



Special Court for Sierra Leone Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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U.K. Judges Gain First-Hand Insight on International Humanitarian Law at Special Court

The Interim Registrar and the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court briefed a delegation of fifty-one visiting British immigration judges Monday on the progress of the Special Court and the challenges ahead.



The judges are currently on a private visit to West Africa, to see first hand the situation in the region.

Interim Registrar Lovemore Munlo SC described how the Special Court came about, and some of the major challenges it has had to meet in the first three years of its existence.

“Funding of the Court is based only on voluntary contributions and this has got its own challenges,” Mr. Munlo said. “It creates uncertainty as to whether you will get funding, and whether it will come in

time.”

He told the judges that being situated in the country where the conflict took place required the Court to connect and interact, through the Outreach Section, with the people of Sierra Leone.

“(We must) explain to them what the court is here for, what it is supposed to achieve, and also get feedback from the Sierra Leonean people relating to how they perceive the court,” Mr. Munlo said. “Across the social fabric, we talk to schoolchildren, we talk to chiefs, we talk to police officers and military people, across the country.”

Chief Prosecutor Desmond de Silva QC told the judges that when the United Nations Security Council decided to establish the Special Court, they took into account lessons learned from the other tribunals.

“They took the view, perhaps rightly, that the other tribunals were costing too much and taking too long to dispense justice,” he said.

“I do believe that unless one can discharge one’s duty to the international community within a politically

acceptable timeframe, you have failed,” Mr. de Silva said. “The administration of justice is vital in bringing those who have perpetrated abominable crimes against man to account, because the victims are entitled to see justice done.”

Said Mr. de Silva: “The whole process of trials tears at the scabs of war. Trials must be brought to a speedy end to allow the healing process to begin and for people to move beyond the memories of the atrocities into a new future.”

The visiting judges also observed a trial session, and met informally with the Special Court Trial Judges of Trial Chambers I and II, and with Justice Gelaga-King of the Appeals Chamber.

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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