

Civil and Political Rights

Acceded: 23 August 1996.

Sierra Leone's initial report was due 22 November 1997.

Optional Protocol: Acceded: 23 August 1996.

Racial Discrimination

Signed: 17 November 1996; ratified: 2 August 1967.

Sierra Leone's fourth through 15th periodic reports have not been submitted (1976-1998); the 15th periodic report was due 4 January 1998.

Discrimination against Women

Signed: 21 September 1988; ratified: 11 November 1988.

Sierra Leone's initial and second and third periodic reports were due 11 December 1989, 1993 and 1997 respectively.

Torture

Signed: 18 March 1985.

Rights of the Child

Signed: 13 February 1990; ratified: 18 June 1990.

Sierra Leone's initial report (CRC/C/3/Add.43) has been submitted and is scheduled for consideration at the Committee's May/June 1999 session; the second periodic report was due 1 September 1997.

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Since 1996, Sierra Leone has been considered by the Commission on Human Rights under the 1503 confidential procedure. At the 1998 session, the Commission decided to continue consideration under 1503 at the 1999 session.

THEMATIC REPORTS**Mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights****Arbitrary Detention, Working Group on:**

(E/CN.4/1998/44, para. 19)

The report notes that an urgent appeal was sent on behalf of one person but no details of the case were provided.

Mercenaries, Special Rapporteur on the use of:

(E/CN.4/1998/31, paras. 29-38)

The report reviews political events in the country dating from the 1996 elections and the signing of a peace agreement between the elected government and the leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The Special Rapporteur (SR) noted that, for much of the population, there was no difference between the war of earlier months and the proclaimed peace, as they were subjected not only to the continuing exactions of armed rebels but also to those imposed by members of the regular armed forces. The SR stated that it was probably widespread insecurity which caused the elected government to decide not to cancel the contract of Executive Outcomes, a private security company that works with mercenaries to

perform a variety of services. Instead, the government rewrote the contract, making the mercenaries principally responsible for the protection of the region of Kovo against the attacks of rebel forces, despite the provision in the peace agreement reflecting the rebels' request that Executive Outcomes should leave the country.

The report notes that the governments of the region condemned the coup of May 1997, isolated the rebels, and demanded the return of the democratic government. [The democratically elected government returned to power in March 1998.]

The SR hypothesized that the presence of Executive Outcomes, which was partly responsible for the security of Sierra Leone, created an illusion of governability but left untouched some substantive problems which could never be solved by a service company. The SR recalled statements in the report to the 1996 General Assembly (A/51/392, para. 33) warning about the precarious situation and pointing out that the presence of a company that worked in security matters with such personnel as mercenaries was a debilitating factor that at some point would impair the stability of the legal government. The report then cautions against approaches that do nothing to cure the structural ills suffered by the people, and states that the right to life, the political and legal institutions of state, security, peace and maintenance of the rule of law and democracy, are not matters to be turned over to private companies which claim to perform advisory and military training services. The SR stated that such companies stand to gain by selling their competence as security agents, but they cannot replace bodies which have been entrusted with the responsibility of protecting life and maintaining security as an obligation vested in the state.

OTHER REPORTS**Children affected by armed conflict, Special Representative:**

(A/53/482, paras. 43, 52-60)

The Special Representative (SRep) visited Sierra Leone on 10 and 11 March 1998 and undertook a second, more extended, visit to Sierra Leone on 26 to 29 May 1998. The SRep travelled to the eastern region of Sierra Leone, close to the areas where active fighting was ongoing, and had the opportunity to witness the plight of internally displaced people, including hundreds of unaccompanied children who had recently emerged from the bush. The report notes that there are many serious manifestations of the impact of the prolonged conflict on children, such as street children, child combatants, displaced children, unaccompanied children, and victims of atrocities, as well as the collapse of health and education services. Many people expressed their alarm at the rapid erosion of local value systems within the society, especially among the youth.

The SRep identified five areas requiring urgent action by the international community: demobilization and reintegration of child combatants; resettlement of internally displaced persons; tracing of families of unaccompanied