

LIBERIA

@A new peace agreement - an opportunity to introduce human rights protection

I. Introduction

In August 1995, a new peace agreement was signed in Abuja, Nigeria. This could bring an end to this little known but brutal war in Liberia which since December 1989 has destabilised neighbouring countries, resulted in the death of an estimated 150,000 Liberians and caused over 700,000 more to flee the country. It also provides an opportunity to put an end to the torture and deliberate and arbitrary killing of civilians which have marked the conflict.

There have been numerous previous attempts to make peace but all have failed, sometimes because of an inability to reach consensus within the transitional governing bodies, but also partly because none of them, not even the present one, have made any attempt to put an end to the human rights abuses which have been carried out in a pattern of retaliation and revenge.

Amnesty International believes that there is no chance for a lasting peace in Liberia unless effective guarantees on human rights are included in the peace process. This report documents human rights abuses by all parties to the conflict as well as the failures by the peace-keepers to investigate or prevent abuses. Finally, the report makes recommendations for human rights protection and calls upon all those involved in the peace process to make unlimited efforts to implement them.

These recommendations could facilitate discussion between the parties to the peace agreement on how to prevent human rights abuses. There is also an important role for the international community, including The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations

(UN), to play by closely monitoring the human rights situation and for individual governments by putting pressure on the parties to respect human rights.

II Background

The conflict begins

The current conflict in Liberia began on 24 December 1989 when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) launched an attack from Côte d'Ivoire. The attack aimed to bring down the government of President Samuel Doe.

The government of President Doe (1980 to 1990) was sustained by his control of the armed forces. His government systematically undermined judicial and legislative independence and silenced critics. With extensive US military assistance, he expanded the military apparatus and promoted members of his own Krahn ethnic group, which constituted no more than five per cent of the population, within the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the government. AFL soldiers were responsible for widespread human rights violations including arbitrary arrests, extrajudicial executions, rape and floggings (see Amnesty International Reports for these years).

The government's response to the NPFL attack was swift and brutal. As the NPFL advanced through Nimba County, the AFL attacked not only NPFL fighters but also civilians of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups who lived in the area. Within two months, over 100,000 people had fled the fighting.

NPFL fighters also ruthlessly disregarded the human rights of the civilians in their path. The NPFL killed and tortured thousands of unarmed civilians, particularly people suspected of belonging to the Mandingo or Krahn ethnic groups, as they advanced towards Monrovia.

When the NPFL reached Monrovia in June 1990, the city became the site of a vicious conflict. President Doe was a virtual prisoner in the Executive Mansion, from where he ordered the launching of rockets and missiles, which fell indiscriminately on the city's residents and the rebels and destroyed buildings. Parts of Monrovia were occupied by the NPFL and by a breakaway faction of NPFL fighters led by Prince Johnson known as the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). Human rights abuses -- rape, torture, killings -- were rife. Hundreds of thousands of Liberians fled in terror to neighbouring countries.

The regional perspective

This conflict has had a major impact on the sub-region of West Africa. Some countries, like Sierra Leone, have been directly destabilized. Others are host to hundreds of thousands of Liberian refugees. The numerous peace initiatives have involved many countries in the region. In addition, arms have been flowing into the region as looted goods from Liberia were sold to raise money to buy arms for the various Liberian factions.

The destabilization is seen most clearly in Sierra Leone. The insurgent forces backed by the NPFL launched their attack into Sierra Leone in March 1991 from NPFL territory and with the active support of Charles Taylor. The Sierra Leone government had supported the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) forces which entered Liberia in August 1990 to stop the civil war and which prevented the NPFL from taking control of Monrovia. The resulting armed conflict continues today and has cost many innocent lives as all involved have committed human rights abuses with impunity.¹

The major players in the Liberian conflict have each received varying types of support from other West African countries. Nigeria, largely through its predominance in the ECOMOG forces, has supported armed factions opposed to the NPFL, which in turn has reportedly received support from the governments of Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. There have been reports of Liberian Peace Council (LPC) fighters entering Côte d'Ivoire to attack NPFL supporters. In June 1995 some 32 people were killed, including 10 Ivoirians, when the tension between the LPC and NPFL spread to Ivorian territory. That same month, between 16,000 and 35,000 refugees fled into Côte d'Ivoire in a matter of days apparently fleeing the human rights abuses which they expected to come with fighting between the LPC and the NPFL taking place in Liberia, near the Ivorian border village of Tai. Guinean security forces have offered tacit support to the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy-Kromah faction (ULIMO-K). According to eye-witnesses, ULIMO-K in Guinea has been allowed to operate with the support of local government officials and members of the Guinean security forces of the same ethnic origin. Guinean authorities have arrested Liberian refugees suspected of supporting factions opposed to ULIMO-K. In one case in 1994, Guinean soldiers reportedly allowed ULIMO-K fighters to wear Guinean army uniforms and to kill young men among the Liberian refugees in Guinea whom they suspected were Lofa Defense Force (LDF) members. In none of the cases involving abuses by ULIMO-K are the Guinean authorities known to have intervened to protect refugees or bring to justice those responsible for abuses.

For further information on the conflict in Sierra Leone, refer to "Sierra Leone: Human rights abuses in a war against civilians" (AI Index: AFR 51/05/95), published by Amnesty International on 13 September 1995

International intervention to stabilize the crisis in Liberia has been organized by ECOWAS. On 24 August 1990 ECOMOG troops landed in Monrovia. The force consisted of contingents from several West African states, the largest being from Nigeria. The AFL and the INPFL agreed to recognize the ECOMOG operation. Charles Taylor of the NPFL opposed ECOMOG, particularly the Nigerian component, claiming that it was a foreign occupying force sent to Liberia to deny him a military victory. NPFL forces attacked ECOMOG troops as they disembarked in Monrovia but were soon driven out of the city.

President Doe, who nominally continued to head the government, was captured, tortured and killed by INPFL soldiers in September 1990. The NPFL gained control of the whole of Liberia outside Monrovia. Within Monrovia, the INPFL agreed to place their combatants in camps and to limited disarmament by ECOMOG. In November 1990 an Interim Government of National Unity led by Dr Amos Sawyer was formed as a result of ECOWAS negotiations. It was not recognized by the NPFL, which, reportedly assisted by its extensive business connections with France, consolidated its control and formed its own administration with headquarters in Gbarnga, Bong County. From November 1990 to late 1992, a tenuous cease-fire remained in effect.

ECOWAS brokered a peace accord in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, in October 1991 which provided for the confinement to camps and disarmament of all armed groups under the supervision of ECOMOG, to be followed by elections. ECOMOG troops were finally permitted to enter NPFL-controlled areas.

In return for recognizing ECOMOG's legitimacy, the NPFL insisted that the composition of ECOMOG be changed to include more troops from Francophone countries. In response, approximately 1,500 Senegalese troops were added to ECOMOG. They were withdrawn in early 1993. For a short period after the agreement there were some positive developments, including the reopening of roads, the joint selection of a Supreme Court and the creation of a commission to oversee elections.

However, the progress did not last. In March 1991 the conflict spilled over into neighbouring Sierra Leone. The NPFL, working with Sierra Leonean dissidents, launched an attack on Sierra Leone against the government of President Joseph Momoh. The NPFL was able to capture and control a large portion of Sierra Leone for a few months, including the lucrative diamond producing area, before being pushed back by an ECOMOG contingent sent to Sierra Leone and by the Sierra Leonean army. In August 1991 a new Liberian rebel group, United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), launched an offensive against the NPFL from Sierra Leone, supported by the Sierra Leonean armed forces.

The NPFL reneged on its pledge to disarm and to recognize ECOMOG and attacked ECOMOG forces. In May 1992 NPFL forces captured, tortured and killed six

ECOMOG soldiers from Senegal and in August held some 500 ECOMOG soldiers hostage for several days. Fighting between the NPFL and ULIMO also intensified. ECOMOG withdrew to the Monrovia area.

In October 1992 the NPFL launched a major offensive against ECOMOG-controlled Monrovia. The attack led to fierce fighting in many parts of the city. There were widespread reports of murder and rape by NPFL soldiers as they advanced towards the heart of the city. The NPFL also abducted hundreds of people and took them to its headquarters at Gbarnga.

ECOMOG responded in force. ECOMOG aircraft attacked positions held by the NPFL and aerial bombardments led to a number of civilian deaths in NPFL-controlled areas. AFL fighters who had previously been disarmed by ECOMOG were officially reinstated as the national army in November 1992 by Liberia's interim parliament in an attempt to repel the NPFL. ECOMOG and its allied forces succeeded in defending Monrovia and in re-establishing a zone which acknowledged the sovereignty of the Interim Government. Tension between ECOMOG and NPFL forces continued: the UN Security Council's Press Release of 21 October 1994 referred to reports that elements of ECOMOG had supported the efforts of a coalition of forces to attack the NPFL headquarters of Gbarnga which began in July 1994. There were however no reports that ECOWAS had taken action against ECOMOG for this alleged breach of their mandate. Such reports have also been described in the UN Secretary-General's reports on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and while the ECOMOG Field Commander has undertaken an investigation of the matter, no concrete steps are known to have been taken to tackle this problem which could undermine the entire peace process.

In November 1992 ECOWAS approached the UN Security Council to propose a UN international economic and arms embargo against any warring faction that violated the ECOWAS peace plan. However, a compromise resolution with only an arms embargo was passed that same month. An ECOWAS Heads of State meeting held in Abuja in May 1995 to discuss the Liberia peace process expressed concern about the continued flow of arms into Liberia and reminded all ECOWAS member states and the rest of the international community to abide strictly by the arms embargo.

The Cotonou Agreement -- and subsequent peace agreements

On 25 July 1993 the Interim Government, the NPFL and ULIMO signed a cease-fire in Cotonou, Benin. It was also signed by ECOWAS, the UN and the OAU. The AFL and the armed groups agreed to cease hostilities in the positions which they then occupied. A new Transitional Government was to be created, consisting of nominees of the Interim Government, ULIMO and the NPFL, and was required to conduct free and fair elections.

The Cotonou Agreement set out a timetable for disarmament and elections to return the country to democratic rule. ECOMOG was to remain in place to monitor the implementation of the Agreement, and to disarm the signatory forces.

However, the Cotonou Agreement failed to address the abuses of human rights that have fuelled and prolonged the conflict in Liberia. It contains no human rights guarantees, no provisions for investigations of human rights abuses, and no mechanisms to ensure that those responsible for abuses are brought to justice or that victims and their families receive compensation.

While ECOWAS states have been preoccupied with the need to bring about peace, they have ignored the equally important need to ensure that addressing human rights abuses - an essential component of any lasting peace settlement - is not overlooked in a bid for peace. The short-sightedness of this approach has been revealed as the warring factions have continued to abuse human rights with impunity as fighting has resumed.

Incidents of severe human rights abuses committed in ECOMOG-controlled territory have remained unpunished. For example, INPFL fighters led by Prince Johnson committed abuses with impunity between 1990 and 1992. Abuses committed by the LPC have not been tackled by ECOMOG, which has maintained that it could not take any action against the LPC since the LPC was not a signatory to the Cotonou Agreement. This situation continued despite open collusion between senior officers of the AFL and the LPC.

The Cotonou Agreement not only failed to include human rights protection, it also encouraged impunity by providing a general amnesty for acts committed "in actual combat" and "to all persons and parties involved in the Liberian civil conflict in the course of actual military engagements". There is a danger that this could be extended to those responsible for human rights violations, serious violations of international humanitarian law and crimes against humanity in the context of military engagements.

There has been no effective effort by ECOWAS to ensure that ECOMOG troops are properly briefed on their role as peace-keepers or made aware of international humanitarian law and international human rights standards which it is their duty to uphold.

The UN role increased significantly following the Cotonou Agreement with the creation of UNOMIL (Security Council Resolution 866, September 1993).

UNOMIL was required among other things, to investigate violations of the cease-fire agreement and to "report on any major violations of international humanitarian law to the Secretary-General". It was also to verify the impartial implementation of the Cotonou Agreement and assist ECOMOG in the monitoring of arms deliveries, demobilization of combatants and the coordination of humanitarian relief.

The general peace-keeping operation was hampered not only by its failure to tackle human rights abuses, but also by a blurring of the division between political and military responsibilities, by financial and logistical problems, and by the lack of any overall disciplinary mechanism for human rights abuses and other crimes by ECOMOG personnel. The lack of accountability has resulted in widespread looting which goes unpunished, particularly by Nigerian troops who are paid irregularly by their government. In 1994 Nigerian ECOMOG troops reportedly looted millions of dollars' worth of equipment from the Liberian International Mining Company (LIMCO) premises in Buchanan and shipped it abroad. According to eye-witnesses, ECOMOG gunboats have been used for transporting stolen goods. No known action has been taken against those responsible.

The Transitional Government was finally constituted on 7 March 1994, under a five-person Council of State. It sat in the capital, Monrovia, backed by ECOMOG, with large parts of the country controlled by opposition factions. Some 3,500 fighters were reported to have handed over their arms to ECOMOG by early July 1994, but the peace process was clearly in jeopardy. Fighting resumed and the September deadline for elections passed with no attempt to organize a ballot. Subsequent peace initiatives have resulted in further clarification of the Cotonou Agreement in both the Akosombo and Accra Agreements. In June 1995 the UN Secretary-General recommended to the Security Council that UNOMIL's presence be terminated or converted into a good offices mission at the end of September 1995 if there was no "clear demonstration by the parties of the political will necessary to reactivate the peace process." The August 1995 Agreement, brokered by ECOWAS in the presence of the OAU's Eminent Person for Liberia, Reverend Professor Canaan Banana, provides for a ceasefire and disarmament. It also decided upon a new Council of State to be chaired by Professor Wilton Sankawulo and to comprise Charles Taylor - leader of the NPFL, Alhaji G.V. Kromah - leader of ULIMO-K, George Boley - leader of the LPC, and Oscar Quiah - representative of the Liberia National Conference. However, it seems to make no provision for human rights safeguards. It was welcomed by the UN Secretary-General, but the future of UNOMIL was not yet clarified at the time of writing.

Violence since the Cotonou Agreement

Not long after the Cotonou Agreement was signed, one of the factions, ULIMO, split along ethnic lines after a dispute about nominations to government positions. Fierce fighting broke out between rival ULIMO factions in March 1994: ULIMO-K, led by Alhaji G.V. Kromah, representing the Mandingo faction and ULIMO-J, led by Roosevelt Johnson, representing the Krahn faction.

A previously inactive group, the LPC, re-emerged in late 1993 as an armed faction and began to attack areas under NPFL control in the southeast of the country and to

commit widespread human rights abuses. The LPC appeared to be a proxy force supported by the AFL which the AFL was using to wage war while itself claiming to observe the Cotonou Agreement. The LPC and the AFL both denied these allegations (see below).

Other armed groups have formed in different parts of the country, such as the Lofa Defense Force in Lofa County and the Citizens' Defense Force in Maryland County.

The passing of the 7 September 1994 election deadline resulted in serious political upheavals. In Monrovia, there was an unsuccessful coup attempt by a former senior commander under President Doe, Charles Julu, which was defeated by ECOMOG. In July 1995 Charles Julu and six other officers were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment after being found guilty of sedition by a court martial. The heads of the AFL, NPFL and ULIMO met in Ghana and agreed a tripartite administration, but this was not accepted by other groups and never put into effect. While the leader of the NPFL, Charles Taylor, was out of the country, serious fighting in his headquarters town of Gbarnga seemed to indicate splits within his organization.

September 1994 saw intensive fighting in the area around Gbarnga, when a coalition force of five warring groups (the AFL, ULIMO-K, LPC, LDF and a dissident faction of the NPFL) seized control of the town in an effort to prevent Charles Taylor returning there. He did however regain control of Gbarnga.

In January 1995 the UN noted that all factions had experienced serious problems of command and control over their fighters and indicated that some ground commanders, especially within the LPC and ULIMO, seemed to have marginalised the political leadership of the factions. It also noted that ECOMOG was deployed in less than 15 per cent of the country, because of insecurity in the country and logistic difficulties.

There have been more outbreaks of fighting in 1995 between ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J in Grand Cape Mount and Bomi Counties, between the NPFL and ULIMO-K in Lofa County, between the NPFL and ULIMO-J in Bong and Margibi Counties and between the NPFL and LPC in Grand Bassa and Maryland Counties.

The war in Liberia has remained to a large extent a war of terror waged by young men with guns against unarmed civilians. Few of the fighters are trained soldiers, and most of them are not paid. Extortion and coercion have become a livelihood for many who now have an economic as well as political interest in the continuation of the conflict. A ceasefire was due to come into effect on 26 August 1995.

III Human Rights Abuses

Throughout the crisis, the fighting has been marked by a blatant disregard for international humanitarian standards by all parties. Over 150,000 people are estimated to have been killed in the context of the conflict. There have been persistent reports of widespread rape, torture and other atrocities. In June 1995, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) representatives registered 652 raped women within less than six months in the town of Buchanan, some 55 miles east of Monrovia. Some of the atrocities committed go beyond Amnesty International's limited mandate for action. Others are illustrated below by a few examples, which can only give an indication of the extent to which the human rights of Liberians have been abused since this conflict began.

A recent incident shows not only the brutality Liberians are suffering and the difficulty of attributing responsibility, but also the ineffectiveness of UNOMIL in reporting human rights abuses. A massacre on 9 April 1995 in Yosi, a village near Buchanan, was reported by workers with the UNICEF. They stated that at least 62 people, including women and children, had been rounded up and killed -- most had been hacked to death. The UNICEF workers could not determine who was responsible for the massacre; the area had been controlled by the NPFL, but was contested by the LPC. The UN Secretary-General's report of 10 June 1995 referred to UNOMIL's limited ability to document such incidents and said UNOMIL had visited Buchanan on 13 April 1995. The report repeated the observations made by UNICEF workers, adding only that the survivors they met had severe cutlass wounds. No investigation is known to have followed these observations on the ground.

Only on a few occasions has there been any inquiry into incidents involving human rights abuse. In no case, as the Yosi incident shows, has the inquiry resulted in any action to bring those responsible to justice or to prevent further abuses.

A Panel of Inquiry set up by the UN Security Council in June 1993 concluded that the AFL had been responsible for the extrajudicial executions near Harbel (see below) and that there had been a deliberate attempt to implicate the NPFL and to cover up the AFL's responsibility. To date no-one is known to have been brought to justice.

In response to the killing of more than 50 civilians at Paynesville near Monrovia in December 1994 (see below) the Transitional Government announced that nine AFL officers had been arrested and that it was opening an inquiry, but no progress has been made public.

To break the cycle of impunity, it is essential that all parties accept their full responsibilities in investigating and preventing human rights abuses and that the factions take immediate steps to observe and ensure that all their members observe minimum international humanitarian standards. It is also important to implement a system which allows for prompt and effective remedy to human rights abuses.

In times of internal armed conflict not only do governments remain bound by international human rights law, but both governments and their opponents should observe minimum standards laid down by humanitarian law. Guided by the protection of the individual enshrined in common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, Amnesty International opposes deliberate and arbitrary killings by armed opposition groups of those not taking part in the conflict and condemns the torture and killings of prisoners by armed opposition groups. In addition, Amnesty International opposes the taking of hostages by such groups. Amnesty International also asks all governments to free all prisoners of conscience, ensure fair and prompt trials for political prisoners, abolish the death penalty, torture and other cruel treatment of prisoners and to end extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

Unlawful killings and torture - routine practices throughout Liberia's current crisis

All of the warring factions in Liberia have killed unarmed civilians, often chosen more or less at random, and sometimes on a large scale. Many of the killings which have been reported from various parts of Liberia occur during inter-factional violence or looting expeditions.

Responsibility for individual abuses has been difficult to ascertain as it has often been unclear which group was in control of territory when a massacre occurred. For example, after intensive fighting following an attack in September 1994 by coalition forces on Gbarnga where the NPFL had its headquarters, some 30,000 residents sought refuge in the precincts of nearby Phebe hospital. Later that same month, unidentified fighters attacked the hospital and killed many displaced civilians and medical staff. Responsibility was not clear but the killings apparently occurred after NPFL forces overran the area. Also, the AFL have often acted in collusion with the LPC and ULIMO-J, and ECOMOG has at times reportedly supported the action of armed groups opposed to the NPFL.

Torture and ill-treatment have frequently preceded arbitrary killings throughout the war. Amnesty International has received first-hand testimonies and reports of raids by armed groups in which victims were robbed, tortured and ill-treated, some of whom were killed.

One of the most common forms of ill-treatment is known as the *tabey*, where the victim's elbows are forced together behind the back and tied in that position, causing extreme pain to the muscles of the shoulders and chest as well as rope-burns to the crooks of the arms. *Tabey* victims often lose feeling in their lower arms for days or weeks following their torture. In some cases, nerve damage is so acute that irreversible paralysis of the arms results. There are also reports, in exceptional cases, of death caused by breathing difficulties experienced by a person subjected to *tabey*.

All of the Liberian warring factions have subjected captives to *tabey*. In some cases, victims tied in this manner are subjected to further ill-treatment and torture including beatings and rape.

The warring factions have mutilated captives. Pregnant women have had their babies cut from them before being killed. The commonest form of mutilation is cutting off the ears. This form of punishment was reported to have been used by NPFL leaders, for example, to punish indiscipline by its own fighters. Amnesty International has also found evidence of the use of mutilation by ULIMO.

One of the main purposes of torture is undoubtedly to intimidate and inspire terror in the general population. All groups appeared to believe that, the more ferocious their reputation, the more successful they will become. This is also reflected in the war-names assumed by the commanders, who often give themselves names like "Rambo", "Bad Boy" or "Striker".

Intimidation and torture are also intended to establish control over the civilian population. All the Liberian factions have terrorized the local population in disputed territory in order to discourage support for rival factions. This has taken various forms. Many people have been forced to carry out hard labour by the group which captures them, sometimes being forced to act as porters of loot and to carry away their own property. One commander of a ULIMO faction claimed in a British Broadcasting Corporation radio broadcast to have taken captive people of the Krahn ethnic group, forcing them to work on his farm. In other cases, the bodies of those killed have been used with the aim of terrorizing the local population: human intestines have been used to cordon off areas newly-controlled by the victorious group and human bodies have been cut up and scattered around villages to frighten away enemies.

Abuses attributed to specific armed groups, including the AFL

Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)

From November 1990 until November 1992, when it was officially reinstated as the national army, the AFL remained encamped in the capital. It has often acted as an armed group independent of government authority.

At the start of the current conflict, the AFL deliberately killed thousands of civilians while combating the NPFL attack. Most of the victims were members of ethnic groups or inhabitants of areas considered to be supportive of the NPFL. AFL soldiers systematically killed people of Gio and Mano ethnic origin in Nimba County and elsewhere.

In July 1990 AFL troops reportedly massacred 600 displaced people sheltering in a church in Monrovia. The AFL was also found responsible by the UN for the murder of some 600 displaced people, including many women and children, at Carter Camp, near Harbel, on 6 June 1993. The killings took place in an area of the Firestone Rubber Plantation which had been contested between the NPFL on the one hand and the AFL and ECOMOG on the other. An inquiry instituted by the UN Secretary-General concluded that the so-called Harbel massacre had been planned and carried out by the AFL and that there had been a deliberate attempt to implicate the NPFL and to cover up the AFL's responsibility. This report conflicted with an earlier Interim Government report which placed responsibility for the massacre on the NPFL. The Interim Government requested further evidence from the Panel of Inquiry before proceeding with charges against three AFL soldiers named in their report but no one has been brought to justice for these killings.

Senior officers of the AFL, notably those of the Krahn ethnic group, are widely believed to have encouraged the re-emergence of the LPC as an armed group in 1993. Increasingly strong evidence since then has confirmed that the LPC was almost entirely a proxy group for the Krahn faction within the AFL and that the LPC continued to receive strong support from the AFL.

There have been consistent reports that senior AFL officers, particularly from the Sixth Battalion, have been acting as commanders of LPC units and have supervised widespread torture, murder and looting. Numerous other AFL soldiers are reported to have participated in LPC operations in southeastern Liberia. When operating in areas under the control of ECOMOG or the Transitional Government, they reportedly identified themselves as AFL soldiers; when fighting in the bush they declared themselves to be LPC members.

Senior officers of the AFL from the Krahn ethnic group have also reportedly supported the Krahn faction of ULIMO, ULIMO-J. Both George Boley of the LPC and Roosevelt Johnson of the ULIMO-J are believed to have been frequent visitors to Barclay Training Center, the AFL headquarters, and to have maintained residences there. In May 1994 a senior officer of the AFL, Lieutenant-Colonel Amos Garlo, was killed in a land-mine explosion while travelling in the LPC operational area. Senior AFL officers and the Minister and Assistant Minister of Defense initially stated that Lieutenant-Colonel Garlo had been travelling in this LPC operation area without authorization. However, it was not clear whether or not he was acting with AFL authorization or acquiescence. It was also clear that LPC fighters have received medical treatment at a clinic in the AFL headquarters at Barclay Training Centre, which is in principle only for the use of AFL soldiers. In the area around Buchanan, the capital of Grand Bassa County, local people have pointed out known LPC fighters dressed in AFL uniforms and the houses where they

lived, some of them no more than a few yards from check-points manned by ECOMOG. Such reports have been confirmed informally by non-Liberian army officers serving with ECOMOG forces in the Buchanan region. It was apparent that LPC/AFL fighters were able to move at will through ECOMOG lines in Grand Bassa County calling into question the impartiality of ECOMOG forces.

Human rights violations attributed to AFL soldiers have continued. On 15 December 1994, more than 50 civilians, including 28 children under 10 years old, were massacred at Paynesville near Monrovia. Responsibility was unclear but witnesses said the attackers were Krahn AFL soldiers, acting in collusion with LPC fighters. The Transitional Government announced that nine AFL officers had been arrested and that it was opening an inquiry, but no progress has been made public.

Liberian Peace Council (LPC)

The LPC, which has operated with the support of the AFL, began military operations in late 1993. By January 1994 Buchanan was witnessing a regular stream of displaced people arriving from rural areas taken over by the LPC, including many people who had been burned with red-hot metal rods or machetes heated in a fire. The new arrivals reported a consistent pattern of LPC abuses.

Representatives of ECOMOG told Amnesty International in July 1994 that it was beyond their mandate to respond to abuses by the LPC, since the LPC was not a signatory to the Cotonou Agreement and therefore could not be held to be in breach of it.

An incident in which the LPC reportedly tortured many civilians occurred during an attack by eight LPC fighters at Barnabo Beach in Number Four district on 17 July 1994. The attackers took all the money in the victims' possession and then tied their elbows together behind their backs, in the form of torture known as the *tabey*. The attackers then heated machetes in a fire and branded their captives, leaving large third-degree burns on their backs, inner thighs and groin areas. After eventually untying their victims, the attackers made them carry goods on their heads to another village. On the way, a man named Popo, still suffering the effects of torture, collapsed. He was shot dead by his captors.

Observers in Buchanan have reported having seen hundreds of such burn victims since late 1993. The systematic use of torture by burning from heated machetes was a new phenomenon in Liberia and has been particularly associated with the LPC.

LPC fighters have been responsible for killing civilians and non-combatants in central and eastern Liberia, often because they were suspected of supporting the NPFL. On 11 September 1994 LPC fighters reportedly assembled the inhabitants of Kpolokpai, Kokoya District, Bong County, captured 30 alleged NPFL fighters and supporters and killed them with machetes, then shot dead 15 other civilian prisoners and fired into the crowd. Also in September 1994 they allegedly cut off the fingers and ears of Albert Mende, a journalist taken prisoner in Kokoya District, Bong County. The same month LPC fighters in Greenville, Sinoe County, were reported to have killed Marie Tokpa, a girl from the Kpelle ethnic group, because she resisted being raped. In early October 1994 LPC fighters reportedly fired on assembled civilians in Zanzaye, Nimba County, killing scores of them. The following month, November 1994, a number of atrocities were reported. LPC fighters allegedly captured and killed with cutlasses 12 residents of Sabo Wofiken, Glibo District, Grand Gedeh County, including Joshua Duweh, William Kuwor and David Hinnah. Refugees arriving in Côte d'Ivoire from Maryland County reported wilful killings by the LPC as they attacked an NPFL area - one witness described the arrest of a pregnant woman by LPC fighters who slashed her open, removed the baby and left both mother and baby to die. LPC fighters also reportedly took 10 girls captive in Sabo Wofiken, slashing their feet and forcing them to walk back to the fighters' base in Sinoe County.

The LPC campaign in Bassa County and other parts of southeastern Liberia during 1994 was also apparently designed to depopulate rural areas and thus deny support and subsistence to the NPFL, which had previously controlled the area. LPC fighters have systematically swept through rural areas, robbing, torturing and intimidating people, and forcing them to take refuge in Buchanan or other places under ECOMOG control.

Floods of refugees fleeing to Buchanan in February 1995 were reported to have been tortured with bayonets, gun shots and floggings at the hands of LPC fighters. At the time, large numbers of people, perhaps as many as 6,000, were reportedly being held by the LPC in the compounds of an agricultural company, where they were subjected to forced labour, rape and extortion.

United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO)

In western Liberia, fighting intensified in early 1994 between rival factions of ULIMO, one headed by General Roosevelt Johnson and dominated by members of the Krahn ethnic group (ULIMO-J), and the other led by Alhaji G.V. Kromah (ULIMO-K), largely consisting of members of the Mandingo ethnic group. The two factions raided each other's territory, harassing, torturing and killing civilians. In November 1994 the two factions agreed a cease-fire and peace negotiations began in April 1995. However, fighting between the two factions broke out again in May 1995.

Eye-witnesses have recorded a consistent pattern in the fighting, which has been carried out by combatants some of whom are no more than eight years old. ULIMO fighters typically send a spy to a village to find out what is available for looting and who owns valuable goods. Then they attack, usually assembling the residents at a central point and forcing the village chief to point out the people whose houses they want to loot. Sometimes they kill one or two people and rape some of the women. When they leave, they have often forced villagers to accompany them, particularly young men whom they force to carry the looted goods, which are sold at the border. These people are also often forced to work for ULIMO while they remain under their control.

During 1993 and 1994 ULIMO fighters in Lofa County subjected members of the civilian population to torture. Some had their ears and one hand cut off. In one case, there was evidence that a ULIMO commander was carrying out various atrocities, including cutting off the ears of a victim, tearing the heart out of another victim, and torturing an old woman by crushing her leg between two pieces of wood.

The following catalogue of incidents was reported by refugees from one small region of Cape Mount County which has been affected by the feuding between rival factions of ULIMO. The area has been under the control of various groups since 1990, including the NPFL, ECOMOG and ULIMO. However, some of the worst abuses took place after March 1994 when fighting between the two ULIMO factions broke out. The struggle between the two factions has centred on occupation of the town of Tubmanburg, which served as the ULIMO headquarters before the split.

The disputed area of Cape Mount County around the town of Tienne had been under the command of a local Krahn ULIMO-J commander known as "24 Hours" or "Two-Four." He was driven out of the area by fighters loyal to the rival ULIMO-K faction.

Refugees described the following attacks by ULIMO fighters:

- On 17 June 1994 the same war-party raided the village of Goe, north of Tienne. They forced all the villagers to assemble at a central point and accused them of supporting the rival ULIMO group led by "24 Hours". Eight houses were burned and the entire village looted. The village chief, Sandoh Browne, was tied up and put in his hut, which was then set on fire. However, he managed to escape. It seems that ULIMO-K were responsible for killing at least four civilians and taking women hostage for money.
- On 19 June 1994 a ULIMO group under Commander Keita killed six people from Bangoroma village including a father and son, both named Momoh Sata, because

they had dared to ask him to return their stolen property. The group also burned down the house of the local chief, Lamini Betty.

- On 23 June 1994 a ULIMO-K group under "Senegalese" attacked the village of Ngojah and murdered two people, Bendo Zeduah and Lahah Gbonu. The two were tied up and their throats were cut.

-In August 1994 ULIMO-K fighters killed at least 20 civilians in Gbesseh, Cape Mount County. In August and September 1994 they killed civilians in Lofa and Bong Counties. For example, Paul Tarwoi, a traditional healer who was captured in Zowolo, Lofa County was killed, reportedly for ritual purposes, in Gorlu. In Gbarnga, a ULIMO tribunal ordered the execution by firing-squad of civilians whom it found to be NPFL supporters.

In April 1995, ULIMO-K fighters were accused of committing atrocities as they attacked and set ablaze three coastal towns -- Fassama, Zuana 1 and Zuana 2 -- in Cape Mount County. Some inhabitants were held hostage and about 15 were killed; others who escaped spoke of rape, abductions and widespread looting. Later that month, ECOMOG forces issued an ultimatum to the ULIMO factions to withdraw from the highways and subsequently ECOMOG declared some areas safe havens. In late April, UNOMIL began patrols in the area, but had to withdraw following renewed fighting between the two ULIMO factions which began on 12 May 1995.

In May 1995, UNOMIL said it would investigate the massacre of civilians in the disputed area of Cape Mount County and asked for representatives of ULIMO-J, ULIMO-K and the AFL to assist in on-the-spot investigations. There has been no news of the scope, terms of reference, names of investigators or outcome of these investigations. In June 1995 the UN Secretary-General's report mentioned an incident in the Royesville community (15 kilometres north-east of Monrovia) where, at the time of clashes between ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K, civilians were deliberately killed, terrorized and raped.

ULIMO-K fighters are also reported to have been allowed by Guinean soldiers to search refugee camps within Guinea and to kill young men that they suspect of being members of the LDF. Three Liberian refugees -- Kulubah Piwi, Alfred Zeze and Augustine Moniba -- were shot dead by ULIMO fighters in June 1994 in the Guinean town of Yezu.

National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)

Between December 1989 and mid-1993, the NPFL are estimated to have been responsible for thousands of deliberate killings of civilians. As NPFL forces advanced towards Monrovia in 1990, they targeted people of the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups, both of which the NPFL considered supporters of President Doe's government. During the October

1992 assault on Monrovia, in the context of thousands of civilians being killed as a result of shelling, the NPFL was reported to have deliberately killed civilians. Some were shot dead in the course of looting, others were singled out and accused of supporting the Interim Government.

Since the Cotonou Agreement of July 1993, NPFL abuses have tended to be concentrated in those areas where it is in conflict with the LPC. There are reports that NPFL fighters who have recaptured villages from the LPC have killed villagers and burned houses.

New evidence has emerged of a number of individual political assassinations carried out by the NPFL in previous years. In July 1994, following a split within the NPFL, dissidents - most notably Tom Woewiyu, formerly NPFL Defense Minister and one of four ministers nominated by the NPFL to the Transitional Government in Monrovia - publicly stated that several prominent individuals had been assassinated by the NPFL on Charles Taylor's orders. Among those named as victims of NPFL killings were two leading opposition party figures - Jackson Doe, leader of the Liberian Action Party and widely regarded as the real winner of the 1985 elections, and Gabriel Kpolleh of the Liberian Unification Party - as well as Teah Cooper, Alfred Flomo, Stephen Daniels, Nimba County Senator David Toweh, former Commerce Minister David Dwanyen and University of Liberia President Stephen Yekeson.

In August 1994 the NPFL was reported to have executed as many as 80 of its own fighters, without any form of trial, and to have tortured and killed Lieutenant-General Nixon Gaye, an NPFL Commander, for leading a mutiny against Charles Taylor.

On 9 September 1994, following an attack on Charles Taylor's headquarters in Gbarnga by a coalition of forces, the NPFL arrested 43 unarmed UNOMIL observers and six non-governmental organization workers and held them at nine different sites. Thirty-three of the UNOMIL personnel were released after five days, and the remaining detainees were released by 18 September 1994. The UN reported that some of the detainees, especially those held at Harper, were mistreated, beaten and terrorized by their captors. The UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council of 14 October 1994 implied they may have been held as hostages when he stated that "the detention of these personnel may have been a premeditated action on the part of the NPFL (1) to use the observers as a shield against attacks by renegade NPFL forces or rival factions, and (2) to secure reliable communications and transportation from UNOMIL and non-government organizations to further their war efforts."

In September 1994 NPFL fighters robbed and killed civilians as they fled the Gbarnga area. In one incident they tied up at least 20 men, women and children and threw

them into the St John River at Bahla bridge. In another, they reportedly shot dead some 100 people in Palala, Bong County, on suspicion of being ULIMO supporters.

In December 1994 the NPFL executed six senior commanders held responsible for the fall of Gbarnga in September, apparently after some form of court-martial.

Although human rights abuses by NPFL fighters mostly went unpunished, an NPFL commander and some fighters were reportedly detained by the NPFL in October 1994 in connection with the killing of civilians at the St John River. It is not known whether they remain held.

Fighting between the NPFL and the LPC in Maryland County in late October and early November 1994 caused more than 2,000 people to flee to neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. NPFL fighters reportedly killed scores of civilians in Maryland County suspected of supporting the LPC, among them Simon Gyekye, a Ghanaian school principal in Plebo, and young boys who had sought refuge in a church in Plebo.

Lofa Defense Force (LDF)

The LDF is a much smaller force than the others mentioned above and less is known about its activities. However, LDF fighters were also reported to have killed civilians, including more than 70 civilians in the village of Rusie, near Zorzor, Lofa County in July 1994.

Forcible return of Liberian refugees in Guinea by Guinean authorities

Guinean army officers, immigration officials and local authorities belonging to the Mandingo ethnic group are reported to have participated in the forcible return of Liberian refugees fleeing ULIMO, in violation of international law.

This reportedly happened to a Liberian nurse at Zorzor Hospital, Lofa County, who gave the following account. He had to flee when ULIMO attacked the hospital on 13 February 1993. When he attempted to cross the border into Guinea, a Guinean Mandingo soldier took all his money and then forced him at gunpoint to cross back into the fighting in Liberia. As he was walking away, the Guinean soldier shot him in the back. The bullet went through his body narrowly missing his heart and lung. He survived in the bush for one week before he was able to cross into Guinea and obtain medical treatment.

In a separate incident, a Liberian refugee from Luyema, Lofa County, recounted how his two brothers, Mulbah Kaplee (aged 15) and Robert Moniba (aged 23), had

escaped from ULIMO fighters who had forced them to carry looted goods to the Guinean border. The two were then arrested by Guinean soldiers and handed back to ULIMO fighters who killed them on 8 September 1993.

To date, the government in Guinea is not known to have taken any steps to punish army and immigration officials who assist ULIMO.

IV The role of the peace-keeping forces

- ECOMOG

Since the Cotonou Agreement of July 1993, ECOMOG has been responsible for enforcing the cease-fire among the three signatories and for supervising disarmament. However, renewed fighting and the emergence of new factions forced ECOMOG to withdraw to Monrovia and Buchanan. In early August 1995, following agreements with two armed factions, the NPFL and the LPC, there were plans that ECOMOG should extend its presence into Bong County in central Liberia and Rivercess and Sinoe Counties in the south east.

Although human rights abuses have continued, and despite the fact that ECOMOG is not seen as an impartial force in the conflict, the peace-keeping operation has offered protection and sanctuary to hundreds of thousands of Liberians who have sought refuge in ECOMOG-controlled territory. In the Monrovia area, under ECOMOG control, some semblance of normal life has returned; efforts by the ECOMOG-backed Interim Government between 1990 and 1994 have restored parts of the legal system, permitted a free press to function, established freedom of movement within the city, and made limited efforts to reconstitute the security forces and National Police Force.

Nonetheless, the ECOWAS peace initiatives have been seriously flawed. Amnesty International's recommendations for the incorporation of human rights safeguards into the peace initiatives are given below.

The lack of clear mandate and accountability is also a serious concern. There is no civilian ECOMOG component to undertake the necessary political and diplomatic negotiations required to achieve a peace which would ensure respect for human rights, or to ensure that ECOMOG's military operation remains within its mandate and does not lead

to human rights abuses. Many decisions which should have been taken by political leaders have been taken instead by military commanders, and there is no ECOWAS presence within Liberia to limit ECOMOG actions. In May 1991 the Liberian authorities did not intervene on behalf of a civilian when the ECOMOG Field Commander interrogated and threatened to arrest the managing editor of the *Inquirer*, an independent newspaper in Monrovia. Although ECOMOG's actions against the newspaper editor constituted a breach of freedom of expression, the Interim Government remained unwilling to criticize ECOMOG. The ECOWAS Secretariat, hundreds of miles away in Abuja, apparently remained uninformed.

Since the Cotonou Agreement, this lack of a civilian authority within ECOWAS able effectively to monitor the way ECOMOG follows its mandate and to report on human rights abuses, has contributed to impunity and facilitated further abuses. The fierce fighting between ECOMOG forces and the NPFL in 1992 has resulted in a tacit, and sometimes explicit, support by some ECOMOG troops for anti-NPFL factions. The NPFL has consistently singled out the Nigerian contingent of ECOMOG as its main enemy, and some Nigerian ECOMOG troops are reported to have provided arms and ammunition to the LPC in Buchanan. No attempt appears to have been made to stop such support for particular warring factions.

There is no text defining the precise legal relationship between ECOMOG and the state of Liberia. Throughout the ECOMOG operation, there have been no clear lines to distinguish the peace-keeping role of ECOMOG from the role played by law enforcement bodies. Liberia remains a sovereign state and its governing authority is the Transitional Government. Under this, there exists a justice and law enforcement system comprising the courts, the Ministry of Justice, the Bureau of Rehabilitation (for prisons), the AFL and the National Police Force. In practice, ECOMOG has often carried out functions which should be the responsibility of the Liberian Government. This has undermined efforts to reconstruct a Liberian judicial system which is competent, independent and impartial and which can ensure fair trials. ECOMOG's exercise of judicial functions has failed to satisfy international standards for fairness.

There are a number of areas where ECOMOG appears to be acting beyond its mandate. For example, there appears to be no legal basis for ECOMOG to hold detainees in Liberia. Detainees should be handed to the Ministry of Justice and the Bureau of Rehabilitation. However, in practice people suspected of security offences have been detained by ECOMOG outside of the legal framework.

ECOMOG has deliberately frustrated efforts by the Liberian human rights and legal community to define ECOMOG jurisdiction. An important case concerning issues of ECOMOG detention was that of Peter Bonner Jallah, a lawyer and former political activist, who was arrested and held in ECOMOG custody during the fighting between ECOMOG

and NPFL forces in October 1992. He was arrested by a joint force of Interim Government police and ECOMOG soldiers, and accused of providing intelligence to the NPFL. He was taken to ECOMOG headquarters and severely beaten. In early 1993 the Center for Law and Human Rights Education, a Monrovia-based human rights organization, urged ECOMOG either to hand him over to the appropriate Liberian authorities so that he could be charged under Liberian law or to release him. In August 1993 the Center filed a writ of habeas corpus in the courts asking for the Interim Government to produce Peter Jallah in court. Because there is no legal jurisdiction which would formalise ECOMOG as a party in a Liberian case, the Center brought the case against the Interim Government, arguing that although Peter Jallah was not physically held by the Interim Government, he was held under its legal authority. The Interim Government argued that it was entirely separate from ECOMOG. ECOMOG did not appear in court. Days before the case was due to be heard by the Supreme Court, on 6 May 1994, ECOMOG released Peter Jallah after 18 months' detention without charge or trial. In September 1994 the Supreme Court ruled that ECOMOG had no legal authority to arrest or detain.

ECOMOG forces are in principle answerable to the ECOWAS defense commission, but there appeared to be no overall ECOMOG structure which was able effectively to discipline ECOMOG forces who colluded with some warring parties. Liberian courts have no jurisdiction over ECOMOG soldiers.

- **UNOMIL**

The UNOMIL operation, set up by Security Council Resolution 866 (1993), has a humanitarian and human rights component. However, its mandate in this regard is limited to reporting "on any major violations of international humanitarian law to the Secretary-General". The UN has indicated an intention to broaden UNOMIL's scope and in April 1995, the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council stated: "Given the frequency of reported human rights violations in Liberia, I have decided to appoint a legal/human rights officer to UNOMIL. This officer will, among other things, work with UNOMIL military staff, ECOMOG, the Liberian National Transitional Government and local community groups to investigate these reports." This officer was scheduled to start work in Liberia in September 1995.

UNOMIL and ECOMOG cooperate, but have separate and independent chains of command. UNOMIL is not involved in any active combat. The report of the UN Secretary-General defining the relationship between UNOMIL and ECOMOG stressed that "UNOMIL would need to have freedom of movement, communications and inspections, and to enjoy other rights that would be necessary for the performance of its tasks in Liberia." Yet UNOMIL has been restricted in its movements at night by the ECOMOG-imposed curfew. UNOMIL has apparently been very reticent to criticize ECOMOG or to assert its right to monitor the peace process. In his June 1995 report, the

UN Secretary-General states that ..."while ECOMOG and UNOMIL continue to enjoy close working relations, especially between the top levels of their command structures, the cooperation required for UNOMIL to carry out its tasks has not always been satisfactory at the working level." He also reports that, despite negotiating freedom of movement, "there have been cases when UNOMIL military and civilian staff have been stopped and harassed at ECOMOG checkpoints." Reporting these difficulties is important, but a more detailed, regular and public reporting of the problems could help to improve respect for human rights.

UNOMIL - effectively the only means of exerting pressure on ECOMOG - has failed to play an assertive role in the defense of human rights. It is not known to have taken any action to counter AFL support for other armed factions. Nor has UNOMIL tackled the lack of impartiality of some elements within ECOMOG. UNOMIL was reduced from 390 to 90 in October 1994 and just prior to the August 1995 Agreement, 53 UNOMIL personnel remained. The UN threatened to withdraw by September 1995, if there was no progress towards peace - although the UN Secretary-General welcomed the August 1995 Agreement, the future of UNOMIL was not yet clear.

V Recommendations

The human rights situation in Liberia demands action from those responsible for human rights abuses, from others in a position of authority within Liberia and from the international community. Unarmed men, women and children have been tortured and murdered, and the recurrent unpunished abuses undermine hopes for a lasting peace.

Amnesty International appeals to all parties to the conflict in Liberia and all involved in the recent peace initiative to build respect for human rights. Amnesty International takes no side in the conflict and has no political position on who should govern Liberia. It simply urges an end to torture and unlawful killings and other abuses - whoever commits them.

Amnesty International has developed a 15-point Program for Implementing Human Rights in International Peace-keeping Operations (AI Index: IOR 40/01/94). This program together with the training manuals developed by the United Nations should be used by ECOWAS to brief ECOMOG personnel regarding the relevant human rights and international humanitarian law standards.

Amnesty International also appeals to the international community to take action to find effective solutions to end the cycle of human rights abuses in Liberia.

To all the factions in the Liberian conflict:

* Amnesty International calls on all parties to the Liberian conflict to take immediate steps to eliminate and prevent torture and unlawful killings.

* All forces should observe minimum standards of humane behaviour as set out in common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions, in particular to treat civilians and captured combatants humanely, and to prevent unlawful killings, or torture.

* The leaders of all armed factions, whether members of the Council of State or not, should make clear to those under their command they are totally opposed to torture and killings of prisoners and non-combatants. Amnesty International urges the leaders of armed factions to ensure strict chain-of-command control over their forces and to hold accountable any members of their forces who commit or tolerate human rights abuses, ensuring that anyone suspected of committing an abuse is removed from a position of command or where they can commit abuses.

To the Transitional Government:

* Amnesty International calls on the Transitional Government to assert its authority over the the armed groups and the AFL to ensure that they do not commit human rights abuses such as torture and extrajudicial executions.

* The Transitional Government should order investigations into human rights abuses. Such investigations should be assisted by forensic specialists in order to satisfy the UN's standards set out in the Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions.

* Amnesty International calls on the Transitional Government to bring to justice those suspected of being responsible for human rights abuses. Pending investigations, they should be excluded from any amnesty, or any position of authority over prisoners or armed personnel.

* The Transitional Government should declare in public that those suspected of human rights abuses or violations of the laws of armed conflict, such as killing prisoners or non-combatants, will be brought to trial within a reasonable time, and will meanwhile not benefit from any measure of amnesty.

* The Transitional Government should ensure the proper functioning of the judicial system, in conformity with international standards. (Liberia is a state party to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights and to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.)

* Amnesty International calls on the Transitional Government to take steps towards long-term institution-building and reforms for the protection of human rights. In particular, the Transitional Government should treat as a priority the establishment of an independent judicial system and the effective training in human rights standards of the security forces.

To the regional intergovernmental organization, ECOWAS:

* Amnesty International appeals to ECOWAS to use its influence with the Transitional Government to ensure that it exercises control over the armed groups and the AFL to prevent them from committing human rights abuses or colluding in human rights abuses by others..

* ECOWAS should hold ECOMOG troops accountable for their actions in Liberia, by establishing a disciplinary mechanism sufficient to investigate allegations that ECOMOG soldiers have colluded with warring factions in committing abuses and to take prompt action against any soldiers found to have committed abuses.

* ECOWAS should reassert the limitations of ECOMOG's mandate, to make it clear that the administration of justice and powers of arrest and detention rest with the Transitional Government.

* ECOWAS should ensure that all national contingents of ECOMOG have rules of engagement and regulations for the use of firearms and other weapons which meet the requirements of international standards concerning the use of force by law enforcement officials and minimum standards of humane behaviour in armed conflict.

To the United Nations:

* The UN should exert its influence on the Transitional Government and on ECOWAS to ensure that there is no official participation or collusion in human rights abuses.

* The UN should expand the human rights component of UNOMIL in the coming months. In particular, a human rights monitoring mechanism should be established with a mandate to investigate and report human rights abuses. It should issue frequent reports and distribute them widely. An international group of civilian advisers should be established to assist in human rights training and to support local human rights initiatives.

* The UN should maintain an international presence in Liberia for as long as may be necessary after any future elections to ensure effective human rights monitoring and assistance continues. The international presence should remain until it is clear that the government is able and willing to ensure respect for human rights without international monitoring and assistance.

* the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should set up a mission to Liberia by the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions in order to investigate human rights violations and produce a report with recommendations. Such investigations should be assisted by forensic specialists in order to satisfy the UN's standards set out in the Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions. In addition to further preliminary investigations, there should be detailed follow-up to the 1993 UN investigations into the Harbel massacre and the 1995 UNOMIL findings concerning the Yosi massacre.

To the international community:

* the OAU's African Commission of Human and Peoples' Rights should study the human rights situation in Liberia and report to the African Heads of State and Government recommending a concrete course of action to halt the abuses.

* Amnesty International is calling on all members of the international community to undertake every possible effort and to exert their influence to bring to an end the pattern of widespread human rights abuses in Liberia.

* Countries which have provided or continue to provide training, weapons or other facilities to parties to the conflict in Liberia should ensure that they do not facilitate human rights abuses.

* Countries neighbouring Liberia have a special role to play by ensuring that they do not provide sanctuary for those responsible for human rights abuses, and by protecting those fleeing from human rights abuses.

Glossary

AFL: Armed Forces of Liberia

The country's national army of approximately 10,000 soldiers. The AFL is heavily dominated by members of the Krahn ethnic group, and has supported two armed factions: the LPC and ULIMO.

Akosombo and Accra Agreements

Following the failure of the Cotonou Agreement to break the political deadlock, a further accord was reached and signed on 12 September 1994 by Lieutenant-General Hezekiah Bowen (the Chief of Staff of the AFL), Charles Taylor (leader of the NPFL) and Alhaji G.V. Kromah (leader of one of the ULIMO factions). The Akosombo Agreement reaffirmed the Cotonou Agreement and aimed to give factions more control of a new Transitional Government and to facilitate disarmament. The Agreement was opposed by civilian groups meeting in a National Conference in Monrovia. Further talks, which included civilians and other armed groups, resulted in the Accra Agreement in late December 1994 providing for a ceasefire starting on 28 December and the installation of a new transitional government until handing over to a new elected government in January 1996. However, the ceasefire was only short-lived and the signatories failed to agree on the composition and leadership of the new transitional Council of State.

August 1995 Agreement

On 19 August 1995 a further agreement was signed in Abuja, Nigeria breaking the deadlock which had existed since the Accra Agreement. The August Agreement was signed by leaders of the AFL, LPC, NPFL, ULIMO-J, ULIMO-K and Oscar Quiah of the Liberian National Conference. Professor Wilton Sankawulo was named president of a new Council of State to be installed on 2 September 1995. The Agreement, brokered by ECOWAS, allows for a ceasefire, disarmament and elections within 12 months.

Cotonou Peace Agreement

Signed on 25 July 1993 by the Interim Government, the NPFL and ULIMO, the Cotonou Agreement provided for a cease-fire by the signatories, to be enforced by ECOMOG and monitored by UNOMIL. It was also signed by ECOWAS and the UN, which are responsible for ensuring its implementation, and the OAU. It provided for disarmament of the warring parties; the release of prisoners; access for humanitarian assistance; the return of refugees; the establishment of a Transitional Government; and an amnesty for acts committed during military engagements.

ECOMOG: ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group

A peace-keeping force sent to Monrovia in August 1990 by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It has grown from a five-nation 5,000 strong force to approximately 10,000 troops from nine African countries. It is composed of soldiers from six ECOWAS member nations -- Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana, Mali and Gambia. Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda have participated but have since withdrawn.

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

An intergovernmental organization of 16 West African states with headquarters in Nigeria. The aim of ECOWAS is to promote economic development and to improve regional cooperation.

Interim Government: Interim Government of National Unity

The Interim Government was seated in Monrovia from April 1991 to March 1994 under the protection of ECOMOG troops. In March 1994 the Interim Government handed over to the Transitional Government under the terms of the Cotonou Agreement.

INPFL: Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia

A breakaway faction of the NPFL led by Prince Johnson, a former senior NPFL lieutenant. In October 1992 Prince Johnson gave himself up to ECOMOG and left the country. Many INPFL fighters then rejoined the NPFL.

LDF: Lofa Defense Force

A self-defense organization which emerged in Lofa County in northern Liberia to counter attacks from the Mandingo faction of ULIMO. It is based on the Poro secret society, which is of considerable influence among non-Muslims in Lofa County and other parts of northern Liberia.

Transitional Government: Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG)

The Transitional Government has had its seat in Monrovia since 7 March 1994. This caretaker administration was presided over by a five-person Council of State elected by the three armed groups which signed the Cotonou Agreement. The Transitional Government should have handed over power after elections in September 1994 under the Cotonou Agreement. Following the August 1995 Agreement the composition of the Council of State was changed. It was to be chaired by Professor Wilton Sankawulo and to comprise Charles Taylor - leader of the NPFL, Alhaji G.V. Kromah - leader of ULIMO-K, George Boley - leader of the LPC, and Oscar Quiah - representative of the Liberia National Conference.

Liberian National Conference

A meeting organized by Liberian citizens to discuss aspects of the peace process. Its initial meeting started on 24 August 1994 and lasted until October 1994. This body continues to discuss and make recommendations to the different parties involved in the conflict and peace negotiations. From September 1995, its representative, Oscar Quiah is scheduled to be a member of the Council of State.

LPC: Liberian Peace Council

An armed faction which re-emerged in October 1993 in the southeast of Liberia and is headed by George Boley. It is supported by the AFL and is composed mainly of people from the Krahn ethnic group. George Boley is scheduled to be a member of the new Council of State from September 1995.

NPFL: National Patriotic Front of Liberia

The group that launched the civil war with an attack launched from Côte d'Ivoire in December 1989. Headed by Charles Taylor, the NPFL has controlled large parts of Liberia and has established a provisional government, headquartered in Gbarnga, 120 miles northeast of Monrovia. From September 1995, Charles Taylor is expected to become a member of the Council of State.

ULIMO: United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy

An armed faction which emerged in 1991 made up of former members of the AFL predominantly from the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups. In March 1994 ULIMO split along ethnic lines into two factions: the Mandingo group led by Alhaji G.V. Kromah (ULIMO-K) and the Krahn group led by Roosevelt Johnson (ULIMO-J). In September 1995, Alhaji G.V. Kromah is expected to become a member of the Council of State.

UNOMIL: United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia

The UN Observer Mission in Liberia, comprising approximately 300 military observers, was established by the UN Security Council in September 1993 to monitor the cease-fire and the disarmament process, supervise the demobilization and reintegration of combatants, and to assist ECOMOG in overseeing overall implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. UNOMIL is also entrusted with the task of assisting in the coordination of humanitarian relief and of reporting violations of international humanitarian law to the UN Secretary-General. The number of personnel had been reduced to 53 by early August 1995.

The precise nature of UNOMIL's presence had not been clarified since the August 1995 Agreement.