



Special Court for Sierra Leone Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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Special Court Officials Brief U.N. Security Council on Progress, Challenges

The President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Justice Renate Winter, and Special Court Prosecutor Stephen Rapp today briefed the UN Security Council on the progress of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and challenges the Court faces in completing its mandate.



Justice Renate Winter

The two Court officials highlighted a number of “firsts” by the Special Court for Sierra Leone which have set many precedents in the development of international humanitarian law.



Prosecutor Stephen Rapp

The Special Court was the first to rule that a national amnesty does not apply to the prosecution of international crimes, and was the first court to adjudicate the limitations of immunity by a head of state before an international criminal court.

The Special Court was the first to enter convictions for the forcible recruiting and use of child soldiers, for acts of terrorism in a non-international armed conflict, and for the crime of attacks on UN peacekeepers.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone also pronounced the first-ever convictions on the charge of sexual slavery and for the crime of forced marriage as a crime against humanity.

Justice Winter noted that the Special Court’s impact on Sierra Leone extends well beyond the findings in its cases.

“The Special Court has transferred expertise to Sierra Leoneans via a number of programmes, including capacity-building and training on police investigations, case management, courtroom interpretation, archiving, witness protection, and detention standards,” she said.

Prosecutor Stephen Rapp asked the Security Council for the cooperation and support necessary for the Court to complete its mandate “so that justice can be achieved for the victims of those crimes (committed against the civilian population in Sierra Leone).” He also stressed the Court’s groundbreaking work in reaching out to the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

“(The Special Court) is also the court that has placed the highest priority on outreach—in providing accurate information about its proceedings to the population throughout Sierra Leone, and for the Taylor

case in Liberia as well,” Mr. Rapp said. “For as important as it is to do justice, for all those that a court intends to serve, it is also important that justice be seen to be done.”

Justice Winter told Security Council members that the Court is projecting a funding shortfall this year.

“This shortfall poses the real possibility of disrupting our work, which would have disastrous consequences for the Council’s extensive peace building efforts in Sierra Leone and Liberia,” Justice Winter said. “A disruption in the proceedings would send the wrong message to the international community, jeopardizing the fight against impunity and potentially calling into question our collective commitment to international justice.”

The Prosecutor told the Security Council that the Court’s immediate financial situation constitutes an “impending crisis.”

“Even if all pledged donations from donors for this year come in early, our funds will run dry before next year’s round of donations, and the Special Court will not have the resources necessary to complete its work,” Mr. Rapp said.

The Court officials also briefed the Security Council on the necessity to make arrangements for residual issues, such as the enforcement of sentences, Court archives, and the protection of witnesses who have testified before the Special Court.

“Because the necessary residual mechanisms must last as long as victims and witnesses need protection and until every sentence has been served, it will be a great and on-going challenge to maintain the mechanism in the long-term based purely on voluntary contributions,” Justice Winter said.

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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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