

## **Sierra Leone**

### **Rice**

Sierra Leone gained its independence from Britain in 1960 following constitutional talks. At that point, the former Chief Minister (who had assumed that position during the decolonization process in 1953), Sir Milton Margai, became the Prime Minister. He was a member of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). Sir Milton was Prime Minister until his death in 1964, at which point he was replaced as Prime Minister by his half brother, Sir Alfred Margai. Margai was in power until the elections of 1967, which were won by the All People's Congress (APC) party. Before the leader of the APC could be sworn in, however, a military coup was staged by Brigadier David Lansana. This is a SOLS change. Two days later, another group of officers within the military staged a coup against Lansana, replacing him with Andrew Juxon-Smith. This is not a SOLS change, as the SOLS is still the military. Juxon-Smith remained in power until 18 April 1968, when he was ousted by another military coup, making Patrick Conteh the country's leader. Conteh's government was in power until April 26<sup>th</sup>, when they yielded power to the civilian APC government which had won the elections. Siaka Stevens, the leader of the APC, was then allowed to become Prime Minister. This is a SOLS change

Under Stevens and the APC, Sierra Leone became a single-party state. The constitution was edited so that all political parties outside of the APC were banned. Stevens made himself and remained in power until 1985. In 1985, Stevens had his hand-picked APC candidate, Major General Joseph Momoh, elected President in a one-party referendum. This is not a SOLS change. In 1991, Sierra Leone came under attack as a militia group known as the Revolutionary United Force began to attack villages, eventually gaining control of the diamond mines and pushing the Sierra Leone army towards the capital. In 1992, Momoh was overthrown in a military coup, led by Captain Valentine Strasser. Momoh went into exile, and Strasser established the National Provisional Governing Council as the governing body of Sierra Leone. This is a SOLS change. This government, classified as military-personalist by Geddes, was equally ineffectual at driving back the RUF forces, eventually having to hire mercenaries from a private firm to drive them back. Strasser was ousted in a coup by NPGC members on 16 January 1996, and Julius Bio became the Chairman of the NPGC. This is not a SOLS change. Bio was then convinced to hand over power to a civilian government, and new parliamentary and presidential elections were held.

In March 1996, Ahmad Kabbah, a member of the SLPP, was elected President. This is a SOLS change. He had been in power for a little more than a year when, in May 1997, he was ousted in a military coup led by Johnny Paul Koroma. This is a SOLS change. Koroma's Armed Forces Revolutionary Council was overthrown ten months later by a group sent by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and Kabbah was allowed to resume his presidency. This is a SOLS change. Kabbah was able to negotiate a ceasefire with the RUF, which was broken as soon as the ECOMOG forces left. A new ceasefire was negotiated in 2000. Kabbah was in office until 2007, when he lost elections to the APC's Ernest Koroma (no relation to Johnny Koroma). This is a SOLS change. Ernest Koroma remains in office in the present day.

## **References**

United States Department of State. "Country Background Note: Sierra Leone". Last edited 1 April 2010.  
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Coded by Meera Krishnan July 19, 2010

Revised by Bryan Rooney 10/14/2012

Edited by Andrew Wood (Rice) on 5/24/2014