

## Sierra Leone Chronology

1865

Britain declares the colony of Sierra Leone a protectorate. Colonial rule creates the underpinnings of a state but there are divisions between various societal and ethnic groups. Tensions between poor rural populations and wealthier groups Freetown, between northerners and southerners, and between various ethnic groups in the protectorate are sometimes controlled through the use of force. Economic development is based on mining of diamonds and other unprocessed minerals, such as iron, ore, rutile, platinum, and gold.

1961

There is a peaceful transition to **independence** under Sir Milton Margai and his Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP).

1967

The SLPP loses an election to the opposition All People's Congress (APC). Army commander David Lansana arrests APC leader Siaka Stevens and is subsequently arrested by junior officers. These Officers create a military government, the National Reformation Council.

1968

A second coup installs **Stevens'** government.

1971

Stevens declares Sierra Leone a republic, becoming president under a new constitution.

1978

Stevens makes Sierra Leone a one-party state and the **APC** the only legal political party. War breaks out between supporters of the APC and SLPP in the Pujehim district. Rebellion is also linked to smuggling activities on the Liberian border.

1985

Major General Joseph Saidu **Momoh** is appointed Stevens' successor.

1989

Civil war begins in Liberia in December with an insurgency launched by **Charles Taylor's** National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The war will last for 6 years.

1991

23 Mar The **Revolutionary United Front (RUF)**, led by **Foday Sankoh**, launches an invasion of Eastern Sierra Leone. The fighters include Sierra Leonean dissidents and Liberian fighters loyal to Charles Taylor.

May The RUF launches a war against farmers, villagers and miners. Under a populist rhetoric, they try to demonstrate Momoh's inability to protect his citizens. Momoh assembles a force of young untrained troops. Britain denies his request for help.

Aug Following a referendum, the constitution is amended to introduce a multiparty system.

1992

Jan Rebels attack strategic economic targets in the diamond-rich areas of the southeast.

29 Apr Junior officers seize power and establish the National Provisional Ruling Council (**NPRC**), with Captain Valentine **Strasser** as chairman.

Nov An NPRC offensive pushes rebels out of the diamond rich southeast and into Liberia. There they receive support from **NPFL** leader Charles Taylor.

1993

Mar The rebels regroup and intensify their attacks on rural villages, with an increasing number of civilian casualties. **Nigerian troops arrive in Freetown.**

1994

Jan The NPRC increases its ranks, recruiting boys as young as 12. New soldiers are "**sobels**," soldiers by day and rebels by night, looting and pillaging towns and villages.

Sept Nigeria and Sierra Leone enter into a Mutual Defense Pact.

1995

6 Jan Strasser offers the RUF a 6-point peace plan and threatens military action if it is refused.

18-19 Jan The RUF overruns the Sierra Rutile and Sieromco Mines, hurting government revenues

Feb RUF fighters advance towards the capital.

Mar Strasser enters into a contract with the South African security firm **Executive Outcomes (EO)**. EO begins training programs for the Sierra Leone Army. Army with EO air support retakes Moyamba.

May EO joins the Nigerian and Ghanaian troops in Freetown, driving the RUF back.

Dec EO moves into rural areas, taking back diamond-mining areas. They work with the **Kamajoh traditional militia**, a local defense force, providing training and support.

1996

Jan EO retakes the Sierra Rutile mine, and fights with the Kamajohs against the RUF in its rural strongholds.

Feb & Mar **Presidential and legislative elections are held.** Ahmad Tejan **Kabbah** of Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) wins, and the

NPRC transfers power to the civilian government. EO continues to work with the increasingly powerful Kamajohs against the RUF.

- Apr-Nov Kabbah and RUF leader Sankoh agree to an indefinite ceasefire, then amnesty for RUF, the **Abidjan Peace Agreement** (Nov)  
EO required to leave following the est. of neutral monitoring group.  
Sept EO charging US 1.8 m per month for less than 100 personnel w/ 2 Russian helicopters and logistics. With IMP requirements  
pressing for govt cuts, Kabbah renegotiates EO fees.  
Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> coup attempt in 4 months.

## 1997

- 31 Jan **EU officially departs Sierra Leone.**  
17 Apr Britain and Sierra Leone sign an agreement regarding military training.  
25 May A group of junior officers stage a **coup**. Kabbah flees to Guinea, and the **Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)** assumes  
power. There is extensive looting and killing.  
26 May The Economic Community of West African States Ceasefire Monitoring Group (**ECOMOG**) establishes control at the Hastings  
and Lungi Airports.  
27 May The AFRC suspends Sierra Leone's constitution and bans political parties.  
28-29 May The RUF orders its fighters to support the AFRC. AFRC assumes control of Koidu mines.  
30-31 May Approximately 1200 people (including 300 foreigners) are evacuated from Freetown. UN withdrawal staff.  
1 June A Nigerian attempt to oust the junta fails after Nigerian troops and 800 Foreigners are trapped in a hotel, under siege. An ICRC  
representative negotiates their safe passage. On invitation of the AFRC, the RUF joins the Junta as the "People's Party".  
2 June **US Marines evacuate 1200 more people**, including those from the hotel. The OAU condemns the coup and calls for the  
restoration of Kabbah.  
3 June **AFRC/RUF forces are in control of Freetown.** Nigeria brings in hundreds of troops.  
27 June The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) adopts a three a point plan to persuade the junta to step down:  
dialogue, an embargo and if necessary use of force. A Committee of Four (C-4) of Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Ghana is  
appointed.  
30 June Two thousand RUF fighters arrive in Freetown to support the AFRC.  
18-19 July ECOWAS meets with AFRC/RUF to try to negotiate a return to constitutional rule. Unsuccessful, they impose an embargo on  
military supplies to the junta while the Nigerians mount a naval blockade of Freetown.  
18 Aug Anti-coup students demonstrations in Freetown are suppressed violently.  
29 Aug ECOWAS adopts sanctions on petroleum products, arms imports, and international travel of AFRC/RUF leaders. C-4 becomes C-  
5 with the addition of Liberia.  
8 Oct Under UN security Council resolution 1132, the **UN imposes as embargo** on weapons and other military equipment, petroleum,  
and petroleum products to Sierra Leone.  
Oct-Dec ECOMOG, C-5 and the AFRC/RUF agree to restore Kabbah to office within six months.  
Dec Reps from Sandline meet with President Kabbah to discuss military plan for restoring civilian rule.

## 1998

- 18 Jan Kamajoh militiamen, backed by Nigerian forces and with logistical support from Sandline International, capture the diamond-  
mining town of Tongo. This deprives the AFRC of a large source of income.  
18-25 Jan **Fierce fighting erupts in Freetown.**  
6 Mar The British Foreign Office is implicated for alleged involvement in Sandline's plan to ship weapons to Sierra Leone in violation of  
the UN embargo.  
10 Mar Kabbah is reinstated as president.  
16 Mar The UN embargo on petroleum and petroleum products terminated, while Kabbah declares a state of national emergency.  
16 Apr UNSC Resolution 1156 terminates petroleum embargo.  
Mar-May **ECOMOG takes last AFRC/RUF stronghold**, the Kono District, and by May has all provincial capitals under control.  
5 June The UN arms embargo is lifted for ECOMOG and the government.  
11 July ECOMOG captures Kailima captures Kailahum, the location of RUF headquarters, but RUF forces evade capture and move north  
and west.  
12 July UNSC Resolution 1181 establishes UNOMSIL as a 70-member observer force.  
17 Aug The RUF threatens a terror campaign directed at civilians should Sankoh remain in government custody.  
23 Oct **Sankoh is sentenced to death** for treason.  
Dec Foreign personnel are evacuated from Freetown as the security situation deteriorates.

## 1999

- 6 Jan **The AFRC/RUF reenters Freetown by force** in a major setback for ECOMOG. Massive destruction, loss of life, and  
amputations take place in the eastern sector.  
Apr-May Sankoh is allowed to go to Lome, Togo for consultations. Kabbah and Sankoh sign a preliminary ceasefire arrangement in Lome.  
7 July Kabbah and Sankoh sign Lome Peace Agreement.  
10 July Thousands of starving civilians and rebels emerge from the bush in search of food.  
4 Aug 10 UNOMSIL and 20 ECOMOG kidnapped by 'rebels'  
22 Oct The UN Mission in Sierra Leone (**UNAMSIL**) is established, authorizing 6000 troops to ensure the security of the government  
and ECOMOG.

- 2 Nov Kabbah forms his new cabinet, including representatives of the RUF and AFRC.
- 2000**
- 23 Jan A moratorium on diamond mining is announced, but rebels ignore it.  
Jan MSF staff kidnapped by RUF's Sam Maskita Bockerie.
- 2 Feb UNHCR reports that rebel fighters continue to loot, rape and mutilate civilians.
- 7 Feb **UNAMSIL is increased from 6000 to 11,000.**
- 2 May **ECOMOG withdraws** from Sierra Leone.
- 8-17 May **RUF rebels hold approximately 500 UN peacekeepers.** After the shooting down of a UN helicopter, **mass evacuation of foreigners** begins. 30,000 protesters march toward Sankoh's residence. UNAMSIL troops fire into the air, disperse the crowd and the RUF opens fire, killing 17 and injuring many more. Sankoh escapes his house and goes into hiding, but is captured, stripped, and paraded through the streets.
- 22 May Bodies suspected to be peacekeepers are found, raising concerns over the continued holding of hostages by the RUF.
- 30 May 467 of the peacekeepers abducted by the RUF are released; 258 still remain surrounded.
- July The UN Security Council imposes an **embargo on the sale of rough diamonds** from Sierra Leone. This is followed by measures on the part of the diamond industry to suppress illegal trade in "conflict diamonds".
- 14 Aug The UN Security Council adopts Resolution 1315 creating a **special hybrid tribunal** (international and Sierra Leonean involvement) to try those responsible for the most serious crimes. It also authorizes the creation of an independent special court to try crimes against humanity and war crimes.
- 10 Sept In a surprise attack, 150 members of the **British** Special Forces and parachute regiment free remaining British and Sierra Leonean hostages.
- 2001**
- Jan The government postpones elections due to instability.
- Mar UN troops begin to deploy peacefully in rebel-held territory.
- May Disarmament of rebels begin. Sierra Leone's army, trained by the British, begins to deploy in rebel held areas.
- 2002**
- Jan The UN mission says 45,000 fighters have been disarmed. The UN and the government agree to put a war crimes court in place.
- May Kabbah wins a landslide victory in elections. His Sierra Leone People's Party secures a majority in parliament.
- July British troops leave Sierra Leone after their two-year mission to help end the civil war.  
-Rebel leader Foday Sankoh dies of natural causes while waiting to be tried for war crimes.
- 2003**
- Aug President Kabbah tells truth and reconciliation commission that he had no say over operations of pro-government militias during war.
- 2004**
- Feb Disarmament and rehabilitation of more than 70,000 civil war combatants officially completed.
- Mar UN backed war crimes tribunal opens courthouse to try senior militia leaders from both sides of civil war.
- May First local elections in more than three decades.
- June War crimes trials begin.
- Sept UN hands over control of security in capital to local forces.