

£SIERRA LEONE

@Human rights abuses in a war against civilians

Introduction

The continuing conflict in Sierra Leone, which in 1994 and 1995 spread throughout the country, has been characterised by abuses by both government soldiers and rebel forces against defenceless civilians in their homes, villages and towns. Unarmed civilians have been captured and held hostage, ill-treated and tortured, deliberately and arbitrarily killed. Thousands have died and many more thousands uprooted from their homes and livelihoods.

The conflict between an insurgent force and government soldiers began in 1991. By 1994 the identity and motives of those involved in the conflict were no longer clear; the conflict had developed into a campaign of terror aimed primarily at civilians. It became increasingly difficult to attribute responsibility for abuses to either side with any certainty. As the target of human rights abuses by both government soldiers and rebel forces, civilians are bearing the brunt of the conflict.

Although attacks on civilians were invariably reported by official sources to be the responsibility of rebel forces, since 1994 government soldiers have been increasingly implicated in the killings. Government soldiers have also been responsible for the torture and summary executions of captured rebels and people suspected of assisting or collaborating with rebels.

While some of the abuses directed against civilians in Sierra Leone could be directly attributed to government soldiers, rebel forces have also been responsible for torture and killings of non-combatants as well as the abduction of large numbers of civilians, including children, some of whom were ill-treated and killed and others held as hostages.

Amnesty International is calling on all those committing these abuses - both government soldiers and rebel forces - to stop the torture and ill-treatment and deliberate and arbitrary killing of unarmed civilians. Those responsible for these abuses must be brought to justice. Until late 1994 the conflict in Sierra Leone received little attention or response from the international community. The international community also has an obligation to address the grave human rights situation in Sierra Leone and to take effective measures to end human rights abuses. Initiatives to bring peace to Sierra Leone must

take into account human rights and any peace settlement must include human rights guarantees if it is to be effective and long-lasting.

The conflict in Sierra Leone

March 1991: regional instability spreads into Sierra Leone

The conflict in Sierra Leone began in 1991 when armed insurgents launched an attack from neighbouring Liberia with the apparent objective of ousting or destabilising the government of Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh, who had come to power in 1985.

The insurgent forces were initially backed by a Liberian armed political group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), headed by Charles Taylor. The civil war in Liberia began when NPFL forces entered Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire in late December 1989.¹ The Sierra Leone Government supported the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peace-keeping force² which entered Liberia in August 1990 in an attempt to stop the civil war and which prevented the NPFL from taking control of Liberia's capital, Monrovia.

When insurgent forces, supported by the NPFL, launched their attacks in 1991 into Kailahun District, in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone, and Pujehun District, in the Southern Province, they were made up predominantly of Liberians, joined by Sierra Leonean opponents of the government of President Momoh and soldiers from Burkina Faso whose government, together with that of Libya, supported the NPFL and provided it with training and arms. A rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by former army corporal, Foday Sankoh, emerged and by 1992 rebel forces remaining in Sierra Leone were primarily Sierra Leoneans, who still received supplies from Liberia.

Developments in the civil war in Liberia and, in particular, the capture from the NPFL of territory bordering Sierra Leone by another armed group, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), prevented supplies reaching the RUF from Liberia. The RUF appeared subsequently to rely heavily, but not exclusively, on arms and ammunition captured from government forces or supplied by disaffected

¹For further information about the conflict in Liberia, refer to [Liberia: A new peace agreement - an opportunity to introduce human rights protection](#) (AI Index: AFR 34 /01/95), published by Amnesty International on 20 September 1995.

²ECOWAS is an international organization of 16 states (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo) with its headquarters in Nigeria. The aim of ECOWAS is to promote cooperation and development and to improve relations among member states. The ECOWAS peace-keeping force is known as ECOMOG - ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group - and is currently composed of soldiers from six ECOWAS member states (Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone).

government troops colluding with rebel forces. Its resources also come from looting and exploiting territory under its control, particularly those areas rich in mineral wealth.

In responding to the rebel offensive, the Sierra Leone army, the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF), was joined by soldiers from neighbouring Guinea who have played a key role in the fighting since 1991. By mid-1995 there were more than one thousand Guinean troops in Sierra Leone; an additional 400 troops were deployed in April 1995 with a further 200 troops sent in May 1995 to increase defence around Freetown as rebel forces advanced towards the capital.

Nigeria has also provided training and troops since the beginning of the conflict. By mid-1995 there were some 2,000 Nigerian soldiers in Sierra Leone, based mostly in Freetown and at the international airport at Lungi. Nigerian combat aircraft were used for aerial bombardments of rebel positions. Reinforcements were sent by Nigeria to Freetown in May 1995 as rebel forces made advances towards the capital.

As a result of a military agreement, Israel has provided military training to Sierra Leonean troops. The government of Sierra Leone also sought the assistance of private security companies in the United Kingdom and South Africa to provide military advice and training to the Sierra Leone army. Reports in October 1994 referred to a defence agreement between Sierra Leone and Ghana which envisaged military training and the patrolling of Sierra Leone's coast by the Ghanaian navy. However, Ghanaian troops were not known to have been deployed in Sierra Leone.

The April 1992 coup

On 29 April 1992 the government of President Momoh and the ruling All People's Congress (APC) party was overthrown in a military coup led by a group of junior army officers from the war front in eastern and southern Sierra Leone who were subsequently joined by soldiers in Freetown. They proclaimed a National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) headed by Captain Valentine E.M. Strasser. The new military government suspended parts of the multi-party constitution which had been introduced in October 1991 and declared a state of emergency. Emergency legislation was introduced, giving the security forces unlimited powers of administrative detention without charge or trial.³ The NPRC also declared its commitment to bringing the war to a speedy end.

³For further information about political detention without charge or trial in Sierra Leone following the coup in April 1992, refer to [Sierra Leone: Political detainees at the Central Prison, Pademba Road, Freetown](#) (AI Index: AFR 51/04/93), published by Amnesty International on 21 June 1993.

The conflict continues

Despite the overthrow of President Momoh, which had apparently been one of the RUF's aims, rebel activity continued in the south and east of Sierra Leone. The political objectives of the RUF and the reasons for continued fighting were no longer clear. During 1992 and 1993 there were no public statements by the RUF of its current political objectives and nothing was heard of its leader, Foday Sankoh.

By the end of 1993 government troops had regained control of areas in the south and east of Sierra Leone previously held by the RUF. Captain Strasser announced a unilateral month-long cease-fire during December 1993 and offered an amnesty to rebel forces who surrendered. However, rebel attacks continued.

Violence, in particular directed at unarmed civilians, worsened during 1994. Attacks spread to the centre and north of the country, previously unaffected by the conflict. There was no longer a military front line and attacks were aimed largely at the civilian population. Having been repelled from territory which they had previously held in the south and east of the country, rebel forces appeared to have taken to the bush and to have resorted to sporadic, dispersed attacks on towns, villages and major roads throughout the country.

The identity of those responsible for these attacks became increasingly difficult to determine. Many Sierra Leonean civilians claimed that government soldiers were responsible and there was strong evidence to support these claims. The absence of any public statements by the RUF or Foday Sankoh fuelled speculation during 1994 that the RUF no longer existed as a political group and that the attacks were the work of serving government soldiers or other armed groups, composed largely of soldiers who had defected from the army. In some areas where rebel attacks occurred large numbers of soldiers had previously gone missing.

However, from late 1994 the RUF re-emerged as an organized political group, under the control of Foday Sankoh and a War Council, with its forces encamped in various parts of the country, including the Malal Hills in Northern Province and the Kambui Hills in Eastern Province. This became clear as a result of the capture and subsequent release of foreign nationals who had been held hostage by the RUF. Representatives of the RUF, including its Political and Foreign Affairs Coordinator, Alimamy Bakarr Sankoh, based in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, provided a public voice for the RUF.

After the RUF admitted that it had been responsible for an attack on the town of Kabala, Koinadugu District, in Northern Province in November 1994, an area until then considered safe from rebel activity, during which two British nationals were taken hostage,

the NPRC called for dialogue with the RUF. A meeting between representatives of the NPRC and the RUF was officially reported to have taken place in early December 1994 but there was subsequently a further escalation in violence.

A spate of attacks in late December 1994 in the south and east of Sierra Leone heralded a rapid spread of the conflict throughout the country, edging into the Western Area and closer to Freetown. In March 1995 rebel forces attacked Songo, some 48 kilometres from Freetown, advancing by May 1995 to Newton and Lumpa and towards Waterloo, less than 30 kilometres from the capital. However, further rebel advances towards Freetown were repelled by government soldiers assisted by Guinean and Nigerian troops.

On 27 April 1995, the 34th anniversary of Sierra Leone's independence, Captain Strasser offered an immediate cease-fire and to negotiate peace with the RUF without conditions. The RUF refused to negotiate and repeated earlier calls for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Sierra Leone and for Captain Strasser to cede power to a national conference with authority to decide the future of the country.

Meanwhile, rebel activity either by the RUF or other armed groups, which included disaffected soldiers, continued throughout Sierra Leone. On 29 April 1995 rebels attacked towns, including Koidu, 250 kilometres east of Freetown, and villages in Kono District, Eastern Province, an area rich in diamonds and of vital economic importance. The area has been held by rebels several times since the conflict began in 1991. Both rebels and soldiers have illegally mined diamond deposits in Kono District. The towns of Koidu, Yengema and Njaiama-Sewafe and the surrounding area in Kono District were retaken by government forces in late June 1995. Kailahun District in Eastern Province appeared to remain a stronghold of the RUF. Rebel attacks continued in the Southern and Eastern Provinces, including around the towns of Mile 91, Bo and Kenema, with government soldiers claiming success in repelling rebel forces particularly around Bo during July 1995. There were heavy civilian casualties when a convoy of some 70 vehicles carrying food and other vital supplies to the towns of Bo and Kenema was attacked by rebel forces at Matoi on the main route between Freetown and Bo on 2 August 1995.

Moves towards a return to civilian rule

On 29 April 1993, the first anniversary of its coming to power, the NPRC promised a return to civilian rule within three years. A National Advisory Council was established to draft a new constitution and to prepare a transition to civilian rule. The following year an Interim National Electoral Commission, chaired by Dr James Jonah, former United Nations (UN) Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, was established and a new

constitution drafted. However, because of the deteriorating security situation, voter registration was delayed. A referendum on the constitution, scheduled to take place in 1995, was abandoned.

On 27 April 1995 Captain Strasser announced that the ban on political activities imposed in April 1992 was to be lifted. (On 19 June 1995 a decree was promulgated formally lifting the ban but there was a subsequent decree barring former President Momoh and 56 other former APC officials from holding public office for a period of ten years.) Captain Strasser also announced that presidential and legislative elections would go ahead in November and December 1995 leading to the installation of a civilian head of state and government in January 1996 and that a national consultative conference would be set up to prepare for a return to civilian rule. Seventeen political parties applied for registration to the Interim National Electoral Commission in August 1995. The RUF did not apply for registration as a political party. Neither did it accept an invitation from the Interim National Electoral Commission to attend the national consultative conference on how the return to civilian rule should be implemented which took place in August 1995. The conference, which included representatives of political parties, traditional leaders, trade unions, religious groups, women's and students' groups, displaced people and Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea and Liberia, recommended that elections be postponed to no later than February 1996. Alimamy Bakarr Sankoh, the RUF's Political and Foreign Affairs Coordinator, announced that the RUF would not participate because it did not recognise the legitimacy of the NPRC to organize elections.

Sierra Leonean refugees in Mola, Forécariah, Guinea, April 1995. Up to 20,000 Sierra Leoneans fled across the border into Guinea in January 1995 following attacks by rebel forces in Northern Province.

Observers within and outside Sierra Leone questioned whether legislative and presidential elections were appropriate or possible while the conflict continued and vast numbers of Sierra Leoneans were either internally displaced or refugees in neighbouring countries. Some argued for a broadly-based interim government whose primary objective would be to secure peace before elections were held.

Civilian victims of the conflict

The number of civilian deaths as a result of more than four years conflict in Sierra Leone is difficult to estimate with any accuracy. Official estimates put the number of deaths - both combatants and non-combatants - at 10,000; however, the real number of casualties is believed to be several thousand more.

In any war or internal armed conflict there may be civilian casualties as a result of hostilities between warring factions. Amnesty International is concerned that in Sierra Leone many civilian deaths have been the result of deliberate and arbitrary killings by both

government soldiers and rebel forces. The unlawful killings of unarmed civilians, often in attacks which appeared to have no military or economic significance, created a climate of fear and destabilised communities throughout the country.

Soldiers and rebels against civilians

During 1994 the identity and motives of those carrying out attacks on civilians became increasingly unclear. Although the government invariably claimed that rebel forces of the RUF were responsible, there was evidence that many attacks were in fact carried out by disaffected soldiers, some of them deserters but others still serving soldiers. Many attacks appeared to be carried out for material gain - from looting or illegally mining diamonds. However, it also appeared that some were carried out by factions within the army who were supporters of the APC, the former ruling party of the government of President Momoh, and who were opposed to the NPRC. There appeared to be widespread disaffection within the army. Some disaffected soldiers appeared to have joined RUF forces, whereas others formed separate armed groups which also attacked civilians and looted property.

During 1994 the word "rebel" could no longer be assumed to refer uniquely to RUF forces led by Foday Sankoh; it also referred to undisciplined or disaffected soldiers. The word "sobel", or soldier-rebel, was coined within Sierra Leone and widely used.

Following the incursion from Liberia in 1991, the Sierra Leone army was dramatically expanded to respond to the rebel threat. This resulted in large numbers of ill-trained and ill-disciplined armed young men. Increasingly, reports suggested that government soldiers were responsible for deliberate civilian killings, looting and robbery not only in areas affected by the conflict but also in areas where there was no fighting, for example, in Freetown. Harassment and extortion at army checkpoints along major roads were common. Two civilians who refused to pay a soldier at a checkpoint in Lunsar, Port Loko District, Northern Province, in October 1994 were reported to have been shot by the soldier; one subsequently died.

Displaced people's camp at Masingbi, Tonkolili District, Northern Province, May 1993. The majority of those at the camp at Masingbi were from Kono District, Eastern Province.

It was not only soldiers of the Sierra Leone army who were accused by civilians of unlawful activities. In July and August 1994 some 800 members of the Liberian armed faction, ULIMO, which had been fighting with Sierra Leonean troops against the RUF, were disarmed and returned to Liberia following complaints by traditional leaders, known as Paramount Chiefs, in the Southern and Eastern Provinces that ULIMO fighters had attacked villages and looted property.

During 1994 and into 1995 the perpetrators of attacks against civilians were almost without exception described by witnesses as wearing government army uniforms. They were dressed in complete uniforms, often new, with army issue boots. While it was clear that government army uniforms, together with arms and ammunition, had been captured by rebel forces or provided by soldiers colluding with the rebels, in many cases it appeared that the attackers were in fact current or former government soldiers, acting independently of the RUF.

This confusion was expressed clearly by a Sierra Leonean refugee whom an Amnesty International delegation met in the town of Pamélap, close to the Sierra Leonean border, during a visit to Guinea in April 1995: "It is very difficult to distinguish between a rebel and a soldier because they use the same arms and ammunition, they wear the same uniforms, and they have almost everything the same".

In many cases, government soldiers were reported to have offered no protection to civilians against attacks by rebel forces. There were many accounts of soldiers failing to engage rebels in combat, offering no resistance and doing nothing to prevent loss of civilian lives. In some cases, this suggested actual collusion with the rebels by soldiers opposed to the NPRC. For example, some witnesses described both soldiers and rebels firing into the air; often, following apparent shooting between soldiers and rebels, there were no casualties among either. Soldiers also stood to gain from looting. Following attacks by rebel forces, after they had retreated, soldiers entered towns and villages and looted what property remained. For example, property, including vehicles, looted from the sites of two mining companies - Sierra Leone Ore and Metal Company (SIEROMCO) and Sierra Rutile - in Moyamba District, Southern Province, which were attacked by RUF rebels in January 1995, was later seen being sold by government soldiers in Freetown.

Late December 1994 saw an upsurge in violence with a series of attacks in Southern and Eastern Provinces: the towns of Mile 91, Gerihun, Bo, a large displaced people's camp at Gondama 11 kilometres south of Bo, Kenema and surrounding villages came under attack. Gondama, where an estimated 80,000 people, many of them from Pujehun District, had sought refuge, was overrun by rebels on 24 December 1994. The exact number of those killed is unknown; some drowned in the Sewa river attempting to escape. Among villages attacked was Mattru, Bo District, in Southern Province.

On 26 December 1994 a group of about 40 men, armed and dressed in military uniforms, entered Mattru and said that they were government soldiers who had come to protect Mattru following a rebel attack the day before on the nearby town of Tikonko. Unsure of the real identity of the soldiers, civilians sought confirmation from the Military Headquarters in Bo that government soldiers had been sent to Mattru; this was obtained together with the news that more soldiers were to be dispatched to Mattru. Later that day, many more men, apparently soldiers since they were dressed in full army uniforms and well-armed, arrived in Mattru. Villagers took shelter in their homes when they heard shooting. They were later forced to come out by men in army uniforms but who identified themselves as RUF rebels and who interrogated them about the presence of soldiers in the village. The soldiers who had earlier come to Mattru claiming to protect the village appeared to have abandoned it completely. Several young men were killed by rebels in Mattru, houses were destroyed and property looted (see page 20). This incident was one example among many of the widespread confusion among civilians about the identity of

soldiers, possible collusion between soldiers and rebels and the failure of government soldiers to protect civilians against rebel attacks.

In some cases, government soldiers simply fled in the face of the enemy. Following the intensification of rebel attacks in Southern and Eastern Provinces in late December 1994, a well-equipped contingent of soldiers was deployed by the NPRC at the sites of the bauxite and titanium-dioxide mining companies of SIEROMCO and Sierra Rutile because of their vital economic importance. However, at the time of the attacks by RUF rebels on 18 and 19 January 1995, soldiers abandoned their positions, offering no protection to civilians, some of whom, including seven foreigners, were subsequently captured and taken hostage by the RUF (see page 23). A soldier attempting to escape to Guinea following an attack by rebel forces on the town of Kambia, Kambia District, Northern Province, on 25 January 1995 was heard by civilians to say that he was not prepared to die for 10,000 leones and a bag of rice, the monthly salary of most soldiers.

When the Amnesty International delegation visited Guinea in April 1995 it met many inhabitants of the town of Kambia. Although a contingent of soldiers was stationed in Kambia, all witnesses stated that the soldiers were nowhere to be seen at the time of the attack and offered no protection. The soldiers emerged after the rebels had retreated, taking a large number of captured civilians with them (see page 23).

Displaced civilians in Sierra Leone and Sierra Leonean refugees in neighbouring Guinea are afraid to return to their homes because they cannot distinguish between government soldiers and rebels and have no confidence in government soldiers to protect them.

Following persistent claims and mounting evidence during 1994 that current and former soldiers were responsible for attacks on civilians, as well as looting, robbery and extortion both within and outside areas affected by the conflict, the NPRC admitted publicly that there were serious problems of indiscipline within the army; it claimed that 80 per cent of troops were loyal, conceding that the remainder were not. A number of soldiers were tried before courts-martial in connection with these accusations; some were sentenced to death and executed after unfair trials (see page 18).

Displaced people and refugees

Vast numbers of Sierra Leonean civilians have been displaced by the conflict as their towns and villages are attacked and their homes and livelihoods destroyed. Thousands have sought refuge in the homes of friends or relatives, in displaced people's camps in Sierra Leone or in neighbouring Guinea and Liberia. More than 250,000 Sierra Leoneans were estimated to have fled to Guinea and Liberia since 1991 and by 1995 more than 600,000 were living in displaced people's camps within Sierra Leone. Many others sought refuge with families and friends. Attacks on rural communities resulted in a vast influx into the country's major towns such as Freetown, Bo in Southern Province, Kenema in Eastern Province and Makeni in Northern Province. In mid-1995 UN agencies estimated that nearly one third of the country's four and a half million people had been forced to leave their homes as a result of the conflict.

Sierra Leonean refugees, many of them from Kukuna, Kambia District, Northern Province, constructing a refugee camp in Laya, Forécariah, Guinea, April 1995.

Efforts for peace

Significant initiatives have been taken by Sierra Leonean civilians to bring peace to their country. In July 1994 Paramount Chiefs attended a conference in Freetown with the NPRC to discuss the conflict. Religious leaders and communities, trade unions and women's groups are among many sectors of Sierra Leonean society which have been active in seeking a solution to the conflict.

The National Coordinating Committee for Peace (NCCP), a coalition of some 60 organizations, was formed in April 1995 to facilitate a negotiated peace settlement between the NPRC and the RUF. A leading member of the NCCP, **M'ban Kabu**, was arrested on 12 July 1995 and held without charge until 21 July 1995; he was accused of having criticised the NPRC's use of mercenaries in the conflict, in particular those provided by a South African company, Executive Outcomes, since May 1995 and to have called for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Sierra Leone. A journalist who reported comments attributed to M'ban Kabu was also arrested: **Ibrahim Karim Sei**, editor of an independent weekly newspaper, the *Standard Times*, was also held without charge from 12 July until 20 July 1995. Amnesty International considered both M'ban Kabu and Ibrahim Karim Sei to be prisoners of conscience.

Response by the international community to the conflict in Sierra Leone

From its start in 1991 the conflict in Sierra Leone received little attention from the international community. Even within Sierra Leone, initially it was seen largely as a localised conflict confined to the Southern and Eastern Provinces which had little impact on Freetown, the Western Area and Northern Province. However, the conduct and geography of the conflict changed significantly during 1994.

The sharp intensification of attacks officially attributed to rebel forces in late 1994 and early 1995, involving large-scale deliberate and arbitrary killings of unarmed civilians and the taking of foreign hostages - 16 Europeans and one Brazilian - between November 1994 and January 1995, prompted response from the international community. Inter-governmental organizations - the UN, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Commonwealth Secretariat - sent delegations to Freetown. In December 1994 the UN Secretary-General sent a representative to Freetown who was followed in February 1995 by former Ambassador to the UN, Berhanu Dinka, appointed by the UN Secretary-General to help negotiate a peace settlement. The OAU also sent a fact-finding mission to Freetown in February 1995; it was headed by the OAU Assistant Secretary General, Ambassador Abdulahi Said Osman, and included A. Coleman, Chief of the Conflict Prevention and Research Section. A representative of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Moses Anafu, Deputy Director for Political Affairs, also arrived in Freetown, and the

Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, personally offered to act as an intermediary between the NPRC and the RUF in a radio broadcast on 24 January 1995.

However, attempts by these intergovernmental organizations to facilitate dialogue between the NPRC and the RUF appeared to have foundered. The RUF seemed reluctant to establish contact with their representatives and stated that it would not negotiate with the NPRC until all foreign troops - Nigerian, Guinean and also Ghanaian - had been withdrawn from Sierra Leone and the NPRC had ceded power to a national conference.

Amnesty International believes that political negotiations concerning a resolution to the conflict or a return to civilian rule, in order to be successful, must take into account the human rights abuses committed during the conflict. Complaints and reports of human rights violations must be investigated impartially and effectively and those responsible brought to justice. Steps should be taken to ensure that such abuses are not repeated by incorporating into any peace agreement strong human rights guarantees and effective mechanisms for their implementation.

Human rights abuses in the conflict

Since the conflict in Sierra Leone began in 1991, unarmed civilians have been the victims of torture, ill-treatment and deliberate and arbitrary killings. Those responsible for these abuses are serving government soldiers, rebel forces of the RUF and other armed groups which include disaffected soldiers. Amnesty International is also concerned about the use of the death penalty following convictions after unfair trials before courts-martial.

The Geneva Conventions of 1949 which apply to international conflicts - wars between nations - also contain provisions which apply to internal armed conflicts. Article 3, common to all four Conventions, extends to "armed conflict not of an international character" fundamental rules for the protection of non-combatants which each party to the conflict is "bound to apply, as a minimum". Under the terms of common Article 3, people who take no active part or who have ceased to take an active part in hostilities must be treated humanely in all circumstances. Common Article 3 specifically prohibits: violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; the taking of hostages; and outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment. This prohibition applies not only to government forces but to all parties to internal armed conflicts including armed political groups.

Human rights violations by government soldiers

Unlawful killings of non-combatants

Despite uncertainty about the identity of those responsible for attacks against civilians during much of 1994, reports often suggested that elements within the Sierra Leone army were responsible. Major roads were a particular target for attacks; the routes between Makeni and Koidu in the north and Bo and Kenema in the south became impassable without military escort. Large numbers of civilians died in attacks on vehicles along these roads.

On 5 August 1994 a civilian convoy with a military escort was attacked by men in government army uniforms near Matotoka on the road between Makeni and Koidu. At least three, but possibly more, civilians were reported to have been shot; women were reported to have been stripped and raped. On 25 August 1994 another convoy was attacked, again by men in army uniforms, between Matotoka and Makali, resulting in deliberate killings of civilians; **Captain Nasiru Barrie**, who was leading the convoy, was reported to have been captured and decapitated. The timing and precision of these attacks suggested collusion by some soldiers with the attackers.

Sierra Leonean civilians also claimed that many of the attacks during 1994 in Southern Province, including along the road from Bo to Kenema, were carried out by serving government soldiers.

In several cases, killings blamed by the NPRC on rebel forces of the RUF were in fact carried out by government soldiers.

At least 11 Sierra Leoneans, whose names have not been confirmed, an Irish priest, **Father Felim McAllister**, a Dutch doctor, **Dr Eelco Krijn**, his wife, **Karen van Goudoever**, and their three-year-old daughter, **Zita**, were killed during an attack near the hospital at Panguma, Kenema District, on 12 March 1994. Although the deaths were initially blamed on the RUF, witnesses claimed that government soldiers had been responsible for the killings. Because of apparent rebel activity in the region around Panguma, Father McAllister, the Dutch family and several nuns had decided to evacuate the hospital. As they left in three jeeps, soldiers fired at them. Dr Krijn received serious injuries; his wife and child were shot dead. He too was subsequently shot dead. Father McAllister was also killed in the attack but the nuns escaped.

Under pressure from church leaders and the Dutch and Irish governments, the government initiated an official investigation into the deaths of Father McAllister, Dr Krijn and his family. Property belonging to the murdered foreigners was subsequently found in

the home of an army lieutenant who had been commander of an army unit stationed in Panguma. A woman who was working as a cook for the soldier reported that the property was in his home. The following day both she and her young child were found shot dead.

The commission of inquiry, chaired by a lawyer, concluded that both the lieutenant and a second soldier had contributed to the deaths through professional negligence, but had not been directly involved in the killings; it recommended that both men be brought immediately before a court-martial. Although arrested in September 1994, they were both subsequently released without being prosecuted and resumed their service in the Sierra Leone army.

There were claims that prominent lawyer, **Patrick P. B. Kebbie**, killed on 25 December 1994 in Kenema, was shot by government soldiers and not, as was officially claimed, by RUF rebel forces. Initial reports suggested that he had been one of the victims of an attack by rebels on Kenema that day. However, subsequent reports revealed that he was killed before any rebel attack on the town. According to reports, a group of soldiers went to the house of Patrick P. B. Kebbie, who had recently been offered the post of Director of Public Prosecutions by the NPRC, and asked him to go outside. When he asked what they wanted they replied that they had been sent to kill him. His elderly mother intervened, pleading that they kill her instead. Patrick P. B. Kebbie was shot in the head. The soldiers who had killed him were reported to have been seen later among other government soldiers in Kenema.

Despite conflicting accounts of the circumstances of the death of Patrick P. B. Kebbie, no official inquiry into his death was initiated.

Torture and ill-treatment of rebel suspects

Suspected rebels, or people accused of assisting or collaborating with rebels, have been tortured and ill-treated by soldiers, often in public. There were many reports of suspects captured by soldiers being bound tightly, sometimes with both arms and legs tied behind them, beaten and mutilated. Amnesty International is not aware of any independent or impartial investigations of these incidents or effective steps to prevent such incidents.

While in Sierra Leone in May 1993 an Amnesty International delegation visited several displaced people's camps including those at Makeni, Bombali District, and Masingbi, Tonkolili District, both in Northern Province, where a large number of people had fled as a result of rebel activity in Kono District, Eastern Province, in late 1992. At the camp in Makeni a teacher from Njaiama, Kono District, described how he had been among a large number of civilians captured by RUF rebel forces in Kono District. He escaped after four days. In March 1993, after leaving Kono District, he and a friend were detained by government soldiers as suspected rebels. He was beaten and his arms were

tied tightly behind his back, with the ropes cutting into his flesh, apparently in an attempt to force him to admit to involvement in rebel activities. He remained tied for 24 hours and sustained severe injuries to his arms which were still clearly visible. The soldiers finally conceded that he had not assisted or collaborated with rebel forces and he was released.

Four suspected rebels taken to a military barracks in March 1994 following an attack on Koribundu, Bo District, were reported to have had their hands and feet bound tightly with wire and rope. They were thrown to the ground, kicked and then suspended head down from iron bars and again kicked.

Error! Filename not specified.

Injuries caused by prolonged tight tying of the arms of a man detained by soldiers as a rebel suspect in March 1993.

In the village of Bongor, about 10 kilometres east of Serabu, Bo District, a young man was reported to have been tortured by government soldiers who suspected that he was a rebel. He had let off a hand grenade near the village in late September 1994 but it was unclear whether this was connected with any rebel activity. He was arrested by soldiers that night as he returned to the house where he was staying. He was interrogated and beaten. When he refused to talk, his face, chest and abdomen were cut with a knife. He was held during the night and the following day was left to lie in the sun; no one was allowed to assist him. He subsequently died. Two of his friends and an elderly man in whose house he had been staying were also reported to have been beaten and then taken by soldiers to Sumbuya, some 16 kilometres away. It was not known what happened to them.

The fate of others arrested on suspicion of rebel activities was also unclear. Following the increase in rebel activities in late December 1994 and January 1995 a large number of people suspected of rebel activities were reported to have been arrested in and around Freetown in January 1995. It appeared that some of these arrests were indiscriminate and may have included some of the many displaced people who had fled rural areas for Freetown. Whereas in the past those suspected of involvement of rebel activities were detained

without charge or trial at the Central Prison, Pademba Road, in Freetown, in early 1995 rebel suspects were taken to Cockerill Military Headquarters in Freetown for questioning. Some were subsequently released; it was unclear how many remained in detention without charge or trial. There were fears, founded on the treatment of suspected rebels by soldiers throughout the conflict, that they may have been tortured and ill-treated or extrajudicially executed while held in military custody.

Extrajudicial executions of captured rebels

Since the beginning of the conflict in 1991 government soldiers have extrajudicially executed captured rebels. Amnesty International is unaware of any investigations of these killings or effective steps taken to prevent them. Under the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, the authorities are required to conduct thorough, prompt and impartial investigations of all cases of suspected extrajudicial executions, to bring those responsible to justice and to take effective measures to prevent such killings.

As well as captured fighters, people accused of collaborating or sympathizing with rebel forces have also been tortured, ill-treated and extrajudicially executed. People have been accused by government soldiers of being rebels or rebel sympathizers on the basis of little or no evidence. Often, those who knew the suspect and could testify to their identity and innocence were afraid to speak up in case they too were suspected as rebel sympathizers. Such suspects were often summarily executed. Victims were often mutilated and killed by decapitation. Severed heads have been displayed on army vehicles.

Rebels who surrendered in February 1994 in Buedu, Kailahun District, were reported to have been summarily executed by soldiers. In April 1994 some 30 people, including children, from the village of Dodo Kotuma, also in Kailahun District, who had sought refuge in the bush were reported to have been taken back to their village by soldiers and then to Buedu where 25, apparently suspected of collaboration with rebels, were shot by soldiers.

Witnesses of an attack on the town of Lunsar on 1 January 1995 whom Amnesty International met in Guinea in April 1995 described the extrajudicial execution of two captured rebels by government soldiers; they were not shot but decapitated.

Executions following convictions by courts-martial

In an attempt to address defection and unlawful activities by soldiers in the Sierra Leone army, the NPRC resorted to the use of executions after legal proceedings which were unfair.

Apparently in response to mounting public criticism during 1994 of the behaviour of government soldiers, a number of soldiers were brought to trial before courts-martial and several received death sentences. Courts-martial are composed of a panel of senior military officers chaired by a civilian High Court judge who advises the panel on points of law. Defendants are denied the right to appeal against conviction and sentence to a higher court. Sentences have to be confirmed by the head of state.

The then Attorney General and Secretary of State for Justice, Franklyn Bai Kargbo, resigned in September 1994 in protest against the use of the death penalty. Twelve soldiers, including a 77-year-old warrant officer, **Amara Conteh**, were executed on 11 and 12 November 1994 after being convicted by courts-martial in Freetown of charges which included collaborating with rebels, armed robbery and murder.

Other trials before courts-martial of soldiers accused of similar offences also took place. For example, on 1 November 1994 a further six soldiers appeared before a court-martial charged with murdering two civilians in July 1994. In a separate case, a senior military officer, **Lieutenant-Colonel Chernor M. Deen**, was sentenced to death on 11 January 1995 by a court-martial in Freetown. Formerly commander of the Second Battalion of the Sierra Leone army based at Teko Barracks in Makeni, he had been compulsorily retired in April 1994 with 13 other senior military officers, including the Chief of Staff of the RSLMF. He was arrested in September 1994 and charged with collaborating with rebel forces. He had apparently been overheard by other soldiers talking on a military radio. He was convicted on five counts of aiding and communicating with rebel forces and sentenced to death by firing-squad.

Amnesty International believes that the government has a duty to maintain the rule of law, to exert effective control over its armed forces and to hold accountable those responsible for breaches of the law. However, Amnesty International considers that the death penalty is itself a violation of the fundamental right to life and the right not to be subjected to cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment. The use of the death penalty is contrary to the trend in Africa and countries around the world to abolish this penalty. Nineteen states in Africa have abolished the death penalty in law or in practice and a majority of states in the world have also done so. The UN Security Council has excluded this penalty for the gravest crimes under international law - serious violations of the laws of armed conflict and crimes against humanity, including genocide - in the statutes of the *ad hoc* international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

While recognizing the gravity of the charges brought against the defendants, Amnesty International condemned the executions in November 1994 and urged that no further executions take place. Amnesty International believes that there should be investigations into human rights abuses committed during the conflict and that those

responsible should be brought to trial. However, in all cases trials should conform to international standards of fairness and no death sentences should be passed.

Human rights abuses by rebel forces

Since the beginning of the conflict in 1991, rebel forces of the RUF and other armed groups which subsequently emerged have also committed large-scale human rights abuses. Civilians have been tortured and ill-treated and deliberately and arbitrarily killed. Captured civilians have been held hostage. Some of the victims of these abuses have been among the large number of non-combatants, including children, who have been abducted by rebel forces. Many have been forcibly conscripted into rebel forces; the fate of others is unknown.

While some attacks by rebel forces, such as on the mining companies of SIEROMCO and Sierra Rutile in January and again in April 1995, the diamond mining area of Kono District, and the approaches to Freetown, were of obvious strategic and economic

importance, many attacks were directed at civilians, who were killed, their homes destroyed and their property looted. Thousands were forced to seek refuge either in displaced people's camps in Sierra Leone or in neighbouring countries, particularly Guinea.

The result was to terrorise the civilian population and destroy the social and economic structure of their communities.

Deliberate and arbitrary killings by rebel forces

During attacks on towns and villages throughout Sierra Leone, unarmed civilians have been killed, often by machetes, by rebel forces. Many of these deaths appeared to be deliberate and arbitrary killings: often towns and villages were undefended and contained no military targets.

During 1994 there were many attacks in Southern Province. On 30 June 1994 some 60 villagers were killed at Telu Jaiama, Bo District; more than 20 others were seriously injured. The following month as many as 100 villagers were killed at Telu Bongor, also in Bo District.

Jimi-Bagbo, Bo District, was attacked on 8 September 1994. Most civilians had fled the town because there had been several attacks in the surrounding area and they feared that Jimi-Bagbo would also be attacked. However, the old and infirm who were unable to flee remained in the town which was guarded by a group of government soldiers.

According to reports, when the town was attacked, the civilians who remained were

forced by rebels to enter one of the houses; it was then set alight and its occupants burned alive.

The attack on Kabala by the RUF on 7 November 1994, during which at least 10 civilians were killed, heralded a spate of attacks on towns and villages in the north during which unarmed civilians were deliberately and arbitrarily killed. Estimates of the number of civilian deaths in the area around the towns of Kabala and Bumbuna during November 1994 were put at at least 500 by some sources.

Witnesses later reported that over 650 houses had been destroyed in 14 villages in the area around Alikalia and Bendugu in Koinadugu District in late 1994; although it was difficult to determine how many civilians died in attacks in these villages, estimates of the number killed were between 50 and a hundred. In the village of Badela, some people were reported to have died inside their houses which were set alight by rebel forces; others were reported to have been thrown into a river.

During the attack by rebel forces on Mattru, Bo District, on 26 December 1994 civilians were rounded up from different parts of the village. Several young men among them were subsequently killed; they included **Abdul Kargbo**, **Alfred Foday**, **Bobor Carpenter**, **Francis Kenneh**, **Gaiva Yamba**, and **Musa Yaawei**. Forty-five houses were burned and property destroyed or looted.

On 1 January 1995 there were attacks by rebel forces on several towns and villages in Port Loko District, including Lunsar, Marampa, Maforki, Foredugu and Mabesseneh. More than one hundred civilians were reported to have died in these attacks.

Also on 1 January 1995, the vehicle carrying a member of the Interim National Electoral Commission, **Almami Cyllah**, was attacked by rebel forces dressed in government army uniforms on the road between Foredugu and Lunsar; with him were an elderly and infirm relative, **Alhaji N'fagie Nabie**, and four other people. Shots were fired at the vehicle. While the other passengers fled into the bush and eventually reached safety after being pursued by their attackers, Alhaji N'fagie Nabie was unable to run. His mutilated corpse - an arm and leg had been cut off - was recovered three days later.

At least 15 people were deliberately and arbitrarily killed during the attack on the town of Kambia on 25 January 1995. Among the victims was **Aissatou Bangura**, who had given birth a week earlier, who was shot dead. Other members of her family were abducted by rebel forces. **Amara Sowa** was killed as he tried to escape the attack in a vehicle. Rebels fired at the front tyres, forcing the vehicle to stop; Amara Sowa was then stabbed to death. **Abu Sidiki Kamara**, a former chiefdom police officer, was shot dead in his home in front of his family. When rebels entered his home and saw a photograph of Abu Sidiki Kamara in his policeman's uniform, they demanded that he give them his gun.

When he failed to produce any weapon, they shot him. One of his daughters, **Abiatu Kamara**, aged about 17, was abducted by the rebels (see page 23). **Wenday Kargbo**, also aged about 17, the daughter of the Paramount Chief, was killed in the Paramount Chief's compound after the rebels asked her where her father was hiding.

On 10 April 1995 a group of rebels, dressed in complete army uniforms and well armed, attacked vehicles carrying civilians who were travelling from Bo to Freetown. An Irish religious brother, **Senan Kerrigan**, who had worked for several years in Bo, was shot during the attack; wounded in the arm and stomach, he subsequently died.

On 29 April 1995 rebel forces attacked Koidu, Kono District. One victim of rebel activities in Koidu, a woman, later described how rebels fired at the door of the house where she was staying, wounding her in the arm; they then entered the house. Her two sons, a pregnant woman and her two small children and several young men were shot dead. She and other women sheltering in the house were taken outside and raped; some of the women were then killed. The woman's daughter received serious knife wounds to her back, shoulder and chest and died a few hours later. Her husband was also killed in the attack.

During an attack by rebel forces on the night of 8 June 1995 on the town of Port Loko, Port Loko District, four people, including **Osman Fofanah**, a school student from the Roman Catholic secondary school in Port Loko, the Siaka Stevens Secondary School, died in their homes which were set alight by rebel forces. Two other people - a man and his wife - were also reported to have been deliberately killed by the rebels. At least another 20 civilians, including children, drowned in the river while trying to escape. There were also reports that six Sierra Leoneans and a family of five including children aged from five to 13, members of the Lebanese community in Sierra Leone, were killed after being seized by rebels during the attack on Port Loko. The burnt remains of all 11 people were reported to have been discovered later at the village of Romeni, about 18 kilometres from Port Loko. During the attack 35 houses were burned down and property looted.

Rebel activity continued in Southern Province throughout July 1995; several villages were attacked around Bo. Among the civilian casualties were two women who were reported to have been deliberately killed after being rounded up in a farmhouse with eight other women. The bodies of more than 30 civilians were reported to have been discovered in the villages of Petema and Kalia, some 20 kilometres south-west of Bo, which had been attacked by rebel forces. The victims were believed to have included boys who refused to join rebel forces.

Torture and ill-treatment by rebel forces

Rebel forces have been responsible for the torture and ill-treatment of civilians. Women and girls have been raped. Victims have been mutilated, often by having their hands cut off.

In August 1994, a civilian captured by men wearing government army uniforms near the road between Bo and Kenema was reported to have been taken to a rebel camp where rebels cut off his hands before releasing him. Such treatment was common; in 1994 there were reports that women in Kenema District who had gone into the bush to collect firewood returned with their hands cut off.

A traditional leader, a Section Chief, from the village of Yambama, Bo District, and a number of other men were reported to have been seized by rebels on 8 September 1994. They were tied up and the other men were forced to watch as the Section Chief's chest was cut vertically with a knife. His genitals were also mutilated. He was left tied to a tree while the others were released and warned not to recount what they had seen or to come back to bury the body or they would suffer the same fate. His body was not recovered.

In May 1995 a man from Koidu who had sustained severe injuries to his head and face described how he and eight other men were rounded up by rebels, stripped and forced to push a car to a rebel base. They were then lined up and shot. Surviving a bullet wound to his head, he was then stabbed repeatedly with a bayonet in his face and beaten around the head before the rebels left when he managed to escape and find help.

Hostage-taking and other abuses against captured non-combatants

Between November 1994 and January 1995 rebel forces of the RUF abducted 17 foreign nationals and held them hostage, demanding the withdrawal of foreign troops in Sierra Leone and an end to military assistance by foreign governments as a condition of their release. Large numbers of Sierra Leonean civilians have also been abducted and held captive by the RUF but no specific demands have been made for their release. The fate of many of them is unknown. Some who tried to escape or refused to join rebel forces have been killed and captured girls and women have been raped.

At the beginning of the conflict, when insurgent forces invaded from Liberia in March 1991, they apparently faced little resistance and rapidly captured towns and villages in Southern and Eastern Provinces, killing those who refused them assistance or who tried to escape. At that time hundreds of Sierra Leoneans were reported to have joined the rebels willingly, but many more were forced under duress to cooperate with them and to provide food, money and other assistance. As the RUF gained territory in the south and

east of the country, many villages and their inhabitants effectively came under the control of the RUF.

By the end of 1993 government troops had regained control of areas in the south and east previously held by rebel forces. However, during 1994 and into 1995 attacks by rebels spread throughout the country. Large numbers of civilians, in particular young men and women but also children, were captured and abducted by rebel forces during these attacks. They have been forcibly recruited to fight in rebel forces or forced to undertake other tasks such as carrying loads, including looted property and food, and cooking. While representatives of the RUF publicly claimed that some of those abducted had joined rebel forces willingly, it appeared that in most cases captured civilians were held under duress, threatened with killing or ill-treatment, and had little option but to cooperate. However, it also appeared that some chose subsequently to join rebel forces.

The abduction of civilians received international publicity in November 1994 after two British nationals, **Robert d'Cruz** and **Calum Murray**, both volunteers with the Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) organization who were working on rural development projects, were abducted by the RUF during the attack on Kabala. A number of Sierra Leoneans were also abducted. Radio messages by members of the RUF claimed that they were holding the two men and demanded arms, ammunition and medicines in exchange for their release.

A large number of people, including 15 foreign nationals who were held as hostages, were subsequently abducted in January 1995.

A Swiss national, **Roger Graf**, was reported missing following a rebel attack near Lago on the road from Kenema to Panguma on 4 January 1995. It later emerged that he had been abducted by rebel forces. **Abdul Rahman Abdullah**, **Dr Mohamed S. Barrie**, **Vivian Gorvie**, **Dr Mohamed Sulaiman Jabaty Wai**, **Alieu Korjie**, **Thomas Nyamawa**, **Sarah Samura** and her child, **Junior**, **Yayah Sandy** and **Benson Wilhelm** were among Sierra Leonean civilians abducted during the attacks on the SIEROMCO and Sierra Rutile company sites on 18 and 19 January 1995; seven foreigners, including **James Westwood** and **Ross Milne** from SIEROMCO and **Peter White** and **Andrew Young** from Sierra Rutile were also abducted.

A few days later, on 25 January 1995, RUF rebels attacked Kambia and abducted a large number of Sierra Leonean civilians. It was not possible to establish the exact number of those captured but they are known to include more than one hundred secondary school students. The fate of many of them remains unclear. Seven religious sisters - six Italians and a Brazilian - who had been providing assistance to polio victims in Kambia were also abducted.

While in Guinea in April 1995, the Amnesty International delegation met a large number of Sierra Leoneans who had fled to Guinea following the attack on Kambia and other towns and villages in Northern Province in early 1995. An estimated 20,000 Sierra Leoneans had sought refuge in the Forécariah region close to the border with Sierra Leone.

Amnesty International learned the identity of more than 30 of the children and young people abducted from Kambia. They included **Aminata M. Bangura**, aged 13, **Abdulkarim Daboh**, aged 10, **Ibrahim Kamara**, aged 12, **Elizabeth Kargbo**, aged 16, **Oumarou Sesay**, aged 13, and **Foday Turay**, aged 18. Also abducted were **Lucy Brima** and **Mariama Brima**, both 13 who were pupils at the Kolenten Secondary School in Kambia, and **Satta Musa**, aged 12, a pupil at Saint Augustine's Primary School in Kambia. In some cases, several children from the same family had been abducted. A large number of adults were also abducted; they included **Abdulai Bangura** and **Alimamy Sesay**.

They were taken, together with the seven nuns, to a rebel camp in the Malal Hills, in the region between the towns of Lunsar and Magburaka in Northern Province. Some of the children managed to escape. During interviews with Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea, Amnesty International learned that two of the abducted school students, **Dauda Turay** and **Yusuf Zachir**, were shot dead by the rebels, apparently because they had complained of being tired of walking through the bush. A young man abducted from Kambia on 25 January 1995 who managed to escape after a month described how it had taken seven days to walk through the bush to the rebel camp in the Malal Hills with only cassava to eat. He was forced to cook for the rebels.

The RUF initially denied that it was holding the foreign nationals as hostages, saying that it was holding them for their own protection and that the insecurity in the country prevented their release. However, the RUF subsequently set as conditions for the release of the hostages the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Sierra Leone, in particular those from Nigeria and Guinea but also Ghana, and an end to military assistance by foreign governments. It claimed that the United Kingdom was among those governments providing military assistance to the NPRC, a claim which was rejected by the United Kingdom Government.

However, despite these demands not being met, on 21 March 1995 the RUF released the seven nuns captured in Kambia. They were handed over by members of the RUF to church officials and were apparently released on humanitarian grounds. The 10 other foreign nationals - Robert d'Cruz, Calum Murray, Roger Graf and those abducted from the SIEROMCO and Sierra Rutile sites in January 1995 - were handed over at the border with Guinea to representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on 20 April 1995 together with six Sierra Leoneans who had also been abducted from the SIEROMCO and Sierra Rutile sites. However, among the Sierra Leoneans abducted at the same time or in subsequent attacks who were reported to be still held were

Alieu Korjie, Sarah Samura and her child, Yayah Sandy and a traditional leader, a Regent Chief, from Matru, Bonthe District, Southern Province.

Also still held were the school students and other Sierra Leoneans abducted from Kambia. In a radio broadcast, the RUF's spokesperson, Ibrahim Jalloh, based in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, claimed that the young people had not been forcibly conscripted by the RUF but had joined its forces willingly. This claim had been greeted with disbelief and distress by the parents and relatives of those abducted. They had no idea of the whereabouts of their children nor any assurance of their safety and well-being.

Although conditions were harsh - the privations of living for several months in the bush and long marches through the bush - the foreign nationals were protected from the ill-treatment suffered by some captured Sierra Leonean civilians. Boys who managed to escape after being abducted by rebel forces claimed that they were forced to take drugs, trained in the use of firearms and then sent to fight against government troops; girls and young women were repeatedly raped.

The pattern of abductions of Sierra Leonean civilians by the RUF continued after the releases of the foreign nationals and six Sierra Leoneans in March and April 1995. During the attack on the town of Port Loko on 8 June 1995, more than one hundred people were reported to have been abducted; they included over 50 schoolboys and girls, aged between 10 and 19, many from the Siaka Stevens Secondary School. Among them were **Estella Bangura**, aged 14, **Josephine Conteh**, aged 11, **Alhaji Kamara**, aged 10, **Mary Mansaray**, aged 18, **Sahr Pessima**, aged 13, and **Sallieu Sesay**, aged 12. Adults, both men and women, abducted at the same time included **Sarah Bangura**, **Mabinty Kamara**, **Marie Kamara**, **Gbassay Lakkoh**, **Mamusu Mansaray**, and **Yayah Turay**. The whereabouts and fate of all these people are unknown.

Conclusions and recommendations

The fundamental human rights of Sierra Leonean civilians are being systematically abused in the conflict in Sierra Leone. The perpetrators of these abuses are serving government soldiers, rebel forces of the RUF and other armed groups which include disaffected soldiers. Amnesty International is calling on the government, the leaders of the RUF and other armed groups and also the international community to take immediate and effective measures to bring an end to the torture and ill-treatment and deliberate and arbitrary killing of defenceless non-combatants.

Amnesty International's recommendations to the Sierra Leone Government

Amnesty International is calling on the NPRC:

- to assert its authority over the Sierra Leonean security forces in order to ensure that government forces do not commit human rights violations such as torture and ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions;
- to demonstrate its total opposition to human rights violations by government forces and to make clear to all members of the security forces that these violations will not be tolerated under any circumstances;
- to ensure that those in charge of security forces maintain strict chain-of-command control in order to ensure that those under their command do not commit human rights violations;
- to ensure that government forces do not collude in human rights abuses by armed political groups and do not lend such groups support in facilitating human rights abuses;
- to ensure that all complaints and reports of torture and ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions are investigated promptly, impartially and effectively in accordance with international standards, such as the UN Principles on the Effective Prevention and Investigation of Extra-legal, Arbitrary and Summary Executions, by a body which is independent of those allegedly responsible and which has the necessary powers and resources to carry out the investigation; individuals suspected of committing human rights violations should be removed from any position of authority or duties which bring them into contact with prisoners or others at risk of abuse;
- to ensure that those responsible for torture and ill-treatment and extrajudicial executions are brought to justice;
- to commute all death sentences and to end the use of the death penalty.

Amnesty International's recommendations to rebel forces

Amnesty International is calling on the leaders of the RUF, and other armed groups operating in Sierra Leone, to conform to minimum standards of humane behaviour as expressed in international humanitarian law (the laws of armed conflict) and contained principally in common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions. In particular they should:

- prohibit deliberate and arbitrary killings of non-combatants under any circumstances;
- order their fighters to treat prisoners humanely, whether the prisoners are civilians or members of the armed forces, and never to kill them;
- prohibit the taking of hostages;
- make clear to those under their command that they are totally opposed to the torture and killing of non-combatants;
- conduct proper investigations into alleged abuses in order to determine responsibility and ensure that individuals suspected of committing human rights abuses are removed from any position of authority or duties which bring them into contact with prisoners or others at risk of abuse.

Amnesty International's recommendations to the international community

Amnesty International is calling on members of the international community to take all possible steps to exert their influence to bring an end to the widespread human rights abuses in Sierra Leone. In particular:

- intergovernmental organizations, including the UN and OAU, which are seeking ways of resolving the conflict in Sierra Leone should ensure that any political settlement to the armed conflict should include strong guarantees for the respect of international human rights law and international humanitarian law and impartial and independent mechanisms for their implementation;
- the international community should ensure that measures are taken to promptly and independently investigate violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law during armed conflict and to bring to justice the perpetrators of human rights abuses;
- those countries which provide military training, arms or other military assistance to those involved in the conflict in Sierra Leone have a responsibility to ensure that this assistance includes human rights safeguards and does not facilitate human rights abuses.