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## £SIERRA LEONE

### @Arrests of former government ministers

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About 26 people, most of whom are believed to be former government ministers and others associated with the government of former President Joseph Saidu Momoh, are reported to have been arrested on or around 7 May 1994. President Momoh was overthrown in the coup on 29 April 1992 which brought the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), headed by Captain Valentine Strasser, to power. Amnesty International believes that they should be released unless they are to be formally charged with recognizably criminal offences and granted prompt and fair trials, according to international standards.

The following 10 people are among those arrested:

**Dr Birch Momodu CONTEH**, former Minister of Mineral Resources

**Paramount Chief Alimamy DURA**

**Gipu FELIX-GEORGE**, Head of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service

**Abdul Mutallib ISCANDARI**, former Minister of Tourism

**Dr Bu-Buakei JABBIE**, former Minister of Lands, Housing and the Environment

**Dr Wiltshire JOHNSON**, former Minister of Health and Social Welfare

**Egerton Tamba KAMARA**, former Administrative Secretary of the All People's Congress (APC)

**Dr Sheka KANU**, former Minister of National Development and Economic Planning

**Alhaji Abdul Karim KOROMA**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs

**Ahmad Edward SISAY**, former Minister of the Interior

Most of these detainees had previously been arrested either at the time of or shortly after the coup in April 1992. They were held without charge or trial until they were released, either in late 1992 or on 29 April 1993 on the first anniversary of the coup. However, they remained restricted under house arrest while investigations were undertaken into personal assets they had accrued during their period in office.

Three judicial commissions of inquiry, established in 1992 to investigate accusations of corruption by former government ministers, civil servants and state corporations, submitted their reports directly to the NPRC. These reports were not made public but the NPRC subsequently published its decisions with regard to the findings of the commissions of inquiry. Its decisions relating to the commission of inquiry headed by Justice S. Beccles-Davies, which had investigated former presidents, vice-presidents and government ministers, were published in late 1993 and early 1994. Where the NPRC concluded that there was evidence of corruption, it ordered confiscation of property and payment of compensation to the state and, in some cases, it stripped individuals of honours and titles and banned them from holding public office.

Most of those arrested in early May 1994 had been ordered to pay the government very large sums in compensation. However, some have since appealed to the NPRC against these orders. It has been alleged that in some cases the NPRC ordered compensation to be paid where the commissions of inquiry had in fact found no evidence of financial misdemeanour.

Although the official reason given for the recent arrests is non-payment of compensation, no criminal charges have been brought against those arrested. They have had no opportunity to challenge the accusations against them in a court of law with full rights of defence and appeal to a higher court. It appears that they may have been detained because of their association with the former government and suspected opposition to the NPRC. Draconian legislation passed shortly after the coup in April 1992, the Administration of Sierra Leone (National Provisional Ruling Council) Proclamation 1992 of 4 May 1992, allows indefinite administrative detention without charge or trial from which there is no recourse to the courts. Since the coup in April 1992 hundreds of people, including some of those recently rearrested, have been held under this legislation for periods ranging from a few days to more than a year.

Those arrested are being held in the Central Prison, Pademba Road, in the capital, Freetown. According to reports, they are being denied visits from their families and from lawyers.

<b>KEYWORDS:</b> GOVERNMENT MINISTERS1 / DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL / REARREST / HOUSE/TOWN ARREST / INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION / COUPS /
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