

# CHAPTER FOUR

## Nature of the Conflict

### Introduction

1. The Commission is required by its enabling legislation to determine whether the conflict was a result of deliberate planning, action or authorisation of any person or government, and what roles external or other actors may have played in the conflict.
2. The conflict started as an attempt to overthrow a dictatorial and tyrannical regime. It was unable to mobilise support among the people to prosecute the revolution. It resorted to abductions, forced recruitment and other violations and abuses to increase its numerical strength. Community militias were established to resist the purveyors of revolution. In no time, the militias themselves began to attack the civilian population that they were established to protect.
3. The defining character of this conflict was its radical departure from other armed conflicts in terms of targets. This was a conflict waged against the civilian population. The combatant factions did not target conventional military targets. There were very few accounts of direct confrontation between the combatant factions. In consequence, civilians bore the brunt of the violations and abuses that marked the conflict.
4. The conflict was also notable for its chameleonic nature. Factions and groups changed sides frequently culminating in the wholesale transfer of loyalty from a national army to a renegade fighting force established by an illegal government. The confusion among the civilian population led to the sobriquet, “sobels,” soldiers who became rebels at night in order to loot and plunder the resources of the people.
5. What shines through in the rest of this chapter is the plethora of violations and abuses to which the people were subject. The chapter analyses the fighting forces and identifies the strands in their composition and behaviour that enable an understanding of the violence they deployed against the civilian population.
6. Using qualitative testimony and quantitative analysis, the Commission captures the roles played by the armed factions in prosecuting their campaigns and ascribes responsibility for the violations and abuses to the different combat groups including the ECOMOG peacekeeping forces.
7. The Commission has researched the influence of external actors and factors in starting, and fuelling the many thousands of violations that took place during the conflict. Indeed there are specific examples of foreign involvement that attest to a war with significant international, particularly sub-regional, dynamics and reverberations. The overwhelming majority of abuses recorded by the Commission were carried out by Sierra Leoneans against Sierra Leoneans. The patent truth is that for eleven years the people of this country effectively waged armed conflict against themselves. In its essence, it was a self-destructive civil war.

8. The nature of the conflict is better understood in terms of its complexities and ambiguities than through the lens of any single, defining cause of ill intent. What this chapter shows is the multiplicity of causes and effects that permeate the violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law as well as the institutional fluidity of the violators themselves.
9. There are notable paradoxes at the heart of this analysis, which the time and resources available did not permit the Commission fully to resolve. One of our most important observations is that in spite of all the malice and suffering of the conflict period, Sierra Leone has returned in peacetime to what appears to be a climate of tolerant and harmonious co-existence. Sierra Leoneans demonstrated tremendous courage, resilience and desire to put the past behind, through accepting many of those who committed violations against them back in their home communities.
10. However, a propensity for conflict continues to exist among the people. Many of the root causes of the malice and violence remain unaddressed. To a large extent, the purpose of this chapter is to pose a deterrent to the recurrence of armed conflict by recording the full extent of the violations and abuses that have taken place and analysing the context that enabled the perpetration of such violations. The chapter also reports on two further features identified by the Commission as characteristics of the conflict:
  - (a) *particular malice*, whereby violations and abuses are found to have occurred as a result of deliberate targeting, planning or policy on the part of their perpetrators; and
  - (b) *particular suffering*, whereby the specific ordeals of communities, groups or single persons demand to be given a voice in the hope that we might all learn lessons from them and unite to ensure that such things never happen again.
11. Based upon the tenets outlined above, this chapter has been divided into four main sections. The first section outlines the Nature of the Violations by describing the framework for the categorisation of violations adopted by the Commission. The second deals with the victims of the conflict, noting certain characteristics of the violations and abuses perpetrated, and focusing on the patterns of abuse and evidence of targeting. The third section profiles those who committed the violations, that is, the perpetrators and perpetrator groups. It includes an assessment of the character and conduct of each of the militias and armed groups involved in the prosecution of the conflict. The fourth section titled, 'Characteristics of Context' elaborates the general trends that underpin the conflict. Each of these sections is supported, where necessary, by qualitative and quantitative data identifying patterns and peculiarities in the conflict.

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## NATURE OF THE VIOLATIONS

12. The violation categories used by the Commission are the violations known to have occurred frequently during the conflict in Sierra Leone. These are quite different from those that occurred during outbreaks of mass human rights abuse in other conflicts and countries. By using these common violations, the Commission hopes to comprehensively describe the common experiences of the Sierra Leonean people during the conflict.
13. The list is deliberately short, numbering 16 violations. Each is precisely defined to avoid ambiguity, ensuring a common understanding of the violations recorded by the Commission. While the list is short, there is scope for a broad analysis of each one. For example, acts of rape should be considered as not only happening in the context of abduction as sex slaves or “bush wives”; but as a violation perpetrated against women during attacks on villages or as part of encounters at checkpoints or in the bush. Furthermore, the burning of property should be understood, not just as an economic crime, but on occasion, as a means of murdering the persons detained within the property.

### Data Framework

14. In order to grasp the context in which the violations took place, the Commission organised the different violation types into a framework. Some violations such as amputation, forced cannibalism and forced displacement stand alone, because of their specific character and the patterns in which they were committed. The remaining violations have been divided into three sections: violations perpetrated in the context of abduction; violations without prior abduction; and economic violations. It was a major characteristic of the conflict that economic violations were accompanied by other violations, such as beatings.
15. Abduction is violation by itself. In the context of the war, it was carried out with other violations and/or provided a foundation for other violations. Abduction is defined by the Commission as the capture and forced/unwilling removal from current location, in the control of person/s defined as perpetrators. The Commission recorded 5968 cases of abduction.
16. Certain violations occurred specifically in the context of abduction. Abductees experienced abuse for an extended period, often for many years, whereas the experiences of non abducted victims were in the context of encounters with perpetrators. These experiences represented “events” in the lives of the non abducted victims. They occurred mostly during attacks on villages, village occupations, check point encounters, ambushes on the road and bush encounters. For those who were abducted, life was a continuous state of fear, within a rigid hierarchical command structure based on terror. The consequences on the lives of these two categories of victims varied accordingly.
17. It is important that we do not forget the common experiences of thousands of Sierra Leoneans who suffered during chance encounters with perpetrators. This created a climate of general terror within the country, as people never knew when they would be abused and their rights violated, in their village, in their home, etc.

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18. [The violations occurring in the context of abduction are dealt with more specifically in the chapters of this report dealing with Women, Children and Youth respectively. Indeed, sexual slavery was perpetrated mostly against women and girls. Forced recruitment was targeted at children and youths by the RUF, the AFRC and the CDF. The targeted age group for forced recruitment violations were those 10-14years.](#)<sup>1</sup>

19. Following from the above, the Commission developed the following framework for categorising the violations recorded in its database:

- 1 Amputation
- 2 Forced Cannibalism
- 3 Abduction and subsequent long term Detention and Mistreatment
  - 3.1 Forced Recruitment and Sexual Slavery with particular reference to children (including the Drugging violation), Forced Labour
  - 3.2 Assault, Torture and Rape of both children and adults that accompany or follow from Abduction
- 4 Mistreatment without Abduction
  - 4.1 Forced Labour, Assault, Torture and Rape
  - 4.2 Short term Detentions
- 5 Economic Violations
  - 5.1 Looting and Property Destruction
  - 5.2 Extortion
- 6 Forced Displacement
- 7 Killing

20. The purpose of the framework was to make the organisation and analysis of data collected practical. If the Commission had used the hundreds of categories of violations available in the legal or international instruments, the incidents would have been too few for relevant analysis or for the identification of patterns.

21. The examples provided throughout this chapter come from witnesses who made statements to the Commission and serve to illustrate the nature and the circumstances of each violation. However, it is important to understand that in the majority of the situations, victims suffered a combination of *several* violations from the same perpetrators in one incident. 63% of the victims<sup>2</sup> suffered two or more violations. While the Commission deals with the specificity of each violation, it also provides an account of how these violations were interrelated. For example, looting and destruction of property were usually carried out together and are therefore treated together.

22. The following testimony provides an example of this interrelation. The events described relate to the invasion of Moyolo village in Moyamba district, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 1996:

“The RUF told us that they are divided into 4 groups. The first group was called the Killers. The second group was responsible for amputations, the third was responsible for stabbing people to death

<sup>1</sup> See the Children’s Chapter of this Report in Volume 3B.

<sup>2</sup> 9440 out of the 14,995 violations recorded in the database

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and the last group responsible for burning.

Ten people were captured. They divided empty gallons into half, placed them on these people, sprinkled fuel and set them on fire. These people were burnt to ashes. As we were all locked in a room, the RUF started to kill people from this room one after the other. They would call you from the room, you would be taken out and be killed. The killing lasted for hours.

After, they said they were going to start cutting off hands. Many people were severely wounded. Six people had their hands finally chopped off. Amputation stopped and they started stabbing. Many people were again severely wounded and later died. That stopped and they started beating. Many people were beaten to death and survivors are still suffering from serious pain as of today.

I am a victim of the amputation group. I was seriously beaten and severely wounded on my hands for they had wanted to amputate me. I managed to escape from them, went into the bush and managed to reach Moyamba the next day.<sup>3</sup>

23. This testimony included numerous incidents or acts of violations and no less than six *categories* of violations: torture, arbitrary detention, killing, amputation, assault and forced displacement. The testimony also demonstrates the planned and structured character of the abuses that were perpetrated, a topic that will be addressed later in this chapter.

### **Violation Categories**

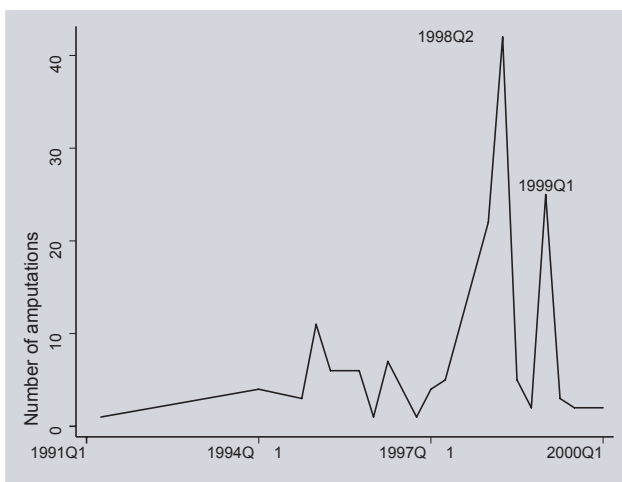
24. The following violations are captured in the database: amputations; forced cannibalism; abduction, forced recruitment, sexual slavery; drugging; forced labour; assault; torture; rape, arbitrary detention; looting and destruction of property; extortion; forced displacement; killing and cannibalism. A general characteristic of these violations is the indiscriminate manner in which they were committed. There was no respect shown to traditional norms, or vulnerable groups. The percentage of each violation committed by the armed factions shows that none of the violations was a peculiar characteristic of any group. They all seemed to be competing to outdo themselves on who would commit the most violations against civilians. Even the government soldiers who had gone through formal training did not seem to have felt themselves bound by the laws of war. Terror became the main tool for the armed groups. Even those groups set up to defend the communities against attack made no distinction between friend and foe. This chapter is therefore very painful reading of how armed groups claiming to act on behalf of the common man turned their guns on the very people in whose name they claimed to be acting.

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<sup>3</sup> John Williams, TRC statement number 947, Moyolo, Moyamba, 14 December 2002

### 1. Amputation:

25. The Commission has compiled statistical data only on those acts of amputation that involved the chopping off of a limb. The decision in this regard was to reflect more accurately how many victims were “disabled” by the violation. Therefore, the Commission defines amputation as *the removal of one or more hands, feet, arms or legs*.
26. [The Commission finds that amputations occurred in “sets” or “spates” during the conflict; in other words they were not a constant or underpinning feature to the prosecution of the war, but rather came in the form of campaigns.](#) Some of the notable campaigns for which amputations were carried out include the 1996 elections, the expulsion of the AFRC from power, the January 1999 attack on Freetown.<sup>4</sup> [While data in the database does not contain the total number of amputees in the country, they do reflect the general trends that](#) during the conflict.<sup>5</sup> The graph below captures the level of amputation committed by the armed groups during the war.<sup>6</sup>



Source: [TRC database](#)

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<sup>4</sup> See the chapter of this Report on the Military and Political History of the Conflict for a discussion of these campaigns.

<sup>5</sup> See the Statistics Chapter of this Report for an analysis of the database.

<sup>6</sup> Of the 378 amputations documented by the Commission, the month of violation was reported in only 40% (152 violations).

[Peaks in amputation are believed to have occurred at the following times and places:](#)

- a. From November 1995 to June 1996, abuses were concentrated in Bo, Kono, Moyamba, and Port Loko. This was the period covered by the elections that led to the disengagement of the military from power. Many of the young soldiers were unwilling to give up power. The Chief of the army claimed that he could not guarantee security for the elections. This alleged inability was exploited by renegade elements in the army and by the RUF to commit amputations against the civilian population.
  - b. The second quarter of 1997, from April to June. This period marked the entry of the RUF into the Government of the AFRC in Freetown. Their entry to Freetown was followed by particular brutality and ferocity.
  - c. The first half of 1998, from February to May. This was the period when the Nigerian led ECOMOG expelled the AFRC from power by. Abuses were concentrated in Bombali, Koinadugu and Kono – the route taken by the AFRC as they fled Freetown. To a lesser extent, abuses also occurred in Kenema and Tonkolili.
  - d. The first quarter of 1999 (January to March). The AFRC with a rag tag of RUF elements marched on Freetown in January 1999. The entry was marked with wanton attack on civilians. Abuses concentrated in Western Area. Having failed to keep Freetown, they laid waste to the city as they departed under heavy casualties from ECOMOG bombardment. Their resentment at the civilian support for ECOMOG was marked by the highest peak in amputations throughout the war.
27. The peaks mark separate campaigns. The motivations for the various campaigns differ. While the RUF campaign before and during 1996 was in protest against the elections and terrorising the people to stop them from voting, the purpose of the AFRC/RUF amputation campaigns of 1997, 1998 and 1999 was revenge on the population for failing to support them. The more the people kept away from the AFRC, the more they were punished by AFRC/RUF combatants through amputations and other violations perpetrated against them.
28. [The RUF was responsible for the majority of the amputations carried out during the conflict in Sierra Leone. The percentage of amputations attributed to the RUF is 40.7% \(154\). The RUF conducted a campaign of violence in and around 1996 known as "Operation Stop Elections" which entailed the chopping of hands and arms as a way of preventing people from voting. One specific circumstance surrounding the cutting of limbs was for the victims to be told to go to President Kabbah for a new hand or that the amputations were a message to the President that the elections were meaningless without the RUF.](#)

29. Tamba Amara, an adult farmer, had his limb amputated in his village Bo Ngleya in 1996:

"People armed and in combat uniforms attacked our village and killed many people. They went all round and shouted that we, in the village had voted for President Kabbah as President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and because President Kabbah is a proud man they are going to cut off our arms so that we will never vote for him again. It was in 1996 and they said that we should go to him to treat us and give us another hand. Four of us were amputated, two men and two women."<sup>7</sup>

30. Morlai Conteh had her hand amputated by the RUF in 1995 in Kainu town:

"After they cut off my hand, they gave it to me and told me to take it to the government."<sup>8</sup>

31. Mohammed Kallon encountered armed men on Election Day in 1996:

"I was on my way from Njopewahun with my children to Bo for elections. We fell into rebel ambush at Falaba. They then asked us our reasons for travelling and where were we going to vote. We then told them we were going to Bo. Then I was tied, laid on three "mortar pestles" and they cut off my right arm."<sup>9</sup>

32. In the RUF, a significant proportion of those who wielded the "implement of amputation" and actually performed the cutting off of limbs appear to have been children. Many of the testimonies collected by the Commission indicate that the perpetrators themselves were acting under strictly enforced orders or other forms of compulsion. For example, the children were instructed that they would be killed if they did not act as their commanders wished. This applied to all violations, but was more prominent in amputations where the children were given different *nommes de guerres* such as "Cut Hand".

33. The amputating implement in most cases was a local agricultural machete known as a cutlass, but on occasions also included knives, axes and other forms of crude cutting blades, picks and crowbars, and broken glass from smashed windows or bottles.

34. The AFRC demonstrated a specialisation in amputations in the period 1998 to 1999. While the AFRC was responsible for 3255 of all violations committed during both years<sup>10</sup>, they committed 44% of the amputations that took place between 1998 and 1999<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> TRC confidential statement number 113, Kenema town, Kenema, 4 December 2002

<sup>8</sup> Morlai Conteh, TRC statement number 1134, Freetown, 7 December 2002

<sup>9</sup> Mohamed Kallon, TRC statement number 733, Kalanda, Bo, 9 December 2002

<sup>10</sup> 11,874 violations

<sup>11</sup> 85 out of 190 violations

35. The amputations carried out by the AFRC were all part of campaigns. One AFRC abductee recalls the following event in 1998:

"About 28 of us who were all abducted were taken to the camp. The AFRC sobels we were with were expecting some ammunition for an attack on Koidu Town but, most unfortunately, a letter came through to the effect that they have to handle with care the ammunition they have left; they should not use their ammunition at all until they were back from the raiding trek. Instead, any enemy being captured – Kamajor, civilian or ECOMOG – must have his hands chopped off. This letter was signed by most of the AFRC PLO's and top officials. I was cooking for them while they met to discuss it."<sup>12</sup>

36. With ammunition scarce, it was considered cheaper to amputate victims' limbs and save the ammunition for confrontations with the government. Any person captured by the AFRC risked having their limbs chopped off during this period. Mohamed Kanu became a victim of amputation by the AFRC/RUF in his village Baba Foindu in 1999:

"One of them threatened to kill me and some others but it was stopped by another soldier. Rather, that soldier that prevented us from being killed told us that they should give us letters that will be taken to His Excellency Tejan Kabbah. After they left my wrist shaking, they told me, 'that is the letter we have given you to be taken to Kabbah'".<sup>13</sup>

37. People were often lined up and their limbs amputated in turns with the choice of having their right or left hand amputated. Single and double amputations of hands were routine, like the following event that occurred in Calaba town in the Western Area in 1998:

"They announced to us that the time has come to display amputated hands. First was Mr. Tickim. His hand was cut off with an axe, and they also macheted him in several places. He fell down and was dumped into the gutter, he was presumed dead. Second was Pa Jolloh, his hand was amputated. Third was me. My left hand was amputated and then they told me to put the right hand again. I did but when he hit it with the machete, not all the bones and veins were cut. They did this to all ten of us. Some were doubly amputated, others single. One Mamie Sampa did not survive the amputation. She died shortly after. They told us to go to Tejan Kabbah to give us hands."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Excerpt from TRC statement taken in Moyamba District, relating to events in the Kono District in 1998; TRC Statement Code Number 3922.

<sup>13</sup> Mohamed Kanu, TRC statement number 5521

<sup>14</sup> Isata Kamara, TRC statement number 7170.

38. On other occasions, civilians were asked if they wanted “long or short sleeves”. If they answered short, their arm was amputated above the elbow; if they said long, it was amputated below the wrist:

“I was brought to a small boy called “Burn House.” He placed my right hand on a stick and asked me whether I wanted long sleeve or short sleeve, not knowing what to say, my hand was cut from the elbow area and I was asked to go and clap for Tejan Kabbah.”<sup>15</sup>

39. All the armed factions carried out amputations against the civilian populace. Even children as young as one year old and very old people had their limbs amputated. They were indiscriminate. The first case of amputation recorded by the Commission was against a SLA soldier by the RUF in July 1991 in Kailahun. In October of the same year, an automobile mechanic in Pujehun had his hand amputated by the SLA for rendering service to the RUF. Since then, amputation became a popular tool used by all the armed factions against perceived opponents irrespective of the laws of war. The amputations have become the clearest manifestation of the brutality of the RUF. In many of the cases reported to the Commission, the perpetrators were exacting punishment on the civilian population for policy actions of the Government or the ECOMOG forces. For the 1996 elections, those whose hands were amputated were told to ask the President to give them new hands. Some were told that they would given letters to the president, only to have their limbs amputated. One of the poster campaigns for the 1996 elections read, “let’s put hands together to create a new future”. Figuratively, the RUF was collecting thousands of hands to prevent people from voting. The targeting of civilians was clearly in breach of the Geneva conventions. Even the leadership of the army did not seem to have made serious efforts to dissuade the targeting of civilians for amputation or punish those who were responsible. One amputee said the commander of an AFRC troop contingent told him in Kono in 1998 just before they amputated both his hands, “you want Kabbah and not the AFRC. We have been kicked out of power and you are going to pay for that. Those hands that were used to vote for Kabbah, you will not use them again. For those who survive, Kabbah will give you hands.” Another commander said, “you don’t want us, it is democracy you want. You are going to pay for that.”<sup>16</sup>
40. It is difficult to determine where the idea of amputation in the conflict came from. There are however examples from different parts of the world that could have motivated the combatants who used amputations to devastating effect. During the colonial period in the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire), the Belgians cut off the hands of workers who didn’t bring home enough rubber. Mozambique’s RENAMO rebels also carried out amputations during the 70s and 80s, and in Uganda, the Lord’s Resistance Army has amputated ears, particularly, and tongues. Nazi Germany was also reputed for terrible medical experiments on victims that included amputations and mutilations. What makes the Sierra Leone case unique is that people elsewhere usually lost limbs to land mines. In Sierra Leone, they were hacked off by human beings using an ax or a machete. What is more, the amputees elsewhere typically lost a leg or sometimes two legs, which though horrible still allows the victim to function with crutches or a wheelchair. In Sierra Leone, most amputees have lost an arm, and many are what technicians call “double upper-limb amputees.”

<sup>15</sup> Foday Kabbah, TRC statement number 2068.

<sup>16</sup> Testimony of Tamba Finnoh, TRC Public Hearings, April 2003.

41. The World Food Programme registered 1,128 amputees in the amputees camp in February 2002. Since then, the numbers in the camp have drastically reduced, because of the voluntary resettlement of many of the amputees in their home communities.<sup>17</sup> It should be recalled however that thousands of the amputees didn't have access to medical care in the communities where their limbs were amputated. Many of them have probably died from lack of care.

## 2. Forced cannibalism:

42. [Throughout the conflict, various factions forced their captives to eat the flesh and body parts of human corpses, cooked and uncooked. The Commission defines forced cannibalism as the act of forcing a person to eat human flesh, body parts or drink human blood by threat, intimidation, force or violence. This particular violation also manifested itself in the forced drinking of \(one's own or another's\) blood, and the forced chewing of body parts, especially parts of one's ears. The Commission recorded 19 forced cannibalism violations in its database. While this number may seem small in relation to the total number of violations in the Commission's database, the extraordinary character of the violation and the purpose it served warrant a closer look at the circumstances under which it was perpetrated. The Commission recognises that many more cases of forced cannibalism and other violations may not have been recorded during the statement taking exercises and hopes that further inquiries into the war will unearth the full plenitude of violations committed against the people of Sierra Leone.](#)
43. Forced cannibalism was a means of inflicting psychological torture on the victims, who were often relatives or neighbours of the person they were forced to eat. Cecilia Caulker's son was murdered by the RUF in 1992 in Bonthe:

"They cut my son in pieces alive. I was under gun point and all actors were in uniform and caps [which] were very low over their eyes, I did not detect anybody. They cut him in pieces with a knife and when they opened his chest, they took out his heart and cut a piece of it and pushed it into my mouth, saying you first eat of it, but then when they have cut his head, they laid it in my hand saying go and breast feed your son and they started dancing."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> TRC Interview, March 2003.

<sup>18</sup> Cecilia Caulker, TRC statement number 1262 obtained in Bonthe

44. These acts were also perpetrated on children. The following account was given to the Commission by a girl who was 8 years old at the time of the events:

"On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1999 RUF/SLA rebels attacked my house at 3 Kissy Road Mental Hospital. The rebels captured me and my sister and they put my sister on the top of my head and they told her they were going to kill her if she did not give them money. My sister was not able to meet their demands and the rebels stood by their words and they shot at my sister on the top of her head and all her blood spilled over my body. I had wanted to cry but they told me that if I do they will kill me also. The rebels further gave me human flesh to eat. After they killed my sister they cut off her head and they told me to dance and laugh."<sup>19</sup>

45. On many occasions, victims were forced to eat parts of their own body, or drink their own blood. This was a means to humiliate the victims. The two following victims were forced to drink their own blood:

"Corporal Blood came with a dagger and a block and cut off one of my finger, but the remaining one he did not cut off, he only cut them half way, he cut off my right ear and gave me my blood to drink. Whilst he was doing this exercise one of his comrades was pointing a torchlight for him. They also cut the hands and ears of the other six people."<sup>20</sup>

46. The following victims narrated to the Commission how they were forced to eat parts of their own bodies by the Kamajors and the RUF respectively:

"One of the Kamajors dragged me outside and cut off my left ear and told me to chew it under gun point."<sup>21</sup>

"I told them there was nothing more and I kept pleading for mercy. Still one of them came from among their lot and cut off my left ear and then put the half into my mouth to eat. As I chewed, the blood oozed out of my mouth. But as I wanted to take it out he hit me with a gun. Still I was pleading to [them to] show mercy. They told me that the next operation was going to be my penis, which they were going to cut off. I was then held, tied up and dropped to the ground. They opened my legs and put them apart. My scrotum was first held and pierced open. The penis was then held as well and chopped off using the same knife. After that they left me and went away to my village where they assembled in their numbers."<sup>22</sup>

47. The CDF and the RUF account for the majority of the forced cannibalism violations.<sup>23</sup> For every other violation category, the majority of that violation type are attributed to the RUF.

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<sup>19</sup> TRC confidential statement

<sup>20</sup> Alusine Turay, TRC statement number 5006, Murray Town Amputee Camp, Western Area, 20 March 2003

<sup>21</sup> Moriba Junny, TRC statement number 4612, Talia, Bonthe, 21 February 2003

<sup>22</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 7079

<sup>23</sup> The database records 6 violations against each of them.

48. It is difficult to understand the logic of forced cannibalism outside the desire for psychological torture of the victims. It is more baffling in the case of the CDF, which was a community response to the inability of the army to protect the populace. Some of the CDF targets were soldiers and members of their families. The targeting of soldiers was a response to their perceived collusion with the RUF. What this violation demonstrates is that this was a war without rules. Nothing was sacrosanct.

### **3. Abduction, forced recruitment and sexual slavery:**

49. These violations have been dealt with comprehensively in the chapters of the report on women and children respectively. Forced recruitment is the forced or unwilling recruitment of any individual to an armed group or organisation by threat, or intimidation to self or family members and /or violence, while sexual slavery is where the perpetrator exercised all or any of the powers attaching to the right of ownership over one or more persons, such as by purchasing, selling, lending or bartering such a person or persons or by imposing on them a similar deprivation of liberty; and where the perpetrator caused such person or persons to engage in one or more acts of a sexual nature.<sup>24</sup> The victim often known as a “bush wife” is held by one or more perpetrators.

### **4. Drugging:**

50. Most of the young people who testified before the Commission complained of forcible drugging by local commanders within the armed factions. Women, abducted and converted to “bush wives” were injected with the psychotropic substances or forced to consume them. In a drugging violation, the victim takes a substance, which alters, temporarily, or permanently, their mental state. The taking of the substance was also achieved by devious means such as lacing drinks or food with the drugs. The drug may result in permanent physical and/or mental injury. Drugging was used mainly against children forcibly recruited into an armed faction to make them more inclined to fight.
51. One witness before the Commission who was abducted as a little girl gave the following testimony:

“I don’t remember from where [I was abducted] but I spent ten years with them. I don’t know my parents or their whereabouts. My commander was colonel Kontobi. I was raped many times. I also cooked for them. I was injected the first time I complained of sickness. I felt cold immediately and sat quietly under the sun for a long time. My body would rise and I became hyperactive. I felt this way for almost two months. One day I was stabbed on the breast by junior and I was told to shoot him. I couldn’t. They gave me cocaine to sniff saying I won’t be afraid. I tried it and started laughing. My eyes felt watery. I opened fire where junior was standing. He ran into the bush and I ran after him firing everywhere until someone held me from the back.

Other times we were injected with a red liquid. Sometimes it was yellow. They said it would give us strength. Then they will disperse us

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<sup>24</sup> See Elements of Crimes of the International Criminal Court 1

to go 'jaja'. If you refused to take the injection, you will be starved. The effect of this drug is dangerous. We were merciless. I was given a human liver to roast and I did and we shared it. We were given blood to drink and we did.

We most times go 'jaja' after eating. There is always a different feeling after you eat. I came across a pregnant woman who strayed into our camp. I threatened to stab her with my knife. The others came around and were curious to know the sex of the baby she was carrying. I said male and others said female. The boys opened her up a front of me and brought out a boy. I jumped with joy that I had won.

We called our Doctor Samuel. He administered drugs on everyone when sick or when on the verge of a mission. Sometimes we are told to go to the car park to collect items including boxes of medical drugs, rice, clothes, and cows. I am not sure where they came from but I guess it was from Guinea through Kabala.

We could hunt dogs and catch them with knives and kill them. This we cooked for every one to eat. We threw grenades to scare the inhabitants of a village away always. Then we would go in to "jaja". A person is re-injected when they know that the previous effect is wearing off. I used to wonder how come they knew when it was wearing off. But when we were given it, we are recharged."<sup>25</sup>

52. Another witness recounted his abduction as a little boy by one commando, Osman, alias 'Kill man no blood'. He acquired this nickname because he drank the blood of his victims. Osman was one of Rambo's commandos.

"I was called 'kill man blood small' since I was his boy. Marijuana was boiled and given to us to drink. They said it will make us wild, unafraid. When I take it I was not afraid to confront anybody. Under its influence I could shoot anyone without being ordered to do so. Cocaine was first administered to me through a cut on the arm. I loved the effect on me. I felt very happy, playful with the fun. We called it coffee or coco. I beat kids younger than I am. Sometimes we were injected. This is normally a blue liquid. After taking it, I once slapped my boss and he locked me up. We had Brown Brown and tablets like Valium 10 or Blue Boat. Sometimes we won't pay and fighting would break out. We could fire and people are killed. Rambo on the other hand could just walk in and take whatever drugs he wanted. When hungry we also used to open up to 60 bullets and empty the powder on a leaf or piece of cloth. This we would chew and later drink water believing it would make us strong. When food was cooked, our commander would sprinkle a white substance into it, we [had no] sauce but it had a bitter taste. Afterwards, I normally felt dizzy but I didn't want to sleep. Then we were sent out to 'jaja'."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Confidential interview with the TRC, Freetown October 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Confidential interview with the TRC, Freetown October 2003.

53. The widespread use of drugs within the armed factions demonstrates that it was condoned and promoted by the leadership of the factions. Many of the children who consumed hard drugs within the factions are now suffering from all kinds of mental health problems presenting an immediate challenge to the health authorities.

## **5. Mistreatment Violations**

### **5.1 Forced labour:**

54. The Commission defines Forced Labour as *forced/unwilling labour by a victim that occurs whilst they are detained*. It excludes the labour implied by being the victim of a "Forced Recruitment" or "Sexual Slavery" violation.
55. Forced labour occurred either without or in addition to abduction. Abductees were forced to do all kinds of domestic work, including cleaning, cooking, and so on, for their abductors<sup>27</sup>. They were forced to carry loads to various locations, engage in agricultural labour and work in the diamond mines<sup>28</sup>.
56. Outside abduction, forced labour occurred when villagers were forced to engage in agricultural activities in their own farms, the proceeds of which were given to the RUF or the CDF<sup>29</sup>. Town chiefs were asked under the threat of death to provide a determined quantity of agricultural products, usually cocoa or coffee, within a specified period. Failure to comply led to the punishment of either the chief or the entire town population.
57. According to one witness, Fomba Mohammed:
- "I was at Sefadu in Kono district when the war came. I had tried to escape to Guinea but it was not possible. I went to stay with an uncle at Giema. When the RUF first entered Giema they did not harm anybody. After a while they gathered all the strong men and they elected a Town Commander. The next day they took us to their training base. ...After we finished training, we were given guns [and] sent to the war front. This did not last long as a separation occurred in the movement between the Gio RUF and the Junior commandos who were trained here in Sierra Leone. I was appointed the master farmer responsible for food. I would order civilians to brush and plant rice for them and it was the food that we would use anytime they have visitors."<sup>30</sup>
58. Upon entering a town or village, the factions usually recruited all the able-bodied men and women as forced labour. The civilians had to cook and carry looted property for them back to their base or to another town, and to perform sundry other services for them. The following account involved the SLA in Yele in 1994:

"These soldiers were bullies. They used to take the wives of

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<sup>27</sup> These violations are described extensively in the Women and Children chapters of this Report.

<sup>28</sup> Examples of these violations are described in the Mineral Resources chapter.

<sup>29</sup> See Mineral Resources chapter for details.

<sup>30</sup> TRC statement Number 4299.

community people to sleep with them, cook for them as well as launder their clothes.”<sup>31</sup>

59. A witness told the Commission about the RUF attack on his village in 1991:

“They made us sit on the ground and ordered us to cook for them. Chickens were caught and slaughtered and food cooked by the women. We were all forced to eat the food with the rebels because they feared that they would be poisoned by the civilians.”<sup>32</sup>

60. The RUF is responsible for the majority of the forced labour violations recorded in the TRC database amounting to 68.2%, while 11% is attributed to the AFRC. The remaining perpetrators were each responsible for less than 7% of the forced labour violations.<sup>33</sup>

### **5.2 Assault:**

61. An assault violation consists of *physical harm inflicted on a victim by punching, kicking, and/or striking with an object or objects over a period of time. It also includes whipping, lashing, stabbing and the shooting a victim.*

62. Assault was used to punish civilians, compel victims to do things or hand over goods. The following statements relate to incidents involving the AFRC in 1998:

“One day, rebels asked me to carry a bag on my head to Makeni. When I refused, they started beating me with sticks. Five rebels beat me with sticks. They hit me on all parts of my body. They released me later.”<sup>34</sup>

“I was stopped by some soldiers who were well armed. I refused to stop and one of them chased me and later gave me a hard hit on the side. My two-month-old child got loose on my back and fell while the soldiers took the bag of rice I was carrying. I was then commanded to go with them. As I wanted to take my child, the soldier told me to go away and leave him there. So I had to leave my child crying.”<sup>35</sup>

63. The RUF also used beatings to force civilians to comply with orders:

“They insisted on us producing food and meat. When we failed to comply with their demand, two men took out their belts and started beating us at random. They beat me and I fell down. They continued to beat me until I became unconscious. I sustained a deep wound on my head.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> TRC confidential statement number 633, Yele, Tonkolili, 14 December 2002

<sup>32</sup> Bockarie Lewis Kartewu, TRC statement number 164, Kenema town, Kenema, 12 December 2002

<sup>33</sup> The Commission recorded 1834 forced labour violations.

<sup>34</sup> TRC confidential statement number 2592, Bombali Bane, Bombali, 28 January 2003

<sup>35</sup> Margarette Lagowa, TRC statement number 7404, Moyamba town, Moyamba, 7 June 2003

<sup>36</sup> Ansumana Allieu, TRC statement number 2172, Garama, Kailahun, 22 January 2003



64. Suspected collaborators were beaten. Those who were perceived to be sympathetic to the Government of the CDF were singled out and severely punished.

"They gathered everybody under the barrie. Our children suffered beatings. This group was headed by CO Manawai who ordered the boys to beat themselves. People started beating each other. We asked them what wrong have we done? They answered that we had allowed our sons to run away and that they had gone to the Kamajors."<sup>37</sup>

65. The Commission also received numerous testimonies of assault by the SLA and the [ECOMOG forces. Assaults were often combined with other violations, especially looting, extortion and physical torture.](#) The [number of assault violations attributed to the RUF](#) is 1883 or 58%. For the other groups, the numbers of assault violations are as follows: [SLA](#) 245 or 7%; [ECOMOG](#) 53 or 1.6% and the AFRC 320 or 9.9%.<sup>38</sup>

### 5.3 Torture:

66. Torture is *the intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, upon a person in the custody of or under the control of the accused*, except that torture shall not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.<sup>39</sup> The method of torture may be unspecified. The torture could lead to bruising, bleeding, internal injury or severe pain. It includes mutilations such as cutting off ears or breasts.

67. Torture was a means of terrorising the population and breaking down their resistance. Public acts of torture were extensively used to humiliate victims in front of their communities and/or relatives. The following victim was stopped in a village by the RUF in March 1997. She was carrying her husband's gun in a basket, without knowing that the weapon was there. When they found the gun, she was tortured:

"They stripped me naked, laid me on the ground and told me to roll on the ground. As I was rolling on the ground, they got buckets of water and poured them on me, laid me under the sun and told me to look at the sun for several hours. When they brought me to Mobai naked, there was an RUF commander named Tidda who passed the order that 8 of his men beat me to death. Commander Tidda also gave the command that they should put me in a deep hole. I was put into a deep cemented hole and padlocked until the morning of the next day."<sup>40</sup>

68. Instances of torture carried out by the CDF were brought to the attention of the Commission. A witness described how alleged members of the RUF were tortured and killed by the Gbethes in the North:

<sup>37</sup> Mariama Sesay, TRC statement number 2723, Woroma, Kailahun, 30 January 2003

<sup>38</sup> The Commission recorded a total of 3246 assault violations in its database.

<sup>39</sup> See article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

<sup>40</sup> Sounah Coomber, TRC statement number 1736, Mobai, Kailahun, 13 January 2003

"Between October and December 1998, I was in Port Loko. The Gbethes were using a house as their base, with their commander Mr. Dumbuya. Normally, he and his boys would go on raids. When they returned, they would come with six to ten men, whom they accused to be rebels. They blindfolded them, tied their hands and locked them in a dark room where they used to torture them. In the night, he would take the victims out and summarily execute them in a secret place. He carried these exercises every four days until December 31<sup>st</sup> 1998, when the rebels attacked the township."<sup>41</sup>

69. The following account illustrates how torture was used by the AFRC, in this case, to humiliate civilians, leaving them with scars for the rest of their lives:

"He ordered the operation to start. He started by cutting my two ears. He had wanted to cut the man close to me but he ran away. So the third man's ears were cut off."<sup>42</sup>

70. The elderly were also tortured. This was part of the RUF strategy to break down the social fabric and communal norms.

"My grand-father was too old to run when there were attacks on the village. He was always left in the village alone. One day, these rebels captured him and brought him out of the house. They tied him up and seriously beat him. One of them stabbed him on the eye, which resulted in the loss of his eye. As a result of the torture, he became very sick. He couldn't bear the pain and died."<sup>43</sup>

71. The AFRC and the CDF are responsible for 235 or 11.5% and 217 or 10.6% of the acts of torture recorded in the Commission's database respectively. The RUF is responsible for the majority of torture violations in the database, accounting for 1136 or 55.4%.<sup>44</sup>

## **6. Rape:**

72. The Commission has defined *rape* as *where the perpetrator invaded the body of a person by conduct resulting in penetration, however slight, of any part of the body of the victim or of the perpetrator with a sexual organ, or of the anal or genital opening of the victim with any object or any other part of the body*. The invasion was committed by force, or by threat of force or coercion, such as that caused by fear or violence, duress, detention, psychological oppression or abuse of power, against such person or another person, or by taking advantage of a coercive environment or the invasion was committed against a person incapable of giving genuine consent.

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<sup>41</sup> Haja Mariama Kamara, TRC statement number 2913, Freetown, 6 February 2003

<sup>42</sup> TRC confidential statement number 7140, Panlap Amputee Camp, Bombali, 26 April 2003

<sup>43</sup> Sahr Morie, TRC statement number 2165, Pujehun town, Kailahun, 21 January 2003

<sup>44</sup> The Commission recorded 2051 torture violations in its database.

73. While victims who were abducted and turned into sex slaves or bush wives suffered numerous rape violations<sup>45</sup>, hundreds of other rape violations were reported to the Commission outside of the context of abduction, during encounters on the road or in the bush, or during village attacks.

74. Male combatants did not use rape merely as a weapon against female civilians. It was a devastating tool of terror wielded intentionally to strike a sense of vulnerability into the wider society. It became the crux of a whole-scale assault on belief systems and traditional norms; a medium through which entire families or communities were “punished” in revenge acts; and a crime against humanity. The very nature of the forced sexual acts forced upon the civilian population was an aberration to the individual and collective sense of self.

75. Civilians were often forced to rape family members, under the threat of being killed if they refused. The NPFL used this strategy to devastating effect at the beginning of the conflict:

“We were here when the Liberian rebels entered the country in 1991. The rebels came and they met me on the road with one girl by the name of A; they captured us and demanded to know where we were going. We told them that our people had sent us to collect food for prayer. When they asked me about my relationship with A I told them that she was my sister. They ordered that I must have sex with her by force. After the sex they threw plenty of dirty water on us and allowed us to go.

I left for another nearby village in search of salt. It was that same night that the rebels entered this village and commanded us all to come out of our various houses and homes. They ordered us to undress ourselves naked, both men and women, and to dance, men on one side, women on the other. The rebels then ordered the women to lie down on the ground on their backs.

The rebels then made the men to identify their relationships with these women on the ground. Each time when a man points to one lady or girl to identify her as his sister or mother those rebels will force him by the gun to have sex with her. We did this for over one hour.

One man lost his life during this process because he refused to have sex with his mother; he was brutally beaten. The next day we saw only his dead body.”<sup>46</sup>

76. On occasion, civilians were forced to witness the rape of a family member, a mother, sister or daughter. This was aimed at stigmatising family members thereby weakening the bonds of the family, since it is the most basic component of society.

“It was during the dry season in 1998 at Romendi village in the Bombali district when a group of RUF rebels headed by Superman attacked the village. One of the rebels arrested my daughter Fatmata and raped her in front of my naked eyes. I went to his colleagues after the attack and reported him. This rebel was taken to Lunsar to their

<sup>45</sup> Those experiences are fully captured in the Women’s chapter of this Report.

<sup>46</sup> TRC Confidential statement 0855; place and date of statement undisclosed.

commander Superman for further punishment.”<sup>47</sup>

“In January 1999, RUF/SLA attacked my village called Rokou. They raped my wife in my presence and they abducted her. Since the abduction, I have not set eyes on her.”<sup>48</sup>

77. The RUF used rape to destroy the social respect and standing for pregnant and older women. A victim narrated an experience in 1991:

“One fearful thing they used to do was when they got hold of old women, they raped them. Some of these grand mothers died from sex with these young men. Sometimes, a woman who had just given birth would be used for sex until she dies.”<sup>49</sup>

In traditional Sierra Leonean society, men did not have sex with pregnant or lactating women. It was a social taboo. The rape of such women during the conflict was aimed at destroying the traditional social fabric, stigmatising the old and pregnant women and nullifying the boundaries of acceptable behaviour within the community.

### **7. Arbitrary detention:**

78. Arbitrary detention is defined as *detention in a single location such as a prison, guardroom, or civilian building adapted to use as a detention place. The detention is illegal and the detainees are not charged with an offence.*

79. Arbitrary detention was used extensively to punish civilians who disobeyed orders, or suspected of being allied with the “enemy”:

“On the 6<sup>th</sup> of January 1999, I was at home with my children [when] I saw a group of Kamajors and ECOMOG soldiers coming to our area. I ran inside with my children and they opened fire on us. They were shooting directly at our house. We all laid down on the floor to avoid being hit by the bullets. I found out that two of my children had been shot. I heard the ECOMOG soldiers telling the Kamajors to stop shooting. They came to our house and they saw what they had done, but they did not care. The ECOMOG soldiers told us that if we don’t like President Kabbah, they will make sure that they kill all of us. We told them that we liked Tejan Kabbah and that we voted for him. They locked us in a house for three days without food. On the fourth day, they released us and I managed to take care of my children.”<sup>50</sup>

80. Detainees were often beaten and tortured while in detention. They were denied basic utilities such as water:

“One day in 1997, I was caught by the ECOMOG forces. They misconceived me as a rebel and I was taken to the Daru barracks where I was detained. I was given a serious beating. I was detained in the guardroom for four days without food and water.”<sup>51</sup>

81. Many of the cases of arbitrary and illegal detention occurred in the period after

<sup>47</sup> Confidential statement to the TRC, Amputee Camp Aberdeen Road, 20 March 2003

<sup>48</sup> Confidential statement to the TRC, Rokou, Western Area, 12 March 2003

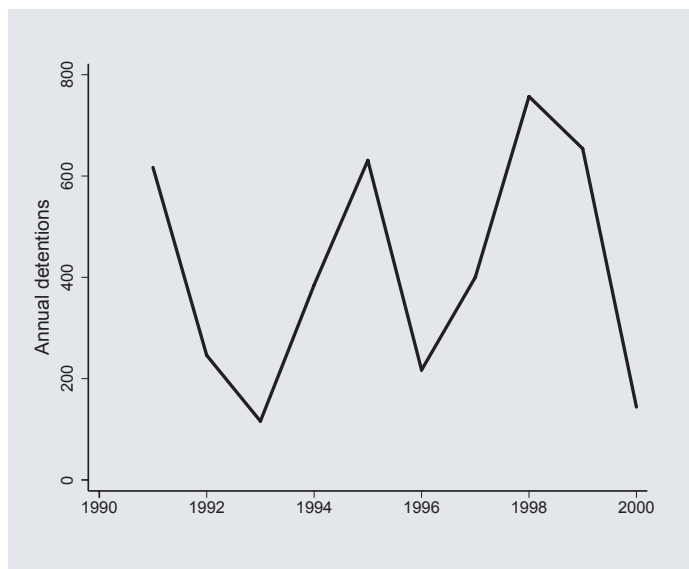
<sup>49</sup> Gbassey Musa, Statement 4282, Kailahun town, Kailahun, 20 February 2003

<sup>50</sup> Yeabe Conteh, TRC statement number 4395, Freetown, 20 February 2003

<sup>51</sup> Fomba Kamara, TRC statement number 2161, Ngegbema, Kailahun, 21 January 2003

the restoration of President Kabbah to power in 1998. 18.2% of all recorded detentions occurred in 1998 and 15.7% occurred in 1999.<sup>52</sup> 1998 and 1999 are the first and second highest years, respectively, for reported cases of arbitrary and illegal detention.

82. The graph below shows the annual pattern of reported detentions, and the 1998-1999 peak is higher and sustained longer than any other period.



83. People suspected of being sympathisers of the AFRC were attacked at will, severely beaten and detained. In a number of instances the detentions were orchestrated by ECOMOG as a means of protecting people from rampaging bands of Kamajors attacking Northerners and AFRC “collaborators”. However the detentions became prolonged even after the threat level had minimised. [According to records at the CID obtained by the Commission, more than 3000 people were detained at the Pademba Road prison in the period after the restoration of the president to power.](#)

<sup>52</sup> Many testimonies given to the Commission did not specify in which month the violations occurred, and consequently, we cannot be specific about the temporal pattern of detentions. However data for the year in which the violation occurred is given in 86.2% of detentions,

84. Hundreds of civil servants who had served in one *capacity* or *another* during the AFRC regime, and others with connections to leaders of the AFRC were detained under the state of emergency declared by the government. A subsequent inquiry established by the Government declared that many of them had no cases to answer and should be released. Despite this recommendation, many of them languished in detention for several months thereafter.
85. Hundreds of people, many of them former soldiers of the RSLMF with no connections to the AFRC other than that they were soldiers and who had not supported the AFRC were detained first at Lungi and subsequently at the Pademba Road prisons, until the Government determined that they had no relationship with the AFRC and ordered their release.
86. Following the events of May 6-8 2000 in Freetown, leaders of the RUF were ordered to report at the police stations nearest to them. All those who did were detained. The explanation offered then was that the detention was protective since mob justice after members of the RUF was on the prowl. Till date, no less than 16 of those persons are still in detention at the Pademba Road prisons without any charges having been preferred against them.

## **8. Economic violations**

### **8.1 Looting and Destruction of property:**

87. Looting consists of *theft of personal or commercial goods with the victim absent, or present under threat, intimidation, force or violence.*
88. Destruction of property is defined as the *destruction/damage to private/public property through burning, mining, bombing, shelling, and arson or by other means. Property means a home or other building or personal effects.*
89. The looting and destruction of property violations are often interrelated. In most cases of attack on towns and villages, movable properties of civilians were looted and the remaining items, such as houses and other fixed assets were burnt down or otherwise destroyed.
90. The Commission recorded 3044 looting violations and 3404 property destruction violations in its database. Of these, the RUF committed 56.4% of the property destruction and 60.5% of the looting violations. The AFRC committed 12% and 8.3% respectively while the CDF committed 3.2% and 5.7% of the property destruction and the looting violations respectively.

"It was in January 1999 when about 5 RUF/AFRC rebels came into our compound. We were so frightened. They came into our house and demanded money, but my stepfather begged them telling them that we do not have money in the house. They did not believe him. They went into the rooms, ransacked everywhere; they took the video, television, clothes and many other things. They told us to come out of the house and put us together in a corner of the compound and ordered us not to move an inch or else they would shoot us. They took petrol, sprinkled it on the house and set the house on fire."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Noella Hamid, TRC statement number 1394, Freetown, 14 January 2003

91. The Commission received many testimonies of people being locked up in a house and the house set on fire with the people burnt alive. An old woman described how her granddaughters were killed:

"I am explaining a sad story. This was at the early stage of the war in 1991. The rebels invaded Rotifunk and went to the house where my granddaughters were living. All four of them were ordered to enter into the house. They closed them in and set the house ablaze. They all died in the fire."<sup>54</sup>

92. Another witness had his properties stolen and his house burnt down on three occasions:

"I returned to the village and discovered that my house had been burnt down. Also, all my possessions that were in the house were burnt down [by the RUF]. We went to Bandajuma Sowa. While there, I built another house, which I occupied with my family. Later in 1997, the Junta soldiers drove us from Bandajuma, stole all properties in our houses and again burnt down my house. We returned home to Kobeibu and built huts there. One day in 1998, the AFRC Junta soldiers came and burnt them down."<sup>55</sup>

93. Many people in Sierra Leone are still living in displaced camps or in shanty-towns in Freetown because they lost their houses and properties. The fighting factions used looting of property to finance their war effort, thereby transferring the fiscal costs of the war to the civilian population.

### **8.2 Extortion:**

94. Extortion is as an incident during which *perpetrators use intimidation and/or threats to attempt to compel the victim to surrender goods, cash or services, including sexual services.*

95. The armed factions used checkpoints to extort property from civilians. Instances include the NPRC looting petty traders' merchandise<sup>56</sup> in Freetown, and the ubiquitous RUF check points wherever they entered.

"In November 1998, the RUF rebels attacked my house in Yengema. They demanded Le500,000 from me or else I would lose my life. I gave them half of that money and I begged them not to kill me as that was the only cash I had. Because there was an argument among them on whether they should accept the money or kill me, they decided to cast a vote. Fortunately for me, they accepted the money."<sup>57</sup>

96. Numerous incidents of extortion occurred along the roads in ambushes:

"I was stopped by RUF rebels on the highway towards Gbetgbo. I was removed from my car and my money amounting to Le500,000 was

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<sup>54</sup> Fatmata Tejan, TRC statement number 1631, Dworzak farm, Western Area, 21 January 2003

<sup>55</sup> Borbor Bao, TRC statement number 3826, Kobeibu, Pujehun, 14 February 2003

<sup>56</sup> Abdul Bundu, TRC statement number 4951, Funkia, Western Area, 15 March 2003

<sup>57</sup> Kabineh Conteh, TRC statement number 4362, Waterloo, Western Area, 19 February 2003

taken from my pocket. I was asked by the rebels to choose between my life and my car. My driver who resisted was beaten. I chose my life and left the car."<sup>58</sup>

97. Extortion was also common place when fighting factions invaded or occupied villages. Corporal punishment was used to compel people to give money or other goods:

"When the RUF came, they started writing letters for contributions in cash and kind. They also used to lock up people in a box for failing to contribute. One of such people was X. He was placed in the box for almost three hours. He was only released after the sum of Le 5,000 was paid."<sup>59</sup>

### **9. Forced displacement:**

98. Forced displacement is *s the forced/unwilling departure or movement from one's property/home by threat, intimidation, force, violence, fear, suspicion or due to conflict. The move may be due to perception of danger, rather than actual abuse.* It was *the most* frequently reported violation to the Commission. There were 7983 instances reported. Of these violations 63.8% and 12.5% were attributed to the RUF and 'rebels' respectively

99. The climate of fear created from attacks by all the combatant factions all over the country made thousands of people flee their homes. Upon hearing rumours that the "rebels" were planning an attack or gaining ground, villagers would pack some of their property and leave their houses. They would either run to hide in the bush, or escape to a neighbouring village. On many occasions, they would be attacked in the bush, or an attack would be launched on the village they escaped to, forcing people to flee again and again. The following account describes this climate of fear created by the RUF:

"The war spread rapidly. Civilians fleeing the war from Tongo Fields and Dodo began to enter Boajibu with bundles on their heads. We began to feel concerned about our security. Letters were often found on the streets about the rebels' intention to attack Boajibu. All the roads leaving the town became vulnerable so we remained to live in fear. On the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1994, the RUF attacked Boajibu."<sup>60</sup>

100. Some civilians were permanently displaced or at least displaced for several months or years at a time. After the RUF had stayed in the community of Gofor (Pujehun) for three months in 1991:

"One day, the chief who was in charge of this community called us all and told us that the government soldiers will be coming around to fight the rebels and whosoever they meet here will be considered as rebels. This was a very big shock for the community and we all vacated the town, I was partially paralysed, so the community people helped by groups to convey me. We went as far as Dia. There we were stopped not to cross [the border to Liberia]. We spent 6 days and later were allowed to cross. We stayed at Gbaoma Lumeh where the

<sup>58</sup> Alusine Koroma, TRC statement number 351, Makeni, Bombali, 13 December 2002

<sup>59</sup> TRC confidential statement number 6161, Sumbuya, Kambia, 14 March 2003

<sup>60</sup> Nancy Matia, TRC statement number 2457, Komende, Kenema, 25 January 2003

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ULIMO soldiers met us and brought us back to Sierra Leone. We were taken to Kenema because our town Gofor was a complete bush. My house and all the houses in the town were burnt.”<sup>61</sup>

101. On many occasions, the destruction of people’s houses led to their being displaced, sometimes outside of Sierra Leone:

“The day following the attack, I was told by fleeing civilians that my house in Falaba had been burnt down by SAJ Musa’s men. I found that the area was not safe and I decided to head for Guinea.”<sup>62</sup>

102. But crossing the border did not mean being safety, because of cross border attacks and disastrous living conditions in the refugee camps:

“We decided to seek refuge in Shekia in neighbouring Guinea. At about 3 am, the rebels launched an attack on the village of Shekia. They arrested my nephew and, using their bayonets, they impaled his throat. They also shot my elder brother in the foot. I fled the village into the bush. I later decided to take my family to the supposed safe haven of the refugee camp at Forecariah. It was there that my son fell ill and passed away.”<sup>63</sup>

103. Many of these refugees stayed abroad in refugee camps for years. Some of them are yet to return. One of the most dramatic and painful experiences involved in the events surrounding forced displacement is the separation of family members. The Commission received numerous testimonies of people losing their children, their parents or their siblings while escaping an attack. Many of these family members left behind are dead, and many others are yet to be reunited with their family.

104. The following statement giver left his village because of fears of RUF attack and stayed in the bush for two months, carrying his blind brother who was an old man. After two months, they went to Levuma:

“Two days after our movement to town, the RUF rebels launched an attack on Levuma. I again ran into the bush. I was not able to carry my brother. He was blind and could not find his way. He was left in the town. When I went back to see what had happened, I saw my brother lying dead with seven other people.”<sup>64</sup>

#### **10. Killing:**

105. The Commission considers a killing as causing death. In addition to intentional killing, a person’s life was taken in the course of other abuses and violations.

106. Many civilians were killed in crossfire through encounters between government and “rebel” forces which occurred on numerous occasions within villages and towns. While killing arising from cross fire is generally regarded as collateral damage and therefore not a violation, the Commission considers that collateral damage in the context of the Sierra Leonean conflict was in many respects

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<sup>61</sup> Iye Massaquoi, TRC statement number 1888, Gofor, Pujehun, 22 January 2003

<sup>62</sup> Jeneba Samura, TRC statement number 3639, Falaba, Koinadugu, 20 February 2003

<sup>63</sup> Kompolo Sorieba Sumah, TRC statement number 3608, Bubuya, Kambia, February 2003

<sup>64</sup> Momoh Abdulai, TRC statement number 4007, Vaania, Kenema, 15 February 2003

arbitrary. The combatants were in the main reckless and negligent in avoiding civilian casualties.

107. Sometimes people were killed intentionally to satisfy the innate desires of the combatants:

"I came across a pregnant woman who had strayed into our camp. At first I threatened to stab her with my knife. Then the others came around and asked what we should do with her; they were curious to know the sex of the baby she was carrying. I suggested male while others said female. The boys opened her up in front of me and brought out a baby boy. I jumped with joy that I had won."<sup>65</sup>

108. Killing or the threat of killing was used extensively to punish disobedient civilians and terrorise the population into obedience by "giving the example" of what happened with those who failed to obey orders.

109. The following witness' brother in law was in hiding. He was punished when he was caught:

"My brother in law was captured from his hiding place and was brought to town. He was placed before us and shot. He fell down and one of the RUF men went closer and fired at his head. He died on the spot and was thrown into the bush."<sup>66</sup>

110. People were killed as human sacrifice to bring luck to the fighting factions. The following account relates events that happened in Koinadugu town in August 1998. The CDF had attacked the town but were repelled by the AFRC forces:

"When the fighting ceased, Superman called on the civilians and informed us that he was about to make a sacrifice. Many people were then forced to be present, although in fear. At first, he maintained that he was making the sacrifice in the name of peace while he had planned to massacre civilians. He blamed the civilians for giving intelligence information to the CDF at Kabala, which resulted in the attack of Koinadugu.

Several people were locked up in a room and burnt alive. They included my wife, my uncle, my grand-mother and several other people."<sup>67</sup>

111. Another account relates a similar event in Bumpah Tabbay, Bo district, in 1997. The AFRC massacred about 50 people in the same way:

"The rebels went from house to house searching for people. They got hold of my grandfather and grandmother who were too old to run away, and also of other old and young men and women, nearly 50 people. They were all put inside our house and locked up. They

<sup>65</sup> Excerpt from a confidential TRC interview with a female RUF ex-child combatant, conducted on 09 September 2003 in Makeni, Bombali District.

<sup>66</sup> Vandi Momoh, TRC statement number 2157, Jenneh, Kailahun, 21 January 2003

<sup>67</sup> Ferenkeh Marah, TRC statement number 3250, Koinadugu town, Koinadugu, 4 February 2003. Also corroborated by James Lebbie, TRC statement number 507, Kabala, Koinadugu, 19 December 2002

sprinkled petrol on the house and set it on fire. They went afar to watch the house burning so that no one could attempt to put off the fire. Everyone in the house was burned down to ashes.”<sup>68</sup>

112. Ritual killings were practised on enemy fighters or on civilians, including children:

“The most fearful event I saw was when fifty babies were punched on an iron alive, as sacrifices for the war.”<sup>69</sup>

113. Another account, was of killings by the AFRC in Kono in 1998:

“They decided that one person should be sacrificed. I was pointed out to be slaughtered. They brought one Limba woman who could not speak Krio; she was just crying and begging them in Limba. Since the woman was crying, they said the woman was causing noise so that ECOMOG could hear her. For that, they will release me and slaughter the woman in exchange. The woman was stripped naked and slaughtered and a pestle was inserted into her vagina.”<sup>70</sup>

114. The Commission received reports of the killing of 4514 people. The RUF were named as perpetrators of 58% of the deaths, and AFRC were identified in 11.3%. Killing were concentrated in 1991, 1994-1995 and in 1998-1998 with relatively less violent periods in between.

#### **11. Cannibalism:**

115. The first emergence of the practice of cannibalism the Sierra Leonean conflict appears to have been attributable to the contingent of Liberians, predominantly from the Geio and Mano tribes, who fought for the NPFL, under the auspices of the RUF,<sup>71</sup> in the first two years of the conflict. A woman who witnessed the killing of her husband narrated the incident to the Commission.<sup>72</sup>

“I had to hide myself in the nearby bush from where I could see the body of my husband where he lay. I then saw Johnson coming up to him, he came to where the body was, stood by it and with the knife he had opened up Kamanda’s stomach. He removed most of the internal organs and gave them to some of the captives to cook. Johnson rubbed Kamanda’s blood all over his body. They cooked it for him and ate every thing.”

<sup>68</sup> TRC confidential statement number 2195, Fallah, Kenema, 24 January 2003

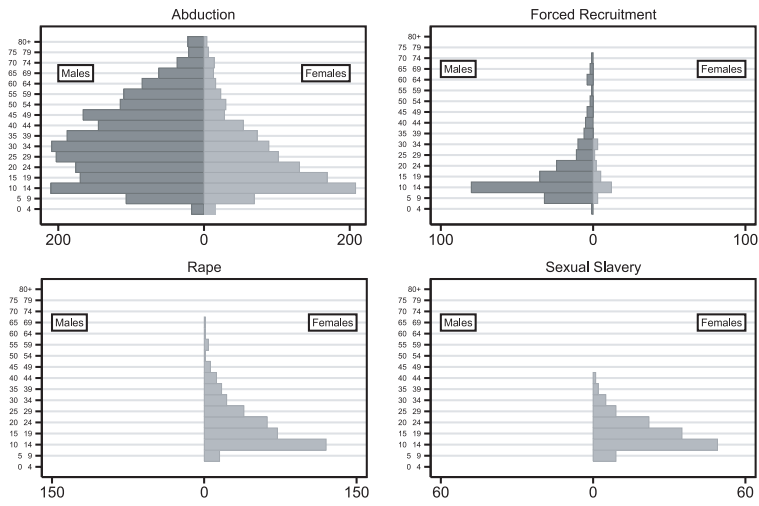
<sup>69</sup> Joseph Mava, TRC statement number 7054, Baoma, Bo, 14 March 2003

<sup>70</sup> TRC confidential statement number 7140, Panlap Amputee Camp, Bombali, 26 April 2003

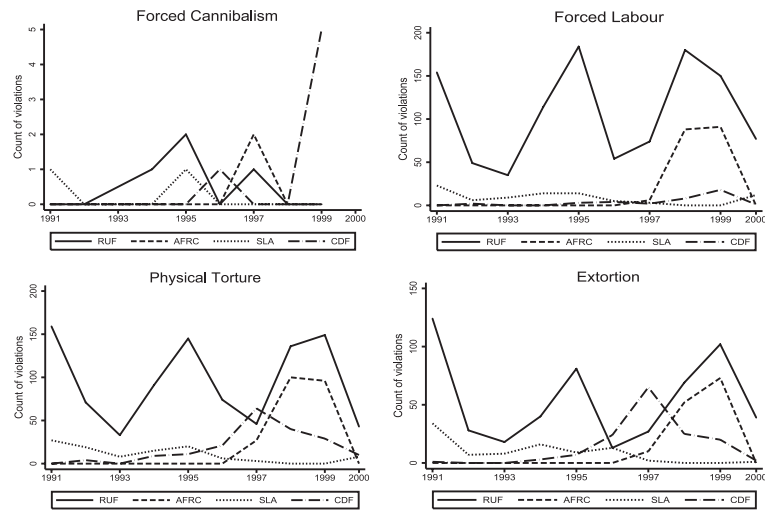
<sup>71</sup> Although fighters of the NPFL did not appear to unite themselves behind a common command structure with the ‘vanguards’ or the junior forces of the RUF/SL movement, they appear to have identified themselves as RUF ‘revolutionaries’ in the communities they entered. Accordingly, they were perceived by most of those they encountered to be part and parcel of the same, single movement headed by Foday Sankoh; in the recording of human rights abuses by the TRC, victims of abuses in Kailahun District that appear in fact to have been committed by NPFL fighters were widely, if not universally, attributed to the RUF.

<sup>72</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 4243

Selected violations categories according to age / sex of victims  
(number of violations documented in TRC database)



Selected violations categories according to year / perpetrator faction  
(number of violations documented in TRC database)



116. Some members of the RUF/SL were vehemently opposed to the practice and upon that premise there developed severe hostility between the two component factions of the original incursion force.
117. The Commission recorded instances from Kailahun District in 1991 of the establishment of 'eating areas' in which fighters would gather habitually to devour the flesh of their victims. Killings were committed in order to acquire 'human meat'. Even in instances where those who subsequently cannibalised the corpse were not the killers, the families were deprived of their right to respectful burial of the deceased.
118. The Kamajors, who constituted the CDF of the Southern and Eastern Regions, founded their existence partly upon a ceremony known as 'initiation', in which recruits were marshalled through a rigorous series of physical and psychological challenges. This veiled form of psychological torture bears striking parallels with the RUF/SL's strategy of 'de-institutionalising' its forced recruits.
119. Organs, tissue, blood and flesh from the bodies of dead persons – some of them relatives of Kamajors – were used in the ceremony of initiation. Civilians from communities surrounding the initiation site and even would-be recruits were killed for the express purposes of 'sacrificing them to the cause'.
120. The Commission recorded testimony that pregnant women were killed by the Kamajors in order to extract parts of their bodies for use in initiation ceremonies. Furthermore some Kamajors carried 'charms' or 'fetishes' with them which were constituted of human remains, including the mutilated genitalia of women.
121. In some of the cases recorded by the Commission, the Kamajors who participated in initiation ceremonies that involved the eating of human flesh were unaware of the 'materials' that had been used in preparing the 'ceremony', or indeed the manner through which they had been acquired. Thus, added to the incidence of human sacrifice, some Kamajors participated unwittingly in cannibalism. Testimony before the Commission indicated that they became aware of this only subsequently, yet they also didn't do anything to stop the practice. This was a perversion of people's perceptions of the 'justness' of the cause, or the nature of the initiative, and smacks of deceit and exploitation by the leaders of the Kamajors.
122. The 'Initiators' of the Kamajor Society in concert with their assistants, or 'apprentices', prepared the 'food' for initiation ceremonies and also indoctrinated the 'initiates', most of who were illiterate, with the 'belief' that certain supernatural powers would be bestowed upon them through the practice of cannibalism and human sacrifice.

"In fact, some AFRC 'sobel' captives who were held in prison were at the same time handed over to the Kamajors. One AFRC captive was brought out of his prison cell and laid on the ground; he had his chest split open with a cutlass, divided into two halves. The Kamajors took out his heart, kidney and liver, which I saw 'respiring' or beating, and I saw the Kamajor man starting to eat the above-named organs, and the intestines, raw – without cooking them or roasting them – publicly, in the open, before everyone. This induced the town and chiefdom

elders into making arrangements for the feeding, transportation and all other necessary logistical support for the Kamajors so that all courage would be given to them to defend the township. From this point, things started going on fine, as normal, everyday activities were resumed.<sup>73</sup>

123. In particular, the High Priest of the Kamajor Society, self-styled King Dr. Allieu Kondewah, played a key role in the practice of cannibalism and human sacrifice. Evidence available to the Commission indicates that these violations were carried out with the full knowledge of the National Co-ordinator of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), Chief Samuel Hinga Norman, who appears in fact to have actively encouraged them.<sup>74</sup>

124. Witnesses told the Commission that the practice of such violations by the Kamajors was brought to the attention of the President, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, who neither sanctioned nor condemned those responsible, and who in fact continued to endorse the activities of the CDF thereafter.<sup>75</sup> The witnesses stated that the President organised a meeting at his office after his restoration to power in 1998 where members of the War Council at Base Zero gave him a comprehensive briefing of their activities. Furthermore, many of them subsequently came to see the President privately where they notified him of the terrible practices going on within the Kamajor camps. The witnesses claimed that the President lamented his inability to call Chief Norman to order for fear that he might incite the Kamajors to revolt against the Government. However, the president was alleged to have issued an order banning further initiations within the Kamajor movement. The order was however largely ignored by the initiators.

125. A woman testified to her husband being eaten by the Kamajors:

"The Kamajors brought the head of my husband, gave me the head cut off and said I should give them money to buy tomato paste, magi, onions for them to cook the head and eat. I gave them the sum of one thousand Leones. They hit my hands, stripped me naked and took from me the sum of 50,000 Leones. I have the scar marks on my left hand near to my wrist. Further more they went with the head to town dancing with it while his flesh was in the pot in front of my house cooking for them to eat."<sup>76</sup>

126. All the combat groups engaged in cannibalism. The RUF had demonstrated a clear propensity for attacking the very people in whose name it claimed to be carrying out the revolution. It was no surprise to the people that the RUF also engaged in cannibalism. What was shocking to the people was that the Kamajors also engaged in it, for no ostensible reason. A group within the Kamajors, called the "yarmotor" is reputed to be a cult of warriors in traditional Sierra Leonean society. Witnesses claim that this group carried out most of the cannibalism violations. As legend has it, eating the remains of a conquered foe imbued the warrior with the strength of the vanquished. This fable has existed

<sup>73</sup> Excerpt from TRC statement taken in Moyamba District, relating to events in the Kono District in 1998; TRC Statement, Number 3922.

<sup>74</sup> TRC confidential interview with a member of the War Council at Base Zero, TRC office, Freetown, November 2003.

<sup>75</sup> TRC confidential interview with a member of the War Council at Base Zero. TRC Office Freetown December 2003; also M.S. Dumbuya, TRC Offices, Freetown, 2003.

<sup>76</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 150

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from ancient times, providing the basis for cannibalism in some of the great wars in different parts of the world. It has no scientific basis and remains unproven. The leadership of the Kamajor militia and of the RUF were grossly remiss in preventing their members from participating in cannibalism or punishing those who did.

## THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON FAMILIES

127. As the smallest unit of social organisation, the family felt the most impact of the war in Sierra Leone. Household heads were targeted, brutalised and killed in the presence of their children. Young girls most of them not yet at puberty were raped and taken away to become "bush wives". Boys, some of them as young as eight years old, were taken away to be trained to fight for the combat groups, some of them never to return. In most cases, their links with their families were deliberately severed through forcing them at the pain of death to commit incest and horrendous atrocities against family members. The following testimonies before the Commission capture the tragedy that befell the average family during the war.

128. A witness from Magbotoso village was forced to watch the rape and killing of his blind mother by "men in combat attire" in January 1999.

"As we reached the town my mother was raped right in front of me. I covered my face so as not to see, but one of them gave me a slap saying I should see what was happening. Three of them raped her, one after the other. The fourth one was about to rape her when my mother pushed him. He immediately removed a knife from his pocket and stabbed her in the chest. They were in disarray when they heard the helicopter gunship. I carried my mother on my back to a nearby village. She died later that day."<sup>77</sup>

129. Nothing seemed to attract the respect or deference of the RUF soldiers. Even pregnant women were beaten and raped.<sup>78</sup>

"During the war in 1999 the rebels captured me. At that time I was pregnant. The rebels stabbed me in the leg with a bayonet. They beat me with a stick on my head until I bled from the nose. The rebels took me back to their base at Burkina in Kailahun district. The rebels raped me on the way to their base. I was with them when I gave birth, but I lost the child because of the serious pain. When I gave birth I was seriously sick because of the way the rebels beat me when I was pregnant."

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<sup>77</sup> Mohammed Fofanah. Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 2556.

<sup>78</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 1830

130. John Lamboi was a resident of a village that was attacked by the RUF on January 4 1995. He was detained at gunpoint, denied food and water. His house was burnt and he witnessed the raping of his young daughter:<sup>79</sup>

“My daughter was a small girl and knew nothing about sexual affairs. But it was that night that the rebels inaugurated her against her wishes. She was shouting and crying but they didn’t listen to her and went ahead and raped her in my presence.”

131. Adama Gribow, of Moyamba town, fled to the bush with part of her family when the RUF first attacked her town. They stayed in the bush for two months until the rebels captured them and other displaced women. She was forced to watch the torturing to death of her mother and aunt. She was also made to sing and dance as the atrocities were taking place.<sup>80</sup>

“One morning the rebels met us in the forest. They threatened to shoot anyone who attempted to run. We were asked to line up in groups, children in one line, women in another. They later separated pregnant women from us. My mother’s younger sister, Moinya, was pregnant. She was made to stand in front of all the pregnant women. An argument erupted among the rebels. One rebel argued that Moinya was carrying a baby boy, while the other denied and maintained that the baby was a girl. They bet 10,000 Leones on who was correct. The argument lasted for nearly twenty minutes. A young rebel boy was appointed as a judge, and four other young rebel boys were appointed to split the stomach of Moinya. The rebels split her stomach and removed the baby while my aunt was crying in pain. While they were splitting her stomach they told us to sing and dance. My mother refused to dance. She too was arrested. She was forced to lie on the ground. They beat her with sticks. They also kicked her in the stomach until she started bleeding. We stood around them singing and dancing until both my mother and her sister died. No reasons were given as to why my mother and my aunty were killed.”

132. The AFRC soldiers who had revolted against the elected government were no different from their RUF colleagues in their treatment of civilians.<sup>81</sup> AFRC soldiers abducted Miss X during the January 6 invasion of Freetown. She was used as a slave after refusing to submit to rape. She watched her cousin being raped.<sup>82</sup>

“When we came back to their base three of the men raped my cousin, but my elder sister and I refused. They put my sister’s left foot into boiling water and later she could not walk for days.”

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<sup>79</sup> Confidential Statement to the TRC.

<sup>80</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 2550

<sup>81</sup> The relationship between the RUF and the AFRC is explored in detail in the chapter on youths in this report.

<sup>82</sup> The name of the witness has been removed to protect her identity.

133. Miss Y had a similar experience. She was forced to watch the rape of her elder sister by "soldiers"<sup>83</sup>

"During the January 6<sup>th</sup> invasion we were also abducted. One soldier used to rape Fatima (elder sister) every day in my presence. He said that I should start to learn how to have sex."

134. A paramount chief recounted the rape of his nephew's pregnant wife by members of the SLA in 1995:<sup>84</sup>

"In early 1995 my nephew was passing by the brigade with his wife, when they were intercepted by soldiers. Both were alleged to have passed by without greeting them. They were taken into the brigade. The woman was forcefully taken to a room and the husband was asked to stay outside. The woman, who was a month pregnant, was raped. The husband informed them of his wife's pregnancy. Because of this statement he was severely beaten and almost killed."

135. According to Lamin Mauranay, his pregnant daughter was raped and murdered in his presence by AFRC soldiers in 1998<sup>85</sup>:

"Later in the night another group of AFRC came from Sandia road on a mission statement saying 'operation no living thing.' They killed 17 civilians, raped one of my daughters who was pregnant at the time and later killed her in cold blood."

136. "Satu", 32 years of age and a mother of four, was abducted by "Sobels" retreating from Freetown in January 1999. Pregnant at the time, she was repeatedly raped while in captivity<sup>86</sup>.

"I was two months pregnant. During the time of my stay with the Sobels I was appointed as one of their cooks. I was raped three times per night by different Sobels. Three Sobels were raping me not even thinking I am a pregnant woman. The Sobels forced me to have sex with them and if I failed to do so I would have been killed, leaving behind my four children. The Sobels were not allowing us to watch at their faces, they only came from the Bengurnia barracks at night and they forced us to have sex and later they returned to their barracks."

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<sup>83</sup> The name of the witness has been removed to protect her identity.

<sup>84</sup> The name of the paramount chief has been removed in order to protect the identity of the woman.

<sup>85</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 2064

<sup>86</sup> The real name of the witness has been removed to protect her identity.



137. The targeting of families was not restricted to the RUF and its allies. The pro government militia, the CDF also targeted the families of those they suspected of being collaborators to the AFRC/RUF.<sup>87</sup>

“The Kamajors stormed our house again claiming that my brothers had dug a hole [in the back of the compound] and had hid arms there. My brothers denied this, telling the Kamajors that it was not arms they kept in the pit but fuel and money. My brothers even told them that they would go dig up the hole so that the Kamajors would believe what they were saying. But the Kamajors did not listen saying that as long as they have got that information [from an informant] they know it is true and will act on it. It was then that they chopped off the ear of Abu, one of my brothers. After that they put my brothers in a vehicle with five other men and drove away. After sometime they appeared again in our area and told us that everybody should come out and identify their relatives. When we came out we were under gunpoint, and they took us to the vehicle, where we saw seven human heads they had just chopped off. We identified our brothers, and they told us that we should laugh over their heads and dance, which we did for fear that we would be killed if we refused.”

138. “Kadi” was hiding in the bush with her young son when 3 Gbethes stopped her. She was pregnant at the time.<sup>88</sup>

“One of the men asked me where the people were hiding. I told him that I didn’t know because I was a stranger in the village. They said that if I failed to direct them to where the people were hiding they would kill me. They were with me the entire day walking in the bush. One of the men raped me in the bush. In the evening when they came to the town with me another two men raped me. At the time I was five months pregnant. They were about to give me some load to carry, but one of the men who raped me in the bush appealed to his colleagues to set me free. I was then released.”

139. The targeting of families was designed to remove all vestiges of respect and dignity in the people abused. Such conditioning makes people very malleable and easy to control. It however led to the break up of families, as the trauma was too great for many to bear.

140. One characteristic of the conflict was the familial connection between prominent actors on both sides of the conflict. One notable family was the Bio family of Tihun, Bonthe district. A prominent member of the family, Steve Bio was a reputed supplier of arms and ammunition to the RUF and the AFRC. His nephew Julius Maada Bio was the mastermind of the April 29<sup>th</sup> 1992 coup that brought the NPRC to power. An in law of the Bio’s, Ibrahim Deen Jalloh was a teacher at the Bunumbu Teachers College in 1993 when the RUF attacked the college and abducted him and his wife, Agnes. Subsequently, he was converted into a believer in the RUF cause. All through the conflict however, his wife was detained and compelled to provide sexual services to Foday Sankoh as a means of keeping her husband in check. After the AFRC was kicked out of Freetown, Steve Bio was arrested and detained at the Pademba Road prison.

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<sup>87</sup> Mamodu Kamara. Statement to the Commission. Number 1017

<sup>88</sup> The real name of the witness has been removed to protect her identity.

Steve Bio was in prison with Gibril Massaquoi and other associates of the RUF and AFRC including former President Joseph Momoh and Alex Minty. They all attempted to escape from Freetown following the January 6 1999 attack. Hiding around the Guma Valley premises in the days after the attack and looking for a safe exit from Freetown, Steve Bio was killed by an ECOMOG shell. Gibril Massaquoi subsequently took Steve Bio's wife Edna under his wings to offer solace and protection and made her his "wife".<sup>89</sup> Because of the involvement of the Bio family with the different factions during the conflict, Brigadier Maada Bio was accused of colluding with the RUF. The Commission's investigations demonstrate that this was not the case. When Maada Bio became Head of State, he sent photographs of his sister Agnes to all military formations to try and track her as they launched attacks on RUF positions. A witness reported to the Commission how he broke down and wept uncontrollably when he was finally reunited with his sister. Tihun, their home town, was attacked in January 1996 because Maada Bio was the Head of State. That attack has entered the conflict folklore as the 'Tihun Massacre'. Several members of the family including Josepo Bio were killed in the attack. It is to the credit of Julius Maada Bio that he did not allow family tragedy to becloud his pursuit of peace with the RUF.

141. The linkage between family members and the different factions again came to the surface in the aftermath of the May 8 2000 demonstrations and attack on the residence of Foday Sankoh in Freetown. While all the leaders of the RUF were ordered to report to the nearest police stations or at ECOMOG headquarters, Gibril Massaquoi claimed to the Commission that he hid himself at the residence of the then Vice president, Dr. Joe Demby who he said is an uncle of sorts to him. Another prominent member of the RUF, Peter Borbor Vandy who became the Minister of Lands and Country Planning after the Lome Peace Agreement was married to Georgina Demby, daughter of the then Vice president. One of the accused officers during the treason trials of 1998 was one Lieutenant Commander Francis Momoh Duwai. He was convicted and sentenced to death. One of the members of the Court Martial Board that convicted him was his father, Lieutenant Colonel P. M. Duwai (Rtd.). His sentence was subsequently commuted to life imprisonment. He also broke out of Pademba Road prison following the January 6 1999 attack on Freetown, and is currently serving in the armed forces.
142. Another of the treason convicts was Reginald Halston, head of the military police during the AFRC regime. He was also sentenced to death. In the weeks after his conviction, his father was involved in a ghastly motor accident with ECOMOG at the Congo Cross Bridge in Freetown, from which he died. The Commission has received testimony that then Head of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces, Nigerian born Brigadier Maxwell Khobe lobbied very hard for his sentence to be reduced to avoid the double tragedy that would result for the family. His sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. The Commission does not consider it part of its mandate to interrogate the exercise of the discretionary power of prerogative of mercy by the president.
143. One of the leaders of the NPRC regime whose roles in the conflict is discussed in the chapter on military and political history is Captain Tom Nyuma who claimed that he is a nephew of Foday Sankoh. After the overthrow of the government on May 25 1997, a lot of effort was invested by the government in exile, in bringing him back to Sierra Leone from the United States to take over

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<sup>89</sup> Confidential interviews with ex-RUF combatants in Bo, Kenema and Pujehun August 2003.

from Chief Hinga Norman as commander of the CDF forces. All testimonies received by the Commission about Tom Nyuma point to a relationship between him and the different combat groups and a multiplicity of roles by him in each of them.

## THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON COMMUNITIES

144. The RUF “revolution” was launched to dislodge the dictatorial regime of the All Peoples Congress from power. During the early contacts with people in the Kailahun and Pujehun districts, the movement tried to explain its purpose, promising emancipation for the people. Their tactic of co-opting support and forcibly appropriating property belonging to the people as well as the targeting of prominent and educated people showed the people that this was anything but a revolution. Communities were captured for the basis of plunder, where the movement sought to replenish its stock of food and other materials from community resources. In the targeting of communities lay the basis for the widespread displacement of people that took place during the conflict.

145. In many respects this strategy by the RUF speaks volumes about the misconstrued platform on which the ‘revolution’ was launched. The very acts that the attackers believed to be emancipatory were received by the populace as oppressive and offensive. Moreover, such acts contributed significantly to the siege mentality prevalent in many communities of the Southern and Eastern provinces. One of the most direct manifestations of the siege mentality was the subscription to the concept of civil defence and the consequent mobilisation of local militias.

146. ‘Rebels’ held Loretta Sesay held captive in her house for three days, beginning on January 6, 1999.<sup>90</sup>

“They put us under gun point and asked us to sing and dance for them. The song they asked us to sing was ‘we want peace’. They also forced us to use obscene language on the Tejan Kabbah government. They rebels took all my belongings. They tortured me with guns and sticks. They also restricted my movement by putting me under siege for three days. They forced us to sing and dance for them both day and night. On the third day, the rebels told me and the others who were under siege that they were going to amputate people’s hands. Upon hearing that I and others started begging them to have pity on us...As God would have it, one of the rebels decided to take pity on us and told his colleagues not to implement their plans, but that they should let us evacuate the house so that they could burn it. Before they finally freed me and the others they gave each of us forty strokes.”

147. Sei Tham witnessed abuses committed by the Kamajors against the people of his village,

“I cannot remember the dates of all the events, but Kamajors visited us at 8.00pm and gathered all the people in our village, locked the women up in a house and then asked the men to come outside and dance for them. The men were beaten up while dancing.”

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<sup>90</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 1389

148. John Abdallah, son of Lebanese and Sierra Leonean parents, was a resident of a township in Kailahun, which was attacked by the RUF on 27 April 1991.<sup>91</sup>

“About thirty six people jubilated and came out to stand for peace since the APC was overthrown. Sankoh who was the RUF leader instructed his boys to boil palm oil and dump it on all thirty six people who jubilated for peace.”

149. One of the communities to feel the direct impact of the war was Koribundo in Bo district. There was a military garrison in the town, which during the AFRC regime was occupied by the renegade soldiers. The town was fought over between the CDF and the AFRC several times with control seesawing between the groups. The Kamajors accused the towns’ people of supporting the AFRC. When the AFRC finally evacuated the town, several contingents of the Kamajors led by Joe Timide and Joe Nunie came on revenge missions. The Commission’s investigations revealed that the Kamajors committed so many atrocities during this and subsequent visits to the town. The Commission therefore decided to organise a public hearing on the destruction of Koribundo by the Kamajors.

150. Koribundo residents told the Commission that the SLA soldiers who occupied the town treated the towns’ people decently. This was to change when the RUF joined them in a “peoples’ army” in 1997.

“Sincerely the soldiers didn’t do much destruction, but the people’s army did most of the looting in Koribundo. They were violent with us. They took our property without respect. They said they are not paid by the government. Anywhere they go they will just take what they want.”<sup>92</sup>

151. Interviews and testimonies reveal that the order to attack and destroy Koribundo was given by no other than the National Coordinator of the CDF himself, Chief Hinga Norman. The attack was led by Joe Timede. Other Kamajor commanders who participated in the attack included Tommy Lahai, Bockarie Beloko, Slagie Rogers. They were alleged to have committed wicked and inhuman acts, ordering the deaths of many people who challenged their activities in the town.<sup>93</sup>

“The Kamajors occupied the town and started firing or shooting for the rest of the day while I was inside my house. Heavy machine guns were used for the rest of the day. At 4.15 in the evening I got up and peeped. I saw more than 4000 Kamajors. They entered from one house to another. When they entered my house they cleared everything, including 15 bags of rice and 10 bags of groundnuts...they stayed for 2 months. Everyone ran away...majority of the houses were burnt, about 106 houses.

My blood brother was killed by the Kamajors. I was arrested and charged with making radios for the soldiers. They started dropping

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<sup>91</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 243

<sup>92</sup> TRC Interview with Momodu Kijan, resident of Koribundo at Koribundo 3rd June 2003

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

[burning] rubber on my body. They said that I should die.”<sup>94</sup>

152. Following complaints by the chiefs and people of Koribundo, a meeting was subsequently called at which Chief Hinga Norman was to address the people.

“So majority of us went for that meeting. When everybody reached, both civilians and Kamajors, he [Chief Norman] said that the Kamajors didn’t do their work for which he sent them. He asked them, ‘what happened? Are you afraid to kill?’ he asked the Kamajors in front of everybody. He told the Kamajors that Kapras kill people, nothing come out of it; Tamaboros kill, nothing happened; the soldiers killed nothing happened; the rebels the same thing. Why if Kamajors killed. ‘Why are you afraid to kill?’ He said further, ‘look these rebels, why are you afraid to kill them?’ Then the Kamajors started shouting, ‘pa-pay pa-pay!’ I was afraid. I thought that the Kamajors would open fire at us. So I dived down and moved off from the barray. Many people didn’t sleep in that town because of that speech by Hinga Norman.”<sup>95</sup>

153. Following the speech, a regime of terror was established in Koribundo. The Commission during the public hearing heard harrowing tales of atrocities committed against the towns’ people. The most notorious of the kamajor commanders was Tommy Lahai. He converted the hospital in the town to a “high court”. A high court judgement usually meant death for the unfortunate victim. The Commission was told that Lahai’s other name is Halai and that he is presently a member of the armed forces.

#### **THE PARTICULAR SUFFERING OF THE ELDERLY, THE AFFLUENT AND THOSE OF STATUS**

154. In terms of material loss, it is perhaps inevitable that people of affluence and status suffer inordinately in a conflict of this nature. The more one has, so the theory goes, the more one stands to lose. In a conflict in which forced displacement and looting violations were rife and constant throughout the period of fighting, property owners and those with assets such as expensive motor cars and large numbers of livestock were deliberately targeted by each of the fighting factions as they sought to accumulate wealth for themselves.
155. The particular suffering of the affluent and those of status attests to a great deal more about the dynamics of the conflict as a whole than simply the idea of material loss, however. In view of the character of the majority of the fighting forces, which appears to have been young, disgruntled and poor, the Commission considers that violations such as looting and destruction of property were as much an expression of the wretchedness of the plight with which so many of the perpetrators were familiar as it was any reflection of the particular identity of the victims themselves. Through those violations, they strove for a material existence better than that to which they had been conditioned.

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with Mr. Ibrahim Bar, resident of Koribundo at Koribundo 3rd June 2003.

<sup>95</sup> TRC interview with Mr. Ibrahim Bah, resident of Koribundo, at Koribundo 3rd June 2003.

156. From the evidence available one conclusion could be that it was a recurring tendency on the part of marginalised groups in Sierra Leone to harbour resentment against those who did not seem to have struggled like they have for whatever small gains they can gather. Thus, when a poor farmer has lived on a knife's edge for many years, possibly even decades, and has watched as those in positions of power and privilege enrich themselves at his expense, then he will lash out when he attains the means to exact revenge, which during the conflict came through the barrel of the gun.
157. The members of society who were perceived to 'have everything' were therefore often the ones destined to 'lose everything'. Equally, those that took them to task for their wealth and status were those who perceived themselves to be the silent victims of their self-enrichment. It was not so much a case of targeting the individual as lashing out against what that individual symbolised.
158. From the statements made to the Commission, it becomes evident that the aggressor sometimes creates justifications for his actions in his own mind - including allegations of collaboration or support for the corrupt system. The attacks represented an attempt to "bring down the system". The system was perceived as oppressive and enabling only the well connected and affluent to prosper. By "bringing down the system", the attackers hoped to make a statement that the playing field was not equal and that a new and egalitarian system needed to be constructed.
159. On the part of those who carried out such violations, there is little sense of the moral outrage of his act. He perceived himself, in fact, to be acting out a divine justice, by 'equalising' the disparities that society had thrust unfairly upon him. In this regard, one can perhaps begin to understand the utterance of the abusers of an elderly lady in the Bonthe District that "it is only because you have called the name of God that we are going to spare you".
160. The stories of loss are plenty and pitiful. Foday Kamara lost all his property, which he values at millions of Leones, after fleeing his town of Kamasondo, following the arrival of "men in combat dress."<sup>96</sup>

"I ran into the bush together with my wife and children. The following morning I went into the village to check if they had left. Indeed, none of them were around, but my two houses were burnt down to ashes. Also, my two stores with two hundred bushels of rice kept there, containers of palm oil, bags of groundnuts and bags of flour were burnt down. My twenty goats and ten sheep were looted too. Properties worth millions of Leones couldn't be recovered. Everything in my two houses was burnt down. My rice farm that was to be harvested that month was again burnt down. I was left with nothing except the clothes I had on."

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<sup>96</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 2094

161. Cecilia Caulker, mother of Victor Caulker, former Secretary General of the SLPP, recounts the arrest and murder of her son at the hands of "the junta" on October 14, 1997.<sup>97</sup>

"They said, 'You are our bitterest enemy, both you and your son, because you worked so hard against us that it was announced on the radio that Bonthe District scored the highest percentage [during the elections], so you are the greatest enemies of us and when the enemy catches the other enemy that enemy must die'. They took us to the base and imprisoned us. Then they took us out and separated us.... They said, both you and your son have gold, diamonds and a lot of money in your compound. Therefore, we have come so that you can show us where they are because it isn't yours any more because your son is dead."

162. Bankole Isaac George Vincent is a retired senior civil servant who was forced to hand over all his money to the 'rebels' and to subsequently flee his house.<sup>98</sup>

"I went into my room under escort and removed the 500,000 Leones I had in my box. Under great shock, I handed the money over to them. The Commando ordered one of his men to give me two slaps, which he did very brutally. The commando ordered his men to lock my family and myself in one room whilst they ransacked all the six rooms of the house and store. All the articles they looted were loaded inside of a lorry; before they departed they ordered me to dance and laugh and express my gratitude to them for looting my house and destabilizing my Mercedes Benz car beyond repairs. The rebels promised to come back in two days time and ordered me not to vacate the house as they would bring me some good gifts. However, knowing the notorious character of the rebels and the advice which an old lady gave me, my family and myself immediately left our house and sought refuge in different places."

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<sup>97</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Numbers 1262/1267

<sup>98</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 5992

## THE IMPACT OF THE CONFLICT ON BELIEF SYSTEMS

163. The RUF forces showed scant regard for the institutions and symbols of the people's belief systems and cultural heritage. Barrie's, which were the community meeting places and served all kinds of purposes including as places for the settlement of disputes were randomly attacked and destroyed. Faith and community institutions were desecrated. Belief systems were mocked and people were forced to commit religious and other sacrileges. Modibor Kaikai was present in Sahn Mahlen when the RUF arrived in 1991.<sup>99</sup>

"The rebels then requested the townspeople to give them drinks (rum). At first the townspeople told them that they are Muslims and they don't have alcoholic drinks. But these elders were highly molested by the rebels and were forced to give them a "batta" of moley (rum). The rebels were so happy with this offer and said that they were going to dance with the town (bamba) people for the whole night and this they did. But before the dance started they asked those who could not drink to identify themselves. We were all given alcohol forcefully. A good number of elders and Muslims were disgraced that night since that was the first time they would take alcoholic beverages."

The 'rebels' who forced the villagers to drink the rum were dressed as civilians. They proclaimed their mandate to be "fighting for the comfort of Sierra Leoneans". Such ironic representation of the "revolution" was not lost on the ordinary people in whose name the "revolution" was being carried out. These attacks shocked the collective conscience of Sierra Leoneans who began mobilising within the communities to find ways of resisting the invaders.

### The targeting of Chiefs and figures of traditional authority

164. Acts carried out against Chiefs, Speakers and their fellow elders in fact account for only a minute numerical percentage of the abuses inflicted on the civilian population during the conflict. Their suffering does not impact statistically to the same degree as, say, a consistent pattern of violations recorded against a certain ethnic group or an age group would do. Whilst there are several instances of deliberate targeting that are statistically more perceptible, however, there is none that is wrought with more symbolism than the singling out of social and cultural figureheads for humiliation and brutal maltreatment.
165. Essentially, the Commission has discovered two trends pertaining to the plight of local traditional authority figures whose communities were attacked in the opening year of the conflict. First, the attackers actively sought them out upon arrival in a town or village. Second, where they were found and identified, they were typically subjected to a particular and peculiar *nature* of abuse.
166. Tragically, most of the instances recorded by the Commission in which this category of persons fell into the hands of their attackers culminated in their being tortured to death or otherwise killed. The responsibility for these acts rests squarely with the advancing troops of the NPFL contingent who formed the bulk of the incursion force that entered the country at its Southern and Eastern borders with Liberia. Accordingly the brunt of this apparently deliberate targeting strategy was borne by those holding positions of authority

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<sup>99</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 6494

in the Kailahun, Pujehun and Bonthe Districts.

167. Such was the impact of just a handful of killings of Chiefs and elders by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), one might legitimately reflect upon why the numbers killed were not much higher. Rather than mercy or a change of heart, though, this anomaly is mostly attributable to the fact that there were very few Chiefs in Sierra Leone in the first place,<sup>100</sup> and even fewer who remained in their Chiefdoms long enough still to be there when the vicinity was attacked. News of early atrocities – and the identities of their victims – spread quickly through the country with the flow of displaced persons from the border areas towards the interior. The leadership elite, with finances and transportation at their disposal, was in the privileged position of being able to take flight almost at will, quite often out of the country. Thus, if the objective of such targeting was indeed to rid the territories captured of any effective traditional ruler (as a precursory step to putting in place alternative structures to fit with RUF/SL objectives), then it succeeded without reaping as high a death toll as its architects might have imagined would be necessary.
168. Nevertheless, attacks on Chiefs' properties and estates in their absence were commonplace. It is not surprising that Chiefs' compounds were among the first properties to be looted and destroyed when one considers that in any given township they are among the largest and most decorated residences. To a great extent, extortion and destruction violations against Chiefs followed an almost identical pattern to those against the foreign, affluent and well-heeled members of a community.
169. More significantly, when a Chief was physically abused, tortured and killed, often consecutively rather than in the alternative, the impact tended to be more profoundly and enduringly felt by his community than when similar abuses were meted out to less-exalted citizens. One statement giver Brima Amara Davowa witnessed the abuse carried out against the town chief of Sandayallu when the RUF first arrived in April 1999. The towns people were asked to gather at the barrier.<sup>101</sup>

“There was one lady in the group who was forced to show them the town chief, otherwise they would kill her. So with fear, she pointed at the town chief. Immediately, he was stripped naked in front of his subjects, including his wives and children. He was asked to run from where we were gathered to his store which was about 50 metres away. As an old man, he became exhausted and asked to lie down on the ground. He laid down, they asked him to open his mouth, he did, the commander took a single barrel gun loaded with bullets, put the gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger. His brains scattered all over the street.”

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<sup>100</sup> There are 149 Paramount Chiefs in Sierra Leone, one for each of Chiefdom in the three Provincial Regions. Additionally, there are Section Chiefs and Town Chiefs, who can be afforded an equal status in many communities depending on disparate factors such as their age, family pedigree or simply their charisma.

<sup>101</sup> Statement Number 4311. Statement obtained at Talia Section, Kailahun District on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2003., corroborated by Statement Number 4313

170. Sally Katta was recruited by the SLA as a “vigilante”. She found herself involved in the commission of atrocities:<sup>102</sup>

“Chief Sanuka was asked to bring us fish two times a day. It was an order from me. He told us he had no fishermen. I said that we were only interested in fish, not excuses. One week later, he discontinued. I undressed him naked with his wives, took them to the riverside and told them to dance. One of us came and thought they were rebels. He shot the chief and released the women. I had no alternative but to jubilate over the chief’s death. I get confused and don’t feel like eating whenever I think of Chief Sanuka.”

171. Haja Isata Mattia was “sick and confined” in her home in Sumbuya when the RUF attacked her town on May 4 1991. She witnessed the humiliation of her paramount chief<sup>103</sup>

“The Paramount Chief Amidu Nallo was dancing before them under duress and the moment he proclaimed that he was the chief, they showered abuses and insult on him.”

172. Al Haj Alpha Amaou Mansaray lost all his property to the RUF. He had anticipated being targeted because of his status as a Section Chief and a wealthy businessman:<sup>104</sup>

“Being as I was the section chief I knew that I might be a possible target. This is also because I was a big business man with three houses, a very big shop and 272 cows. When they came, they set my houses ablaze, including other houses as well. I could not see a single cow later as all had been destroyed. My shop was completely looted. Even my safe was vandalised. They took away everything. So finally I was left with nothing.”

173. The fate of the regent chief of Makayrembay was no different from that of other chiefs who were attacked. He was killed by ‘rebels’ in 1997, after being presented with a false choice between amputation and death. He was later hacked to death with a machete.<sup>105</sup>

174. A Kono Chief, Kai Sarquee, lost his life when an SLPP identity card and a traditional dress was found in his possession as he was escaping fighting in his home town. He was stopped at a military checkpoint manned by soldiers and when searched, these things were found in his possession. He was tortured and burnt alive.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 871.

<sup>103</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 7220

<sup>104</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 2905

<sup>105</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 382

<sup>106</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 257

175. In 1991 Chief Kallon-Kamara, Section Chief of Bomaru was arrested by SLA soldiers after a counter offensive in Bomaru to dislodge the 'rebels'. He was accused of being a rebel collaborator. He was beaten and tortured till his body was all swollen. He was eventually taken away on board an armoured car supposedly to Freetown and to this day he has not been seen and is presumed killed.<sup>107</sup>
176. In 1996 Chief Lagbenyor Lebbie of Konboya was killed by soldiers. Chief Lebbie was very outspoken about his doubts of the army and this made him a target. Most people in the chiefdom suspected that the army was unable to protect them and they preferred the Kamajors. He and his bodyguards were ambushed by SLA soldiers and shot dead.<sup>108</sup>
177. The attacks on chiefs and other local authority figures gave the civilian populace the inescapable impression that their attackers had embarked on a calculated programme to destroy the tenets and symbols of their local culture. In many of the cases recorded by the Commission, the outcomes of such murderous missions – either the corpses or dismembered body parts of the victims – were then paraded through the communities themselves as a chilling confirmation of the terror that had struck.
178. There is little doubt that many of the Chiefs and elders killed in the early phases of the conflict had themselves been responsible for the systemic suppression of their townspeople during the preceding decades of bad governance under the APC, although the Commission was not able to substantiate such a supposition in any individual case. The evidence before the Commission suggests that the attackers harboured an ill-conceived notion that by humiliating, torturing and ultimately eliminating figures of traditional authority, they might actually gain some popularity among the indigenes of the communities they entered. In reality, though, this tragic miscalculation quickly came to form a major part of the basis upon which residents of the Kailahun and Pujehun Districts – and through them the population of Sierra Leone as a whole – were instinctively averse to and alienated from the self-styled revolutionaries.
179. One of the most shattering individual killings of the nascent months of the conflict was undoubtedly that of Paramount Chief Ernest Claudius Farma Mahalor IV, who met his death in his home village of Tei in the Kwamebai Krim Chiefdom, Bonthe District on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1991. According to first-hand accounts,<sup>109</sup> the heavily-armed, RUF-affiliated attackers – Liberians most likely fighting under the large contingent of NPFL troops – numbered eleven in total and were under the command of one CO Livingstone. Upon their arrival in Tei, they gathered all the villagers together at the court barray and, apparently acting on the personal vendetta of one local man named Sahr Gibrilla, began to interrogate them about the whereabouts of their Chief. Although the Chief was among the party, he remained unidentified during this interrogation; when he was himself questioned, however, he was shot on his ankle in an apparent act of warning, causing him partial paralysis and profuse bleeding that was later to

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<sup>107</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 24

<sup>108</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 686

<sup>109</sup> See, in particular, TRC Statements 7352 and 7353, collected in Tei, Kwamebai Krim Chiefdom, Bonthe District; 08 June 2003. The Commission also recorded numerous second-hand accounts and related references to this killing from statement givers in Bonthe and several other Districts, all of which testify to its massive symbolic impact on the local populace.

prove his undoing. Despite having effected an initial escape from the rebels' captivity, Chief Farma left a trail of blood in his wake and was again apprehended due to the assistance of Sahr Gibrilla in tracing the blood to his hiding place. At that point he was firmly bound up with nylon twine, known locally as 'tabay', and dragged before his people at the court barray one final time to bid them farewell.

180. One of the last sights the Chief was forced to endure was that of his house being burnt down by his would-be killers. Still bound by the twine, he was then shot dead at Sahr Gibrilla's behest and subsequently his body was dismembered. The Liberian attackers later paraded the dead Chief's decapitated head through some of the communities of his erstwhile subjects, openly boasting that they had 'finished' him. As if further to destroy the Chief's legacy and the dignity of his family, the attackers abducted and raped one of his wives and later looted most of his properties from his relatives' homes. "Following the attack and brutal assassination of our Chief, the entire town of Tei was in a state of panic."<sup>110</sup>
181. The impact of such a killing on a local population cannot be overstated. In one fell swoop, the community loses its figurehead and its sense of security. The myriad practical and ceremonial functions of the Paramount Chief, many of which cannot be performed by anybody else, are suddenly unattended to. His dependents, commonly numbering twenty and more, are left to fend for themselves, often having been mercilessly victimised. In terms of the past, several generations of ancestral heritage are sullied; in terms of the future, the Chiefdom can be rendered devoid of status and direction, at least in the short term.
182. Both the element of publicity and of averred complicity in the killing of Chief Farma are mirrored in multiple other examples of targeting of senior authority figures in the early stages of the war. Making the Chief bid farewell to his subjects before being killed is thoroughly offensive to the local culture because it represents an admission of the figurehead's vulnerability, or mortality; on the other hand, though, it was a rite of passage that few murdered chiefs were actually afforded.
183. The targeting of chiefs is significant because it became an antecedent to the formation of the Kamajors in the form they took, with the chiefs very much in the forefront of their operations. The targeting also provides a poignant human angle on the broader targeting of Sierra Leonean traditional and cultural norms that featured as a defining characteristic of the conflict.
184. The tradition of leadership in Sierra Leone is most definitely one premised upon notions of seniority. It would be inconceivable in most communities for an elder to be subordinated to an untried 'junior man', especially one who hails from another geographical area, or from another culture altogether. Yet that is exactly what the insurgents set out to achieve, fully aware that in overhauling the traditional leaders, they would be punishing the individuals themselves on the one hand and targeting the very institution of chieftaincy on the other.
185. To a great extent, though, the theory that to humiliate and undermine figures of authority in a particular community might actually serve to gain some popularity among the indigenes was horrendously ill conceived. Townspeople whose

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<sup>110</sup> TRC statement 7352, collected in Tei, Kwamebai Krim Chiefdom, Bonthe District; 08 June 2003.

Chiefs were slaughtered invariably saw the attacks as an affront to themselves and their collective dignity. They were also left with an enhanced feeling of vulnerability, spawned by the realisation that if the Chiefs were not immune to this wave of terror then nobody would be. In many respects the strategy speaks volumes about the misconstrued platform on which the 'revolution' was launched.

186. The RUF leadership did nothing to prevent the targeting of chiefs and other community symbols. The Leader, Foday Sankoh, according to some accounts objected to certain acts committed by the insurgent forces, particularly by the NPFL fighters, on the basis that they were 'counter-revolutionary'. Among the objects of his alleged disapproval was rape, for which it was claimed that he introduced an express rule that anybody found to have committed rape would be executed. Sankoh himself committed rape and sexual slavery in the forcible detention and conversion of Agnes Deen Jalloh to his bush wife. On the issue of killing Chiefs, Sankoh remained conspicuously silent. Indeed he lent the practice his implicit endorsement by proceeding to keep a house in the same Sandeyallu Village in Kailahun District where the incumbent Town Chief had been so brutally and publicly murdered in 1991. It may have been that Sankoh was in favour of such tactics on the misplaced premise that they struck a blow against 'the system' he so despised.

## TARGETING ON THE BASIS OF GRUDGES AND VENDETTA

187. One other common characteristic of the conflict was the targeting of individuals on the basis of pre-existing grudges and vendettas. People were also targeted on the basis of nationality, as Nigerians were during the AFRC regime. Several factors account for this. The study on the antecedents of the conflict<sup>111</sup> identified several local and district variables that gave the conflict a particular flavour in the communities. Many of the issues identified relate to the imposition of arbitrary fines and punishment by the chiefs in the local courts leading to exile (many times across the border into Liberia) by the convicted persons, conflicts arising from the imposition of unpopular candidates as chiefs and as members of the local councils and the legislature, conflicts over land and other communal resources. Many of those who lost out in these instances allied themselves to the RUF or the CDF and on many occasions to both groups when it suited them to revenge the punishment or loss they had suffered. There were also cases of targeting arising from rejected love and marriage overtures, the possession of resources over and above the perpetrator. The inexplicability of the targeting was captured in most of the testimonies of the victims who appeared before the Commission.
188. Mohammed Conteh, narrated to the Commission the roles played by the RUF, the SLA and the CDF in Bo during the conflict:<sup>112</sup>

"Later I came back to Bo but one of our neighbours at 14 Barima Road, Bo went to the ECOMOG peacekeepers and told them that I was one of the armed men in Bo and that I was responsible for the death of his wife. I learnt that his wife died in the Liberian war but he

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<sup>111</sup> Palmer, Isaac. Dr. *The Antecedents of the Rebel War in Sierra Leone*. Research conducted for the TRC by the Research and Documentation Bureau of the Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, July 2002.

<sup>112</sup> Statement to the TRC > Statement Number 693

lied and said that I killed her. He made a statement to the police. The CPO said that is a murder case and that he could not handle it. I was sent to the ECOMOG peacekeepers. When I got there, they did not allow me to explain. They flogged me mercilessly from morning to evening. I was treated in this way for one week, and I was regularly flogged during that period.”

Mr. Conteh was later allowed to go home after the ECOMOG troops discovered that he was a “peaceful citizen”. In the end he left his former abode at Barima Road “because of the fear that I was a Temne and the angry Kamajors who are Mende would retaliate destructively and indiscriminately.”

189. Umu Jalloh, described how a group of Kamajors surrounded her house in 1999:<sup>113</sup>

“According to those Kamajor fighters, the house was owned by a SLA soldier. I told them that the house was built and owned by me. They said they would burn the house. I pleaded, crying bitterly, but they still insisted on burning the house down. They asked everybody in the house to vacate or they would burn us alive. My family and I had to leave the house and we weren’t allowed to remove a single item of property from the house before it was burnt down. They guarded the house until the entire building was razed to the ground. The next thing they did was to sell the land again to another person. That day, most houses owned by Temnes were burnt down. I wanted to take action but my life would be in a very risky position. During that time, the Kamajors were the voice of Bo”.

190. What the targeting signified was a wanton disregard for the common threads that bound people in the communities together before the war. In many cases attacks were led by people with whom the victims were previously acquainted or familiar. The attacks created distrust among people and undermined the foundations for co-existence in the communities.

### Targeting of Soldiers

191. Throughout the first half of the 1990s, the RUF gained territory and the war spread to many parts of the country. As perceptions increased that the soldiers were colluding with the RUF, they were declared *persona non grata* in the Southern and Eastern provinces. Attacks on soldiers increased. It was risky for any person in military uniform to go to these regions, even if to visit their family members. The Commission heard harrowing tales of soldiers who went visiting their family members were arrested and butchered by the CDF. The lucky ones escaped with their lives but with physical scars of their experience:

“I was the last in the row and I had to hold the decapitated head of my brother until all life had drained from it. I was certain that I too would be killed in this manner. However, ‘The Killer’ declared that I would not be beheaded; instead, the rebels’ commander named ‘Scare the Baby’ ordered a letter to be tied around my neck to send a ‘warning’ to my colleagues. ‘The Killer’ then took out his blunt sword and used it to hack at my arm until the bone broke; he used his hands to snap the

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<sup>113</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 5812

bone fully; then he severed the remaining veins and tendons entirely to finish the job. I passed out from the excruciating pain and re-awoke three hours later to find that my other hand had also been amputated. I stumbled around for several days in the forest without food or water, before eventually making it back to my soldier colleagues."<sup>114</sup>

A presidential commission to review the relationship between soldiers and the CDF was unable to complete its assignment before the soldiers overthrew the Government in 1997.

### Targeting of Nigerians

192. The relationship between Nigerians and Sierra Leoneans blossomed from the colonial era. The colonial authorities recruited many Sierra Leoneans as missionaries and civil servants in Nigeria. Many of them subsequently settled in Nigeria. Furthermore thousands of slaves who had been freed from the slave ships arrested on the high seas and resettled in Sierra Leone were able to trace their homes in Nigeria and re-establish contact with their family members. The links between both countries have therefore been very strong. Up until the start of the war, majority of the students at the Fourah Bay College were Nigerians. Inter marriage between both nations had been quite strong and thousands of Nigerians had settled in Sierra Leone carrying on legitimate business activities
193. It was no surprise therefore that Nigeria spearheaded the ECOMOG intervention in Sierra Leone. Following that intervention, thousands of Nigerian soldiers who had served in ECOMOG returned to Sierra Leone as civilians on completing their commission to engage in business activities. On the overthrow of the Tejan Kabbah Government, ECOWAS and the Organisation of African Unity charged the Nigerian dominated ECOMOG with ensuring the restoration of the civilian government to power. The AFRC regime therefore perceived Nigeria as the biggest threat to its hold on power. It began a campaign stigmatising Nigerians as responsible for the woes to which the populace was subjected as a result of the blockade of Freetown port. Mass hysteria against Nigerians was promoted, and it wasn't surprising when Nigerians began to be molested and attacked on the streets and in their homes by the civilian collaborators and the troops of the AFRC.
194. A Nigerian victim of the conflict, David Anyaele said, "the rebels isolated Nigerians from the other captives and began amputating their forelimbs. After amputating me, the rebels set me on fire and told me to go deliver their message to the Nigerian government".<sup>115</sup>
195. Another victim, Emmanuel Egbuna who was lucky to have his mutilated limbs stitched together, also recounted his experience:
- "They cut off the hands of my younger brother, Benedict, from beneath the elbow. They dumped him at the cemetery behind the house, and he bled to death in front of me and his pregnant wife. The machete cut

<sup>114</sup> Excerpt from TRC statement taken in Western Area, relating to events in the Kono District in 1992; TRC Statement Code Number 7132.

<sup>115</sup> Affidavit in a petition to a Nigerian High Court to have Charles Taylor tried in Sierra Leone by the Special Court for supporting the RUF. Reported by the Pan African News Agency, Monday July 14 2004.

through the flesh and the bones of my hands, but did not entirely severe them. With my hands dangling from my arms, the rebels dumped me at the cemetery."<sup>116</sup>

196. During the evacuation of Freetown by members of the international community in May 1997, Nigerians who had sought safety at the Mammy Yoko hotel and other parts of Freetown were prevented from leaving unlike other nationals. Whenever groups of people were arrested, the Nigerians among them were separated from the rest, kept behind, and taken away into detention or killed without trial. Thousands of them suffered amputations, arbitrary detentions, killings, rapes and other sexual offences, looting and the destruction of their property. The material losses by Nigerians during that period have been estimated at more than \$5.5million.<sup>117</sup>

"[Following the 25 May 1997 coup] our shops, business premises and even our residences were vandalized and destroyed. Our women were raped, our Sierra Leonean wives were humiliated on the streets, and many of our people were killed. Some were maimed and rendered destitute. Some lost their properties and everything they possessed to the hoodlums. Some managed to escape into the bush where they lived miserable lives until 1998. Only the Almighty God, on whose mercies we relied, saved us and ensured our inexplicable survival. We lost less than 100 Nigerians within this period. Among many other pathetic and unforgettable experiences, the one at Mammy Yoko Hotel on the morning of June 2<sup>nd</sup> 1997 stood out. On that day, nearly all the Nigerian citizens in Freetown sought refuge at the hotel awaiting evacuation to Guinea. The only help the Nigerian government could render was for those who could make it to Guinea. On this day, AFRC/RUF forces attacked the hotel from the sea and land, launching heavy military artillery at the building with hundreds of Nigerians in there. A Nigerian army detachment was then lodged at the Mammy Yoko hotel. They put up a fight and the heavy firing went on till evening when the Nigerian Army surrendered after mediation by the RED CROSS, because of the consideration about the possibility of heavy civilian casualties. Civilians were then allowed to board an American helicopter on standby nearby. As the civilians (mostly Nigerians) left the hotel, they were stripped of virtually all they owned all their lives by AFRC/RUF fighters. Cash, jewelries and other priceless items were forcibly taken from Nigerians fleeing the country. Some were taken to Military headquarters for detention and to be used as human shield in case of a Nigeria-led attack on the military base."<sup>118</sup>

197. The legacy of the conflict period still lingers in the relationship between Nigerians and Sierra Leoneans. In its submission to the Commission, the Nigerian National Union in Sierra Leone charged that Nigerians have become the proverbial fowl used for sacrifices in all occasions:

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<sup>116</sup> Affidavit in a petition to a Nigerian High Court, to have Charles Taylor tried in Sierra Leone by the Special Court for supporting the RUF. Reported by the Pan African News Agency, Monday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2004.

<sup>117</sup> Nigerian National Union in Sierra Leone, Submission to the TRC, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2003.

<sup>118</sup> Nigerian National Union in Sierra Leone, Submission to the TRC, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2003.

"The parties to the conflict on every occasion see us as enemies. We always bear the brunt of all clashes in the country. Even on the Streets, in the buses/taxis in Sports arena, markets, schools, residential areas, what we hear of Nigeria is incredible and unimaginable. People don't ever say any good thing about Nigeria. I don't know if those good Sierra Leoneans who value our activities and appreciate good things are afraid of speaking out. The voices of our detractors always overshadow that of our admirers (if any). All our genuine goodwill is turned into bad and evil."<sup>119</sup>

## THE ROLE OF ETHNICITY IN THE CONFLICT

198. The link between the conflict and ethnicity lies in the element of targeting, whereby ethnic origin was 'instrumentalised' by a particular leader or interest group against those whom they perhaps resented or wanted to eliminate. In numerous submissions to the Commission, it was averred that the motivation for such a strategy was power, self-preservation or self-enrichment. Moreover, the use of ethnicity as a 'justification' appears to have been a veil for quite different motives, for example: fear that the object group was 'exploiting' the natural resources of the country; suspicion about the success that a particular 'outsider' or group of 'outsiders' enjoyed in a particular community, for example as a businessman or a diamond miner/dealer; or indeed desire to preserve their positions (of power) in a certain social order (perhaps Government itself) and to ensure that those who participate in any criminal enterprise with them are people they can understand and trust – invariably their own tribal counterparts.
199. The implicit impact can give the impression, as many submissions to the Commission have intimated, that there is widespread ethnic intolerance and hatred among the individuals themselves, when this is not in fact the case.
200. In reporting such incidents of 'instrumentalising ethnicity', the Commission is not in fact finding that, for example, all Krios were vehemently anti-Mende in the years immediately after independence, nor that all Mendes were inherently anti Temne in the latter years of the conflict. In fact, Sierra Leone is a society that is founded upon a fair degree of ethnic tolerance, as evidenced by the various factors cited in submissions such as inter-marriage and cross-Regional co-operation.
201. The Commission's research finds that it is rather the case that persons in positions of leadership or responsibility made vitriolic statements regarding the opposing ethnic group in order to promote their strategic objectives. The first such objective appears to have been that of giving the recipient audience a sense of vulnerability; statements against another ethnic group made them feel threatened by the object group and therefore more likely to act against them. The second such objective seems to have been creating and / or emphasising a notion of 'otherness' – which in itself is largely artificial – among the recipient audience. Such a strategy was intended to convince them that the object group is somehow different from them in terms of character, loyalty or interest (as manifested through traits over which the individual has no control, such as ethnicity) and is 'plotting' something unfamiliar against them.

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<sup>119</sup> Nigerian National Union in Sierra Leone, Submission to the TRC, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2003.

202. Targeting on the basis of ethnicity was mostly carried out in the South against victims of Northern origin. It is important to place this targeting in context. The targeting began against soldiers. By the onset of the war, majority of the members of the armed forces were of Northern origin. This had both historical and political foundations. Historically, the rank and file of the army was predominated by people from the North. Politically, one of the legacies of APC rule was the bastardisation of the finest tenets of the military in favour of ethnic and other considerations. Candidates into the army had to present a recruitment card issued to them by a politician. Without such a card, even the best qualified candidates stood the risk of rejection. Elevations and promotions went to those either from the north or who owed allegiance to Siaka Stevens and his successor, Joseph Momoh.
203. As the war wore on, allegations of collusion by the army began to dominate public discourse. Accusing fingers in the South and East, were pointed at Northerners in the army as providing support to the RUF. This distrust deepened during the AFRC rule when soldiers of Northern origin were suspected of sympathising with Johnny Paul Koroma, a fellow Northerner. This distrust even affected the CDF response to the war, as the national Coordinator of the CDF refused or neglected to provide logistics to the northern CDF for fear that it would divert those resources to the AFRC.
204. Although there might be alternative explanations for some of the violations committed against Northerners by Kamajor militia men in the South of the country, it is important nevertheless not to underestimate the ethnic undertones of such acts, particularly with a view to achieving meaningful reconciliation in the future.
205. One witness testifies to his experience in Bo town where he had lived for more than 27 years.

“The burning of houses belonging to Temnes or Northerners was only done in Bo Town, where 110 houses were burnt. No house belonging to a Mende or a Southerner was burnt in Makeni and all over the North. It [has planted] a bad seed for tomorrow... One of the main objectives of Kamajors or Civil Defence Forces in Sierra Leone [was] to defend the lives and properties of civilians in general. They should not have seized or looted or destroyed properties from peaceful civilians on a tribal basis that was not practised or done in other areas of the country, especially the North and East, but even the West. The people to whom I have addressed my complaints and cries have not done anything to remedy the situation; to save the Sierra Leone family from created troubles and divisions of minds against each other. We all have children who will become leaders of the nation tomorrow. Revenge is possible in the case the table of leadership turns and falls on the side of those children whose parents' homes and properties [were] destroyed in Bo by order of COs of the CDF in power today, under the SLPP family and under the same Sierra Leone nationality banner.”<sup>120</sup>

<sup>120</sup> George S. Tarawally, resident of 27 years' duration in Bo Town, whose compound was ransacked and burnt by CDF forces under the command of Bo Commanding Officer Kosseh Hindowa; full account given in letter to the TRC dated 20 December 2002; at pages 2 to 4.

206. Mr. Abu Kamara,<sup>121</sup> a Temne, worked as a farm and revenue collector. One day in 1998, while Mr. Kamara was in Fanima Sow in the Pujehun District to mine diamonds, the chiefs and natives of the town declared his presence along with that of a few others as unwanted because they were Temnes, "the natives alleged that as Temnes they expected us to be enemies". As a result, they were asked to leave the town. The group of Temnes left Fanuma Sow for Bumpah. After a few days in Bumpah, the leader of the Kamajors asked the people of the town whether they had Temnes staying among them. They said yes. The Temnes were called upon and told to leave:

"He gave us only three days to leave the town. He commanded the Kamajors in the town to ensure that we complied with his order, otherwise he was going to kill them himself for not executing his orders."

207. The group of Temnes decided to leave but requested a pass from the Kamajors to guarantee their safety along the way. They arrived at the Dandabu town checkpoint. There, they were accused of being rebels and were asked to disembark from their vehicle. All the Mende passengers were asked to re-board while the Temnes were left at the checkpoint. The commander of the checkpoint was one Mr. Kemoh:

"In presenting our passes, our names were called one after the other and we were asked to stand aside, while we were undressed leaving us only in our underpants. We were beaten up very seriously. One of the Kamajors pointed his gun at me and fired. God helped me as the bullet missed me. The Kamajors were pointing us out to passing vehicles as rebels. I was side kicked and fell to the ground. I sustained bruises from the hard surface of the ground. Statements were obtained from us and all our bags were emptied of our possessions which they took away."

208. A disagreement arose among the Kamajors over whether they should kill the Temnes. In the end it was decided that they should not be executed but taken to their headquarters in Pujehun. As the Kamajors organised a car to take them to Pujehun, Mr. Kamara describes how he and others were treated. *"Five Kamajors were asked to escort us. They had loaded guns. As the Kamajors entered the vehicle, they beat us until my skin was thoroughly scraped."* At the headquarters they were put in cells. Their hands were tied backwards to their feet, making it impossible for them to stand up and causing them tremendous pain in the joints. They were questioned by "Mr. Eddie" the leader of the Kamajors on the events that had taken place during the day. Mr. Eddie then scolded the Kamajors for disobeying his orders. He directed that their belongings be released to them. Mr. Kamara and his group proceeded to Bo. Upon their arrival in Bo, other Kamajors came to them and forced them to give up their accommodation. On why he believed that Temnes were targeted, Mr Kamara said, *"Mr Eddie, the head of the Kamajors in Pujehun district told us that since Foday Sankoh is a Temne, they were no longer going to tolerate Temnes in their land as Temnes were against them"*.

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<sup>121</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 440

209. Fomba Korgie, a student in 1999 saw some Kamajors at the Old Railway Line in Freetown committing violations against Northerners.

"[I saw] Kamajors torture some Temnes on the allegation that they were collaborators of the RUF/SLA."<sup>122</sup>

210. Ibrahim Kamara, another Temne, told the Commission that in 1998, after the intervention and reinstatement of President Kabbah, Kamajors took to the streets of Bo on a house to house search for Temnes and Northerners.<sup>123</sup>

"They said all Northerners, especially Temnes, should go back home. People were molested, harassed, and properties were looted. They came to my house and arrested me. I was severely beaten and laid to the ground for execution. I managed to sneak out and fled to the C.K.C. cemetery and hid there for three days without food and water."

Mr. Kamara later went back to Bo to check on his property. He discovered that his shop had been looted and a Kamajor commander was occupying his house. When Mr. Kamara approached the vendor who sold the property to the Kamajor, he was told by the vendor that he sold the property because he assumed that he (Mr. Kamara) was dead and that in fact, because he was a Temne, he should go back to the North and that if he insisted that he owned the property, it would cost him three times as much to get back the house.

211. In Kono the war created a context for the assertion of rights over land, which was occupied by Temnes and other non-indigenes, for the mining of diamonds. Leaders of different local factional groups took advantage of the situation to attack Temnes and other groups. An inter ethnic conflict seemed imminent. According to one account, efforts were then made to pacify the feuding groups and prevent an ethnic bloodbath.<sup>124</sup>

"Commissioner Val Bangura came, so the people moved from Kono to Masingbi and turned it into a tribal war. They started saying that the Konos were killing the Temnes and Mendes in Kono. We met with the chief together with the youths of MOCKY. The NGO's told us they were leaving because their properties have been taken away including motorcycles etc. They arrested a police truck and a landrover of one chief and these things were taken away. Then I promised the chief that I would go to Masingbi where the Temnes had regrouped for the tribal war and I will stop them. I assured them that I am going to Masingbi to meet the chief who had led the regrouping and that I will bring them to Kono in order to bring stability. So they gave me Fomba and other Pakistani soldiers to go with me to Makeni. When we arrived, we saw so many cutlasses, machetes, single barrels, sticks and knives. I was with some policemen whom they wanted to attack. I came down and stopped everybody and asked them what was wrong.

They told me that the Konos have killed so many Temnes and Mendes that they were no longer going to accept it. So I showed

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<sup>122</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 5597

<sup>123</sup> Statement to the TRC. Statement Number 7291

<sup>124</sup> Abdul Razak Kamara, former youth leader and self-styled RUF/SL 'peace ambassador'; testimony at TRC Public Hearings held in Koidu Town, Kono District, 26 June 2003.

them a Kono guy who was with me called Fomba. I told Fomba there and then to disarm all the Temnes and to put all the single barrels and knives together so that we could open the route to Makeni. I told Fomba that I am a son of the Temnes and Mendes and he is a Kono but he should disarm them of all their guns and knives. I told them all to lay down their sticks. I asked them to call the Konos for me. We went to Makeni and I called all the chiefs. I told the chiefs if anybody should inform them that there was a tribal war, they should not believe it. I said it was only a disagreement since some people did not want to respect the owners of the land. I then invited them to go to Kono with me and meet with the Kono chiefs. The chiefs agreed and the UN sent a helicopter for them. We went to Kono and signed a communiqué with the chiefs to open the Makeni road.”

212. The statistical patterns of perpetrators and victims in the testimony are consistent with the claim that there was targeting of people of Northern origin in the Southern Region during the war. Northern ethnic groups include the Temne, Koranko, Loko, Limba and Yalunka tribes. The targeting is more sharply illustrated by the [table](#) below, which depicts violations against victims of Northern origin in selected districts of the Southern and Eastern Regions and in the Western Area
213. For example, in Bo district, 5.9% or 145 of the 2475 violations committed by the RUF are against victims of Northern origin, whereas 19.5% or 43 of the 221 violations attributed to the Kamajors were against victims of Northern origin.

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Figure 3.4.7: Percentage of Violations against victims of Northern origin

Perpetrator Faction	Percentage of Violations Against Victims of Northern Origin				
	Bo District	Kailahun	Kenema	Moyamba	West/Area
RUF	5.9	3.1	5.3	9.6	39.8
SLA	2.0	2.0	0.7	13.5	29.2
Kamajors	19.5	6.8	16.3	15.5	69.1

214. If the various perpetrator factions were choosing their victims at random, without any consideration of the victim's ethnicity, we would expect the proportion of Northern victims to be the same for all the factions. This is clearly not the case. So in interpreting the table, two possible conclusions can be drawn. Either the Kamajor faction was targeting Northern peoples or the RUF and SLA were targeting Southern peoples. Given the qualitative evidence describing targeting of Temne persons by the Kamajors, the data is consistent with the view that the Kamajors deliberately targeted Northern victims.
215. Bo is a Southern District. Despite migration, people of Northern origin living in Bo are a minority in what is historically a Mende district. Whilst 19.5% of the Kamajor violations in Bo had a Northern victim, it is unlikely that Northern people account for 19.5% of the population in Bo district. This is consistent with the claim that the disparity between the factions is explained by deliberate Kamajor section of Northern victims.

216. The Western Area including the capital Freetown had become a cosmopolitan area with people from all over the country making it their home. Nonetheless, Kamajor violations focused on victims of Northern origin: 69.1% (67 out of 97 violations) of Kamajor violations in the Western Area were directed against Northerners. In the testimony of victims of attacks, there are frequent notes that their attackers told them they were targeted because they were Northerners.
217. Testimony before the Commission indicates that the motivation for the attacks include the fact that Foday Sankoh, a Temne and the leader of the AFRC, Major Johnny Paul Koroma, a Limba were both from the North. The North was therefore perceived as supporting the RUF rebellion and subsequently the AFRC overthrow of an elected government. The demagoguery of some of the Kamajor leaders propelled their followers into believing that attacks against Northerners were encouraged. The attitude of many in the country in the early years of the war had created a siege mentality in the east and the south. The war was described as “a Mende man’s war”, meaning that the rest of the country would not be affected by it. The implied statement was that the Mendes who inhabit most of the south and east should find a solution to the war themselves. A national emergency was confined to a sectional or ethnic problem. Such attitude was intensely resented in the south and east. The resentment seems to have accounted for some of the violations against Northerners.

#### Other cases of ethnic targeting

218. There were other cases of ethnic targeting in the conflict. Victims targeted by the RUF on the basis of ethnicity included the Lebanese, Fullahs, Madingos and Marrakas. These groups are essentially trading or mercantile communities who were targeted because of their perceived wealth and the opportunity to appropriate their property. The statements in the Commission’s database on the numbers of persons from these communities targeted as a result of their ethnicity is quite small.
219. There are indeed terrible stories about the experiences of the people during the war that cannot be fully captured in this report. Subsequent research will hopefully enable Sierra Leoneans come to terms with the terrible tragedy that befell them for ten years. The thousands who were maimed, sexually violated and endured other sundry violations may live with the trauma of their experiences for the rest of their lives. Thousands of those who died could not be afforded a decent burial. Many were abandoned in the open fields and may have been devoured by vultures. Others are still missing because their families cannot account for their whereabouts. Thousands of children still roam the streets of Freetown and the regional capitals because they do not remember where they came from or cannot trace any family members. They are denied the love and affection of their biological parents and siblings. Many of those who in the past enjoyed a middle class existence have been impoverished by the war. There is no family in Sierra Leone that has not been affected by the war. In the end it is difficult to talk about the gains of the revolution. It may well be concluded that the years 1991 to 2000 represent the years of the locust in the lives of Sierra Leoneans and for their country.

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**Deleted:** is does not derogate from the fact that a far largepercentage of their numbers could have been targeted. The numbers available however are insufficient to generate any graphs to identify any patterns in the targeting.

## THE PERPETRATORS

220. It is now necessary to discuss the armed groups that participated in the war in Sierra Leone. This discussion will first identify the groups and their various mutations, and attempt to construct some explanation for the roles they played during the conflict.

### Perpetrator Aggregations

221. Based on its research and investigations, the Commission has identified the following groups as the main protagonists in the conflict, the Revolutionary United Front Sierra Leone; the Government of Sierra Leone; the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and the Civil Defence Forces. Each of them had other groups associated or affiliated to them or were umbrella organisations for several groups, and these groups are included in the sections dealing with the main groups.
222. The RUF had different sub groups. These groups are examined in more detail in the chapter of this Report on the military and political history of the conflict. The main support for the RUF was the national Patriotic Front for Liberia, which constituted the main incursion force that invaded Sierra Leone in 1991. The NPFL was not markedly different from the RUF. For the people therefore it was difficult to distinguish one from the other. The major difference for a lot of the populace was that most of the NPFL fighters “spoke with a Liberian accent.” However, it should be noted that many of the RUF fighters were Sierra Leoneans recruited in Liberia. Speaking with a Liberian accent was not conclusive proof that the person was Liberian. For the people however, it was sufficient to distinguish the RUF fighters from their Liberian compatriots.
223. Throughout the Report, the Commission examined the RUF as a distinct group from the onset of the conflict to 27<sup>th</sup> May 1997. On this day, soldiers carried out a coup d’etat against the elected civilian government and established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. They then invited the RUF to join the government. The merger of the RUF with the AFRC led to the establishment of the “Peoples Army”. Attribution of responsibility for violations during the period May 1997 to March 1998 is generally to the AFRC/RUF since in most cases it was difficult to determine which wing of governing faction committed the violation.
224. On 10<sup>th</sup> February 1998, ECOMOG expelled the AFRC/RUF from power in Freetown. The group then dispersed to the North and East of the Country. In the course of the departure from Freetown, internal differences emerged within the AFRC/RUF coalition. These differences led to different commanders leading pockets of supporters to settle in different parts of the country, and pledging allegiance not to the larger coalition but to specific commanders. Loyalty split along the lines of their previous RUF or AFRC affiliations. Many of the AFRC soldiers were uncomfortable being led by RUF commanders whom they perceived as illiterate and not as professional soldiers. From this point to the end of the conflict, the Commission attempts as much as possible to attribute responsibility to the specific group that committed any violation.

225. With the coalition split along amorphous and clearly indistinguishable lines in the eyes of the public, it became extremely difficult for the public to identify with any certainty the group responsible for any violation in their communities. It should be noted that none of the armed factions in the conflict had any remarkable distinguishing gear with which they could be identified. Even the RUF had engaged in false flag operations wearing full SLA uniforms, leading the public to believe that the violations were carried out by the SLA and strengthening public perception of collusion between the SLA and the RUF. The public therefore attributed many of the violations committed during the period 1998 to 2000 to "rebels" because of the difficulty in determining the exact institutional affiliation of the perpetrators. The numbers of violations attributed to this group is therefore quite high in the Commission's database. Any violation attributed to 'rebels' should be understood as referring to the RUF, the AFRC, both of them, or a group comprising of members of the AFRC and the RUF.
226. Many of the remaining AFRC soldiers who wanted to return to service in the army organised themselves into a group that occupied the Occra Hills in the outskirts of Freetown. From here they organised raids in the neighbouring communities, seizing food and other material possessions from people, and committing all kinds of violations. They however maintained their contacts in the army after the restoration of the Government. Increasingly they found more grounds of difference with the RUF and common purpose on a range of issues with the Government. On occasion therefore they became "guns for hire" for the army, and were deployed to devastating effect against the RUF by Johnny Paul Koroma during the May 6-8 2000 events in Freetown. Violations committed by this group are specifically attributed to it in the period 1998 to 2000.
227. Another perpetrator category of "unknown" is included by the Commission to cover violations and abuses where no mention was made of the person or institution responsible for the violation or in cases where the presence of several perpetrator groups make it impossible to distinguish which of them was responsible for a specific violation or abuse.
228. The Government of Sierra Leone underwent different mutations in the course of the conflict. These mutations reflect the different governments that were in power during the conflict. The Commission attributes violations to the specific government in power at the time the violations occurred. Consequently, violations by operatives of the Government such as the Civil Defence Units, the police, or that occurred outside a theatre of military action, between 1992 and 1996 are attributed to the NPRC, while violations that occurred between March 1996 and May 1997 (the first period of the SLPP in power) are attributed to the SLPP Government. Similarly violations by the amorphous civilian groups, such as neighbourhood vigilantes or groups of civilians acting on behalf of the Government or by the police or the loyal members of the army in the period February 1998 to 2000 are also attributed to the SLPP Government. However, violations that were committed by army personnel in the period 1991 to May 1997 while prosecuting the war (up to the AFRC coup) are attributed to the SLA. This is because the complexion and alignment of the SLA varied, being, to some extent, outside of direct government control. For example, there were substantial defections of SLA troops to the RUF during the conflict. Also elements within the SLA developed their own agendas, becoming involved in looting and other violations, rather than opposing the RUF as would be expected of a professional fighting force.

229. A number of civil militia groups sprang up to support the Government. They went by the generic name, "Civil Defence Forces". They were composed of the following specific groups: the Kamajors, Gbethes, Kapras, Donsos, Tamaboros and hunters. Violations committed by any of them are generally attributed to the CDF. The largest of them, the Kamajors controlled most of the Southern and Eastern provinces and committed the most violations. Where it was necessary, the Commission distinguished the Kamajors from other constituent groups in the CDF in attributing responsibility for violations.
230. A number of external actors supported the Government in prosecuting the war against the RUF. These included ULIMO (the United Liberation Movement of Liberia, an armed faction that eventually moved back to Liberia to fight Charles Taylor and his NPFL), the Ghurkhas and Executive Outcomes. Where any of these groups committed violations, these were specifically attributed to them.
231. The ECOWAS peace monitoring group, ECOMOG, in the course of its operations was responsible for a number of violations. While these violations were committed by troops from the troop contributing countries, the violations have been attributed to ECOMOG because it provided the institutional platform for the presence and participation of those countries in the Sierra Leonean conflict. The database of the Commission however contains the breakdown of the violations committed by troops from specific countries.

#### The Revolutionary United Front/Sierra Leone (RUF/SL)

232. The RUF was a revolution that was still born even before it started. It was born out of opportunism. The original leader of the movement, Allie Kabbah, and the Pan African Union, the group of ex-student radicals who wanted to actualise a revolutionary regime based on popular participation in governance, believed in a revolution anchored first on the political education of the people. Military action would be the culmination of other preceding revolutionary activities. Believing that these antecedent actions had not taken place, the Pan African Union late in 1988 pulled out of the revolutionary project. The likes of Foday Sankoh with his military background, believed that armed force was all that was necessary to carry out a revolution. With the departure of Allie Kabbah and his group from Libya, Sankoh exploited the leadership vacuum by claiming ascendancy. The remaining members of the movement deferred to him because of his age and military experience. Even at the conclusion of training in Libya, the RUF had no document that espoused its beliefs. It was only in 1995 that it released "Footpaths to Democracy".
233. Witnesses to the Commission claim that Footpaths to Democracy was a terrible corruption of an earlier PANAFU document which they themselves had participated in drafting, and which the RUF mutilated beyond logic.<sup>125</sup> The RUF document mouthed platitudes about how corrupt the system was and needed to be changed. There was nothing revolutionary about it. It had no ideological content and therefore is an unsuitable document for measuring the ideological foundations behind the RUF struggle. The man who recruited Foday Sankoh into PANAFU exclaimed his alarm and disappointment when he heard the BBC broadcast of Sankoh's ultimatum in 1991 giving the Government of Joseph Momoh 90 days to step don or be removed by force. To him, Sankoh did not

<sup>125</sup> See submission and testimony from Cleo Hanciles. TRC Public Hearings, Freetown, April 2003.

have the credentials to wage a revolutionary war<sup>126</sup>. The assistance Sankoh received from Charles Taylor in launching his revolution compounded his problems. Taylor himself was no ideologue, but a crass opportunist. Within the RUF therefore, there was no inspirational or ideological thread that welded the leadership and membership of the movement.

234. In the absence of an ideological foundation, it is difficult to talk of a common cause among the members of the movement. There was some attempt to instil an ideology early on in the movement. This attempt was not widespread and stopped altogether with the death of Rashid Mansaray.
235. Without an ideology, there was no overriding consideration for the recruitment of members into the movement. People were recruited as long as they could carry a gun. In this context, it did not matter whether they believed in the cause or not. What mattered was numbers. All kinds of tools, including deception and forced recruitment would be deployed on a large scale by the RUF to get people into the movement. This was to have a terrible impact on the civilians as evidenced by the widespread violations committed by members of the movement against the very people they claimed they were fighting for.
236. Testimonies received by the Commission suggest that the violations carried out by the RUF fighters may be directly related to the methods of recruitment of the group, the widespread use of deception, and the rigorous training programmes to which young recruits were subjected. While these strategies and experiences were not peculiar to the Sierra Leonean conflict, outside an ideological foundation for the revolution, they provided the only context to the relationship between the fighters and the civilian population in captured territory.

#### *'AWOL' – A Pre-RUF Case Study: Tajura Training Base, Tripoli, 1988*

237. The prospect of a training seminar in Nigeria seemed to provide a rare opportunity of self-enrichment to a young man who had felt suppressed and devalued by the APC one-party rule in Sierra Leone. In the company of like minds and kindred spirits, AWOL had often sat around in 'potes' and other people's stairwells, smoking marijuana, drinking beer and chewing over the complexities of revolutionary writings. His best friend was with him; they had both joined a PANAFU 'cell' in an effort to build up their knowledge of alternative systems of government, as well as the finer points of dialectics, rhetoric and finding the truth.<sup>127</sup> In April of 1988, he was given a handful of different currencies in order to make his way out of Freetown overland to Accra, from whence he would be flown to a 'Capacity-Building Seminar' in Lagos.
238. Having paid for a series of public vehicles through Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, AWOL and his three comrades had made it to their first destination in decent spirits. The older man among them, who had joined them on the verge of departure, was quiet, not to mention a little eccentric,<sup>128</sup> but apparently no cause for concern. Their meeting point, an International Student

<sup>126</sup> TRC interview with Victor Reider, Freetown, October 2003.

<sup>127</sup> These topics are merely three of the headings contained in a novel piece of literature entitled 'Ideology of the PANAFU' which was dictated to the members of the young man's revolutionary cell.

<sup>128</sup> These were the descriptions applied by other members of the group to the one man among them who had not been part of their discussion cell: his name to them was 'Sanks', better known as Foday Sankoh.

Centre at the University of Legon in Accra, Ghana, was fairly non-descript and, since they arrived there late at night, there was nothing particularly unsettling about it. When men in military uniforms started ushering them around, however, there was a distinct feeling in AWOL's mind that something unsavoury was afoot. The subsequent appointment at the Libyan Embassy in Accra and double-quick transfer to a military airbase in the dusk of the same evening confirmed a deep, unspoken fear within him. He had been drafted against his will into a guerrilla training programme from which he had no easy means of escaping. He had been deceived into joining a revolution for which he was ill prepared.

239. From the military airbase in Accra, AWOL was flown directly to Tripoli, Libya and transported to a sizeable training camp where he was to be housed along with up to 700 'recruits' of diverse nationalities.<sup>129</sup> After observing a ceremony known as 'passing out', in which prior trainees demonstrated the skills and aptitudes they had acquired, the new recruits were themselves inducted into a physically and psychologically gruelling series of exercises over a period of several months.<sup>130</sup> Among the disciplines they were expected to master were such torturous and inhumane undertakings as the 'halaba',<sup>131</sup> the 'black hole'<sup>132</sup> and the murdering of a live animal by ripping its head off with their teeth.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Among the other nationalities with whom Sierra Leoneans were trained in Libya were Liberians, Gambians, Senegalese, Congolese, Philipinos and Indonesians. Whilst it cannot be stated with any degree of certainty, it appeared to most of those recruits who spoke to the TRC that the fighters of other nationalities on the training base had arrived there voluntarily.

<sup>130</sup> The declared objective of the series of physical exercises to which trainees were subjected in Libya was to 'remove the civilian blood from inside' them. This metaphor was all too often extrapolated into the realms of the physical; many trainees shed blood whilst undergoing guerrilla training.

<sup>131</sup> The exercise known by this name was originally conceived to be conducted on a circular 'running track' in a rough desert area on the outskirts of Tripoli. Recruits were given an onerous load to carry on their heads, such as a large plastic container filled with water or oil. They were then made to run (or stumble) around the circuit, the soles of their bare feet being torn open by the rough ground, whilst simultaneously kicking up sand and grit into their own and other trainees' faces. Trainers would stand on the edges of the circuit barking instructions at the trainees, sometimes slapping or kicking them to encourage greater speed. Any trainee who so much as tripped would be verbally lambasted and often physically beaten. If one should fall to the ground during the 'halaba', he or she would be mercilessly flogged using sticks and other implements, including the butts of guns. The use of 'halaba' was retained by Foday Sankoh and the other Libyan-trained Sierra Leoneans throughout their further participation in insurgency training and combat. Thus, it was used to train the 'vanguards' of the RUF/SL on their camp in Namma, Liberia, and indeed to train the recruits who were brought into the RUF/SL after its incursion into Sierra Leone. At some point, probably between Libya and Liberia, the name of the exercise was warped from 'halaba' into 'halaka'; accordingly those recruits who were trained in 1990/91 in Liberia, or after 1991 in Sierra Leone, know the exercise as 'halaka'.

<sup>132</sup> The ominous-sounding 'black hole' exercise was purportedly designed to instil fearlessness and an aptitude for self-preservation at the battlefield into the trainees. It was conducted in a large, unlit building (or series of buildings) at night and entailed several 'checkpoint-style' traps where instructors would lurk in the shadows, armed with various weapons and ready to pounce when a trainee came upon one of them. The trainees were admonished to fight their way out of trouble, sometimes sustaining severe injuries in the process. They would emerge at an unspecified point 'into the light' to be told that they had completed the exercise.

<sup>133</sup> The examples given of this kind of exercise entail the murders of live fowl (chickens) and live frogs. The trainee would be given the animal to grasp in his fist, then, upon the order of the instructor, sink his teeth into its neck and rip its head off in his clenched jaw. Most trainees would spit out the head of the decapitated creature; on more than one occasion, however, some of the most fearsome trainees were seen to swallow what they had bitten off. The whole exercise made for a distressing spectacle and was known to induce vomiting and convulsions in even the non-participating observers.

The Head Instructor on the base, who was a Libyan known only by the derogatory term 'Haiwan',<sup>134</sup> apparently revelled in the suffering of his trainees and would often push them beyond their physical limits whilst 'laughing sadistically'.<sup>135</sup> AWOL's tolerance to this kind of torture withered over the months of his training. When he eventually suffered a fall during an exercise, which entailed walking through the flames of a raging fire, sustaining serious burns in the process, he was a broken man. To compound his dejection, he was taunted and humiliated by the instructors for the unavoidable limp he carried from his injuries, and on one occasion received a full-blown kick to the buttocks from Haiwan. Although he eventually secured safe passage away from the Tajura base in Tripoli and back to Sierra Leone,<sup>136</sup> AWOL was unable to resurrect anything resembling a normal life, or his former mental state. The promising life of an innocent young man had been ravaged by the ordeal of guerrilla training.<sup>137</sup>

240. AWOL's story might initially seem somewhat incongruous with the military and political history of the conflict in Sierra Leone that was to unfold three years later. He never took part in that conflict, nor has he, to the Commission's knowledge, since perpetrated any human rights abuse against others. Upon closer inspection, though, his story is instructive in understanding the *nature* of the violations committed in the conflict in Sierra Leone. The Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL) is behind the majority of violations and abuses committed during the conflict.<sup>138</sup> Yet behind the majority of RUF/SL combatants in the conflict is a story of deception and forced recruitment. In turn, behind every forced recruit, including those who did not become combatants is a story of victimisation.
241. What lies beneath the victimisation of the many thousands of forced recruits in this conflict is uncertain; but testimonies to the TRC indicate that it can manifest itself in several ways: as a protracted psychological torment; as a burden on one's conscience and one's mind; and, most pertinently, as a tendency, or a capacity, to subject others to a victimisation akin to the one endured by oneself. Herein lay the recurring phenomenon of the *victim turned perpetrator*.

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<sup>134</sup> 'Haiwan' is an Arabic phrase meaning 'animal' or 'bastard'. The commander in question used to call every one of the trainees 'Haiwanat', which in loose interpretation from Arabic means 'son of a bitch', or 'spawn of a bastard'. According to one interviewee, "When you say 'Haiwan', it means 'you are a bastard', so everybody called him 'Haiwan'." Although this nickname would normally be considered derogatory, it appears to have been worn as something of a badge of honour by this commander. His real name is not known to anybody with whom the TRC has spoken.

<sup>135</sup> This chilling description stems from a TRC interview with men who trained under Haiwan's supervision.

<sup>136</sup> This element of AWOL's story is particularly relevant to the subsequent course that the conflict took and has been discussed in greater detail under the 'Military and Political History of the Conflict' chapter in the section entitled 'The Predecessors, Origins and Mobilisation of the RUF'.

<sup>137</sup> A real-life human tragedy lies at the heart of this narrative. None of AWOL's close friends or associates knows his present whereabouts, or indeed whether he is dead or alive. On the few occasions that he was spotted after his ordeal at the training base he displayed acute symptoms of trauma and no palpable lust for life. His friends suggest that his spirit was in fact totally drained from him by his 'forced recruitment'.

<sup>138</sup> According to a rough approximation conducted against the August batch of statements, around 70% of all violations recorded in the TRC's statement-taking phase are attributed to the RUF/SL.

### *Institutionalisation and De-institutionalisation in the RUF*

242. After their recruitment, a culture of total dependency prevailed among most of the individual combatant units established in the RUF. Junior fighters, the overwhelming majority of whom were forced recruits, depended totally on their commanders for provisions, for their livelihoods, for privileges such as drugs and women, or girls, whom they raped and for their 'licence to kill'.<sup>139</sup> All of this was quite apart from the fact that if they disobeyed or deviated from the orders they were given, they would almost certainly be either beaten severely or (in the worst cases) killed.
243. The concept of institutionalisation appears to apply mostly to the entrenched practice within the RUF of ridding a particular forced recruit of all grounding in the society to which he or she previously belonged (including by subverting the moral and socio-cultural norms of that society) and then compelling (corrupting) the recruit to adopt a new, fundamentally warped set of standards and guiding principles. It was a form of inculcation, which included elements of physical and psychological torture as well as indoctrination.
244. Among the recurring insights into this process of 'conversion' deployed by the RUF is the use of mantras and chants in order to embed certain principles or perceptions into the minds of forced recruits. The most common format for such chanting would be during a muster parade, when the commander would stand at the front of a mass of ranks and lead them in a series of motivational shouts: "Arms to the People! Power to the People! Wealth to the People!"<sup>140</sup>; or "COMMANDO! – Disciplined, Brave and Contented!"<sup>141</sup> During the AFRC regime such mantras included, "Sierra Leonean People don't like themselves", "Kabbah is fooling the Native People", "No Sierra Leonean Army! No Sweet Sierra Leone", "Nigerians are not able to disband the National Army", "Tejan Kabbah caused this Problem for the Sierra Leonean People", "If ECOMOG don't leave Sierra Leone! Burning and Killing will never Stop".<sup>142</sup>
245. Contrary to many of the declarations of wanting to enthrone an egalitarian society, particularly those made to civilian communities in the early days of the incursion, there does not appear to have existed any such thing as egalitarianism within the RUF. Combatant promotions were awarded on the basis of arbitrary factors like the 'business' a fighter demonstrated, the prowess he displayed in a particular battle, or the relationship he enjoyed with a senior commander. In the case of child combatants or junior commandos, promotions

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<sup>139</sup> This phrase, which is drawn from an interview with an ex-child combatant, should be understood to indicate two central facets in the relationship between commanders and rank-and-file: first, the commanders would have total control over which of the junior commandos in their unit would be given access to firearms; second, most child combatants were disciplined strictly for acting beyond the direct commands issued to them – it seems that in reality, therefore, they could only fire their weapons upon the issuance of an express order to do so.

<sup>140</sup> This chant was known among most RUF members as the official motto of the movement, long before its incorporation into the propaganda pamphlet known as *Footpaths to Democracy: Towards a New Sierra Leone, Vol. 1*, which was produced in 1996.

<sup>141</sup> Among some of the child recruits, this mantra was recited almost mindlessly, since most of them had no idea of the meanings of the words they were using. In asking them what qualities they thought a commando was supposed to possess, many recruits reverted to more simplistic interpretations such as 'tough' or 'fearsome'.

<sup>142</sup> Abdulai Barrie, Statement to the Commission at Kamakwie 1, Sella Limba, Bombali District on 26 March 2003. Statement Number 5758

were awarded as a form of morale-booster.<sup>143</sup>

246. In any case, this institutionalisation process appears to have been clearly directed towards disorientating the recruits and detaching them from the conventional psycho-social norms on which their civilian lives were premised. Similarities with the concept of 'removing the civilian blood from inside', the ethos of the early training in Libya, are striking: it is thus eminently possible to trace a filter-down effect from one round of trainees to the next.

#### *The transformation from RUF Detainee to Junior Commando*

247. The Commission received reports from both the Kailahun and Pujehun Districts that upon entering into major towns, the insurgents typically demanded that the residents should identify any soldiers, policemen or those in the community who were thought to be APC representatives or powerbrokers. In the event that these persons had fled, attention would turn to their relatives, their friends, their acquaintances and those who were deemed to know 'where they were hiding'. Each of the persons pointed out in this manner, even where they denied any knowledge of the status they were alleged to hold, were arrested and placed in captivity. Accordingly, sizeable groups of local residents, sometimes up to 20 at a time, were detained in a local cell or guardhouse on the premise that they had connections to the APC regime, however tenuous the link.
248. These detentions are of special relevance to the composition of the RUF because many of the detainees were subsequently converted into members, in a similar mode of compulsory 'recruitment' to the recruitment of the Vanguardians in Liberia. One resident of Pendembu, Kailahun District described to the Commission how he was enlisted into the RUF after a two-week period of detention until 29 April 1991:

"Upon his first arrival in Pendembu, Foday Sankoh was made to understand that some people were jailed and that they were still in the cell. Immediately he sent for us and we were brought before him. We had been told the previous night that they were going to kill us next morning, so some of us thought Sankoh was going to do the killing. Rather fortunately he was our saviour.

He became very furious with the [NPFL] commanders; he told him that this was not what he had sent them on and that they should not treat his people in such a way... He apologised to us and begged us to accept it in good faith as it was wartime... He then picked me up as the youngest among those from jail and asked for my name, my occupation and my qualification. He told me that the revolution is for those of us who are educated but have no better jobs."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> One commander described this concept as a means of encouraging his combatants to participate in battles with more vigour and commitment; if a commando could be convinced that he was a 'senior man' (even if, paradoxically, he was actually a 'small boy', then he would be 'more able to carry out my instructions well'.

<sup>144</sup> TRC Confidential Interview with former RUF/SL 'junior commando' recruited on the Kailahun front, who later became a G-2 / IDU commander; interview conducted in Freetown, 13 September 2003.

249. A similar story was recounted from the town of Gendema, Pujehun District, where Foday Sankoh appeared on 07 April 1991 and similarly lambasted his commanders for putting prominent functionaries of the authorities in a cell. Upon securing their release, Sankoh apparently embraced and praised the detainees for their courage and welcomed them, especially the soldiers among them, into his movement. According to testimonies, Sankoh described the men as “our brothers, not our enemies”; a popular refrain was that these people had no choice but to be working for the authorities because it was a one-party state. In Gendema as elsewhere, such displays by Sankoh in releasing detainees were reportedly greeted with rapturous ovations from the civilian crowds, from which Sankoh clearly drew valuable populist credentials.

250. As the following testimony from a vanguard indicates, Sankoh was notorious for exerting moral compulsion over individuals and communities by playing on the perceived indebtedness of those he had freed:

“He continuously reminded me of the fact [that he was my ‘liberator’], everywhere we went. Even when we first captured my hometown, he gathered my relatives from the area and asked me to tell them where he had found me... When I just said the place, he was not comfortable. He wanted me to say ‘in prison’, which I did; so as to make it clear to the people that he had rescued me.”<sup>145</sup>

251. Sankoh in fact made pointed and often astute attempts to sensitise and mobilise particular groups in support of his averred ‘revolutionary’ objectives. By all accounts, he spoke passionately and convincingly in his public addresses and was apparently well received by his audiences in the early weeks of the conflict. In addition to being a generally compelling character, he would often adapt his style, or indeed his rhetoric, to play on the particular characteristics or insecurities of the local population who were receiving him. Thus in the Kailahun District, Sankoh’s addresses dealt with the plight of impoverished farmers and coffee or cacao harvesters who were historically prevented from receiving due compensation for their yields; in the coastal District of Pujehun he was reported to have spoken about fishery and marine resources, as well as the local undercurrents of social disgruntlement that had given rise to events like the Ndorgboryorsui rebellion in the early 1980s.

252. In the RUF’s recruitment of new members there was very often a very thin dividing line between purported ‘genuine subscription’ to the values of the RUF’s agenda and the opportunistic pursuit of personal gain or retribution based on grudges, grievances and vendettas. In short, many people claimed to be ‘revolutionary’ when they were actually nothing of the sort; they simply wanted to utilise the RUF as a means of acquiring a firearm and a vehicle for their own aggression. As the RUF’s former Adjutant General testified to the Commission:

“Some people felt that going on the base would give them a chance to revenge for anything that had happened to them.”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> TRC Confidential Interview with former RUF/SL ‘vanguard’ commander who was taken from detention in Liberia to become a member of the movement; interview conducted in Freetown; 19 September 2003.

<sup>146</sup> Jonathan Kposowa, former Adjutant General of the RUF/SL who worked closely with the Leader and other members of the High Command throughout the conflict; primary interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown; 25 June 2003.

The pitfalls of allowing such people into the movement should have been all too apparent to the RUF leadership from the very outset.

253. Hence the RUF ranks began to fill up not only with forced conscripts, but also increasingly with a potentially uncontrollable number of 'bogus revolutionaries', who had no interest in common objectives, seeking only the power of the gun to act out their suppressed feelings of rage and revenge, usually against innocent civilians from their own or other communities. This category of persons was obviously prone to human rights abuses, but was also highly dangerous to the RUF movement itself, since they were effectively beyond discipline and could be just as likely to turn their guns on fellow RUF members.
254. Many testimonies received by the Commission traced the path of individuals who were brow-beaten into joining the RUF because they simply could not survive outside the movement. Living conditions in a town or village situated within an NPFL or RUF 'target area' seemed in its initial throes to be manageable. Government functionaries, many of whom were loathed, were typically chased out or killed and the distribution of provisions, including agricultural produce, became for a time more liberal and equitable than it was under the unjust 'system'. However, without exception, these ostensible benefits would prove to be a false dawn once the rule of law descended into rule by force. Armed commandos were often reported to have arrived at civilians' houses unannounced and invariably in the middle of the night, forced entry and helped themselves to food wherever it was available. Moreover the NPFL and RUF forces extended their terrorising of families to the raping and gang raping of women and girls in their homes, often in front of their husbands, parents or other family members. One witness who testified at a public hearing in Kailahun captured the plight of many families:

"If they met you with food, they would take it and rape your wife in front of you. I was a victim. I was sleeping with my wife when four of them took me outside, under gun point, and took my wife and had sex with her."<sup>147</sup>

In many other reports recorded by the Commission, men who resisted or opposed such grievous acts were habitually shot dead or tortured.

255. Through the continual wearing down of people's normal lives and levels of tolerance in this reprehensible fashion, but also commonly through more explicit means that included coercing them at gunpoint, the insurgent factions forced civilians to join them, either by making them take up positions within the 'administrative' cadre, or by sending them to training bases and turning them into combatants, whom the RUF referred to as their 'junior commandos'. Some of the persons recruited through these means in the early days and weeks of the war went on to play important roles in actual combat undertaken by the RUF. Gibril Massaquoi, an early recruit on the Pujehun front who would later become one of the few junior commandos to rival the vanguards in terms of battlefield prowess and commandership, described his enlistment into the RUF:

"Initially, I resisted joining them. I even had to escape, leave Pujehun

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<sup>147</sup> A civilian resident of Pendembu and other parts of Kailahun District during the conflict; testimony before TRC public hearings held in Kailahun Town, Kailahun District; 13 May 2003.

and go to a village... Unfortunately for me, I met them, still looking for men whom they could train... Each and every member of the RUF, whether you were a civilian, you were working with them on civil service or whatever, you were always forced to take training. There were some people who were only taking ideological training, there were others who were taking the real physical, military training. We were taken to Zimmi to take our training."<sup>148</sup>

256. The early 'mass recruitment' intakes were dominated by children and, more especially, youths. These were vulnerable groups whose innocence or disaffection made them less likely to resist their enlistment into the RUF; some of them in fact would even start to embrace the ethos of the RUF wholeheartedly and later bring others on board under similar duress. They were certainly malleable to the will of the trainers, who would subject them to both rigorous physical exercises and what was known as ideological instruction, but which might more properly be referred to as indoctrination. It was a pattern of forced recruitment that was bringing more and more traumatised but subsequently hardened boys, girls and young men and women into the RUF. Its practice would only intensify as the conflict wore on, with increasingly brutal methods of enlistment and commensurately more adversely affected conscripts.

"The first day we arrived on the place they order[ed] us to lie flat on the floor. We had no idea and we lay down as if we were lying on a bed. They showed us how to lie down flat and if they saw your foot up they will use their foot to stamp your foot down. They will use the gun; they put it on the forehead of the first person in the line and fired! In that process if you are hit by the bullet you are killed. It you are not perfectly in line with the first person that is the end of your life. They were doing that so that we can get accustomed with the sound of a gun. They taught us how to fire guns for ourselves. They also taught us courtesy and discipline that will show us how to respect them. But even though you respect them they will not respect you. It was no formal training where you go to a classroom. With that kind of training if you are sent to the warfront only God will help you."<sup>149</sup>

257. After the first year of the conflict – and certainly after the transition to full-scale guerrilla warfare at the end of 1993 – the RUF/SL retained and increased its fighting force in both size and commitment predominantly through a wide array of compulsive measures that included abduction and forced recruitment.
258. The RUF/SL pioneered the concept of forced recruitment in the conflict. It bore a marked proclivity towards abduction, abuse and training of civilians for the purpose of creating commandos. Particular units, including those units that were expressly formed to comprise child combatants, were almost exclusively comprised of forced recruits. Unfortunately, the Commission's database does not permit findings to be made as to whether forced recruits in fact constituted the majority of the RUF/SL fighting force as a whole.

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<sup>148</sup> Gibril Massaquoi, former RUF/SL Target Group and Battalion Commander, originally recruited as a junior commando in Pujehun and later Personal Assistant to former RUF/SL Leader, Foday Sankoh; TRC Interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown; July 2002.

<sup>149</sup> TRC Confidential Testimony from an early recruit of the RUF/SL in Kailahun District; testimony before TRC closed hearings held in Kailahun Town, Kailahun District; 14 May 2003.

259. The experiences endured by these recruits were replicated in their relationship with the civilian communities with which they came into contact. It is therefore no surprise that the scale of violations increased as the war progressed. According to a child combatant:

“During my five years’ jungle life with the rebels I adapted to their barbaric activities. And I usually made trips (missions or patrols) to the surrounding villages where we broke people’s houses and loot whatever that was in our access. We captured their cattle, picked fruits and sometimes after the looting we set some houses ablaze and returned with the booty which we handed over to the commander.”<sup>150</sup>

#### *RUF Codes of Conduct / Internal Discipline*

260. The RUF developed a code of conduct, which was taught to every recruit during training. It is indeed doubtful how much use the combatants made of the code of conduct in the light of the violations and abuses that have been attributed to members of the movement.

261. Acknowledging, perhaps, some of the limitations to the disciplinary system, particularly as it pertained to the obvious acrimony that existed between various high-ranking members of the movement, Foday Sankoh’s erstwhile personal assistant Gibril Massaquoi appeared to obscure the issue somewhat in his testimony:

“At one point in time, Sankoh told me that there was some offences which were committed and the people involved could not be disciplined for fear that there would be in-fighting; except at the end of the war, when he would have brought such people to book. For instance, the case of Rashid [Mansaray] who was killed in Kailahun; he said he never gave orders. He told Sam Bockarie to take Rashid and others from positions towards which the enemies were advancing to continue their prison sentences in another location. When Sam Bockarie took them to the front line, he killed all of them.”<sup>151</sup>

Indeed, Massaquoi himself was implicated on multiple occasions for his assassination of rival commanders in his native Southern Province.

262. As could be imagined in any organisation with such a diverse and essentially incompatible membership, bitter disputes took place at almost every level in the RUF/SL. Unsurprisingly most of the commanders felt intensely vulnerable to threats – real or imaginary – posed to their dominance. The senior ranks were almost universally suspicious of one another. Hence, it was frequent for bitter and often violent confrontations to break out between them, mostly premised upon territoriality or control of the movement’s fighting resources.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Confidential Statement to the Commission. Statement Number 5761

<sup>151</sup> Gibril Massaquoi, former RUF/SL commander and erstwhile personal assistant to Foday Sankoh; TRC interview conducted in Freetown, July 2002.

<sup>152</sup> See *inter alia* TRC interviews with Moigboi Moigande Kosia, former GSO-1 in the RUF/SL; conducted in Freetown between XX May and XX June 2003. Kosia refers to the disagreements that resulted in armed confrontations between, among others, Superman and Issa Sesay, Superman and Maskita, and Gibril Massaquoi with various others.

263. Furthermore, there was apparently always something of a chasm in the RUF/SL between the well-educated, experienced, minority in the movement and the majority membership of unrefined, marginalised, angry young men. On the one side were those who believed somewhat naively that they could inject a degree of moral rectitude into the movement, perhaps through the examples they set or the good sense they talked. Many of this group would, under circumstances in which the traditional cultural norms applied, have ascended to positions of responsibility and authority in the movement because of their education and seniority if nothing else. Some of them did indeed harbour pretensions on the leadership of the movement, although any active efforts to achieve it invariably met with spectacular failure.<sup>153</sup>
264. On the other side were the younger, more militant members who found their natural constituencies among the malleable combatant youths whose loyalty could be guaranteed based on factors such as local allegiance, raw compulsion, manipulative bra-ism, dependency syndrome or a combination of several of those. These *de facto* leaders – the commanders of the RUF/SL – mostly enjoyed reputations for using force to solve their problems, whether against civilians or their fellow combatants.
265. The prevailing attitude held by the RUF/SL combatant cadre towards the intellectual or educated members of the RUF/SL was one of resentment and suspicion. Elder members of the movement most of who occupied investigative or administrative roles, were invariably subjected to intimidation and violence by the ‘force men’ whose discipline they were charged with ensuring; accordingly, most internal rule enforcement was ultimately abandoned due to fear.
266. The Commission recorded numerous instances of physical violence, intimidation and harassment against those RUF/SL members who profess to have had an interest in pursuing an ideologically based revolution, with principles, objectives and reasons at its heart. Those who opposed them were largely the ones who stood to make material gains out of the wayward acts they carried out with utter impunity. The favourite refrain of a group of younger thugs beating up a better educated, typically older man was: “noto buk wo dis” (literally this is not a book war or this is not a war for educated minds).
267. The practice appeared to continue right up until the end of the conflict: as long as there were new members coming on board, there were longer-standing members who saw the need to dig in their heels; as long as there were moderates in the ranks who tried to appease or restrain the combatant cadre, there were combatants and commanders who would try to thwart them with force. Issa Sesay, whose rise up the leadership ladder in the RUF/SL was marked by outbursts of violence and long-standing personal vendettas, ordered a number of acts against those he perceived as threats to himself. One such example was the severe beating administered to a prominent youth from Tonkolili District named Abdul Razak Kamara, who testified to the Commission during its public hearings in the Kono District:

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<sup>153</sup> The most pertinent example of such a failure was the attempt in 1996 by a small band of self-deluding RUF members led by Philip S. Palmer to squeeze Foday Sankoh out of leadership of the RUF and install a new set of figureheads who were more palatable to the ruling political classes.

"After three days, I was travelling to Masingbi to go to Makeni, not knowing that they had sent a radio message ordering my arrest. I was arrested in Masingbi and taken to Makeni; Issa then sent 50 people headed by Lion – Colonel Lion – to meet me in the jail. They came and met me in the jail. They then removed me from the jail and I was stripped naked and beaten. They said I was thinking that I was in an educated world; but now I have been 'handled' and taught a lesson. I was stabbed on my hand and Lion kicked me hard on my private part."<sup>154</sup>

268. The prevailing atmosphere of suspicion within the RUF/SL was perceived in the later years as a major cause of acrimony and a potentially fatal obstacle to peace:

"There was one thing in the RUF: you should never say the truth; when you do that you are going to have problems. And you should not challenge, neither question whatever thing they are doing. But I did not believe in those things. I believe that I have to question whatever thing the case may be so that I can know the truth and say the truth. And allegations against people with the RUF were very much common."<sup>155</sup>

269. From all accounts, the movement appeared to have lost focus from the very day the incursion was launched in to Sierra Leone. Without an ideological foundation, attacks on civilians were rationalised as necessary to consolidate the revolution, whatever that meant. It was no surprise that combatants attacked even family members of fellow combatants. It would take ten unfortunate years for the tragedy that was the RUF to play itself out and for the people to begin counting the costs of such a misadventure.

#### The Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and Dissident Military 'Splinter Groups'

270. At the start of the conflict, the Sierra Leonean Army numbered less than 3,500. Within four years, the strength of the Army was to jump to as high as 12,000<sup>156</sup>. The NPRC government embarked on a massive recruitment exercise to strengthen the human resources available to the army for the prosecution of the war.
271. The social origins of most of these new recruits into the army were the urban marginalised groups who lived on the fringes of society. The antecedents of this group have been eloquently captured in the chapter of this Report dealing with youths.
272. As a result of their social origins, this group historically had a grudge against the rest of society arising from their long years of deprivation and marginalisation. The conflict provided an opportunity to vent the bottled up frustrations against those perceived to have benefited more from the opportunities available within the system.

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<sup>154</sup> Abdul Razak Kamara, former youth leader and self-styled RUF/SL 'peace ambassador'; testimony before TRC Public Hearings held in Koidu Town, Kono District, 26 June 2003.

<sup>155</sup> Abdul Razak Kamara, former youth leader and self-styled RUF/SL 'peace ambassador'; testimony before TRC Public Hearings held in Koidu Town, Kono District, 26 June 2003.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Brig. Julius Maada Bio, private residence, Freetown November 2003.

273. People of means, public officials and public institutions were reminders of the “oppressive” regime of zero opportunity under which they had lived for a very long time. The conflict became an opportunity to level the playing field. They began preying on the very people they were supposed to protect. For the first time in modern history, a national army turned against its very public in a civil war.
274. The signs that the army would ultimately consume its benefactors were rooted in the history of the institution.
275. The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces traces its history back to British colonial days. From its inception, the RSLAF has had series of title changes and underwent rapid transformation from the colonial days to date. The original name was the Royal West African Rifles. It was later transformed into the Royal Sierra Leone Rifles, and subsequently the Royal Sierra Leone Regiment. The army served with distinction in both first and second world wars gaining the battle honours of Cameroon, in what was then German West Africa, and Myohaung, in Burma in 1944. Following independence in 1961, the armed forces became known as the Sierra Leone Regiment and finally, the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF) after the attainment of republican status in 1971. In 1995, the NPRC military regime renamed it the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone (AFRSL). President Kabbah on 21 January 2002 renamed it as the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF).
276. The RSLAF was founded on a sound tradition of discipline, professionalism, and valour.<sup>157</sup> As a primary organ of the security forces of this country, it is answerable and accountable to civil constituted authority. Article 165 (2) of the 1991 Constitution defined the constitutional role of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces as follows:
- a. To guard and secure the sovereignty of the Republic of Sierra Leone and its citizens.
  - b. To preserve the safety and territorial integrity of the state.
  - c. To participate in the development of the state.
  - d. To safeguard the people’s achievement.
  - e. To protect the Constitution.
277. These provisions were not radically from those of the Independence Constitution of 1961. Yet, with the passage of time, instead of building on this enviable foundation, the entire institution deteriorated. Order and hierarchy are the noblest traditional foundations of any Army; when that structure is destroyed, chaos is bound to follow. Unfortunately, that was the path the Army was forced to follow in the period after independence. Things became so bad that the Sierra Leone Military completely lost all semblances of command and control. The appointment of the Army Commander to parliament, for example, was enough inducement to selfish, greedy and disgruntled soldiers dreaming to become president or ministers overnight instead of aspiring to become generals by rising through the ranks systematically and by merit. Some elite members of the society who sought to use the military to further their own personal ambitions and interests were also responsible for the decay of the

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<sup>157</sup> Major General Tom Carew, Chief of Defence Staff. Submission to the TRC. May 2003.

institution. The decay of the institution was further compounded by other vices such as tribalism, sectionalism, lip service, indiscipline, loss of command and control and the lack of respect for the chain of command within the military.<sup>158</sup> It is therefore in the manipulation of the army by politicians that the roots of the terrible violations committed by the army during the conflict could be found.

278. A programme of 'africanisation' of the military in Sierra Leone started in 1964. It has been argued that the escalation of the 'africanisation' was political, premature and therefore deficient in professional judgment.<sup>159</sup> The recipient of such political largesse was not given the time to mature in any of the new commands he had been given. This was because the new positions were not merited outside the criterion of the need for 'africanisation'. According to Major Noah,

"It appeared then as if the programme was designed to put the most senior Sierra Leonean Officer in a position of trust as political insurance for the politician who introduced the scheme. In 1964, for example, the speech of the Governor General lauded the elevation of Lieutenant Colonel Lansana to the substantive rank of a Colonel and. I in 1965, he was promoted to the rank of Brigadier. As the time for elections drew nearer, the political atmosphere took on a new dimension. Tribalism was clothed in negativity and this led to the alienation of tribes: the south and east from the north and the west. It was a very disastrous divide which systematic demise of values and finally culminated in the crisis. It was that unfortunate phenomenon (negative tribalism) that catapulted the Force Commander into politics and consequently, led to the erosion of his grip on the army, as the alienated segment in that same army fossilized into a counter-poise to safeguard stability and continuity of sanity in the force."<sup>160</sup>

279. The tribal and regional divide assumed a very catastrophic political dimension. The political parties exploited it to the extent that sycophancy became the order of the day. Professional promotions and other considerations that were hitherto meritorious in the military were politicised. The primary criterion for promotion, merit, became redundant and ostracized. The main criterion became 'The right tribe and the ability to pass on intelligence on fellow officers and men'. This system automatically made square pegs in round holes extremely prominent in telling abominable lies and calumnies about innocent, hardworking, more qualified, and competent colleagues. It completely negated and alienated such virtues as easy camaraderie, sharing, mutuality and permissiveness, which were the cohesive factors of the norms and traditions of the officer corps.
280. The slogan became "Survival of the fittest", meaning 'the most depraved liar was King'. Thus, depravity wedded the Army and as mediocrity assumed importance, the schism in the tribal divide widened. By 1967, the army was already consumed by the divide. Two clear groups emerged

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<sup>158</sup> Major General Tom Carew, Submission to the TRC. May 2003. See also submission to the TRC by Major Abu Noah (Rtd.) May 2003.

<sup>159</sup> Major Abu Noah (Rtd.) Submission to the TRC. May 2003.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid

along the lines of the political divide. Officers from the North allied with those from the Western Area, while officers from the South were allied with those from the East.<sup>161</sup>

281. The disintegration continued to propel the army inexorably to a climax. Other senior officers perceived the Force Commander as a tool of the Prime Minister who depended on the Force Commander for his security and political victory in the impending election of 1967. With increased powers arising from his closeness to the Prime Minister, the Force Commander on a number of occasions had his colleagues retired or arrested and detained for all kinds of infractions, or assigned junior officers to administrative positions over and above other senior officers. This led to indiscipline as the senior officers refused to recognise the authority of the junior officers.
282. Mutual suspicion gripped the military about the role of the officers in the 1967 elections. When the Force Commander declared martial law on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1967, after the Prime Minister had lost the elections, the bonds of unity and esprit de' corps in the army finally snapped. A process of military intervention in politics had been unleashed on the country, with the new helmsmen awarding themselves military ranks they didn't deserve and which elevated them far above more senior, qualified and experienced army officers.<sup>162</sup> Such an arrangement could only lead to an implosion. What it needed was a spark, which was provided by the onset of the conflict in 1991.
283. The return of Siaka Stevens in 1968 and his rise to power ushered in the final assault on the values and traditions of order, discipline and hierarchy in the Army. He rendered the Army impotent by a system of subtle but deliberate disarmament through fear, that when it was called upon to perform its constitutional role (to defend the sovereignty of the state), it was in no position to do so. Over politicisation of the Army had castrated the higher echelon, and entrenched those whose sole desire to get to the top led to their betrayal of their colleagues. They became *merchant-generals*, more interested in material acquisitions from the politicians than in a professional armed service. Therefore when war came, there was no officer corps to handle it.<sup>163</sup>
284. By the beginning of the war in 1991, the rot in the army had become obvious. Discipline had collapsed. Training was non-existent and people had risen to the commanding heights of the army by simply doing desk jobs. Officers simply abandoned the war front or cowered in the face of the RUF onslaught. Junior officers developed disdain for their officers who were unable to show leadership at a critical time in the life of the country. The disdain culminated in the plan by the junior officers to overthrow the government. The coup of April 1992 was designed to arrest the collapse of the army and prosecute the war in a more professional manner. The coup plotters assigned to themselves very important political

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> After the counter coup of 1967, the coup leaders elevate even private soldiers to Captains and Lieutenants. Siaka Stevens himself granted 21 Warrant Officers commissions as officers. The leaders of the April 1992 also approved fantastic promotions to themselves. All these elevations were intensely resented by other officers and destroyed the chain of command in the military.

<sup>163</sup> Major Abu Noah (Rtd.) Submission to the TRC. May 2003.

offices as a result of their participation in the coup. During the NPRC era, it was common to see Brigadiers and Colonels saluting their juniors (mostly captains and lieutenants). The impact on morale and discipline in the army was devastating and negated the core foundations for executing the coup.

285. During the war years, the gates into the military were thrown open to good citizens, criminals, and hooligans alike in the hope of flooding the warfront with enough manpower to prosecute the war. These undeserving individuals quickly exploited their uniforms and guns for personal, sectional and other selfish interests. The ultimate result was the AFRC coup of May 25, 1997, which threw the entire nation into turbulence, lawlessness, chaos, anarchy and catastrophe. It was reported to the Commission that a colonel in the army even argued before his colleagues that there was nothing wrong for a colonel to pay compliments to a corporal during the era of the AFRC. "That was how discipline disappeared and the entire officer corps decomposed."<sup>164</sup>
286. It wasn't surprising therefore that both the officer corps and the rank and file of the army began preying on the civilian population right from the onset of the war. There was no overriding national sentiment on which the army could be mobilised. The military was national only in name. By 1991 it was still hostage to ethnic and tribal sentiments. These deepened with the onset of party politics in 1996 when the well intentioned efforts of the Government at reform of the army were labelled as ethnic persecution of Northerners. The Sierra Leonean army has still not weaned itself of ethnic sentiments. Those who harbour such sentiments are however in the minority. The Government needs to move fast to consolidate the gains of the present restructuring and retraining efforts for the army.

#### The Civil Defence Forces (CDF)

286. The term "civil defence" is not construed here exclusively to mean the group that became known as the Civil Defence Forces, or CDF. In fact, the Commission identified numerous examples of groups that embarked upon initiatives to lend protection to their communities quite independently from the formal structures of the CDF and in many cases long before that institution was even conceived.
287. We must, of course, acknowledge that in the minds of many Sierra Leoneans the CDF faction was to become associated with most of the official 'operations' carried out towards the cause of defending civilians against their attackers or oppressors. A primary reason for this association is that the majority of those civil defence initiatives that had existed before the time of the CDF were eventually subsumed into the CDF's structures of co-ordination. Nevertheless, as a wealth of testimonies before the Commission confirm,<sup>165</sup> between different

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<sup>164</sup> Major General Tom Carew, submission to the TRC. May 2003.

<sup>165</sup> The TRC has conducted statement-taking, public and closed hearings, investigations and research interviews in each of the twelve Districts of the country, as well as in the Western Area. In every District, the TRC heard from representatives of local civil defence groups, including – wherever possible – from the leaders of the relevant local arm of the CDF. One of the most striking points stressed by witnesses time and again was that the CDF was contrived as a formal endorsement, or an 'institutionalisation', of activities that had been undertaken at community level for many years previously. Moreover, the Regional and cultural differences between the ways in

Regions, between different ethnic groups and even between cultural sub-groups, there were substantial differences in the character and conduct of the respective CDF components, let alone of the autonomous civil militias and vigilante groups that had preceded them. This chapter shall however deal with the CDF. It is hoped that subsequent research will investigate the roles played by these other groups and the extent of their intervention in the conflict.

288. Civil defence evokes different images and memories depending on the part of the country from which one originates and the place or places in which one lived during the hostilities. At least in the first few years of the conflict, the local populace of most communities felt a strong sense of ownership over the persons they had entrusted with their protection and thus they developed nomenclature in their own native languages to refer to these groups.
289. Hence the people of the Koinadugu District in the Northern Province, who are predominantly Koranko, Limba and Yalunka by tribe, knew the warriors, soothsayers and guides who mobilised alongside the Army as early as 1991 by the collective term *Tamaboros*.<sup>166</sup> In the Temne-dominated Districts of Bombali, Port Loko and Tonkolili, there were *Gbethes*, the word having derived from the Temne term for hunters, which is also understood to carry an implied meaning of power or prowess,<sup>167</sup> and *Kapras*. The people of Kono referred to their local militiamen as *Donsos*, which also means hunters, but which was abstracted effectively to mean 'fighters', or any one who stood up in the face of the enemy.<sup>168</sup> Finally, the people of the predominantly-Mende Districts of the South and East of the country – Moyamba, Bonthe, Bo, Pujehun, Kenema and Kailahun – mostly spoke of their own 'local hunters' or *Kamajors*.<sup>169</sup>
290. The last of these categories – the Kamajors – merits special attention in an analysis of the concept of civil defence during the conflict. At the point when the Commission began the pursuit of its mandate, there existed a great deal of ambiguity and contention in the popular understanding as to who or what the Kamajors actually were. To a great extent, it remained the case during the Public Hearings across Sierra Leone, as Kamajor witnesses proved to be incredibly reticent and in one District practically boycotted the Hearings on the suspicion that the TRC was simply a witch-hunt intended to expose their Society 'secrets'.
291. While such attempts to cast a veil of mystery over the character and conduct of the Kamajors were perhaps motivated out of a certain fear of the reception that a candid testimony might get from erstwhile compatriots or adversaries alike, they in fact did nothing to serve the cause of truth in Sierra Leone. Only a very small handful of former Kamajors testified publicly about the full extent of their

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which different civil militia groups described their roles was also a noteworthy feature of the TRC's enquiries. It would thus be neither accurate nor impartial for the Commission to restrict its analysis of civil defence to the activities of the CDF.

<sup>166</sup> In interviews with the Commission, witnesses from the Koranko ethnic group translated the word 'Tamaboro' as meaning "come and take us out of trouble"; see for example James F. Koroma, elder of the community of Kondembaia, Diang Chiefdom; TRC interview conducted in Kondembaia, Koinadugu District, 15 August 2003.

<sup>167</sup> Sheikh Ahmed Tejan Sesay, former 'Tamaboro' and CDF District Commander for the Bombali District; TRC interview conducted in Makeni, Bombali District; 17 August 2003.

<sup>168</sup> Chief Augustine Safea Nyademo, Town Chief of Baiama and former 'Donso' commander; TRC interview conducted in Koidu Town, Kono District; 12 August 2003.

<sup>169</sup> Kekura Brima Gbau, prominent community stakeholder and former Kamajor; TRC interview conducted in Pangoma Township, Kenema District, 17 July 2003.

participation in the conflict; accordingly, the remainder of witnesses in that category did as much to confuse the Commission further with half-truths and convenient oversights as they did to assist in the creation of an impartial historical record. There was a marked absence of public testimony from Kamajors pertaining to their participation in actual combat or military operations. The Commission has depended largely upon closed testimony and confidential interviews to formulate its account of that aspect of the CDF's conduct. Moreover, very few witnesses were willing in any forum to discuss the details of their initiation ceremonies, which for many of them remain taboo.

292. Indeed, there has been a generally unproductive effort on the part of some Kamajors to obscure the character of their faction. They have tried to finesse a place for the Kamajors among the sacred secret societies that form an integral part of Sierra Leone's cultural heritage. This place is simply not their due: the Kamajors were created for the express purpose of war, albeit a war that they perceived themselves to be fighting in the name of a just cause. The secret societies, including the Poro and Bondo Societies for men and women respectively, are essentially peaceful unions of citizens premised on common belief in the powers of spirits that dwell mainly in the "bush."<sup>170</sup>
293. There was undoubtedly an underlying integrity to the manner in which certain individual Kamajors engaged in the struggle to liberate their homeland from the unconstitutional stranglehold of the People's Army (comprising fighting forces from both the RUF/SL and the AFRC). However only through a nuanced analysis of the evidence can it be possible to garner an accurate understanding of how the Kamajors, abstracted out of, yet distinct from any pre-existing tribal militias, turned a noble cause into a presence that proliferated the armed conflict in its latter stages.
294. The word *Kamajors* was used in testimonies to the TRC in essentially two different contexts: first, to describe certain among the locally-organised Mende militia groups of the early 1990s – by all accounts consisting mostly of those who had actually been hunters;<sup>171</sup> second and much more commonly, to apply to the dramatically-expanded CDF that mobilised *en masse* from 1996 onwards. There is, once again, an important disconnect between the two groups: the first attempted to capitalise upon pre-existing aptitudes among the local populace that would assist in rendering protection to the township; whereas the second has, upon rigorous inspection, proven to be a much more less discriminatory means of recruiting manpower with which to wage war.
295. The latter Kamajors group was not in fact a hunting society, nor did the majority of its members have any unifying pedigree as local hunters or traditional 'bush warriors'. On the contrary, the Kamajors of the 'mass mobilisation' era were mostly hurriedly assembled youths from rural communities; spirited into action through an initiation ceremony that made the illusory promise that they were

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<sup>170</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission made a principled decision not to undertake any of its own analysis regarding the possibility of violations and abuses of human rights taking place within secret societies in peace-time Sierra Leone, precisely because of the *de facto* detachment of these groups from the militias and armed factions that prosecuted the war. The role that such belief systems play in society in general was perceived to have been of greater relevance to the reconciliation component of the Commission's work; hence the production of the internal research paper entitled: *Traditional Belief Systems and Customs of Ethnic Groups and their implications for Reconciliation*; 26 March 2003

<sup>171</sup> TRC interviews with Kamajors from the Kenema, Bo, Pujehun and Bonthe Districts; conducted in each of those four Districts of the country between July and September 2003.

endowed with supernatural powers; then sent to conduct sensitive and serious operations without adequate training or any recognised system of discipline. It is to this expanded group of Kamajors, comprising the overwhelming bulk of the CDF membership after 1996, that nearly all of the violations citing CDF in the Commission's database are attributed.

296. In addition to the above-listed geographically-specific groupings, there were also diverse mechanisms for civil defence that sprung up in different parts of the country under generic terms such as 'vigilantes', 'community defence units' or CDUs, 'auxiliaries' and 'watchmen'. Each of them played its own distinct role in Sierra Leone's history and the Commission is mandated to capture such contributions to the greatest extent possible.

#### *Character and Conduct of the Kamajors*

297. There is a great deal of merit in assessing the leadership of the Civil Defence Forces, particularly as regards the intricacies of its structures, according to a phased approach: first, from the attainment of power by the SLPP Government up to the point of the 1997 military coup and the establishment of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) [that is 10 March 1996 to 25 May 1997]; second, during the period in which the SLPP Government was in exile in Guinea, which is also known as the *inter-regnum* [that is, 25 May 1997 to 10 May 1998]; and third, after the restoration of the Government to power until the final cessation of hostilities [that is, 10 March 1998 to 18 January 2002]. These distinctions are vital in piecing together an accurate understanding of the means by which decisions were made and, either as a result of those decisions or due to other militating factors, operations were carried out during each of the periods in question.
298. The erstwhile National Director of Operations for the CDF, in his public testimony before the Commission in Pujehun, appeared with hindsight to belittle the importance of a title or official rank within the movement. His testimony – whilst couched in parables – further lends credence to the deduction that power and effective command in the CDF appeared to be relatively centralised.

“Giving me the power as National Director of Operations was like you giving me a goat and then you continuing to hold onto the rope; if you're going to hold onto that rope, what would be the point of giving me the goat in the first place – how could I benefit from it?”

You have to bear in mind that there were so many of us, all vying for power or position. There were certain people among us who always tried to interfere; to undermine; to grab the position of the next man. You can't work properly under those kinds of conditions; but those were the conditions in which we were being asked to work. Nobody was reporting to his compatriots or to his commanders further up the chain of command; our attitudes to leadership and organisation were negative.”<sup>172</sup>

299. On a somewhat lower level, Kamajor fighting units seem to have organised

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<sup>172</sup> Joseph A. S. Koroma, former CDF National Director of Operations and Member of the War Council at Base Zero; testimony before TRC Public Hearings held in Pujehun Town, Pujehun District, 24 June 2003.

themselves around fairly arbitrary, ad-hoc criteria. It is indisputable that many groups of Kamajors, a substantial number of who had not been formally 'initiated' into the Society or who had been through false initiations, acted in excess of their collective mandate. The Commission's research suggests further, however, that on an individual level, combatants also acted beyond and often in direct contravention of their superiors' instructions. In the circumstances, effective command responsibility was vested in the commanding officers at the lower level; the unit commanders whose groups were smaller, well known to them and therefore more manageable. Several witnesses before the Commission used the terminology of gang violence to describe the ways in which Kamajors moved through the townships they patrolled.<sup>173</sup> According to one of those civilians who observed the Kamajors most closely in the Bonthe District:

"[A] battalion commander could conceivably be against a lot of the things that happened, but he [would not be the one] to have absolute control over 'his' Kamajors. It was something like a clan system; every group had its own identified leader."<sup>174</sup>

300. The Civil defence Forces was established to defend the communities against attacks by the RUF. Its base of support was in the communities. For a group professing a "just cause", that of defending the communities against unprovoked attack, it was inconceivable that it would attack the very people it was established to protect. This was exactly what happened. It may be tempting to explain away the violations committed by the CDF as collateral damage in a war situation as some witnesses suggested to the Commission. However, such simplistic explanation does not contextualise how a just cause became indistinguishable from 'rebel' atrocities. The following paragraphs are insights discerned by the Commission as rationale for some of the violations that were committed by the CDF.

#### *CDF Initiation and Training*

301. The initiation process in the CDF was a very rigorous exercise that emphasised compliance with certain taboos that included sexual abstinence and non-appropriation of other people's property. Compliance with these taboos was expected to protect the combatant in battle, making him invisible to the enemy. With numerous initiation ceremonies going on all over the southern and eastern regions, and with all kinds of people welcomed into the group, it became difficult to enforce compliance with these taboos. The Commission received testimonies of harassment of the civilian population, especially those suspected of being RUF sympathisers. Subsequently to a lot of people, membership of the CDF became a passport to free passage in the communities. Membership became highly sought after. Many of those who joined were not initiated neither did they receive any training in the mores of the group. Initiation became a highly commercialised enterprise with people paying exorbitantly to go through the process. Initiation fees ranged from Le2000 to Le10, 000 per person. At times there were as many as 5000 men to initiate. The initiators chose their times and locations. With such numbers being initiated on a regular basis, discipline and control became lax. The possession of a weapon became an important instrument for the new arrivals in settling old

<sup>173</sup> Locate testimony in the database and refer further to Father Garrick and others.

<sup>174</sup> Reverend Father Emmanuel John Garrick; TRC interview conducted in Pujehun Town, Pujehun District, 26 June 2003; at page 7.

personal and family quarrels.

302. The establishment of the civil defence units in the communities had been on the initiative of the chiefs. In the early days, the chiefs selected able-bodied young men from their communities and sent them for “training”. With institutionalisation of the movement and the massive numbers that subsequently joined, it became impossible for the chiefs to control the membership. Furthermore, while the chiefs’ retained symbolic authority in the communities, the control of men in arms created new levers of power in the communities. The CDF was organised both as a military and an administrative entity. Each district and town had administrators who were in charge. The function of the administrator was to ensure the maintenance of law and order, settle disputes among people and encourage the people to continue with their daily lives. The administrators had supplanted the government appointed administrative officers. Increasingly the administrators supplanted the chiefs as points of authority and contact. The administrator could override the decision of a chief on any issue. He could punish a chief for “errant” behaviour or appoint a chief in any community or interfere in chieftaincy disputes in the community in favour of a disputant.<sup>175</sup> Many administrators became drunk with power and began sending the troops out against perceived opponents. The administrators wielded powers of life and death over people. Some of them like Kosseh Hindowa in Bo protected CDF militiamen accused of killing innocent people and shielded them from law enforcement officers. This created a culture of impunity that membership of the CDF put you above the law. The Commission has received testimony of CDF troops being sent out to murder opponents or seize their property, even after the conflict was over in 2001.<sup>176</sup> In a letter of complaint to the Commission, a petitioner accused Kosseh Hindowa of ordering the destruction by Kamajors of his compound in Bo valued at over Le50Million, and the removal of valuable property including steel windows and doors, roofing and other building materials which were then taken to the CDF store in Bo on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1998. The petitioner had complained to the CDF Coordinator in Bo at the time, Alhaji Daramy Rogers, the National Coordinator, Chief Hinga Norman and the then Vice president, Dr. Joe Demby. None of them intervened to facilitate the return of his property, pay him compensation for the destruction or punish Kosseh Hindowa for his actions.<sup>177</sup>
303. After the expulsion of the RUF from power, the Kamajors launched an operation on the town of Koribundo in Bo district, “to punish the people for supporting the AFRC”. This support was an apparent reference to the fact that an army garrison had long existed in Koribundo. The town was completely destroyed. On the basis of reports made to the Commission, an event specific hearing was organised in Freetown on the destruction of the town. Witness after witness narrated to the Commission that after the destruction, the National Coordinator of the CDF, Chief Hinga Norman, visited the town and congratulated the boys for “a job well down”. When confronted by the town’s people he was alleged to have told them that his instruction was actually that no building in the town should be left standing, but that he noticed that his boys had spared the local church. He told the people that the destruction was a punishment for the support extended to the AFRC and warned them from such conduct in the future.

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<sup>175</sup> Testimony at Bo Public Hearings

<sup>176</sup> Confidential interview with an ex-CDF combatant in Bo, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

<sup>177</sup> Petition to TRC dated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2002.

304. The CDF became a law unto themselves in all the districts and communities they controlled. While there were police stations in some of the districts, the police officers were hamstrung and could do nothing in the face of the overwhelming powers of the CDF. Police officers were summarily beaten for not obeying the orders of the Kamajors. Testimonies abound of people arrested on all kinds of charges and it was left to the district administrator or the local commander to determine the fate of the person. For such purely civilian matters, no code of conduct had been laid down for the rank and file. It all depended on the momentary idiosyncrasy of the local commander whether one lived or was killed if arrested on any charge by the CDF. As witnesses told the Commission:

"They take the laws into their own hands; they have the feeling that they are the people in charge in the country so they will act however they wish."<sup>178</sup>

"The complainant was a businessman who had lived in Bo for many years, with his family. The Kamajor leader in Bo without any lawful excuse or justification raided his house, beat him up and took up his goods on many occasions. He reported the matter to the police in Bo who tried to safeguard him and his properties, but the Kamajors in Bo repeatedly beat him up and took his goods away. Later the police decided to send him to the CID Freetown for "protective custody". The CID Freetown decided to keep him in Pademba Road prisons without any justification or lawful excuse. He was there for six months without release when his wife and mother came to our office to complain."<sup>179</sup>

The police sent a citizen into detention for six months, yet it was their constitutional duty to offer him protection. The police authorities could not bring his persecutors to account even after the war had ended.

"The seizure of my Honda motorbike took place at Bumpeh, on the Bo – Matru Road on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 1997. I met a Kamajor at a checkpoint in Bumpeh town with a gun. He stopped me and demanded the Honda keys from me. He then took me and the Honda bike to his boss, Mr. Moses Lamina alias Gbokambama. Moses Lamina told me that he acted upon the order of his boss, Mr. Allieu Kondewah, the Kamajor High Priest, that all vehicles used on that road should be confiscated and brought to him at his base – Talia in Bonthe district. I became helpless and my Honda bike was forcefully taken away. I continued my journey the next day walking 20 miles on foot from Bumpeh to Serabu.

In the attempt to retrieve my Honda and to test the veracity of Moses lamina's allegation, my brother, James Farma of Kaniya and I walked 60 miles to Allieu Kondewah to his base at Talia on the 30<sup>th</sup> October 1997. He admitted passing the order to seize all vehicles and send them to his base. He promised to return the confiscated vehicles to their owners after the war but he never did."<sup>180</sup>

305. There were contradicting testimonies from members of the CDF on the nature and length of the training they received. Most of the witnesses talked of "a few

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<sup>178</sup> Rev. Fr. Garrick, testimony at TRC Public Hearings in Bonthe District, July 2003.

<sup>179</sup> Office of the Ombudsman. 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Report 2002. OMB 3921/2002 page 23-24.

<sup>180</sup> Mr. Henry Moriba, Petition to the TRC, dated 11<sup>th</sup> March 2003. As at the time of the petition, the motorcycle had still not been returned.

days" for the initiation after which they were drafted to the war front. They also claimed that they were not even trained in how to handle a gun. A combatant was expected to learn how to use a gun himself. Other testimonies talked of training programmes lasting from between a week to one month. Such witnesses however could not recollect or discuss in detail the nature of the training offered them during that period. It seems obvious that some training was offered at least at Base Zero. It is however doubtful the nature of any training offered the combatants who underwent initiation in their various chiefdoms. Even while at Base Zero, the Commission was told that the combatants refused to undergo training considering it worthless or unnecessary.<sup>181</sup> Without adequate training, it was no surprise that the combatants took liberties with people as they liked. The Commission was invited to compare the behaviour of the Kamajors with the Gbethes whose leader M. S Dumbuya invited the ECOMOG forces to train his men. It seemed therefore that for the Kamajors, a lot of emphasis was placed on the initiation as if it was the solution to all potential problems that might be encountered by the combatants.

306. For many CDF combatants, wielding a gun provided a context to appropriate property. Numerous testimonies before the Commission talk of Kamajor local commanders taking over the private property of individuals without the payment of compensation, and apparently for no cause. Many of the properties taken over have not been returned even now that the war is over. By 1999 the Chief Initiator, King Kondewah was telling the Kamajors that everything was over. This was interpreted to mean that they were freed from all injunctions and taboos, and further that from thenceforth, they were to fend for themselves.<sup>182</sup> The scale of violations dramatically increased as the Kamajors began a spree of looting that was not markedly different from the RUF. Houses were unroofed and the materials converted to the personal property of the commanders.
307. The CDF had been very popular as a concept. It would have been logical to assume that its leadership at the communities would derive from an amalgam of all the groups and interests present in the communities. Many middle class persons and members of the political elite supported the movement in various ways. Yet it's fighting forces and the administrative arm were led by people with very basic education or none at all. Lacking knowledge of human rights principles or the laws of armed conflict, it is not surprising that brazenness and arbitrariness subordinated common sense and intellect in decision making within the movement.
308. The government seemed unable or unwilling to rein in the CDF. Very prominent witnesses informed the Commission that they brought to the attention of the government the grave violations that were being perpetrated against the civilian population by the CDF. In one instance, a witness said the President confessed to him his inability to call the National Coordinator of the CDF, Chief Hinga Norman to order about the behaviour of the combatants for fear that he might turn the CDF against the government.<sup>183</sup> Hon. Richard Lagawo, majority leader in parliament and former National Chairman of the CDF has described Chief Norman as "a strong man" who could not be controlled.<sup>184</sup> All of this took place

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<sup>181</sup> M.S. Dumbuya, interview at the TRC Office, Freetown, October 2003.

<sup>182</sup> Confidential interview with ex-Kamajor combatant in Bo. 5th June 2003.

<sup>183</sup> Confidential interview with a member of the CDF War Council at Base Zero, TRC Office, Freetown, November 2003.

<sup>184</sup> Interview with the Commission. TRC office, Freetown, May 2004.

in a situation where the national army had been effectively disbanded by executive fiat. Defence of the country and even peacetime defence activities fell to an armed faction that had not been trained in the basic rudiments of how to relate to civilians. This state of affairs could only worsen the climate of impunity that prevailed in Kamajor camps, as they were indeed beyond control by the government. In one instance it took the intervention of ECOMOG to arrest the Chief Priest, King Kondewah over the murder of a civilian.<sup>185</sup> After a few days in detention he was released and the matter has not been resurrected. The behaviour of the Kamajors provides important lessons in managing civilian militias when they deploy violence on behalf of a national government.

## FACTIONAL FLUIDITY IN THE CONFLICT

309. To the extent that the violations committed by the RUF are a permanent, underpinning characteristic of the conflict, the Commission has identified the RUF/SL as the foremost single influence on the course of the conflict from its outset until its cessation. Indeed, due to the transient presence of some fighting factions on the territory - for example, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) or the Ghurkhas, both of whom entered but subsequently left Sierra Leone - and to the initial non-existence of some factions which came to feature prominently in the conflict - for example, the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) and ECOMOG, the Sierra Leone-mandated Monitoring Group of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) - it is possible to surmise that the RUF/SL was in fact the only faction that featured in the conflict from start to finish.
310. Whilst certain combatants of other affiliations fought throughout, some of them continually against the RUF/SL, the capacity in which they were fighting changed, in some cases many times over, depending on such factors as shifts in political power or leadership, force of circumstance or sheer adversity. The biographies of individual fighters over the course of the conflict testify to its unfathomable complexity and an astounding factional fluidity. The Commission has, for example, heard from certain combatants who first took up arms as members of the RUF, later joined a civil militia group to fight against the RUF and now serve in the reformed Sierra Leone Armed Forces. Others began as soldiers fighting for the Government, later joined the junta and turned against the Government, formed their own splinter groups in the bush, found favour with the Government again to assist in eliminating the RUF and are now sitting in prison.
311. None of the above ought to imply that the Revolutionary United Front itself had anything akin to a fixed identity, or identities, from the point of its conception to the point of its effective elimination. On the contrary, the RUF is most fittingly described as a 'movement' - a set of loosely bound objectives, some of them divergent or even contradictory, afforded a military dimension and finding their expression in the actions of people from across a wide spectrum of backgrounds, many of whom associated themselves neither with the objectives of the movement, nor necessarily with one another.
312. Indeed, as the ensuing analysis demonstrates, the scale and nature of atrocities committed by members of the RUF appear to have their roots as

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<sup>185</sup> TRC Confidential interview with an ex-Kamajor combatant. Bo 5<sup>th</sup> June 2003

much in dissension within the ranks, the nature of their training and in any shared agenda among them. The RUF were not rebels without a cause, but nor can we ascribe a common cause to 'the rebels'. In reality the movement attains its defining character from the differences - sometimes subtle, sometimes fundamental - behind the various causes for which RUF members fought.<sup>186</sup>

### The Chameleonic Character of the Combatants

313. The conflict was prosecuted largely by unconventional fighting forces among and between themselves, certainly in its second and third phases. Even during the first phase, when the factions aligned themselves to a more conventional brand of warfare, there was a marked absence of head-to-head battlefield confrontations. Militias and armed groups, including the Sierra Leone Army in its various incarnations, generally concentrated their strategic planning and resources on carrying out 'operations'. Whether or not couched in the rubric of offensive and defensive missions, these operations were predominantly geared towards the destruction of life and property. Civilians, as individuals and in groups, were often the express targets of participant militias and armed groups rather than merely the unfortunate victims of 'collateral damage'.
314. To the extent that it retained at least a semblance of conventionality in its command structures, ranks and rules of engagement until the bulk of its soldiers were subsumed into the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in 1997, the professional Sierra Leone Army was something of an exception in the conflict as a *de facto* conventional Army. The norm for the militias and armed groups whose formation or transformation was essentially premised upon participating in the conflict was to structure and organise themselves in a mode and manner that was irrevocably reflective of the social order that reigns in Sierra Leone.
315. The Commission identified an astonishing 'factional fluidity' among the different militias and armed groups that prosecuted the war. Both overtly and covertly, both gradually and suddenly, fighters switched sides or established new 'units' on a scale unprecedented in any other conflict of which the Commission is aware. These 'chameleon tendencies' spanned across all factions without exception; they say much about the character of the general 'breed' of combatant who participated in the Sierra Leone conflict.
316. On an individual level, the biographies of ex-fighters who testified to the Commission attest to the relative frequency of the peculiar scenario whereby combatants could be allied to a particular faction for several years before joining their proclaimed archenemies.

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<sup>186</sup> It should be noted that compulsion was one of the most common causes that drove conscripted civilians into fighting for the RUF.

317. On a collective level, almost entire 'factions' switched 'sides' on at least two occasions during the conflict. First, after 1994, the membership of the so-called 'Action Group', a component of the RUF/SL in the Pujehun District, largely abandoned the RUF/SL and became Kamajors fighting for the pro-Government CDF. Second, upon the creation of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) as a junta regime, the majority of officers and private soldiers in the Sierra Leone Army transferred their allegiance away from the incumbent (*de jure*) Government of Sierra Leone to ally themselves with the RUF/SL under the banner of the 'People's Army'.
318. In every single case recorded by the Commission, including those cited above, the dynamics of factional fluidity were complex and somewhat anomalous, but nevertheless remarkable to even the most experienced of military observers. Research carried out by the Commission has been able to proffer the following possible explanations for such factional fluidity.
319. Broadly speaking, for each of the different factions, the composition of the ground forces was almost identical – young, impressionable, disgruntled 'youth men' eager for an opportunity to 'assert themselves' and see that no harm was done to their own people ('people' here to be understood restrictively to mean either immediate family or perhaps members of the same close-knit community) whilst fighting against perceived injustice.
320. Due in part to the prevalence of organised hierarchies in Sierra Leonean society – sometimes referred to as *bra-ism* and a related culture of dependency– groups of combatants were more inclined to remain loyal to particular commanders than to overarching causes or societal interests. Thus, where an influential commander (or a *bra*, a big brother figure) declared that the whole unit was now to follow orders from a new source, or to ally themselves with a different set of fighters from another 'faction', there would invariably be wholesale compliance without so much as asking questions. During the conflict, the declarations and suggestions of a *bra* carried all the more persuasive weight because they were backed up by threats of summary punishment for non-conformists.
321. Upon conducting a in-depth investigation into the circumstances, the Commission has found that there are subtleties to the collective switches (like the examples of the Action Group and the People's Army described above) that preclude their being described accurately as 'defections', 'sell-outs' or transformations of character.
322. On the contrary, chameleonic tendencies in the conflict are actually representative of the consistency of the underpinning objectives and motivations of the combatant factions. For example, where a local militia like the Momoh Konneh (Ndorgboryorsoi) component of the 'Action Group' (purportedly) sought sincerely to protect and/ or promote the interests of the indigenous people in the face of scourges like bad governance and corrupt leadership, they originally found a vehicle in the shape of the RUF/SL; after the RUF/SL reverted to guerrilla warfare and moved out of the communities in question, the 'Action Group' (Ndorgboryorsoi) members identified a new means of fulfilling their objective – through the local civil militia concept embodied in the CDF. A further example of the subtleties of an apparent collective 'switching of sides' is found in the case of the Sierra Leone Army and its various incarnations.

### 'Blurred lines': various phenomena relating to perpetrator identity

323. In the second phase of the conflict in Sierra Leone, there grew among the public a widespread subscription to the theory that soldiers of the Sierra Leone Army were 'behaving like rebels' or indeed 'working together with the rebels'. The concept that soldiers generally could not be trusted with the defence of the civilian population became popularly understood under the rubric of 'sobels'.
324. While appearing at first glance to be testament to the 'chameleonic character' of combatants (purporting to be one thing while acting like quite another; 'soldiers by day, rebels by night', etc.) these 'blurred lines' in fact reaffirm the adage that a 'soldier is a soldier'.
325. The loyalties of the soldiers have always been transient and malleable to the political agenda of those in power. The disharmonies and internal conflicts between soldiers in this conflict appear to have arisen primarily due to the mixing of military and political concepts of 'power' in an unsophisticated fashion.
326. The NPRC administration of Captain Valentine Strasser consistently caused offence to senior officers who resented having to receive directions from their 'juniors' who occupied State House.
327. 'Power' was sought and wielded in an even more crude form under the AFRC regime of Major Johnny-Paul Koroma; such was the unconventionality of the AFRC hierarchy and the lack of coherent (far less *unified*) military or political strategy that its reign in Government and, especially, the imposed state of flux that resulted from its dislodgement both created a propensity towards violence against civilians they identified as loyal to the SLPP Government.
328. In the end, it is difficult to answer the question, why the combatants fought the war. If they claimed any overriding agenda, the fluidity in their membership and their transient loyalties make it difficult to perceive, much less understand their agenda. The Commission is left with the regrettable and uncomfortable conclusion that the war was a naked pursuit of power clothed in the garb of revolution. The original agenda for radical system change had been aborted in 1988. What the people of Sierra Leone were served from 1991 was a counterfeit. They have paid a terrible price for a fake product.
329. It is easier to understand the motivations of those who engaged in a just war, to resist the enslavement of their people. However, the Commission is unable to understand or justify the whole scale condemnation of the civil populace as collaborators or supporters of the RUF by those who claimed to be liberating them from the RUF scourge. How else should the Commission interpret the indiscriminate attacks on people by the CDF? Despite the achievements of the CDF in the conflict, Sierra Leoneans must feel terribly disappointed and let down by the CDF record on human rights. Sierra Leoneans gave all their possessions denying themselves even basic services to feed and cloth their assumed liberators. Indeed, the thought must be shocking to them that between the CDF and the RUF, the difference on respect for people's human rights is marginal.

## PERPETRATOR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE VIOLATIONS

330. In the statements received by the Commission, the AFRC is responsible for 14,646 or 36.4% of the total of 40,242 violations. These violations were committed primarily in the third phase of the conflict, with the greatest number occurring in early 1999. The second highest number of documented violations, 13,657 or 33.9% were attributed to the RUF/SL. These violations were carried out prior to the RUF alliance with the AFRC junta regime and include abuses by the NPFL. Smaller numbers of violations are attributed to the SLA (6.0%) and the CDF (6.0%) and other forces (1.5%).<sup>187</sup>
331. The other perpetrators include local civil forces such as the police and SSD, and international parties such as the ECOMOG and the Guinean Armed Forces (GAF). Both the ECOMOG and GAF account for less than 1% of the recorded violations.

### 1991-1996: The First Phases of the Conflict

332. Throughout the first two phases of the conflict, the groups responsible for the highest number of violations were the RUF and to a lesser extent, the SLA. The RUF is responsible for 13,657 or 74.6% of the 18,308 documented human rights violations while the SLA accounted for 2,025 or 11% of the violations.

### 1997-2000: The Final Phase of the Conflict

333. In the final phase of the conflict, from 1997 onwards, the character of the war changed markedly. Though active previously, the CDF groups mobilised to a much greater extent, committing thousands of violations and abuses, especially in the South. In Bonthé the civil militia is the dominant perpetrator, with the statements describing more abuses committed by the Kamajors than by any other party. Furthermore the national army that had previously been charged with defending the country formed an alliance with the RUF after the AFRC coup. Both the GAF and the ECOMOG intervened more forcefully into the conflict in its final phase, with the latter driving the AFRC/RUF forces from Freetown. In the bush the AFRC soldiers adopted the behaviour patterns of the RUF fighters, committing atrocities on a massive scale in the Northern region.
334. Slightly more than two thirds, 14,646 or 66.8% of the documented 21,934 violations committed from 1997 onwards are attributed to the AFRC, the RUF or a combination of both. The next major perpetrator is the CDF accounting for 1893 or 8.6% of the violations.
335. Both the ECOMOG and GAF bear a measure of responsibility for the abuses during this final phase of the war. It is important to note that numbers for violations committed by ECOMOG troops do not purely relate to involvement in the fighting, but the alleged commission of violations against the civilian population. Thus, it is most unfortunate to record that forces intended to bring peace to the country, comprising professional soldiers, contributed to the violations against the people.

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<sup>187</sup> It should be noted that many violations had no specific perpetrator attributed to them, while violations may have been shared among several perpetrators.

336. Many statement givers were unable to determine or recall those responsible for the violations against them. Consequently many abuses have unknown perpetrators. The proportion of violations and abuses without an identified perpetrator increases as the conflict progresses. Between 1991 and 1996, 2,342 or 12% of the 18,308 documented violations have unknown perpetrators. In the final period, they make up to 4,411 or 20.1% of the 21,943 documented violations. This is an indicator of how over time, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish between the various fighting factions.

#### CDF Militia Responsibility

337. The militia groups in the North of the country were not comparable to the Kamajors in terms of the scale of their abuses. The Kamajors account for 2188 or 90% of the 2419 violations attributed to the CDF. The next largest group, the Gbethes, accounted for 143 or 5.9% of CDF violations. The Tamaboros, Kapras, and the Donsos are responsible for 15 or 0.6% of the documented CDF abuses between them. In 78 or 3.2% of the violations, the statement giver indicated that the CDF was responsible but did not specify which militia.

#### ECOMOG

338. The violation with which ECOMOG forces were associated was killing. To comprehend the killings in which it is alleged that ECOMOG actors were responsible, a special coding exercise was undertaken. The total number of statements in the TRC database involving killings by the ECOMOG forces is 72. Out of these a random sample of 55 statements were studied. As such, the results can be considered as representative of ECOMOG violations in the TRC database.
339. The statements indicate that abuses by ECOMOG forces primarily occurred in the Western Area – 90% of the killings in the sample were in Freetown. This supports the notion that abuses by the ECOMOG force are concentrated in the Western Area. Taking evidence from the database as a whole, less than 1% of the abuses are attributed to the ECOMOG forces. However ECOMOG actors are blamed for less than 3% of the abuses in Freetown in 1999.

#### Indiscriminate Killing

340. Some of the deaths studied in the Special Coding exercises were indiscriminate, due to bombing, shelling or cases where the victims were caught in a crossfire. Of these 'accidental' killings, the majority (63.5%) were caused by stray bombs. The issue of cross fire has been discussed earlier in this chapter. It is now important to deal with the issue of bombing. In general it is forbidden to carry out aerial bombing in urban areas. The dangers of civilian casualties are just too great. It is important to set out the applicable international humanitarian law norms to the bombing of military objectives. Article 51 of the Geneva Conventions protects civilian populations against dangers arising from military operations. It sets out rules that give effect to this protection. The rules are additional to other applicable rules of international law, which should be observed at all times. The rules include that the civilian population shall not be the object of attack. Acts or threats of violence designed to spread terror and indiscriminate attacks are prohibited. Indiscriminate attacks are those not directed at a specific military objective; those which

employ a method of means of combat the effects of which cannot be limited as required by the protocol. In consequence such attacks could strike at military objectives and civilians or civilian objects without distinction. The article further defines indiscriminate attacks as an attack by bombardment by any methods or means which treats as a single military objective a number of clearly separated and distinct military objectives located in a city, town, village or other area containing a similar concentration of civilians or civilian objects; and an attack which may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians, damage to civilian objects, or a combination thereof, which would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.

341. Civilian objects are all objects, which are not military objectives as defined in paragraph 2 of the section. The attacks ought to be limited strictly to military objectives. Military objectives are limited to those objects which by their nature, location, purpose or use make an effective contribution to military action and whose total or partial destruction, capture or neutralisation, in the circumstances ruling at the time, offers a military advantage.
342. Any attack therefore must demonstrate that there was a clear military objective being sought, and that some 'collateral' damage to the military objective was inevitable, and that tactics and weapons were chosen in order to minimise such collateral damage. Where ECOMOG is unable to provide proof that military objectives were targeted, the aerial bombing of Freetown will be considered to be a violation of international humanitarian law. In the Commission's view, the use of bombs in largely urban areas violated the principle of proportionality. In consequence, ECOMOG's bombing campaign in Freetown did on occasion, kill entire families including children.<sup>188</sup>

### Summary Executions

342. Of all the sample deaths, 58.8% were deliberate executions. Of the 50 killings recorded, in the sampled statements, over three quarters involved some accusation that the victim was involved with the AFRC or RUF factions. Where such an allegation was made, 70% of the victims were accused of being a 'rebel'. The remainder were accused of being either 'rebel' collaborators or members of a family containing a 'rebel'. This is consistent with the argument that elements within the ECOMOG force targeted and summarily executed suspected rebels and collaborators. Regardless of the veracity of the allegation – or indeed the 'guilt' or 'innocence' of the supposed collaborator - such executions constitute a breach of international human rights law.
343. The method of killing was, primarily, execution by shooting at short range. The deaths mainly occurred in public places and were witnessed by civilians. The public nature of the violation suggests that it may have been intended as a warning to others. In some cases the victims were first abducted from their home or workplace and brought to the point of execution.<sup>189</sup> Summary executions constitute serious violations of international human rights law. They amount to arbitrary deprivation of life, which is prohibited by the major human rights treaties. In addition, they constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law. For example, Common article 3 to the Geneva Conventions, which applies specifically to non international armed conflict, prohibits the

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<sup>188</sup> See statement Numbers 1156, 2221, 5041, 5046.

<sup>189</sup> See statement Numbers 1116, 1352, 1420, 1686, 1942, 2586, 2593, 5409, 7134

carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognised as indispensable by civilized peoples. The ECOMOG forces who perpetrated these acts are not sheltered by the amnesty of the Lomé Agreement, and should be prosecuted before the courts of their own countries in accordance with national and international law.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF CONTEXT

### Understanding the Violations

344. It has been argued that the conflict in Sierra Leone was the worst in recent history and cannot be explained by reference to any existing phenomena in the country. Many victims want to understand why the conflict was attended by so much violence and abuse. To provide an insight into the psychology of perpetrators, the Commission commissioned some monographic studies in the hope of finding some explanation.<sup>190</sup>

#### *Psychological perspectives on the process of enlistment*

345. In the Sierra Leone conflict, various violent acts were perpetrated by individuals, all of who underwent a process of enlistment, which was basically conscription into any of the fighting forces. This process preceded the act of perpetration.
346. Specific procedures were methodically used to enlist and create a whole group removed from society. This process was open-ended; in that under-aged children, youths, males and females were no exception. The focus of enlistment is the destruction of specific social and psychological links between the individual and his community resulting in a bid to inculcate the new beliefs and ideas of the group in the individual.
347. There were diverse reasons why individuals were enlisted in the fighting forces during the conflict. Some volunteered as a way to carry out revenge for previous wrongs. Others were forcibly enlisted. Left with no choice they became active fighters. The reasons for enlistment were either personal, social, economic or political in dimension. But enlistment involves specific psychological processes that lead vulnerable individuals, especially young children, to commit atrocities.

“I was living with my father and mother and was the elder son of the family. At around 5.00am that day our village was attacked by the RUF in the South. One of the commandos who knew my parents entered our house with a group of teenagers. Three of us were captured since we were not able to escape. The commando who was called K ordered his boys to gang rape my mother before my father and me. They had to rape her by turns in front of my father. This was done as a way of revenge because my mother refused to marry K who

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<sup>190</sup> The TRC commissioned Handicap International to conduct a study of perpetrators to examine causal links between their initiation and the violence they subsequently perpetrate. The Commission also contracted a private consultant to examine the relationship between the use of drugs and the violations that occurred. The ensuing paragraphs draw upon the papers produced as a result of these studies.

had earlier asked her hand in marriage.

After five of the boys have raped my mother, she became unconscious and asked my father for help. As the husband who was at this point under gun point attempted to move he was shot at point blank range. I saw my father drop dead. I cried for help but a gun was pointed at me. I do not remember how many of them raped my mother later. I was asked to follow them which I did. We left my mother close to my father's corpse. Later, I saw our house on fire. I cannot tell whether my mother also died after. A bag of looted items were given to me to carry for that night. I cried quietly along the way. Soon one of my colleagues in the village who was also captured told me to keep quiet or else I would be killed. This made me to stop crying."<sup>191</sup>

### *The traumatic transmission*

348. It is important to note that the representations/images of the initiator are transmitted to the future soldier in a traumatic climate. This is not done unconsciously. Through how it is transmitted, the mechanism is automatically put in place. Victims of enlistment who have gone through the process therefore become representations of the same process like the one the torturer went through: a traumatic logic through traumatic initiations. One example of this is that when a victim of traumatic violence is narrating the event, it provokes deep and uncomfortable emotions to the person listening to it.
349. The individual abducted or initiated into a combat faction goes through a deliberate process of disruption of the links and the marks that constitute the individual's psyche. It happens in the "torture" process and in some initiation rituals in traditional societies<sup>192</sup> such as the initiation processes organised around the testing of abilities through trials. The relationship between the future soldier and his leader/initiator is important to understanding the relation between torturer/victim.
350. There are two ways to transmit and to initiate: through pedagogy and through trials. In the context of perpetrators, to traumatically initiate, one goes through this duplication. The secret binds the initiated with his initiator<sup>193</sup>, emphasising and perpetrating the traumatic aspect of the initiation. This aspect would therefore initiate the trauma, and push the initiated to transmit it by duplication, as a psychological way to cope with the traumatic image. The initiation takes place in a secret environment that has also a function of demarcation between those who are initiated and the others. It is as if it is conferring to the individual something additional, an "extra or supernatural power". However, it reinforces his identity with the group but also creates a gap between the two groups: those who were initiated and those who were not. Those who speak are those who are disrupting their affiliation with the initial group and are in a process of affiliation with another group. Finally there is often a need to finalize the initiation by perpetrating an act that they have been trained for. By this concrete act, they are concretising their affiliation to the body.

### *The altering of the initial identity*

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<sup>191</sup> Statement from a child soldier, S.

<sup>192</sup> T.Nathan (1994), *L'influence qui guérit*, Paris, Odile Jacob.

<sup>193</sup> L.Hounkpatin et T.Nathan, « *Secret professionnel, secret initiatique. Deux modalités de constitution de groupe professionnel de soins* », Agora, 37, 1996.

351. This phase marks a deliberate process of disorientating and dissociating initiates from all previous attachments, beliefs or values. He is cut off from all his usual works, which totally disorientates him. One of the examples is that he loses all his contacts with his family or social marks (by being abducted).

“After a long journey we finally arrived at their base. This place was called “Burkina”, it was very far. I was so tired that I couldn’t recognise it. We were put in a sort of cage till the next morning. We were later called out and sent to the training field.”

352. He is also systematically cut off from his environment. They integrate him in another “mystic” and strange world that ex- combatants usually do not remember. The location of training camps is carefully selected. It is an excluded area, cut off from the rest of the society. This is to ensure that there is no escape and to be sure that they are cut off from all usual marks and bonds. Some of the ex-commandos called it “Burkina” or said that it is the training put in place in foreign countries: what this part of a myth, was it the part of the intentional disorientation?

“We were two dozen in number and each of us was given a cup of juice mixture to drink. This drink was to help us go through the training. During lunch a plate of porridge mixed with brown-brown was shared among us with gunpowder added to it. Our trainer commando “S” told us that it will strengthen us to face the enemy. On the training ground you are subjected to different exercises ranging from running, jumping, rolling and marching. You are also expected to stand in one place for hours on end. All this is done with the hope of testing your physical fitness and endurance. During this period, you are given different forms of punishment if you fail to take instructions from the trainer. Some of the girls are asked to carry out these punishments. I felt the punishment was inhuman but there is no training wherein somebody will not die. So any attempt by a trainee to escape is punishable by torturing you to death.”

353. Then, they are subjected to harsh and humiliating trials in a bid to put them in a position of vulnerability. New rules are introduced some of which can be illogical. Some of the humiliating acts could be carrying food and other support items for the initiators, wives being raped in the presence of their husbands or girl children being used as sex slaves. Some commented that in the training, they also had to walk naked during hours in the bush.

“The second phase is the use of the gun. This also entails dismantling, assembling and firing to the right target etc. You spend sleepless nights during this phase because the training instructor can give order any time for you to fire. Failure means punishment. We are also trained to lay down in one place for days without drinking neither eating nor moving. We all went through this training naked.”

354. As a way of making initiates more vulnerable they are deprived of any form of privacy. Every action of the initiate is watched and monitored to increase his sense of insecurity. For example, the doors were always open, everything belonged to everybody. To emphasise the effect, the act is accompanied with deliberate exaggeration of superiority over initiates. The initiate is reduced to the level of universality making him believe that he is nobody. All the usual

character marks of his individual identity are deleted. Every single difference between individuals are erased and not tolerated within the group. He is placed at the same level with other initiates. This is done to erase any previous link (with the family, community) be it formal or not. At this point it is clear that initiates are in a position of nakedness, totally dispossessed of all former ties and completely vulnerable.

355. The moment of natural selection is not ruled out wherein those who cannot survive the ordeal die. On the other hand, any form of emotional breakdown or resistance or escape warrants instant elimination. These fears suppress initiates and strengthen their resolution to move on. In this state of extreme vulnerability, the ideals are reinforced to boost the morale of new converts.

“SJ tried to escape from the training, he was captured back and it was decided that he should be killed. They covered his face with a bag and beat him. Fortunately, a friend came to rescue him, as he was about to die. Since that time, he had stopped crying each day he had the urge to undertake the training.”

356. Two approaches are used to integrate and inculcate the new ideals to converts. The psychology approach is based on the belief that the individual behaviour is influenced by subconscious and unconscious motivations. The perpetrator uses this approach to motivate an individual by disturbing the equilibrium of his personality, making him feel uncomfortable, then offering him some course of action that will dispel this uncomfortable feeling. The socio-cultural approach is by attempting to define or redefine the norms that are guidelines for the behaviour of groups. It takes place most easily in unstructured situations where the norms have not yet been formed. By these new approaches, new members are integrated and ideals/beliefs are resultantly inculcated. At this juncture the initiates experience a feeling of annihilation and are resolved to stay.

“We normally go through different phases of this training. Before each training period, you are asked to sing the national anthem of the movement. At the end of each phase you are told why this type of training is needed. Towards the end of the training you are frequently taken out of the camp to attack villages and towns.”

357. Initiates are linked to members through an oath of secrecy with rituals and initiations. They are based on traumatic rites, where the trials are to live or die. The trials of endurance and courage continue in the same degree until all humiliating tones disappear. This is a moment of total submission and a new person is formed. They are based on traumatic rites, where the trial is up to the point that you live or you die.

### *The final phase*

358. New converts display their new identity in public through ceremonies. This goes with a symbol of identification usually a 'tattoo'. These corporal marks which cannot be erased, explain their affiliation to this group. This new identity is also reflected in some cases in their dress and behavioural codes. The initiator will show some signs of recognition through acting also. The closing ceremony follows the period of traumatic ritual. This is done to recognise their 'new identity' that depicts values of ideal manhood. With their newly acquired rights and powers the new converts begin to implement their beliefs. The individual is

now focused on the full implementation of the ideas through continuous training and rehearsal for the execution of tasks and instrumental roles. They consider themselves above the law that governs humanity and civilisation. They act in very strange ways taking orders from above (commandos). Orders are also taken from external commands that have been integrated in order to ensure cooperation, solidarity and total affiliation with other group members.

359. Another symbol of identification for new converts is the dreadlocks. In times of their action, they are usually badly dressed with military trousers and T-shirts, worn out boots or slippers. They do not care about what they wear as long as they are filled with the notion of being in control of the situation. Everyone is under their command. In this position they can get what they want forcefully. Converts display sadistic behaviour to non-members. This explains the nature of atrocities committed against civilians, which range from amputation, mutilation, arson and rape.

“After three months intense training, we were distributed among the different groups with different commanders. Assignment made me to be brave. I was involved in massive killing, raping, looting properties and abduction of people, even specifically in my father’s village. In one of these missions, we faced an attack where my commando could not survive. I killed an ECCOMOG soldier whose gun and uniform shirt I used. I gave the short and boots to my other commando.”

360. The act is usually inflicted on targeted victims. The perpetrator consciously or unconsciously transfers all the humiliations and pains he has gone through to the innocent victim. These acts are climaxed by celebrations with group members. They rejoice at this moment because they feel that they are now above the common world, above its limits and laws and all codes of race and prohibitions that constitute it. They dance, drink, take drugs, gang rape and this final stage is celebrated by the whole group in extreme ways after this initiation. SJ explains this ceremony, which has to be understood as an effect of the traumatic aspect of the rite:

“I went through the training in front of the whole group, I was so proud. The test was on one of my members of the same age and consisted in a protection of bullet proof. I didn’t dare him at the beginning but he first shot me on the foot and on the ankle, (he shows the scar). I thought I was dead at a moment, but I realised that the bullet did not reach. I was stronger than now. So I decided to revenge when I realised that it was he or I. I killed him. I was so proud, I was now a rebel. Everybody was so enthusiastic, they screamed with joy (he makes an extreme face). The end of the training was marked by a lot of ceremonies. This I cannot explain because I took an oath.

They took me to a gorgeous party. We drank, we danced and sang. We were all so happy.”

He was now affiliated to the group, with his war ‘brand identity’.

361. New converts experience a sense of pride, fulfilment and purification having gone through the training successfully. They are now new persons totally disorientated from previous beliefs and ideals. They are part of a new set of beliefs and values, with a new identity.

362. The individual is now superhuman; he doesn't belong to the other world and is above all the laws, prohibitions and codes that used to structure the individual's marks. R.U.F. rebels used to say "civilians don't have blood", they are the bad objects, we do not belong to the same race, and we are coming from a superior group. This served to show their perception of humanity that they are above humans. Ex-commando children expressed this as a beautiful and enjoyable moment and state and as a sort of second state.

*Downfall and the end*

363. This is the breaking point of perpetrators, a moment to face reality and of retransformation. The feeling of super human, invulnerability is being questioned. They are now targeted and sought after. This is when they disguise themselves to mingle with civilians. This does not prevent them from flouting accepted codes of behaviour. They flee to areas where they could engage in savage activities. Those who resist the law are killed. Others surrender and are kept in seclusion where they are rehabilitated.

"I attacked the villages, killed people. I was the best, and especially with these drugs they used to give us or to directly inject in the brain. My bravery made our commando send me to Kono as a bodyguard to Colonel "C" who was also the spokesperson of the RUF. After a lot of involvement in different attacks and missions in which I played a leading role, I was made a commando at the age of 12 years. I had six girls that were my wives. Two were my uncle's daughters. As a commando, I had well over 10 adults, 10 boys who were my age group, 'elders' or adults; I was free to command, as I wanted. The more I caught, the more I had men under my command, and I had five girls, two of whom were bodyguards to my wives.

Most of my missions were always successful. This was due to the fact that I had a map of the country, which helped us. I was feared by most of my colleague commandos because of my bravery and attacking skills. That was why my colleagues called me young Rambo. Soldiers or ECOMOG forces always occupied most of the villages that I captured. These attacks were always bloody and horrible. However after the signing of the peace accord, the international committee asked that child soldiers be handed over to UNICEF."

364. This brings to an end the process of enlistment. From a position of passivity, the initiates gradually become active in implementing the group's beliefs and conducts. This is accomplished after a long period of disorientation, dehumanisation, brainwashing, integration and implementation of new beliefs and values akin to that of the initiator. At the end of this exercise a new human being is formed who implements what he has been trained to do based on the several traumatic stages that he went through, he will deal with these uncontrollable ways and act them on as a way to cope with it. There will be the displacement of all the anguishes and anger on the victims and the atrocities committed. He carries out atrocities with out remorse.

## THE USE OF DRUGS

365. A number of researchers who have investigated the conflict have concluded that the only way to explain the violations that occurred must relate to the widespread use of drugs by the combatants. The Commission has also interrogated the use of drugs in the conflict. It must be noted that in every conflict, use of hard drugs is prevalent. The Commission therefore looked for peculiarities in the use of drugs in the Sierra Leonean conflict as a way of explaining the level of violence that attended. The Commission's conclusions are that hard drugs were widely used in the conflict. Each combatant group promoted the ingestion or injection of drugs to strengthen the endurance capacity of the fighters, make them bold and able to carry out orders. Some of the hard drugs used included cocaine, heroin, ephedrine etc. Hard drugs were widely administered on very young boys and girls. Since the majority of the fighting forces for all the combat groups were young people, the use of these drugs widely affected their behaviour not only in battle but in their relationship with the civilians they encountered in the communities.
366. An ex RUF female testified that she was captured in Kenema in 1991 together with her sister Mbalu and little brother Musa. They were taken to Kailahun. She and other older persons were given marijuana to smoke. Refusal meant serious beating or starvation. She attempted to run away once but was captured and injected with a green liquid. She felt "instant happiness and would go wild and become bold to challenge other rebels". She was raped multiple times, either sober or under the influence of cocaine. She used to cook for them and she was given marijuana to boil with the sauce. Her commander was called 'Major'. Under the influence of drugs they would raid villages and fire at will at civilians. She also drank blood passed around without protest. She was usually used as a decoy when they wanted to enter a village.<sup>194</sup>
367. Abu Bakar Conteh was captured in Makeni in 1997 and forced to join the RUF. His commander was called "sufferer".

"We were given heavy boxes to carry. Those who dropped their load were shot and left behind. After three days all porters were lined up and injected with a white substance. We were told that it would make us strong and tireless. I suddenly became active and during the night journey never felt sleepy. When we rested I felt scared and jumpy at the slightest sound. I could be in this state for weeks. In my present state we could raid villages, take their food and any resistance would mean death. I wasn't afraid. I became bold. I was marked with the RUF symbol and I never felt it. They injected me saying I won't feel the pain. They rubbed cocaine into it saying it will disinfect the wound. I immediately felt like killing someone. They gave me some boys and asked us to go 'jaja' (loot)."<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Confidential Interview with the TRC. Freetown, October 2003

<sup>195</sup> Interview with the TRC. Freetown, October 2003.

368. Joseph Kamara was abducted on June 16 1997 at Wusum Lane. He couldn't run because of his partial deformity. His commander was Colonel Gold Teeth.

"I kept his pistol and ran his errands, such as getting his cocaine from his drawer. When I was captured, I was given a tablet that looked like 'super appetite'. I was sent to go and kill dogs for cooking. The drugs made me tireless and unafraid of dogs. I could grab a dog and strangle it. The drug gave me energy to do so. Colonel "gold teeth" gave me cocaine and under its influence I saw humans as 'chicken'. I can fire at will mercilessly. I used to beat women or shoot them. 'Colonel Gold Teeth' acted as our doctor. Whenever supplies were short, he would communicate by radio and someone would bring the drugs. Not always the same person. He spoke like a Liberian. They had tablets that would last a week, five days, six weeks in the system. When they want to go on the offensive they come to the doctor and select what they would need. If you need the tablet or 'injection' it is given to you. When under influence we could move from Kamalo to Sanda, Kamakwe and we clashed with Kamajors and took their food. Supply is brought from Liberia through Daru and is included in the boxes of ammunition. If you refused taking the drugs you are beaten by 'junior' (that's his job). The only thing that made us afraid of the Kamajors was the 'controller' an object fitted on top of their caps. This could send us running away."

369. A witness Richard Abdulai Kamara, described his use of a cocktail of drugs:

"I was captured in Makeni in 1997 and taken as a driver for Issa. We had abundance of cocaine and brown brown with us. We got this from Bo Waterside where we exchanged cocoa for cigarettes, cocaine, fuel, brown brown. We also took a tablet called 'blue boat' (because of its colour) which is mixed with 'mamanyini' a very hard alcoholic drink brought from Liberia. When these two are mixed, that is, blue boat and mamanyini the effect is drastic, instant intoxication. It makes you drunk or intoxicated for two or three days. In that state a lot of things could happen. We would fight among ourselves at the slightest provocation. we sniffed cocaine and talked a lot. We became sleepless, jittery. We could do anything under the influence of these drugs: kill villagers on impulse even where some of them cooperated with us. We were merciless. The injection was not administered on everyone. When a gallant male was captured, it is given to him to make him fall asleep. It depended on the dosage. Then when he wakes up he is no longer himself he does things our way. He becomes ruthless, kills mercilessly in raids on villages. The injection is sometimes blue or green in colour and the feeling is like being chloroformed."<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Interview with the TRC, Freetown, October 2003.

370. Foday Sesay was captured at Wusum field by 'Captain Siwo'.

"They gave me a tablet to take and asked me to fire at women. I refused. They asked me to fire at a dog, I did. At Sanda I was given an injection. I was not myself after that. I shot people who looked to me like 'chickens'. After taking these drugs we would raid villages. We abused the villagers and took their goats, cows and food. The effect of the injection lasted for nearly two months in me. We were taken to kono, Kenema, Makeni, Sanda, and then Makeni. All this time we looted and killed. The injection given to us looked blue or green. There was also another white tablet which we took anytime we felt like it especially if we wanted to attack the Kamajors. It gave us the zeal to enter their territory without fear. I didn't even know what death was. I didn't care."<sup>197</sup>

Generally, such injections were common with the RUF and administered to make the combatants tireless, sleepless, energetic, and hyperactive, traits, which were very much valued at the battlefield.

371. The picture that emerges above is that all the combat groups widely administered drugs and other substances to their fighters. In particular, the RUF bears overwhelming responsibility for the widespread use of drugs by its combatants. The widespread use of drugs within the combatant groups convinces the Commission that it was a deliberate policy on their part to administer drugs to their fighting forces with a view to making them fearless in battle. Unfortunately, there were very few battles between combat groups. Most of the "battles" were direct attacks on the civilian population. The leadership of the combat groups cannot claim ignorance about the potential impact of feeding thousands of their fighters with these mind twisting and hallucinogenic substances. It turned them into brutes who viewed and treated the civilian population, to use the words of one RUF witness, "as chickens" or "ants".

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<sup>197</sup> Interview with the TRC, Freetown, October 2003.