



Special Court for Sierra Leone
Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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RUF Trial Judgment is Special Court's Last in Sierra Leone

Judgment in the trial of three former leaders of Sierra Leone's defunct Revolutionary United Front (RUF) will be handed down by Trial Chamber I in Freetown on 25 February.

The three Accused, former RUF "Interim Leader" Issa Hassan Sesay, former RUF commander Morris Kallon, and RUF Chief of Security Augustine Gbao, each face an 18-count indictment, consisting of eight counts alleging widespread or systematic attacks against Sierra Leone's civilian population (crimes against humanity), eight counts which allege attacks by an armed militia against vulnerable persons (war crimes), and two counts of other serious violations of international humanitarian law – the recruiting and use of child soldiers and attacks against UN peacekeepers.

All three of the accused have pleaded not guilty to all of the charges.

If any of the Accused is found guilty on any of the 18 counts, a sentencing judgment will be handed down within a month. The Special Court does not have the death penalty, and sentences must be a specified term of years.

In January 2002 Sierra Leone's Parliament ratified the Special Court Agreement without a dissenting vote. The Court began its work the following June.

This is the last judgment which will take place in Freetown. Two other trials are complete, including appeals. The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor is continuing in The Hague.

The Special Court was set up by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone to address atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's brutal civil war. That war, which began in 1991 and only ended in January 2002, has often been called the world's most brutal conflict in half a century. The widespread killing and mutilation of civilians, the burning of villages, and the abduction and recruiting of children to fight in the war have been chronicled by Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and reflected by such films as "Cry Freetown" and "Blood Diamonds."

#END

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996.

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