

AI INDEX: AFR 51/03/96  
9 APRIL 1996

SIERRA LEONE: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL VISITS SIERRA LEONE

Two Amnesty International representatives will be visiting Sierra Leone from 14 to 24 April 1996 to obtain information about the current human rights situation in the country.

The Amnesty International representatives will meet officials of the new government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and a range of other individuals and organizations. The representatives are Reed Brody, a lawyer, and Teresa Kordeczka, a staff member of the International Secretariat of Amnesty International.

“We believe that any political settlement to the armed conflict in Sierra Leone should include strong guarantees for the respect of human rights and independent mechanisms for their implementation,” Amnesty International said.

“We hope that the new government -- which came to power following presidential and parliamentary elections in February and March this year -- will take effective measures to ensure that the fundamental human rights of Sierra Leoneans are reinstated and protected.”

The armed conflict in Sierra Leone, which began in 1991, has been characterised by abuses by both government soldiers and rebel forces against defenceless civilians in their homes, villages and towns throughout the country. Unarmed civilians have been captured and held hostage, ill-treated and tortured, deliberately and arbitrarily killed. In September 1995 Amnesty International published a report *Sierra Leone: Human rights abuses in a war against civilians* which documented these abuses.

Initial talks between members of the former government, the National Provisional Ruling Council, which has now ceded power to the new civilian government, and the armed opposition, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) took place in Côte d'Ivoire in February and continued in March 1996. A meeting between President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah and the RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, is scheduled for mid-April 1996.

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