



Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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Appeals Chamber Upholds Sentences of Convicted AFRC Leaders

The Special Court's Appeals Chamber today upheld long sentences for three former leaders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara, and Santigie Borbor Kanu were each convicted last June on 11 of 14 counts for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Brima and Kanu each received sentences of 50 years, while Kamara received a 45 year sentence.

All three defendants appealed their convictions, with Brima appealing on 12 grounds, Kamara on 13, and Kanu on 19. In a Appeal Judgment summary read out in Court by Presiding Judge Justice George Gelaga King, the Court dismissed all of the Defendants' appeals.

The Prosecution also entered nine grounds of appeal against the Trial Court judgment, including appeals against the Trial Chamber's dismissal of the count of forced marriage and the Prosecution's pleading of Joint Criminal Enterprise in the indictment.

In its judgment, the Trial Chamber dismissed the count of forced marriage as an "other inhumane act", ruling by a majority that it was not significantly different from other counts of rape and sexual slavery. The Appeals Chamber upheld the Prosecution's appeal in part.

The Appeals Chamber found that acts of forced marriage amount to a separate crime under international law. This is the first such finding by any international court. The Appeals Chamber, however, declined to enter new convictions.

The Appeals Chamber also reversed a Trial Chamber decision that the Prosecution had not properly pleaded the issue of Joint Criminal Enterprise. The Appeals Chamber found that the common criminal purpose of the Joint Criminal Enterprise was properly pleaded in the indictment, but it did not enter additional convictions.

The Appeals Chamber rejected an appeal by the appellants for a reduction in their sentences. Justice Gelaga King read from the Trial Chamber record a list of crimes found to have been committed by the accused to underscore the gravity of the offences.

"The Trial Chamber found Brima, Kamara and Kanu responsible 'for some of the most heinous, brutal and atrocious crimes ever recorded in human history. Innocent civilians – babies, children, men and women of all ages – were murdered by being shot, hacked to death, burned alive, beaten to death. Women and young girls were gang raped to death...Hacking off the limbs of innocent civilians was commonplace. The victims were babies, young children and men and women of all ages...Children were forcibly taken

away from their families, often drugged and used as child soldiers who were trained to kill and commit other brutal crimes against the civilian population’.”

“The Appeals Chamber is, therefore, satisfied that having regard to that finding the Trial Chamber was justified in imposing a prison sentence of 50 years on the Appellant Alex Tamba Brima, 45 years on the Appellant Brima Bazzy Kamara, and 50 years on Santigie Borbor Kanu,” Justice Gelaga King said.

“The Appeal Chamber therefore finds no reason to interfere with the quanta of the sentences of imprisonment passed on the appellants.”

#END

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996.

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