PRESS RELEASE BY THE TRC
Freetown, Sierra Leone, 03 December 2003

TRC STANDS BY ITS STATEMENT ON HINGA NORMAN

The Special Court issued a statement on 3 December 2003 claiming that the TRC had corrected “certain inaccuracies” in its 1 December 2003 press release on the Special Court’s decision to deny the right of Chief Sam Hinga Norman to appear before the TRC.

The TRC has done no such thing. The TRC rejects the attempt by the Special Court’s media office to mislead the public in this regard.

The TRC stands by its statement issued on 1 December 2003 in relation to Hinga Norman. Hinga Norman has been denied his freedom of expression and his statutory right to appear before the TRC to tell his story. The people of Sierra Leone have been denied the opportunity of hearing from Hinga Norman in an open and transparent manner. As a result the causes of truth, reconciliation and that of addressing impunity have been seriously undermined.

Mr. Franklyn Kargbo, the Executive Secretary of the TRC, did state in his interview with Radio UNAMSIL that, notwithstanding the setback of the Court’s decision, the TRC will still issue a credible and impartial historical record of the conflict in its final report.

Mr. Kargbo’s statement must not be interpreted to mean that the TRC is retracting or correcting its earlier press release.

The Special Court statement is further misleading where it suggests that testimony may occur by way of “a written statement and a meeting with Commissioners.” This does not even reflect the text in the judgment of Judge Robertson. In order to meet with Hinga Norman the judgment requires the TRC to make a fresh application. The Court’s own procedures exclude confidential interviews and the judgment of Judge Robertson prohibits the possibility of public hearings. There is then no point in applying afresh. In any event the TRC is closing its doors within a few weeks, which in itself prevents any new applications. This pressing time constraint is well known to the Court.

One point is clear amidst the exchange of press statements. The TRC has been effectively blocked by the Special Court from holding any hearings or meetings with the detainees.

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Issued by Franklyn Kargbo
Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Tel: 232 22 235899, 235904
Mobile: 030 240 622