

The Cotonou Accord in July created a transition government of IGNU, NPFL and ULIMO led by Philip Banks until elections in March 1994, to take office once all factions encamped and disarmed to a reconfigured peacekeeping force with new African contingents and UN observers. While relief aid flowed to hungry refugees, the slow deployment of the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and the late arrival of new African peacekeepers delayed the disarmament of factions until January and elections until May. However the ceasefire continues to hold barring a few skirmishes.

CANADIAN POSITION

As Liberia was neither in the Commonwealth nor la Francophonie, Canada was traditionally not directly involved. Bilateral ties were minimal, aid was limited to small NGO projects, and consideration of a draft tax treaty was abandoned in light of human rights concerns.

During the civil war, the human rights situation was unbelievably bad. There were at least two massacres of over 500 people each, and many smaller ones committed by all sides. Civilians, notably women and children, bore the brunt of atrocities far more than soldiers. One of the most distressing aspects of the war was the use of heavily drugged boys as young as 10 as soldiers, largely but not exclusively by the NPFL. Less dramatic but more widespread was acute famine and malnutrition found in several areas controlled by NPFL and ULIMO. While Canada and others were appalled and spoke out at times about these abuses, the attention of the international community was engaged elsewhere, and until recently they did not receive the consideration they deserved. It is thus all the more important to prevent them from occurring again by supporting the peace settlement.

Since the civil war began, Canada has provided over \$22 million of humanitarian and food aid for Liberians through UN agencies, the Red Cross and church groups. Canada also sent an electoral expert in March 1992 when a fall vote seemed possible. In order to help the Cotonou Accord succeed, Canada will maintain and if possible increase its relief aid, and will be ready to offer electoral assistance when needed.

After the war flared up again in 1992, Canada considered that the UN should help ECOWAS bring the world's first serious regional peacekeeping effort to a successful conclusion, by providing a few military observers and technical experts to improve its impartiality and effectiveness. The alternative of letting ECOWAS fail would entail the UN having to take over outright when it could hardly afford to. The creation of UNOMIL was exactly what we had in mind.

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