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captured a young man who tried to hide in a garden. One of the RUF/AFRC members was asked by the others to take a big stone and to smash the hands of the young captured man. Before leaving for another village called Samie, they burnt the remaining houses.¹⁰⁰⁸ At Samie, a man was shot three times in the head with an AK47 because he could not give the RUF/AFRC forces the location of the hiding place for the people of the village. The RUF/AFRC forces also poured petrol they found in the village on two thatch houses and set them on fire. The fire spread to other thatch houses and, eventually, 11 of them burnt down. As it was getting dark, the RUF/AFRC forces, together with the last captive they had, went back to Kombayende.¹⁰⁰⁹

After President Kabbah's restoration to power in March 1998, two points for killing people called "commaflag" were established in Kombayende, a commercial town. One of these points was located at the centre of the town and the other one on Mambo Bridge, the last bridge leading to Kissitown in the west. On one occasion,¹⁰¹⁰ the RUF/AFRC force commander who had established the commaflag system sent some members to arrest civilians in and around the town to check whether they were supporters of Tejan Kabbah Government. Thirty-one people were brought to the commaflag site. The commander addressed the captured people and told them that Lei Chieftdom was criticising their action, the proof being that people had fled to the bush. The commander called on one of his members, who had recently been promoted to Captain because he "knew how to kill people", to kill those who had been brought to the commaflag site. On that day, 10 of the captured people were shot before the operation was halted because it was getting dark. The remaining people were locked up in a room and brought back to the site the next morning. One of the captured men was given an AK47 and told to fire at one of the other captives. He did so and after one shot, the man died. Then, the commander gave the gun to another captive, but he needed three shots to kill another of the captives, so the commander told him that he had "failed the exam" and shot him. This operation continued until only eight of the captives had survived by "passing the test". They were then recognised as Junta II¹⁰¹¹ and were forced to kill people at the commaflag points. In another killing that took place at a commaflag point, three out of eight people who had been abducted and sent to the Superman Camp at Kissitown for training were arrested as they were trying to escape. The abductees were brought to Kombayende and killed at the Mambo Bridge commaflag, after which their bodies were thrown under the bridge.

When the commander in charge of Kombayende sent some of his men in search of food, those RUF/AFRC forces found nine people themselves were looking for food for their families. As the nine people did not answer the question of the commander of the group who asked them where he could find other civilians, the commander took the G3 rifle that was on his back and fired at two of the civilians, breaking their legs. As the people still refused to say anything, the commander killed the two wounded civilians. As the remaining seven civilians still refused to reveal where other people could be found, the commander amputated their hands with a rusty cutlass that the RUF/AFRC

¹⁰⁰⁸ It is highly likely that this event is related to the one described above when RUF/AFRC forces came to Kenema after people welcomed back the President.

¹⁰⁰⁹ On the way back, an unidentified fighting faction opened fire on them, which allowed the captive to escape.

¹⁰¹⁰ Although the date was not specified, it can be inferred from the record that this event happened between March and June.

¹⁰¹¹ Junta II refers to these people who were enrolled in the RUF/AFRC forces following the retreat from Freetown.



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forces had found in the village. The RUF/AFRC forces then went to Soama, a few miles from the chiefdom headquarter of Siam, where they killed one man who refused to join them.

Rumours of imminent attacks in Guinea were rampant. However, no attack within the Guinean territory was reported for 1998 (nor 1999). It appeared that RUF/AFRC forces would have launched attacks on the Guinean territory earlier had they been larger in number, which they were unable to achieve since most of the civilians had already fled to refugee camps in Guinea.

On 8 April, RUF/AFRC forces moved from Kundundu and headed for Koidu Town. On their way, they passed by Kenema, where they hit an old man on his neck and his back with a bladed weapon for failing to take them to any civilian hiding places, as a result of which he died.¹⁰¹² Two other people were shot and killed at Kenema on that day. Before leaving for Koidu, the RUF/AFRC forces looted the village.

In April, seven men captured by RUF/AFRC forces in military uniforms in Sandor Chiefdom were taken to the Njai stream that separates Sandor and Lei Chiefdoms. Six of the men were tied with a blue plastic rope and were shot in the head. A heavy stone was then tied to each of them and they were thrown into the stream. The seventh person was not killed; the commander of the RUF/AFRC forces declared that he was not going to kill this person, because he was a Christian, as the commander himself was. Rather, the commander ordered one of his men to mutilate the man's 10 fingers, as a result of which his left hand was broken.

RUF/AFRC forces returned to Kundundu towards the end of the month in search of food and civilians. Some of the people they found in the bush were killed while others were taken away for manpower. On 1 May, in the bush around Kenema, RUF/AFRC forces captured civilians, killing two men with a bayonet, one of them being the Town Regent Chief. Those who were captured were told to form two lines, one for men and one for women and children. The commander told his men to choose a woman each for the night, himself selecting a girl who was 14 years old. Three women who refused to go with the armed men were stripped naked and sexually abused with gun barrels before being killed. RUF/AFRC forces settled temporarily in Kundundu.

At Faokor in the south of the chiefdom during the same period, RUF/AFRC forces beat to death a blacksmith allegedly because he was a Kamajor, because they had found two empty cartridge shells in his forge. Twenty-one people were also killed that day, one of them being beaten unconscious and burnt to ashes.

RUF/AFRC forces attacked Gbonkongbor a few miles from the Guinean border in the northeast of the chiefdom with heavy firing in May, during which eight civilians were killed and many people fled. The RUF/AFRC forces then sent young men to bring back the cattle and ordered six women to cook for them. After eating, they left the village with the six women and able-bodied men. On 8 June, another village near the Guinean border was attacked. Some civilians, including men and women, were captured while others were put in a house and burnt.

¹⁰¹² This incident is reported in another record to have taken place when RUF/AFRC reached Lei in February. As this information could not be reconciled, it has to be assumed that this event took place between February and April.



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i) Events in the second half of 1998

Between June and the end of the year, very few incidents are reported.¹⁰¹³ At this time, most of the people of Kono District had fled to Guinea¹⁰¹⁴ or into the bush and a lot of them were forced to work for the RUF/AFRC forces in the mining areas.

In September 1998, RUF/AFRC forces attacked Jagbwema (Fiama Chiefdom) and its environs. They raided the town and other villages, including civilian hiding places. Many civilians, including women and children, were killed and abducted during those attacks and Jagbwema was set on fire. As heavy bombardment could be heard, it was assumed that RPGs were used during those attacks, although it has since been revealed that RUF/AFRC forces had a tactic to produce sounds which are similar to those made by RPGs.¹⁰¹⁵ The Donsos went moved to that area to fight the RUF/AFRC forces and after firing few gunshots to test the strength of the Donsos, the RUF/AFRC forces intensified the shooting. As a result of the heavy shelling from both parties, 32 houses were burnt down.

Around the end of October, RUF/AFRC forces attacked and killed civilians at Tombodu (Kamara Chiefdom) before being engaged by ECOMOG and CDF forces, which left 83 RUF/AFRC members dead. This attack on Tombodu took place in the aftermath of the passing of a death sentence on the RUF leader for treason.¹⁰¹⁶

On 5 November, RUF/AFRC forces reached Hindimi (Lei Chiefdom), where they found 62 people who had returned from Guinea to harvest their crops. The civilians were separated by gender and told to give the RUF/AFRC forces the produce of the harvest. As they were reluctant, the two first people of the line were shot and killed, which prompted the civilians to give them the 216 bags of rice they had harvested. Women were forced to cook for the RUF/AFRC forces. The following day, the RUF/AFRC forces left the village together with captives who were forced to carry the bags of rice; those bags they were unable to take, as there were not sufficient people to carry them, were burnt. When they arrived in Kombayende, the men were separated from the women; this was the last time they saw each other. The men were later taken to Koidu for mining. After mining during the day, they were locked in a container at night.

On 20 December 1998, a fierce attack was launched on Koidu by RUF/AFRC forces, who were able to dislodge the ECOMOG forces based there. This attack came from the bush and was planned from different directions. Prior to this attack, RUF/AFRC forces had regrouped in Buedu (Kailahun District), which was an RUF stronghold throughout the war, and moved with three to four battalions to Kono. RUF/AFRC forces were already in Kono District and another group of RUF/AFRC forces were deployed at Njaiama Sewafe (Nimiyama Chiefdom) to set an ambush for

¹⁰¹³ This period corresponds to the rainy season, during which heavy rains often paralyse movement. In Sierra Leone, the rainy season runs mostly from May to August.

¹⁰¹⁴ By April, around 90,000 civilians had crossed the border to Guinea since the start of the ECOMOG offensive against the RUF/AFRC in Kono and Kailahun Districts: Sierra Leone Humanitarian Situation Report, 16 - 30 April 1998.

¹⁰¹⁵ RUF/AFRC forces used empty five-gallon containers, with their lids on, which they hit with a stick to emulate the sound of RPG fire.

¹⁰¹⁶ AFP, 26 October 1998.



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the retreating ECOMOG forces. Four days prior to this attack, RUF/AFRC forces had attacked Small Lebanon and dislodged ECOMOG forces; ECOMOG troops based at Koakuima, Motema and Bumpe were also dislodged. In Koidu and Koakuima, RUF/AFRC forces killed many ECOMOG and CDF forces, as well as civilians.¹⁰¹⁷ At Koakuima, the retreating ECOMOG forces left behind them a lot of arms and ammunition, which were captured by the RUF/AFRC forces. Retreating ECOMOG forces fell in the ambush staged by RUF/AFRC forces at Njaiama Sewafe and suffered heavy casualties.

RUF/AFRC forces then attacked the last ECOMOG battalion in the District, namely the 197th Battalion redeployed in Njaiama (Nimikoro Chiefdom).¹⁰¹⁸ After a fierce battle, ECOMOG repelled the RUF/AFRC forces and asked for reinforcements from Bo. However, the ECOMOG commander was instead advised to withdraw his troops from Njaiama. On 30 December, the ECOMOG commander left Nimikoro Chiefdom with CDF members and thousands of civilians, as ECOMOG did not want to leave the civilians in the hands of the RUF/AFRC forces. They took the road to Tongo Field (Lower Bambara Chiefdom, Kenema District) in the south of Kono District. On their way, they fell into two ambushes laid by RUF/AFRC forces. After the first ambush, ECOMOG forces led the convoy, which allowed the RUF/AFRC forces to abduct hundreds of civilians from the rear end of the convoy during the second ambush.

Prior to this attack on Koidu, a number of troop movements were noted in the surrounding areas in Sandor Chiefdom and in Koinadugu District. In fact, in late November, RUF/AFRC forces retook control of Sandor Chiefdom and civilians at Yiffin (Koinadugu District) observed many ECOMOG forces retreating from Kono District.

At Yormandu, some RUF/AFRC forces told the civilians that were their captives that they would continue the fight until Freetown and that they got the necessary logistics, arms and ammunition from Kailahun District. Indeed, this attack on Koidu was the catalyst for the RUF/AFRC forces to proceed further south, capturing more towns in the District and the country¹⁰¹⁹ and to enter Freetown on 6 January 1999,¹⁰²⁰ using civilians from Gbane to carry their arms and ammunition.

Following the attack on Koidu, civilians and hunters decided to leave Kayima (Sandor Chiefdom) for Yiffin and Alikalia (Koinadugu District). However, they fell into an RUF/AFRC ambush on 28 December and a lot of them were captured. Over 170 of those captured were taken to Yiffin. One of the captured hunters was given a letter that requested the hunters to come out of the bush and join the RUF/AFRC forces. He was also told that if he did not convince the hunters to join them, he would be killed. The man saved his life by explaining that he only knew people in Kayima

¹⁰¹⁷ It cannot be inferred from the reports whether these forces were killed within the course of the battle or after being captured.

¹⁰¹⁸ Prior to this wave of attacks, this battalion was deployed at Njala and Wanjama (Nimikoro Chiefdom). When the ECOMOG position at Bumpe fell into the hands of the RUF/AFRC forces, the decision was taken to establish a blocking position at Njaiama, on the highway that leaves Bumpe to the south of the District: Adeshina, *op cit*, p 128.

¹⁰¹⁹ See the general overview and the analysis for Kailahun, Tonkolili, Bombali and Port Loko Districts and the Western Area.

¹⁰²⁰ See the factual analysis for Tonkolili, Makeni and Port Loko District and the Western Area.



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(Sandor Chiefdom). Some of the RUF/AFRC forces together with their captives thus headed for Kayima and on their way, four of the captives were killed for their belongings at Gbenekoro.¹⁰²¹

j) Events in 1999

On 1 January 1999, the RUF/AFRC forces that had killed four captives at Gbenekoro proceeded towards Kayima (Sandor Chiefdom), together with their remaining captives. On their way, the captives saw the body of somebody they knew and they learnt he was killed because he answered rudely to the RUF/AFRC forces. The captives were told to take orders from a child commander and were reminded that their lives were of no value for them. When they arrived at the RUF/AFRC forces' commander's compound, they saw one Fullah¹⁰²² man being killed for refusing to give up his sheep. They were introduced to the RUF/AFRC commander as his "slaves and servants" and were forced to do petty jobs, mainly going on food finding missions for the commander. A man was appointed to the G5 position, to look after the civilians' affairs/interests. A Formation Assembly was set up where every morning, civilians were told to pray and announcements for the rest of the day were made. The establishment of these G5 committees not only took place in Kono, but also in other Districts, as a means of rationalising the use of civilians by making them participate in administrative matters. Civilians appointed to such positions could hardly refuse the appointment, because a refusal would soon be followed by a severe flogging. In Sandor Chiefdom, civilians were required to follow rules imposed on them by the RUF/AFRC forces, which included no raping, no taking of civilian's property and no stealing ("Jar Jar").¹⁰²³

However, the establishment of such committees and the rationalisation of the use of civilians did not stop the harassment and violence continued to be committed against civilians. At Kayima, for example, sometime after the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement, civilians presented complaints to the top commander in charge at Koakuima. When they came from this meeting, they were threatened and were punished with flogging and being forced to go on food finding missions. The commander at Koakuima sent some RUF/AFRC members to investigate the matter, although the results and consequences of this investigation are unknown. Furthermore, five civilians were killed and burnt to ashes in a bush near Neakor, west of Kayima. Following this incident and a complaint made by a relative of one of the civilians killed, the commander at Kayima recalled that no one should kill civilian and if such a crime was committed, it should be reported to the G5.

On 10 January 1999, RUF/AFRC forces attacked Punduru, a CDF stronghold in Nimiyama Chiefdom that was overcrowded with civilians. During this attack, both civilians and CDF were killed and their property was damaged.

From February 1999, hunters came in and out of Sandor Chiefdom from Guinea and made their permanent base in Fanema, near the border with Guinea, progressing towards the north of the chiefdom and retaking some areas from the RUF/AFRC forces. They were obtaining coffee and cocoa from the population in support for their activities, selling these items to the Guineans to buy

¹⁰²¹ It could not be ascertained whether this place is to be found in Koinadugu or in Kono District.

¹⁰²² The Fullah are a tribe to be found in the north of the country and in Guinea. They would be particular targets of the RUF and, later, the RUF/AFRC during the war, as they were often healthy, earning money by raising and selling cattle.

¹⁰²³ More details are required from the records on the G5 committees.



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ammunition or food. In one incident, RUF/AFRC forces came to Fanema looking for a famous hunter. They took all his belongings and brought his relatives back to Kayima, where they were molested, beaten and tied up before being released.

The abduction rate increased as people were used as diamond miners and were conscripted into the RUF/AFRC forces. At this time, Koakuima was the base for the RUF/AFRC 2nd Brigade and hosted the main office for the mining operations; it was also was the base for the Overall Mining Commander, who was assisted by a Deputy Mining Commander. Mining officers were appointed at the various mining sites. Every week, mining officers were to bring the diamonds collected at the sites to the Deputy Commander, who crosschecked them before handing them over to the Overall Mining Commander. However, diamonds over 5 carats were to be brought to the Overall Mining Commander at Koakuima as soon as they were discovered, without waiting for the weekly shipment. Every week, the diamonds were sent from Koakuima to Kailahun, from where they were sent to Liberia. Some private mining, mainly carried out for diamond dealers, was authorised by the Overall Mining Commander at the cost of Le 5,000 per week. However, diamonds over 5 carats were to be given to the Overall Mining Commander, as they were considered to be the property of the RUF.¹⁰²⁴

At this time, the District was divided into operational areas under the command of a commanding officer. The training base established in Bunumbu (Luawa Chiefdom, Kailahun District) since 1998 and known as "Camp Lion" was transferred around January to Yengema (Nimikoro Chiefdom), as the centre of RUF/AFRC actions had moved to the north-west. On one occasion, six abductees, six adults and one child of a Small Boys Unit (SBU) escaped from the training base and tried to reach Koinadugu District but were caught and brought back to the base. The RUF Senior Officer in Charge of the Brigade Headquarters in Koakuima ordered these escapees to be killed. The six adults were shot and killed while the fate of the child soldier remains unknown. Hundreds of abductees from the Northern Province were sent to Yengema but as their number increased and as food supplies were not sufficient, the base was moved for three months to Gbendembu (Bombali District) before coming back to Yengema. Recruits were organised into platoons and young children as young as 10 were conscripted into Small Boy Units (SBUs).

A lot of beating, killing and rapes took place at the camp during the time of its operation. One practice carried out in the camp was called Halaka.¹⁰²⁵ A big circle, the size of a tennis court, was drawn on the ground with a smaller inner circle. The area between the two circles was full of obstacles such as barbed wires, drums and blocks. Recruits were to enter in this area and to find the exit located far from the entry, while the instructors located in the inner circle were beating them with sticks. Many civilians died from this practice.

In Lei Chiefdom, the rate of violations committed in 1998 continued and was very high after January 1999. Civilians were abducted to be trained as combatants, especially for the purpose of the upcoming attacks on Guinea. The commander in charge of Kombayende regularly sent his men to capture civilians to be trained as Junta II. A team went to Kissitown, where Superman Camp was

¹⁰²⁴ These diamonds were considered as "government property" as the RUF was considering itself as a government.

¹⁰²⁵ This term allegedly comes from Libya.



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located, but as they could not find anybody in the town, they went to the bush. There, they eventually found 160 people, who they brought to Kissitown for scrutiny.

Following those continuous developments, CDF members mobilised themselves; some of them were sent back to Guinea to bring back shotguns and they attacked the RUF/AFRC forces at Kissitown. After a three-hour battle, 15 civilians had lost their lives and the RUF/AFRC forces left the town with the civilians they had earlier abducted. Strengthened by this success, the CDF established a base at Gborgborma and successfully attacked the RUF/AFRC forces at Samie,¹⁰²⁶ where the RUF/AFRC forces fled the town leaving behind them most of their weapons. A few days after the CDF attack on Samie, RUF/AFRC forces attacked the chiefdom headquarter of Saiama, where they killed almost all the civilians they found in the town. After this attack on Saiama, the RUF/AFRC forces headed back for their base at Kombayende. On their way, they passed through a village called Kutima, where they found three bodies. As they continued their journey, they met three women who told them that men in military fatigues had attacked Kutima. The three women were then taken with the group, who used them as a shield anytime they entered a town. At Bomboro, some RUF/AFRC forces found one young woman with her baby. As she was caught trying to escape, they accused her of being a supporter of the President. They told her to throw her baby in a thatch house they had set on fire, warning her that she would be thrown in the fire as well if she did not do what they asked her to do. After she had thrown her baby into the burning house and she was asked to join the RUF/AFRC forces, she tried to escape and was shot in the head. The RUF/AFRC forces also attacked the CDF base at Gborgborma and dislodged the CDF members who went back to Guinea.

Teams put together to search for civilians, also called "Safari team" by the RUF, continued to be sent. On one occasion, a team came back with only 15 civilians. Three of them were women and were allocated to the RUF/AFRC forces who did not have any woman. Among the 12 other captives, three who tried to escape were brought to the commaflog located on the Mamba Bridge and were shot, their bodies thrown under the bridge. In another incident and after orders coming from Koidu told commanders in the different posts to conscript more civilians for planned attacks on Guinea, 152 civilians were captured in the bush and taken to Kombayende for scrutiny before being sent to Superman Camp. The able men and women were sent to Kissitown while the old people were brought to the commaflog in the centre of the town, at Baoya Road. All 21 of them were killed by the member of the RUF/AFRC who had been promoted to Captain because he knew how to kill. Their bodies were thrown in a very big hole previously dug by RUF/AFRC forces for this purpose. This was a common scenario, which was repeated many times.

In March 1999, an internal fight arose between RUF/AFRC forces as a group coming from Koidu entered Kombayende (Lei Chiefdom) with heavy firing. The members stationed in Kombayende fired in return. Sixteen civilians died during that fighting and 22 were seriously injured.¹⁰²⁷ Around this period, the identification of combatants was difficult but it is alleged that some AFRC members were integrated within the RUF movement and were briefed on the ideology of the movement. The senior officer in charge of the Brigade headquarters in Koakuima, who was also the Overall Mining Commander, was one of the most senior RUF members; most of the senior AFRC commanders

¹⁰²⁶ This village could also be Soama.

¹⁰²⁷ It could not be ascertained what happened after this incident between the two RUF/AFRC groups.



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were deployed in the Northern Province, in Kabala (Koinadugu District) and Mile 91 (Yoni Chiefdom, Tonkolili District).¹⁰²⁸

On different occasions, civilians with amputated limbs arrived in refugee camps in Guinea and explained they had been attacked by RUF/AFRC forces in Lei Chiefdom. For example, one civilian had his left hand amputated when he was in Gbordur, a village nine miles from Siama. RUF/AFRC forces attacked the village and killed five people. The man who had his limb chopped off was accused of being a Kamajor and after he was amputated, he was given a message by the RUF/AFRC commander to deliver to the Kamajors and civilians living in Guinea that they should expect the coming of RUF/AFRC forces soon. On another occasion, one man was mutilated at Gborgborma; the RUF/AFRC forces who had amputated his limb told him that whoever was captured in this village would be treated as a Kamajor because the village used to be a Kamajor base.

Sometime before the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord, RUF/AFRC forces attacked a number of towns and villages in Kamara Chiefdom, including Sukudu and Peyima, killing many civilians and burning many houses. Over 200 civilians, including men, women and children, were abducted and the strongest men were used for mining. There was a food shortage at that time and what little food was available was taken by the RUF/AFRC forces. Civilians were relying mainly on roots (gari) and boiled bananas to survive. Several civilians, particularly those working in the mines, died from starvation. The same working conditions described earlier in 1998 prevailed and the same kind of corporal punishments were applied. Among others, one practice, which caused the death of 10 men in Tombodu (Tankoro Chiefdom), was called “hanging solar on the civilians”, which meant beating someone to death. Civilians caught trying to smuggle or steal diamonds were tortured or killed. It is believed that hundreds of men, women and children were killed during this period.

RUF/AFRC were occupying Fiama Chiefdom, setting ambushes for Donsos and civilians. Towns in Fiama Chiefdom, including Sandekor, Koakor, Waima, Njardu, Darkadu and Gbematambadu, were attacked and burnt down during 1999. Sometimes, the burning of different villages took place on the same day and at other times, RUF/AFRC forces decided to burn a certain number of houses per day. Rice barns were also set on fire after being looted.

RUF/AFRC forces were in control of Gbane Kandor and Mafindor Chiefdoms, which were virtually empty, as civilians had fled to the bush or to Guinea. However, people who fled came back to their chiefdoms from time to time in search of food. Attacks on villages are reported occasionally. For example, in April, as civilians were moving regularly between the bush around Sindadu, in the northeast of Gbane Kandor Chiefdom, and Guinea for food, RUF/AFRC forces attacked the village and shot the hands of one civilian. In May, while searching food, RUF/AFRC forces from

¹⁰²⁸ Furthermore, unlike for Port Loko DDR, where ex-AFRC members disarmed as such, the DDR centre opened in Kono District received RUF and CDF members but no ex-AFRC members, which tend to reinforce our assumption that AFRC members who were in Kono District after the invasion of Freetown were incorporated within the RUF. However, as the distinction between the forces was difficult for civilians, we would continue referring to RUF/AFRC forces in the subsequent developments. Relations between RUF and AFRC forces were not totally sour, for in 1999, an AFRC member was appointed as personal bodyguard to the RUF leader when he was released from Prison.



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Mafindor Chiefdom shot a hunter who was captured in his house at Dengenyma. The hunter was caught by surprise in his house, his shotgun leaning on the wall.

During that period, Donsos forces reorganised in Guinea and launched an attack on the RUF/AFRC forces at Kamiendor (Mafindor Chiefdom). Both sides suffered fatalities, but the loss of men did not prevent the CDF from continuing to launch attacks, as a result of which they recaptured different villages in Gbane Kador Chiefdom. Donsos freed some civilians that had been held captive by the RUF/AFRC forces and sent them to Guinea.

Following these attacks and the significant gains the Donsos were making, RUF/AFRC forces called for peace talks, which took place in July¹⁰²⁹ at Manjama (Soa Chiefdom). Over 3,000 civilians also attended the meeting. This meeting led to a ceasefire agreement, with the fighting factions agreeing that both civilians and combatants should move freely and that Manjama should serve as a buffer zone. For the purposes of freedom of movement, passes were issued to the civilians by the fighting forces. In August 1999, the RUF/AFRC forces even asked that joint security forces be formed to patrol the border area. It has been suggested that this system gave the RUF/AFRC forces the opportunity to bring their looted property to Manjama and to exchange it for other necessary items brought from Guinea by the Donsos. However in September, RUF/AFRC forces attacked Donsos positions, retaking all the areas the Donsos had held for the previous few months. The RUF/AFRC forces expanded their attacks beyond the borders of Sierra Leone, launching one attack at Gueckedou, one of the busiest commercial centres in Guinea.

After the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement on 7 July 1999, the rate of violations decreased, even if molestation and other violations were still committed by RUF/AFRC forces, fearing that they would no longer be able to use civilians to carry out their mining activities and food finding operations. After July, it is reported that civilians were appointed to a G5 committee to look after civilian affairs in Kamara Chiefdom.¹⁰³⁰

The fighting with the RUF/AFRC forces in Sandor Chiefdom continued until the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord in July 1999. However, the cessation of hostilities was only temporary and fighting resumed in 2000.

During the second half of the year, a mining area was opened by the RUF under the directive of the Overall Mining Commander near the bridge between Tombodu and Bundu II (Kamara Chiefdom). Many civilians were captured from across the whole District and forced to work in the mines. The captured civilians were working with barely any food or water and people were beaten or killed if they complained of hunger or thirst. On one occasion, three young men who defied instructions were killed, allegedly on the order of the Overall Mining Commander. On another occasion, 50 men were brought from Kainkordu (Soa Chiefdom) to mine and it is believed that almost all of them died during the course of the mining.¹⁰³¹ Even foundations of houses were broken for the purposes of mining for diamonds.

¹⁰²⁹ This first meeting may have taken place in August, as reports mention both July and August for the date of this meeting.

¹⁰³⁰ Clarification is required from the records on the dates.

¹⁰³¹ It is believed that 95% of them died.



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In Sandor Chiefdom, different RUF/AFRC camps, known as Joe Bush, were operating and many violations were committed at those camps. At Tegbadu, four miles north of Yormandu where RUF/AFRC forces were still engaged mining, there was a “killing field”. Nearby Tabema, on the Kayima Tefeyah highway, a camp also called “P.C. Ground” was infamous for the sexual violence inflicted on civilians. Many girls were raped and kept in the camp for sexual purposes. These women and girls were often sexually assaulted by more than one RUF/AFRC member at a time while some were taken and assigned to only one man.

On 20 October 1999, the Sierra Leone President officially launched the started of the Demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) program during a ceremony at Wilberforce Barracks in Freetown.¹⁰³²

In November 1999, near Jagbwema (Fiama chiefdom), RUF/AFRC forces, who already had over 130 abducted civilians with them, captured an unspecified number of people. Those abductees were told to fetch water, firewood and food; one of them was given the responsibility to settle minor disputes among civilians. After three weeks, all the abductees were taken to Kailahun District, passing through Gandorhun (Gbane Chiefdom). Most of the journey was undertaken at night and civilians were not allowed to rest on their own volition. In Kailahun, there were over 1.000 members of the RUF/AFRC forces and a lot of abductees. Some of them were required to farm for the RUF/AFRC forces while others became teachers.

In December 1999, hunters who had found refuge in Guinea tried another time to repel the RUF/AFRC forces from Lei Chiefdom. With the support of local authorities also living in the refugee camps, they crossed the river that separates Sierra Leone and Guinea on 18 December, launched different attacks on RUF/AFRC positions and at Kombayende, they managed to inflict heavy casualties on the RUF/AFRC side and to chase out the remaining forces. However, eight days later, RUF/AFRC forces came back and this time, the CDF members were not able to withstand the heavy firing and had to retreat to Guinea. The CDF members who were captured were either killed or mutilated and given letters promising that they (RUF/AFRC forces) would chase them into Guinea.

k) Events in 2000 to 2001

Throughout 2000 and the large part of 2001, mining activities were carried out in Koidu Town and in Plant No. 11, a mining area located between Koidu Town and Tombodu (Kamara Chiefdom). In Koidu Town, a place called Kaisambo was mined for the Overall Mining Commander. An unspecified number of houses in Koidu town had their foundations broken so that they could be mined. At Plant No. 11, more than 500 people were abducted and forced to mine and push caterpillars whenever they broke down.

On 14 January, the RUF leader, the Deputy Defence Minister and the ECOMOG Force Commander visited Koidu, as part of a country tour aiming at sensitising the combatants on the

¹⁰³² The start of the DDR program was originally planned to take place within six weeks of the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement on 7 July 1999.



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DDR process.¹⁰³³ Military Observers began conducting regular patrol missions in the District, although UN peacekeepers had not yet been able to deploy in the District.¹⁰³⁴

However, the situation in the country worsened and United Nations peacekeepers captured in Makeni in early May 2000 were brought to Plant No. 11 (Kamara Chiefdom).¹⁰³⁵

It was widely believed that the control by the Government of Kono District would mark the end of the conflict¹⁰³⁶ and talks were initiated between the President of Sierra Leone and the RUF to end the conflict, which faced a new development in May with the abduction of the UN peacekeepers, as mentioned, and the arrest and detention of the RUF leader in Freetown.¹⁰³⁷

Inhabitants of the District, however, began again crossing the Melie River, which separates the District from Guinea, fleeing RUF harassment.¹⁰³⁸ Around the same period, RUF/AFRC forces began attacking the Guinean territory from different fronts.¹⁰³⁹

The peace talks, which started in late May 2000 in order to reactivate the Lomé Peace Agreement found a conclusion in Abuja on 10 November with the signing of a ceasefire between the Government and the RUF forces. UNAMSIL was given the mission to monitor this ceasefire.¹⁰⁴⁰ However, in December 2000, civilians who had found refuge in a Guinean camp near the border with Lei Chiefdom saw thousands of civilians with bundles on their heads, who explained them that they had been attacked by “rebels” during their sleep.¹⁰⁴¹ The following day, another group of refugees within the territory of Guinea confirmed that the “rebels” had come to Guinea. The next morning, trucks full of RUF/AFRC forces dressed in military uniforms arrived at the place where all these refugees were at this time and announced through a microphone that they had not come to kill them but to take them back to Sierra Leone. Their commander told the civilians that they wanted peace and as a proof of their commitment to the peace process, they have come to take Sierra Leoneans back to Sierra Leone. Over 20,000 refugees were thus taken back to Sierra Leone while the RUF forces continued their attacks in Guinea. The trip to Lei Chiefdom lasted roughly 10 days and when they arrived at Kombayende (Lei Chiefdom), the civilians were allocated to different towns within the chiefdom.

¹⁰³³ Sierra Leone Humanitarian Situation Report 5 - 16 January 2000.

¹⁰³⁴ IRIN West Africa, 12 April 2000. On 22 October 1999, the UN Security Council had adopted Resolution 1270 approving the deployment of 6,000 armed peacekeepers alongside the 260 unarmed military observers. Their number would increase over the subsequent months.

¹⁰³⁵ This group of UN peacekeepers was composed of 208 Zambians: IRIN West Africa, 8 May 2000. Around the same period, peacekeepers were also abducted in Kailahun District.

¹⁰³⁶ In early June, the Deputy Defence Minister called for an offensive military operation in the District: Sierra Leone Humanitarian Situation Report: 1-2 June 2000.

¹⁰³⁷ The RUF leader was arrested in Freetown in May, after his bodyguards had shot and killed civilians gathered for a demonstration in front of his house in Freetown on 8 May 2000.

¹⁰³⁸ IRIN West Africa, 23 August 2000.

¹⁰³⁹ Attacks on the Guinean territory were also launched from Kambia and Kailahun Districts.

¹⁰⁴⁰ UNAMSIL press briefing, 27 November 2000. Paragraph 4 of this Ceasefire Agreement stated “both parties agree that UNAMSIL shall have full liberty to deploy its troops and other personnel throughout Sierra Leone including the diamond-producing areas in the discharge of its responsibilities, when UNAMSIL is satisfied that the ceasefire is observed by all the parties.”

¹⁰⁴¹ In addition, during this period, the training base at Yengema (Nimikoro Chiefdom) was still open.



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At Kundundu, the returnees were forced to work for the RUF/AFRC forces and were told to plant cannabis seeds. A woman accused of performing witchcraft was stripped naked and shot six times. In another incident that took place at Yawandor, 22 miles from the headquarter town of Saiama, following the killing of two RUF/AFRC members and the wife of another member by civilians, 17 civilians were killed on the order of the commander based at Kombayende, so that the RUF/AFRC forces based at Yawandor could restore their authority. At Kombayende, the commander in charge was the same person who had established the commaflags in 1998.

During this time, RUF/AFRC forces continued to commit acts of violence against civilians. On one occasion, four RUF members raped a 42-year-old woman until she died. When the civilians took the matter to the commander in charge, he replied to them that the RUF never made complaints about the men they had lost during the war so the civilians should not complain. Two days after that incident, a suckling mother was raped and her child was taken away from her. A man accused of stealing was stripped naked and the commander ordered some of his men to set fire to an empty five gallon container and to drip the burning rubber onto the man. The man died three days later. Furthermore, some civilians were taken and sent to Koidu for mining.

In January 2001,¹⁰⁴² fighting between RUF/AFRC forces and hunters intensified in the upper part of Sandor Chiefdom. However, UN personnel and commanders together with the Paramount Chief of Sandor arrived in Kayima by helicopter to exhort both factions to disarm. The RUF/AFRC forces who spoke with those authorities responded positively and stated they were ready to disarm.¹⁰⁴³ However, about one month after this visit, fighting intensified north of Kayima¹⁰⁴⁴ and as they were retreating south, RUF/AFRC forces burnt the remaining houses in the villages. After a battle at Yaryah, three miles north of Kayima, the RUF/AFRC forces decided to leave the chiefdom and headed for Koidu.

In Fiama Chiefdom, in March 2001, one man on his way to Jegbwema met civilians who told him that 50 men had been abducted and used to work for the RUF/AFRC forces at Jegbwema. Women were used to cook and for sexual purposes, as a result of which some of them became pregnant and had children. Sometimes, the captured civilians were beaten at night and put in containers used as cells by the RUF/AFRC forces. One man brought from the Guinean border was suspected of being a Kamajor and was beaten for three days by RUF/AFRC forces at Jagbwema before he died on the fourth day. At Gbekor, a man met more than 12 young girls below the age of 18 who were with the RUF/AFRC forces as their "wives". As he was wondering whether these girls were with the RUF/AFRC forces for their stolen property and money, he discovered that most of them had been abducted and were afraid to go back to their parents for fear of being called "rebels" or being maltreated.

Three days after they had arrived in Kombayende, 150 men who had just come back were taken by the commander to go to Guinea with some RUF members to carry the stolen property they had in Guinea. Shortly after, the Guinean Minister of Defence and some senior military officers came to the border with Sierra Leone to find members of the Kamajors to help Guinea repel the RUF

¹⁰⁴² Although this event was described as taking place in 2000, it probably took place in 2001.

¹⁰⁴³ This visit probably took place during the second half of 2000.

¹⁰⁴⁴ The CDF members fighting were those coming from the north of the Chiefdom.



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beyond the Guinean border. The Kamajors told the Guinean authorities that they could not fight without the approval of the Sierra Leone Government, as they were under the control of the Sierra Leone Government. Two weeks later, the Guinean authorities came back, told the Kamajors that they had communicated with the Sierra Leone authorities, who approved their request. Kamajors were then equipped with arms and ammunition from the Guinean authorities.

Following this, on 23 March 2001, a group of 200 Donsos and Kamajors who had regrouped and were fully armed¹⁰⁴⁵ launched simultaneous attacks on RUF/AFRC positions in Kono District through three different flanks: Gbangbokoro¹⁰⁴⁶ in Soa Chiefdom (Kamajors/Donsos), Kamiendor in Mafindor Chiefdom (Donsos) and Kailahun District (Kamajors). Communication sets allowed the three groups to launch attacks simultaneously and to communicate any developments.

The group that headed to Kamiendor drove out the RUF/AFRC forces before separating into two groups, one going to Kombayende and the other using the Kondewakoro flank and working in concert. These two sub groups regrouped later on in Fiamma Chiefdom. From Kamiendor, the group heading to Kombayende dislodged RUF/AFRC forces from Sindudu, which is located on the border between Gbane Kandor and Mafiendor Chiefdoms. As the commander in charge of the RUF forces in Kombayende noticed the advance of the CDF, he sent for reinforcements to Koidu, which was still under RUF/AFRC control. The reinforcement was composed of senior RUF commanders, who moved to Kombayende armed with anti-aircraft machine guns, RPGs, automatic rifles and other weapons seized from the UN peacekeepers. When they entered the town, the CDF forces opened fire and killed 32 of them. After a fierce battle, the RUF/AFRC retreated back to Koidu, as most of their senior commanders had been killed. The CDF chased them up to Jagbwema (Niama Chiefdom), where a battle took place. The RUF/AFRC then retreated to Maiyor, which is on the highway linking Jagbwema to Koidu.

In late April, the Acting Force Commander of UNAMSIL made a visit to Koidu to assess the situation on the ground, following RUF complaints about attacks carried out by CDF members backed up by Guineans.¹⁰⁴⁷ The CDF prepared themselves to go to Koidu, but in the meanwhile,¹⁰⁴⁸ in May, trucks full of UN peacekeepers came to the CDF deployment to advise them not to make any further assault on RUF/AFRC positions and to observe the cease-fire.¹⁰⁴⁹ The CDF told the peacekeepers that they would only observe the cease-fire after they had seen their Paramount Chiefs. About one week later, Paramount Chiefs and senior UN officials came by helicopter to meet the CDF and the Paramount Chiefs told the CDF that they did not want the Government to accuse the people of Kono of destroying the peace process. This meeting caused the CDF to desist from launching any more attacks and to stay in Maiyor until disarmament¹⁰⁵⁰ took place.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Reports mention that these CDF forces had heavy artillery like tanks and that a ferry was built across the Meli River that separates Mafiendor Chiefdom and Guinea to facilitate the movement of the CDF.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Gbangbokoro is on the border with Guinea.

¹⁰⁴⁷ UNAMSIL press briefing, 26 April 2001.

¹⁰⁴⁸ It is alleged that a member of the RUF General Staff went to Makeni to find the UN Bangladeshi contingent to ask them to come to Kono to resolve the situation.

¹⁰⁴⁹ UN peacekeepers from Tonkolili and Kailahun Districts carried out two-day patrol missions in early May prior to the establishment of a permanent patrol presence patrol in Koidu in late May: UNAMSIL press briefings, 6 May 2001, 11 May 2001 and 22 May 2001.

¹⁰⁵⁰ The other CDF group that entered Kono District through Soa Chiefdom met this group at Jagbwema.



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On 4 May 2001, a meeting was convened between the RUF and the Government of Sierra Leone¹⁰⁵¹ to review the ceasefire signed in Abuja in November 2000 and which was violated, mainly in Kono District.¹⁰⁵² Further to this meeting, it was decided to introduce phases of disarmament, in order to accelerate its process.

Also in May, UNAMSIL force Commander and Deputy Force Commander visited the RUF forces at Koidu and the CDF members at Kombayende (Lei Chiefdom) and Jagbwema (Fiama Chiefdom), to witness the implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement, signed by the RUF and the CDF on 15 May.¹⁰⁵³ This cessation of hostilities and the start of the DDR program made the atmosphere extremely tense and many officials made visits in the District to ensure the process ran smoothly.¹⁰⁵⁴

During the second meeting of the Joint Committee on DDR held at Magburaka on 2 June, the parties agreed to conduct the DDR process simultaneously in Bonthe and Kono Districts in July 2001, leaving time for the DDR facilities to be built in Yengema (Nimikoro Chiefdom). The estimated numbers of combatants to be disarmed were 1,500 combatants for the CDF and 2,500 for the RUF.¹⁰⁵⁵

Disarmament started on 1 July at a very slow pace and was intermittently halted. Different reasons were put forward to explain the stalling of the process, including the suspicion of both the CDF and the RUF forces against each other, the UN travel ban on the RUF's Political and Peace Council Chairman and, above all, tensions resulting from the mining activities.¹⁰⁵⁶ To speed up the disarmament process, UN Officials met directly with the commanders of both fighting factions on the ground, rather than with the political leaders¹⁰⁵⁷ and during the third meeting of the Joint Committee on DDR on 17 July, the parties agreed that the checkpoints established by the RUF and CDF forces be dismantled and a moratorium on mining activities be implemented.¹⁰⁵⁸ Nevertheless, skirmishes between RUF and CDF were still reported for June and July.¹⁰⁵⁹ By the end of July, two companies of the UN Bangladeshi contingent were deployed at Koidu and 500 Pakistani UN peacekeepers were based at Yengema.¹⁰⁶⁰

¹⁰⁵¹ This meeting was the second meeting of the Committee of Six of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, the United Nations, the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front: UNAMSIL press briefing, 3 May 2001.

¹⁰⁵² Further to the meeting in May 2001, those parties would hold monthly tripartite meetings under the Joint Committee on DDR.

¹⁰⁵³ UNAMSIL press briefings, 17 May 2001, 24 May 2001

¹⁰⁵⁴ On 25 and 26 May 2001, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, accompanied by the UNAMSIL Force Commander and Deputy Force Commander and a Government delegation, including the Deputy Defence Minister met with representatives of the CDF and RUF in Koidu: UNAMSIL press briefing, 28 May 2001.

¹⁰⁵⁵ UNAMSIL press briefing, 5 June 2001.

¹⁰⁵⁶ UNAMSIL press briefing, 6 July 2001 and 13 July 2001.

¹⁰⁵⁷ IRIN West Africa, 12 July 2001.

¹⁰⁵⁸ IRIN West Africa, 20 July 2001; UNAMSIL press briefing, 20 July 2001.

¹⁰⁵⁹ IRIN West Africa, 24 July 2001.

¹⁰⁶⁰ UNAMSIL press briefing, 24 July 2001.



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The initial target date of 28 July for the completion of the disarmament process was not met and the process was extended, as pockets of RUF forces were still not disarmed in the District. By 17 August, the disarmament for Kono District was complete and the figures of the combatants who had gone through the process were higher than originally expected, mainly for RUF members came from Koinadugu District to Kono District to disarm.¹⁰⁶¹

The completion of the disarmament in Kono District brought relief to the whole country, as it meant the war was really over. As a mark of the importance of this achievement for the country, the Sierra Leonean President, the Nigerian President and the Chairman of the ECOWAS went to Kono on 3 September, to witness the official end of the disarmament process.¹⁰⁶²

RUF forces, however, continued to mine in the Koidu area, including indiscriminate mining carried out in the centre of the township. Some incidents of violence against civilians are reported during that period.¹⁰⁶³ In one incident, one civilian went back to Koidu from Freetown to assess the level of destruction of his property. As he reached his house, he met 20 people busy mining the soil underneath his house. When he asked them to stop, one commander at the site told his boys to arrest him and tie him up. He ordered four of his men to hang four solars on the man as he had interrupted the mining activities, which means that four people will beat the person. On another occasion, the Overall Mining Commander ordered civilians to be arrested, so that they could wash gravel at mining areas. One of these civilians was accused of stealing a diamond and when a young RUF member reported that the man had swallowed the diamond, the Overall Mining Commander ordered his men to hang ten solars on the man. After the beating, the man admitted he had taken a diamond but had swallowed it. The Overall Mining Commander ordered his men to kill the man and get the diamond out of the stomach. However, nothing was found in the stomach of the dead man, which made the Overall Mining Commander say that the boy who made the report let him kill a man for no just cause. As a result, the Overall Mining Commander shot the young member three times in the chest, killing him.

This situation of continuous mining activities angered the residents of Koidu. They reported the matter to UNAMSIL, who explained that it would be solved in due time. Nevertheless, on 18 December 2001, residents from Koidu took slings and machetes to fight the RUF/AFRC forces. A lot of the residents then left the District for other Districts (Bombali and Tonkolili) as they believed some of the RUF/AFRC forces would never give up the privileges they got from the mining areas, namely control on the mineral wealth and taxes levied on traders. Following this mass exodus of the population, a meeting took place¹⁰⁶⁴ in Makeni at the headquarters of the UN Nigerian contingent with leaders of the RUF forces and a delegation from Kono authorities. On 27 December, an important delegation composed of Northern Paramount Chiefs, the UNAMSIL Acting Force

¹⁰⁶¹ UNAMSIL press briefing, 14 August 2001. As of 31 August 2001, 5,634 combatants had disarmed in the District, 3,623 being RUF members and 2,011 CDF members: UNAMSIL press briefing, 14 August 2001 and Sierra Leone Humanitarian Situation Report 09 - 31 August 2001.

¹⁰⁶² IRIN West Africa, 3 September 2001.

¹⁰⁶³ In its Sierra Leone Humanitarian Situation Report 09 - 31 August 2001, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), based on information from Sierra Leone Web reports, reported on the ongoing use of child labour by the RUF for mining activities.

¹⁰⁶⁴ It is alleged that this meeting took place to clear the rumour that the incident of the previous day was carried out on tribal lines on the pretext that Temnes, Limbas and Mendes were being killed in Kono.



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Commander, officers of the Sierra Leone Police and other people arrived in Koidu and summoned a meeting of stakeholders at the UNAMSIL headquarters. An agreement to put an end to the RUF mining activities in the District was signed and apparently implemented.

3. Conclusion

As with the two other Districts of the Eastern Province, Kono District was affected by the conflict since 1991 until the disarmament was declared complete in 2001. This 11-year conflict transformed the face of the District, which suffered heavily in terms of casualties, displacement of population and destruction of dwellings.

The District was first attacked in 1991 by RUF/NPFL forces coming from Kailahun District but those attacks were limited to the south-east, at the border with Kailahun District. During the following year, RUF/NPFL intensified their incursions into the District and progressively expanded their positions to attack Koidu, the headquarter town, by the end of 1992. SLA forces repelled the RUF/NPFL forces from Koidu at the beginning of 1993 and continued their “mopping up” operations throughout the year. By the middle of the year, they had dislodged the RUF/NPFL forces from their main positions in the District. Around the same period, SLA forces had confined the RUF/NPFL forces to the extreme east of Kailahun District, which led Sierra Leoneans to think the war was over and the NPRC Chairman to unilaterally declare a ceasefire.

In late December, however, RUF forces launched a massive operation in the south of Kenema District. This operation clearly marked a new phase of the conflict, during which RUF forces spread across the whole country, using guerrilla warfare tactics. RUF forces re-entered Kono District in 1994 and gradually gained territory on SLA forces, whose number had considerably increased over 1994 but whose actions aimed at repelling the RUF forces had proved wholly ineffective. By April 1995, RUF forces captured Koidu Town for the second time, inflicting high casualties on civilians and destroying and vandalising the town. From Koidu, RUF forces spanned out mainly in the diamond areas around Koidu. Their progression in the District and their mining activities were stalled around May/June by the SLA assisted by CDF forces and, above all, by Executive Outcomes, the South African mercenary company in Sierra Leone under contract with the Government. The RUF forces were rapidly driven out of their positions and throughout the rest of the year and 1996, were mainly confined to the south-east of the District, while Executive Outcomes controlled most of the remainder of the District.

Following the withdrawal of Executive Outcomes by the end of January 1997, the Kono population was left in the hands of the RUF forces, in particular following their merging with the AFRC forces. RUF/AFRC forces, although mainly concentrated around Koidu, patrolled the chiefdoms, harassing civilians for food items and abducting civilians who were then forced to work at the mine sites for the RUF/AFRC forces. As the harassment and physical violence against civilians increased, youths and CDF members fought the RUF/AFRC forces in Koidu and recaptured the town early 1998.

Following the ECOMOG intervention in Freetown, RUF/AFRC forces retreated into the Provinces and reached Kono District in late February 1998. They rapidly retook Kono and spread across the whole District, carrying out the “Operation No Living Thing”. The rate of physical violence, mutilation, rape, killing, abductions for conscription, use as forced labour or for sexual purpose and



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the destruction of property reached unprecedented levels. This period, running from February to May/June, was characterised as the “reign of terror”. Although RUF/AFRC forces were also deployed across the Northern Province, where they carried out the same actions, Kono District suffered the most from this “Operation No Living Thing”, as RUF/AFRC forces clearly concentrated their operations on the main mining area. ECOMOG operations continued in the Provinces and by April 1998, ECOMOG forces had reached Kono District and recaptured the towns previously under RUF/AFRC control. RUF/AFRC forces continued their actions from the bush and abducted more civilians to conscript and train them in the new camp they had opened in the east of the District or to use them in the mining sites.

Violence began decreasing by June 1998. Around this period, hundreds of thousands of civilians had fled the District and RUF/AFRC forces were mainly engaged in large-scale mining operations. In late December, however, the RUF/AFRC regrouped and launched a massive operation on Koidu and other main towns in the west of the District, dislodging the ECOMOG forces from all their positions. The capture of Kono was the first step of a wider action, which reached its conclusion in the invasion of Freetown in January 1999.

Following the invasion of Freetown in January 1999, negotiations started between the Sierra Leonean President and the RUF leader in order to put an end to the conflict: A ceasefire was signed in May and a Peace Agreement on 7 July 1999. This agreement did not end the conflict, as RUF/AFRC expanded their positions in the Northern Province and continued to be present in Kono District. RUF/AFRC forces pursued their mining activities in the District and violence was still inflicted on civilians. Local hunters in the north and the east of the District increased their attacks on RUF/AFRC forces but were often defeated. From 1999, however, the conflict got a new face, as it appeared RUF/AFRC forces planned to launch attacks onto the Guinean territory.

The number of civilians abducted and trained, in particular in “superman camp” in the east of the District clearly indicated that RUF/AFRC forces were preparing attacks onto the Guinean territory. Attacks on Guinea were launched in May 2000 and reached their peak in September. These attacks onto the Guinean territory were not isolated, for Guinea was also attacked from Kailahun and Kambia Districts.

In 2001, the CDF, backed up by Guinean authorities, engaged and defeated the RUF forces in the east of the country. They were halted in their progression through the intervention of Kono authorities and UN officials, in a bid to enforce the ceasefire renewed in Abuja. The disarmament process began shortly afterwards, an agreement to end illegal mining was reached and the war was officially over in the District by the end of 2001.



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E. Southern Province

a. Bo District

1. Introduction

Bo District is one of the four Districts composing the Southern Province together with Pujehun, Bonthe and Moyamba Districts. Its headquarter town, Bo Town, lies in its centre in Kakua Chiefdom. It is strategically located at a nodal crossroad, from which roads extend into the District in four directions.

Bordered on the east by Kenema District and in the south by Pujehun District, almost all the incursions would come from this direction following an east-west pattern. Its northern chiefdom, Valunia, shares a boundary with the central District of Tonkolili. Moyamba District on the north and Bonthe District on the south constitute its western edge.

There are 15 chiefdoms in the District:

<u>Chiefdom</u>	<u>Headquarter</u>
Badjia	Ngelehun
Bagbe	Ngarlu
Bagbo	Jimi
Baoma	Baoma
Bumpeh	Bumpeh
Gbo	Gbo
Jiama Bongor	Telu
Kakua	Bo
Komboya	Njala
Lugbu	Sumbuya
Niawa Lenga	Nengbema
Selenga	Dambala
Tikonko	Tikonko
Valunia	Mongere
Wunde	Gboyama

Two roads leading to Bo Town allow its penetration from Pujehun Town, the principal road passing by Wunde Chiefdom and the secondary road passing by Bagbo Chiefdom. It was the secondary road that would find favour with the RUF/NPFL forces, who entered the District from Pujehun District in 1991. The main road in the District is the highway that links Freetown with Kenema Town. This feature would influence the conduct of the conflict, as it would be the setting of many ambushes and checkpoints. The relatively large number of roads accessible by vehicle would allow further RUF advances inland towards the Districts of Moyamba and Bonthe, even if the headquarter town, Bo Town on the Freetown-Kenema highway, would not be captured by RUF forces.

The Sewa River that flows from the south-west to the east, following one-third of the border with Kenema District, divides the District in two and would be the natural separation between the chiefdoms affected by the conflict during its first years.



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As Bo Town is the second largest city in Sierra Leone, trading and business are among the main activities of the District, as well as mining, particularly diamond mining in Jima Bongor, Baoma, Tikonko and Lugbu Chiefdoms and cash crops such as rice, cocoa, coffee and palm oil. The mining production has however to be considered in the context of the whole country and in this regard, the production of the District comes rather far behind Kono District and the North of Kenema District.

The absence of external borders would make the District a safer haven for the inhabitants of Pujehun District, at least during the first years of the conflict, and different camps, often made of bush sticks and mud and hosting thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from others Districts, would be built in Bo District. Gondama (in the south of Kakua Chiefdom), at the junction between different chiefdoms, would host such a camp and would be severely affected during the conflict. Koribondo would be a strategic town during the conflict, due to its location at a crossroad between two strategic roads, the first running west-east and linking Bonthe District to Kenema District and the second running south-north and linking Pujehun District to Bo Town.

The main ethnic group is the Mende, renowned, among other things, for the importance of the traditional hunters in the society. Accordingly, the initiation of Kamajors, which had started in the Southern District of Bonthe, soon spread throughout Bo District, which would become a Kamajor stronghold.

Three different phases of the conflict can be clearly identified in Bo District. The first phase encompassed 1991 to 1993 and was characterised by the spreading of the RUF/NPFL forces from Pujehun District. However, only a few chiefdoms closest to Pujehun District were affected at this time, namely Bagbo, Lugbu, Jima Bongor and Tikonko Chiefdoms. RUF/NPFL forces followed the same pattern when entering a village: they would gather people in the centre of the village, introduce themselves as “freedom fighters” coming to redeem them from the APC regime; some members would stay in the villages while others would proceed further. Physical violence, killing, abductions, the taking of property - especially food - and the burning of houses were reported from the very first incursion. Starting in June 1991, the SLA forces based in Koribondo (Jima Bongor Chiefdom) and assisted by foreign troops contained these first attacks, repelled the RUF/NPFL forces from the District and patrolled in the areas previously under RUF/NPFL control, chasing “rebel” collaborators and encouraging the formation of vigilante groups. RUF/NPFL forces would later make sporadic raids in the District but did not settle in the District during this first stage.

The second phase spanned from 1994 to 1995, during which time the RUF had spread throughout the entire District. This phase saw the beginning of the organisation of youths and local hunters fighting alongside the SLA, although no formal initiations took place at this time. By the middle of 1995, SLA forces had retaken control of a large area south of Bo Town, although RUF forces still made repeated incursions and attacks, mainly in the chiefdoms on the east bank of the Sewa River and along the border with Kenema District. During this second phase, a lot of civilians were maltreated, killed, raped and abducted, a lot of houses were burnt, especially along the Kenema border, and property was taken away. These incidents were carried out mostly by RUF forces but by SLA forces as well. During this stage, the Freetown-Bo-Kenema highway was the setting of many ambushes, though the precise identity of the faction responsible could not always be ascertained.



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The final phase ran from late 1995 to the end of the war, during which time the Kamajors were formally initiated and spread across the District. Although they initially fought alongside the SLA, their collaboration soon deteriorated and was almost nonexistent by the time of the Coup in May 1997. Fighting between those forces were reported and some SLA forces were suspected of collaborating with the RUF. The Kamajors nonetheless gained control of almost all the previous RUF strongholds in the District and during the AFRC regime, RUF/AFRC forces were only based in Koribondo and Bo Town. Following the ECOMOG deployment in the District in late February-early March 1998, no further RUF/AFRC incursion were reported, the District remaining under the Kamajors control who however harassed civilians, chasing, inflicting physical violence and killing people they suspected of being "Junta" and RUF collaborators.

2. Factual Analysis

a) Phase I: 1991 – 1993

RUF/NPFL forces entered the District in April 1991 through Malen Chiefdom (Pujehun District) in the south-west of Bo District. These forces arrived first in Bagbo Chiefdom, where they scattered throughout April, May and June. They reached Lugbu Chiefdom in June, where they stayed for some months before being repelled by SLA forces.

On or around 24 April 1991, RUF/NPFL forces coming from the RUF base in Malen Chiefdom (Pujehun District) known as "Kuwait" arrived in the headquarter town of Jimi (in the east of Bagbo Chiefdom), 42 miles south-west of Bo. The RUF/NPFL forces fired their weapons¹⁰⁶⁵ and gathered the people of the town for a meeting in the Court Barrie. At this meeting, they identified themselves as fighters from Liberia, trained in Burkina Faso and fighting for their leader to liberate the people of Sierra Leone. The RUF/NPFL forces gave the people of the village palm fronds as symbols of the revolution¹⁰⁶⁶ and warned them that if they ran, they would be deemed an "enemy" and shot. They took all the Paramount Chief's belongings, including his car, claiming he was an "APC chief". While there are no reported fatalities, they abducted the Paramount Chief's staff and recruited some 82 people, including young children.¹⁰⁶⁷

The RUF/NPFL forces remained in Jimi for approximately one week, after which the forces split into three groups. One group remained in Jimi and the second group headed north west towards Sumbuya (Lugbu Chiefdom). On the way, at Mani Junction (Bagbo Chiefdom), this group split into two, with one group continuing on their way to Sumbuya and another group heading south for Bum Chiefdom in Bonthe District. The third group headed north-east in a push towards Niagorihun, passing successively through Limba and Levuma. Niagorihun occupies the strategic position of junction town on the road leading to Sumbuya, the commercial centre and headquarter town of Lugbu Chiefdom, and the road coming from Jimi, from where movement between the north-east to the south-west could be controlled.

¹⁰⁶⁵ The RUF/NPFL forces were armed with mortar bombs, AK47 rifles, Berettas, LMG, GPMG and grenades.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Palm fronds and leaves were considered to be a symbol of the SLPP (Sierra Leone People's Party), the opponent to the then APC regime of J.S. Momoh. Reports from Kenema also mentioned RUF/NPFL forces coming to the District with palm leaves round their wrists.

¹⁰⁶⁷ No mention is made of what happened to the staff of the Chief nor whether they were included in the 82 people abducted at this time.



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The second group, who went to Sumbuya (Lugbu Chiefdom), stopped at Mani Junction in Momajoe on the way, where they encamped all the civilians at Lavekee compound and conscripted 85 boys and girls. In their address to the people, they made it clear that nobody should run in their presence or they would be classed as an “enemy” and would be shot on sight. Furthermore, the RUF/NPFL stated that they came more for the Fullahs and the Lebanese, who - according to them - contributed to the suffering of the masses.¹⁰⁶⁸ Thus, one Fullah businessman was tied to a stick and people were told to guard him until their return, under threat of indiscriminate killing in the area if anyone let him go.

Before leaving, they warned the population to have livestock ready for them when they passed through on their way back. They then split into two groups and left, one group going towards Bonthe District and the other continuing on their way to Sumbuya. Near Sumbuya, one young man was shot because he started running away when he saw the forces coming. One Lebanese businessman was killed at the wharf, another one was shot dead for refusing to open his store and four Lebanese people were abducted. The RUF/NPFL commander ordered his forces to take property from the town, including hundreds of bags of rice, many bags of onions, sugar and other items, including vehicles. All the property was taken back to Jimi by the young boys and girls who had been abducted when they had first arrived, some of whom were taken for training.

On their way back, the RUF/NPFL forces stopped in Momajoe and brought the man who had been tied up since they left before the assembled town, at which time the commander of the RUF/NPFL forces shot and killed him. They forced some of the townspeople to bury the body, which had started to cause panic among the inhabitants. While in Momajoe, the group that had gone to Bonthe District returned with property, including motorbikes, they had taken from the rice mill at Torma (Bum Chiefdom). They then left Momajoe and went back to Jimi with the property they had taken from Sumbuya and from Torma, some of which was then taken to the RUF base called “Kuwait” in Malen Chiefdom (Pujehun District).

The third group, who were heading north-east, continued along the road to Limba, passing through Manjama on the way, where they burnt down a number of houses. On their arrival in Limba, the RUF/NPFL forces gathered the people of the town for a meeting, in which they introduced themselves as trained Liberian mercenaries who had come to put down the APC regime. After this brief meeting, they continued on to Levuma, north of Limba, and later to Niagorihun Gateway, 7 miles north of Jimi, the meeting point of the main road to Sahn Malen and Sumbuya Lugbu Chiefdoms.

On 12 May 1991, SLA and the United Liberation Movement for Liberia (ULIMO) forces stationed in Koribondo (in the south of Jiamia Bongor Chiefdom) were deployed to Niagorihun to prevent the RUF/NPFL forces from taking control of the town, which was successful. The RUF/NPFL forces made approximately four other attempts to take the town, returning each time to Jimi and passing through Limba on the way to Niagorihun, but each time they were repelled by the combined SLA and ULIMO forces. During the successive battles, both sides suffered heavy fatalities, including one

¹⁰⁶⁸ The Fullah are one of the ethnic groups from Sierra Leone and were a particular target, as its members were known to be wealthy businessmen.



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of the RUF/NPFL commanders,¹⁰⁶⁹ and houses were burnt down as a result of the shelling.¹⁰⁷⁰ After their final attempt, they went back to Jimi and went on raiding missions in different towns in the chiefdom, taking what food they could find.

As a result of these battles, SLA and ULIMO forces based in Niagorihun began to move down the road towards Jimi, first taking control of Levuma and then moving on to Limba, where they established a base. The SLA and ULIMO forces, who were under SLA command, held a town meeting in the Court Barrie at which they established a curfew, set restrictions on people's movements and seized all the weapons in the town. During the following month, the SLA and ULIMO forces remained in Limba, from where they undertook covert reconnaissance missions to establish the extent of the RUF/NPFL strength in Jimi. They also went on food finding missions in nearby towns, which resulted in some skirmishes between SLA/ULIMO forces and RUF/NPFL forces.

On or around 16 June 1991, SLA and ULIMO forces launched a successful offensive with up to 250 troops to retake control of Jimi. During the battle in Jimi, the SLA and ULIMO forces killed six civilians who they believed to be "rebel" collaborators. RUF/NPFL forces coming from the direction of Pujehun District attempted several times to recapture Jimi but were unsuccessful. During these attempts, at least one house was burnt down as a result of the shelling, but no fatalities are reported. After they had recaptured Jimi, SLA forces maltreated civilians and hunted RUF collaborators. A number of people were killed because they were suspected of being "rebel" collaborators or because they came from "rebel-held" villages, although no investigations appear to have been held. Civilians who dealt with or hosted any RUF/NPFL forces, whether willingly or unwillingly, were tied up, beaten, made to look at the sun and, in some instances, killed.

In late June 1991, SLA forces launched a counter-attack to take control of Mano (Bagbo Chiefdom), which resulted in half of the town being occupied by the SLA forces and the other half of the town being occupied by the RUF/NPFL forces, although the exact dividing lines are not clear. Civilians in the town became the victims of both sides as each of the fighting factions accused them of aiding and abetting the other faction. Thus the SLA forces killed one boy, beat up the Town Chief and burnt down up to 45 houses. In return, the RUF/NPFL forces burnt down the remaining houses, killed 15 people and mutilated others.¹⁰⁷¹ Around this time, RUF/NPFL forces also attacked Sonehun Gola and Mano, west of Jimi on the way to Momajoe/Mani Junction. In Sonehun Golan, RUF/NPFL forces killed 10 people and in Mano, they killed two people and burnt down four houses.

At the same time, SLA forces passed through Momajoe on the way to Sumbuya (Lugbu Chiefdom), where they remained for around two weeks, trying to assess the extent of territory controlled by the RUF/NPFL. At the beginning of July 1991, SLA forces regained control of Momajoe/Mani Junction, and were also established in Kasseh and Sumbuya. Sumbuya was an economic and trading

¹⁰⁶⁹ It is reported that there were no civilian fatalities at this time.

¹⁰⁷⁰ It appears that the houses were not deliberately targeted, but were burnt down as an indirect result of the shelling.

¹⁰⁷¹ The records report that the people who were mutilated were "taken to Mattru Jong or Bo for treatment", although it is not clear what this means.



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centre and people were moving south of Sumbuya to buy food and other items, bringing them back to Sumbuya to trade. However, the SLA commander was uncomfortable with this movement of people, so people coming to Sumbuya from the south were considered to be “enemies” and were molested or put in cells for some days. This may in part be due to an incident that occurred on or around 10 July 1991: a military truck had an accident, which resulted in one SLA member falling off the truck and accidentally discharging his weapon. This led his companions to think they were under attack and they fired in the direction the shooting had come from, accidentally killing the soldier on the ground. The soldiers then fired at the vehicle to make their commander believe they had fallen into an ambush. Based on this report, the commander declared the zone north of Momajoe an “enemy zone” and ordered preparations for a full-scale invasion, including the order to shoot anybody they saw on sight. The following day, the invasion occurred from Golawoma to Tawamahehu, during which a lot of civilians were wounded, some of whom died in the bush due to lack of medical care.

One week later, the SLA commander required young men¹⁰⁷² in the surroundings of Momajoe¹⁰⁷³ to register for a vigilante group. After registration, they formed vigilante groups in the various towns and were assigned tasks by the SLA, including building huts, hunting and general cleaning tasks. Punishments for coming late or failing to do assigned duties included frog jump,¹⁰⁷⁴ rolling, being forced to lie down and look at the sun and imprisonment for a number of days.

In mid July 1991, SLA forces required civilians to lead them to Golapo Junction¹⁰⁷⁵ following a RUF/NPFL incursion in Kasseh, south of Momajoe, from Malen Chiefdom (Pujehun District), during which two people were killed. They met stiff resistance from the RUF/NPFL forces and one of the SLA soldiers was killed. However, all the civilians escaped safely, as a result of which the SLA commander imposed more stringent rules on how to deal with civilians. Civilians who had any connection with RUF/NPFL forces, including mothers of people abducted by the RUF, were all classed as “rebels” and were treated accordingly. For example, in Mogbon, five miles east of Momajoe, two women were killed by gunshot wound to the vagina because they cooked food for their children who had returned from the RUF/NPFL base and failed to surrender to the SLA. One man was killed because he said that the RUF/NPFL were planning to attack Momajoe. Two boys who came to Momajoe from Malen Chiefdom (Pujehun District) to buy salt were suspected of being “rebel” collaborators and were forced to chew their own penises before they were shot and killed. It is estimated that during this period, up to 48 people were killed by SLA forces because they arrived in Momajoe from a direction in which RUF/NPFL forces were believed to have bases.

¹⁰⁷² The ages of these people are not clear; they are variously described as “young men” and “youths”, which in the Sierra Leone context could be anywhere up to mid to late thirties, but probably does not include people under 14.

¹⁰⁷³ The towns are reported as being Momajoe, Golawoma, Mowei, Mossamgbahuò, Nyahgorihun (all north of Mamojoe); Temgbelch, Largo, Maniwa, Mani, Bo, Tissana, Yegelleh, Fala (all south Momajoe); and Mojamai Kpongbalia and Golapo, east of Momajoe.

¹⁰⁷⁴ To “frog jump” or to “pump” is done by first holding on to the earlobes with two hands – the left hand holding the right ear lobe and vice versa – after which the person is required to jump up and down continuously on their haunches. This form of punishment was both physically and psychologically painful, because it is a punishment meted out mostly to children and it is considered shameful for an adult to be made to “pump”.

¹⁰⁷⁵ While not explicitly stated, it appears that the civilians were used to guide the SLA forces through the area rather than provide them with any sort of protection.



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The District remained under the control of the SLA/ULIMO forces, who engaged the RUF/NPFL forces from all flanks, pushing them north-easterly from Sumbuya and south from Jimi through Pujehun District back into Liberia. At this time, the main SLA base was still in Koribondo (Jiama Bongor Chiefdom) and others had been established in Jimi, Sumbuya and Momajoe. Initially, SLA forces provided food and medicine to the civilian population, which led to good relations between them. Over time, however, civilians were forced to build camps for the SLA, were molested and flogged in public for failing to carry out the cleaning exercise and young girls were sexually harassed. A court structure was set up by the SLA and civilians were heavily fined for breaches, although it is not clear what law (if any) was applied in these courts. In November 1991, SLA forces started using civilians to mine diamonds in Niagorihun, where unidentified armed men killed 20 civilians.¹⁰⁷⁶ These events led to confusion within the population and to distrust of the SLA. At that time, civilians began to suspect that SLA soldiers were disguising themselves as RUF fighters and attacking villages.

During this time, from late 1991 to the end of 1992, the RUF/NPFL made sporadic incursions in Jimi and Limba (Bagbo Chiefdom) from Malen Chiefdom (Pujehun District). They burnt seven houses in Limba and took away all the cattle in the town. One man was killed by his son in law, a member of the RUF, and his head was displayed along the road leading to Jimi. In addition, they launched some attacks in the area around Mano, in which some people were killed. However, RUF/NPFL forces did not manage to make any significant advances into Bo District and did not retake control of any territory.¹⁰⁷⁷

Foreign troops¹⁰⁷⁸ were based in Gondama (south of Kakua Chiefdom, at the border with Tikonko and Jiama Bongor Chiefdoms) and in early 1993, an influx of civilians from Pujehun District fleeing RUF forces came to Gondama through Koribondo on the advice of SLA forces in the District. Gondama would remain safe until November 1994, when RUF forces launched a major attack on the town.

In April 1993, RUF forces entered Sembehun, a mining area in Tikonko Chiefdom. The RUF forces were not wearing combat uniforms and many people did not realise they were RUF until they began firing their weapons. The RUF forces went through houses looking for gold and diamonds and took many goods from the market place, including clothes and shoes. They then abducted a number of people to carry the stolen property, although they were not detained and were returned to Sembehun the same evening.

In 1993, RUF forces embarked on road ambushes in Bagbo Chiefdom around Jimi, during which SLA forces and civilians suffered heavy casualties. In December 1993, during a meeting called by the SLA commander in Jimi to discuss the situation with chiefdom authorities, news broke out that a commercial vehicle had been attacked at Basaleh junction in Malen Chiefdom (Pujehun District) between Jimmi Bagbo and Sahn Malen Chiefdoms.

¹⁰⁷⁶ No further information is available on this attack or who the attackers were.

¹⁰⁷⁷ No news was made available on these attacks in the chiefdom (Bagbo) and people soon forgot about them.

¹⁰⁷⁸ These troops were either Guinean or Nigerian troops, posted in Sierra Leone in furtherance to bilateral treaties with Sierra Leone.



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B) Phase II: Late 1993 to 1995

From February 1994, the Freetown – Bo – Kenema highway was constantly ambushed by RUF and SLA forces, cutting off food supplies for towns like Bo and Kenema whose population was swollen by thousands of civilians seeking refuge. Convoy of trucks¹⁰⁷⁹ leaving Freetown were often ambushed.

Towards the end of 1993, RUF/NPFL forces regrouped in Malen Chiefdom (Pujehun District) and started launching heavy attacks on Bagbo Chiefdom, starting in Jimi. In addition, in October 1993, Koribondo was attacked and many civilians moved to Bo Town. As a result of this attack, the Director of the Gondama camp initiated a self-defence program, selecting youths as vigilantes to run checkpoints both day and night. By late 1993 or early 1994,¹⁰⁸⁰ SLA forces were to a large extent dislodged from Jimi, Sumbuya and Momajoe and re-established themselves in Koribondo. This SLA withdrawal gave room to the RUF/NPFL forces to go through Bagbo Chiefdom into Bonthe District, where they also pushed out the SLA forces present in Bum Chiefdom and gained access to Mattru Jong and from there the Sierra Rutile mining areas.

Most likely in early 1994,¹⁰⁸¹ upon receiving news that the war was approaching his chiefdom, the Regent Chief of Jiama Bongor Chiefdom decided that all the towns and villages of his chiefdom should mobilise their youths to guard their villages against the assailants. The old hunters were asked to give their guns to the youths and the youths and local hunters were trained, after permission was granted from the Resident Minister of Bo. Youths and local hunters from Boama and Bagbe Chiefdoms also organised themselves in a similar fashion. By June 1994, the training was complete and 2,800 men composed of youths and local hunters were issued with arms and ammunition.¹⁰⁸²

The RUF forces attacked Koribondo in March 1994, as a result of which troops on both sides were killed and one civilian was caught in the crossfire. At the time of the attack, the SLA had been sent to the town. Following the attack, a troop of Guinean soldiers came as reinforcements for the SLA forces.

In the early months of 1994, villages in different chiefdoms along the border with Kenema District were attacked by a small number of RUF forces, mainly for food finding purposes. For example, RUF forces entered Komboya Chiefdom in the north of Bo District by crossing the Sewa River from Kenema District. They arrived in a small village near the town of Gumahun, where the Trade Fair was situated. The RUF forces then entered Gumahun, apparently with the main intention of obtaining food, as they only took food items, palm oil, cattle and money. Before leaving, on the same night they entered, the RUF forces also burnt down three dwelling houses. SLA forces were stationed at that time at Njala (Komboya Chiefdom), but the RUF made their incursions before

¹⁰⁷⁹ These convoys could be very big, comprising up to 70 vehicles.

¹⁰⁸⁰ This information has to be read in conjunction with the attacks that started in December 1993 in Kenema District.

¹⁰⁸¹ No date is given for this meeting, but training took place in April 1994 as a result of this meeting, so it is likely these events took place in early 1994.

¹⁰⁸² This gathering of youths did not entail, at this time, the process of initiation within the Kamajor society. This initiation would begin in Bo District in 1995.



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there was time to deploy those forces and, in addition, it is reported that the SLA forces there were themselves harassing civilians and taking away their food and property.

In 1994, most of the road ambushes were carried out by SLA forces, especially between Niagorihun and Grima (Tikonko Chiefdom), during which civilians were killed and their property stolen. These forces were referred to as “sobels”, meaning members of the SLA who had joined forces with the RUF. The loss of confidence in the SLA, which had begun towards the end of 1991, thus continued to grow stronger in 1994. People relate that wherever SLA forces deployed to protect a town or a village, that town or village would be attacked by RUF forces shortly after their arrival.¹⁰⁸³ In April 1994, inhabitants of Lugbu Chiefdom who no longer felt safe moved to Koribondo (Jiama Bongor Chiefdom) and Bo Town (Kakua Chiefdom). Thus, the population of Bo Town swelled in 1994 and food became scarce.¹⁰⁸⁴

At some time in 1993,¹⁰⁸⁵ vigilante groups were established in Wunde Chiefdom (south-east of the District, at the border with Pujehun District), led by the former Regent Chief. In April 1994, RUF forces attacked Juhun (Wunde Chiefdom) twice and each time, people were killed, some houses were burnt and people were forced to carry the stolen property to Zimmi, near the border with Liberia in Pujehun District. Local hunters from Jiama Bongor Chiefdom sent to the border between Wunde and Jiama Bongor Chiefdoms fought with RUF forces. Four civilians are reported to have been killed in that fight and two houses were burnt down.

Many villages were attacked in 1994 in Wunde Chiefdom, property was taken, houses burnt, people killed and women raped. For example, in early 1994, RUF forces attacked Kambawana, a section headquarter town with 58 dwelling houses, causing many of the inhabitants to flee into the nearby bush. RUF forces set fire to the town, completely destroying 30 houses and damaging the remaining buildings, including by shooting at them. RUF forces killed or abducted most of the people who had remained in the village, including young children, and raped the women.¹⁰⁸⁶

In Boama Chiefdom, the youths and local hunters were mobilised in 1994 and established as a Territorial Defence Force (TDF) under the command of the chiefdom authorities in the town of Gerihun. The TDF was divided into two groups, one of which was sent to Jomu village and the other of which was sent to Kpatbu, both of which are on the border with Jiama Bongor Chiefdom. These towns were considered strategic points in the defence of Boama Chiefdom from the RUF forces fighting in Jiama Bongor Chiefdom.

Nevertheless, in May 1994, RUF forces coming from Kenema District, most likely from their base of Camp Zogoda,¹⁰⁸⁷ continuously attacked villages behind the Sewa River in Boama Chiefdom. In all these attacks, civilians were killed, women raped, houses burnt, property stolen and people

¹⁰⁸³ Cross reference to Bombali District, where people said the same thing.

¹⁰⁸⁴ It appeared that its population doubled in 1994, rising sharply from 450,000 inhabitants to roughly one million.

¹⁰⁸⁵ No month is given for the formation of the vigilante groups.

¹⁰⁸⁶ The bodies were left on the ground for some time, as a person who visited the village some time after this attack saw a number of skeletons lying on the streets. It is not clear when or where these skeletal remains were finally buried.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Camp Zogoda was located in Koya Chiefdom (Kenema District) and was operational throughout 1994-95 before being overrun by SLA and Kamajors in 1996. For further information, see Kenema District.



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abducted, including underage children. For example, in Tugbedu, two civilians were killed and four houses were burnt; in Sandia, one pregnant woman was killed; and in Kpatobu, three young men were killed, five houses burnt and a lot of property taken. In Keigbai village, one civilian was killed, women raped, three houses burnt down, property was taken and over 200 people abducted. Also in May 1994, RUF forces coming from the direction of Mile 30 on the old Koribondo-Blama (Small Bo Chiefdom, Kenema District) highway attacked Gordi (Jama Bongor Chiefdom), burnt five buildings, including the school, and took sheep and goats away with them. No fatalities were reported at this time.

On hearing that the chiefdom headquarter of Telu (Jama Bongor Chiefdom) had come under heavy attack in June 1994, local hunters and youths from Gbaama mobilised themselves and went to Telu. On their arrival in Telu, they discovered the 70 bodies of local hunters and youths in front of the Regent Chief's residence, which was damaged.¹⁰⁸⁸ Twenty civilians were found dead from bullet wounds. The survivors of the attack on Telu, including the Regent Chief, fled to Bo, Gerihun and other places for safety.

Similarly to the other chiefdoms at the border with Kenema District, RUF forces first entered Badjia Chiefdom in mid 1994 mainly to find food. However, these food-finding missions were also accompanied by the burning of houses and huts and the killing of civilians. In Pendebu, one old man was shot dead and one hut was set on fire. Each time they came to find food, the RUF forces were very small in number.

In August 1994, the Town Chief of Geima¹⁰⁸⁹ (Jama Bongor Chiefdom) arrived in Koribondo with two youths whose hands had been cut off. He reported that RUF forces had attacked Geima, dumped 40 civilians in wells, killed nine men, three children and eight women, burnt down 30 houses and forced people to carry their stolen property to Zimmi, which is on the border with Liberia in Pujehun District.

That same month, RUF forces again attacked Jimi and over 20 civilians were killed and up to 50 were abducted, allegedly being taken away to "Kuwait", the RUF base in Pujehun District. Another attack took place in September, during which an SLA officer was killed. After this incident, the SLA intensified their search for RUF collaborators and many civilians were killed by SLA forces on this basis, including the Town Chief. During this period, up to 190 houses in Jimi were burnt down, with the exception of the Primary and Secondary Schools; civilians were killed; and many young people were abducted. Cases of rapes are mentioned and it is reported that three girls were raped on the road between Jimi and Kanga, west of Jimi. Houses were looted and people were injured with machetes in Mano; there are also reports of amputations at this time.

At the same time, the RUF forces began attacking the towns that had been left by the SLA, particularly in Niagorehun, Sumbuya, Towamaheahun and Lower and Upper Saama in the west of Lugbu Chiefdom on the road between Sumbuya and Niagorehun. During these attacks, many civilians were killed and raped and houses were burnt down. In Sumbuya, over 100 houses were

¹⁰⁸⁸ It is not clear how the Regent Chief's house was damaged or how the local hunters were killed.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Geima is on the Koribondo-Sumbuya Highway, the main route from Kenema District to Bonthe District through Bo District.



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burnt, including the residence of the Paramount Chief, and over 150 houses were burnt in Niagorehun.

In September 1994, RUF forces attacked Momajoe and its environs (Bagbo Chiefdom), meeting little resistance from the SLA forces based at Mani Junction. During this attack, one boy and one local hunter, who had been pointing his gun at the RUF forces, were killed in separate incidents. Property was taken away from people and around 20 young men were forced to carry that property to RUF bases in Malen Chiefdom.

Njala (Komboya Chiefdom in the north of Bo District), which is a hub for the flow of produce such as palm oil, rice, groundnuts, kola nuts, coffee and cacao during marketing seasons, was attacked in September 1994.¹⁰⁹⁰ Five civilians were killed and houses were looted and then burnt down. The RUF forces attacking the town came from the east, most likely along the road from Kenema District through Gumahun and Naigolehun. The RUF forces left the town the same day as they had arrived.¹⁰⁹¹

Also in September¹⁰⁹² 1994, a large number of RUF forces, most of them dressed in plain clothes with red headbands and commanders in uniforms with steel helmets, entered the chiefdom headquarter town of Ngelehun (Badjia Chiefdom),¹⁰⁹³ firing heavily. Although no deaths were reported, many women and children were abducted and forced to carry stolen property. RUF forces came back later and abducted many more people. In Badjia Chiefdom, few people were killed but thousands were abducted and forced to join the RUF movement, whereupon many people fled to Gerihun (Boama Chiefdom). Progressively, the villages and towns of Badjia Chiefdom became empty, as RUF forces made various incursions and attacks throughout the chiefdom and people sought refuge in larger towns like Kenema or Bo or in the bush.

The chiefdom headquarter of Ngarlu (Bagbe Chiefdom) was also attacked by RUF forces,¹⁰⁹⁴ using a method worth describing in more detail. The RUF assailants gathered the inhabitants in the Court Barrie and asked the Town Chief to send messages around the farms calling all the people to come at once. People were forced to sit on the floor with their legs stretched out in front of them. The RUF members explained to the people that those among them who were in uniforms with helmets on were Burkina Faso fighters while those in other clothes and red headbands were RUF members.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Njala is at the foot of a steep mountain on top of which there was rumoured to be a RUF establishment called Bokurr, which was a large training camp and the sometime residence of the RUF leader. Sounds of helicopters were heard over the mountain every two days during 1995, although the duration when the helicopters were flying was unspecified

¹⁰⁹¹ Indeed, at the same period, RUF forces had reached Wandor Chiefdom (Kenema District) that lies at the east of Komboya Chiefdom.

¹⁰⁹² Reports mention two different dates for this attack, September and December. Although open sources could not confirm the date, it is likely that this attack took place in the aftermath of the one at Njala (Komboya Chiefdom) in September.

¹⁰⁹³ The land of Badjia and Komboya Chiefdoms was rich in food and the place was ideal as it is a hilly area, far from the main road.

¹⁰⁹⁴ This event was described as happening in June 1994 but also as taking place after Njala (Komboya Chiefdom) and Ngelehun (Badjia Chiefdom) had been attacked, which took place probably in September. Accordingly, this attack was probably carried out around September.



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Under heavy guard, some of them took young women and girls into a house and raped them. As these rapes were going on, the old people were separated from the youths and other RUF members searched the houses. After collecting items from the houses, they set the town on fire. One hundred and fifty youths were told to carry the things they had collected from the houses for the RUF forces. As it was time for the third Muslim prayer, they fired shots above the heads of the gathered civilians, dropped young babies and trampled on them and hit screaming children on their heads. Many young people, including children and teenagers, were abducted during this attack, most likely for recruitment purposes although their fate remains unknown. People who had escaped to the bush and returned the following morning discovered burnt houses, property missing and 25 bodies in the town and others in the nearby bushes, including adults, children and babies, whose heads had been crushed. Ten of the bodies were buried in one grave in the centre of the town, three in another one and four in a third grave.

Valunia, the northernmost chiefdom in Bo District, was first touched by the conflict in late 1994. In October, November and December, RUF forces and SLA forces were present for the first time in the three biggest towns. In early October 1994, SLA forces came by truck to the town of Baomahun, towards the north in the centre of the chiefdom, from Tekoh Barracks in Makeni (Bombali District). The SLA forces explained to the population that they had come to search for RUF forces based in Kangari Hills¹⁰⁹⁵ in Tonkolili District, from where they believed RUF forces would make an attack on Valunia Chiefdom. However on their return, very few soldiers were to be seen on the trucks. At around that time, foreigners who were operating the gold mines left the town, allegedly poisoning the food and drink in their quarters as they believed the SLA forces would be back to steal their property. Later in October 1994, SLA forces attacked Baomahun, taking a lot of property from the gold mining quarters and the town in general. The SLA forces spent some time in the quarters, drinking what was left by the expatriates who had fled earlier. Trucks loaded with food and other items were brought to Tekoh Barracks. A few days later, information reached the civilians that SLA soldiers were found dead in the forest and that wives and children of those SLA members at Tekoh Barracks were also dead, as a result of the poison the expatriates put in their food and drinks before leaving.

Due to the persistent attacks on Bagbe Chiefdom, up to 600 villagers came and settled in Gerihun (Boama Chiefdom), which also hosted displaced people from Komboya and Badjia Chiefdoms after the attacks on the headquarters towns of Njala and Ngelehun respectively. Following this influx of civilians, UNHCR established a displaced camp in Gerihun, under the protection of SLA forces and Special Security Division Police.

In November 1994, RUF forces coming from Camp Zogoda¹⁰⁹⁶ in Kenema District attacked Gerihun twice. Both times, they were repelled but promised that they would not be satisfied until Gerihun was captured. In June 1995, the RUF forces returned in large numbers, attacking the town on three sides and retaking control of both the town and the IDP camp. Over 100 displaced people were killed in the camp either by shooting or by being drowned in the Beibei River. Property was taken from booths, namely huts made from bushsticks and covered with greenery for shelter, which

¹⁰⁹⁵ The Kangari Hills are to be found mainly in Tonkolili District but also lie in Valunia Chiefdom. The RUF base, however, was located in Tonkolili District.

¹⁰⁹⁶ The camp was mentioned on the ID card found on a dead RUF member.



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were then set on fire. At that time, the SLA forces asked the fleeing civilians to come to their base for protection as they had sent someone to Bo Town (Kakua Chiefdom) to ask for reinforcements, although it is not clear whether reinforcements were on the way.

While up to 1,000 civilians went to the base, the whole town including the military base was soon taken over.¹⁰⁹⁷ The SLA forces withdrew to an unknown destination and more people were killed, some as a result of RPG firing by RUF forces as they entered the town. Every house in the town was searched and looted. Over 200 civilians were told to carry the stolen property to the RUF base at Camp Zogoda in Kenema District. Before leaving the town, the RUF forces set the IDP camp on fire. Among those people who had to carry the property, few came back and the rest have not been seen since. Shortly after the RUF forces left, SLA forces returned with reinforcements, firing indiscriminately. After they arrived, they made the population bury the people who had been killed by the RUF forces when they had attacked the town.

During the same period, women and children who had left Bagbe, Komboya and Badjia Chiefdoms were killed on their way to Kenema District. When they had stopped at the chiefdom headquarter of Boajibu (Simbaru Chiefdom, Kenema District) and sought shelter in a large house, RUF forces set the house on fire.¹⁰⁹⁸

Monghere (Valunia Chiefdom), south-west of Baomahun at the junction between the road from Moamahun and the road from Bare in the north-west of the chiefdom, was attacked in November 1994. RUF forces believed to come from their base in Bokurr raided the town. They took people's property, in particular domesticated animals such as goats and sheep, before burning down nearly all the houses in the town. They abducted some people, forcing them to carry the stolen property. These people later escaped. While there were no reported fatalities, a number of people suffered gunshot wounds.

In December 1994, RUF forces attacked the town of Mandu, towards the south of Valunia Chiefdom along the road from Monghere. RUF forces set fire to all the houses in the town, took property, including food and valuables, and forced civilians to carry the property they had taken. The civilians were later released after the RUF forces had reached villages allegedly near their bases. SLA forces based at Grima junction,¹⁰⁹⁹ north of Mandu along the road to Monhere, arrived in the town after the RUF forces had left the town and some of them also took property belonging to civilians, although others assisted in putting out the fires in the town.

Another example of the attacks on Wunde Chiefdom in 1994 is the assault on Niagorehun in the south of the chiefdom, which was attacked by RUF forces in December 1994. Windows and doors of the houses were broken, houses ransacked and people forced to carry their property; people who refused were shot on the spot. Young girls were raped and young boys, most of them below 10 years

¹⁰⁹⁷ One key person said that an RUF member advised them to move from the SLA base to a safer place because the SLA forces were "fooling" people and were fighting together with the RUF.

¹⁰⁹⁸ No further information could be obtained on this event, which was not mentioned in relation to Kenema District.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Note that while the records refer to it as "Grima junction" and "Grima town", the UNHCR maps have it named "Geima".



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old, were abducted. Many civilians were killed, such as one pregnant woman who refused to have sex with one of the fighters.

Later, towards the end of 1994 and the beginning of 1995, RUF forces came back to Bagbe Chiefdom, this time arriving from the south. Given the location of Ngarlu at a junction, RUF forces planned to establish a base there. They drove the people out of the chiefdom by burning the main towns like Madina, Gibina, Blama, Kpetewoma, Kpakoh and Mano. Prominent people were also killed, including a schoolteacher of Blama who refused to be a teacher for their forces. Some people went into hiding and others went to Bo Town or Kenema Town (Nongowa Chiefdom, Kenema District). Their arrival in Bo corresponded with the initiation of Kamajors starting in 1995.

Benduma (in the south of Bagbe Chiefdom) was overcrowded with civilians fleeing from the Sewa River, where RUF forces were settled; from the headquarter town of Ngarlu; and from Komboya Chiefdom. Villages in the area were surrounded by RUF forces and attacks were always imminent. In December 1994, five people were instantly shot dead by RUF forces arriving in Benduma. During the same visit, they raped women, stole property and forced young men to carry that property to the RUF base in Ngallu. Benduma was of interest as it was rich in food and animals. Benduma was also the largest town in the chiefdom, where the Paramount Chief lived.

However, the most striking wave of attacks that affected Bo District as a whole is the one that took place in December 1994 with the attack on the Gondama IDP camp, followed by attacks on the main towns in the centre of the District during the Christmas week.

In December 1994, RUF forces attacked Gondama camp, south of Kakua Chiefdom.¹¹⁰⁰ The attack on Gondama Camp, where thousands of people from Pujehun and Bo Districts had found refuge, was a shock for the population. At the time of the attack, on 24 December 1994, only a few ECOMOG troops were posted at Gondama,¹¹⁰¹ where an estimated 80,000 people had sought refuge. Between 200 and 400 civilians were killed, either by drowning in the Sewa River or as a result of bullet wounds. ECOMOG troops repelled the RUF forces about one week later and the camp was transferred temporarily to Bo Town. During this time, both RUF and SLA forces raided the camp, taking property that had been left behind. In January 1995, the camp was declared safe¹¹⁰² and people were asked to come back, which they did. Nevertheless, throughout 1995 the situation was difficult, as RUF forces had blocked the main highway between Bo and Freetown, thereby cutting off a main route for the supply of food. People died on a daily basis from malnutrition and cholera broke out; some relief was provided when the route was reopened in October 1995.

¹¹⁰⁰ It has to be noted that there is little information for Kakua, Tikonko and Bumpe Chiefdoms from 1993 to 1995, as almost all the civilians at that time were living either in the bushes or in displaced camps, such as Gondama camp. For example, the only information about Kakua Chiefdom, during this time, besides the December 1994 attacks, is that in July 1995, SLA forces and local hunters launched successful attacks on RUF forces in Kakua Chiefdom, resulting in the death of many RUF fighters.

¹¹⁰¹ It appears that on 22 December, the ECOMOG troops were ordered to go to Bo to provide security for a carnival that was planned, leaving only 11 soldiers in the camp.

¹¹⁰² It is not clear who declared the camp to be safe, but ECOMOG continued to provide protection at the camp, so it is possible it was ECOMOG.



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After their attack on Gondama, RUF forces then moved on to make their first attack on Tikonko Town (Tikonko Chiefdom) on 25 December 1994, arriving at around 3.00 pm, killing many civilians and burning and looting many houses. At the same time, other villages in the chiefdom were also attacked. At Sengema riverside, one young man was killed and another was shot in the leg. Civilians fled in large number to Mattru on the Rail (Tikonko Chiefdom),¹¹⁰³ intensifying the panic in the town.

On 26 December 1994, RUF forces attacked Mattru on the Rail (Tikonko Chiefdom) in the afternoon, mutilating civilians' arms and legs. The RUF then opened sporadic gunfire on the civilians, killing many people, looting their property and burning down their houses. They also abducted civilian youths who they conscripted into the RUF forces. In the morning before this attack, 40 fully armed men wearing military uniforms entered the town, claiming to be Government forces coming to protect Mattru on the Rail. However, when RUF forces who identified themselves to the civilians as such attacked the town, these Government forces were nowhere to be found.

Bo Town was attacked on 27 December 1994 for the first time by RUF forces passing through the New London quarter. Prior to this attack, fleeing civilians from Mattru on the Rail and Tikonko Town had told residents of Bo Town that the RUF were bent on attacking Bo Town. The authorities of the town organised youths to erect checkpoints, which were controlled by these youths as a precautionary move in the event of an RUF attack. Thus, the youths who had mobilised themselves repelled the RUF forces out of the town. Few civilians were killed, few houses burnt and few youths abducted during this attack.

Bumpeh Town (Bumpeh Chiefdom), in the far west of Bo District, was attacked three times between December 1994 and June 1995. RUF forces coming from the north of Bumpeh attacked the town for the first time in December 1994, probably during the same wave of attacks against Bo Town, Tikonko Town and Mattru on the Rail. During this attack, few houses were burnt and some property was taken. Some girls were raped and people were abducted. The Regent Chief from Mattru Jong tried to hide from the RUF forces in the Tabal River, but accidentally drowned. As had happened in Mattru on the Rail prior to the RUF attack, forces claimed to be SLA forces had come to the town, asserting they were waiting for reinforcements following the previous attacks on Tikonko, Mattru on the Rail and Bo Town. However, when the RUF forces entered the town, those forces were nowhere to be found.

The attack on these major towns in the District was perceived by the population as an indication that the RUF were now a strong force not only in the eastern and northern parts of the country but also in the Southern Province of Sierra Leone.¹¹⁰⁴

Gbo, Selenga and Niawa Lenga Chiefdoms, north of Kakua Chiefdom, were not affected by the war before 1995, following the wave of attacks on Gondama, Bo and Tikonko Town in December 1994.

In January 1995, RUF forces reached Gbo Chiefdom through Bumpeh Chiefdom. The first village they attacked was Nagbana, on 3 January, killing people, raping women and taking away cattle. On

¹¹⁰³ As opposed to Mattru on the Jong, which is in Bonthe District.

¹¹⁰⁴ Also during the Christmas week, Kenema Town and Magburaka (Tonkolili District headquarter) were attacked.



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hearing that they were approaching the headquarter town of Baiama, the Paramount Chief reported the threat to the SLA's Bo Brigade Headquarter. However, no action was taken by the SLA to prevent the attack on Baiama, which took place on 4 January 1995. People were gathered in the Court Barrie, beaten and kicked by the RUF forces. Six people were killed, houses looted, cattle taken and over 20 houses were burnt. On the same day, Mokeilendeh was also attacked. Confusion arose in the mind of the civilians since uniformed men came to Baiama on 6 January 1995 telling people they were Government forces but, shortly after, left the town. People did not know to which government they were belonging, particularly because the RUF was now calling itself a "Government".

RUF forces attacked Baiama a second time on 8 January 1995, killed people, burnt some houses and abducted some people who were released shortly after. After the attack, SLA forces came from Bo to Baiama, after the Paramount Chief made another appeal to the SLA Brigade Commander. However, these SLA forces, who did not stay long, took all the cattle of the town.

The headquarter town of Dambala (Selenga Chiefdom), about 12 miles north of Bo Town, was also attacked in January 1995 by RUF forces coming from the direction of Negbenah, which is four miles east of Dambala. This time as well, SLA forces who were based in the town were nowhere to be found at the time of the attack. During the attack, RUF forces killed approximately three people and burnt down up to 110 houses.

In January 1995, RUF forces attacked the SLA forces based in Grima (Valunia Chiefdom) and overpowered them. Attacks on SLA positions were frequent, including on their bases in Mandu and Monghere (Valunia Chiefdom). Throughout 1995, civilians hiding in the bush were tracked down either by RUF or SLA forces. RUF forces were raiding villages and hunting civilians in the bush, mainly for food. Civilians were maltreated as RUF forces beat them, dripped melted plastic on them, raped women and, frequently, young girls, and forced people to have sexual intercourse with members of their own family. Young people were taken away and some people were killed, such as one man who was killed so the RUF forces could take his animals. Another incident concerns a young farmer who had his fingers cut off when the RUF forces discovered he had set traps to get meat.

Negbema, 16 miles from Bo Town in Niawa Lenga Chiefdom, which adjoins Selenga Chiefdom to the north-east, was also attacked in January 1995. At the time of the attack, no SLA forces or local militia were based in the town. RUF forces, as they identified themselves to the civilians,¹¹⁰⁵ burnt down houses and abducted young boys. Another attack took place later during the year, probably in May 1995, during which the RUF forces burnt down more houses, killed some people and abducted some young girls. In August 1995, SLA forces came to protect the town. However, according to civilians, they were more thieves than liberators as they were taking away all the food from civilians.

The SLA forces took property from civilians in Valunia Chiefdom, including food items and livestock, claiming it was on orders. They also forced civilians to work for them, including requiring drivers to carry items for them. Anyone who refused would be punished, often by being verbally

¹¹⁰⁵ It is reported that the commander of the RUF forces who identified them to the civilians was approximately 15 years old.



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abused or beaten. The only secondary school, in Koyeima, was completely vandalised; the furniture, steel windows and doors were removed and, for the most part, taken to Bo Town, either to be sold or to be used by the SLA forces based there. In addition, checkpoints were set up in the town and operated both by SLA soldiers and by civilians. People were stopped at checkpoints and faced being “booked”, i.e. fined, for failure to carry the correct identity cards, among other things.

Momajoe and its environs (Bagbo Chiefdom) were again attacked in January 1995 but no mention is made of casualties at this time. RUF forces deposed all the chiefs and elected new ones, although it is not clear how these elections took place. The area was divided into two operational zones, with one command post at Sumbuya (Lugbu Chiefdom) and another post in Momajoe (Bagbo Chiefdom). Soon after their arrival, RUF forces made civilians work for them, in particular to carry property taken from one town to another town and to carry wounded RUF members back to their bases. In addition, RUF forces threw civilians out of their houses so that the forces could occupy them and forced civilians to feed them. Salt was the most expensive condiment, for which people were killed. No civilian was allowed to eat proper food, which led to the death of children from malnutrition. Any civilian refusing to obey orders from the RUF forces was killed and it is suggested that rapes also occurred around this time.¹¹⁰⁶ RUF forces remained in control of Momajoe and its environs for around 9 months, up to the end of 1995.

In 1995, “loyal”¹¹⁰⁷ SLA forces began attempting to dislodge RUF forces from Bagbo Chiefdom but harassed civilians, taking away all the property that was hidden in the bush.

In February 1995, Njala (Komboya Chiefdom) was attacked for the second time by RUF forces using a bypass route through Kundorma and Pelewahun rather than the route through Gumahun and Naiagolehun. SLA forces were based in Njala but were overpowered. Some civilians were killed and others were forced to carry property that was taken from the town. Those who were abducted travelled to Kpelewama (Valunia Chiefdom), where the RUF had a settlement and then moved to Kpetema, which is located near their main base, Bokurr, in Valunia Chiefdom. On their way to the base, civilians who were unable to keep up were shot dead and some women were raped. In Kpelewama, the RUF forces opened fire, killing one woman and her child before cutting her head off. After they arrived in Kpetema, all the remaining civilians were released, allegedly because RUF forces did not authorise civilians to come to their base.

During the RUF attack on Njala, the commander in charge of the SLA forces was killed by one of his subordinates, allegedly because he was a “loyal” SLA member. After the death of this commander, SLA forces relocated to Mendewa, three miles outside of Njala. From there, they occasionally returned to Njala, stealing property from the people of Njala and surrounding areas. In one incident, SLA forces came to Njala with a truck, opened fire as they entered and loaded their truck with food and non-food items. The SLA forces were at this time using the word “clearing” to refer to the taking of property in the town.

¹¹⁰⁶ Key persons talk about marital homes being “broken up”.

¹¹⁰⁷ At this time, the key persons speak of “loyal SLA forces”, who were believed to be loyal to the Government and “sobels”, who were SLA forces believed to be in collusion with the RUF.



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Since the SLA forces had completely left Njala, the RUF forces used this road to travel from the East to the West up to Gbaama and back. On their way, they were harassing civilians, taking food and forcing them to carry it for the RUF forces to their base at Bokurr, on top of the mountain near Njala.

Thus, starting in 1994 up to 1995, the whole of Komboya Chiefdom was affected by both RUF and SLA activities. Civilians living in the bushes in sorkoihun¹¹⁰⁸ were chased by RUF forces for food. Civilians were also killed for various reasons during this period, including for failing to show the RUF forces where other civilians were hiding. In other incidents, a man was amputated between Bauya and Tibor, seven houses were burnt down in Tibor and four civilians were killed at Talla II.¹¹⁰⁹

In 1995, RUF forces coming mainly from Bumpeh and Lugbu Chiefdoms were attacking villages and sorkoihun in Tikonko Chiefdom. Property was taken, houses burnt, civilians killed and young people abducted. At Wotebehun, north of Baoma in the south-west of Tikonko Chiefdom, three men and two women were shot and killed, sheep belonging to a chief were taken away and some houses were burnt. At Yegensa, one man was killed and his body tied to a tree. At Buewama, people were killed and houses and a mosque were burnt. At Kassama, two and a half miles from Baoma, RUF forces killed two people, which the SLA forces based there made no attempt to stop. In June 1995 at Baoma, which is on the Sewa River in the south-west of Tikonko chiefdom, RUF forces entered the town from the direction of Kassama (to the north of Baoma) and stayed there for two days. RUF forces threw some people into the Sewa River, where some drowned, and killed many others.

The same scenario was repeated in many places in 1995, including Buewama, Kassama, Sembehun Tabema, Benehun, Shengema and Mano Bembehteh, which are all in the south of the chiefdom, and Dodo, Faikundor, Foidu, Samie Tabaima, which are all around Tikonko Town. In all of these attacks, many young men and women were abducted, including people who were underage. Civilians identified the assailants as RUF forces, dressed in jeans and t-shirts and some having red pieces of cloth tied around their heads.

From March to June 1995, SLA forces were deployed in Dodo (Tikonko Chiefdom). However, these forces harassed civilians, molested them, took their property and killed alleged "rebel" collaborators. On one occasion, they cut off the head of a suspected collaborator, put it on a stick and went to every house asking for some money as a sign of appreciation for their job. Tikonko Town itself was attacked for the second time in June 1995 but civilians had already fled the town. Dodo was also attacked by RUF forces in June 1995. People were shot and killed, among them the Town Chief's son, and some were seriously wounded with knives. All of Dodo, except the mosque and a few houses, was burnt.

The second attack on Bumpeh Town (Bumpeh Chiefdom) took place between March and April 1995, with the third one occurring in June. The March attack on Bumpeh was part of a massive RUF operation in the chiefdom allegedly in retaliation for the killing of RUF members by SLA forces in the Sierra Rutile Mining area in nearby Moyamba District. The attacks on different villages in the

¹¹⁰⁸ This refers to hiding places in the bushes, also spelled "sorquehun".

¹¹⁰⁹ No further details are available on any of these incidents.



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chiefdom left over 100 civilians dead within a few days.¹¹¹⁰ During the third attack on Bumpah Town, many people were abducted, at which time civilians were told that the RUF needed more people to be trained. In addition, a lot of people were killed, more people were tortured, some had their hands amputated and young girls and women were raped. Some people were burnt alive in a house.¹¹¹¹

Starting in July 1995, SLA forces regained control over the area and the surrounding chiefdom of Tikonko during a massive “mopping up” operation.¹¹¹² During their operation in Bumpah Town in early July 1995, SLA forces claimed to have killed a lot of RUF members but no other source of information could confirm the fatalities. However, it is clear¹¹¹³ that from July 1995, SLA forces retook control of a large area south of Bo Town, inflicting serious defeats on the RUF for the first time since the start of the second phase of the conflict.¹¹¹⁴

However, SLA control over an area never guaranteed the absence of RUF attacks, which were often carried out by pockets of forces disseminated in various areas. For example, Yengema was attacked in September and 60 civilians were put in five houses that were set on fire; in addition, RUF forces killed a lot of civilians at Serabu. However, after these last attacks, Bumpah Town and the entire chiefdom were free from an RUF presence. That same month, SLA forces who had gone to repel RUF forces in other town in the chiefdom, namely Kpakema and Serabel, returned with seven captured RUF members.¹¹¹⁵ These RUF members were paraded in Bo Town before they were killed and burnt in front of the NPRC Secretariat, which was witnessed by a large crowd. The bridge in Bumpah Town divided the town in two distinct living areas, one being for the civilians and the other one for the SLA forces. Shortly after, the SLA commander exhorted civilians to come out of the bushes.

In July 1995, RUF forces coming from Simbaru Chiefdom (Kenema District) launched attacks on Badjia, Bagbe and Komboya Chiefdoms, where over 40 towns and villages were destroyed and, in total, 50 civilians were killed. The armed men who carried out the attacks were dressed in full military uniforms.

The following month, panic broke out in Gondama IDP camp (Kakua Chiefdom) as people feared another RUF attack was taking place. People were running around the camp and during the confusion, ECOMOG forces fired a heavy weapon, which resulted in the death of eight civilians. ULIMO soldiers came as reinforcements from Bo Town and on their way to Gondama, arrested two boys who they believed were former RUF members. The two boys were killed immediately, one

¹¹¹⁰ AFP, 26 April 1995.

¹¹¹¹ The precise figures of the casualties could not be obtained.

¹¹¹² It was not, however, totally clear when those SLA forces first arrived in the town as there are suggestions that some SLA members were already deployed at the time of the third attack.

¹¹¹³ Amnesty International Report, “Sierra Leone – Human Rights abuses in a war against civilians – 13 September 1995”.

¹¹¹⁴ This military victory has to be read in conjunction with the recent military training the SLA received from the Executive Outcomes, the South African mercenary company contracted by the Sierra Leonean Government. Similar “mopping up” operations were carried out in Moyamba District and, shortly after, in Bonthe District.

¹¹¹⁵ It seems that the SLA forces recaptured those towns.



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of them having his genital organ cut off before being killed and the other one being beaten and tied up. Both were thrown into the Sewa River.

A second attack on Dambala (Selenga Chiefdom) took place in August 1995 but unlike the first one, SLA forces fought the RUF forces and repelled them. Up to 30 people, identified as “strangers” passing through the village on their way to Bo, were killed during this attack, possibly by SLA forces at checkpoints, and were buried in a mass grave. Another attack took place in the nearby village of Joru, four miles from Dambala, but this time, RUF forces did not use their weapons. Rather, they hit people on their heads with stones until they died, claiming they were doing it to save their ammunition. RUF forces also burnt down up to 20 houses during this attack.

By the middle of 1995, the situation in Bo District was divided in two: while SLA forces had retaken control of a large area in the west of the District, minimising RUF activities in that area, the large eastern area was still severely affected by RUF incursions carried out mainly from other Districts.

c) Phase III: Late 1995 to 1997 and beyond¹¹¹⁶

The initiation of Kamajors began in mid to late 1995; rapidly, all the chiefdoms had their own Kamajors. They were initially armed with single barrel guns, sticks and spears.¹¹¹⁷ Furthermore, except in Bagbo and Lugbu Chiefdoms and a camp in Valunia Chiefdom, it should be noted that RUF forces did not have bases in Bo District where, unlike other Districts in the south, they were entering sporadically from other Districts.

In mid to late 1995, the idea of initiation came up in Bumpeh Chiefdom¹¹¹⁸ and people were sent to Bo Town for that purpose. After their initiation, Kamajors went back to Bumpeh Chiefdom, in the far west of Bo District, where they worked for some time hand-in-hand with SLA forces based in Bumpeh Town. While sent by the SLA commander to get some food in Nyayahun, north of Bumpeh Town, Kamajors came under fire. The identity of the men attacking the Kamajors proved to be SLA forces who had started developing a camp called “Bulkoh” with RUF forces near Nyayahun. Kamajors examining the bodies found the ID card, boots and uniform of an SLA commander who had sent them. On their return to Bumpeh, the SLA commander denied that the armed men were his men, which led the Kamajors to decide to join with more Kamajors to attack the camp.

During the second half of 1995, at the time the Kamajor initiation ceremonies were introduced in the District, towns and villages in Tikonko Chiefdom sent men to be initiated.¹¹¹⁹ During the first round of initiations in 1995, only people above 15 were initiated, but this changed later, although no date is specified. Tikonko Chiefdom soon came under the control of the Kamajors.

¹¹¹⁶ Little information was available on events in 1998 to 2001, because the District was under Kamajor control and no further RUF/AFRC attacks were reported.

¹¹¹⁷ It should be noted that compared to other Districts in the South, the records reveal little information on CDF activities, in particular on atrocities they may have committed. It is unclear whether this meant that fewer violations were committed or whether violations were committed and we lack information, as people are reluctant to talk on this.

¹¹¹⁸ The initiation ceremonies started in Bonthe District.

¹¹¹⁹ No more details could be obtained on the place where this initiation took place.



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In late 1995, as the RUF forces were spreading throughout Jiama Bongor Chiefdom, the elders of the chiefdom sought the Regent Chief's permission to initiate people into the Kamajor society. After permission and full support was granted by the Regent Chief, one person was sent to the village of Tihun (Bonthe District) to contact the Kamajor's High Priest Initiator. On arriving in the headquarters of Tellu, the High Priest Initiator requested that the Gondama – Tellu road be brushed for security, to prevent any RUF incursion. However, one young man who had returned to his village to look for food had his left hand cut off when he came across some RUF forces at Nagbena, two miles from Tellu.

In late 1995, RUF forces left Njala Town (Komboya Chiefdom) for their main base on the mountain near Njala. Knowing that there were no SLA forces stationed in Njala at that time, RUF forces regularly used the road to travel from the east end through Gumahu and Korkortie to the west end at Gbaama and back.

As Kamajor operations were spreading in Bonthe and Pujehun Districts, dislodged RUF forces from those Districts joined their companions in Bagbo Chiefdom, primarily in Momajoe, Sumbuya and Kissahoi, 4 miles from Momajoe. In December 1995 in Kissahoi, RUF forces brought with them over 300 civilians, who had been forced to carry property for the RUF. The regrouped forces launched a massive attack on civilians in December and over 700 civilians were captured in different villages, including Momajoe, Maniwa, Mani-Bo and Tissana. All those abductees were taken to Madoko (Bagbo Chiefdom) before being divided into groups and taken to different locations in Bo and Pujehun Districts, depending on their origin. The fate of these people is as yet unknown.

Events in 1996

After 1995, most of the population had fled Bagbe Chiefdom, which is north-east of Bo Town. There were instances of RUF incursions, such as one in early 1996, when RUF forces attacked Benduma (Bagbe Chiefdom), one of the largest towns in the chiefdom where the Paramount Chief resides. The young RUF forces, who were described as “uncontrollable”, started firing indiscriminately, killing a member of their own forces, whose body they cut into pieces and ate, while some drank the blood.

As in other chiefdoms, Valunia Chiefdom had its own Kamajors initiated in Bo Town by the Deputy Initiator sometime before 1996.¹¹²⁰ When they returned to their chiefdom in 1996, the Kamajors successfully repelled RUF forces from their Camp Kokahun, which was near the towns of Sengina and Yamandu, close to the border with Moyamba District. The Kamajors seized arms and ammunition, including machine guns, and freed some civilians who were being held captive at the base. At that time, SLA forces were removed from the chiefdom allegedly because of controversy surrounding the fact that their attire and weapons were similar to those of the RUF forces.

In early 1996, young men of Komboya Chiefdom were initiated in Bo-Messima and came back to settle in Njala. They successfully repelled the RUF forces from the chiefdom.¹¹²¹ At this time, the hunting of alleged RUF collaborators began and those suspected were seriously beaten, tied up and

¹¹²⁰ No further information is available on the exact dates.

¹¹²¹ There is little information available on how the Kamajors managed to fight off the RUF forces, including information relating to the number of battles, casualties, damage to property and so on.



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forced to sit under the sun. Anybody who had stayed in the towns during RUF attacks was suspected of being a collaborator. One person, who the RUF forces had appointed Town Commander, was undressed, tied up and severely beaten before being released. Freedom of movement was restricted and passes were required from civilians before they were allowed to move from one place to another. Any civilian failing to show such a pass at checkpoints could be suspected of being a “rebel” or a “rebel” collaborator and be treated accordingly.

Kamajors from Bonthe District entered Bagbo Chiefdom through Fola, south of Momajoe, in early 1996, where they established their first base. In order to repel RUF forces still based in Momajoe, it was decided that every town should nominate four “gallant” men to be initiated. Those men, numbering up to 200 from the entire chiefdom, were taken to Kpanda Kemo Chiefdom (Bonthe District), where the Kamajor’s High Priest Initiator initiated them in February 1996.

However, RUF forces were still active in the area and in April 1996, they launched attacks on a number of towns in the environs of Momajoe that the Kamajors were unable to withstand. A number of civilians were killed and others were wounded during these attacks. In a separate incident, RUF forces killed three men accused of collaboration with Kamajors in Momajoe and displayed their heads at checkpoints. Civilians continued to suffer from the RUF presence in this area by having their property taken away, being denied food, being thrown out of their houses and married women were not allowed to sleep with their husbands.

Later, but probably still in April 1996, the newly initiated Kamajors took control of Momajoe and its environs.¹¹²² As a result of this, RUF forces moved to Bendu (Malen Chiefdom, Pujehun District), taking a large number of civilians with them. It appears that these civilians were later rescued sometime in April 1996 by Kamajors from Pujehun District and taken to a town near Momajoe.

The Kamajors brought a large amount of stolen property they had found during their attack in Bendu with them to Sumbuya (Lugbu Chiefdom). Probably as a result of this, RUF forces attacked Sumbuya for the third time towards the end of April 1996. It was during this attack that Sumbuya was destroyed and many houses were burnt down.

The last attacks by RUF forces on Bagbo Chiefdom took place in May 1996, in the area surrounding Momajoe, during which houses were burnt down and two people were killed in Yegelleh. After this, the Kamajors controlled Lugbu Chiefdom, in particular the Sumbuya axis, from where the roads lead up to Bumpah Chiefdom, to Jiam Bongor Chiefdom and on to Kenema District and down through Bagbo Chiefdom to Pujehun District.

After the attack on Gerihun in 1995 in Baoma Chiefdom, adjoining Badija and Bagbe Chiefdoms to the south, RUF forces were still occupying some villages across the Sewa River from Gerihun. In some of these villages, people had to live with those forces, working for them and women were forcefully taken. As a result of this, in April 1996, 200 men were initiated into the CDF. However, their relationship with SLA forces still based in Gerihun was not friendly and problems began to arise between the two forces.¹¹²³

¹¹²² No further information is available.

¹¹²³ No further information is available.



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In April 1996, a group of well-armed people coming from the direction of Kori Chiefdom (Moyamba District) arrived in Baiama (Gbo Chiefdom). These men, whose identity is unknown, introduced themselves as SLA forces, but left the town in the evening to an unknown destination. After this, the Paramount Chief called a meeting to ask the townspeople to provide young men for initiation into the Kamajor society, which they did. A couple of weeks later, in late April 1996, the senior officer in charge of the SLA Brigade in Bo came to Baiama with 90 men, of whom 20 remained in the town and the other 70 went out on patrol. In early May 1996, unidentified uniformed men attacked Baiama and a number of houses were set on fire. The Kamajors stationed in Baiama believed the attack was perpetrated by SLA forces so there was no SLA presence in town until later in the month, when another SLA battalion was established in Baiama and began working together with the Kamajors.

Probably in early 1996,¹¹²⁴ the Kamajors from Bumpah Chiefdom attacked the RUF/SLA¹¹²⁵ camp called "Bulkoh". They killed up to 200 men, presumed to be both SLA and RUF forces. Some men were shot on the ground and others were hiding in the trees, where they were shot, fell into the Tarba River and drowned. The female commander was killed, her body cut into pieces by the Kamajors and cooked in a large pot for the whole day. This was apparently done for retaliatory or revenge purposes and the woman was not subsequently eaten. Following this, Kamajors leaving the area of Bumpah for Bo Town (Kakua Chiefdom) were often caught by SLA forces and killed.

Following the attack on "Bulkoh" camp, Kamajors from Bumpah Chiefdom moved from Bumpah to Tikonko, where they established their base. Following an attack by the SLA forces, they went back to Bumpah. On their way back to Bumpah, they discovered villages that had been looted and burnt by SLA and RUF forces. In these villages, bodies were found with plastic in their eyes and some people had been amputated. At Serabu, for example, up to 300 buildings were burnt, including the hospital, and the convent and the Archbishop's compound appeared to have been looted.

The main Kamajor base in Valunia Chiefdom at that time was in Mandu, which is on the road leading from Tonkolili District south towards Selenga Chiefdom. After they successfully repelled the RUF forces from Kokahun, the Kamajor commander decided to initiate more men. To do so, he asked the seven Section Chiefs to give as many men as they could. It was at this stage that young boys, described as school-going boys under the age of 18, were also initiated. As their number increased, they planned to attack Bokurr, the main RUF base in the chiefdom. It is reported that they undertook this operation together with SLA forces. The Kamajors came back with a quantity of arms and ammunition and some property previously stolen by RUF forces. After this attack, RUF forces attacked the Kamajors in all the sections of the chiefdom; anytime there was any threat in one of the sections, Kamajors from the other sections would come to provide support.

On or around 20 June 1996 at Tellu (Jama Bongor Chiefdom), the High Priest Initiator initiated up to 800 local hunters and youths into the Kamajor society. After the initiation, the new initiates were asked to return to their towns and villages to work for the protection of their towns and villages and for the chiefdom as a whole.

¹¹²⁴ The exact date is unclear and could not be confirmed by open sources.

¹¹²⁵ As mentioned earlier, this camp was reportedly composed of both RUF and SLA forces.



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In July 1996, armed men attacked Tellu in large numbers, some dressed in complete military uniform and fully armed, while some were carrying two rifles, one in their hands and the other one slung across their backs. Some Kamajors were killed, as was the Fullah headman of Jiamia Bongor Chiefdom. The Kamajor initiation site and some houses were burnt. Some Kamajors went to meet the advancing “rebels” - as described by civilians - and fought them near Gordie. The armed men were overpowered and the Kamajors came back with three heads, weapons and military uniforms. From what was found on the bodies, it appeared that most of them were military officers from the SLA Battalion deployed in Koribondo. The CDF National Coordinator was reported to have come to Gbaama the day after and to have left with some weapons and the military uniforms.

Thus, by the end of 1996, the whole District except Bo and Koribondo, which were controlled by SLA forces, was under CDF control. Clashes occurred many times between Kamajors and SLA forces at Koribondo and Bo Town. For example, towards the end of October 1996, fighting between those two forces took place in Bo Town and lasted several hours, leaving members of both sides and civilians dead.¹¹²⁶

Events in 1997

RUF forces launched subsequent attacks in Selenga Chiefdom in 1997 but each time, the Kamajors were successful in repelling those forces, with little killing of civilians or destruction of civilian property or houses.

In 1997, the Paramount Chief of Komboya Chiefdom, who had played an important role in bringing peace between the Kamajors and SLA forces in Bo, was invited together with some Kamajors to the Headquarter at Reservation Quarters, Bo Town. On his arrival, SLA forces opened fire, killing the Paramount Chief, some Kamajors and some civilians.

Kamajors controlled Bagbo and Lugbu Chiefdoms until the arrival of United Nations peacekeepers, during which time the Kamajors established a court system and assumed the mantle of authority from chiefs. At the same time, they were harassing the civilian population for food and suspected “rebel” collaborators were chased and killed. In addition, around this time,¹¹²⁷ the Commanders told the people in Limba (Bagbo Chiefdom) that the CDF National Coordinator had told them that every town under Kamajor control should contribute three stones of diamond not less than three carats each to buy weapons.

¹¹²⁶ AFP, 31 October 1996. According to the Sierra Leone Bi-Monthly Information Report No.9, “the fighting in Bo town on 30 October, 1996 erupted following the acrimonious break-up of a meeting between the Kamajors and the military at Brigade Headquarters, the purpose of which was to enable the Kamajors and the military to resolve their differences over Talama”, a village west of Bo. Two days earlier, “[...] it was reported that Kamajors in Talama village tried to prevent members of the military from looting zinc roofing sheets from Njala University College, 7 miles outside Talama. In response, the military in Talama detained the Kamajors involved at the local barracks. On hearing this news other Kamajors in the area decided to converge on the barracks with a view to resolving the situation. En route, these Kamajors were ambushed by soldiers using RPG launchers and suffered casualties [...]”

¹¹²⁷ This date is not clear.