



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone – SLE37320 – Sierra Leone People’s Party – All People’s Congress – Armed Forces Revolutionary Council – Human Rights advocates – 1997 Military Coup – 2007 Elections – Ethnic groups – Drug dealers – State protection – Internal relocation

7 September 2010

- 1. What is the situation for Fulas in Sierra Leone? Are they discriminated against and/or treated as foreigners because they are regarded as Guineans rather than as Sierra Leoneans? Do they face discrimination in employment, education etc and/or possible persecution from the APC government because they are not traditional supporters of the APC? Are Fulas likely to be regarded as anti-government on account of their ethnicity?**

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) states that Sierra Leone is home to 178,400 people of Fula/Fulbe/Fulani ethnicity, or 2.9% of the population, who live mainly in the north.¹ International Crisis Group (ICG) reports that the Fula, also referred to as Peul, or Fulani, are “an historic trading and cattle-herding diaspora with networks across West Africa”. Although Fula have lived in Sierra Leone for centuries, particularly large numbers migrated from Guinea in the 1960s and 1970s, “many without formal naturalisation”. Fula in Sierra Leone are thus “often considered ‘strangers’ by settled, land-owning groups”. Nevertheless, the Fula “community has since grown and prospered”.² In 1996, the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB) similarly reported that “the Fula have historically been merchants and traders, with origins from the neighbouring state of Guinea. As such, the Fula are viewed by some nationals as being exploitative outsiders in control of certain economic domains”.³

No specific information was found to indicate that Fulas in Sierra Leone experience discrimination in areas such as employment or education. According to Freedom House, “[s]tate policy does not discriminate against the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic rights of minorities. Most minorities do not suffer systematic discrimination with regard to the

¹ Minority Rights Group International (undated), ‘Sierra Leone Overview’, World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples <http://www.minorityrights.org/4807/sierra-leone/sierra-leone-overview.html> – Accessed 24 February 2010 – Attachment 3

² International Crisis Group 2008, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, Africa Report N°143, 31 July, p.5 – Attachment 4

³ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1996, SLE24140.E – *Sierra Leone: Information on the Fula ethnic group and whether they are being targeted by the government or the rebels*, 7 June – Attachment 5

enforcement of their rights and enjoy full equality before the law, albeit within the serious limits of state capacity to provide it”.⁴ However, the US Department of State argues that “[s]trong ethnic loyalties, bias, and stereotypes existed among all ethnic groups...Ethnic loyalty remained an important factor in the government, armed forces, and business. Complaints of ethnic discrimination in government appointments, contract assignment, and military promotions were common with the former SLPP and current APC ruling parties”.⁵

ICG reports that leaders of the Fula community strongly support the opposition Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP).⁶ The author of an August 2007 article in Sierra Leone’s *Concord Times* states that “I have not come across any Fula who supports [the All People’s Congress (APC)]”.⁷ In addition, one prominent Fula family in Sierra Leone, which has produced a number of leaders including a Chief Justice,⁸ expressed their unwavering support for the SLPP prior to the 2007 elections, stating that “[w]e were born SLPP and we will die SLPP”.⁹ However, the US Department of State reports that although “[e]thnic affiliations traditionally have been a strong influence in political party membership” for dominant ethnic groups the Mende, the Temne and the Limbas, other ethnic minority groups in Sierra Leone “had no strong political party affiliations” during the 2007 elections.¹⁰ Freedom House similarly argues that although “[p]opular discourse often ascribes ethnic biases to particular political parties...electoral data indicate that there is significant flexibility in regional and ethnic voting patterns”.¹¹

Nevertheless, during and following the 2007 elections the Fula community, whose “leaders strongly backed the SLPP”, was targeted, suffering “sporadic attacks, allegedly perpetrated by vindictive APC supporters”. However, this appears to have been motivated by political rather than ethnic affiliations. ICG reports that “explicitly identity-based violence...was not motivated by deep-rooted ethnic antagonisms”, but instead “was directed at particular minorities whose voting rights were questioned”.¹² Only Sierra Leonean citizens are permitted to vote.¹³

An article in *The Independent* from March 2007 indicates that Fulas were accused by the APC and the PMDC of being illegal immigrants and therefore did not have the right to

⁴ Reno, W. 2010, ‘Countries at the Crossroads: Sierra Leone’, Freedom House website, p.8

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7914-9.pdf> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 1

⁵ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Section 6 – Attachment 2

⁶ International Crisis Group 2008, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, Africa Report N°143, 31 July, p.5 – Attachment 4

⁷ Hughes, C. J. 2007, ‘Sierra Leone: The Myth of the APC Victory’, AllAfrica Global Media, source: *Concord Times*, 7 August <http://allafrica.com/stories/200708070666.html> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 6

⁸ ‘Those Tejan-Jalloh Genes’ 2009, *Awareness Times*, 10 December

<http://news.sl/drwebsite/exec/view.cgi?archive=1&num=13908> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 7

⁹ ‘Fulas Hotly Oppose PMDC... The Tejan Jalloh Family Denounce PMDC’s Runningmate in Sierra Leone’ 2007, *Awareness Times*, 19 April <http://news.sl/drwebsite/exec/view.cgi?archive=4&num=5264> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 8

¹⁰ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Section 3 – Attachment 2

¹¹ Reno, W. 2010, ‘Countries at the Crossroads: Sierra Leone’, Freedom House website, p.8

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7914-9.pdf> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 1

¹² International Crisis Group 2008, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, Africa Report N°143, 31 July, p.5 – Attachment 4

¹³ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Section 3 – Attachment 2

vote in the upcoming elections. The article refers to “the despicably brazen act by the unholy alliance of PMDC and APC to disenfranchise minority tribes in Sierra Leone”, quoting a PMDC leader as stating that “[t]here was clear evidence that some Fulas, Madingos, [and] other tribes...were pouring in from Guinea and Liberia to register so that they can cast votes in July 2007 it is clear that the ruling party will bring in illegal immigrants p[u]rporting to be eligible electorates to vote for them”.¹⁴ The ruling government prior to the 1996 elections, the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), was similarly accused of discriminating against Fulas in voter registration. The IRB advises that “[t]here was some difficulty in determining the citizenship, and thus the right to vote, of individual ethnic Fula voters and also in registering all the eligible voters, problems that were compounded by the large numbers of internally and internationally displaced people”.¹⁵

In addition, a *Concord Times* article from December 2007 highlights discriminatory policies under both the SLPP and APC governments that denied Fula people the right to citizenship and a national passport. The article reports “complaints from numerous Fula [citizens]...that their passport applications are being deliberately rejected by the Immigration Department” due to the perceived threat of “emerging Fula affluence and influence in Sierra Leone”. Senior government officials were reportedly alarmed at a recent national census that indicated a “rapid upsurge in the number of Fula people and their growing domination of almost every sector of the economy”, which also led to the popular perception that “Fulas [are] taking over the country”. Sierra Leone’s Immigration Department reportedly began requiring Fulas to attend interviews to prove their citizenship before approving passport applications; a procedure that the article alleges did not apply to other ethnic groups. While more recent reports of such discrimination have not emerged, the *Concord Times* argues that the challenge for Fula people to assert their rightful status in Sierra Leone is ongoing.¹⁶

Furthermore, the IRB advised in 1996 that Fulas had “been “subjective targets of violence” by elements of the rebel forces of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)”. Fulas were killed and exploited with “anti-Fula ethnic sentiment” in the RUF’s campaign to increase their support base in rural areas. The Fula were also victims of “violence stemming from robberies by rebel groups and other criminal elements of Sierra Leone society”; however, such attacks were spasmodic and the Fula were not the only ethnic group to be targeted.¹⁷

¹⁴ Tiyaama, S. 2007, ‘Sierra Leone: PMDC Rationale for Xenophobia’, *AllAfrica Global Media*, source: *The Independent*, 28 March <http://allafrica.com/stories/200703280936.html> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 9

¹⁵ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1996, SLE24140.E – *Sierra Leone: Information on the Fula ethnic group and whether they are being targeted by the government or the rebels*, 7 June – Attachment 5

¹⁶ Bah, C. A. M. 2007, ‘Sierra Leone: The Immigration Department And Xenophobia Against Fulas’, *AllAfrica Global Media*, source: *Concord Times*, 11 December <http://allafrica.com/stories/200712120914.html> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 10

¹⁷ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1996, SLE24140.E – *Sierra Leone: Information on the Fula ethnic group and whether they are being targeted by the government or the rebels*, 7 June – Attachment 5

2. What is the situation for high profile human rights activists? Is it common for high profile activists to be interviewed, assaulted and or detained by the authorities? Is such a person likely to be targeted and/or harmed by APC supporters for speaking out about government policies?

The US Department of State notes that in 2009, “[t]he government generally respected the human rights of its citizens [and] rarely attempted to impede criticism”. Domestic and international human rights groups generally operate without government interference or restrictions, and human rights monitors are able to travel freely throughout the country. Government officials were also generally responsive to the findings of human rights groups, although the National Human Rights Commission received slow support from government agencies, and its investigations into human rights abuses continue to be limited by a lack of funding.¹⁸

Freedom House describes Sierra Leone’s political culture as one “that values debate and is tolerant of diverse opinions and backgrounds”. In April 2010, the organisation reported that “[n]o serious allegations of extrajudicial killings of state opponents have appeared since 2000... State agencies do not persecute political opponents or peaceful activists as a matter of formal or informal policy... The state effectively protects the rights of citizen organizations to mobilize and advocate for peaceful purposes”. Furthermore, although some non-governmental organisations have raised complaints about registration fees, “there is no evidence of systematic discrimination”.¹⁹

However, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights states that although “Sierra Leone has continued to progress in building its capacity for the promotion and protection of human rights”, there were some “[r]eports of threats against human rights defenders” in 2009. For example, anonymous death threats were made against a prominent human rights activist in February. The activist was also the victim of physical attacks after a non-governmental organisation of which he is the director, the Society for Democratic Initiatives, published a report on the status of the media one year after the APC government came to power. In September, the chairperson of the Human Rights Committee in the Bombali District faced harassment “by the provincial secretary of the northern region” for raising a torture case against a policeman in Bombali. He was also detained in November for two days by a Makeni magistrate, after allegedly criticising the court’s ruling on a rape case.²⁰ In addition, an April 2010 news report states that a civil society activist received a substantial bribe from the APC government “to keep him quiet and maintain his support for so-called agenda for change”.²¹

¹⁸ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Introduction, Sections 2a, 5 – Attachment 2

¹⁹ Reno, W. 2010, ‘Countries at the Crossroads: Sierra Leone’, Freedom House website, April, pp.3, 7, 9 <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7914-9.pdf> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 1

²⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council 2010, *Assistance to Sierra Leone in the field of human rights: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights website, 12 February, pp.1, 6 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/docs/13session/A-HRC-13-28.pdf> – Accessed 2 September 2010 – Attachment 11

²¹ ‘APC Government is corrupting civil society activists to shut them up’ 2010, *The New People Newspaper Online*, 7 April http://www.thenewpeople.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=282 – Accessed 2 September 2010 – Attachment 12

Furthermore, it is reported that local government interference continued to be a problem throughout 2009.²² According to Freedom House, “individual officials use the prerogatives of their office to pursue critics or rivals. This appears to be most prevalent in the context of local politics...Many Sierra Leoneans suspect that official tolerance for cronyism and corruption is tantamount to an informal state policy of acceptance of such intimidation”.²³ The US Department of State reports that political figures were accused of using the media to target their opponents. In one example, “high-level government officials threatened to sue a paper if it did not retract a critical story. When the paper stood by its reporting, the officials backed down but asked that the paper publish a pro-government article to compensate for the bad press”.²⁴ Human Rights Watch (HRW) similarly reports that “[l]ocal court officials frequently abuse their powers by illegally detaining persons, charging high fines for minor offenses, and adjudicating criminal cases beyond their jurisdiction”.²⁵

Reports of “arbitrary arrest and detention...restrictions on freedom of speech and press; [and] forcible dispersion of demonstrators” were also evident throughout 2009.²⁶ Human Rights Watch reports police use of live ammunition to disperse demonstrations in September 2009, which resulted in the deaths of three protestors and a further ten were injured.²⁷ Freedom House also argues that “protests occasionally result in violence and forcible dispersal by the police”; however, “[d]emonstrations in support of opposition candidates for the 2007 and 2008 elections were tolerated, and authorities have not banned demonstrations by groups critical of government policies”.²⁸

3. What is the relationship between the AFRC and the APC? Following the 1997 elections, were people who opposed the AFRC arrested and detained? Do opponents of the AFRC continue to face possible harm?

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was formed in May 1997 by members of the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), both of which had collaborated to overthrow the APC government in the early 1990s. The joint AFRC forces also ousted the SLPP government in May 1997, after it had been democratically elected in 1996.²⁹ The AFRC disbanded in August 2000 and is

²² US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Section 2a – Attachment 2

²³ Reno, W. 2010, ‘Countries at the Crossroads: Sierra Leone’, Freedom House website, April, pp.3, 7, 9

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7914-9.pdf> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 1

²⁴ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Section 2a – Attachment 2

²⁵ Human Rights Watch 2010, ‘World Report 2010: Sierra Leone’, January – Attachment 13

²⁶ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Introduction – Attachment 2

²⁷ Human Rights Watch 2010, ‘World Report 2010: Sierra Leone’, January – Attachment 13

²⁸ Reno, W. 2010, ‘Countries at the Crossroads: Sierra Leone’, Freedom House website, April, pp.3, 7, 9

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7914-9.pdf> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 1

²⁹ US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services 1999, ‘Sierra Leone: Background information on the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and the conflict in Sierra Leone in general’, UNHCR Refworld website, 22 December

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USCIS,,SLE,456d621e2,3dee45d14,0.html> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 14; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1998, ‘UNHCR CDR Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Sierra Leone’, UNHCR Refworld website, 1 November

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi->

no longer active.³⁰ No further information was found on the relationship between the AFRC and the APC.

The civil war in Sierra Leone began in 1991 when the RUF “led a guerrilla campaign to end the 23-year one-party rule by the All People’s Congress (APC)”.³¹ Despite conflict between the RUF and the RSLMF, it has been alleged that RUF rebels and discontented army soldiers collaborated to overthrow the APC government in 1992.³² The APC was subsequently ousted from power by officers of the RSLMF. The reluctance of the new ruling government, the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), to negotiate with the RUF led to an intensification of the rebel campaign and an increase in the spread of the conflict. The NPRC was also ousted by military officers in January 1996, and presidential and legislative elections were scheduled. In March 1996, the SLPP came to power as a result of the democratic elections. In May 1997, forces of the RUF and the RSLMF joined together under the umbrella of the AFRC, led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma, to overthrow the SLPP government. However, the SLPP government was restored to power in 1998 by West African troops, and the AFRC members involved in the coup were pardoned for their actions.³³

During the rule of the AFRC from May 1997 to February 1998, the constitution was suspended, political parties were banned and rule by military decree was announced. In June 1997, the AFRC invited RUF rebels to join its government in an alliance based on joint opposition to the SLPP. Following negotiations initiated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), an agreement between the AFRC/RUF and the SLPP government was reached in October 1997. However, the AFRC/RUF undermined the agreement and Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) forces drove the rebels from Freetown in February 1998 and reinstated the SLPP government in March 1998. The AFRC/RUF rebels launched offensives to gain control over strategic areas, and attacked Freetown in January 1999. A ceasefire agreement between the SLPP and the rebels was signed in May 1999, and a peace agreement was subsequently reached in July 1999.³⁴ In August 2000, “AFRC leader

bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=search&docid=3ae6a6418&skip=0&query=afrc%20apc#hit18 – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 15

³⁰ Human Rights Watch 2003, ‘World Report 2003: Sierra Leone’, January – Attachment 16; ‘SIERRA LEONE: IRIN Focus on the West Side Boys’ 2000, *IRIN News*, 5 September

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=2092> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 17

³¹ US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services 1999, ‘Sierra Leone: Background information on the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and the conflict in Sierra Leone in general’, UNHCR Refworld website, 22 December

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USCIS,,SLE,456d621e2,3dee45d14,0.html> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 14

³² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1998, ‘UNHCR CDR Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Sierra Leone’, UNHCR Refworld website, 1 November <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=search&docid=3ae6a6418&skip=0&query=afrc%20apc#hit18> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 15

³³ US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services 1999, ‘Sierra Leone: Background information on the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and the conflict in Sierra Leone in general’, UNHCR Refworld website, 22 December

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USCIS,,SLE,456d621e2,3dee45d14,0.html> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 14

³⁴ Human Rights Watch 2003, “We’ll Kill You If You Cry”: *Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict*, Human Rights Watch website, 15 January, pp.11-13

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/sierleon0103.pdf> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 18

Johnny Paul Koroma...announced...that the AFRC had been disbanded”.³⁵ The West Side Boys, a splinter group of the AFRC, also disbanded in late 2000.³⁶

Human Rights Abuses

Widespread human rights violations were committed by AFRC and RUF forces during the period of their rule, particularly against those involved in pro-democracy activities. According to the US Department of State, such persons “were often detained, beaten, sexually assaulted, mutilated, and killed”.³⁷ Human Rights Watch states that the AFRC-led coup in May 1997 “ushered in a period of political repression characterized by arbitrary arrests and detention”.³⁸ The arbitrary arrest, detention, ill-treatment and execution of human rights activists, students, journalists, supporters of the former SLPP government, and others opposed to AFRC rule, are widely reported. Observers noted that many people were arrested and detained “only because of their opposition to the coup d’état which brought the AFRC to power and their lack of cooperation with the AFRC”.³⁹ For example, at least 15 civilians associated with the SLPP were arrested and detained by the AFRC in June 1997 on accusation of conspiring to overthrow the military government. In May 1997, civilians protesting against the military coup were attacked by soldiers, resulting in at least one death and, in August 1997, a democracy march organised by the National Union of Students was suppressed by the AFRC with “heavy shooting, tear gas, beatings, and detainment”.⁴⁰

Human rights organisations in Sierra Leone also “reported an increase in human rights abuses after the AFRC came into power...includ[ing] armed robberies and summary executions”.⁴¹ In 1998, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated that “hundreds of civilians have reportedly been killed either in random violence or political killings”. Further AFRC/RUF human rights abuses “included deliberate extrajudicial killings of civilians, torture, mutilation, rape [and] beatings”. In addition, it was reported that “soldiers further terrorise their victims by forcing them to participate in

³⁵ ‘SIERRA LEONE: IRIN Focus on the West Side Boys’ 2000, *IRIN News*, 5 September

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=2092> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 17

³⁶ US Department of State 2002, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002: Sierra Leone*, 4 March, Introduction, Section 1b – Attachment 19

³⁷ US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services 1999, ‘Sierra Leone: Background information on the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and the conflict in Sierra Leone in general’, UNHCR Refworld website, 22 December

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USCIS,,SLE,456d621e2,3dee45d14,0.html> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 14

³⁸ Human Rights Watch 2003, “We’ll Kill You If You Cry”: *Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict*, Human Rights Watch website, 15 January, pp.11-13

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/sierleon0103.pdf> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 18

³⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1998, ‘UNHCR CDR Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Sierra Leone’, UNHCR Refworld website, 1 November <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=search&docid=3ae6a6418&skip=0&query=afrc%20apc#hit18> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 15

⁴⁰ US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services 1998, *Sierra Leone. Political, Military, and Human Rights Chronology: 1991-1997*, UNHCR Refworld website, 1 April, pp.7-14 <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=search&docid=3ae6a60d4&skip=0&query=afrc%20apc> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 20

⁴¹ US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services 1998, ‘Sierra Leone. Political, Military, and Human Rights Chronology: 1991-1997’, UNHCR Refworld website, 1 April, pp.7-14 <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=search&docid=3ae6a60d4&skip=0&query=afrc%20apc> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 20

their own mutilation, asking them to make choices about which finger, hand or arm, for example, to have amputated”.⁴² Human Rights Watch also outlines the severe physical mutilation and torture committed by the AFRC/RUF against civilians, including “amputations by machete of one or both hands, arms, feet, legs, ears and buttocks and one or more fingers; lacerations to the head, neck, arms, legs, feet and torso; the gouging out of one or both eyes; rape; gunshot wounds to the head, torso and limbs; burns from explosives and other devices; injections with acid;...beatings [and] unconfirmed reports of sexual mutilation such as the cutting off of breasts and genitalia”.⁴³

Furthermore, Human Rights Watch reported in 1998 that “[v]ictims of amputations or other mutilations are frequently told that they should take their amputated limb and a verbal or written message to ECOMOG or the [SLPP] government. The messages are typically demands that ECOMOG should “leave the country to Sierra Leoneans” or that [SLPP President] Kabbah should replace the limbs of amputees”.⁴⁴ These widespread human rights violations continued, and reportedly increased, after AFRC/RUF forces were ousted by ECOMOG, and the SLPP government was restored, in 1998.⁴⁵ The joint AFRC/RUF rebels launched two campaigns in 1998 known as ‘Operation No Living Thing’, which involved “looting, destroying and killing anything in [their] path”, and forcing “thousands out of their homes where many died from wounds, disease, and starvation”; and ‘Operation Pay Yourself’, which “included AFRC/RUF roadblocks where civilians were forced to place their belongings into two piles, one for civilians to keep, to ‘pay themselves’, and one to be handed over to the soldiers”.⁴⁶

In addition, the three-week occupation of Freetown by AFRC/RUF rebels in January 1999 was characterised by widespread human rights abuses against civilians, including rape, amputation of limbs, abductions, and killings. Despite the May 1999 ceasefire agreement, violations were widespread, and AFRC/RUF militias continued to abuse civilians in northern and eastern areas in which they retained control. A splinter group of the AFRC, the West Side Boys, were particularly notorious for committing violence and human rights

⁴² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1998, ‘UNHCR CDR Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Sierra Leone’, UNHCR Refworld website, 1 November <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=search&docid=3ae6a6418&skip=0&query=afrc%20apc#hit18> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 15

⁴³ Human Rights Watch 1998, *Sowing Terror: Atrocities against Civilians in Sierra Leone*, Human Rights Watch website, July <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/sierra/> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 21

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch 1998, *Sowing Terror: Atrocities against Civilians in Sierra Leone*, Human Rights Watch website, July <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/sierra/> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 21

⁴⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 1998, ‘UNHCR CDR Background Paper on Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Sierra Leone’, UNHCR Refworld website, 1 November <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refworld/rwmain?page=search&docid=3ae6a6418&skip=0&query=afrc%20apc#hit18> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 15

⁴⁶ US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services 1999, ‘Sierra Leone: Background information on the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF) and the conflict in Sierra Leone in general’, UNHCR Refworld website, 22 December <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,USCIS,,SLE,456d621e2,3dee45d14,0.html> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 14; Human Rights Watch 1998, *Sowing Terror: Atrocities against Civilians in Sierra Leone*, Human Rights Watch website, July <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/sierra/> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 21

abuses such as rape, sexual violence, abductions, and looting raids, even after the signing of the July 1999 peace agreement.⁴⁷

Current Situation

The AFRC is no longer active after disbanding in August 2000.⁴⁸ Therefore, it is unlikely that opponents of the AFRC would continue to face harm. The West Side Boys, a splinter group of the AFRC, also disbanded in late 2000.⁴⁹ Many AFRC and RUF troops were disarmed and demobilised by UNAMSIL between May 2001 and January 2002.⁵⁰ Control over security was handed over from the peacekeeping UNAMSIL to the RSLAF and the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) in 2004, although UN peace-building operations have continued “to support government institutions and monitor and protect human rights and the rule of law”.⁵¹ The establishment of the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in 2002 has resulted in trials for war crimes and crimes against humanity of individuals from the AFRC, the RUF and Civil Defence Forces. Three former AFRC officers have been convicted of such crimes and sentenced to 45 and 50 years imprisonment.⁵²

4. Were there outbreaks of violence between members of political parties (SLPP and APC) during the 2007 elections? Were some people prevented from voting?

Presidential and parliamentary elections were held in Sierra Leone on 11 August 2007. The APC won a majority in the parliamentary elections with 59 out of 112 seats, while the SLPP won 43 seats.⁵³ APC leader Ernest Bai Koroma was subsequently elected as president. Domestic and international observers deemed the elections to be free and fair. However, only Sierra Leonean citizens are permitted to vote in elections, and the law states that citizenship at birth is restricted to persons of “patrilineal Negro-African descent”. Many long-term residents who are unable to meet this strict naturalisation requirement, including a large number of people of Lebanese descent who were born in Sierra Leone, were therefore not permitted to vote in the elections.⁵⁴ ICG notes that some

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch 2003, “We’ll Kill You If You Cry”: *Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict*, Human Rights Watch website, 15 January, pp.3, 11-13

<http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/sierleon0103.pdf> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 18

⁴⁸ US Department of State 2002, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002: Sierra Leone*, 4 March, Introduction – Attachment 19; ‘SIERRA LEONE: IRIN Focus on the West Side Boys’ 2000, *IRIN News*, 5 September <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=2092> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 17

⁴⁹ US Department of State 2002, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2002: Sierra Leone*, 4 March, Introduction, Section 1b – Attachment 19

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch 2003, ‘World Report 2003: Sierra Leone’, January – Attachment 16

⁵¹ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Introduction – Attachment 2

⁵² Human Rights Watch 2008, ‘Sierra Leone: War Crimes Ruling Bolsters Victim Protection’, Human Rights Watch website, 28 May <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/05/28/sierra-leone-war-crimes-ruling-bolsters-victim-protection> – Accessed 2 September 2010 – Attachment 22; UK Home Office 2009, *Operational Guidance Note: Sierra Leone*, 1 June – Attachment 23

⁵³ US Department of State Bureau of African Affairs 2010, ‘Background Note: Sierra Leone’, US Department of State website, 17 August <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5475.htm> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 24

⁵⁴ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Section 3 – Attachment 2

of the violence that erupted “during and after the elections...was directed at particular minorities whose voting rights were questioned”.⁵⁵

A number of sources highlight political tension and violence between members and supporters of the APC and the SLPP surrounding the 2007 elections. Both parties claimed that their members were harassed in the lead up to the August elections. The SLPP government attempted to ban membership in political organisations, while SLPP members monitored opposition party meetings. Reports also emerged that the government had pressured provincial chiefs to discourage opposition political activities in remote areas.⁵⁶ Amnesty International states that “[i]ntimidation around elections took place on several occasions”. One member of the SLPP reportedly threatened a radio station manager with arrest if members of the People’s Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) were permitted to broadcast information about the elections.⁵⁷ Despite numerous complaints of abuse, the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), responsible for governing political party behaviour, did not sanction any party for inappropriate actions.⁵⁸

Violent clashes between supporters of the SLPP and the APC reportedly occurred both during and after the 2007 elections.⁵⁹ Election observers from the European Union reported “a rise in tensions at the start of the second campaign period and an increase in violent clashes between rival supporters”.⁶⁰ During the election campaigning, a clash between the PMDC and the SLPP was reported, in which PMDC leader Charles Margai narrowly escaped being killed.⁶¹ In addition, a convoy of the SLPP’s presidential candidate was attacked by alleged APC supporters during the SLPP campaign launch for local council elections in Kono District in June 2007.⁶² Leaders of the PMDC and the APC were similarly prevented by alleged SLPP supporters from entering a town in the Kailahun District during the presidential runoff campaign. Some of their vehicles were destroyed during the incident.⁶³

Reuters states that political violence between the APC and the SLPP occurred in Freetown prior to the presidential run-off in August. ‘Street battles’ near the SLPP headquarters resulted in police using tear gas and setting up roadblocks in the area. According to reporters, at least two dozen people were wounded and taken to hospital before the

⁵⁵ International Crisis Group 2008, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, Africa Report N°143, 31 July, pp.1-5 – Attachment 4

⁵⁶ US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Section 3 – Attachment 25

⁵⁷ Amnesty International 2008, ‘Annual Report 2008: Sierra Leone’, May – Attachment 26

⁵⁸ US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Section 3 – Attachment 25

⁵⁹ International Crisis Group 2008, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, Africa Report N°143, 31 July, p.8 – Attachment 4

⁶⁰ Reno, W. 2010, ‘Countries at the Crossroads: Sierra Leone’, Freedom House website, p.4 <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7914-9.pdf> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 1

⁶¹ West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) Sierra Leone 2007, ‘August 11, 2007 Elections: Challenges Of A Transition & Beyond’, WARN Policy Brief, ReliefWeb website, 19 July [http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2007.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/SBOI-75DN6C-full_report.pdf/\\$File/full_report.pdf](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWFiles2007.nsf/FilesByRWDocUnidFilename/SBOI-75DN6C-full_report.pdf/$File/full_report.pdf) – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 27

⁶² United Nations Human Rights Council 2009, *Assistance to Sierra Leone in the field of human rights: report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*, UNHCR Refworld website, 4 March <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/49b7905e2.html> – Accessed 2 September 2010 – Attachment 28

⁶³ US Department of State 2008, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007: Sierra Leone*, 11 March, Section 2b – Attachment 25

violence spread to the city's eastern APC stronghold. The violence occurred one "day after opposition candidate Ernest Bai Koroma was forced to abandon campaigning in the country's southeast due to violence".⁶⁴ *IRIN News* similarly reported an outbreak of violence in Freetown on 27 August, when "police used tear gas to disperse rock-throwing ruling-party and opposition supporters. Witnesses said hundreds of riot police were in the area on high alert".⁶⁵ According to the *BBC News*, further attacks against SLPP members and supporters occurred in September 2007 after Koroma was sworn in as the president. The house of the former SLPP Foreign Minister's uncle was burnt down, while APC supporters attacked journalists and threatened local chiefs. In addition, the SLPP offices in Freetown were looted.⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch states that the 'house burnings and street clashes' that have been committed by rival political parties both before and after the elections resulted in at least one death and dozens of injured people.⁶⁷

Ethnic Divisions

Reuters stated that the 2007 elections "revealed ethnic fault lines in the nation of more than 5 million people, with the SLPP drawing its support from the southern Mende peoples and the APC stronger in the Temne north and west".⁶⁸ *IRIN News* cites a diplomat, who stated that "the country may still divide along ethnic-regional lines". It is argued that riots in Kono in August may have been caused by ethnic divisions, as "the Kono ethnic group, who are related to the Mende...had reportedly sworn a collective allegiance to the ruling SLPP...yet individually many appear to want to break with tradition and vote for the opposition candidate". However, the article also cites a local bishop, who stated that "the old system of voting along regional and ethnic lines may be being replaced" as the Mende, traditional SLPP supporters, are now divided between the SLPP, the PMDC and even the APC.⁶⁹ In addition, International Crisis Group reports that "[w]here explicitly identity-based violence did erupt during and after the elections...it was not motivated by deep-rooted ethnic antagonisms".⁷⁰

5. Would a person who is an advocate against drugs, face possible harm from drug dealers (non-State actors)?

No specific information was found to indicate that an anti-drug advocate would be at risk of harm from drug dealers in Sierra Leone. A 2009 report by the United Nations Security Council on the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone highlighted the increasing use of the country for drug trafficking between South America and Europe as an immediate issue of concern to the security situation in Sierra Leone. The report states that "[c]ocaine trafficking represents the biggest single threat to the security of Sierra

⁶⁴ Manson, K. 2007, 'Elections violence grips Sierra Leone capital', *Reuters AlertNet*, 1 September <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L01214502.htm> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 29

⁶⁵ 'SIERRA LEONE: Election tensions could help or hinder democratic process' 2007, *IRIN News*, 29 August <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73994> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 30

⁶⁶ 'Violence spreads in Sierra Leone' 2007, *BBC News*, 20 September <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7004686.stm> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 31

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch 2008, 'World Report 2008: Sierra Leone', January – Attachment 32

⁶⁸ Manson, K. 2007, 'Elections violence grips Sierra Leone capital', *Reuters AlertNet*, 1 September <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L01214502.htm> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 29

⁶⁹ 'SIERRA LEONE: Election tensions could help or hinder democratic process' 2007, *IRIN News*, 29 August <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=73994> – Accessed 31 August 2010 – Attachment 30

⁷⁰ International Crisis Group 2008, *Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform?*, Africa Report N°143, 31 July, pp.1-5 – Attachment 4

Leone, especially since drug trafficking tends to be accompanied by arms and human trafficking, corruption and the subversion of legitimate State institutions”.⁷¹ However, Human Rights Watch describes the recent high-profile convictions of 15 individuals in Sierra Leone on drug trafficking charges, demonstrating an “improvement in the capacity of the rule of law sectors”.⁷²

6. What is the level of state protection provided? Does the possibility of being regarded as anti-government affect the level of protection a person may receive?

According to Freedom House, the right of ethnic minorities to enjoy full equality before the law is weakened by “the serious limits of state capacity to provide it”.⁷³ Therefore, the state may be unable to provide protection from ethnic discrimination.

Furthermore, as referred to in response to question two, Freedom House reports that although “[s]tate agencies do not persecute political opponents or peaceful activists as a matter of formal or informal policy...individual officials use the prerogatives of their office to pursue critics or rivals”. As a result, many locals “suspect that official tolerance for cronyism and corruption is tantamount to an informal state policy of acceptance of such intimidation”.⁷⁴ This tolerance by the state for such intimidation may indicate a lack of willingness to provide protection for victims, particularly those who are perceived as anti-government.

However, Freedom House also argues that the state adheres to constitutional provisions that protect the right to association, and “effectively protects the rights of citizen organizations to mobilize and advocate for peaceful purposes”. Furthermore, “[d]emonstrations in support of opposition candidates for the 2007 and 2008 elections were tolerated, and authorities have not banned demonstrations by groups critical of government policies, although protests occasionally result in violence and forcible dispersal by the police”.⁷⁵ In addition, the United Nations Security Council reported in May 2009 that “[t]he Sierra Leone police have begun prosecuting a number of persons associated with the [March 2009 attack on] SLPP offices in Freetown”.⁷⁶

7. What are the possibilities for relocation for a person who is a Fula and/or has established a high profile in Freetown as a human rights or youth advocate?

There is no evidence to suggest that a person of Fula ethnicity, or a human rights/youth advocate would not be able to relocate elsewhere in Sierra Leone. The US Department of State reports that Sierra Leone’s “ethnically diverse population consist[s] of about 18

⁷¹ United Nations Security Council 2009, First report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, UNHCR Refworld website, 30 January
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/498aa2272.html> – Accessed 3 September 2010 – Attachment 33

⁷² Human Rights Watch 2010, ‘World Report 2010: Sierra Leone’, January – Attachment 13

⁷³ Reno, W. 2010, ‘Countries at the Crossroads: Sierra Leone’, Freedom House website, p.8
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7914-9.pdf> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 1

⁷⁴ Reno, W. 2010, ‘Countries at the Crossroads: Sierra Leone’, Freedom House website, April, pp.3, 7, 9
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7914-9.pdf> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 1

⁷⁵ Reno, W. 2010, ‘Countries at the Crossroads: Sierra Leone’, Freedom House website, April, pp.3, 7, 9
<http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/ccr/country-7914-9.pdf> – Accessed 1 September 2010 – Attachment 1

⁷⁶ United Nations Security Council 2009, Second report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone, UNHCR Refworld website, 22 May
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a2515432.html> – Accessed 3 September 2010 – Attachment 34

ethnic groups of African origin...[which are] concentrated outside urban areas”. Within urban areas, there is little ethnic segregation, and intermarriage between ethnic groups is common. In addition, according to the US Department of State, human rights monitors were able to travel freely throughout the country in 2009.⁷⁷

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