

Special Court for Sierra Leone  
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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Special Court Investigators Cordon off their First Crime Scene

Investigators for the Special Court for Sierra Leone yesterday cordoned off a 300 meter perimeter around a flooded diamond mining pit in the village of Tombodu in the Kono district. Local residents allege that the bodies of hundreds of civilians have been dumped there.

The Chief of Investigations, Al White, briefed reporters, showing them bones and other remains at the edge of the pit. He said that they were clearly human. Residents of Tombodu said that mass murder occurred there when their village was attacked in 1998.

The site is the first official crime scene cordoned off by Sierra Leonean and international investigators working for the Prosecutor of the Special Court, David Crane. His mandate is to prosecute those who bear the greatest responsibility for the atrocities committed during the country's civil war. Crane told reporters at the site, "My investigators are hopeful that the evidence here will lead to convictions."

Atrocities seemed to have occurred elsewhere in the village sites. Al White showed reporters a house in the village that contained numerous human skulls and other human remains. But he said that the site had been tampered with and was of limited use for investigations.

The Chief of Tombodu, K.L. Sogbor, implored the people to respect the crime scene at the diamond pit to help the Prosecutor deliver justice for the village and for the people of Sierra Leone. Crane expressed his gratitude for the chief's support and for the assistance of the Sierra Leone Police and the Pakistani Battalion of UN peacekeepers for helping to turn the pit into a secure crime scene. Crane said that he would evaluate the evidence carefully and follow it wherever it leads.

The Prosecutor and his team began their investigations last month. Crane says he has a broad mandate and will pursue leads throughout the country, the region, and the world.

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