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Making and maintaining peace in Sierra Leone: the role of religion, courts, and community

Or

**Court, commission and circle: models of post-conflict
justice in Sierra Leone**

Outline

1. Introduction

2. Data collection

3. Insights:

- Interreligious Council
- Special Court for Sierra Leone
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission

4. Summary

1. Introduction

Specific research aim:

Explore the long-term legacy of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (also known as the Sierra Leone Tribunal).

Broader objectives are:

- To develop links with Sierra Leonean contacts in research and practice in relation to transitional justice, urban agriculture and youth work.
- To orientate and familiarise University of Gloucestershire, University of Otago and Ulster University researchers who are new to Sierra Leone.
- To carry out pilot interviews in national criminal justice policy and practice, community transitional justice practice and youthwork in both Freetown and Kenema.



Research Team:

Dr Kenny Lynch and Dr Jon Hobson, University of Gloucestershire (UK)

Kabba Bangura, Forough Bay coll. University of Freetown (Sierra Leone)

Professor Tony Binns and Dr Jerram Bateman, University of Otago (New Zealand)

Sierra Leone

Population: 7.65 million (WB, 2018).

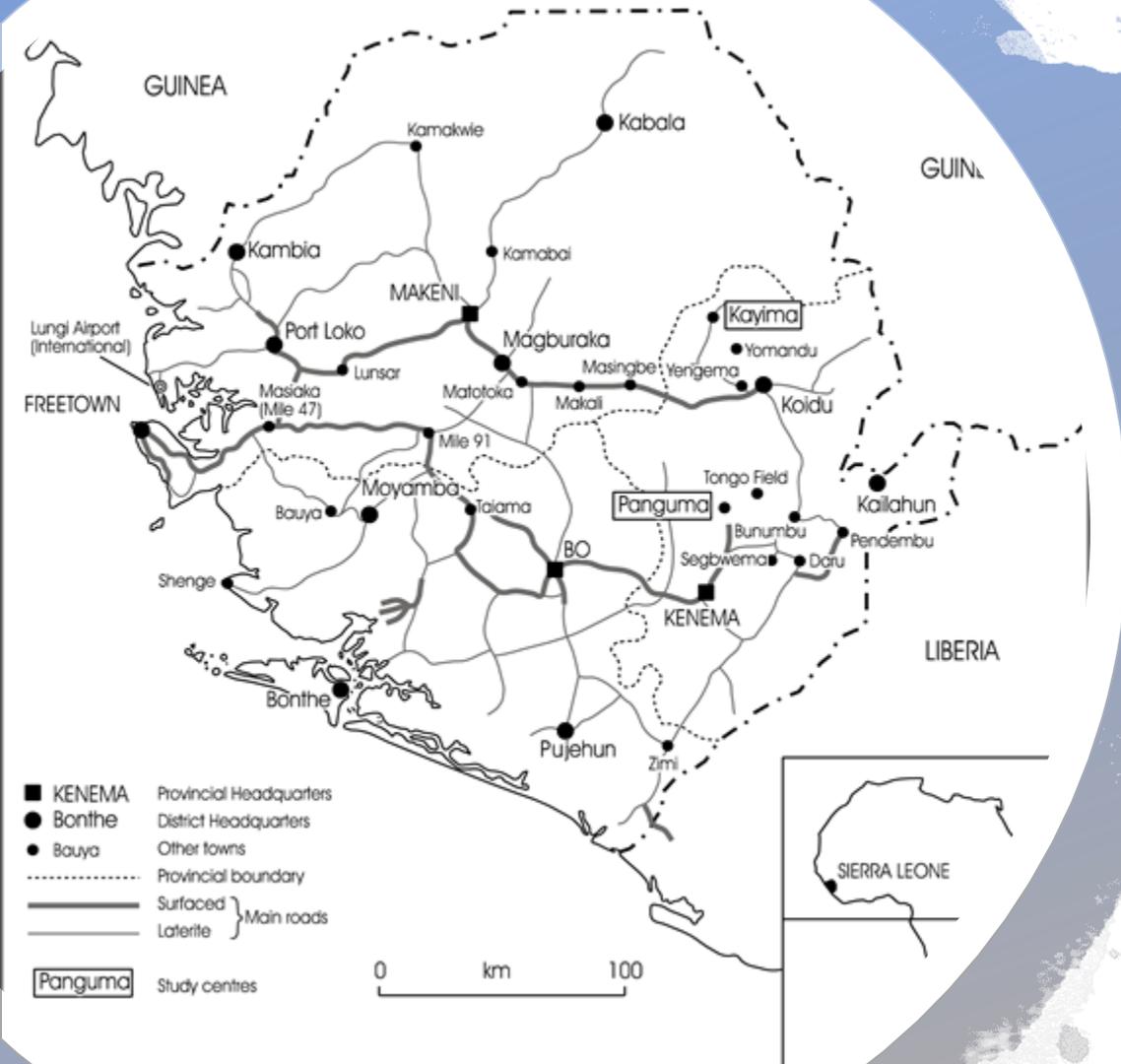
Life Expectancy at birth: 54.31 (WB, 2018).

GNI/capita: US\$490 (WB, 2018).

Human Development Index: 0.438 (UNDP, 2018).
(181 out of 189 countries).

Civil War 1991-2002.

Ebola epidemic 2014-2015.

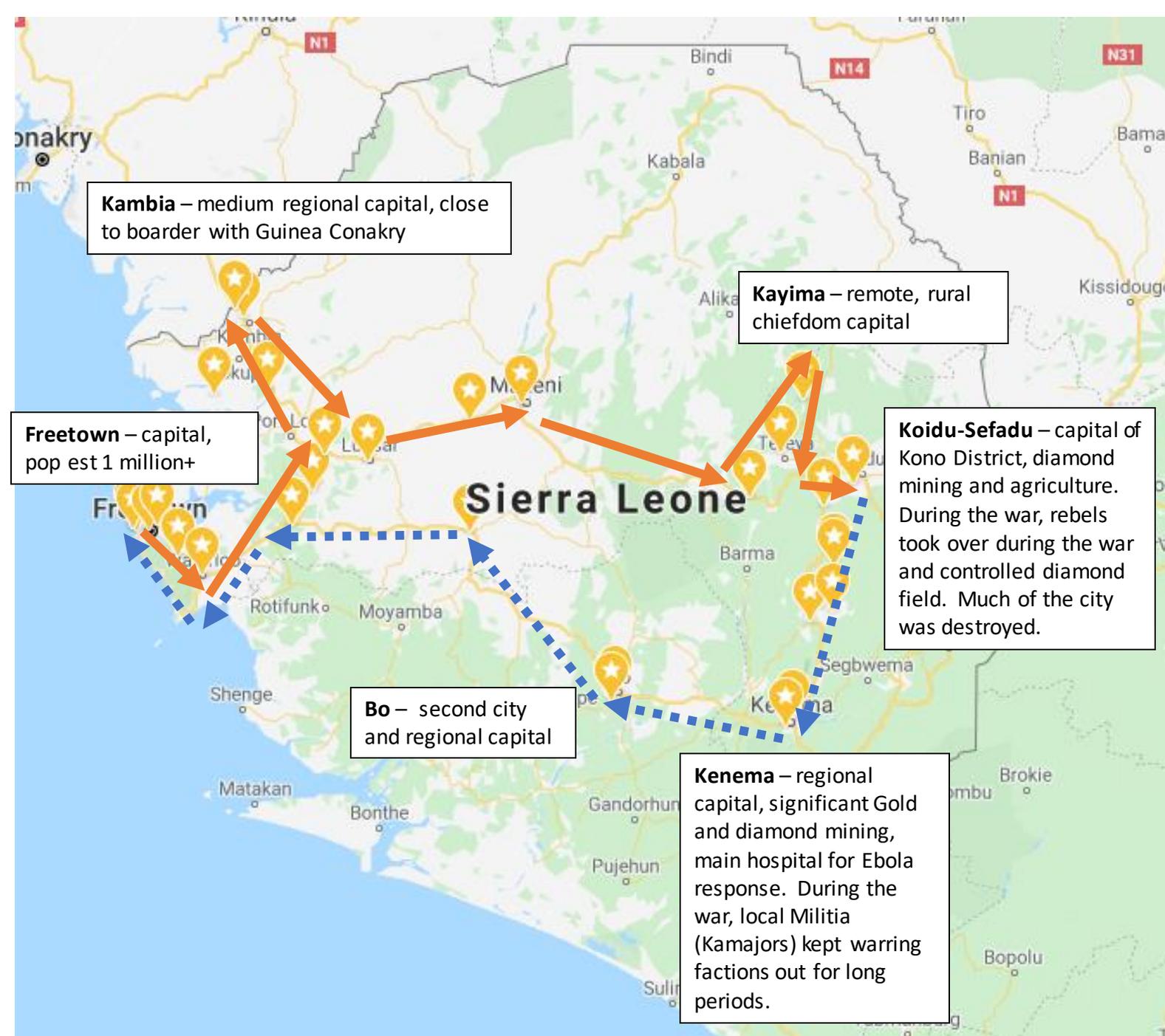


2. Data Collection

- To explore the Sierra Leonean experiences and perceptions of the Special Court and its long-term legacy on reconstruction – although it quickly became obvious in answers that we should also be asking about:
 - The Inter-religious Council
 - Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- Gather ‘everyday’ stories and experiences of post-conflict reconstruction from a diverse socio-cultural and geographical range
- Snowball/convenience sampling: 24 interviews in January by the whole team, a further 26 currently being conducted by Mr Bangura

2 weeks traveling around the country to visit as much as we could of:

- **Administrative divisions:** 14 districts and 149 chiefdoms.
- The country is **secular**,
 - 78% are Moslems.
 - 21% Christian.
 - Tolerance is exemplary.
 - Intermarriage is frequent.
- **16 ethnic groups**
 - main groups: Temne, Mende, Krio, Kono & Sherbro.
 - The Mende mainly S-E, support SLPP.
 - Temne live in N-W, support APC.
 - Each ~30% population.





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3. Insights into the data



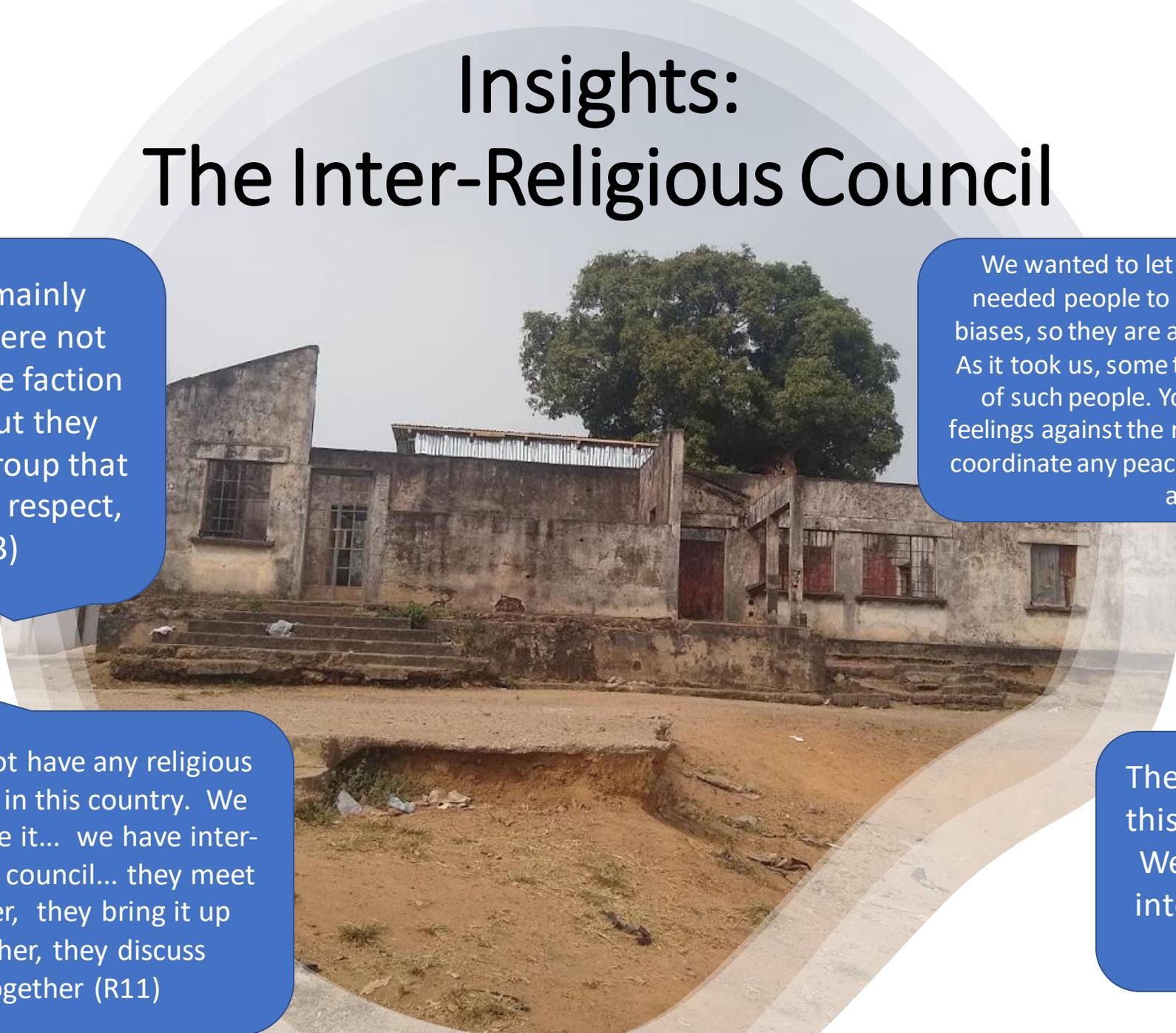
Insights: The Inter-Religious Council

I think partly mainly because they were not part of one of the faction or the other. But they were seen as a group that everybody could respect, trust (R23)

We wanted to let dialogue allow peace. We needed people to disarm themselves of their biases, so they are able to listen to both groups. As it took us, some time to neutralise the minds of such people. You know, to suppress their feelings against the rebels. Otherwise you cannot coordinate any peace process, if you exhibit your anger (R2)

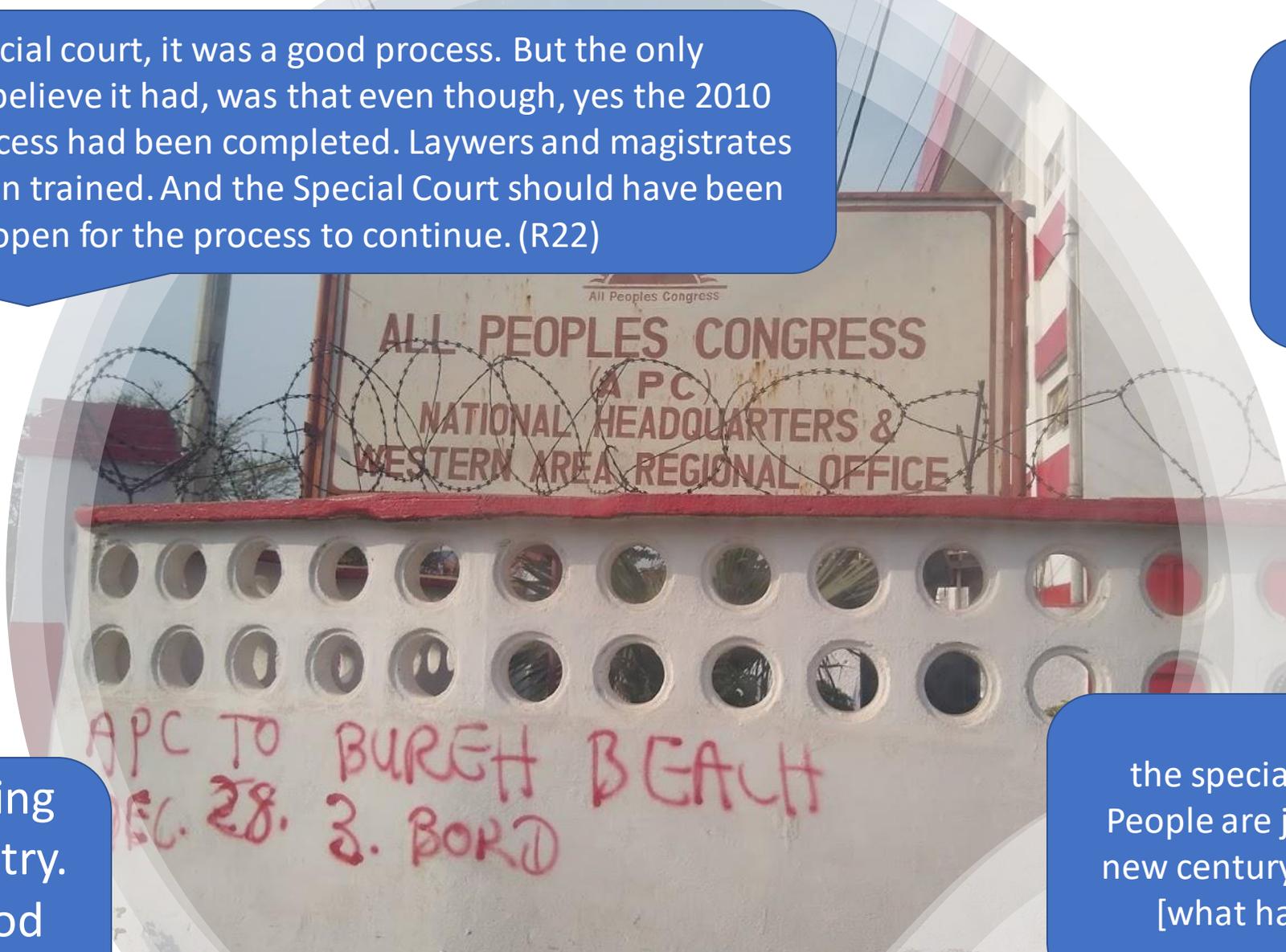
We do not have any religious conflicts in this country. We don't have it... we have inter-religious council... they meet together, they bring it up together, they discuss together (R11)

The religious aspect in this country is perfect. We live together, we inter-marry together. (R21)



Yes the special court, it was a good process. But the only disadvantage I believe it had, was that even though, yes the 2010 consultation process had been completed. Lawyers and magistrates should have been trained. And the Special Court should have been left open for the process to continue. (R22)

...it helped people to reconcile their differences after the war so that the country could move forwards (R14x)



...a good thing for the country. It was a good thing for Africa. (R15x)

the special court is good... People are just going into the new century, they don't know [what happened] (R22)

Insights: Special Court for Sierra Leone

the truth and reconciliation is one of the pillars set by the international community, deeply into the root cause of the war (R7)

the TRC was fantastic for the country ... meant that people no longer can do whatever they feel like to someone else. It has taught people how to behave ... It has a legacy of helping people think about their actions and think about their behaviour (R6)

so, I said to myself, you know what, it will be difficult to do this because I travelled all around Sierra Leone: people want peace. I will never say at all cost, of peace at all costs... they are very much aware that it won't be perfect. Fortunately, there was a provision of a TRC (R1)



Summary: building and maintaining peace

At the end of it, so if we really want to ensure that we maintain the fragile peace we have, we should ensure transparency and accountability. We should make sure that the citizens are involved in decision making. We should make sure that the literary sources [about the past conflict] that are coming should filter right down to them; let it be part of the implementation so that they own it and feel we are part of it. But if you deny them that you are creating the possible avenue for a conflict. (R23)



