



Special Court for Sierra Leone
Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 26 October 2009

Appeals Chamber Upholds Sentences for Convicted Revolutionary United Front Leaders

The Special Court Appeals Chamber, by a majority, has upheld the convictions of three former leaders of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Justice Renate Winter of Austria delivered the majority judgment, dismissing a total of 96 Defence grounds of appeal.



Former RUF Interim Leader Issa Hassan Sesay and Senior RUF Commander Morris Kallon were each convicted in February 2009 on 16 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war. Former RUF Security Chief Augustine Gbao was convicted on 14 counts.

The Appeals Chamber judgment, read out today in Freetown, upholds first-ever convictions by an international tribunal for forced marriage as a crime against humanity, and for attacks against United Nations peacekeepers. The Chamber also upheld convictions for the recruitment and use of child soldiers.



Issa Hassan Sesay



Morris Kallon



Augustine Gbao

The Appeals Chamber unanimously upheld the convictions of Sesay and Kallon on all 16 counts. The Chamber unanimously overturned Gbao's conviction on Count 2 (collective punishments) and found that he was not responsible for one of the two attacks against UN peacekeepers (Count 15) for which he was convicted by the Trial Chamber.

The Judges, by a majority, upheld Gbao's liability for crimes pursuant to his participation in the Joint Criminal Enterprise.

The Prosecution appealed on three grounds, including a challenge to the Trial Chamber finding that the Joint Criminal Enterprises ended in April 1998, the acquittal of Gbao on Count 12 (the recruitment or use of child soldiers), and the acquittal of Sesay, Kallon and Gbao for taking of UN peacekeepers as hostages (Count 18 of the indictment).

The Appeals Chamber allowed the Prosecution's Ground 3, in part, holding that some RUF fighters other than the three Appellants did commit the crime of hostage taking, but that the Prosecution had failed to establish that Sesay, Kallon or Gbao were liable for that offence. The Chamber, by a majority, dismissed the Prosecution's Ground 1 and unanimously dismissed the Prosecution's Ground 2.

In April 2009, the Trial Chamber sentenced Sesay to 52 years imprisonment. Kallon received a term of 40 years, and Gbao a sentence of 25 years. The Appeals Chamber upheld the total terms of imprisonment for each of the three, although the sentences for some counts were revised.

In addition to the majority opinion, four separate opinions were read out. Justice Winter read out a separate concurring opinion which was joined by Justice Shireen Avis Fisher. A separate concurring opinion was also read out by Justice Emmanuel Ayoola. Justice George Gelaga King read out a dissenting opinion which was joined by Justice Jon Kamanda. Justice Fisher read out a partially dissenting and concurring opinion in which Justice Winter joined in part.

Today's appeal judgment is the last that will be delivered in Freetown, and marks a significant step forward as the Special Court for Sierra Leone works to complete its mandate. Two other trials held in Sierra Leone are complete, including appeals.

The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor continues in The Hague.

#END

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.

INFORMATION FOR MEDIA - NOT FOR ADVERTISING

Produced by the
Outreach and Public Affairs Office
Special Court for Sierra Leone
Mobile: 232 76 655732
Email: SCSL-pressoffice@un.org

Visit our website at www.sc-sl.org