



Special Court for Sierra Leone

Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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Defence Office Holds Seminar to Train Investigators

The Special Court's Defence Office opened a one-day seminar Wednesday aimed at preparing Defence investigators for the imminent opening of the Defence case in two of the Court's three ongoing trials.



The session was taped by the Public Affairs Office for the use of foreign-based counsel not currently in Sierra Leone.

Nine Defence investigators working on behalf of accused from the CDF, RUF and AFRC trials, along with Defence Office staff, attended Wednesday's seminar.

The training covered logistical and other issues pertaining to all three trials, with matters concerning witnesses high on the agenda. The investigators heard from representatives of the Court's Witness and Victims Support Section and

UNICEF.

The seminar was opened by Principal Defender Vincent O. Nmehielle, who told participants that the Defence had to do more than pay lip service to the ideal of equality of arms.

"We must be seen to seriously consider the issues surrounding the trial rights of the accused person, or else human rights itself would be on trial," Mr Nmehielle said.

Mr Nmehielle told the investigators to "commit to the idea that every accused person is innocent until proven guilty."

"You would definitely therefore work to the best of your ability having that conviction in your mind in terms of putting their case forward," he added.

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted eleven persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

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