

Liberia: New Accounts Detail Abuses
Accounts from Victims and Witnesses to Human Rights Watch*
March 2003

I. Accounts of Five Liberian Nurses Captured and Mistreated by LURD Forces

- A.Z., 28 years old, was working in the hospital when the rebels arrived, asking for wounded government soldiers. They asked for money to let her escape, but as she did not have any money with her, they grabbed her out of the hospital and brought her to an ambulance. A soldier named Noa took everything from her, including her ID card, clothes, and slippers. “I cried and begged them to release me, but the child soldiers forced me to go into the car.”

They arrived the following day in Lofa bush. The soldiers had already divided the survivors amongst themselves in the car. A rebel named Nostar had chosen A.Z. “When we arrived, they told us that we would be given to a man. I refused, I told them that I was already committed and did not want break my vow. Then they asked me to be a fighter. I said no, I am a nurse, not a soldier.” During the first two weeks, she stayed at general Massa’s house [a female rebel] together with two of the other captured nurses, C.X. and B.Y. General Massa insisted that she become a fighter or be turned to a man. She asked to be given more time to decide. “It was a tough time in the Lofa bush. We had no rest. There were attacks and fights against government troops during the day, and harassment, drugs and smoke during the night. At that time, we were still resisting. They already had E.V. and D.W. So they were after us [C.X., B.Y. and A.Z.].” She reported that, at night, men would come to general Massa’s house to take drugs. They would verbally and physically assault them.

“One night, around 10h30-11h00pm, Moton [one officer] sent a child soldier to get me. I told the boy to inform Moton that I was not there. I hid in the bathroom until 2h00am. The following day, Moton sent an older man to get me. He brought me to Moton’s house. A group of man was there. One of them grabbed my hair and cut it. He verbally abused me and my family, saying that my husband was a government worker. He beat me and undressed me. I was naked in front of them. Moton was sitting and watching the scene.”

“I remember the date; it was July 6th, a Saturday, when they said that we would be trained”. The rebels gave trousers to C.X., B.Y., and A.Z., and carried them to the bushes for military training. The rebels shot around their legs and in the air, and forced them to exercise. After the training, general Massa told them that, as they were weak and could not fight, they had to get married. A.Z. went and lived with Nostar. “He was always on drugs. Almost everyone was afraid of him. During the night, he would point a gun at me and say that if I would not have sex with him, he would kill me. He was also carrying a grenade on his belt. I had no choice when he forced me.” He raped her twice.

On 20 July, the rebels decided to retreat because they lacked ammunition. “Every night since July 20th I slept with him. I tried to talk to him until the day so that he would not hurt me.” She

* All initials have been changed to protect victims and witnesses.

reported that she was forced to tell him her husband's name and his whereabouts. He took a picture of her husband that she was carrying and her wedding ring, inside of which her and her husband's names were written. He told her that he would use this to find her husband and to kill him.

"When we left Wiesua, there was a lot of tension. The headquarters had told the rebels that they wanted us in Voinjama. But the fighters did not want to leave us. They threatened us. They said that if we got back to Monrovia, they would kill us because we would say what happened and divulgate their code signs."

The survivors stayed one week at the LURD's headquarters. "There, the leaders tried to apologize. They said that what happened is because of the war. They told us that if we would say anything, they would kill us. They also told us that they have rights in Guinea."

She reported that she could still not sleep. When she lies down, her heart beats up. "I think about the terrible things that I have gone through. Yesterday [when they were handed over to UNHCR] I could not believe that I was freed. I thought that it was a dream. I never want to experience this again. I want to be with my family far from here."

Note: A.Z. reported that she feels pain when she has her periods and that she has malodorous discharges. She did not inform her friends about this. She expressed the desire to see a gynecologist to be treated.

• B.Y. (26 years old, engaged, 2 children): "At the hospital general Gonda captured me. For this reason, he told me that I should be his wife. From the beginning until the end he was aggressive with me. If I refused to go something, he would point his gun at me."

When she arrived in Lofa bush, she insisted not to be forced into a relationship. She stayed at general Massa's house [together with C.X. and A.Z.]. "We used to serve her [general Massa]. We would cook for her, clean, and wash her clothes. At the beginning, she was nice to us. She was talking to the men explaining that we had to be given time to chose what we wanted to do. It is after the training that she became aggressive. One day, she looked for me. She wanted me to go to the frontline. I hid and she never found me. Afterward, she told me that I had to get married. Nostar signed for A.Z. and me."

"One night, I was lying in Nostar's house. Gonda came to look for me. He wanted me to go to his house. I said no. He pulled out his gun and forced me to go with him. Inside his house, he ordered me to lie down or he would kill me. I said that I wanted to use the bathroom. He did not want to let me go because he knew I would run away. He asked a child soldier to escort me. I ran to general Massa's place with the child soldier. I told her what happened. She told me to stay in her house and to lie down. At that point, C.X. entered naked into Massa's house [see below]. I was lying on the bed when Gonda arrived. He told me to get up and brought me outside the house. P.Y.G. [a high-ranking officer] was standing outside. He asked me: who brought you from Sinje to Lofa bush? I answered that I was captured by a group of people. Gonda said no. He said that he captured me so I belonged to him. P.Y.G. agreed. Gonda told a group of child soldiers to carry me to his place. They assaulted me and undressed me [in the living room].

Gonda approached me. He shot between my legs and around me. All soldiers stood beside him with their gun. He raped me.” Afterward Gonda ordered her to go to the bedroom so that she could sleep with him. She said she needed to go to the bathroom [located outside the house]. She met general Massa directly outside Gonda’s house and told her that she had been treated like a slave. “Gonda came and told general Massa to leave me alone. Nevertheless General Massa brought me to her place. The next day, Nostar came and brought me back to his place.”

From this day, B.Y. stayed with Nostar [together with A.Z. and C.X., later on joined by E.V. and D.W.]. “When he was taking drugs, he was abusing us. He was insulting us and our family, he was beating us. When he did not smoke, he behaved nicely and protected us. He made sure that we had enough to eat. But he was nice to us only because A.Z. pleased him. A.Z. would sleep with him in a room while we would sleep in another room. He forced her. Many nights I heard A.Z. crying. She did not sleep all night.”

She reported that they could not stay together. “If we were together, they would come with their guns and say that we are planning bad things. We could not pray in group. We had to pray separately.” C.X., A.Z. and she thought of escaping twice. However, they had no idea where they were. They were also afraid of the government troops. “I cried every night. I missed my family. I worried about how they manage without me”. She reported that the rebels hold several meetings during which they planned to kill them because they were afraid that they would reveal their secrets. “They threatened me and my family. They warned that if I tell my story, they would kill us. They said that they have rights here in Guinea as well. They took my ID card when we were at the hospital. They said they would use it to find me.”

“When we arrived in Kolahun, the rebels living there said that it was their time to have us. They wanted us to stay there two weeks before going to Voinjama. Thanks to God, the car arrived the next morning.”

- C.X. (27 years old, single): She worked during the night shift and came home around 9h00. She was about to have breakfast at a friend’s place when the shooting started. She ran to the hospital but came back to her house [located beside the hospital] because she had forgotten her keys. After the shooting, which lasted 20-25 minutes, she heard the rebels going through each house, searching for teenagers. The rebels entered the house and found her [together with E.V.] hiding in a corner. They forced her into an ambulance and drove to Lofa bush.

“We spent one month in the Lofa bush. Every day was hell. After the training, they said we were weak. They decided to give us as wife to high-ranking officers. They came to decide whom to take. One came to me. He wanted to sleep with me. I refused.” The officer, named Moton, verbally and physically assaulted C.X. on a daily basis because she refused to have sex with him. He tortured her, beat her, dragged her on the street, naked her, and threatened to kill her. “Moton took everything from me: my passport, my gold chain, my ID card and my diary in which I kept my friends’ addresses. I was forced to give information about my family and relatives. He said he would use this to trace me and kill me.”

C.X. reported that they received constant threats. “They said that they would get everyone of us pregnant. They wanted us to become sex-slaves. At one point, I almost gave up. There were so

insisting.” Although she was severely beaten, C.X. continuously refused to have sex. “As a result, General Massa hated me. She said I was stubborn. She said that I had to be deployed [word used by the rebels to say ‘married’]. One day, she ordered Gonda to rape me. If I was not raped, it is only because of God’s mercy.” Gonda went into the house in which C.X. was staying. He physically assaulted her and forced her to undress. She managed to run away to general Massa’s house. During the same evening, Gonda raped B.Y. [see above].

Gonda tried to sexually assault C.X. on two other occasions. Each time, she managed to escape. “One night in Wiesua, Gonda came to look for me. He told me that Nostar was waiting for me outside and that he wanted to discuss with me. It was late so I knew it was something fishy. I told him that it could wait until tomorrow. Gonda became furious. He started to pull me out of the house and slapped me. I had to hang at the door. Nostar came in and asked Gonda to leave me alone.”

After two weeks spent in Wiesua, the survivors started to walk towards Kolahun accompanied by Nostar and two child soldiers. When they reached a small village called Moyeso, C.X. was told that she could not follow them anymore. “Nostar decided to leave me there. He said that I was bad because I did not want did not want to sleep with them. The other girls tried to convince him to keep me but he said that he would kill anyone who would speak. He told me that he would send ten men to get me. [Another rebel] found me and took care of me. Since the chairman had said that we should go to the headquarters, he brought me to Kolahun.” She arrived there one day after Nostar and the four other survivors.

“When we arrived in Voinjama, the rebels tried to polish the reputation of the organization. They said that we should forget what happened. They told us that if we go back to Monrovia, they would not spare us a second time. They would kill us. They added that we are not free in Guinea. I am afraid because my last name is of Nigerian origin. My family is perhaps the only Liberian people with such a name. The rebels can trace us very easily. I want to go to a safe place with my family.”

“At the border, when the rebels handed us over to UNHCR, I was interviewed by a journalist. He asked me about my experience with the rebels. I was afraid to say the truth. I told him that we were not treated badly.”

- D.W. (30 years old, married, 2 children): She was working at the maternity department when the rebels came in the hospital. “General Death captured me at the hospital. He shot around my feet and told me that he would kill me if I tried to escape. He took my money and my bracelet. From then, he said that I was his woman.”

When she arrived in Lofa bush, general Death took her to his place. She was forced into a relationship with him. “He was very aggressive. He said that he was God and that he could get anything. He said that I had to sleep with him. He would kiss me and touch me. I would tell him that I am sick, that I have my periods. He forced me.” After few days, General Death left Lofa bush and traveled to Gamba. During his absence E.V. came to live with her [see below]. One week later he came back with his wife and kicked D.W. and E.V. out of his house. “His wife was

very aggressive towards me. She tried to abuse me. I told her that it was her husband who forced me to live with him.”

They went to Nostar to ask him to stay at his place, where C.X., B.Y. and A.Z. were already living. “I was cooking, cleaning, and washing for him. He took care of me. He became very aggressive when he was using drugs.” She reported that they had no rest from other men, who would come to Nostar’s house and assault them.

“At Kolahun, we learned that the headquarters had sent a vehicle to pick us up because A.Z. could not walk. Another group came and said that they wanted to keep us for a while before we could go to Voinjama.” The car arrived the next morning and brought them directly to Voinjama. At the headquarters, the leaders tried to apologize for what had happened. “They tried to justify the boys’ behavior. They ordered us not to say anything about what happened. They told us that they have free access to Guinea. They said that they could kill us at any time.”

“I don’t want to go back to Liberia. I am afraid for my family and myself. I don’t want to stay in Guinea either.”

- E.V. (engaged, one child): She was at work when the fighting started. She ran to her house [located beside the hospital] to pick up a friend who was staying with her and her documents. Her friend had already left. She found C.X. in the house. The fighting intensified and they could not get back to the hospital. After the ceasefire, one soldier named Noa came into the house. He asked for money and belongings and ordered them to follow him. He brought them in front of the commander, who was standing beside an ambulance packed with stolen objects. The hospital administrator, chief doctor and lab technician tried to convince the rebels to release the nurses. The rebels threatened to kill them and so they left.

“Around 9h40, we left Sinje for Lofa bush. Fighting was still ongoing, I was scared. We drove until the night and slept on the highway. We arrived in Lofa bush the following day. The first night, all of us slept at the commander’s house. The next day, we were separated and given to soldiers who had fought at the hospital. I was taken by R.J. [another rebel].”

R.J. already had a wife. She got angry and ordered E.V. to leave the house as she would otherwise be killed. E.V. answered that she did not choose to come to R.J.’s house as he is the one who decided to take her. She begged to stay one night. “The next morning, R.J.’s wife beat me. I ran away to the house in which D.W. was staying.” She stayed one week there [general Death’s house] during the absence of general Death. “Junior’s wife was still spying on me. After a week, general Death came back with his wife. He asked D.W. and me to leave”. They went to live at Nostar’s house. “Nostar was only about A.Z.. He left me alone. He only protected us because of A.Z. However, other men would give us a hard time. We had no rest.”

“The rebels refused that we stayed with the civilians. The civilians are those who carry the ammunitions, collect the wood and prepare the food. They were not harassed by the soldiers. So we were not civilians and we were not fighters. We were in between. We stayed with the fighters and were used as slaves.”

On 20 July the rebels started to retreat to Wiesua, and the survivors continued to live with Nostar. After two weeks Nostar and two child soldiers were instructed to bring the survivors to Kolahun. “The walk from Wiesua to Kolahun was terrible. We did not have proper shoes. We did not have enough food. One day, we had to cross a river but the canoe was not there. We spent the night by the river. It was cold, there were many mosquitoes. From that day, my skin began to itch. Later on, A.Z.’s foot became so swollen that she could not walk. The rebels abducted some farmers and forced them to carry her on a stretcher.”

In Voinjama, she received threats. “They said that we should not think that we are free. They say that they know where we are and that they could kill us at any time if we tell their secrets.”

II. Ongoing Violations Committed by Government Troops and LURD Forces

Civilians Burned Alive by Government Troops

Refugees reported to Human Rights Watch that they have witnessed government troops rounding up civilians, locking them in houses, and then setting those houses on fire—burning them alive. Human Rights Watch has reported on this practice repeatedly in the past.

- E.F., a twenty-eight year old Gbandi woman from Kiatahun village in Kolahun District reported to Human Rights Watch that in June 2002, the government troops attacked her village, and put a group of (she estimated) approximately fifty civilians into a house, including E.F.’s mother and father, and burn the house down, burning to death all those inside.¹ E.G., a twenty-eight-year-old man from Kiatahun and E.F.’s brother (interviewed separately), described the incident. He said that on June 8, government troops captured one hundred and twenty five civilians from Kiatahun and brought them forcibly to Kamatahun. On June 30, sixty-five of those people were brought back to Kiatahun, according to E.G. They were all put into a house alive, and the house was lit on fire using gasoline. “My father and mother were inside,” E.G. reported, confirming E.F.’s dramatic story. “I stood right there, not far away, and watched. I heard people screaming.”²
- D.F., a thirty-year old man from Kolahun town, said that in early June 2002 he saw government troops put three people live into a house, lock the door, and burn it down. The incident reportedly took place in the Gbandi quarter of Kolahun town, and the victims were Korpor Bockarie, sixty years old; Sherif Bockarie, seventy-five years old; and Djongba Sherif, sixty-five years old.³ D.F. reported that he fled from Kolahun town to Susumoilahun village, where in July 2002 he witnessed government troops put seven people into a house, lock them in, and burn them to death inside. Among the victims of this incident, according to D.F., were three women, two men, and two children. “We heard voices of people crying,” he said.⁴

¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Dauda Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19, 2002.

² Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

³ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

Killings of Civilians by Government Troops

Witnesses reported that government troops under the authority of President Charles Taylor continue to engage in widespread indiscriminate killing of civilians, using both firearms and other weapons. Liberian civilians who fled Kolahun district in October 2002 reported that "Government troops just run into villages and kill people, [they] don't care who you are...they used guns, knives, and beat people with sticks until they die...They kill innocent civilians."⁵

- D.E., a thirty year old Gbandi woman from Gbaohun village in Kolahun District informed Human Rights Watch that in July 2002, government troops compelled her brother to carry loads for them, and then killed him.⁶
- I.J., a twenty five year old woman from Hasagulowain village in Kolahun District, reported to Human Rights Watch that on September 14, 2002, government troops came into her village and killed five persons before her eyes with AK-47s. One of them, according to I.J., was a thirty-one-year-old male named Kollie, and the other four were women, all of whom were unarmed civilians.⁷ I.J. also stated that in August 2002 in the same village, she saw the bodies of five others, two men and three women, whose throats had been cut and whose bodies had been burned with tires.⁸
- J.K. reported to Human Rights Watch that in August 2002, government troops entered Lehuma town, came into his house, and shot dead his twenty-five-year-old daughter.⁹ R.S., a twenty-eight-year-old man from Masambolahun village in Kolahun District, reported that government troops entered Masambolahun in September 2002. On that first day, R.S. said, he saw more than fifteen bodies of his neighbors, some killed by knife and some by firearms.¹⁰ S.T., a forty-five-year-old woman from Masambolahun, reported that when government troops attacked her village in June 2002, they fled briefly into the bush, coming back when the troops had left. Upon her return, she found the bodies of her elder brother, whose body had been burned, and her younger brother, who was apparently killed by a bullet wound to the chest. S.T. also reported that a woman named Hawa Kama was killed, and her daughter disappeared.¹¹
- V.W., a forty-nine year old man from Kiatahun village in Kolahun District, informed Human Rights Watch that on June 8, 2002, when government troops entered Kolahun town, they killed eleven people that he knew of in the Tulay quarter of the town, among them men and women. V.W. reported that he buried the bodies of these people, and that he had known them. He said they had all been shot.¹² V.W. further alleged that in August 2002, after government

⁵ Human Rights Watch discussion with a recently arrived group of Liberian refugees from the villages of Masambula, Bolahun, Lehuma, Kamatahun, all in the Kolahun District of Liberia, Largo refugee camp, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Blama Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19, 2002.

⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

¹⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

¹¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

¹² Some of the names of these victims, and some information about them, according to V.W., are: Sesay Bakisa, female, mother of four; Djebbe Kamara, female, approximately fifty years old; Kanguma Turay, male,

troops captured and held Kolahun town for four days, he buried five bodies of civilians killed by government troops, all shot. He reported that government troops were “shooting all around.”¹³

- B.D., a twenty-five year old man also from Kiatahun village, Kolahun district, said that when government troops captured Kiatahun in June 2002, they killed his mother, fifty-five years old, and his uncle. He also said he saw government troops kill nine other people, shooting them dead and then covering the bodies with mattresses which they then lit on fire.¹⁴
- C.E., a twenty-eight year old woman from Kolahun town, said that in June and July 2002 she saw at least twenty dead bodies of civilians killed by government troops, many of whom were shot in the back.¹⁵
- D.F., a thirty year old man from Kolahun town, reported that he too saw many civilians killed in Kolahun town during the month of June 2002 by government troops. He reported seeing over fifty bodies of people in the street, many of whom had been killed by knives.¹⁶ D.F. told of the summary killings of ten people by government troops in Gelehun village, all with knives. He said that the men had been forced to carry loads of weapons from Susumoilahun village to Gelehun, and once there they were all killed. D.F. helped to bury the bodies.¹⁷ According to E.G., government troops entered Kiatahun on September 5, 2002, and recaptured that village. During this time, E.G. saw the troops kill seven persons, of which he alleges that five were civilians, four of whom were women. They were shot to death before his eyes.¹⁸

Civilians Abducted and “Disappeared” by Government Troops

Witnesses reported to Human Rights Watch that government troops continue their well-documented pattern of abductions of civilians, including young girls and boys. In many cases, those abducted “disappear,” with their fates entirely unknown.

- C.D., a twenty-six year old Gbandi woman from Masambarahun village in Kolahun District told Human Rights Watch that during the month of September 2002, she was an eye witness to government troops abducting twenty-seven-year-old Sangay Kanneh, as well as a seven year old girl named Gpana Kamara. C.D. reported that the soldiers who captured them were wearing uniforms and were heavily armed.¹⁹ D.E. told Human Rights Watch, “I saw plenty of people taken away by government troops, all of them boys, young boys, from Gbaohun.”²⁰
- E.F. informed Human Rights Watch of the abduction of her thirty-five-year-old brother by government troops, whose head was covered with a box as he was taken away forcibly in

approximately fifty-nine years old; Lansana Sesay, male; Keifa Turay, male, over sixty years old; Fomba Turay, male, approximately twenty-two years old.

¹³ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

¹⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Blama Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19.

²⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Blama Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19.

June 2002.²¹ Numerous others were reportedly abducted by government troops in July 2002 from Kiatahun village in Kolahun District—small children who have not been heard from since.²²

- I.J. told Human Rights Watch that she witnessed government troops abduct ten civilians, mostly girls but some men, from Hasagulowain village in September 2002.²³ R.S. informed Human Rights Watch that two women, one approximately fifteen years old and one twenty-five years old, were disappeared by government troops in September 2002. Their names were Hawa Korpor, disappeared from Masambolahun, and Mbuwe Djassou, disappeared from Jembelahun village, respectively.²⁴ V.W. told Human Rights Watch that more than eighty people were captured by government troops in Kolahun town in August 2002 and taken to Foya District. He alleged that men, women, and children were captured, including four-year-old Kama Turay.²⁵ D.F. informed Human Rights Watch of the abduction of twelve people from Susumoilahun by government troops in July 2002. Among those abducted he could confirm that there were four women, two of whom were abducted together with their infant babies.²⁶

Government Troops Firing on Fleeing Civilians

Scores of Liberian civilians Liberian civilians who fled Kolahun district in October 2002 reported that Liberian government forces continue to systematically fire upon fleeing civilians. Many said, “As we were fleeing, the government troops were firing on us.”²⁷

- J.K. reported that when he and his neighbors were fleeing government troops who had captured Lehuma town in Kolahun District in August 2002, the government troops were firing at them as they were running away. Among those killed while being shot at were J.K.’s thirty-one-year-old brother and his brother-in-law, both of whom were shot in the back while fleeing in August 2002.²⁸
- O.P. also informed Human Rights Watch that when she was fleeing Kolahun District in October, she was running away with many civilians, and that government troops were shooting at them from behind as they fled.²⁹

²¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Blama Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19, 2002.

²² E.F. reported that the following children had been among those abducted and disappeared: Miatta Yama, female, six years old; Kaifa Yama, male, eight years old; Kopoh Meto, female, seven years old; Marie Meto, female, five years old; Amara Dino, male, seven years old; Joanno Dino, male, eight years old; Bendu Meto, female, seven years old.

²³ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

²⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

²⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

²⁷ Human Rights Watch discussion with a recently arrived group of Liberian refugees from the villages of Masambula, Bolahun, Lehuma, Kamatahun, all in the Kolahun District of Liberia, Largo refugee camp, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

²⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

- B.D. described the July 2002 takeover of Kolahun town by government troops, stating that the troops were shooting at fleeing civilians including himself; he watched one man near him get shot in the back as he fled.³⁰

Civilians Abducted and Disappeared by LURD Forces

Witnesses reported that LURD forces also engage in abductions of civilians for both forced conscription and for women and girls to be forced into sexual slavery.

- B.C., a forty-five-year-old Gbandi woman from Polohun village, Kolahun District,³¹ told Human Rights Watch that she fled her village to Kolahun town in November 2001, and then fled Kolahun town in December 2001 to hide in a hut in the bush. Yet even there she was not safe; the LURD forces came in the early days of October, B.C. said, and abducted her husband's three nephews and younger brother. The nephews were sixteen, fifteen, and thirteen years old, and her brother-in-law was fourteen. The boys managed to escape and come back home – but the LURD forces came back again, this time armed. The LURD forces, according to B.C., tied the boys' hands behind their backs with ropes and took them away by force. One of the boys managed later to flee to Guinea, but the other three have not been heard from.³²
- Q.R., a thirty-five year old man from Dodo village in Kolahun District, informed Human Rights Watch that Yewe Momoh, twenty-five years old, was captured by LURD forces in June 2002 in Kolahun.³³ E.F. informed Human Rights Watch that “government troops and rebels take small boys and give them weapons; if you don't take them you are dead. I saw them take small boys plenty of times.”³⁴

Forced Labor, Abuse, and Killings by LURD Rebel Forces

Scores of Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone interviewed by Human Rights Watch reported that they were forced to haul loads of weapons and goods for the LURD forces, under threat of injury or death. In most cases, refugees reported that the LURD forces would forcibly abduct them from their villages for the purpose of using them to carry weapons and other supplies. Some were sent to the Guinean border to bring weapons across, and others reported that they were required to go from village to village to town, carrying supplies for the LURD forces. Most witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch reported that if any civilians recruited for this forced labor would complain of exhaustion, thirst, or hunger, they would often be shot in the foot or leg, and left to bleed to death.

³⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

³¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Blama Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19, 2002.

³² The names of the missing are Bockarie Dunoh, Siafa Dunoh, and Foday Dunoh, all originally from Popolahun village.

³³ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

³⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Dauda Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19, 2002.

- D.E., a thirty year old Gbandi woman from Gbaohun village in Kolahun District informed Human Rights Watch, “I had to carry goods from Gbaohun village to Kolahun...coffee [and] palm oil. It is a twelve hour walk, and I could not refuse or they would flog me.”³⁵
- E.F. reported to Human Rights Watch that Momoh Dunoh, approximately 50 years old, was forced by the LURD forces to carry ammunition in July 2002. “He was tired and hungry,” E.F. reported, who witnessed the incident, “they shot him dead. I saw it.”³⁶
- H.I., a forty year old male from Butehewa village in Kolahun District, reported that he carried arms for the LURD forces many times, including twice in September 2002. He said, “LURD would come to the village chief, talk to him, ask for men, and according to the number he asked for we’d go. We were forced to do it—no choice. I saw LURD forces wound four people, in September 2002, who could not go on. They don’t feed you, you can’t drink, can’t stop. Two of those wounded died on the spot...during one of the trips in September, I saw three people try to escape. As they ran they were shot at. I saw them kill one of them, and wound two others. Whenever they [transport] armor, they always kill and wound people.”³⁷
- B.C. reported to Human Rights Watch: “I saw them [LURD forces] beating people almost every day. LURD come to get people to carry loads for them, if you say no they beat you. One time they beat someone almost to death. In the past few months I saw this, in the Mamyaso village. I was there when they were beating him, but we ran after that. Some of the LURD forces had uniforms and others did not.”³⁸
- J.K., a 45 year old man from Lehuma town in Kolahun District, reported to Human Rights Watch that in September 2002 LURD forces “caught me on my farm and wanted me to carry armor [weapons]...I said I can’t carry armor, they said I have to do it and they were armed. There were four of them in civilian clothing...They took seven of us, all men. We walked for four hours, I said I was tired and I put down my load to drink. They started beating me with guns and sticks, they broke my teeth with a gun butt. They shot at me but missed, cutting the edge of my arm. They also beat me on my shoulders and chest, and left me there in the bush.”³⁹
- O.P., a twenty year old woman from Mangetahun village in Kolahun District, reported to Human Rights Watch that in May 2002 she was among nine people, five women and four men, who were beaten by LURD forces because of their refusal to carry loads.⁴⁰
- Q.R., a thirty-five year old man from Dodo village in Kolahun District, reported to Human Rights Watch that he was forced by LURD to carry loads “all the time,” and that he had seen LURD forces shoot three people in the foot.⁴¹

³⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Blama Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19, 2002.

³⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Dauda Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19, 2002.

³⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, Blama Way Station, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 19, 2002.

³⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

⁴⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

- E.G., who was also forced to haul loads of weapons for the LURD forces, reported that he saw the LURD forces shoot the feet of two people, wounding them because they said they were tired. This incident occurred in August 2002, when he was carrying loads from Kolahun to Hemme.⁴²

Guinean Military Supplying Weapons to LURD Rebel Forces

As recently reported by Human Rights Watch,⁴³ elements within the Guinean military were completely aware of, and had in some cases facilitated, arms transfers to the LURD across the border from Guinea into Liberia. Numerous recent Liberian arrivals in Sierra Leone reported to Human Rights Watch that weapons continue to cross this border with the knowledge of Guinean soldiers based at Ouet Kama, and that they were forced to carry these weapons across the border from Guinea back into Liberia by LURD forces. Refugees reported that the LURD troops would force them to walk, often in groups of over one hundred people, both men and women, to the Guinean border, and to cross over the border and walk to a town in Guinea near the border, called Ouet Kama. There, they were made to wait, as trucks were sent further into Guinea, returning laden with weapons of all kinds. From there, the Liberian civilians were made to carry these weapons back into Liberia for use by the LURD rebels in their military effort.

- H.I. reported to Human Rights Watch that in September 2002, he was forced by LURD forces to go across the border into Guinea to bring back weapons. He describes the same pattern of collaboration between the Guinean military and the LURD forces that Human Rights Watch documented as occurring throughout the middle of this year. “We cross into Guinea, and stay in a village. The LURD forces go easily, with arms, into Guinea. They [the Guinean authorities] don’t bother them at all. We stayed in Ouet Kama. That’s the place they used to get weapons and bring it back to Liberia. RPG bombs, AK rounds, and SMG arms, new ones.”⁴⁴
- D.F. informed Human Rights Watch that he made three trips to the Guinean border in June 2002, two trips in July, one trip in August, and two trips in September, forced by the LURD forces. He reported walking approximately four hours from Kolahun town to the Guinean border, and said that more than one hundred people and sometimes up to two hundred were forced to do this at one time—civilians, and both men and women. D.F. said that he did not cross over the border but waited on the Liberian side. However, he saw Guinean military on the other side assisting the LURD forces as they themselves crossed over, obtained weapons, and brought them back across into Liberia. D.F. said the weapons were in bags and were new.⁴⁵
- E.G. informed Human Rights Watch that between June and September 2002, he carried weapons four times from the Guinea border. LURD forces would force them to join them, he said, often among between 150 and 200 civilians at a time. They first put those “recruited” in what E.G. called a “cell”—“a locked place,” he explained—and at daybreak they would leave to go to the border. It was approximately a five hour walk to the border from Kolahun town, E.G.

⁴² Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

⁴³ Human Rights Watch, “Liberian Refugees in Guinea: Refoulement, Militarization Of Camps, And Other Protection Concerns,” Vol. 14, No. 8 (A), November 2002.

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 20, 2002.

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.

said, and then they crossed the river into Guinea to Ouet Kama. “Guinea forces could not let us go into town. Guinean forces and LURD forces worked together, there is a good relationship. They brought the armor in trucks, with plenty of Guinean military personnel present, as well as LURD forces.” Among the weapons E.G. was made to carry were AK-47s, M-60s, and rocket propelled grenades (RPGs).⁴⁶

Human Rights Watch is gravely concerned about the continuation of this pattern of direct military support being provided, in violation of the UN sanctions, by the Guinean military to the LURD rebel forces in Liberia.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Largo refugee camp, Kenema District, Sierra Leone, November 21, 2002.