



Sierra Leone – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 26 February 2015

Any information on organisation in Sierra Leone known as either ‘red devils’ or ‘red hedlords’.

Information on a group known as either the “Red Devils” or “Red Hedlords” (or “Red Head Lords”) currently active in Sierra Leone was not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

A 2002 report published by the Physicians for Human Rights, in a section titled “Identity and Affiliation of Attackers”, refers to eyewitness accounts of rebel fighters believed to be members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) wearing red head cloths as follows:

“Dress also played a role in linking individuals to a group in the minds of those who were attacked. One woman told PHR, ‘They were running after us and they were calling Superman, Colonel Issa, and everybody knows that these people were RUF, because they were always at the bush and wore T-shirts with “RUF” printed on them. I was given one to wear by Gold Teeth.’ A 16-year-old from Port Loko who was gang raped by five attackers and held for months was able to identify her attackers ‘because they were wearing Tupac [Shakur] T-shirts, so I know they were rebels.’ The RUF were identified numerous times as wearing red scarves tied around their heads. ‘They identify each other by names. One called himself Abdullah, another Mohammed and the last Sorie. They all had red cloths on the forehead. The Ex-SLA wore their uniforms and identified themselves as Ex-SLA,’ recounted a woman who had been abducted and gang raped. Another woman who had a similar experience in which she was jointly attacked by RUF and Ex-SLA claimed: ‘They had red cloth on their forehead and call their leaders name, which is Poppeh, meaning Foday Sankoh.’ Another woman told PHR, ‘They had red headbands and green uniforms on and said they were fighting for Foday Sankoh (and) that they were going to fight until Tejan Kabbah goes away.’” (Physicians for Human Rights (June 2002) *War-Related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone: A Population-Based Assessment*, p.75)

A 1998 IRIN News report states:

“An estimated 200 rebels loyal to the ousted military junta in Sierra Leone launched a surprise attack on soldiers of the Nigerian-led West African intervention force this week in the northern town of Kabala, the BBC reported. It quoted ECOMOG commander, General Maxwell Khobe as saying the battle on Monday started when about 200 rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), arrived in Kabala, saying they wanted to take advantage of an amnesty. With white truce flags, two groups of rebels approached tables specially set up to register the surrender of their weapons. Then a third group wearing red scarves rushed out of the bush, and instead of surrendering, they

attacked the ECOMOG forces, the BBC said.” (IRIN News (31 July 1998) *West Africa Weekly Roundup 59*)

A thesis authored by US army major Francis M. Beaudette states:

“The Sunday of 25 May began as a typical weekend day for the SFODA with 0600 physical training (PT) and personal hygiene. As the team prepared to eat breakfast, heavy small arms and RPG fire erupted across the compound. A coup was taking place in Freetown. Disloyal soldiers, sobels, and pure RUF rebels jointly decided to form the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and overthrow President Kabbah. At approximately 0400 around 300 men identified by red bandanas commandeered the ferry from Lungi airport peninsula to Freetown and quickly engaged in urban combat with Nigerian ECOMOG troops and RSLMF soldiers.” (Beaudette, Francis M., MAJ, USA (2001) *The Role of United States Army Special Forces in Operation Nobel Obelisk*, pp.17-18)

An Immigration and Refugee board of Canada response to a request for information on the RUF, in a paragraph headed “Background”, states:

“Between 1991 and 2002, Sierra Leone experienced a civil war which cost over 50,000 lives. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was one of several ‘rebel groups’ involved in the fighting and was blamed for numerous killings, rapes, and abductions which occurred during the conflict. In 1999, the Lome Peace Accord was signed (UN Feb. 2007); it provided for the inclusion of RUF members into government, and granted amnesty to all combatants of the civil war as of that date. However, fighting did not cease until 2002.” (Immigration and Refugee board of Canada (31 July 2007) *Sierra Leone: Situation of people suspected of prior Revolutionary United Front (RUF) membership or collaboration; treatment by authorities (2005-2007)*)

A Human Rights Watch report, in a paragraph headed “The Sierra Leone Armed Conflict”, states:

“The devastating 11-year armed conflict in Sierra Leone from 1991 to 2002 was characterized by extreme brutality and widespread human rights abuses against civilians. The rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the rebel Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) were responsible for systematically hacking off the limbs, noses, and lips of adults and children with machetes, and subjecting women and girls to widespread sexual violence. While the RUF and the AFRC were responsible for the most egregious violations, government armed forces and the government-backed Civil Defense Forces (CDF) militia were also responsible for numerous abuses, including killings, torture, rape, and using child soldiers. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed and up to half of the population was displaced. A peace process that began in 1999, though marred by ceasefire violations and continuing human rights abuses, eventually led to the end of the armed conflict in January 2002.” (Human Rights Watch (25 July 2012) *“Even a ‘Big Man’ Must Face Justice”: Lessons from the Trial of Charles Taylor*, p.10)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to

the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

References:

Beaudette, Francis M., MAJ, USA (2001) *The Role of United States Army Special Forces in Operation Nobel Obelisk*
http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/files/Bio%20book%20Post_symposium%20version%203_15_13.pdf
(Accessed 26 February 2015)

Human Rights Watch (25 July 2012) *“Even a ‘Big Man’ Must Face Justice”:
Lessons from the Trial of Charles Taylor*
http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/sierraLeone0712ForUpload_0.pdf
(Accessed 26 February 2015)

Immigration and Refugee board of Canada (31 July 2007) *Sierra Leone:
Situation of people suspected of prior Revolutionary United Front (RUF)
membership or collaboration; treatment by authorities (2005-2007)*
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/474e895cc.html>
(Accessed 26 February 2015)

IRIN News (31 July 1998) *West Africa Weekly Roundup 59*
http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Newsletters/irinw_73198.html
(Accessed 26 February 2015)

Physicians for Human Rights (June 2002) *War-Related Sexual Violence in
Sierra Leone: A Population-Based Assessment*
https://s3.amazonaws.com/PHR_Reports/sierra-leone-sexual-violence-2002.pdf
(Accessed 26 February 2015)

Sources Consulted:

Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
UNHCR Refworld
US Department of State