

Chronology of Events

1989 **Nine year rule of President Samuel Doe under increasing strain after severe economic mismanagement and a cutoff of US aid narrow and weaken his personal patronage systems. Brutal repression further alienates the general population, especially northerners of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups. NPFL invades.**

December

A few hundred National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) fighters, mainly Gio and Mano, launch an incursion from Cote d'Ivoire into Nimba County, northern Liberia. Led by Charles Taylor, the NPFL aim to overthrow President Samuel Doe. They are broadly supported in this by Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, both of whose leaders nurse family feuds with Doe.

1990 **Bloody civil war escalates. Civic groups cede lead role in peace process to ECOWAS. ECOMOG, a regional peace-keeping force dominated by Nigeria, secures Monrovia and prevents early victory of NPFL. Civilian interim government installed and ceasefire established, but little evidence of commitment from main faction leaders.**

January-June

After ruthless counter-insurgency measures by the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), vicious, inter-ethnic war breaks out. NPFL extends de facto control to most of the country, apart from the capital, Monrovia. Appalling human rights abuses

on all sides. UN agencies evacuate Liberia. ECOWAS heads of state in Banjul, The Gambia establish a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) to monitor developments. Liberian Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC) initiates peace talks in the US Embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

July

NPFL splits. Breakaway Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) captures strategic points in Monrovia. AFL massacre 600 displaced persons, including many Gio and Mano, sheltering in a Lutheran church in the city. Despite intense diplomatic activity, Taylor demands removal of Doe as condition for further talks. Peace efforts of IFMC flounder.

August

SMC adopts IFMC prescriptions as the first ECOWAS Peace Plan. Creates a regional peace-keeping force, the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Headed by a Ghanaian General, ECOMOG comprises some 4,000 troops, mostly Nigerian, but also from Ghana, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Togo and Guinea. Substantial resistance to ECOMOG deployment from Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The SMC also convenes a national conference of Liberian political and civic groups to help resolve the crisis. NPFL refuses to attend. In their absence, Dr. Amos Sawyer, leader of the Liberian People's Party (LPP), is elected head of an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). IGNU to exercise sovereignty over Liberia, with ECOMOG protection.

September

ECOMOG engages NPFL in Monrovia and prevents it from seizing power. Foreign nationals and diplomatic staff evacuated by US naval force. Around one third of Liberian population are refugees in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone, with many more internally displaced.

President Doe abducted, tortured and killed by INPFL leadership en route to ECOWAS headquarters in Monrovia. Nigerians assume command of ECOMOG. Ivorian and Burkinabe backers of the NPFL more receptive to a diplomatic solution. Further efforts by US State Department to involve Taylor in a negotiated settlement.

October

ECOMOG establishes control over Monrovia, with some support from AFL and INPFL fighters. The latter factions agree to observe a ceasefire.

November

Bamako Ceasefire signed between AFL, INPFL and NPFL following an extraordinary session of ECOWAS heads of states. IGNU formally installed. UN estimates 150,000 dead and 500,000 displaced in war. UN agencies return to Monrovia.

December

Banjul Agreement between the AFL, INPFL and the NPFL to convene a national conference in 60 days to reconstitute and consolidate IGNU with representatives from all factions.

1991 **Effective partition of Liberia. War spills over into Sierra Leone. Emergence of ULIMO. Cote d'Ivoire assumes leadership of ECOWAS diplomatic process, with ambiguous support from Nigeria. Reluctant NPFL pressured into series of tenuous peace accords.**

January

UN Security Council backs ceasefire. NPFL establishing their National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG) in Gbarnga.

February

Signing of Lome agreement which specifies the modalities for ECOMOG monitoring of ceasefire implementation. Disarmament deferred until after reconstitution of IGNU.

March

All-Liberia National Conference fails to take the peace process forward, as Taylor's presidential plans are thwarted and NPFL resorts to wrecking tactics. INPFL leadership irrevocably split over degree of collaboration with IGNU, ECOMOG and NPFL. First raids into diamond-rich border areas of Sierra Leone by NPFL-backed Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Refugee flows from Sierra Leone into Liberia and Guinea.

April-September

United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) formed in Guinea and Sierra Leone by ex-AFL fighters and Krahn and Mandingo supporters of the late President Doe. ULIMO forces enter western Liberia from Sierra Leone to attack NPFL.

Reconciliation in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire between Sawyer and Taylor, brokered by President Houphouet-Boigny, with the involvement of the International Negotiations Network (INN) of former US President Jimmy Carter. ECOWAS 'Committee of Five' established, comprising heads of state of Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Senegal and Togo. Committee to steer diplomatic negotiations together with the INN. First three Yamoussoukro agreements signed.

October-December

Increasingly isolated NPFL pressured into signing of Yamoussoukro IV accord, providing for the disarmament and encampment of factions, for the handover of all territory to ECOMOG control, and for elections to be conducted under ECOWAS supervision. ULIMO not party to the Yamoussoukro process and hence not bound by its provisions. NPFL wary of disarming to ECOMOG, especially amid persistent rumours of ECOMOG-ULIMO alignment. ECOMOG supplemented with Senegalese troops.

1992 **Suspicious of vacillating ECOWAS and under pressure from ULIMO, NPFL reneges on peace commitments, re-arms and launches attack on Monrovia. ECOMOG turns to openly partisan 'peace enforcement' and repels attack. Ivorians draw back from diplomatic process.**

January-April

Deployment of ECOMOG outside Monrovia. ULIMO gains in western Liberia. Sierra Leonean government toppled by under-paid and disgruntled army officers, but RUF insurgency continues.

May

In sporadic fighting, six Senegalese soldiers captured and executed by NPFL. ECOMOG forces withdrawn to Monrovia. UN Security Council launches appeal to factions to respect the Yamoussoukro Accord.

June-July

Amid continued ceasefire violations and NPFL arms purchases, ECOWAS gives Charles Taylor a 30-day ultimatum to disarm fighters and apply Yamoussoukro Accord or else face economic sanctions. NPFL refuses to disarm to ECOMOG,

calling for neutral UN peace-keeping force. Internally divided and inconsistent in its approach to Taylor, ECOWAS invites the UN to verify and monitor the proposed election process.

August-September

ULIMO/NPFL fighting escalates. ULIMO seizes diamond mining centre of Tubmanburg. ECOMOG officers support ULIMO with arms, intelligence and uniforms.

October

200,000 internally displaced in Monrovia having fled from renewed fighting and NPFL harassment in the interior. NPFL finally disbands. Their patience waning, Cote d'Ivoire steers ECOWAS to renew threats of economic sanctions on NPFL areas. 'Committee of nine' instituted to coordinate ECOWAS policy, comprising representatives of key states, both anglo- and francophone.

'Operation Octopus', an all-out assault on Monrovia, launched by the NPFL from the facilities of the Firestone rubber plantation near Harbel. ECOMOG abandons its peace-keeping stance for greater combatant role. Re-arms AFL and, openly allied with ULIMO, commences heavy bombing of NPFL-held areas. Former US President Jimmy Carter comments publicly on ECOMOG partiality.

November-December

Trevor Gordon-Somers appointed Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) in Liberia and commences discussions with regional leaders. UN Security Council imposes mandatory arms embargo on all factions. US Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen condemns non-neutrality of ECOMOG. Further flows of refugees into Guinea.

1993 Forceful ECOMOG offensive severely weakens NPFL without crushing it. Diplomatic process moves ahead with signing of landmark Cotonou Accord, which allows representatives of armed factions to join transitional government. Emergence of LPC.

January-March

Arms flows continue despite UN embargo. ECOMOG troops increased to 15,000, but Senegalese withdraw. ECOMOG, AFL and ULIMO achieve strategic military gains, including the port of Buchanan, the supply point of Kakata on the Monrovia-Gbarnga road, the Robertsfield Airport, and the Firestone rubber plantation at Harbel. NPFL's military and commercial interests severely undermined. First reports of substantial corruption and commercial adventurism by ECOMOG personnel. Security Council reiterates backing for ECOMOG and offers increased UN support to ailing peace process.

April-May

ECOMOG finally imposes economic sanctions on NPFL-held areas. Reportedly strafes cross-border convoy of relief agency, Medicins Sans Frontieres.

June

600 civilians, mainly displaced Liberians, killed in an armed attack on the Firestone plantation near Harbel. A panel of inquiry appointed by the UN Secretary General attributes the attack to units of the AFL. Nigerian elections held and annulled.

July

At the invitation of the UN, the Beninois Chairman of ECOWAS and the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), all the warring parties invited to Geneva for peace talks. Geneva Ceasefire signed between the NPFL, ULIMO and IGNU.

Cotonou Accord formally signed between the same parties. This accord re-schedules disarmament and encampment, and provides for a tripartite Liberia National transitional government (LNTG). LNTG to replace IGNU once disarmament commences, headed by a five-man Council of State to be appointed from the signatory organisations and from lists of 'prominent Liberians' drawn up by them. Council of state to operate by consensus and to determine the allocation of posts in the cabinet, in public corporations and autonomous government agencies. LNTG leaders ineligible to contest future presidential elections. Implementation of the Accord to be supervised and monitored by ECOMOG, with support of newly-formed United Nations Observer Mission In Liberia (UNOMIL). Nigerian dominance of ECOMOG to be reduced.

August

President Babangida of Nigeria resigns.

September

The mis-named Liberia Peace Council (LPC) emerges with support of AFL and engages the NPFL around rubber and timber exporting zones in south-eastern Liberia. Refugee flows to Cote d'Ivoire. UNOMIL established, the first UN peacekeeping operation undertaken in co-operation with a regional organization. ECOMOG has primary responsibility for ensuring implementation of Cotonou Accord, but UNOMIL authorized to monitor and verify the ceasefire, the arms embargo, and the encampment, disarmament and demobilization of combatants. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) protests at UN support for embargo on NPFL-held areas.

October

Governments of Egypt, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe announce troop

contribution to ECOMOG. Egypt and Zimbabwe later fail to meet their commitments due to financial constraints.

November

General Sani Abacha assumes Nigerian presidency. ECOWAS calls a consultative meeting of Cotonou signatories to determine allocation of LNTG posts.

December

President Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire dies. Emergence of NPFL-sponsored Lofa Defence Force (LDF) in Western Liberia. Two weeks of negotiations fail to decide the allocation of four remaining cabinet portfolios, or a date for the start of encampment, disarmament and demobilisation.

1994 Cotonou Accord eventually unravels, due to factional squabbles over composition of transitional government, the continued emergence of new armed groups, and the limited resources of peace-keepers. ECOWAS diplomatic process renewed under Ghanaian leadership, further accommodating the armed factions (especially NPFL) and increasing the militarisation of Liberian politics. ULIMO splits.

January

UNOMIL reaches full strength. Arrival of East African ECOMOG battalions. Frequent ceasefire violations.

February

Signatories of the Cotonou Accord meet in Monrovia. Disarmament to begin on March 7th, after the installment of the LNTG. General elections scheduled for September 7th.

March-April

LNTG Council of State installed with IGNU's David Kpomakpor as chair. Transitional legislative assembly sworn in. Supreme Court opens for 1994 term. ECOMOG and UNOMIL troops commence deployment to monitor the disarmament process. Deployment stalled around Tubmanburg, where ULIMO fighters riot over LNTG composition, in border areas, where hostilities continue amid the proliferation of armed groups, and in the southeast, where skirmishes persist between NPFL and LPC fighters.

May

After internecine fighting around Tubmanburg, ULIMO effectively splits into Mandingo and Krahn factions. These are termed ULIMO-K and ULIMO-J, after their respective leaders, Alhaji Kromah and Roosevelt Johnson.

June-August

All factions experiencing command and control problems. ECOMOG not fully deployed and UNOMIL withdrawn from western region for security reasons. Informal talks between Taylor and incoming ECOWAS chair Jerry Rawlings.

Liberia National Conference (LNC) of civilian groups meets to deliberate on the peace process. Supports the Cotonou Accord but urges the maintenance of a strong civilian presence in the LNTG. Gambian government unseated by a military coup precipitated by pay disputes within its ECOMOG contingent.

September

Akosombo Agreement signed by the NPFL, ULIMO-K and AFL to augment the Cotonou Accord. Provides for an immediate ceasefire and the establishment of a reformed LNTG Council of State. Each of the three armed factions to delegate one

council-man, with two civilians to be appointed, one by the LNC, and one jointly by the NPFL and ULIMO-K. Council decisions to be made on the basis of a simple majority. LNTG to collaborate with ECOMOG and UNOMIL in supervising and monitoring implementation of the accord. LNTG also empowered to begin the formation of national security structures and to build AFL as a national army with fighters from all factions. The bearing of arms in the capital is prohibited, although faction leaders are allowed to provide for their own personal security.

While Taylor is abroad, fighting is reported at NPFL headquarters. Gbarnga subsequently attacked by anti-NPFL forces, led by ULIMO-K. Fresh refugee influx into Guinea. NPFL fighters detain and terrorise UNOMIL and NGO personnel in north and east of country. UNOMIL evacuated to Monrovia and drastically reduced in size. Split in NPFL, leading to formation of NPFL-Central Revolutionary Council (CRC) under Tom Woewiyu and Sam Dokie, key members of NPFL command structure. Attempted coup against the LNTG, led by disaffected AFL General Charles Julu, is crushed by ECOMOG.

October-November

Elements of the LNTG, civilian political groups, churches and human rights agencies vigorously protest at the increasing militarisation of Liberian politics. Anthony Nyakyi becomes the new UN SRSR to Liberia.

December

Accra Clarification signed by all factions, old and new, including both wings of ULIMO. Council of state to include representatives of the NPFL, ULIMO-K, and the LNC, together with paramount Chief Tamba Tailor (nominated by NPFL

and ULIMO-K) and a joint representative of the AFL and the new signatories. Amid growing evidence of NPFL/ULIMO-K collaboration, deep divisions persist within the AFL and the 'coalition' of LPC, ULIMO-J, LDF and NPFL-CRC. Nigeria wary of perceived NPFL ascendancy, but largely preoccupied with domestic problems.

1995 **Regional accommodation of NPFL continues with rapprochement between Taylor and Nigerian President Abacha. Discontent and divisions spread among powerful Krahn factions. Abuja Accord draws all armed groups into transitional government, with Taylor and Kromah assuming prominent role.**

January-July

ECOWAS Heads of State attend mini-summit on the formation of the Council of State. All warring factions accept a proposal to expand the number of council nominees from five to six in order that the AFL and the 'coalition' forces can be represented separately.

US State Department condemns ECOMOG for systematic and large-scale looting and, along with the UN, cuts funding. Also encourages informal talks between Taylor and Nigerian President Abacha. These talks are sponsored by Rawlings and international NGOs.

Purges of 'disloyal' lieutenants within NPFL. Factions continue sporadic warfare whilst jockeying for position within LNTG. Civilian LNTG leaders perceived as increasingly irrelevant.

August

Taylor's first trip to Nigeria. Signing of the Abuja Accord, which supplements all previous agreements. The accord establishes a new six-member Council of State, headed by writer Wilton Sankawulo. Taylor, Kromah and LPC's George Boley are appointed vice-chairmen of equal status, along with the LNC politician Oscar Quiah and Tamba Tailor. All members can contest proposed elections, provided they resign their post three months in advance. Only one council seat is allocated to the AFL/Coalition, but ULIMO-J is granted control of three ministries and a range of public corporations.

To fulfil its widened responsibilities, ECOMOG plans to increase its strength to 12,000, and to integrate Ivorian and Burkinabe troops as part of this expansion. Ugandan and Tanzanian troops withdraw from ECOMOG.

September

Faction leaders enter Monrovia with armed 'protection'. New LNTG Council of State installed.

October

Several ceasefire violations reported. Internal tensions in all factions, notably ULIMO-J, on distribution of LNTG posts. ECOWAS receives renewed pledges of financial assistance from the international community.

November

UN Security Council provides for the expansion of the UNOMIL mandate, authorizing the deployment of additional troops to investigate all ceasefire violations, support humanitarian assistance activities, investigate and report human rights violations, and observe and verify the proposed election process. UN

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali visits Monrovia to meet with the Council of State, after a summit in Ghana with Jerry Rawlings.

December

Violence erupts in Tubmanburg between ECOMOG and elements of ULIMO-J loyal to Roosevelt Johnson over disarmament and control of diamond mines. ECOMOG personnel killed, kidnapped and wounded and military hardware seized. NPFL and ULIMO-K forces join in the fighting.

1996 **Alliances within the transitional government move to suppress dissent and squeeze opposition. Under-resourced ECOMOG unable (and unwilling) to prevent serious escalation of hostilities. Heavy fighting in Monrovia leaves hundreds dead, severely undermining the credibility of the transitional government and the Abuja Accord.**

January-February

Persistent lack of resources stalls deployment of ECOMOG/ UNOMIL. Sporadic fighting continues within ULIMO, between ULIMO-J and ECOMOG, and between LPC and NPFL. All factions reluctant to proceed with disarmament. Evidence of NPFL-inspired crack-down on independent press.

March

Taylor calls for ECOMOG forces to be placed under the control of the Council of State. The council adopts protocols by which the LNTG is to be termed the 'Government of Liberia', and the Council of State 'the collective presidency'. Taylor and Kromah begin referring to their fighters as 'government forces'. LNTG commission of inquiry into December violence in

Tubmanburg finds against ULIMO-J. ULIMO-J high command removes Johnson as overall leader, but he maintains allegiance of many fighters. Johnson suspended by Council of State from ministerial post in LNTG.

April

In the absence of Boley, the Council of State despatches police-militia to arrest Johnson on murder charges. Heavy fighting breaks out between 'government' forces and predominantly Krahn factions. The latter, comprising LPC, AFL and ULIMO-J fighters loosely allied under Johnson, base themselves in the Barclay Training Centre, taking with them and later releasing 600 'human shields'. Violence and intensive looting by all factions leads to estimated 1,500 fatalities and US evacuation of over 2,000 aid workers and foreign nationals. Johnson flown to Accra, Ghana. Independent press offices ransacked and burnt out, allegedly by the NPFL. Thousands of civilians find refuge in US Embassy compound. US convenes the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL), an inter-governmental committee of donor countries concerned with overseeing and augmenting ECOWAS peace efforts.

May-July

Militias eventually withdraw from central Monrovia after Council of State orders 'government forces' to surrender their positions to ECOMOG. All factions believed to have retained contingency arms and personnel within the city limits. 'Congo Defence Force' emerges and engages with ULIMO-J north-east of Monrovia. Cross-border raids by NPFL and ULIMO-K fighters into Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. ECOMOG remains seriously under-resourced, despite renewed pledges of US support. Thirteen international NGOs resolve to pursue only limited, life-

saving operations until security can be assured. Angry protests from Liberian civil groups demand that faction leaders be called to account for the renewed violence.

August

President Abacha assumes ECOWAS chair. An ECOWAS summit in Abuja sets a new timetable for disarmament and announces sanctions against future violators of the Abuja Accord. Sankawulo replaced as Council of State chair by Ms. Ruth Perry, a former senator. Faction leaders pledge their compliance with the new timetable but LNTG remains riven with hostilities. Elections now scheduled for May 30th 1997.