of the junta and their families. **[6][7c,d]**

3.16. 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. **[11a]** President Kabbah returned to the country on 10 March to a rapturous welcome from thousands of jubilant Sierra Leoneans**. [11b]** He announced his new broad based government on 20March.**[11c]**

IV INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE

A: JUDICIARY

4.1. 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 and only during part of 1999, 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 are often lengthy delays between arrest, detention, the impositions of charges, and judicial proceedings, trials are usually free and fair. Traditional justice systems continued to supplement the central government judiciary extensively in cases involving family law, inheritance, and land tenure, especially in rural areas. **[52]**

4.2. By law after an initial 24-hour detention detainees had to have access to legal counsel, families and medical care, but detainees were seldom provided with these services unless they could afford legal counsel to demand compliance. The government provided legal representation for the indigent only in cases of capital offences. Lack of counsel in other cases frequently led to wrong convictions. Many indigent detainees were unaware of their rights and assumed, sometimes correctly, that law enforcement or the accuser would pay judicial authorities to rule against them. The Society for the Protection of Human Rights provided free legal counsel to some indigent detainees, and some local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provided counsel and advice to women concerning their rights. **[2]**

4.3. The courts - martial system, based on British military codes and common law, provided for adjudication of minor offences by the military unit commander. Soldiers that were accused of more serious offences were transferred from field units to Headquarters for trial. The right of minimum due process was not always respected. Authorities sometimes beat detainees or otherwise punished them prior to incarceration or a court hearing. In addition the regular court system accepted and sanctioned provisions of tribal, traditional and Islamic law that discriminated against women and minorities. **[2]**

4.4. There is no proper appeals process for the military courts martial. The President can grant clemency after confirmation of the sentence and deliberation by the Prerogative of Mercy Committee. **[12f]**

4.5. In a broadcast to the nation on the day of the executions, on 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. **[12f]**

4.6. 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 the year and functioned in other parts of the country only during part of the year. However, the judiciary demonstrated substantial independence in practice when it did function. **[52]** Many prisoners were held for months on suspicion of criminal activity before their cases were examined or formal charges were instituted. **[19]**

4.7. Although there are often lengthy delays between arrest, detention, the imposition of charges and judicial proceedings, trials are usually free and fair. After the overthrow of the rebel junta, the government detained several hundred people under emergency decrees approved by Parliament, which authorised indefinite detention without trial on suspicion of treason and other charges stemming from their involvement with the junta. Some were eventually released, some remained in detention at year's end and at least 103 people were tried in four civilian trials and one court-martial proceeding. **[19]**

4.8. The trials and courts-martial were open to the public and were extensively monitored by UN personnel, foreign diplomats and human rights observers from both within and without the country. Observers generally agreed that these high profile proceedings were conducted in an open and fair manner and that the defendants had adequate opportunities both for counsel and to make their cases. The verdicts ranged from acquittals on all charges to guilty. The sentences given ranged from 5 years imprisonment to execution. However, some observers from international human rights organisations questioned the appropriateness of the treason prosecutions or death sentences in the cases of five journalists and one 75 year old woman. Twenty-four former army officers convicted on treason charges were subsequently executed. **[19]** Following the fighting in Freetown in January 1999 Magistrates courts re-opened on 12 April 1999 amid tight security for the first time since the rebels attacked the city. An official in the Attorney General's department said they are working on the modalities to re-open the High Court and the Supreme Court as soon as possible. He said that trials in Freetown would start on 13 April and that Magistrates courts around the country would re-open when the security situation allowed. **[27]**

B. SECURITY FORCES

4.9. Following the overthrow of the AFRC, security in the country was provided largely by ECOMOG troops acting on behalf of the legitimate government. In January 2000 ECOMOG began to withdraw its troops. **[53]** In January 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]** As of late April 2000 over 8000 UN troops have deployed in Sierra Leone to help support and monitor implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement. The UN peacekeeping force (UNAMSIL) is now the largest such force in the world.

Under the terms of the Lome Agreement all combatants of the RUF, CDF, Sierra Leone Army and paramilitary groups are to be disarmed, demobilised and re-integrated. **[32][49][50]** On 2 March 1999 the Foreign Secretary announced details of a new UK £10 million package of assistance for Sierra Leone, including help for the rebuilding of a new, democratically accountable Sierra Leone army. **[48]**

C: POLICE AND PRISONS

4.10. Prison conditions and those in police lockup facilities generally are harsh; at best they are 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. Although male and female quarters were separate, adults and juveniles were incarcerated together. Convicted felons, those in the middle of the judicial process and those who had not yet been charged formally were also incarcerated together. Other prison facilities were equally rudimentary. The holding cells in police offices were even further from compliance with international standards. **[52]** Following the arrest of the alleged AFRC members and collaborators Kabbah's government co-operated fully with the various detention and trial monitors and were willing to make small improvements to conditions in the light of comments made by UN human rights officials.**[11f] [13b]** The Government allowed the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) UN, human rights officials and other observers to visit the prisons to assess the conditions and see inmates. **[52]**

4.11. The police officially had primary responsibility for internal order. However, due to the continuing insurgency, the newly constituted army, the CDF and ECOMOG shared de facto responsibility with the police in security matters. **[13a]** During the rebel attack on Freetown in January 1999 more than 250 policemen and members of their families were killed. In March 1999 police officers estimated that at least 500 officers had been killed and much police equipment and infrastructure destroyed, including the Criminal Investigation Department headquarters and all its files, records and documentation. **[28]** The Paemba Road Prison was also broken into and all of the prisoners escaped. This represents a substantial setback to the Government's plans. **[26]** When Lunsar was recaptured by ECOMOG forces in February 1999 they discovered that over 130 of the 170 police in the city were executed, most on the town football field. **[52]**

D: CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE (CDF)

4.12. Both CDF and ECOMOG forces operating in support of the Government summarily executed suspected rebels and collaborators. These abuses were particularly serious during the January 1999 attack on Freetown and the ultimately successful effort to drive rebel forces from the city. **[52]** The CDF continued to accept, train and induct children into its ranks. **[19]** In his report of June 1999 the UN Secretary-General said that the Kamajors had continued to recruit underage children even though they had promised to stop the practice and disarm child soldiers**. [29]** Under the terms of the Lome Peace Accord the CDF, along with all other armed groups, were to be disarmed and demobilised. However, they remain active following an outbreak of violence in May 2000. **[36][52][61]**

V. HUMAN RIGHTS

A. INTRODUCTION

5.1. Prior to the elections, which re-instated a civilian government the UN, the OAU and the Commonwealth had been involved in attempting to bring about a settlement to the 5 year conflict. A draft peace accord between Kabbah's government and the RUF was agreed by the end of May 1996 which included references to human rights, in particular a commitment to adhere to international human rights and humanitarian law and the establishment of an independent National Commission of Human Rights. A National Unity and Reconciliation Commission, headed by an eminent lawyer from Trinidad and Tobago, was inaugurated on 1 July 1996. It was established to address abuses against civilians by former governments. It was also to investigate accusations of corruption by former government ministers. **[4]**

5.2. During the conflict leading up to and following the 1996 elections there were many abuses of human rights by government soldiers and rebel forces, civilians were killed, abducted or mutilated. There was also evidence of summary executions and torture and it was claimed that there was collusion and collaboration between government soldiers and rebel forces in such activities. Active human rights groups included the National League for Human Rights, the Network Movement for Justice, the Civil Liberties Congress, Prison Watch, and the Society for Advancement of Civil Rights. There was a local chapter of Amnesty International in Freetown and human rights groups operated without restriction. Several organisations were providing human rights training. **[4][2][9]**

5.3. Following the military coup on 25 May 1997 the constitution was suspended, political parties were banned and all demonstrations were prohibited. Many of those associated with Kabbah's government and the SLPP were arbitrarily arrested, together with journalists, students and human rights activists. Whilst some of those arrested were released after a short time, others remained held without charge or trial for days, weeks or months. There were also reports of extrajudicial executions of some of those suspected of opposing the AFRC. The number of those arrested or detained was said to be several hundred. There was widespread use of torture and ill treatment and many civilians were killed or injured in the fighting and general lawlessness that followed the coup. **[3]**

5.4. Following the overthrow of the junta forces and Kabbah's triumphant 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. **[13c][11b]** He showed a willingness to work with members of different parties. He announced his new broad-based government in March 1998 and a number of former political opponents were appointed to his new cabinet. **[11c]**

B: SECURITY SITUATION

5.5. Immediately following the liberation of Freetown in 1998 there were some acts of retribution carried out by the local population and in some other major towns against AFRC members/collaborators. However, such actions were not condoned by the Sierra Leone government who condemned revenge killings **[11a,b]** and upon being returned to power the government, with ECOMOG support, acted forcefully to end these killings. There is no evidence that any of those responsible for any of the deaths were ever formally charged or

prosecuted. **[19]** The Civilian Defence Forces (CDF) also committed human rights abuses including killings, torture and the obstruction of humanitarian assistance. Reports also indicated that the CDFs continued to recruit children. **[12a] [8][15b]** In the upsurge of violence after May 2000, it was reported that children were still being used as soildiers 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 defence 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, that "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". **[8]**

5.6. There were reports of acts of violence and intimidation by ECOMOG troops against civilians in Freetown and other parts of the country. There were also several reports of harassment of humanitarian convoys by both ECOMOG and CDF forces in October 1998. However, ECOMOG commanders expressed a determination to address problems of ill discipline and were reported to have established a complaint procedure to investigate any allegations of harassment of civilians by ECOMOG forces. Reports of extrajudicial executions and torture of prisoners by the CDF decreased significantly from June 1998 apparently as a result of intervention by the government and ECOMOG and the discipline of many CDF units improved significantly. **[25]**

5.7. Following the overthrow of the junta forces the remnants of the AFRC together with the RUF embarked on a campaign which they called "Operation No Living Thing." This resulted in many deaths, 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. 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 and were then told to show themselves as messages to the president. **[12b]** An additional number were abducted for use as combatants, forced labourers or sexual slaves. **[12a]** Many people fleeing the fighting apparently died of starvation and disease due to the generally poor conditions in these areas. **[11d,e]** 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]**

5.8. 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, and these 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. **[14]**

5.9. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) monitored the detentions, and UN and other international monitors observed the trials. The UN recruited trial monitors from the International Bar Association. Scores of civilians and 31 police officers that had been detained as AFRC suspects were released in August. The Tejan-Cole Commission of Investigation had examined their cases, which was set up to evaluate evidence against those suspected of having committed non-treason crimes. The Commission had concluded that there was not enough evidence against the suspects. At the end of August the authorities freed 277 soldiers detained since returning from peacekeeping duty in Liberia in March. Military authorities said the soldiers had been held in prison because of fears that some had loyalties to the junta. General Khobe CDS said that nothing was found against the 277 and said that for those who could give loyal service they were ready to accept them after thorough screening. **[12c]**

5.10. In July 1998 RUF rebel 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,g, i]**

5.11. 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. **[11f]** In September 1998 the National Commission for Human Rights and Democracy established 4 committees, composed of prominent civilians, to monitor and report on areas of concern for the protection and respect of human rights. These included the conduct of the police, prison conditions and the situation of women and children. In October 1998 UNOMSIL human rights officers conducted a human rights training session for the committee monitoring women and children, which was also attended by members of the National Commission. **[25]**

5.12. 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, 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. **[12f]** Numerous protests were made following the announcement of the death sentences and the executions. However, international observers have indicated that fair trials had to date been conducted under difficult circumstances. **[16]**

5.13. On 21 October, 11 more civilians were sentenced to death for their role in the May 1997 coup. **[12f]** On 27 October it was announced that another 50 people would stand trial on charges of collaboration with the junta. **[12h]** On 5 November, 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. **[15c]** On 11 December 22 civilians went on trial for treason, they included 2 women and 3 journalists. **[18a]**

5.14. The Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (DDR) was formally launched on 22 August 1998 at Lungi camp where there were over 2,000 ex combatants. In launching the programme vice president Dr Demby said that this was the start of an overall 3 year programme the aim of which was to bring lasting peace to Sierra Leone by the successful reintegration of ex combatants into the community. **[13d]** The government's National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation launched a sensitisation campaign to highlight humanitarian objectives. **[17]**

5.15. 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. They released between 2000 and 3000 ex combatants from Pademba Road prison. ECOMOG troops remained in the western part of the city and at Lungi airport. President Kabbah also remained at the airport together with other senior government ministers. **[18c]**

5.16. On 7 January 1999, President Kabbah announced a 7-day cease-fire after discussions with rebel leader Sankoh. **[20]** This did not hold. On 11 January 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]** By 19 January ECOMOG troops had re-taken control of the eastern suburbs of Freetown although there was still some rebel activity in the surrounding area. On 31 January ECOMOG said that they had pushed the rebels further out of the capital but acknowledged that rebels were still active in some areas surrounding the city. Rebel leader and former junta Prime Minister Solomon Musa was killed in fighting at the end of December. **[18d,e, f, g]**

5.17. During their occupation of parts of Freetown the rebels made little distinction between civilian and military targets. They repeatedly stated that they believed civilians should be punished for what they perceived to be their support for the existing government. While there was some targeting of particular groups, the vast majority of atrocities were committed by rebels who chose their victims apparently at random. The arbitrary nature of these attacks served to create an atmosphere of complete terror. Many of the attacks were well organised and some were clearly planned and premeditated. Operations to round up civilians for mutilation, rape and execution are well documented, as is the existence of units specialising in the perpetration of particular forms of these atrocities. There were frequent accounts of people being burned alive in their houses. Children and the elderly were particularly vulnerable. Throughout the occupation, the rebels perpetrated and organised widespread sexual violence against girls and women. **[30]**

5.18. As they retreated the rebels continued to mutilate and kill. It is difficult to establish how many civilians were killed during the invasion. The senior government pathologist registered the burial of 7,335 corpses. While the number of combatants from both sides either killed in battle or after capture or incapacitation by wounds was thought to be high, human rights activists believe at least half of the dead were civilians. **[30]** Large sections of central and eastern Freetown were destroyed and tens of thousands were left homeless. **[52]**

5.19. ECOMOG forces advancd further into the interior where they re-captured Lunsar and Port Loko and the western town of Kambia. **[18i, j,]** They also drove rebels out of Waterloo. Residents said that rebels killed hundreds of people and burned down more than 1,000 homes after spending over a month in the town. Trucks took food and other supplies to Waterloo for thousands of residents who had sought refuge in the surrounding bush. **[18k]** ECOMOG also re-took the eastern diamond town of Segbweme and in February 1999 were fighting rebels for another diamond town, Tongofield. **[18l]** They also drove rebels from the southwestern town of Moyamba, capital of a bauxite and Rutile (titanium oxide) mining district. **[18k]** They dislodged rebels from several key towns along the main road into Freetown. One of these, Newton, supplies the city with fresh food, rice and cooking oil. **[18m]**

5.20. Also in February relief workers said that civilians in the east were short of food and medicine. Aid workers said that the problem was extremely serious in towns and villages around Bo and the eastern regional capital of Kenema. **[18l]** In March 1999 the UN World Food Programme used a helicopter to ferry staff and supplies into Freetown and upcountry. They said that with the helicopter they would be able to make frequent runs into the city and other parts of the country not currently accessible by road. **[18k]**

5.21. In January 1999 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) evacuated its expatriate staff after the Sierra Leone government accused it of providing communication equipment to the rebels. **[18n]** They were given permission to resume operations in May of that year. **[31]**

5.22. While the rebels committed the vast majority of atrocities and other violations of international humanitarian law during the battle for Freetown, those defending the capital also committed serious abuses, both during and after the rebel incursion. Members of ECOMOG, and to a lesser extent members of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) and Sierra Leonean Police routinely executed rebel prisoners and their suspected collaborators or sympathisers. The Human Rights organisation, Human Rights Watch, documented over 180 of these executions. **[30]**

5.23. The UN said that more than 100 members of ECOMOG were accused of the summary execution of civilians suspected of collaborating with rebel forces. The UN also said that 2 ECOMOG generals had acknowledged the excesses and ordered the arrest and interrogation of more than 100 of their soldiers. The ECOMOG high command assured the UN Special Representative of their continued efforts to investigate all allegations and to take corrective action as necessary. **[23][26]**

5.24. In his address to the nation on 21 February 1999, President Kabbah called upon the UN Security Council to intervene to get the rebels to negotiate. **[18p]** President Kabbah agreed to talk to rebels and said that he would allow detained rebel leader Foday Sankoh to meet his guerrilla chiefs to discuss a new peace plan. President Kabbah said that the Abidjan Accord could provide a framework for such talks. The rebels gave a cautious welcome to Kabbah's proposal but their representative said that progress depended on the government's actions towards Sankoh **[18 q, r,][24]** and later called for his release. **[18s]**

5.25. The Sierra Leone government accused Liberia of supporting the rebels in Sierra Leone. Liberia denied this and announced an effort to repatriate and offer amnesty to Liberians fighting in Sierra Leone. Liberia also renewed its request to the Security Council to approve the

deployment of United Nations monitors along with ECOMOG forces at the Liberia/Sierra Leone border in the light of repeated allegations of illegal arms shipments to the rebels. **[26][18t, o]**

5.26. In March 1999 the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, condemned the merciless murders and inhuman mutilations and other appalling human rights violations perpetrated by the rebels on the innocent civilians of Freetown. He recommended increasing the number of UNOMSIL observers from 8 to 14 and extending their mandate. **[18u]**

5.27. Following the signing of the Lome Accord on 7 July 1999 the UN Secretary-General said that the UN would expand its presence in Sierra Leone, increase the number of peacekeepers and enlarge the humanitarian assistance. **[32]** On 20 August the UN Security Council decided to authorise the provisional expansion of UNOMSIL to up to 210 military observers. **[33]**

5.28. In his report to the UN Security Council in June 1999 UN Sec Gen Kofi Annan gave details of increased atrocities against civilians by RUF rebels. Most of the atrocities were reported from the provincial towns of Masiaka and Port Loko. Some of the abuses were believed to have been carried out as preparations were underway for peace talks in Lome. Mr Annan also referred to a few instances of ill treatment of civilians by ECOMOG soldiers. **[29]**

5.29. On 24 June 1999 during her visit to the country the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights signed a 9 point HR manifesto calling for the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate war atrocities. Under the agreement, the UN will also help establish a human rights information clearing house and analysis facility in Sierra Leone. The manifesto included a pledge by the government to raise the age of military recruitment to 18. Mrs Robinson said her visit was not a one-time trip but heralded a greater commitment to Sierra Leone by the international community. **[34]**

5.30. On 18 April the leader of the RUF, Foday Sankoh, travelled from Freetown to Lome, Togo, to meet other RUF leaders for internal consultations. On 18 May 1999 a cease-fire was signed between the government and the rebels that came into force on 24 May. Peace talks between the two sides were launched on 25 May. **[35]** 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. **[36]**

5.31. Under the agreement the RUF would be transformed into a political party and would join a broad-based government of national unity. The party will 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. A Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to be established to address impunity, break the cycle of violence and provide a forum for both the victims and the

perpetrators of human rights violations to tell their story. One of the Commission's duties will be to recommend measures to be taken for the rehabilitation of victims of human rights violations. The peace accord has been adopted by Parliament. **[36] [52]** Following the signing of the Lome accord the government ordered the civil defence forces (CDF) comprising traditional hunters to disband. **[42]** However, following the upsurge in violence in May 2000, please see paragraphs on RUF and the United Nation, Sankoh was detained, and any charges that maybe made against him have yet to be decided. The CDF also reformed to in May 2000, to oppose RUF hostile moves against Freetown. **[61][67]**

5.32. Hundreds of former rebels entered Freetown following the signing of the Lome Accord. The influx of the unarmed rebels caused fear among Freetown residents. An official said the government was also concerned about the influx of rebels and said they were ordering the former fighters to report to the UN Military Observer Mission in Sierra Leone and ECOMOG. **[36].** In July rebels handed over 192 abducted children to the UN special representative in the country. **[37]** On 17 July 1999, 8 soldiers who were serving life sentences for their part in the May 1997 coup were pardoned and freed. The 8 were originally sentenced to death for treason in 1998, but President Kabbah later commuted the sentences to life imprisonment. **[38]** On 19 July the government said that it would begin disarming rebels, members of the army and loyalist traditional hunter militia on 18 August. State radio announced the location of assembly points and said rebels could surrender their arms and ammunition to UN military observers or to ECOMOG. **[39]**

5.33. On 23 July 1999, the government pardoned 98 former ministers and officials who had been jailed last year 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]** Aid agencies reached the northern town of Makeni in July where they found large numbers of people in desperate need of food and medicine. Rebels captured the northern capital in December. The director of the CARITAS agency said that it is the worst human tragedy that he has ever seen and unless the situation is addressed quickly thousands of people including children will die of starvation and disease. **[41]** In September the UN announced the arrival of a consignment of 1000 metric tons of food aid into. **[51]**

5.34. On 5 August 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 signed on 7 July and complained that they had no food or medicine and had received no international assistance. **[43]** The hostages were released safely on 10 August together with about 200 women and child prisoners. The freed children were taken to a special centre for trauma counselling. **[44]** The AFRC soldiers returned home on 22 August after talks in Liberia with their leader Johnny Paul Koroma, saying they no longer felt excluded from the peace process. **[45]**

5.35. On 1 November 1999 fighting between RUF and AFRC forces in Makeni and Lunsar ended. 150 rebel soldiers and about 40 civilians were killed in the fighting which had erupted after AFRC forces were expelled from Makeni in mid October. **[55]**

5.36. In December AFRC leader Johnny Paul Koroma called upon his followers at Kabala to disarm after clashes with RUF fighters. He said that the war was over and any soldiers who continued to attack civilians would be charged with aggravated robbery. **[57]** Former President

Joseph Saidu Momoh was released from RUF captivity in November after being held by them since August. **[58]** On 2 November 1999 President Kabbah formed his new cabinet which incorporated members of the RUF. Former members of the RUF and the AFRC were granted 4 cabinet posts and 4 deputy ministerial positions. In November the RUF formed a political party - the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUFP). **[56]**

5.37. In December 1999 Human Rights Watch reported that rebel attacks were spreading to northern Sierra Leone and alleged that government troops and ECOMOG were unwilling to intervene. **[55]** During his visit to Sierra Leone in January 2000 Peter Hain (FCO Minister of State) announced a contribution of £250,000 to help establish an effective Truth and Reconciliation Commission, provided for under the Lome Peace Agreement. Also in December 2 US congressmen toured part of Freetown to assess conditions there. During the rebel invasion of January 1999 77% of houses in the Calaba Town suburb were burnt down and the 32,000 residents were forced to leave and seek shelter in displacement camps in the capital. By the end of October 563 of the 948 destroyed houses had been completely rebuilt and over 10,500 displaced people were able to return to their homes. Efforts to rebuild the remaining houses are still underway**. [59][60]**

(i) Recent events

5.38. There has been an upsurge in violence in Sierra Leone since May 2000. The most significant recent incident was on 11 September, when British forces stormed a jungle hideout, freeing six British soldiers and one Sierra Leonean officer who had been seized by a rebel group called 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, east of Freetown. Sierra Leonean Information Minister Julius Spencer said that government troops sealed off the area during the operation in which, the Sierra Leonean military said, 18 rebels were captured. Minister Spencer also said, that 'The British have assured us of their full commitment'. He added that the British had trained 2,000 men for the new military. The Sierra Leonean military information officer, Major John Milton, told Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) that another 1,000 troops would go through intensive training in September. **[62]**

5.39. The rescue was authorised because it was believed that the WSB were not negotiating in good faith to release the troops. The soldiers were among 400 to 500 men who have been training the new Sierra Leone army. British Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon said that the rebels had threatened their lives, and had carried out mock executions. Initially, 11 British soldiers and their Sierra Leonean army liaison officer had been captured along the highway between Freetown and Masiaka, east of the capital, but 5 were released five days later after negotiations with the rebels. Although the rebels' base in the Occra Hills has been captured and their fighters dispersed, captured or killed, Major Milton said the army would not declare the road from Freetown to Masiaka safe for aid workers and public vehicles until the completion of a combined mopping up operation. However, he said the army wanted to persuade rebel stragglers to surrender. **[62]**

(ii) Revolutionary United Front

5.40. RUF has consistently failed to demonstrate good faith in its dealing with the UN and

the Sierra Leone authorities. RUF has not fully to participate in the DDR program, and in early May 2000 RUF took 500 UN peacekeepers hostage, they have since been freed, but a number were killed. As well as kidnapped UN peacekeepers, RUF has on a number of occasions impeded UN peacekeepers, stolen weapons and supplies, and besieged UN personnel in their camps. A number of its leaders, including Foday Sankoh, have been detained, and a decision has yet to be taken on any charges that they may face; or the appropriate procedure to try them. RUF still holds large areas of Sierra Leone and has the means to wage a protracted campaign of violence. Tension between the UN and RUF remains high, the most prominent recent clash was at Kailahun on 17 July, when the UN took action to relieve an Indian forces and UN military observers besieged in camp. **[63][64][65][66][67]**

5.41. 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, as it was believe that the UN peace keepers could take now take its place. **[68]** However, on 9 May, 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 support to the legitimate Sierra Leone authorities and the UN. On 8 May, 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. **[65][67]** 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. **[66][69][70]**

5.42. Following a change in RUF's leadership in August 2000, Gen. Issa Sesay took command and replaced Foday Sankoh. **[71]**

(iii) United Nations

5.43. In light of recent events, the ability of the UN to advance the peace process has been questioned. The UN has responded by requesting reinforcements from donor countries, but the eventual level of reinforcements and any change in their mandate is still subject to discussion. The Lome peace agreement remains a basis for peace negotiations, but the prospects of a lasting peace have been undermined by the recent upsurge in violence. **[65][74]**

5.44. On 5 July, 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][75]** In October, 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]**

5.45. In August the Security Council adopted Resolution 1315 (2000), which 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 relevent 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. **[75]**

5.46. A recommendation by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan for authorised troop strength of 20,500 is under the Council's consideration. UNAMSIL's mandate, which was due to expired in September, has been extended by just over three months to 31 December. **[76]**

5.47. On 21 September India announced its intention to withdraw its troops from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The UN is attempting to increase UNAMSIL from its present level of 12,477 to 20,500. India had provided 3,000 men, and was the second largest contributor after Nigeria, its contingent supplied medical, transport, air and engineering units to the UN force. A purported internal memorandum attributed to UNAMSIL Force Commander Maj-Gen Vijay Jetley and published in 'The Guardian' accused ranking Nigerian civil and military officers of deliberately undermining the peace process by smuggling diamonds and colluding with RUF. The Nigerian chief of army staff Major-General Victor Malu, has denied these allegation. **[77]**

C: SPECIFIC GROUPS

MINORITIES/ETHNICITY

5.48. The 1991 Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity, except for the prohibition against citizenship for persons with a non-African father. This provision effectively blocks citizenship and political participation of the Lebanese community, persons of Afro-Lebanese descent, and other persons with non-African fathers. **[52]** Since his return to the country in March 1998 Kabbah has selected a broad-based government and has pledged to serve equally, fairly and justly. **[11b, c,]**

5.49. The country's population is ethnically diverse and consists of members of at least 13 ethnic groups. These groups generally all speak distinct primary languages and are concentrated regionally outside urban areas. However, all ethnic groups use Krio as a second language. There is little ethnic segregation in urban areas and interethnic marriage is common. The two largest ethnic groups are the Temne in the north and the Mende in the south. Each of these groups is estimated to make up about 30% of the population. **[52]**

5.50. Ethnic loyalty remained an important factor in government, the military and business. Complaints of corruption within ethnic groups and ethnic discrimination in government appointments, contracts, military commissions and promotions were common. However, ethnic differences did not appear to contribute appreciably to the RUF rebellion, the 1997 coup or the civil conflict during the year. There was no identifiable ethnic or regional base of voluntary popular support for the rebels who controlled territory by terror and coercion rather than by popular consent. . **[52]**

5.51. Following the reinstatement of Kabbah's government in 1998 action was taken against those Lebanese who had collaborated with the AFRC junta and on 2 April 22 foreigners, mostly Lebanese, were deported. In the same month the government froze the bank accounts of 93 foreign nationals accused of collaborating with the junta. This number included Lebanese, Africans and westerners. The government has banned all foreigners from the country's key gold and diamond mining areas. Only individuals of Sierra Leone origin and nationality with valid dealers or exporters licenses are to be allowed within identified chiefdoms. This is to ensure that Sierra Leoneans benefit fully from the country's mineral resources. In October 1998 the government launched a crackdown on illegal aliens. This was in response to the large number of Lebanese, Indians and West African immigrants who had entered the country and secured employment without valid permits. A government statement said that those found in violation of the country's labour and immigration laws after 14 October would face the full force of the law including closure of their business. Since the announcement hundreds of Lebanese, Asians and West African immigrants have applied for residence and work permits. **[12e]**

WOMEN

5.52. 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. **[52]**

5.53. 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. **[52]**

5.54. Women 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. **[52]**

5.55. Female genital mutilation (FGM) which is widely condemned by international health experts as damaging to both physical and psychological health 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 UNICEF estimates the percentage of females who have undergone this procedure to be as high as 90% local groups believe this figure is overstated. There is no law prohibiting

FGM. 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 countered the well-publicised international efforts against FGM. . **[52]**

5.56. 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. **[36] [52]**

5.57. However, following the recent outbreak of violence there have been credible reports of human rights abuses by RUF, including rape, recruitment into RUF and amputations. Looting and other crimes were also reported in the north of the country where RUF was based. These have mostly occurred in area where reporting is difficult, so it is not possible to obtain detailed information and confirmation of these reports. **[78][79][80]**

CHILDREN

5.58. Although the government is committed to improving children's education and welfare it lacks the means to provide basic education and health services for them. Schools, clinics and hospitals throughout the country have been looted and destroyed during the 9 year RUF insurgency and most have not been replaced. Although in November 1998 the government began a programme to pay the fees for 3 years of schooling for all children, lack of schools and teachers still place even this much education out of the hands of many. Schools are financed largely by formal and informal fees that many families cannot afford. **[19]** In July 1999 senior officials of the Ministry of Education were charged with embezzling approximately $500,000 (1 billion Leones) which was to have paid arrears in teacher's salaries. The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs has primary responsibility for children's issues. **[52]**

5.59. The recruitment for military service by the Civilian Defence Force (CDF) and the kidnapping and forced conscription of children into rebel forces was a serious problem. During the civil conflict, an estimated 5000 child served as soldiers alongside adults. While the CDF forces accepted children as volunteers, this practice ended with the signing of the Lome Accord. However, most children who join the insurgent ranks do so under duress. For years rebels have kidnapped young boys and girls to serve them and augment their forces. In some cases they have forced these children to commit atrocities involving family members. **[52]** There are now several programmes to deal with former child combatants including those who have escaped from rebel forces. However, their families and communities for their perceived involvement in rebel activities sometimes reject even children who escape and wish to leave the ranks. **[52]**

5.60. In July a UN report contained in the 1999 Progress of Nations Report of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said that 30% of children in Sierra Leone will die before the age of 5 from preventable diseases. The UNICEF representative in Sierra Leone said that the country might soon see a rapidly rising number of deaths due to AIDS as well as a large number of orphaned children whose parents have died of AIDS. These concerns are due to the fact that many of the children abducted were raped and used as sex slaves by rebel forces. According to official reports the conflict has left more than 200,000 children without schooling and an estimated 10,000 separated from their families.

5.61. The Lome peace accord states that particular attention must be paid to the issue of child soldiers in the existing DDR process. Some 3,900 children have been registered by their parents as missing from Freetown since the rebels invaded parts of the city. Approximately 3,100 have still not been found and it is believed that they are still with the RUF. A UNICEF supported programme is being run on the Freetown peninsula for children associated with the fighting forces which includes children who have escaped from the rebels or been released by them as a good will gesture and children found by ECOMOG. The programme has been running for 4 years and over 300 children are enrolled. They are cared for until they can be re-united with their families. According to UNICEF 3,932 children are documented as missing in the country. **[46]** Since the Lome Accord the government has released virtually all-political prisoners and started a process of discharging child combatants. **[59]**

5.62. 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. **[8]** The Sierra Leone government remains unable to impose its authority on areas held by RUF, particularly in diamond producing areas where the profits from mining have been used to finance RUF's activities. During the present upsurge in fighting there have been credible reports of human rights abuses by RUF, including the abuse of children, and their recruitment into RUF. However, as these have mostly occurred in area where reporting is difficult, it is not possible to obtain detailed information and confirmation of these reports. **[78][79][80]**

D: OTHER ISSUES

FREEDOM OF POLITICAL ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

5.63. The 1991 Constitution provides for freedom of assembly and association as well as the right to form political, economic, social and professional organisations. **[52]** Following the overthrow of the military junta in February 1998 many of those associated or perceived to be associated with the 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. **[56]** The government was not known to deny requests to use public areas for meetings or demonstrations, many of which took place throughout the year. There were numerous civic, philanthropic and social organisations and the registration system was routine and apparently non-political. There were more than a dozen opposition parties and there were no known restrictions on their formation or organisation. **[52]**

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

5.64. The 1991 Constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press; however the government restricted these rights in practice. The government attempted to regulate the press through registration and attempts to control the publication of information on security related topics. It also took action against the writers and publishers of articles considered unfavourable to the Government. There are over 50 newspapers published in Freetown alone covering a wide spectrum of interests. Their number 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. **[52]**

5.65. On 25 August 1998 5 journalists were among 16 people found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. On 27 August the government issued a statement reconfirming its support for the freedom of the press and noting that the persons on trial for acts of treason were being tried for their personal complicity and not for the expression of their journalistic views. On 15 September the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) issued a statement saying that they had been following the civilian trials and court martial closely and were impressed so far by the way and the manner in which the trials had been conducted. It further noted that their colleagues were tried not for their professional misconduct, but for alleged crimes under the laws of Sierra Leone. **[12d][13f]**

5.66. Following the rebel attack on Freetown on 6 January 1999 up to 5 journalists were confirmed dead with many more missing according to the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ). Journalists were targeted by rebels when they invaded the city. One journalist was summarily executed on February by ECOMOG troops and Kamajors during a search for arms in the city. Following the execution the journalist's editor requested an investigation into the killing. Another journalist was killed between 9 and 15 January in unknown circumstances. **[18h]**

5.67. 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; both featured 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. **[52]**

5.68. A French based international press rights group, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), said that the RUF had engaged in the systematic elimination of journalists. They said that when the rebels and their allies entered Freetown in January they decided to physically eliminate those journalists accused of criticising them and supporting President Kabbah. **[47]**

5.69. The government generally respected academic freedom. All institutions of higher learning were wholly or partly closed during the year. Most had been looted, burned or used as quarters by rebels and there are no funds yet to restore the infrastructure. **[52]**

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

5.70. The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Serra Leonean Government respects this right in practice. The Government does not have requirements for recognising, registering, or regulating religious groups. Reliable data on the exact numbers of those who practice major religions are not available. However, most sources estimate that the population is 60 percent Muslim, 30 percent Christian and 10 percent 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 ongoing civil war has resulted in movement by major segments of the population. According to sources, many syncretistic practices exist, with up to 20 percent of the population practising a mixture of Muslim and traditional indigenous practices or Christian and traditional indigenous

practices. The Government permits religious instruction in public schools. Students are allowed to choose whether they attend either Muslim- or Christian-oriented classes. **[5]**

5.71. 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. Religious leaders have been targeted by rebel groups as a means of obtaining ransom, and because of their opposition to the activities of such groups. **[5]**

5.72. Insurgent forces targeted religious leaders for attack, including Christians and Muslims, both because of their position in the religious community and their support for the Government. During the January 1999 RUF/AFRC invasion, which occurred during Ramadan, the Freetown population was terrorised and freedom of religious expression was repressed. Muslims who were found praying in mosques were forced to drink alcoholic beverages, and some of those who refused to partake were beaten. Others reportedly were shot and killed. Three churches and two mosques were set on fire and burned down in Freetown during the January attack. Rebel forces also targeted Roman Catholic priests and nuns in particular, largely on the assumption that the church would pay ransom for their return. Another reason is that the rebels saw the use of the church's radio network by ECOMOG troops church support for the Government. **[52]**

FREEDOM TO TRAVEL AND INTERNAL FLIGHT

5.73. The Constitution provides for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration and repatriation and the government generally respected these rights in practice. However, due to the security situation there were numerous ECOMOG and government roadblocks throughout the country that hindered free movement. Citizens were required to obtain police clearance within 72 hours before international travel but such clearances were issued non-restrictively. The government did not attempt to limit departure or return for political or discriminatory reasons. There were reports of attempts by troops manning roadblocks to extort food or money from travellers. **[19]**

5.74. At the end of 1999 more than one million people, more than one quarter of the population, were either internally displaced or had fled the country to escape the continuing insurgency. More that 500,000 people were in refugee camps in Guinea and Liberia. Others were in the Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire and other African countries. Some went to countries outside Africa. **[52]**

5.75. There is no formal process for granting political asylum. The government co-operated with the UNHCR and other organisations on repatriation matters and continued to provide first asylum to over 5000 Liberians who had fled to Sierra Leone because of conflict in their home country in the earlier part of the decade. There were no reports of the forced return of persons to countries where they feared persecution. **[52]**

ANNEX A - COMMON ABBREVIATIONS/POLITICAL PARTIES

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.

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.

Democratic People's Party (DPP)

Led by Hassan Gbassay Kanu who had resigned from the APC to form the DPP. It merged with the APC in March 1992.

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 Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)

One of the principal Liberian factions led by Charles Taylor. In March 1991 it was alleged to have launched repeated border incursions into Sierra Leone which resulted in the Sierra Leone government attacking rebel bases in Liberia in early April 1991. It was also reported that the RUF had joined forces with the NPFL in attacks against government army positions.

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 Thaimu Bangura. Obtained 12 seats in February 1996 elections.

Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

Joined forces with NPFL and commenced insurgency in 1991.Remained in conflict with the government despite ceasefires. RUF 's Leader Foday Sankoh was replace in August by Gen. Issa Sesay.

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.

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.

ANNEX B - PROMINENT PEOPLE

CAPTAIN JULIUS MAADA BIO

Replaced Musa as deputy chairman of NPRC and chief secretary of state in July 1993. Led the coup which 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.

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

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

Deputy chairman of the NPRC; became 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. Chairman of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development. He is at present in detention, and has been replaced by Gen. Issa Sesay as leader of RUF.

SIAKA 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

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.

ANNEX C - CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR EVENTS: 1961-1997

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.

January APC conference held when Momoh was re-elected secretary general of the party. Official code of conduct for political leaders and public servants was adopted.

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

1990 August Momoh announced an extensive review of the constitution. The central committee of the APC approved a number of proposed amendments to the Constitution. In November, a 30 member National Constitutional Review Commission was appointed.

1991 March the Commission submitted a draft constitution which was approved at a national referendum in August.

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 March Hassan Gbassay Kanu who had previously resigned from the APC and formed the DPP declared his support for Momoh's policies and announced that the DPPwas to be merged with the APC.

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; 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.

1994 Further legislation was introduced in March regulating the registration of newspapers. In May former members of the Momoh administration were arrested after failing to pay compensation for funds misappropriated during 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.

October coup attempt suppressed by government forces.

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. Voting was extended for 1 day due to attacks by armed groups.

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 and 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 Communique 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.

March 20 announces new broad-based government.

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. 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.

May18 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 (RUFP).

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

February UN Security Council agrees to increase UN peacekeeping force from 6000 to 11,100

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.

July 17 UN took action to relieve Indian forces and military observers besieged in Kailahun camp. This operation ensured that all the UN peace keepers held hostage since May, were now free.

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.

On 21 September India announced its intention to withdraw its troops from UNAMSIL.

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