

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Prosecutor Welcomes Sentences in AFRC Case

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone welcomed today's decision of Trial Chamber II to sentence the three AFRC defendants to prison terms ranging from 45 to 50 years. The sentences follow last month's verdicts convicting all three defendants of eleven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Alex Tamba Brima and Santigie Borbor Kanu were sentenced to 50 years in prison, while Brima Bazy Kamara was sentenced to 45 years.

"This punishment reflects the horrific crimes for which each defendant was convicted", said Stephen Rapp, the Prosecutor.

The crimes include murder and extermination; sexual violence and rape; amputation and mutilation; terror, slavery and pillage. Today's decision also includes the first sentences in history for the crime of the recruitment and use in hostilities of child soldiers.

Brima, Kamara and Kanu committed "some of the most heinous, brutal and atrocious crimes ever recorded in human history", said Presiding Judge Julia Sebutinde. "Innocent men, women and children hacked to death, burned alive, women gang-raped to death, sons forced to rape mothers, brothers forced to rape sisters, women's pregnant stomachs slit open to settle bets on the sex of the fetus, arms chopped off, heads placed on sticks..."

"The Trial Chamber cannot recall any other conflict in human warfare where the civilian population was subjected to such horrific acts," Justice Sebutinde went on to say.

The defendants not only ordered, but also directly participated in, the commission of these grave crimes. One showed his men how to cut off the hands and arms of victims. Another ordered that entire families be burned alive in their homes.

"These are crimes that shock the conscience of humankind", said Prosecutor Rapp. "These sentences represent an international recognition of the horrible suffering inflicted on the people of Sierra Leone. But they also send a signal to similar leaders, wherever they may be: If you brutalise civilians to gain or hold power you too can face condemnation and punishment".

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