

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: AFR 51/13/93

Distr: UA/SC

21 December 1993

Further information on UA 205/93 (AFR 51/05/93, 22 June 1993) and follow-up (AFR 51/07/93, 2 August 1993) - Legal Concern / Health Concern

SIERRA LEONE:264 political detainees at the Central Prison, Pademba Road, Freetown, including:
Bockarie Babay, farmer
Alhaji Kallon, school student, aged 14
Finda Mbriwa, housewife
Sahid Mohamed Sesay, student

On 12 November 1993 154 political detainees were released from the Central Prison, Pademba Road, in Freetown. According to official figures, a total of 240 political detainees have been released since July 1993. Amnesty International believes that almost all of the political detainees seen by its representatives when they visited Pademba Road Prison in early May 1993 have now been released.

Among those released on 12 November was Alhaji Kallon, a 14-year-old school student, who had been held since August 1992. Sahid Mohamed Sesay, however, is among the few who remain held without charge or trial. A law student at Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sahid Mohamed Sesay was arrested in December 1992 in connection with an alleged coup attempt and has now been held for a year without charge or trial. Eight prison officers, also held since December 1992 in connection with the alleged coup plot, were released from the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) headquarters in Freetown on 11 November 1993.

Amnesty International welcomes the recent releases of political detainees, but is concerned that a few are still held without any opportunity to challenge their continued detention in a court of law.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

At the end of November 1993 Captain Valentine Strasser, who came to power following a coup in April 1992, announced details of a transition program leading to civilian rule in early 1996. He also announced a unilateral cease-fire with effect from 1 December 1993. Government troops fighting rebel forces in the south and east of the country since 1991 have retaken most of the areas previously held by the rebels.

FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send express and airmail letters in English or your own language:

- welcoming the release of a further 154 political detainees from Pademba Road Prison on 12 November 1993;
- expressing the hope that these latest releases represent a move towards an

end to long-term detention without trial;
- expressing concern, however, that Sahid Mohamed Sesay remains detained without charge or trial, a year after his arrest;
- urging that he and any other political detainees who are still held at Pademba Road Prison be released unless they are to be charged and promptly brought to trial.

APPEALS TO:

1) Captain Valentine E.M. Strasser
Chairman, Supreme Council of State
National Provisional Ruling Council
State House
Independence Avenue
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Salutation: Dear Captain Strasser

2) Captain Julius Maada Bio
Deputy Chairman and Chief Secretary of State
National Provisional Ruling Council
State House
Independence Avenue
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Salutation: Dear Captain Maada Bio

3) Mr Abass Bundu
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Department of Foreign Affairs
14 Gloucester Street
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Salutation: Dear Mr Abass Bundu

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

The New Citizen, 5 Hannah Benka-Coker Street, Brookfields, Freetown, Sierra Leone

Daily Mail, PO Box 53, Freetown, Sierra Leone

and to diplomatic representatives of Sierra Leone accredited to your country

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 31 January 1994.