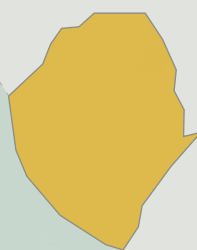


# Sierra Leone

The Wayamo Foundation and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung retrace the key events in the search for accountability for international crimes committed in Sierra Leone during the civil war that began in March 1991 and ended in January 2002.



## RUF attack Sierra Leone marking the start of a brutal civil war

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh attacks Sierra Leone from Liberia in a ruthless campaign to oust President Joseph Saidu Momoh from power.

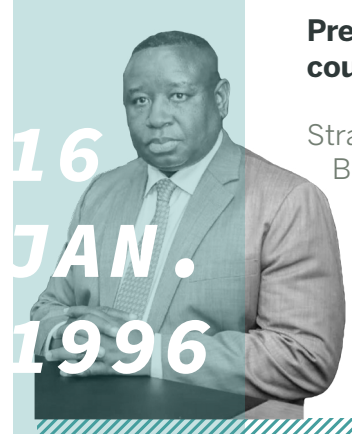
Foday Sankoh  
© Wikimedia, public domain



## President Momoh ousted in a coup

Momoh, who served as President of Sierra Leone from November 1985, is ousted in a coup by a group of soldiers led by a 25-year-old army captain Valentine Strasser. Following the coup, Strasser forms the National Provisional Ruling Council and rules until 16 January 1996.

Captain Valentine E.M. Strasser  
© Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 4.0



## President Strasser ousted in a coup

Strasser is overthrown by his deputy, Brigadier Julius Bio.

Julius Bio in 2018  
© Wikimedia, CC BY-SA 4.0



## Ahmad Tejan Kabbah elected president in multiparty elections

Democratic elections are held and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah the head of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) is elected president of Sierra Leone in the second round.

Ahmed Tejan Kabbah  
© Kari Barber, VOA Public Domain



## Abidjan peace accord signed

President Kabbah and Foday Sankoh sign the Abidjan Peace Accord. The peace is short lived as hostilities resume in 1997.

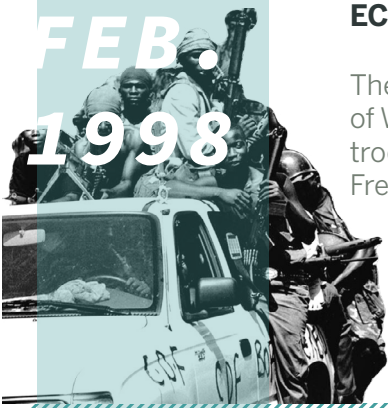
Foday Sankoh in Port Loko in December 1999  
© Open Society Foundations CC BY-SA 4.0



## Kabbah ousted in a coup by the AFRC

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) leads a successful coup against Kabbah's government. Maj. Johnny Paul Koroma is released from prison to head the AFRC. He invites the RUF to form a governing alliance. President Kabbah flees to Guinea.

Johnny Paul Koroma  
Eric Beauchemin, Wikimedia CC BY-SA 4.0



## ECOMOG reinstates President Kabbah to power

The AFRC are overthrown by Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) troops and the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) who storm Freetown and reinstate President Kabbah's government. ECOMOG and CDF continue to battle the rebels until they re-establish control of about two thirds of the country.

Members of Sierra Leone's Civil Defence Forces (CDF)  
© Open Society Foundations CC BY-SA 4.0

## 6 JANUARY 1999

### AFRC Attack on Freetown

AFRC fighters enter Freetown and capture State House in a chaotic, brutal attack that indiscriminately targets civilians. ECOMOG and CDF troops engage the AFRC, who are eventually forced to retreat from Freetown leaving behind a trail of destruction and countless civilian casualties.

## 7 JULY 1999

### Lomé Peace Agreement Signed

Following the attack on Freetown, international pressure mounts on President Kabbah to enter into a peace agreement with the armed opposition groups. An agreement is signed with the RUF in Lomé, Togo, which includes a power sharing arrangement, amnesties, the establishment of a TRC, reparations and a DDR process for the armed groups.



## UN deploys peacekeeping force to Sierra Leone

Despite the existence of the peace agreement, fighting resumes. The UN deploys a 6,000-strong peacekeeping mission (UNAMSIL), to assist with the implementation of the Lomé Peace Accord. In May 2000, hundreds of UNAMSIL peacekeepers are abducted by the RUF.

UN peacekeepers from Bangladesh  
© Abel Kavanagh MONUSCO CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



## Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act (2000) adopted

President Kabbah and the parliament of Sierra Leone adopt the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act (2000), paving the way for the establishment of the TRC. Due to ongoing hostilities, it takes another two years before the TRC can begin its work.

Demonstration in support of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission public hearing in Freetown  
© Sierra Leone TRC CC BY-NC-ND 3.0



## UN Security Council Resolution 1315 paves way for establishment of hybrid war crimes court

As the RUF continues to violate the terms of the Lomé agreement, President Kabbah requests the UN to establish a mixed national and international court to try "members of the RUF and their accomplices." The Security Council unanimously passes Resolution 1315 (2000) authorising the secretary-general to enter negotiations with the Sierra Leonean government to establish such a court.

UN Security Council in New York  
© Neptual/Wikimedia CC BY-SA 3.0



## Special Court for Sierra Leone agreement signed

The UN and the government of Sierra Leone sign an agreement creating the first hybrid international court to prosecute those persons who bear the greatest responsibility for international crimes committed in the Sierra Leonean civil war since 30 November 1996.

Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown  
© ALFA-CODE CC BY-SA 3.0



## Conflict in Sierra Leone declared over by President Kabbah

Freetown National Peace Monument erected in Freetown to commemorate the end of the war  
© Hassanjaloh1, Wikimedia CC BY-SA 4.0



## TRC Commissioners are sworn into office

Seven commissioners representing a mix of national and international members are sworn in by President Kabbah. The truth commission embarks on its mandate of creating an impartial historical record of the conflict, addressing impunity and promoting healing and reconciliation.

Bishop J.C. Humber, Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
© Sierra Leone TRC CC BY-NC-ND 3.0



## Several indictees are taken into custody by the Special Court for Sierra Leone to face trials

Thirteen persons are indicted by the Special Court. Majority of the accused are taken into the court's custody between March and September 2003. Joint trials are held in what come to be known as the RUF, AFRC and CDF trials. A final trial against Charles Taylor is held separately.

Sam Hinga Norman, one of the accused CDF leaders on trial  
© SCSL



## Submission of TRC Final Report

After gathering more than 7000 statements and conducting hearings across the country, the TRC submits a three-volume final report in which it makes far reaching recommendations designed to facilitate the building of a new Sierra Leone.

The Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the United Nations  
© Sierra Leone TRC CC BY-NC-ND 3.0



## Former Liberian president Charles Taylor arrested and handed over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone

Following international pressure, Nigerian authorities arrest Taylor as he attempts to flee the country. He is flown to Liberia before being handed over to the Special Court to face trial. He is eventually tried in the Hague on an 11 count-indictment, as it is deemed too risky to try him in West Africa of creating an impartial historical record of the conflict, addressing impunity and promoting healing and reconciliation.

Mongolian Peacekeepers deployed for the protection of the Special Court for Sierra Leone  
© Eskinder Debebe UN Photo CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



## AFRC trial judgement delivered by the Special Court

The Special Court convicts Alex Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu on 11 of the 14 counts in their indictment. The judgement marks the first time an accused person is tried and convicted for the use of child soldiers in conflict. Brima and Kanu are sentenced to 50 years, while Kamara receives a 45-year prison sentence.

AFRC senior leaders Alex Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu  
© SCSL



## CDF trial judgement delivered by the Special Court

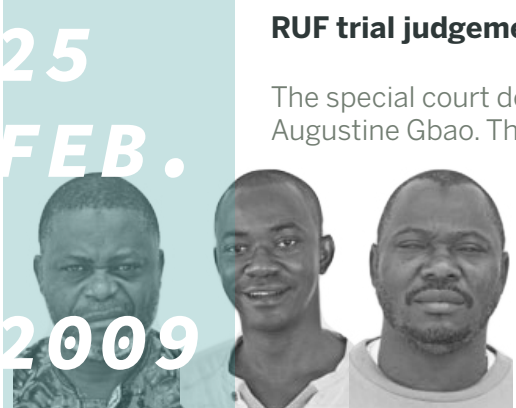
The special court finds CDF leaders, Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa guilty of war crimes and in addition, Kondewa is found guilty of other serious violations of international law. The accused are eventually sentenced to 15-years and 20-years imprisonment respectively.

CDF senior leaders Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa  
© SCSL

## 2007

### Limited reparations program begins

The Sierra Leonean government applies to the UN Peacebuilding Fund to establish a reparations fund for victims. It also establishes a steering committee for reparations, composed of staff from the National Commission for Social Action, TRC Commissioners, civil society representatives and UN mission representatives. A hasty registration process of eligible victims is followed by a chaotic, non-transparent implementation of the reparations program, leaving several victims dissatisfied.



## RUF trial judgement delivered by the Special Court

The special court delivers judgement in the case of Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao. The accused are all found guilty of their crimes and sentenced to 52-years, 40-years and 25-years imprisonment respectively. The judgment marks the first time an international tribunal convicts for the crime of forced marriage as a crime against humanity, and the crime of attacking United Nations peacekeepers.

RUF senior leaders Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao  
© SCSL



## Charles Taylor convicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity

The Special Court convicts Charles Taylor on all eleven counts in his indictment and sentences him to 50 years in prison, upheld on appeal. Taylor is serving his sentence in the United Kingdom.

Portrait of Charles Taylor  
© Thierry Ehrmann, Flickr, CC BY 2.0



## Businessman arrested in Europe for Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes for looting blood diamonds in Sierra Leone

Michel Desadeleer, a Belgian and American citizen is arrested in Spain on 28 August 2015 and extradited in Belgium on 8 September 2015 to face trial for Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes for looting of blood diamonds in Kono District, in the East of Sierra Leone, between 1999 and 2001. He dies in custody on 28 September 2016 before the trial began. his arrest marks the first time that a businessman is arrested for alleged participation in international crimes of looting and enslavement of civilians.

Artisanal diamond mining in Kono District, Sierra Leone  
© Kenny Lynch, Flickr CC BY-NC-ND 2.0