

AI Members Only

AI Index: AFR 51/08/00

To: Section directors  
IEC  
Campaign coordinators  
Press officers

From: Pierre Sané

Date: 12 May 2000

**Re: Invoking crisis response on Sierra Leone**

Dear friends,

In view of the serious threat of further mass human rights abuses by rebel forces against the civilian population of Sierra Leone, we have today decided to invoke the crisis response mechanism. I hope you will join us in giving the highest possible priority to mobilizing public opinion and calling for effective action by governments, IGOs and companies for the protection of civilians in Sierra Leone and for those responsible for human rights abuses, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, to be brought to justice.

The political, security and human rights crises in Sierra Leone pose a serious challenge to the principle of international responsibility for the protection of human rights. The current situation has emerged largely because of a peace process fundamentally undermined by its failure to provide justice and accountability for the gross human rights abuses which occurred during Sierra Leone's armed conflict and also the international community's inability to demonstrate the necessary political will and provide adequate resources to ensure the protection of human rights.

We want to mobilize public opinion so that the protection of human rights is uppermost in efforts to resolve the crisis in Sierra Leone. The international community must fulfil its obligation to ensure that civilians are protected from the atrocities which they have experienced throughout years of conflict.

Next week we will send you recommended actions addressing the following areas:

- C the obligation of the international community to ensure that United Nations peace-keeping forces in Sierra Leone are able to fulfil their mandate to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical danger;
- C the responsibility of the international community to bring to justice those responsible for human rights abuses, including war crimes and crimes against humanity;
- C the prevention of military assistance, including arms, ammunition and personnel, to those responsible for human rights abuses;
- C ending the financial support for military assistance to rebel forces that results from illicit trade in diamonds;
- C ensuring that refugees and internally displaced people receive adequate protection and that adequate international support is provided to meet their needs.

So far we have already taken the following urgent measures:

- C ensured the safety of the AI membership in Sierra Leone and assisted their evacuation from Freetown;
- C released a news service item, *Sierra Leone: Civilians face real and immediate threat to their fundamental human rights* (10 May 2000, AI Index: AFR 51/06/00, News Service: 85/00), with recent information on the situation and AI's immediate concerns and recommendations;
- C initiated a rapid response action, *Sierra Leone: Protection of civilians at risk* (10 May, AI Index: AFR 51/07/00) requesting section action, particularly publicity work and home government lobbying.

Next week we will send you further information on:

- C campaigning strategy for consultation with sections;
- C media strategy;
- C key sections;
- C IS crisis response team;
- C IS presence in the field.

Thank you for your support in responding to the crisis in Sierra Leone.

Pierre Sané  
Secretary General