

Special Court for Sierra Leone  
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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**No Country Found to Take Sankoh for Medical Treatment**

Doctors say that Foday Saybana Sankoh urgently needs to travel outside of Sierra Leone for a medical assessment and treatment; the obstacle is finding a country to accept him temporarily. The alleged leader of the former rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front, was indicted earlier this year by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Sankoh was in a catatonic state when he was first taken into the custody of the Court in March. According to the Court's Medical Officer Donald Harding, he is incapable of walking, talking or feeding himself.

"His condition is also deteriorating," said Doctor Harding. The Special Court held a press conference on the matter Wednesday with the Court's Registrar and Chief of Defence as well as Sankoh's wife and younger brother. Together they appealed to the international community for help on humanitarian grounds.

In April, Sankoh was taken from the Special Court's detention centre in Bonthe to a hospital in Freetown for treatment for an unspecified infection. Doctor Harding says that the condition requires further diagnosis with a CAT-scan machine and other medical equipment which does not exist in Sierra Leone. "Until we understand what is wrong with him we can't treat him properly" said the doctor.

During Sierra Leone's armed conflict, the United Nations Security Council's Sanctions Committee placed a travel ban on Sankoh which is still in effect. The Court's Registrar Robin Vincent said that the Committee would likely be persuaded to lift the ban if a country were to offer to take him. "The government of the country would have to ensure there were no legal impediments to accepting him," he added.

The President of the Court, Justice Geoffrey Robertson QC, wrote a letter to the Secretary General of the United Nations this week which included a request for a Security Council resolution with Chapter VII authority. This would obligate member states of the UN to cooperate with the Court.

At Sankoh's initial hearing in March he did not speak when he was asked whether he pleaded guilty or not guilty to the charges made against him. The presiding judge at the time, Benjamin M. Itoe of Cameroon, ordered that he undergo a full physiological and psychiatric examination to determine whether he is fit to stand trial. The Court has as yet been unable to carry out that request.

Sankoh's wife Fatou called on the international community to practice what it preaches. "My husband is accused of committing crimes against humanity but now to allow him to just wither away and die, where is the humanity in that?" she said.

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