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GUINEA, LIBERIA and SIERRA LEONE

Diamond trading must be controlled and monitored from the point of mining to the point of export

The trade in diamonds has been a key factor in fuelling internal armed conflict in Sierra Leone and its neighbouring countries, Guinea and Liberia. The armed opposition Revolutionary United Front (RUF) has controlled the diamond-producing areas of Sierra Leone and used the profits from the diamond trade to purchase arms and other military assistance which contributed to human rights abuses. The RUF is responsible for the killing, torture and abduction of thousands of civilians throughout the Sierra Leone conflict which began in 1991 and was officially declared over in January 2002.

Diamond mining continues to be a source of tension and instability in Sierra Leone, raising serious concerns about the protection of civilians from human rights abuses. For example, on 19 and 20 December 2001 in Kono District, eastern Sierra Leone, mining disputes led to violent clashes between former RUF combatants and former combatants with the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) allied to the Sierra Leone government; 13 people were reportedly killed and 40 were injured, and there was large-scale displacement of civilians in the area.

In an attempt to control and legitimise the diamond trade, the Sierra Leone government put in place a certification system for all rough diamond exports in October 2000. The trade in uncertified diamonds from Sierra Leone is banned under United Nations (UN) Security Council sanctions. Efforts are also underway by the UN, governments and the diamond industry to put in place an international diamond certification system, due to be introduced in late 2002. The international system is intended to prove the country of origin of rough diamonds by controlling and monitoring the international diamond trade.

Amnesty International welcomes the Sierra Leone government system and the international system. However, the export certification system alone cannot guarantee that the certified diamonds are free of any link to human rights abuses. Groups responsible for human rights abuses such as the RUF are still able to mine diamonds and to profit from the diamond trade. Instead of selling diamonds illicitly through neighbouring countries, the RUF is now selling diamonds through the government export certification system. In order to break the link between diamonds, weapons and human rights abuses, there must be effective and transparent controls on diamond mining and trading within Sierra Leone from the point of mining to the point of export.

The ongoing instability in neighbouring Liberia poses a threat to the current stability in Sierra Leone and the danger remains that profits from the diamond trade are being used to purchase weapons which may contribute to human rights abuses in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. In 2002, the armed conflict

between Liberian government troops and the armed opposition Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) has escalated. Increasingly, civilians are being deliberately targeted and subjected to human rights abuses by all sides. Amnesty International has confirmed that RUF combatants are active in Liberia, fighting alongside Liberian government forces, and there are reports that *kamajors*, CDF combatants, are fighting in Liberia alongside the LURD.

During the Sierra Leone conflict, the Liberian government provided military assistance to the RUF in exchange for rough diamonds from RUF-held areas. As a result, the UN Security Council introduced sanctions banning the trade in rough diamonds from Liberia. Although very few diamonds are mined from within Liberia, the government has been accused of using the profits from the diamond trade with the RUF to obtain weapons and military assistance which contribute to human rights abuses in Liberia.

Many diamonds are also reportedly smuggled from Sierra Leone through neighbouring Guinea, which has a similar export certification system to Sierra Leone, but no controls on the trade within the country.

Amnesty International's recommendations

Effective and transparent controls on the diamond industry within Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are essential to ensure the long term respect for the rule of law and human rights in the region and to comply with the future international diamond certification system. Without such controls, there can be no guarantees that rough diamonds officially certified for export are free of any link to human rights abuses. The governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone must take responsibility for implementing and monitoring these controls in a transparent manner, including by allowing independent verification of the controls. Until this is achieved, the diamond-producing areas in the region are likely to remain a source of tension and instability, leading to further human rights abuses.

Amnesty International calls on the **governments of Guinea and Sierra Leone** to:

- ensure that all artisanal and informal diamond miners are licensed and that only those individuals are allowed to mine diamonds;
- ensure that all diamond mines are licensed and that only those licensed are actively mining diamonds;
- ensure that all buyers, dealers, exporters and others involved in the diamond industry are licensed, regulated and monitored in a transparent and effective manner;
- ensure full transparency in the implementation of licensing and other controls by government and industry representatives;
- allow monitoring and verification of all aspects of the trade by independent experts.

Amnesty International calls on the **government of Liberia** to:

- put in place effective and transparent systems for controlling the mining, trade and export of rough diamonds which could be activated as soon as UN sanctions on diamond exports from Liberia are lifted;
- include in these systems effective mechanisms for monitoring and verification of all aspects of the trade by independent experts.

For further information about Amnesty International's work on the link between diamonds, weapons and human rights abuses, or on Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone please refer to Amnesty International's website: <http://web.amnesty.org>

Alternatively, contact the Amnesty International section in your country or write to: Africa Program, Amnesty International, International Secretariat, 1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom