



Oxfam

9 May, 2000

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Dear Foreign Secretary,

I am writing today about the rapidly changing events in Sierra Leone. Though we have evacuated all of our British and other expatriate staff, sixty local Oxfam employees remain to share the same immediate future as the rest of the people of the Sierra Leone.

Firstly, let me add our support to those who have welcomed the decision which you and Geoffrey Hoon have taken to deploy British forces to Sierra Leone in the past few days.

Secondly, I would urge the Government rapidly and positively to consider the options for the use of British forces for purposes beyond the evacuation of foreign nationals. The continued security of Freetown airport, and logistical support to other forces coming in to augment UNAMSIL, would seem clear possibilities.

But thirdly and most importantly, I have to say that these courses of action do not seem to add up to a strong strategy to avoid Sierra Leone declining into further bloodshed. I believe that the UN Security Council should urgently remandate UNAMSIL under Chapter VII, authorising it to use all necessary means to protect civilians and enforce disarmament. This must mean effective deployment throughout Sierra Leone, including areas such as Kono; maintaining security simply in Freetown is far from enough. Though the contributions of the current and proposed forces from a number of governments are most welcome, it is difficult to imagine how UNAMSIL can succeed, with the required speed, without British troops being available to use force.

Fourthly, the Security Council should learn timely lessons from its relative success so far in using targeted sanctions against UNITA in Angola. A remanded UNAMSIL needs to be complemented by sanctions not only against the RUF, but also against parties elsewhere in West Africa, including authorities in Liberia, Togo and Burkina Faso, cooperating with Foday Sankoh.


As you know, we have long supported your efforts to make the UN Security Council take a more consistent approach to conflicts, including more consistent peace enforcement when that is regrettably necessary. Sadly, though the Security Council spends more than half of its time *talking* of Africa, its real policy is skewed heavily against it. According to our calculations, current mandates provide for one

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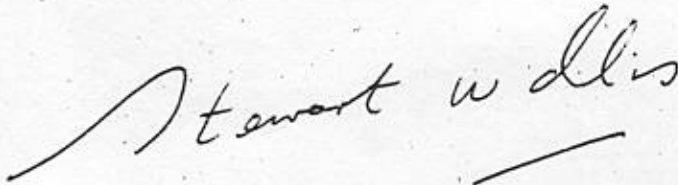
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peacekeeper for roughly 500 people in Sierra Leone, compared to one for around 80 people in East Timor, and an even more favourable ratio in the Balkans.

Nobody could accuse the UK of not taking its share of the existing international response to Sierra Leone. Yet if the UK does not help even more now, the people of that country face an extremely grim future. Beyond that, the UK would then face an almost impossible task of making meaningful progress on helping to lead the UN to become a more helpful and consistent vehicle to protect civilians in other conflicts.

Yours sincerely



Stewart Wallis
Deputy Director

Copies: Rt Hon Geoffrey Hoon MP
Rt Hon Clare Short MP
Peter Hain MP
Ann Grant