

QUESTION AND ANSWER SERIES

**SIERRA LEONE
POLITICAL, MILITARY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS
CHRONOLOGY: 1991-1997**

[QA/SLE/98.001]

APRIL 1998

PRODUCED BY:

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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20536**

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The chronology in this report covers the period from March 1991 to December 1997.

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I. Introduction

This Question and Answer Series paper briefly examines the significant players and provides a chronological overview of the political, military, and human rights developments in Sierra Leone which span the period between 1991 and the end of 1997. Internal strife has been a constant in Sierra Leone since early 1991 when the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) began a guerrilla campaign to end the 23 year one-party rule by the All People's Congress (APC). In April 1992, the APC was ousted from power in a military coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser and junior army officers who protested poor pay and working conditions within the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF).

Captain Strasser's government, known as the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), existed for nearly four years. The NPRC administration's unwillingness to enter into negotiations with the RUF led to an intensification of the rebels' campaign, and in 1994 the NPRC government declared a "total war" on the RUF as the insurgency spread to the northern part of the country. During 1996 local hunters known as *Kamajors* began forming themselves into local civil defense forces to fight against the RUF.

Democratic elections held in March 1996 brought Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) into the presidency in September 1996. A military coup was staged in May 1997, by junior army officers led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma, under the banner of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The AFRC welcomed the RUF into an alliance with them.

Hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leoneans are estimated to have fled to Liberia and Guinea, and a million or more persons were reportedly displaced within Sierra Leone between 1991 and 1997. A regional intervention group led by Nigeria known as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) intervened in an effort to restore stability to Sierra Leone. In March 1998 President Kabbah's government was restored to power in Sierra Leone through the efforts of the military wing of ECOWAS, known as the Economic Community Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

II. Sierra Leone District Map

SIERRA LEONE - Major and Secondary Roads



III. Glossary

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
APC	All People's Congress
ECOMOG	Economic Community Cease-fire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
OAU	Organization of African Unity
RSLMF	Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement for Democracy
WASP	Western Area Security Patrol

IV. Current Political Players

A. Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)

On 25 May 1997 junior army officers, led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma under the banner of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), successfully overthrew the civilian government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. The AFRC accused President Kabbah of humiliating the army, inciting tribalism, and blocking peace with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels. Upon assuming power the AFRC invited RUF leader, Corporal Foday Sankoh, to join the AFRC. The AFRC is composed of members of the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and a majority portion of the RUF (now known as the People's Army). Since the coup, members of the international community, including the UN, OAU, EU, UK, and US, have severed diplomatic ties with Sierra Leone. (*Africa News Service* 29 May 1997; *UNDHA:IRIN-WA Special Briefing* 2 July 1997, 2)

B. Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) is a rebel group which came into existence as a result of the Liberian civil war spilling over into Sierra Leone in 1991. The RUF is led by Corporal Foday Sankoh, who was given the position of Deputy Chairman of Sierra Leone's new government in an attempt to ally the RUF and the AFRC. Despite this national alliance, loyalties vary by regions¹. Since the RUF's alliance with the AFRC, RUF members now call themselves the People's Army. (Carver Jan. 1997, 2; *Inter Press Service* 13 June 1997, 1; UNHCR *Humanitarian Situation Report* 21 July 1997, 1; USCR Sept./Oct.1996, 7)

C. Kamajors (also spelled, Kamajohs)

The *Kamajors* are local hunters who act as a civil defense force. They were supported by senior members of the Kabbah government. During mid and late 1996 thousands of *Kamajors* were inducted and sent to their home areas to fight alongside government troops against the RUF; however, rivalry between the army and the *Kamajors* is thought to have been an important factor in the army's decision to stage their coup. Since the May 1997 coup, the *Kamajors* have been fighting the People's Army (formerly known as the RUF). (*Agence France Presse* 21 June 1997; USCR Sept./Oct. 1996, 7)

D. Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP)

The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) is the political party of ousted President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. The SLPP was in power from 1951 to 1967. Its ethnic affiliation is with the Mende group. (IRBDC 13 June 1990; *Agence France Presse* 24 June 1997; UNHCR:IRIN-WA *Special Briefing* 2 July 1997, 1)

¹ Loyalties are "dependent upon the strength of the relationship between local military commanders and the *Kamajors* prior to the coup. . . It is clear that local military commanders and the RUF work closely together in the townships of Bo and Kenema and support the AFRC. . . However, in many parts of Pujehun district and some chiefdoms in Bo district, local military commands have good relations with the *Kamajors* and do not support the AFRC. In the rural areas of Kenema district, it is extremely difficult to determine which faction controls a particular area" (UNHCR *Humanitarian Situation Report* 21 July 1997, p. 1).

E. Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Economic Community Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional intervention group led by Nigeria which is demanding the return of democratically elected President Kabbah. The Economic Community Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is the military component of ECOWAS. ECOMOG has militarily intervened in Sierra Leone against the People's Army, the AFRC, and the RUF. ECOMOG has "combined" its efforts with the *Kamajors*. ECOWAS is attempting diplomatic negotiations. The OAU has declared its full support for ECOMOG. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 11 August 1997; USCR Sept./Oct. 1996, 7)

F. Western Area Security Patrol (WASP)

The Western Area Security Patrol (WASP) is an anti-looting squad made up of AFRC soldiers, RUF rebels, and Special Security Police personnel. WASP members have initiated a strategy of shooting looters on sight. Most of the atrocities committed by the WASP are said to be committed by the RUF component, who were known for similar abuses during the civil war. (*Inter Press Service* 6 July 1997, 2)

V. Other Political Players

A. All People's Congress (APC)

In 1967 the All People's Congress (APC), led by trade union leader Siaka Stevens, defeated the SLPP in national elections. The APC established a formal one-party state in 1978. In 1985 Stevens was succeeded by General Joseph Saidu Momoh. The reign of the APC ended on 29 April 1992 through a military coup led by a group of junior army officers. They proclaimed a National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) headed by Captain Valentine E.M. Strasser. (Carver Jan. 1997, 3; US DOS 1996, 243)

B. National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC)

The National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) came into power by ousting the long-ruling APC on 29 April 1992 and Captain Valentine E.M. Strasser became the head of state. The NPRC declared its commitment to bring the war with the RUF to a speedy end. The NPRC slowly opened the government to democratic processes in preparation for national elections. In a palace coup in January 1996, Strasser was ousted by his second in command, Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio. Four years of military rule by the NPRC ended in March 1996 with the election of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the SLPP. In September 1996, 28 senior members of the NPRC were retired and an additional 155 officers were dismissed. (Carver Jan. 1997, 3; US DOS 1996, 243)

C. Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF)

The Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) was responsible for external defense; however, 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. Along with the *Kamajors*, they fought against the RUF; however, clashes also occurred between the *Kamajors* and the RSLMF because the *Kamajors* were not under full government control. Government security forces committed numerous serious human rights abuses. (USCR Sept./Oct. 1996, 7; US DOS 1996, 243)

D. Sobels

Sobels is an abbreviated term for “soldier-rebel.” This expression describes soldiers whose behavior is indistinguishable from other armed attackers. (USCR Sept./Oct. 1996, 7)

E. United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO)

The United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO) is one of the rebel groups from Liberia that enabled “the spilling over” of the Liberian civil war onto Sierra Leonean soil in 1991. This group is composed mainly of expatriate Krahn and Mandingos (Malinke) who established a regional headquarters in Freetown. In March 1991 the ULIMO was attacked in Sierra Leone by the Liberian rebel group the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The NPFL worked with Sierra Leonean dissidents (the RUF) to

attack the APC led government of President Momoh. (INS Nov. 1993, 23 & 24; AI 20 Sept. 1995, 5)

F. National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)

The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) is a rebel group from Liberia led by Charles Taylor. The NPFL insurgency into Sierra Leone led to the emergence of the Sierra Leonean rebel group known as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The NPFL's attack on ULIMO in Sierra Leone in 1991 led to the Sierra Leonean civil war. The NPFL supported and supplied the RUF armed insurgents who were fighting against the Momoh government. (INS Nov. 1993, 23; AI 20 Sept. 1995, 5)

VI. Human Rights Situation

A. Background

The internal armed conflict between government forces and the armed opposition group the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which began in 1991, developed into a campaign of violence directed against civilians in 1994. Most civilian deaths were a result of deliberate and arbitrary killings committed by both the RUF and government soldiers. It has been difficult to determine the identity of human rights abusers, because both groups used similar tactics. A general sketch of the perpetrators described them as wearing "government army uniforms and [carrying] identical arms. . . the RUF [used] arms, ammunition, and uniforms captured from government forces or supplied by government troops colluding with rebel forces." (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 8)

It has been estimated that over 250,000 refugees from Sierra Leone have fled to neighboring Liberia and Guinea since 1991. Approximately 600,000 people were living in displaced people's camps in Sierra Leone by 1995. (AI 13 Sept. 1995, 6) According to 1996 statistics from the U.S. Committee for Refugees, one million or more Sierra Leoneans were internally displaced, while 300,000 others are refugees in Guinea and Liberia. (USCR Sept./Oct. 1996, 5)

Following the May 1997 coup, approximately 300 Sierra Leoneans fled to Nigeria and camped at Oru town, in southwest Ogun State. These Sierra Leoneans applied for refugee status and were expected to be granted. Four hundred (400) Sierra Leoneans were granted the right to remain in Ghana as refugees. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 5 Sept.1997, 4; UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 29 Dec. 1997, 4)

B. Human Rights Abuses Committed to Deter Elections

Leading up to the elections of February - March 1996, the situation of human rights deteriorated even further in Sierra Leone. In an apparently deliberate strategy of intimidation and terror, both RUF and government soldiers launched a campaign against civilians to deter the elections. They cut off hands and arms of men, women, and children with machetes; and cut the ears and lips off others. Some civilians were brutalized by having slogans denouncing the elections cut into their backs and chests. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 9)

Both Government soldiers and the RUF launched attacks in the Northern and Southern Provinces. Their attacks were expansive, “the towns of Kamakwie, Kamalu and Pendembu and more than 200 villages were attacked in Kambia and Bombali Districts in the Northern Province.” The methods of arbitrary killings and abductions, and testimonies of the victims, pointed to the responsibility of RUF forces in the Northern Province. The situation in the Southern Province could not be as simply deciphered; both RUF and government troops were utilizing a violent campaign against civilians. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 9)

- **12 February 1996** - Presidential candidate, Thaimu Bangura, was prevented from attending the National Consultative Conference, when a group of soldiers attacked him and then stole his car in Freetown. (US DOS 1996, 244)
- **18 February 1996** - An attempt was made on the life of Dr. James Jonah, the head of the Interim National Election Commission. A hand grenade was exploded in his residential compound. (US DOS 1996, 244)

- **19-22 February 1996** - During attacks in villages located in the Fakunya Chiefdom in Moyamba District, and the Lubu Chiefdom in Bo District, victims suffered from amputation of hands, fingers, upper lips, and ears, and had words such as “no elections” or “RUF” engraved into their bodies. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 9)
- **26 February 1996** - An unknown group of assailants attempted to murder Paul Kamara, who was the former editor of *For di People*, the chair of the NGO human rights group, National League for Human Rights and Democracy, and the NPRC Minister for Lands, Housing, and the Environment. The attackers were dressed in military fatigues and used military weapons. Kamara was seriously wounded when he was shot five times in the leg. No arrests were made by the government. (US DOS 1996, 244; AI 1997, 1)
- **17 March 1996** - A cease-fire was announced; however, rebel and government attacks continued. Most of the attacks consisted of looting and harassment of civilians; however, there were a few reports of murder, mutilation, assault, and abduction. (AI 1997, 1)
- **Abuses Against Women** - This vulnerable group did not escape the atrocities committed during the election period. Women were sexually assaulted and raped. Machetes and bayonets were inserted into their vaginas, often resulting in death. Pregnant women were not spared either. Reports describe attackers cutting open the abdomen of pregnant women and removing the fetuses. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 10)

C. Human Rights Violations by Government Soldiers (RSLMF)

Human rights abuses perpetrated between December 1995 and late January 1996, which were earlier attributed only to RUF forces, were later identified as the acts of government soldiers (the RSLMF). Government soldiers attacked unarmed citizens in the towns of Mano, Taiama, and Njala in the Moyamba District. It was also reported that looting by government soldiers took place in the Moyamba District in the towns of Njala and Taima and the villages of Foya, Njama, Periwahun, Senahun, Kori, Kowa, and Kamajei. Civilians suffered from shootings, amputations of limbs, and wounding from bayonets and machetes. Soldiers attacked entire villages. After the return to a civilian

government, attempts were made to improve military discipline and bring action against soldiers who had committed human rights abuses. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 10, 12)

Government soldiers (RSLMF) tortured and mistreated suspected RUF rebels and people suspected of assisting or collaborating with rebels. There were reports that suspects captured by soldiers were tightly bound at the hands and feet, suspended from iron bars, beaten, mutilated, and left to lie in the sun. In the period after an increase in rebel activities in late December 1994 and January 1995, many people suspected of rebel activities were reported to have been arrested in and around Freetown. Some of the arrests appeared indiscriminate and may have included displaced persons who fled to Freetown from rural areas. In early 1995 rebel suspects began being detained for questioning at Cockerill Military Headquarters in Freetown, where they may have been tortured, ill-treated, or extrajudicially executed in military custody. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 10, 12)

Since 1991 when the conflict began, government soldiers have extrajudicially executed captured rebels. There has been no apparent investigations of these killings. Victims were mutilated and killed by decapitation, with severed heads being displayed on army vehicles. Rebels who surrendered in Buedu, Kailahun District, in February 1994, were reported to have been summarily executed by soldiers. Thirty persons, including children from Dodo Kotuma village in Kailahun District, who had sought refuge in the bush, were reported to have been captured by soldiers. Twenty five of those captured, who were suspected of rebel collaboration, were shot. In an attack on Lunsar town on 1 January 1995 witnesses reported two captured rebels as having been decapitated by government soldiers. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 10, 12)

- **6 January 1996** - The village of Periwahun in the Kamejei Chiefdom was attacked by a large group of assailants dressed in military uniforms. They carried guns and machetes and forced villagers to flee from burning houses. A victim claimed to have been abducted, stabbed, and threatened with amputation. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 10)
- **26 February 1996** - On the day of the national elections, attacks by armed men were reported in the towns of Bo and Kenema. Despite official allegations made by the AFRC blaming the RUF for these attacks, there was strong evidence that soldiers, who did not want to see a civilian government

come into effect, were the actual perpetrators. About 20 unarmed civilians were killed in Bo. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 10)

- **23 June 1996** - Attacks on the civilian population continued in the months after the elections. Amnesty International reported that two military vehicles were seen at a village near Yaweyoma in Fakunya Chiefdom when it was attacked by a large group wearing military uniforms. This village had property looted, houses burned, and civilians were shot. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 10)

D. Human Rights Violations by Rebel Soldiers (RUF)

Despite denials of participation in human rights abuses, RUF leader Foday Sankoh admitted that the RUF was responsible for committing certain human rights abuses. He stated, “Yes, we have committed atrocities. One day we shall stand before the people and ask for forgiveness.” RUF soldiers were responsible for many human rights abuses, including torture and killings which were both deliberate and arbitrary. Prior to the national elections, the RUF was responsible for many attacks in the Northern and Southern Provinces. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 12)

Rebel forces continued to loot villages near their bases for food supplies. Villagers who refused to give their food to the rebels were often attacked with machetes and/or bayonets. In some instances, rebels were dressed in both military and civilian clothes and young boys were abducted. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 13)

- **22 December 1995** - Rebel forces, armed with machetes, spears and guns, ambushed a group of civilians in the village of Gbaama, Jaiama Bongor Chiefdom, Bo District. There were approximately 15 - 20 rebels, including men, women, and children. One civilian, a man who was forty years old, had his arms amputated and put in a bag in order to deliver a message to the displaced people’s camp in Gondoma, Bo District. Five or six people were abducted during this incident. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 12)
- **February 1996** - Villages in Bo and Moyamba Districts were raided during the time of the national elections. Attacks also took place in the Northern Province. Approximately 60 villages were raided in Tonko Limba, Bramaia, Magsungbala and Magbem Chiefdoms in Kambia District. Civilians were arbitrarily and deliberately killed and more than 30 were abducted.

Following the elections, attacks continued in the Southern Province by RUF soldiers. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 13)

- **March 1996** - Despite the March 17th cease-fire, attacks by the RUF continued. Most of the attacks involved harassment and looting. Reports of rebel activity came from the areas of Gerihun and Yamandu, east of Bo, and Yele, Mongeri, Mandu, and Dambara, north of Bo District. These types of attacks continued during the following months. Most of these raids took place near rebel bases. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 13)
- **22 April 1996** - Rebel forces released approximately 250 captured civilians near Bendu, Malen Chiefdom. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 14)
- **4 May 1996** - The *Kamajors* launched an offensive in Bendu, Malen Chiefdom, Pujehun District, in an attempt to free people abducted by RUF forces. About 100 civilians were killed as they were caught in the cross-fire or rounded-up and set on fire. Most of the victims were elderly people, while younger people were kidnapped by the forces. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 13)
- **10 May 1996** - In another skirmish between the *Kamajors* and RUF forces, some 60 - 100 civilians were killed. Civilians suffered from decapitation, gun shot wounds, and lacerations. (AI 25 Sept. 1996, 13)

E. May 1997 Military Coup

On 25 May 1997 junior military officers of the AFRC staged a coup, forcing civilian President Tejan Kabbah to flee the country. Major Johnny Paul Koroma was released from prison and assumed leadership of Sierra Leone. Approximately 500 convicts were released from maximum security prisons during the coup. Within the next four days, reports estimated that up to 100 people died in the violence that resulted from the coup. (*Africa News Service* 29 May 1997)

Following the coup, Koroma suspended the Constitution and banned all political activity. It has been reported that all members of Kabbah's government were to report to military headquarters in Freetown. Some members of the former government, including senior army officers, were arrested. (*Africa News Service* 29 May 1997)

1. General Human Rights Background Under the AFRC

Sierra Leonean human rights organizations reported an increase in human rights abuses after the AFRC came into power. These abuses include armed robberies and summary executions. According to the Civil Liberties Congress, (CLC), more than 30 armed robberies were reported in Freetown. The chairman of the CLC, Sulaiman Banjan Tejan-Sie, stated, “Most of these cases are accompanied by gruesome murders of the victims and there have also been more than a dozen summary executions carried out by the AFRC loyalists, sometimes in broad daylight.” (*Inter Press Service* 6 July 1997)

To deter an increasing amount of looting, soldiers initiated a strategy of shooting looters on sight. The summary executions were carried out by the anti-looting squad known as the Western Area Security Patrol (WASP). The WASP squad was made up of AFRC soldiers, RUF rebels, and Special Security Police personnel. Most of the atrocities committed by the WASP are said to be committed by the RUF rebels, who were known for similar abuses during the civil war. (*Inter Press Service* 6 July 1997) The squads patrolled Freetown in four-wheel drive vehicles, some of which were stolen from international relief organizations. The WASP is described as, “[cruising] the streets crammed with as many as 10 men inside, all in various degrees of uniform, armed with automatic rifles, machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.” (*The Guardian* 10 June 1997) The executions were considered to be an attempt by the AFRC at saving a tarnished image which resulted from the massive looting and destruction of property following the coup. It is believed that much of the looting and armed robberies that occurred were committed by the RUF who arrived by the hundreds, and by criminals that were released during the coup and given arms and military uniforms to help the May 25 takeover. (*Inter Press Service* 13 June 1997)

- During the week of **June 9-13, 1997**, the anti-looting squad executed four soldiers who attempted to rape a group of nuns and plunder their residence in the east Freetown. The soldiers were shot by the Squad and their bodies were dumped into the sea. (*Inter Press Service* 13 June 1997)

- Twelve uniformed armed robbers died in east Freetown after their vehicle crashed during a chase by the WASP Squad. (*Inter Press Service* 13 June 1997)
- An armed robber was “hacked to pieces” by the squad and another man was decapitated at Elizabeth Lane, west of Freetown. The squad then took the decapitated head to the residence of the man in order to recover stolen goods. (*Inter Press Service* 13 June 1997)

Other security issues:

- On **16 June 1997** at least 15 people who were accused of conspiring to overthrow the AFRC were detained by the military government. The people arrested are civilians associated with ousted President Tejan Kabbah or his political party, the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), and senior military officers. Some of the detainees include: Dr. Sama S. Banya, Colonel K.E.S. Boyah, Dauda Bundu, Colonel Tom Carew, Major Francis Gottor, Dr. Abdul Jalloh, Dr. Bockarie M. Kobba, Abu Aiah Koroma, Colonel R.Y. Koroma, Captain Johan Massaquoi, Abdullai Mustapha, Lt. Colonel J.A.H. Tucker, and Major Vandi Turay. (*Africa News Service* 25 June 1997)
- Sierra Leoneans working as United Nations security personnel were also arrested when the UN premises were looted by soldiers. (*Africa News Service* 29 May 1997)
- On **29 July 1997** junta officials ordered the release of civilians and soldiers arrested for attempting to overthrow the military government earlier in the month. (ICG Aug. 1997, 2)
- During the two months following the coup, 30,000 people crossed the border into Guinea. An additional 7,000 have registered in Liberia at Bo-Waterside, and 22,000 have been internally displaced in Kambala, and another 25,000 have been displaced in Kenema. (ICG Aug. 1997, 2)

2. Freedom of Speech and Assembly

- **28 May 1997** - Soldiers opened fire on thousands of civilians protesting against the military coup in Bo. At least one person was reported dead. The AFRC banned all demonstrations and public meetings. (*Africa News Service* 29 May 1997)

- **18 August 1997** - Although the March for Democracy organized by the National Union of Students was banned by the AFRC, students, market women, and trade unionists took to the streets. In a show of force by the AFRC and the national police, reports indicated that heavy shooting, tear gas, beatings, and detainment were utilized to suppress the demonstration. Journalists from international news agencies were also abused during this melee. (UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 22 Aug. 1997, 1)
- **31 August 1997** - At least 10 people were detained in Freetown when an angry crowd attacked the independent “Voice of the Handicapped” FM station in the capitol. The radio, run by a group of blind youths, had broadcast a statement suggesting its opposition to an ECOMOG intervention in Sierra Leone. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 1 Sept. 1997, 6)

3. The Judicial System

Despite promises of fair and speedy trials for prisoners from Major Johnny Koroma, the judicial system is not functioning. The Courts are not in session because a majority of judges and lawyers initiated a civil disobedience campaign following the May 25th coup. The courts are also short of personnel because approximately 70 percent of the judicial workforce fled the country or went into hiding. The lawyers and judges have been living in fear since more than 500 convicts were released from prison, “they are afraid that the criminals whom they convicted, and who are now well armed, may seize the opportunity to torment them.” The home of a High Court Judge was looted by armed robbers and a woman magistrate was raped by released convicts. (*Inter Press Service* 7 Aug. 1997; UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 21 July 1997)

In retaliation, the AFRC has suspended the country’s judicial system and replaced it with “People’s Revolutionary Courts.” These “People’s Courts” are similar to those used by the RUF in order to eliminate opponents during the bush-war. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 21 July 1997) The People’s Revolutionary Courts will be presided over by a group of five adjudicators, including a paramount chief. These courts will have the power to try all civil and criminal cases, except for murder, manslaughter, treason, or other crimes that may carry the death penalty. The People’s Revolutionary Courts will have identical powers to the High Court to impose fines and sentences. Many people in Sierra Leone do not believe in the power of the People’s Courts; they fear that it is the way the

RUF can impose their control without rule of law or due process. (*Inter Press Service* 7 Aug. 1997)

4. The Press

Despite an original pronouncement concerning protection of individual freedom of expression, the media, which has been openly critical of the new government, is being suppressed by the AFRC. According to *Rapporteurs Sans Frontières* (Reporters Without Borders), a Parisian press freedom group, journalists have been accused of aiding and harboring *Kamajor* fugitives. Due to threats and raids by the military, twenty of the forty local newspapers were forced to suspend publication. Many reporters, including Frank Kposowa, the president of the Journalist's Association, have been arbitrarily arrested or detained. (*Inter Press Service* 19 July 1997; UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 21 July 1997; ICG August 1997, 2)

- Editors of two local independent newspapers, *The Democrat* and *Standard Times*, were called down to military headquarters because of alleged negative reporting. The editor of the *Standard Times*, Mr. Philip Neville reported that staff members, "received death threats from anonymous callers saying we will all be killed for not being in line with the revolution." (*Inter Press Service* 6 July 1997, 2) In **July 1997** Pios Foray, the editor of *The Democrat*, went into hiding after a tip that soldiers were searching for him. The offices of *The Democrat* were raided, resulting in the arrest and detention of seven people. (*Inter Press Service* 19 July 1997)
- Victor Sylvah, a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Africa Service Stringer, was also detained by the military at the Maximum Security Prison in **July 1997**. (*Inter Press Service* 19 July 1997)
- As of **22 August 1997** only 8 newspapers continued to operate. They are the government owned *Daily Mail*, the junta sympathetic *Expo Times*, and independent papers *The Concord Times*, the *Point*, the *Torchlight*, the *Herald Guardian*, and *We Yone*. (*Agence France Presse* 22 Aug. 1997)
- **19 September 1997** - The AFRC ordered newspapers to obtain clearance from the ministry of information before going to the press. Any publications failing to comply would be liable to suspension with immediate effect. The move was widely condemned by newspaper editors as an attempt to muzzle the press. Local newspapers have accused the AFRC of human rights

abuses, excessive state spending, looting and plundering. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 22 Sept. 1997, 3)

- **20 September 1997** - Strained relations between Sierra Leone's military junta and journalists took another turn for the worse Saturday as the coup makers censored the vocal *Freetown Press*. (*Deutsche Presse* 20 September 1997)
- **27 September 1997** - Representatives of Sierra Leone's journalists association have met with leaders of the country's military-ruled government over strict new press laws which, among other things, decree that all newspapers must renew their licenses under a 1980 statute. The journalists chose a six-member delegation to meet with the junta and have vowed not to bow to the demands. (*Deutsche Presse* 1 October 1997)
- **29 September 1997** - AFRC announced a concession on its newspaper registration deadline. Commissioner for Information and Broadcasting, Sedu Turay, said he would allow all newspapers legally registered before 25 May to continue publishing until the end of the year. Newspapers not registered prior to March 1996 would not be covered by this concession and would have to cease publication right away. Out of a total of 13 titles, only six would be allowed to publish until registration next year. Journalists want the 1980 Newspaper Act to be repealed but Turay said it protected the public from "libelous and seditious newspapers". (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 1 Oct. 1997, 3)
- **16 October 1997** - Sierra Leone's military junta has arrested a newspaper editor in its continuing clamp down on journalists in the country. Journalists of the newspaper *For the People* [also known as *For di People*] said Paul Kamara was arrested by a group of soldiers who also ransacked his office. (*Deutsche Presse* 17 Oct. 1997)
- **25 October 1997** - Three reporters - Johnathan Leigh, editor of the *Independent Observer*, Jon Foray, editor of *News Storm* and Prince Akpu of *The Financial Times* - detained by the military government in Sierra Leone were released. (*Agence France Presse* 27 Oct. 1997, 1)
- **22 November 1997** - The Sierra Leone military government has continued to crackdown on the press with the arrest of the editor of a private newspaper, the second editor to be arrested in two days. Dorothy Awooner-Gordon, editor of *The Concord Times*, was arrested by security agents at her home. No reasons for the arrest have been given. *The Concord Times* is the third newspaper after *The Democrat* and *The Standard Times* to have fallen foul of the military government. The government on Friday - **21 November** -

banned *The Democrat*, accusing it of irresponsible journalism. (*Deutsche Press* 23 Nov. 1997)

- **24 November 1997** - The AFRC authorities interrogated three newspaper editors. The editors from *The Concord Times*, *The Democrat* and *The Standard Times* were summoned to account for articles the AFRC claimed put “state security in danger”. Colonel Abdul Sesay criticized certain journalists for trying to deliberately undermine and destabilize the AFRC. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 25 Nov. 1997, 3)

5. Child Soldiers

Despite the conditions of the Peace Accords, children were again being armed and recruited to fight for the AFRC/RUF (People’s Army) forces. Sierra Leone has one of the world’s worst records of turning children into soldiers; between 1992 - 1996 approximately 4,500 children were forced to fight on both sides of the war. These children were forced to perpetrate the same types of atrocities that adult soldiers committed, including torturing and murdering their own relatives and slaughtering other villagers. (*Inter Press Service* 1 July 1997)

Following the November 1996 Peace Accords, many of the child soldiers, or “boy soldiers,” were placed in camps for demobilized soldiers. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) ran vocational, technical, and reintegration training programs for the children; however, since the May coup, hundreds of child soldiers have left the camps and are back on the streets. Many of them were orphaned during the conflict. In major cities throughout Sierra Leone it is not uncommon to see children, armed with AK-47’s and rocket propelled grenades, patrolling the streets. It is reported that many of these children were being armed by the military junta, the AFRC and the RUF, also known as the People’s Army, to fight against the local defense militias known as the *Kamajors*. (*Inter Press Service* 1 July 1997)

In October 1997 Major Koroma ordered the immediate disarmament of all child soldiers in keeping with the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Geneva Convention, and the Abidjan Peace Accord. The AFRC’s Ministry of Social Welfare, Children and Gender Affairs was designated the responsibility for identifying child soldiers and arranging for their reintegration into Sierra Leone society.

The Ministry began its work mid-November 1997 in the regional capitals of Bo, Kenema, and Makeni. (UNDHA *Sierra Leone Humanitarian Situation Report* 13 Oct. 1997, 5; UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 19 Nov. 1997, 4)

6. Humanitarian Agencies

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been accused of subversive activities and collaboration with Kabbah supporters. AFRC officials claim that humanitarian aid agencies are using their equipment and food supplies to aid and support the *Kamajor*.

An official of the Sierra Leone Red Cross was arrested for “passing information to Kabbah’s forces”. In the Bo area, NGO personnel were prevented from leaving and publicly condemned for helping the *Kamajor*. The humanitarian agency, Mèdecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), had its communication equipment seized. Vehicles belonging to CARE were impounded by the AFRC. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 21 July 1997)

Humanitarian organizations were also hampered in effectively carrying out their missions due to insecurity.

- **26 August** - The staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have been withdrawn from the Zimmi office because of ICRC inability to guarantee security. The ICRC office in Freetown was also closed after the arrest of a nurse and the harassment of staff members. Despite these problems, ICRC has been able to distribute food to more than 21,016 people in the former RUF-held area of north Kailahun. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 26 Aug. 1997, 3)
- **19 September** - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned that its food stocks have almost run out in Freetown, where in the last three months armed men have looted an estimated 3,000 metric tons of relief food - enough to feed 250,000 people for one month. The Sierra Leonean capital and its surroundings are hosting more than 60,000 internally displaced persons depending entirely on food aid distributed by the WFP and international NGOs. (WFP 19 Sept. 1997, 2)

VII. Military and Political Chronology

CHRONOLOGY MARCH 1991 - MARCH 1996

The following chronology through 15 March 1996, unless otherwise noted, is from Carver, Richard. *From Cease-Fire to Lasting Peace* (Writtenet: January 1997), 8 p. -- as reported on UNHCR/CDR REF WORLD CD-ROM.

1991

March - The civil war in Sierra Leone began “as a spilling over of the conflict in neighboring Liberia.” Two rebel contingents from Liberia, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), entered Sierra Leone, one in Kailahun District (in the east), and the other in Pujehun District (in the south). ULIMO had set up regional headquarters in Freetown, when their camps were attacked by armed insurgents from Liberia (presumably the NPFL). This initial attack, intended mainly against the Krahn expatriates who formed the majority of the ULIMO, led to the emergence of the Revolutionary United Force (RUF), a Sierra Leonean rebel group backed by Charles Taylor of Liberia and his NPFL.

April - Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader, Foday Sankoh, announced the objective of his rebel group: an end to the one-party system presided over by President Joseph Momoh and his All People’s Congress (APC).

1991 - 1992

The rebellion primarily involved the southern and eastern portions of the country. The RUF expanded its area of control through methods of terror attacks on civilians. At the same time, the government forces’ summary executions of alleged RUF supporters, engendered some civilian support for the rebels. The RUF controlled approximately 1/5 of the country, but were driven back by the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and a Liberian militia called the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO).

April 1992 - A military coup overthrew President Momoh and the APC. Momoh fled to political exile in Conakry, Guinea. The new head of state was Captain Valentine Strasser. The RUF considered dropping its struggle but did not do so when government offers of amnesty and a cease-fire did not materialize.

1992 - 1993

The RUF employed tactical changes in the face of virtual annihilation by the military, which committed widespread human rights abuses against the civilian population as well as RUF combatants. The RUF began its push into the diamond producing Kono district

and set up remote forest camps where young recruits were trained and indoctrinated. The RUF began ambushes of the main roads, especially the Freetown-Bo highway. It also began kidnapping foreign aid workers, missionaries and mining engineers, thereby focusing international attention on Sierra Leone.

Late 1994

The RUF was operating throughout the country and was entering the Freetown peninsula.

1995

27 April - The 34th anniversary of Sierra Leone's independence. The ban on political parties was lifted by President Strasser. He also offered the RUF a truce and unconditional peace talks in preparation for upcoming elections to be held later in the year. RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, responded with a threat to disrupt the elections.

May - Executive Outcomes, a mercenary group from South Africa, was hired by the government to protect mining interests in diamond and rutile areas of Sierra Leone. (USCR Sept./Oct. 1996, 5)

August - A national consultative conference was held in Freetown to discuss a return to civilian rule. The RUF refused an invitation to attend the conference. The conference recommended that the elections scheduled for December 1995 should be held no later than February 1996.

1996

January - A palace coup overthrew President Strasser and installed his deputy, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, as head of state.

26 February - Despite the decline in security, first round elections took place. Voter turnout was remarkable and polling was extended for a second day. It is reported that at least 27 people died due to election-related violence which mainly occurred in the south. This violence was officially attributed to the RUF, but it is likely that soldiers opposed to the elections may also have been responsible.

14 March - Bio and Sankoh agreed upon a cease-fire during talks held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

15 March - Second round elections were held between the two leading candidates; Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP and John Karefa-Smart of the United National People's Party when no presidential candidate won the required 55 % of the vote in February.

CHRONOLOGY POST-MARCH 1996

The following chronology through August 1997, is from United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNDHA), Integrated Regional Information Network for West Africa (IRIN-WA): *Sierra Leone - Special Briefing #1 Chronology of Recent Events* (Geneva: 2 July 1997), 4 p. (as reported on RELIEF WEB), unless otherwise noted.

1996

March - Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) is sworn in on 29 March, following multi-party elections which end four years of military rule under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The elections are boycotted by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel movement led by Corporal Foday Sankoh, who has been waging a six-year-long bloody civil war against the state. The negotiations which re-instated civilian rule include a general amnesty for the NPRC, educational scholarships for the leaders, and a return to barracks for the bulk of its members. Two days after the election, the RUF announced a two month cease-fire, which was later extended, while peace negotiations took place. (Carver Jan. 1997, 3)

28 May - Peace talks were suspended by the RUF in a disagreement over the role of Executive Outcomes, a South African mercenary group. The RUF said it would not disarm until Executive Outcomes, who were employed by the government, left Sierra Leone. (US DOS 1996, 246)

September - 28 senior army officers, including former NPRC military rulers Captain Valentine Strasser and Brigadier-General Julius Maada Bio, who was responsible for the restoration of democratic rule, are compulsorily retired, followed by the dismissal of another 155 non-commissioned officers and hundreds of semi-trained soldiers recruited to fight the RUF rebels. No demobilization or reintegration package is provided to these soldiers. Major Johnny Paul Koroma is arrested and jailed on charges of allegedly plotting a coup. Kabbah requests Nigerian detectives to investigate the coup attempt. Accusations of torture and coercion cloud the investigation.

November - A fragile peace is finally brokered with the RUF on 30 November, ending the war which had claimed some 10,000 lives and displaced 1.5 million civilians. Both the Commonwealth and ECOWAS countries, notably Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Ghana and Nigeria, play key roles in the peace process. Kabbah's government weathers a third alleged coup attempt by junior army officers.

December - The promised immunity from prosecution for members of the former NPRC military government is annulled by parliament. The cumulative breaking of previous agreements generates increasing anxiety amongst former NPRC members.

1997

February - Emulating the Mende-dominated *Kamajor* militia units, local authorities in many northern areas begin forming new Temne-based militia units, known as the *Kapra*, to protect their villages and fight remnants of the RUF. (*For more information on ethnic groups in Sierra Leone -- see Appendix*)

March - The RUF leader Corporal Sankoh is 'detained' in Nigeria by local authorities for possession of arms. RUF attacks, targeting civilian populations and Mende-based *Kamajor* units, escalate in the north and north-east.

April - Calls by the Army for the disbanding of the *Kamajor* increase. However, under Chief Hinga Norman, the Deputy Defence Minister and former *Kamajor* chief, the role of the *Kamajor* as a civilian defence force becomes more entrenched and more structured.

May - Growing rivalry between the Army and *Kamajor* erupts in violent clashes. RUF attacks increase unhindered and, according to some reports, aided by the Army. A UN vehicle is ambushed by the RUF in the North, resulting in the death of the driver and injury to an expatriate UN official.

25 May - Junior army officers under the banner of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) stage a coup, forcing President Tejan Kabbah to flee to neighboring Guinea. Major Johnny Paul Koroma is released from prison and assumes leadership of the AFRC. The AFRC accuses Kabbah of humiliating the Army, inciting tribalism and blocking peace with the RUF rebels. Widespread fighting, looting, and arson by uncontrolled soldiers sweep across Freetown.

28 May - Evacuation of foreign nationals begins (more than 5,000 are eventually evacuated). On the same day, RUF rebels begin arriving in Freetown in significant numbers following an invitation to RUF leader, Corporal Sankoh, to join the AFRC. Their arrival reduces the likelihood of a quick resolution to the conflict.

29 May - The AFRC announces the dissolution of the parliament and all political activity.

1 June - Sankoh is nominated vice-president of the AFRC. He is removed from his hotel room in Abuja, Nigeria to an unknown location.

2 June - Following several unsuccessful regional and international efforts to negotiate a peaceful resolution to the crisis, a Nigerian frigate bombards Freetown. In the ensuing skirmishes, ECOMOG troops retreat and the AFRC captures more than 300 Nigerian soldiers. The intervention, at the request of President Kabbah, results in the death of some 120 civilians, engendering a public backlash against Kabbah in Freetown.

3 June - Nigerian troops retreat from Cape Sierra peninsula to consolidate their bases in the east of Freetown at Lungi and Jui. AFRC/RUF forces immediately move into the peninsula with an uneasy truce established the following day.

4 June - Some 30,000 *Kamajor* begin regrouping in the eastern region in and around Kenema, threatening to march to Freetown if Kabbah is not restored to power.

5 June - AFRC claims it will restore democracy in 18 months, but not Kabbah. Nigeria's failure to retake Freetown quickly and bloodlessly leads to growing criticism of the intervention and questions regarding Nigeria's authority to involve ECOMOG troops. Regional powers, the Commonwealth and the UN Secretary-General later announce their support for a Nigerian-led intervention if negotiations fail.

6 June - In an attempt to avert an escalation in the conflict, President Tejan Kabbah appeals to the *Kamajor* over the radio, asking them not to march to Freetown. Some *Kamajor* units disband while others continue to regroup. With the arrival of reinforcements, ECOMOG troops are estimated at some 4,000 strong, heightening fears of a second military intervention. The AFRC leadership appeals for ECOWAS, as opposed to Nigeria, to send a team to Sierra Leone to investigate its charges against the previous government. Large numbers of Freetown residents begin an exodus to the north-east of the country and towards the Guinean border.

7 June - In search of regional support and a way of averting a military intervention, a 13-member AFRC/RUF delegation travels to Côte d'Ivoire and later Ghana.

10 June - A clash between Nigerian and AFRC troops near the Freetown airport results in the death of 5 AFRC soldiers and increases fears of a Nigerian-led ECOMOG intervention.

11 June - Two more Nigerian frigates are sent to Freetown bringing their total number to four.

12 June - Nigeria reaffirms its commitment to re-establishing Kabbah's government. A delegation of Sierra Leonean parliamentarians presents a 10-point mediation plan that calls for the AFRC to step down and for the formation of a broad-based government of national unity. They also call for the release of Corporal Sankoh, a guaranteed future for all those involved in the coup, and the deployment of UN and ECOMOG peace-keeping forces.

16 June - The AFRC claims to have foiled a counter-coup, allegedly backed by Nigeria, by senior army officers and prominent supporters of the SLPP.

17 June - Major Koroma is sworn in as head of state.

18 June - Violent clashes erupt between AFRC troops and the *Kamajor* in and around Kenema, resulting in a heavy death toll mainly for the *Kamajor*.

19 June - The AFRC accuses Kabbah's Deputy Defence Minister, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, of plotting to overthrow the AFRC with the aid of Nigerian and Liberian troops (members of the supposedly defunct ULIMO-K rebels group) brought into Zimmi. A *Kamajor* leader later confirms recruitment of soldiers from Liberia.

20 June - The AFRC calls for an emergency meeting of ECOWAS to discuss foreign interference in its internal political affairs. UN sources report the arrival of some 31,000 refugees in Forecariah, Guinea since the 25 May coup. Guinea and Gambia close their borders to the Sierra Leone refugees; but, Guinea border guards continue to allow refugees to cross in exchange for bribes. The *Kamajors* ambushed a junta convoy which was carrying the new Resident Minister for the South, Major Augustine Kamara, in Gerihun town, 120 miles east of the capital. (*Agence France Presse* 21 June 1997)

21 June - Some 300 Sierra Leonean soldiers, who were members of the ECOMOG peacekeeping forces in Liberia, stationed on the Liberian side of the Sierra Leone border, are disarmed by their Nigerian colleagues. AFRC accuses Nigeria of undertaking the move to pave the way for foreign intervention from Liberia.

22 June - Fighting between the *Kamajor* and the AFRC racks the town of Zimmi. The RUF begins a major publicity campaign to improve its image with the general public. FAO, WFP and NGOs warn of growing food insecurity due to money and food supply shortages. The *Kapra* leadership accuse the Mende-dominated *Kamajor* of targeting and killing civilians and military personnel because of their Temne ethnicity. The *Kapra* threatens to go on the offensive.

24 June - Clashes occur between the RUF and *Kamajor* on the Bo-Kenema highway. The RUF is reported to have been forced to retreat to Bo. During the past three days, clashes between the junta and the *Kamajors* in the southeast have resulted in approximately 35 deaths. Unrest including the *Kamajors* has been reported in 5 of 12 districts in the south and east. (*Agence France Presse* 24 June 1997)

25 June - The AFRC again protests the use of Liberia to destabilize Sierra Leone.

28 June - ECOWAS recommends economic sanctions against Sierra Leone and the use of force, if dialogue fails. This follows a de facto embargo since early June by ECOMOG which has prevented aircraft from landing and ships from docking in Freetown. A 4-member ECOWAS committee is established to oversee sanctions and to conduct an assessment mission to Sierra Leone.

29 June - 25 people, including the father of Kabbah's vice president, are killed by 'men in uniform' in a village in the south-east. This follows other attacks, including one where 10 people have their eyes gouged out and their ears chopped off. Freetown is reported to be quiet, but reports of random violence are on the increase, including nightly robberies as food and money shortages worsen.

30 June - The top prosecutor signs papers ensuring no further action would be taken against Major Koroma and his associates in last year's failed coup attempt.

9 July - The People's Army attempted to break the ECOMOG security forces by attacking the Lungi airport and the 98.1 FM radio station. The attack was effectively countered by ECOMOG, resulting in the loss of approximately 350 People's Army soldiers. (UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 14 July 1997, 1)

12- 13 July - The People's Army fell victim to another setback during heavy artillery fighting in the Jui and Hastings area. (UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 14 July 1997, 1)

14 July - The Kenema-Kono highway, once controlled by the *Kamajors*, was secured by the People's Army. (UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 14 July 1997, 1)

New clashes between Nigerian troops and forces loyal to the junta are reported to focus within four villages located 30 kilometers east of Freetown. (*Australian Broadcasting Corporation* 14 July 1997)

14 - 20 July - ECOMOG enforced a road blockade on the outskirts of Freetown by severing road links between Freetown and the rest of Sierra Leone. (UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 21 July 1997, 1)

17 - 18 July - A 12 member delegation from Major Koroma's junta met with the ECOWAS committee of four in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire for peace negotiations. Delegates agreed to a cease-fire throughout Sierra Leone. (UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 21 July 1997, 1)

31 July - Peace talks in Abidjan broke down following the AFRC's announcement that Koroma planned on retaining power until 2001 and their refusal to discuss the reinstatement of President Kabbah. In a statement issued today by the *Kamajors*, they had launched a fresh offensive in an attempt to regain control of the town of Zimmi. (UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 4 August 1997, 1-2)

13 - 14 August - Fighting erupted when ECOMOG troops opened fire on AFRC and RUF troops near Lungi International Airport outside of Freetown. Heavy shelling resulted in a high number of casualties, reports estimate approximately 150 dead. The AFRC withdrew their troops to Port Loko, 30 miles from Lungi. (*AP* 14 Aug. 1997; UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 22 August 1997, 1)

The People's Army recaptured Tonga, a diamond mining town in Eastern Kenema district, after two days of fighting. The *Kamajors* were also forced to retreat from the town of Zimmi, a strategic town linked to Liberia which had been the scene of heavy fighting for several weeks. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 18 August 1997, 2)

18 August - Although the March for Democracy organized by the National Union of Students was banned by the AFRC, students, market women, and trade unionists took to the streets. In a show of force by the AFRC and the national police, reports indicated that heavy shooting, tear gas, beatings, and detainment were utilized. At least one student died and approximately 35 people were arrested. Journalists from international news agencies were also abused during this melee. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Update* 25 August 1997, 1; UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 22 August 1997, 1)

19 August - Shooting occurred in Freetown near the State House and Government Wharf areas. As tensions heightened, a 10:00 p.m. to dawn curfew was imposed. (UNDHA *Humanitarian Situation Report* 22 August 1997, 1)

21 August - Fighting erupted near Bo between the *Kamajors* and the AFRC, when the *Kamajors* attempted to capture a military garrison in the area. The most volatile areas of fighting are being reported in the far southeast -- Kenema south to Zimmi and along the Liberian border. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Update* 25 August 1997, 1)

23 August - Fighting near Lungi International Airport was renewed between ECOMOG troops and the AFRC. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Update* 25 August 1997, 1)

27 August - AFRC foreign minister, Paul Bangura, visited Togolese President General Gnassingbe Eyadema in Togo. During his visit, Bangura requested that the president intervene on behalf of the AFRC, who was not invited to attend the ECOWAS summit, in order to arrive at a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Ousted President Alhaji Tejan Kabbah has been invited to attend the summit as the head of a Sierra Leone delegation. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 27 Aug. 1997, 3)

28 August - The 20th summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) started today in Abuja, Nigeria, with an opening address by the Nigerian head-of-state General Sani Abacha. Summit leaders are expected to impose more stringent economic sanctions against the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), recommend the reinforcement of ECOMOG contingents in Sierra Leone, and extend ECOMOG's mandate in neighboring Liberia.

According to Sierra Leone military sources, Nigerian artillery forces shelled three cargo ships anchored off Freetown harbor. The leader of the AFRC, Major Johnny Paul Koroma, accused the Nigerian contingent of embarking on a desperate attempt to provoke a war which would coincide with the ECOWAS summit.

Two former military officers, retired Lieutenant-Colonels Komba Mondeh and Tom Nyuma, have been accused of planning a seaborne attack on Sierra Leone to restore the ousted president. The former military officers were ringleaders in a coup d'état led by Captain Valentine Strasser in 1992. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 28 Aug. 1997, 3)

29 August - In a highly emotive speech to the 20th summit of the ECOWAS, ousted President Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah described the motive of the coup leaders of the AFRC as one that is driven by the desire to control the country's mineral resources, namely diamonds and gold. Despite earlier threats by Nigerian leaders and the commander of the ECOWAS Peacekeeping Forces (ECOMOG), West African leaders, who unanimously condemned the coup, are reportedly reluctant to use military force to restore Kabbah. Instead, they are calling for a "rapid and peaceful end to the crisis" through the use of a tougher blockade against Sierra Leone. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 29 Aug. 1997, 3)

2 September - Three top members of Sierra Leone's AFRC were killed in a car crash in the south of the country, near the town of Bo - the country's third largest town. It is believed that the men were traveling to negotiate with the *Kamajor*. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 4 Sept. 1997, 3)

3 September - At least 50 people were killed in Freetown when stray shells fired by Nigerian soldiers from the West African peacekeeping forces (ECOMOG) hit a crowded dockside market in the capital. Nigerian gunners, based across the estuary at Lungi, were aiming at two container ships violating an embargo against the country's Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 4 Sept. 1997, 3)

Eleven ECOMOG soldiers were killed in a landmine explosion near Sierra Leone's international airport. Three soldiers were also wounded in the blast, which occurred as the troops were transporting food to colleagues and displaced civilians in Lungi. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 5 Sept. 1997, 4)

5 September - Hundreds of people gathered in Freetown to protest the death of at least 50 people killed in the shelling of a market, allegedly by the West African peacekeeping troops (ECOMOG).

ECOMOG commander, General Vicot Malu, said today, that humanitarian supplies are exempt from the ECOWAS blockade of Sierra Leone. The blockade was imposed at the ECOWAS regional summit in Nigeria in the hopes that it would force the AFRC to relinquish power. ECOWAS is hoping that the UN will endorse these measures which are expected to remain in force for a month, after which, ECOWAS could sanction military action to restore ousted president Kabbah. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 5 Sept. 1997, 4)

10 September - Sierra Leone's Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) denied Nigerian press reports that its soldiers had murdered two Nigerian shopkeepers in the capital, Freetown. According to the Lagos press, there have been "man-hunts" against Nigerian residents in the city by AFRC supporters and allied former rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 10 Sept. 1997, 4)

11 September - Nigerian warplanes serving under the West African peacekeeping force (ECOMOG) bombed an oil barge - belonging to the National Petroleum Company - anchored in the port of the Sierra Leone capital, Freetown. According to ECOMOG Task Force Commander, Colonel Max Khobe, the boat had persistently violated sanctions by buying fuel from other vessels in the high seas. Two oil company workers were killed and two people wounded.

Sierra Leone's ambassador to the UN, James Jonah, called on the Security Council to endorse ECOWAS sanctions against Sierra Leone in order to make it very clear that the military junta will not be tolerated. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 12 Sept. 1997, 4)

A Nigerian plane dropped another bomb in the Sierra Leonean capital of Freetown but no one was injured. (*Deutsche Presse* 11 Sept. 1997)

12 September - Despite international demand for immediate hand-over, the coup leaders in Sierra Leone, who seized power in May, established a 19-member cabinet to carry out the junta's four-year transition program. According to a statement faxed from the headquarters of the West African Peace-keeping Force (ECOMOG) in Monrovia, Liberia, Major Johnny Koroma remains chairman of the AFRC, Head of State, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and Secretary of Defense. (*Xinhua News Agency* 13 Sept. 1997)

15 September - A group of prominent Sierra Leoneans formed a committee to try and defuse the country's crisis. The Independent National Mediation Committee wants to bring together the AFRC military ruler, Johnny Paul Koroma, and ousted president, Alhaji Tejan Ahmad Kabbah. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 16 Sept. 1997, 3)

16 September - Dozens of dockers resumed work at Freetown's main port after stopping for almost a week for fear of attacks by Nigerian planes. The port is open but no vessels are entering or leaving the harbor. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 17 Sept. 1997, 3)

20 September - Members of the People's Army killed at least 34 *Kamajors* in the southern island of Sherbro. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) has accused the *Kamajors*, a pro-Kabbah militia, of establishing bases and military training centers in Bonthe, south of the capital. The AFRC has alleged that retired Sierra Leone military and police officers, as well as Nigerian military experts, were training hundreds of *Kamajors*. The Nigerian military have denied the claim.

Teachers in Sierra Leone are to continue their strike action until salary arrears are paid and security in the country improves. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 20 Sept. 1997, 5)

21 September - Nigerian ECOMOG and Sierra Leonean Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) troops exchanged heavy artillery fire early today at Freetown's international airport. A Sierra Leonean military source claimed that Nigerian soldiers had

moved from their positions towards the army's airport base in an attempt to take it. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 22 Sept. 1997, 3)

23 September - Nigeria called on the international community to isolate the Sierra Leonean military government. Speaking before the UN General Assembly, Nigerian Foreign Minister Tom Ikimi noted that no government had recognized the AFRC. Ikimi stressed that the ECOWAS needed international support to reverse the coup d'état. Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe also urged the international community to continue to reject the Sierra Leone military government and stand behind Africa denying it recognition.

The West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG warned all commercial shipping to stay away from Sierra Leone. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 26 Sept. 1997, 5)

Threatened with the tightening of an international embargo, Sierra Leone's military junta agreed to meet for talks with Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, the civilian president it overthrew in May. (*Associated Press* 23 September 1997)

24 September - Four Sierra Leonean soldiers and ten *Kamajor* militia have been killed in fighting for control of Tongo, in the eastern district of Kenema. Heavily armed *Kamajors* attacked four military positions in the diamond-rich city. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 26 Sept. 1997, 5)

The ousted civilian government rejected an offer of negotiations made a day earlier by Sierra Leone's embattled military junta. (*Associated Press* 24 September 1997)

29 September - ECOMOG forces shelled the coastal residential areas in Freetown. No casualties were reported, but shells fired across the Sierra Leone estuary left at least three craters in the backyards of waterfront homes. The motive for the mortar fire was not known and ECOMOG declined to comment on the incident. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 30 Sept. 1997, 3)

4 October - Fighting broke out between AFRC soldiers and members of the RUF in eastern Sierra Leone. They were reportedly mining for diamonds in Tongo when disagreement resulted in clashes. Sixteen people were injured but no deaths were reported. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 6 Oct. 1997, 4)

6 October - Only 40 percent of Sierra Leone's teachers reported for work when primary schools re-opened. Some teachers said that they were continuing the four-month-old strike aimed at forcing the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) to restore democracy. The president of the Sierra Leone Teacher's Union (SLTU) said the union was not at war with the military government but peace and democracy are essential prerequisites for a stable political and educational climate. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 7 Oct. 1997, 3)

7 October - The *Kamajor* fighters are reportedly crossing over the Mano River, the boundary between Liberia and Sierra Leone, into Lower Lofa. The authorities in Tongo have already detained five fighters. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 7 Oct. 1997, 3)

The AFRC Chief of Staff confirmed the defection of brigade commander Colonel Falla Sewah. The colonel defected to ECOMOG troops stationed at Jui, near Freetown. He is the highest-ranking officer of some 50 soldiers who have defected to date.

The AFRC released a dozen people held under house arrest since July. The government communiqué gave no names. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 8 Oct. 1997, 3)

8 October - Nigerian warplanes, serving under the West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG, bombed and damaged the Sierra Leone army headquarters in western Freetown. The Director of Defense Information, Major John Milton, said the attack was probably prompted by an AFRC meeting at the base, which was to have been attended by AFRC leader Major Johnny Paul Koroma and other high-ranking officials. This attack coincided with the adoption of a United Nations Security Council Resolution imposing sanctions backing the ECOWAS embargo. (UNDHA *Sierra Leone Humanitarian Situation Report* 13 Oct. 1997, 5)

9 October - The AFRC claimed that 400 Nigerian soldiers, including senior officers, have been taken hostage in the past few days. The AFRC claimed that ECOMOG soldiers surrendered to the People's Army after fierce battle at Jui, 20 km from Freetown. More than 100 Nigerians, including six top officers, were captured in Kenema, 240 km east of Freetown, by Sam Bokarie, the second-in-command of the former rebel group RUF.

An ECOMOG press release said that the AFRC planned to take ECOWAS citizens hostage to use them to bargain for the release of RUF leader Foday Sankoh, who is detained in Nigeria. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Daily Media Update* 13 Oct. 1997, 3)

14 October - Heavy artillery battles continue between the AFRC and ECOMOG around Jui, the ECOMOG base near Freetown. Sierra Leonean radio claimed 117 Nigerian soldiers had surrendered. Sierra Leonean Chief of Staff, Brigadier Dan Anderson, said that two Sierra Leonean soldiers and five fighters of RUF had been killed.

An ECOMOG warplane bombed a house in an attempt to strike the Post & Telecommunications Center in the west of Freetown. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 15 Oct. 1997, 2)

16 October - 15 civilians were killed and dozens more injured in bombing raids by Nigerian ECOMOG forces. Freetown residents and the military government say that several hundred civilians have been killed so far in ECOMOG attacks in and around the capital.

AFRC leader, Major Johnny Paul Koroma, called on youths to stop damaging the homes of officials close to ousted President Kabbah. Gangs of roving youths began burning and ransacking homes of Kabbah supporters, including Kabbah's family home. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 17 Oct. 1997, 6)

Six vehicles carrying armed men came to the house in Freetown of the Secretary General of the Sierra Leone Section of Amnesty International, Isaac Lappia. He was accused of passing information to the international community and also to the radio station broadcasting on FM 98.1 which supports President Kabbah. While Isaac Lappia managed to escape arrest, two other men at the house were beaten and arrested. (AI 31 Oct. 1997, 2)

17 October - The AFRC claimed that 26 Nigerian soldiers serving with ECOMOG died in an ambush set up by its soldiers at Jui. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 20 Oct. 1997, 4)

18 October - ECOMOG Force Commander, General Victor Malu, has confirmed that his troops have abandoned their camp near Bo in southern Sierra Leone. (Star Radio 18 Oct. 1997, 2)

Hundreds of demonstrators marched through Freetown to demand the cessation of Nigerian attacks on the capital. Separate marches starting in the eastern and western areas of Freetown converged on the national stadium.

At least 67 people were killed when the truck in which they were fleeing plunged into a ravine. Approximately 1,000 people have been fleeing Freetown daily since the ECOMOG air raids. The Peninsular Road is the only road out of Freetown as the Jui highway remains closed as a result of clashes between the AFRC and ECOMOG. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 20 Oct. 1997, 4)

20 October - Sierra Leone's ousted President Kabbah, in London, unveiled a 90-day program to be implemented once he has been restored to power. Once back in power, Kabbah said that his first priority would be to ensure lasting peace and security, and to put in place a functioning and dynamic government. Other key objectives included rehabilitation of schools and hospitals. Kabbah said he opposed putting the military government on trial for war crimes and advocated a truth and reconciliation commission. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 21 Oct. 1997, 4)

Amnesty International published a 26-page report documenting the serious human rights violations which have occurred since the military coup. The report, *Sierra Leone: A Disastrous Set-Back for Human Rights*, made specific recommendations to the AFRC for ending these abuses. (AI 31 Oct. 1997, 2).

22 October - Liberia has ordered the closure of its borders with Sierra Leone to prevent a spillover of the crisis in that country. According to Deputy Foreign Minister Christopher, in order to contain the hostilities in Sierra Leone and prevent the spillover of the Sierra Leone War, the government directs the immediate closure of the Liberian border with that country. He said the decision comes in the wake of intelligence reports that the military

junta and its RUF allied forces control major border points between Liberia and Sierra Leone. (*Pan African News Agency* 23 Oct. 1997, 2)

23 October - The ECOWAS Committee of Five said that the AFRC has agreed to a deal which hands back power to ousted President Kabbah. Under a six-point plan endorsed by AFRC leader, Johnny Paul Koroma, provisions have been made for an immediate cease-fire, the establishment of a broad-base government, the return of the RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, disarmament and demobilization of combatants, and amnesty for those involved in the May coup. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 23 Oct. 1997, 4)

25 October - The AFRC executed 10 soldiers charged with murder. Military Chief, John Harleston said that the execution should send the message to all recalcitrant soldiers that the military government means “business” in its quest to bring peace to all residents. It is the first time that the military has ordered capital punishment for soldiers since seizing power in May. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 27 Oct. 1997, 4)

27 October - Three detained journalists were released and a curfew, in place in Freetown since May, was lifted. A cease-fire between AFRC and ECOMOG forces has held throughout Sierra Leone since the 23rd. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 27 Oct. 1997, 4)

2 November - The first direct talks between Sierra Leonean AFRC and the West African peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, got underway today in Freetown. The meeting is expected to discuss the disarmament of all combatants and the establishment of a cease-fire monitoring committee made up of ECOMOG and AFRC.

The Foreign Minister of Sierra Leone’s military regime, Paolo Bangura, confirmed that AFRC would hand back power to Kabbah next April. He also said foreign ministers from the five countries which signed the peace deal - Ghana, Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire, Liberia, and Nigeria - would arrive in Freetown on 20 November to consolidate the process. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 3 Nov. 1997, 3)

4 November - The leader of Sierra Leone’s AFRC, Major Johnny Paul Koroma, has said the recent peace plan signed in Conakry would only work if Nigerian troops currently deployed in his country left immediately. Koroma accused Nigerian troops, serving with the ECOMOG peacekeeping force, of being “the initiators of the recent unprovoked aggression and are therefore considered as combatants”. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 4 Nov. 1997, 2)

5 November - Twenty-five people died in an ambush laid by *Kamajor* fighters, who support ousted President Kabbah. According to Commander Eddie Kanneh, the military regime’s official responsible for eastern Sierra Leone, the *Kamajors* attacked a bus near Kenema. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 6 Nov. 1997, 3)

7 November - ECOMOG warns two merchant vessels currently in Sierra Leonean waters to leave or be attacked. The *MV Sky* and *MV Mercury* were presently in Sierra Leonean

territorial waters, and approaching Freetown in violation of the ECOWAS-UN economic arms embargo on the military junta in Sierra Leone. (*Pan African News Agency* 8 Nov. 1997, 1)

11 November - Sierra Leone's military authorities and the West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG reached agreement on several issues. The three sticking points, according to Malu, were the release of Foday Sankoh, leader of the ex-rebel RUF allied to the AFRC, disarmament, and Nigeria's role within ECOMOG. But agreement was reportedly reached on such issues as demining, suspension of "unnecessary checkpoints", reopening the ferry service between the capital and the airport, and protection for UN and aid agency premises. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 12 Nov. 1997, 4)

12 November - Six Sierra Leonean soldiers were killed when *Kamajor* militia ambushed a military convoy. Military spokesman, Major John Milton, said that an army escort carrying an AFRC member, George Adams, fought off the *Kamajor* militia loyal to ousted President Kabbah on the road from Tongo Field, 140 km from the capital Freetown, to Kono in the diamond area. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 14 Nov. 1997, 3)

13 November - The ruling AFRC said it would not accept the disarmament of its regular troops while ousted President Kabbah dismissed any form of power-sharing. An accord signed in Conakry recently between the AFRC and West African states provides for the restoration of democratic rule in Sierra Leone by next April, and states "all combatants" must be disarmed. Sierra Leone's defense ministry spokesman, John Milton, declared the regular army could not be disarmed "and in any case the composition of ECOMOG must be reviewed before any disarmament takes place". (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 13 Nov. 1997, 4)

16 November - The West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG denied its jets violated the Sierra Leone cease-fire. General Abdul One Mohammed, said the Nigerian planes had been fired upon as they flew over the capital because warnings to the ships "didn't work out". (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 18 Nov. 1997, 3)

Anti-aircraft guns echoed in the Sierra Leone capital, Freetown, as forces loyal to the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) fired on a fighter plane of the West African peacekeepers which flew over the city. (*Deutsche Presse* 16 Nov. 1997)

17 November - The AFRC accused the West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG of violating the recent Sierra Leone cease-fire. A senior military officer claimed ECOMOG, which occupies the Lungi peninsula opposite Freetown, had fired on army barracks and houses in Murray, in the west of the capital, injuring several people. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Weekly Roundup* 20 Nov. 1997, 4)

19 November - The ruling AFRC officially claimed individuals arrested in Freetown were plotting a coup attempt. Steve Bio, brother of former military ruler Brigadier Julius Madda Bio, and Gibril Masaquoi, spokesman for the RUF, were detained. Some 15 people in total are now being held. Other sources suggested the two detained men had been attempting to

dissuade the RUF, now allied with the AFRC, from disarming in line with last month's Conakry accord. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 19 Nov. 1997, 3)

25 November - The West African peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone said that it has released 70 prisoners captured in months of clashes between them and forces loyal to the Sierra Leone military junta. The prisoners released under an agreement between the junta and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) were handed over to the Roman Catholic mission in the capital, Freetown. (*Deutsche Presse* 25 Nov. 1997)

26 November - The AFRC accused the Nigerian-led West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG of building up its forces near Freetown. ECOMOG, which strongly supports the restoration of ousted civilian President Kabbah, airlifted dozens of *Kamajor* militia who are also loyal to Kabbah, to its bases at Lungi airport and Jui, 30km from the capital, Freetown. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 26 Nov. 1997, 3)

28 November - Some 50 persons detained on charges of looting could face execution. A decree, released by the AFRC and backdated to 28 May, warned that persons found guilty of looting would be sentenced to death by firing squad. This includes those receiving looting property. The new decree also provides for the establishment of an anti-looting squad to be staffed by military and police officers. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 28 Nov. 1997, 4)

1 December - Disarmament of the combatants in Sierra Leone's civil war, as agreed to in a peace plan, failed to begin on schedule and the military government said the issue remained unresolved. (*Associated Press* 1 Dec. 1997)

5 December - Ousted Sierra Leone President, Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, told clandestine radio in Freetown that he has taken action to block state funds. Kabbah said legal action had been taken in Britain against a company responsible for printing Sierra Leone bank notes. This would block access by the ruling AFRC to money held by the printer for the Sierra Leone government. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 5 Dec. 1997, 3)

8 December - *Kamajor* militiamen loyal to ousted Sierra Leonean President Kabbah joined the peace talks for the first time since signing the Conakry Accords in October. The ruling AFRC recently accused *Kamajor* of launching several attacks on military and humanitarian targets. Eight *Kamajor* leaders are participating in the talks aimed at resolving the issue. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 8 Dec. 1997, 4)

The military junta of Sierra Leone, the West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG, and other concerned parties in Sierra Leone, have reached a 14-point agreement on disarmament. The agreement includes the selection of sites for troops disarmament, visits and assessment of disarmament sites, determination of troops to task force level, and coordination of disarmament efforts and resources. (*Xinhua News Agency* 9 Dec. 1997, 1)

11 December - The council of ministers of the 16-nation ECOWAS has ended its 42nd session in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, with a call for strict observance of the UN and

regional sanctions imposed on the Sierra Leonean junta. A communiqué from the meeting said this measure had become necessary because of the failure of the Freetown regime to respect the peace plan it signed in October with the ECOWAS committee of five. The ECOWAS Council observed that implementation of the plan had become problematic because the Maj. Johnny Paul Koromah-led military junta is demanding the immediate release of Foday Sankoh. (*Pan African News Agency* 11 Dec.1997, 2)

The Sierra Leone AFRC said ECOMOG jets had bombed the town of Kenema, killing 10 people and wounding 18, in a 15 minute air raid. According to military sources, a Nigerian air force Alpha Jet dropped three cluster bombs on the town of Kenema, 240 km east of the capital Freetown. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA *Update* 12 Dec. 1997, 3)

13 December - ECOMOG jet fighters bombed a dirt airstrip in Magburka that was being upgraded by the AFRC into an airfield capable of receiving arms shipments. (*Africa News* 6 Feb. 1998, 5)

15 December - Sierra Leone's disarmament committee failed to finalize arrangements for the deployment of troops in the country at the weekend - December 12 & 13 - ostensibly because of dispute over the venue. The talks were to have been held between representatives of the AFRC, the West African peacekeeping force (ECOMOG), and the *Kamajor* militias loyal to ousted President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. (*Deutsche Presse* 15 Dec. 1997)

17 December - The military junta in Sierra Leone said that its forces have been engaged in skirmishes with the *Kamajor* militias loyal to ousted president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah in the southeast and accused the regional peacekeeping force (ECOMOG) of aiding the *Kamajors*. (*Deutsche Presse* 17 Dec. 1997)

19 December - Sierra Leone's military ruler, Major Johnny Paul Koroma, has said he does not think his Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) will hand power back to ousted President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on 22 April 1998 as agreed because the disarmament process, which was to have started on December 1, has yet to commence. (*Deutsche Presse* 19 Dec. 1997)

20 December - Civil defense units began an offensive by placing roadblocks along major roads while carrying out a series of low-level attacks and ambushes on AFRC forces. (*Africa News* 6 Feb. 1997, 5)

21 December - Sierra Leone's ousted president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, paid a surprise visit to his country - landing at Lungi International Airport which is controlled by West African peacekeepers. Kabbah, who has been living in neighboring Guinea since his ouster on May 25, went back briefly to his country with a high- ranking delegation, including his vice-president and Ambassador to the United Nations, James Jonah. (*Deutsche Presse* 21 Dec. 1997)

25 December - AFRC forces clashed with *Kamajor* militias loyal to ousted President Kabbah. The clashes occurred in the south and east of the country. (UNDHA:IRIN-WA Update 29 Dec. 1997, 4)

31 December - Sierra Leone's military junta presented a mini budget that painted a bleak picture of the economy that has been crippled by sanctions imposed by the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to force the soldiers back to barracks. (*Deutsche Presse* 31 Dec 1997)

VIII. Future Considerations

On 10 March 1998 democratically elected President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was returned to the war-torn capital of Sierra Leone, through the efforts of ECOMOG troops who ejected the soldiers who toppled President Kabbah's government in May 1997. President Kabbah was received amid much fanfare among the general population of Freetown, and four West African heads of state joined in the homecoming celebrations in the national stadium. ECOMOG forces maintained a tight security cordon around the city.

President Kabbah was warned by James Jonah, Sierra Leone's U.N. envoy and architect of the 1996 elections, that much hard work was in store for Kabbah's government. The country's infrastructure has been destroyed. Civil servants were reported gathered outside of their government offices awaiting long overdue pay checks. Coup loyalists remain active in the southern and eastern areas of Sierra Leone. ECOMOG Chief of Staff, General Abdul One-Mohamed, who commands 10 battalions in Sierra Leone, has requested more soldiers in an effort to maintain control throughout the Sierra Leone countryside. (*Reuters* 10 Mar. 1998; *Reuters* 11 Mar. 1998)

The INS-Resource Information Center (RIC) will provide future updates on country conditions following the return of President Kabbah to supplement the information in this paper.

IX. APPENDIX

ETHNIC GROUPS IN SIERRA LEONE

The text in this appendix is taken directly from: Minority Rights Group International. "Sierra Leone," *World Directory of Minorities* (United Kingdom: 1997), p. 451 - 452.

SIERRA LEONE

Land area: 72,325 sq km

Population: 4.5 million (1993)

Main religions: Islam, Christianity, animism

Main languages: English, Krio, Limba, Mende, Temne

Main minority groups: Temne 940,000 (21%), Limba 273,000 (6%), Kono 120,000 (2.6%), Kuranko 106,000 (2.3%), Sherbro 91,000 (2%), Fulani (Fula) 80,000 (1.7%), Loko (Lokko) 80,000 (1.7%), Susu 80,000 (1.7%), Mandinka (Manding) 61,000 (1.3%), Kissi 60,000 (1.3%), Krio (Creole) 48,000 (1.1%), Kru 8,000 (0.2%), Vai 8,000 (0.2%)

Real per capita GDP: \$860

UNDP HDI/rank: 0.219 (173)

Sierra Leone is a West African republic bounded by Guinea, Liberia and the Atlantic Ocean. Temne- and Mende-speakers are the country's numerically dominant ethnic groups. Temne probably inhabited present-day Sierra Leone by the twelfth century, and Mende moved in from the northern savanna in the fifteenth century. In 1787 British opponents of the slave trade founded a colony of freed slaves at the site of Freetown. Freetown became a Crown Colony in 1808 and the interior was declared a British Protectorate in 1896. Although they initially intermarried with the indigenous population, the former slaves gradually acquired British education and culture, setting themselves apart from the local majority. The British were careful not to let Krio (Creole) elites dominate colonial politics. The 1951 constitution established the framework for independence ten years later.

In 1965, following the death of the first Prime Minister, Milton Margai, his brother and successor as head of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), Albert Margai, began to replace Krio with Mende supporters from his own southern region. Krio shifted their support to Siaka Stevens's All People's Congress which narrowly won the 1967 election but was prevented from assuming power by a coup. Stevens's regime returned to power in another coup in 1969; it gained the support of the Krio elite and instituted a repressive one-party state. When Stevens resigned in 1985, he was succeeded by General Joseph Saidu Momoh, who continued the repressive policies of his predecessor. Momoh reluctantly acceded to domestic demands for political reform, but was ousted by dissident soldiers in 1992 led by Captain Valentine Strasser after suspending the 1991 constitution.

Since 1991 Captain Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and Liberian mercenaries have occupied large areas of the east and south. There has been a general breakdown of central authority, with increasing lawlessness and looting along the borders with Guinea and Liberia. Ethnic resentments were partially at the root of the rebellions, with rebels claiming that the government was dominated by southerners -Krio and Mende. This came after years of northern-dominated government. Strasser, a Krio, was accused of allowing Mende and Krio peoples from the south-east to dominate the government while marginalizing those from the north. Krio never had a monopoly of power similar to that of the Americo-Liberian elite in Liberia. However, because they were well-educated professionals with a disproportionate degree of influence over the government and economy, Krio unwittingly caused animosity and resentment among other groups. The Krio community, amounting to only 5 per cent of the population, was dominant during the colonial era. Minorities living in the border regions have been particularly ravaged by the civil war.

Minority groups

The dominant Mende group, 30 per cent of the population, inhabit the south. Temne, over 20 per cent of the population, inhabit an area inland from the coast to an area north of Mendeland. Limba live in the north-west quadrant. Fifteen minority groups, including the Krio but primarily Muslim groups from the north, make up the remainder. Some ethnic

groups on the basis of their proximity to Mende and Temne tend to identify with the two larger groups, so developing a north/south split. Historically the most conscious ethnic division has been between the Krio of the Sierra Leone peninsula and the groups of the hinterland.

Groups living in the eastern regions of Sierra Leone include the Kissi, Vai, Kono and Gola, all groups with larger numbers living in Liberia. Refugees have fled over the border into Guinea from these areas. Kenema, like many other south-eastern states, has been cut off from relief agencies for long periods by the fighting. Malnutrition and disease are rife among the remaining population. Vast areas of the countryside have been cut off and mounting atrocities are reported from around Bo and Kenema. Abduction of children is a severe problem, and both government and guerrillas use children as spies.

As a consequence of uneven regional development, Northern Province in Sierra Leone has lagged behind the rest of the country in economic development. In the 1950s Krio of Freetown and the Sierra Leone peninsula had the advantage over the provinces in roads, schools and hospitals. In the 1960s the distribution between the provinces became the dominant question; northerners believed the south and west had more than its fair share of Western-style education, transportation, communications and economic development. Temne, Limba, Susu and Kono occupy relatively deprived areas and have been pushed by poverty from the north. Northerners tended to migrate to more prosperous regions such as Freetown and the diamond fields of the Eastern Province.

Mende benefited from the relative prosperity of their southern homeland. Mende came to occupy the heavily forested southern half of Sierra Leone in migratory waves late in the eighteenth century and the regional economy has been based on forest goods and transportation. Whereas the SLPP was dominated by Mende, among the Susu, Limba and Kono a growing sense of identity vis-à-vis the rest of the country and the south led to the emergence of a distinct northern identity. The All People's Congress (APC) was born as a northern party amid this sense of regional deprivation.

Conclusions and future prospects

In April 1995, three years after coming to power in a military coup, the government of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) announced the lifting of the ban on politics. Head of State Captain Strasser announced a start to the process that would eventually see a civilian President sworn-in in February 1996. The military regime enlisted the help of South African mercenaries to protect commercial interests and prepare the country for presidential elections in February 1996. The handover of power to the civilian government of Al Hadjin Ahmed Tejam Kabbah, leader of the SLPP, took place at the end of March 1996. The government appears to be fighting a losing battle against the RUF. Huge portions of the country have become ungovernable. A peace agreement, brokered by Cote d'Ivoire, was signed in Abidjan on 1 December 1996, ending the five-year civil war in Sierra Leone.

Further reading

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Minority-based and advocacy organizations

Amnesty International, PMB 1021, Freetown, Sierra Leone; tel. 232 22 227 354, fax 232 22 224 439.

Council of the Churches of Sierra Leone, PO Box 404, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

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