



Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone  
Public Information

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 22 December 2020

### **SCSL convict Augustine Gbao is first member of the rebel Revolutionary United Front to benefit from Conditional Early Release**

Former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) convict Augustine Gbao was transferred on Sunday from Mpanga Prison in Rwanda back to his native Sierra Leone. He travelled on Tuesday to his community in Blama, where he will serve out the remainder of his 25-year sentence under strict conditions and close monitoring. Gbao has already served 17 years in prison, or two-thirds of his sentence. He is the third Special Court convict, but the first member of the RUF rebel group, to receive conditional early release.

In a decision dated 8 September 2020, Residual Special Court (RSCSL) President Jon Kamanda found that Gbao had fulfilled the requirements to apply for conditional early release, but he ordered a three-month delay so that Gbao could receive specific training geared to his understanding and acceptance of responsibility for the harm he inflicted by his crimes.

Under the terms of his Conditional Early Release Agreement, Gbao must report regularly to a Monitoring Authority consisting of the Sierra Leone Police, and he may not travel out of his requested area of residence without prior written permission from the Monitoring Authority and the RSCSL Registrar.

In addition to the General Conditions set out in the Agreement, Justice Kamanda has imposed a number of special conditions. Gbao is forbidden from approaching, either directly or through others, witnesses and victims or their families, and from trying to intimidate or interfere with those who testified against him. He may not meet with ex-combatants who served under him, or with other persons convicted by the Special Court, in a way that would violate the Agreement. In addition, he may not engage in political activities, and he must conduct himself honourably and peaceably in the community.

Before leaving Rwanda, Gbao recorded an apology to the victims of his crimes and the people of Sierra Leone, saying in part "I am deeply sorry and I sincerely and honestly apologise to all Sierra Leoneans who suffered as a result of my action and negligence. I am humbly appealing to the victims and all Sierra Leoneans to find a place in their hearts to forgive me". His apology will be aired throughout Sierra Leone on radio and television in the coming days.

Gbao, who was the Overall Security Commander for the RUF, was found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including acts of terrorism, murder, rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, cruel treatment, enslavement, pillage, and attacks against UN peacekeepers. He was acquitted on several other charges, including the use of child soldiers, the murder of UN peacekeepers, and taking peacekeepers hostage.

#END

The Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone is responsible for the ongoing legal obligations of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which concluded its mandate in December 2013. These include supervision of prison sentences, witness protection and support, maintenance and preservation of the archives, and assistance to national prosecution authorities.

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