

Liberia: A chronology of 25 years of conflict and turmoil

REPORT

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[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations] Monrovia, 17 January (IRIN) - On President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's first day in office, IRIN takes a look back at 25 turbulent years of war and, finally, peace in Liberia.

April 12, 1980 - Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe, with only a few years of schooling to his name, stages a bloody coup d'etat, murdering civilian president William R. Tolbert on grounds of rampant corruption and mismanagement.

April 22, 1980 - Army officers publicly strip and execute 13 government officials by firing squad at beachside military barracks in the capital, Monrovia. Most of the educated elite, including then Minister of Finance Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, flee the country.

October 15, 1985 - Samuel Doe holds and wins Liberia's first multi-party general elections. Opposition leaders cry fraud.

November 12, 1985 - Samuel Doe's former comrade in arms General Thomas Quiwonkpa stages an abortive invasion that briefly topples Doe's regime. Later that day, Doe announces the coup failed and loyal military take to the streets to celebrate. Within days, Quiwonkpa is arrested and murdered by Doe's army loyalists in Monrovia.

January 6, 1986 - Samuel Doe is inaugurated as the president of the second republic and a new constitution - that remains in force today - comes into effect.

December 24, 1989 - Civil war begins with Charles Taylor mounting an insurgency from neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire into the northeastern Liberian border town of Butuo in Nimba County, helped by a group of guerrilla fighters trained in Libya.

May 30, 1990 - ECOWAS heads of State gather in Banjul, Gambia, to discuss the Liberian civil war. A five-member Standing Mediation Committee is set up to thrash out a peace settlement to end the Liberian civil war.

June 1990 - Charles Taylor rebels and Doe's army battle in Monrovia leading to indiscriminate killings of civilians and mass displacement.

July 1990 - Some 600 men, women and children who fled gun battles to take refuge in the Lutheran Church in Monrovia are massacred by government soldiers.

July 6, 1990 - ECOWAS leaders meet again in Banjul and agree to send a multinational peacekeeping force into Monrovia.

July 1990 - A splinter group from Charles Taylor's rebel movement emerges under the Command of General Prince Johnson and enters Monrovia.

August 7, 1990 - ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee establishes a Military Observer Group (ECOMOG), with the express aim of resolving internal conflict in West Africa and in particular in Liberia.

August 8, 1990 - Taylor's rebel fighters enter the Nigerian embassy in Monrovia, killing scores of Nigerians who had sought refuge there while urging their leaders to send peacekeepers in to Liberia.

August 24, 1990 - The first batch of 4,000 West African ECOMOG peacekeepers led by Ghana and Nigeria and comprising soldiers from Guinea, Sierra Leone and the Gambia land in Monrovia. Taylor's rebels, who oppose their intervention, greet them with gunfire and attacks.

September 9, 1990 - President Samuel Doe is captured and tortured to death by Prince Johnson and his rebel fighters. The event is filmed and distributed in the capital.

November 27, 1990 - First attempts at peace talks brokered by ECOWAS are held in Bamako, Mali with Professor Amos Sawyer sworn in as Liberia's first interim head of state.

November 28 1990 - Taylor's rebels and Doe's soldiers sign Liberia's first ceasefire agreement in Bamako, Mali.

December 21, 1990 - Another peace agreement is signed in Banjul between the Interim Government, Taylor's rebels and the remains of Doe's loyalists.

January 1991 - Rebel leader Charles Taylor throws out previously signed peace deals and forms a government based in the central Liberian town of Gbarnga. At this stage his forces control 90 percent of the country.

February 13, 1991 - The Lome Peace Agreement is signed to clear the way for the deployment of ECOMOG peacekeepers throughout Liberia. The deal is never implemented.

April 1991 - The United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO) formed by former Doe loyalists in Guinea and Sierra Leone invade Liberia to resist Charles Taylor. Alhaji Kromah, a former Information Minister under Doe, emerges as ULIMO's leader.

June 30, 1991 - Rebel leader Charles Taylor and Interim President Amos Sawyer meet in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, for a reconciliation meeting.

October 14, 1992 - Charles Taylor's rebels launch an all-out attack on peacekeepers and the interim government in the Liberian capital, Monrovia.

July 17, 1993 - ULIMO, the Interim Government and Taylor's rebels meet and sign a ceasefire agreement in Geneva.

July 25, 1993 - Another peace deal is signed in Cotonou, Benin, brokered by ECOWAS, the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union) and the UN. Plans for disarmament and a new transitional government to organise general elections in February 1994 - which never take place - are agreed.

September 12, 1994 - Another peace accord is signed by all the warring parties in Akosombo, Ghana, again brokered by ECOWAS. Warring parties agree to establish a five-member state council to oversee general elections in October 1995. The elections never take place.

December 21, 1994 - Warring parties, which by now have splintered and number five separate groups, travel to Accra, Ghana for more peace talks and agree to elections in November 1995 that never take place.

September 1995 - Warlords Charles Taylor, Alhaji Kromah and George Boley are sworn along with three civilian representatives as members of a collective presidency that will lead a transitional government.

April 6, 1996 - Gun battles erupt in Monrovia between allied forces of Charles Taylor and Alhaji Kromah against forces of dead warlord Roosevelt Johnson who had led a splinter group from Kromah's ULIMO. Some 1000 civilians were killed in the violence and private homes and UN facilities were looted.

August 17, 1996 - Another peace deal is signed by the now seven warring parties and civil society representatives in Abuja, Nigeria again brokered by ECOWAS. Ruth Sando Perry is chosen to chair a new transitional government to organise elections on May 30, 1997.

November 22, 1996 - ECOMOG begins disarmament of warring groups with assistance from the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia.

July 19, 1997 - Charles Taylor wins ECOWAS-supervised elections in which two other warlords Alhaji Kromah and George Boley contested. Taylor's campaign song included the words: "He killed my Ma, he killed my Pa, I'll vote for him!"

August 4, 1997 - Charles Taylor is sworn in as President before six West African heads of state in Monrovia for a six-year term.

September 18, 1998 - Taylor's government security forces clash with former rebels.

April 1999 - Dissidents believed to be from Guinea, called the Joint Forces of Liberation for Liberia (JFFL), launched their first attack in Liberia raiding villages and holding six international aid workers hostage.

July 1999 - A rebel group of exiled Liberians form a rebel faction in Freetown, Sierra Leone named Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) to oppose Taylor's regime.

September 2000 - LURD rebels launch their insurgency from Guinean raiding villages in northern Liberia's Lofa County.

May 2001 - UN Security Council reinforces an arms embargo on Liberia over Charles Taylor's gun-running in return for diamonds from rebels in Sierra Leone.

February 8, 2002 - Charles Taylor declares a state of emergency after LURD rebels make gains in northwestern Liberia.

June 4, 2003 - Liberia peace talks opened in Accra, Ghana and the UN-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone unseal Charles Taylor's indictment for 17 counts of war crimes committed in supporting rebels in Sierra Leone.

June 6, 2003 - First offensive by LURD rebels on the southern seafront capital, Monrovia.

June 24, 2003 - LURD rebels renew a second offensive on Monrovia, but are repelled by Taylor's troops.

June 17, 2003 - Mediators from LURD and a second rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) along with Taylor government representatives sign a first cease fire following peace talks in Accra, Ghana.

July 19, 2003 - The Cease-fire is broken and LURD stage their final and third attack on Monrovia leaving almost 600,000 displaced. As shelling of the city intensifies, more than 1000 civilians are killed.

June 27, 2003 - Another cease fire signed in Accra, Ghana.

July 4, 2003 - ECOWAS military chiefs agree to send a 3000-strong regional peacekeepers to Liberia to restore peace.

July 6, 2003 - Charles Taylor buckles under international pressure and agrees to leave Liberia and take up asylum in Nigeria after being offered asylum by Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.

August 4, 2003 - The first batch of 200 West African peacekeepers from Nigeria land as part of a regional force sent to stabilise Liberia.

August 11, 2003 - Charles Taylor steps down handing over power to his vice president. Three African heavy weight leaders travel to Monrovia to watch the ceremony.

August 18, 2003 - Liberia's three warring parties and civilian representatives sign the comprehensive Peace Agreement.

August 21, 2003 - Warring parties select non-partisan Gyude Bryant and Wesley Johnson to head and deputy head a power-sharing transitional government.

September 19, 2003 - The UN Security Council authorises 15,000 strong blue-helmet peacekeepers for Liberia.

October 1, 2003 - UN Peacekeepers begin their mandate in Liberia.

October 14, 2003 - A power-sharing Transitional Government made up of representatives from armed groups and civilian society is inaugurated.

December 1, 2003 - The UN formally launches a country-wide disarmament programme for former combatants.

December 7, 2003 - Fighters riot in Monrovia over poor organisation of disarmament forcing a temporary suspension of the programme.

December 27, 2003 - UN peacekeepers make their first deployment outside of Monrovia.

January 12, 2004 - UN training of a new Liberian police force begins.

February 4, 2004 - A conference on reconstructing Liberia kicks-off in New York and US\$ 520 million is pledged to help rebuild the tattered West African country.

April 15, 2005 - Nation-wide disarmament programme re-starts after a three-month suspension.

October 31, 2004 - The power sharing transitional government announces the official end of disarmament with close to 100,000 men women and child fighters disarmed. Disarmament continues in some remote regions.

November 3, 2004 - Liberia's three warring parties are officially dissolved.

November 8, 2005 - A first batch of internally displaced people begin their journeys home.

February 7, 2005 - The national elections commission releases the timetable legislative and presidential elections on 11 October.

October 11, 2005 - Internationally supervised presidential and legislative elections are held. Retired soccer star millionaire George Weah and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf qualify for a second round run-off poll.

November 8, 2005 - Liberians go to the polls for a second time to choose between the two remaining presidential candidates, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and George Weah.

November 23, 2005 - The national electoral commission declares Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf winner of the run-off elections.

January 16, 2006 - President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is inaugurated as Liberia's and Africa's first elected lady president.

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