

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Further information on 205/93 (AFR 51/05/93, 22 June 1993) - Legal Concern/Health concern

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

Eighty-six political detainees held without charge or trial were released from the Central Prison, Pademba Road, in the capital Freetown (commonly known as Pademba Road Prison) on 9 July 1993 after a review of their cases by both police and military authorities. Among those released were Ernest Allen, former Acting Permanent Secretary at the Department of Defence who was arrested on 8 March 1993, Adeline Koroma, a former government information officer, and Roy Stevens, a journalist, who had both been held since May 1992, and Harry T.T. Williams, a former government minister who was arrested in October 1992.

Amnesty International does not yet know the identities of the other released detainees.

Amnesty International representatives visiting Pademba Road Prison in May 1993 met 264 political detainees. In a statement on 10 July 1993 Lieutenant Karefa Kargbo, Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, stated that 242 political detainees had been held in Pademba Road Prison. The remaining 156 detainees are alleged to have been involved with rebel forces who have been fighting government troops in the south and east of the country since 1991 when they invaded Sierra Leone from Liberia. The conflict has continued since the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), headed by Captain Valentine Strasser, came to power following a coup in April 1992. According to the government, these detainees are to remain in custody indefinitely while the conflict continues. It was implied that those held at Pademba Road Prison who had been arrested since 1992 in the context of the conflict were prisoners of war. However, none of those held in Pademba Road Prison since 1992 appeared to have been captured during fighting. Large groups of civilians have been detained, apparently indiscriminately, by soldiers as they have retaken areas previously held by rebels. No proper investigation into whether they had been involved in rebel activities appeared to have taken place and the only grounds for detention seemed to be a general suspicion that they might have supported or collaborated with rebel forces.

Amnesty International is concerned that some of the remaining detainees held without charge or trial at Pademba Road Prison may be arbitrarily detained in the absence of any substantial evidence that they were involved in rebel activities, and is therefore continuing to urge that their cases be reviewed

in order to establish whether there are legitimate grounds for their detention.

Lieutenant Karefa Kargbo also stated on 10 July 1993 that only one detainee had died in Pademba Road Prison since 1992. There is serious overcrowding, insufficient food and inadequate medical care at Pademba Road Prison and, according to Amnesty International's information, deaths from malnutrition and disease still frequently occur. However, the number of deaths in the prison has decreased significantly since the NPRC came to power in April 1992.

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

- welcoming the government's recent review of the cases of political detainees at Pademba Road Prison and the subsequent release of 86 detainees on 9 July 1993;
- expressing concern, however, that some of those remaining in detention may be detained arbitrarily by the military, in the absence of any substantial evidence of involvement in rebel activities;
- urging that no one should be detained indefinitely without having an opportunity to challenge the reasons for their detention and evidence against them before an independent and impartial tribunal;
- requesting assurances that there will be a thorough review of remaining cases in order to establish whether there are grounds for continued detention; any against whom there is no evidence should be released;
- continuing to call for improvements to conditions at Pademba Road Prison.

APPEALS TO:

1) Captain Valentine E.M. Strasser **Salutation: Dear Captain Strasser**
Chairman, Supreme Council of State
National Provisional Ruling Council
State House
Independence Avenue
Freetown, Sierra Leone
Telexes: 3230
Telegrams: Captain Strasser, NPRC, Freetown, Sierra Leone

2) Captain Julius Maada Bio **Salutation: Dear Captain Maada Bio**
Deputy Chairman, Supreme Council of State
and Chief Secretary of State
National Provisional Ruling Council
State House
Independence Avenue
Freetown, Sierra Leone
Telexes: 3230
Telegrams: Captain Maada Bio, NPRC, Freetown, Sierra Leone

3) Lieutenant Karefa Kargbo **Salutation: Dear Lieutenant Kargbo**
Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
Department of Foreign Affairs
14 Gloucester Street
Freetown, Sierra Leone
Telexes: 3230
Telegrams: Lieutenant Karefa Kargbo, Foreign Affairs Department, Freetown, Sierra Leone

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

Human rights organization:

Society for the Preservation
of Human Rights in Sierra Leone
PMB 915
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Newspapers:

New Citizen, 5 Hannah Benka-Coker Street, Brookfields, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Daily Mail, PO Box 53, Freetown, Sierra Leone
The Vision, 60 Old Railway Line, Brookfields, Freetown, Sierra Leone

and to diplomatic representatives of Sierra Leone accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or your section office, if sending appeals after 13 September 1993.