



UNITED NATIONS
OFFICE OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

The Special Court for Sierra Leone



the State in achieving post-conflict justice, when the State did not have a capacity to do so on its own. The Special Court represented a new model of international criminal justice, the first time there was an international hybrid court comprised of judges of the country, and international judges. The Special Court was also the first court to have its seat in the country where the crimes took place, ensuring that survivors of the conflict could witness the justice process first-hand.

The Special Court was a pioneer in specifically addressing and prosecuting sexual and gender-based crimes, allowing victims of such crimes to achieve justice and accountability through its legal processes and ensuring a victim-centered approach to ensure the comfort, safety and dignity of sexual violence victims who had come forward to testify before the Special Court. In the RUF case, the Special Court issued the first judgment of an internationalized tribunal recognizing forced marriage as a crime against humanity. Both the ECCC and the ICC have cited to the jurisprudence of the Special Court in their own cases concerning forced marriage. The Special Court has been foundational in ensuring prosecution for these types of crimes.

The Special Court also was the first to convict individuals for the recruitment and use of child soldiers, which was subsequently acknowledged and developed by the International Criminal Court in the Lubanga case and in subsequent cases.

Importantly for the United Nations, the RUF case was also the first time in which attacks against United Nations peacekeepers were prosecuted.

Beyond Sierra Leone, the Special Court will be often remembered as the tribunal which convicted and sentenced Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia. As is often noted, this marked the first conviction of a former head of State since Nuremberg. The conviction of Mr. Taylor was a historic moment, embodying the foundational principle that no individual is above the law and impunity will not be tolerated.





important work of its predecessor and continues to promote the legacy of the Special Court.

The Special Court has already taken its place in history through the justice it has provided for the people of Sierra Leone, its groundbreaking jurisprudence, and its contribution to the rule of law.

