



Special Court for Sierra Leone
Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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Special Court Hands Over Courthouse and Complex to the Government of Sierra Leone

The Special Court today formally handed over the Court's landmark courthouse and the surrounding court complex to the Government of Sierra Leone, as it takes the final steps towards closure of the institution.



In a colourful ceremony in front of the courthouse, Registrar Binta Mansaray handed an over-sized ceremonial key to Sierra Leone's Attorney-General and Minister of Justice Franklyn Bai Kargbo.

The courthouse saw the trials of leaders of the Civil Defence Forces, the Revolutionary United Front, and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, as well as the initial appearance of former Liberian

President Charles Taylor. These trials saw first-ever convictions for attacks against UN peacekeepers, forced marriage as a crime against humanity, and for the use of child soldiers.

The building will now house the Supreme Court of Sierra Leone.

"We will be the first international court – the very first – in more than half a century to complete our mandate successfully and to close," Ms. Mansaray said. "We now hand over to the Residual Special Court in the knowledge that we have accomplished what has been asked of us."

Attorney-General Kargbo hailed the Court's mandate which, he said, had been envisaged as a way to bring an end to impunity, to break the cycle of violence which took place during Sierra Leone's civil war and, he said, to give the people of Sierra Leone "an opportunity to show the world that Sierra Leoneans prefer peace, development, rule of law, justice and accountability instead of war."

"The undesirability of impunity and crimes against civilians under international humanitarian law is now firmly entrenched in the psyche of every Sierra Leonean," Mr. Kargbo said. "The country continues to rebuild and make progress with its development in a free, fair and peaceful atmosphere."

Mr. Giles Norman, the Chair of the Special Court's Management Committee and the Committee's

representative for Canada, recalled that the Court's agreement called for the return of the 11.5-acre site and buildings to Government after the court had completed its work. "This significant day has come upon us all," he said.

"This complex is an internationally recognised monument for international criminal justice, and it is my pleasure to be here on this significant day to witness its handover to the Government of Sierra Leone," Mr. Norman said. "It is our hope that this Courthouse will be used as a tool to enhance access to justice for the people of Sierra Leone. It is our hope that the legacy of what this Courthouse has achieved is remembered forever."

Sierra Leone's Chief Justice, Umu Hawa Tejan-Jalloh expressed appreciation for the handing over of the courthouse. "We are grateful for this wonderful legacy," she said. "The judiciary of Sierra Leone will ensure that these courtrooms are well maintained and put to good use, to dispense justice and enhance the rule of law and our own jurisprudence."

The Attorney-General and Minister of Justice unveiled the new inscription on the side of the courthouse: "The Special Court for Sierra Leone, upon the successful completion of its mandate, officially handed the courthouse over to the Government and People of Sierra Leone. Presented to the Chief Justice on 2 December 2013 by SCSL Registrar Madam Binta Mansaray."

The formal ceremony was followed by a "soft opening" of the Sierra Leone Peace Museum, located within the court complex.

#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.

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