

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Special Court Prosecutor Welcomes Final Judgement in AFRC Case

Special Court Prosecutor Stephen Rapp today welcomed the judgement of the Appeals Chamber upholding the Trial Chamber convictions of the three AFRC Defendants for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

"This final decision closes a violent chapter in the history of Sierra Leone," said Rapp. "It establishes forever that 'some of the most heinous, vicious, and brutal crimes in human history' were committed; it recognizes the great suffering inflicted on the people of Sierra Leone, particularly in the invasion of Freetown in January 1999; it judges these men as legally responsible for these grave crimes and this great suffering; and upholds the severe sentences pronounced by the Trial Chamber."

"On Wednesday morning President Koroma spoke here of the work of this Special Court, and the "magnificent and imposing legacy" that it will leave to posterity. This is a legacy to this country, and also to the region and the entire world, because in this appeals judgement, for the first time in history, a court has pronounced final convictions for the crimes of recruitment and use of child soldiers, for acts of terrorism in a civil war, and for sexual slavery as an outrage against human dignity. Additionally, while declining to enter convictions at the appeals level, the Court established that forced marriage is a crime under international law."

In its decision the Appeals Chamber upheld the convictions of each of the accused, Alex Tamba Brima, aka "Gullit," Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu, aka "55," for eleven Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes, and other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, and upheld prison terms ranging from 45 to 50 years.

The Prosecutor gave credit for the verdict to the people of the Sierra Leone. "Those who came forward to tell their stories as witnesses are nothing short of heroic. These men, women and even children took great risks so that the world would know the horrors that the people of this country suffered. Their bravery has ensured that the men responsible for these atrocious crimes would not escape justice."

Rapp also praised the work of the Prosecution staff, drawn from Sierra Leone and around the world. "I would like to acknowledge the dedication and skill of our lawyers and investigators. Their commitment never wavered, from the very beginning of the case to this final chapter. I am very proud of our team and of what they have done for the cause of national and international justice."

With this final appeals judgement, the cases of three accused are at end. "Today's judgement resulted from the courage of the people of Sierra Leone." Mr. Rapp said. "It is this courage that gives us all great hope of a future of justice and progress in this country. And above all, of peace."

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