



Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone
Public Information

PRESS RELEASE

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RUF Convict Augustine Gbao Granted Conditional Early Release, With a Three Month Delay

Former RUF commander Augustine Gbao has been granted conditional early release, with a three month delay, during which time he must undergo specific training geared to his understanding of and acceptance of responsibility for the harm he inflicted by his crimes.

Upon certification by the Registrar that he has completed this training, he will be allowed to serve the remainder of his 25-year sentence in his community in Blama, in Small Bo Chiefdom, subject to strict conditions and close monitoring. Gbao has served his sentence in Mpanga Prison in Rwanda since October 2009, and will complete his full sentence in April 2028.

In his decision today, RSCSL President Justice Jon Kamanda imposed a number of special conditions, in addition to those laid out in the Court's Practice Direction on Conditional Early Release. These include a requirement that Gbao apologise on radio and television to the victims of his crimes and to the people of Sierra Leone. His apology must include an acceptance of responsibility for his crimes and harm to the peace process. He must also express remorse, commit to reconciliation and maintenance of peace in Sierra Leone, and not associate with any ex-combatants or other persons convicted by the Special Court.

These conditions require Gbao to cooperate with a Monitoring Authority, to obey all orders of the Court, to refrain from committing any crime, and to pose no threat to former witnesses, among others.

Justice Kamanda found that Gbao had largely behaved properly in prison, not interfered with witnesses, had apologised for his crimes and had shown remorse, and had completed several educational programmes in prison on international humanitarian law, war crimes, crimes against humanity and human rights. He also received training on the rule of law and on general respect for law and order.

Registrar Binta Mansaray stressed that the Residual Special Court is an international court, and that conditional early release is strictly a legal process. Under the Rules of the Court, decisions relating to the conditional early release and transfer of prisoners are made solely by the President of the Court.

Gbao is the third RSCSL convicted person to receive conditional early release. Moinina Fofana was returned to Sierra Leone in March 2015 and completed his sentence in May 2018. Alieu Kondewa was granted conditional early release and was returned to Sierra Leone in July 2018. He is currently completing his 20-year sentence in his community in Bo. His full term of imprisonment will end in May 2023.

Augustine Gbao was a senior commander of the Revolutionary United Front from 1996. From 1998 to 2002 he was the Overall Security Commander of rebel forces, and after January 2002 he was the joint commander of rebel forces in the Makeni area of Sierra Leone. He was indicted by the Special Court on 16 April 2003 on 18 counts alleging he had committed serious crimes during Sierra Leone's civil war. He was arrested the same day.

Gbao was found guilty of 13 of the 18 counts against him, including for acts of terrorism (a war crime), extermination (a crime against humanity), murder (a crime against humanity), murder (a war crime), rape (a crime against humanity), sexual slavery (a crime against humanity), other inhumane act (forced marriage) (a crime against humanity), outrages upon personal dignity (a war crime), cruel treatment (a war crime), other inhumane acts (a crime against humanity), enslavement (a crime against humanity), pillage (a war crime), and attacks against UN peacekeepers (other serious violation of international humanitarian law). He was found not guilty on charges of the use of child soldiers (other serious violation of international humanitarian law), of murder of UN peacekeepers (a crime against humanity), the murder of UN peacekeepers (a war crime), and taking peacekeepers hostage (a war crime).

#END

The Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone is responsible for the ongoing legal obligations of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which concluded its mandate in December 2013. These include supervision of prison sentences, witness protection and support, maintenance and preservation of the archives, and assistance to national prosecution authorities.

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