The Sierra Leonean civil war was an eleven-year conflict that claimed roughly 50,000 lives and displaced approximately two million Sierra Leonean citizens. The conflict began in 1991 with the formation of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The organization’s actions created nationwide instability that led to the complete overthrow of the government and the seizure of the country’s many diamond mines. The Revolutionary United Front utilized genocidal tactics to gain control of Sierra Leone and oppose both the government and international forces that attempted to demilitarize them. I will be focusing on RUF’s forcible recruitment and use of children in combat and as sexual slaves. Children were taken from their homes and subjected to a decade of brainwashing to become loyal subordinates to the Revolutionary United Front, with many children spending over half of their lives with the organization by the time they were demilitarized in 2002.

UN DEFINITION

Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:
(a) Killing members of the group.
(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group.
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group.
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.
(United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, 1948)

The UN definition of genocide is meant to be applied in a wider manner than we currently use it. Though children are not included as a targeted group in the definition, they are implicitly acknowledged by the clauses.

REFERENCES