



Special Court for Sierra Leone
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PRESS RELEASE

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Principal Defender Hails Opening of Defence Case as Another Landmark for the Special Court

The Defence opened its case Thursday in the trial of three alleged former leaders of Sierra Leone's Civil Defence Forces (CDF).



*Special Court Principal Defender
Vincent Nmehielle*

Lawyers representing Second Accused Moinina Fofana and Third Accused Allieu Kondewa made opening statements to the Court outlining the cases they would make for the Defence.

First Accused Samuel Hinga Norman made an opening statement on his own behalf on 15 June 2004, at the beginning of the Prosecution's case. Under Rule 84 of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, each accused is allowed one opening statement.

Principal Defender Vincent Nmehielle hailed the opening of the Defence case on Thursday as another landmark for the Special Court and a milestone for international justice.

"Justice involves fairness, moral, and impartial treatment of all persons, especially before the law," Mr. Nmehielle said in a statement (*complete statement attached*). "It is often seen as the continued effort to do what is right. Justice is a particularly foundational concept within all systems of law, and draws highly upon established and well-regarded social traditions and values."

The trial of the CDF accused began on 3 June 2004. The Prosecution concluded its case on 14 July 2005, and oral arguments on Defence Motions for Judgment of Acquittal were heard on 20 September 2005.

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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