In 1991, Foday Sankoh led the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) into a civil war in Sierra Leone that would kill as many as 50,000 people and displace over one million. Backed by Charles Taylor and the National Patriotic Front, RUF was able to take control of the important gold and mining regions around Sierra Leone. Despite a series of coups and multiple attempts to integrate RUF, the conflict continued until 2002 when UN peacekeepers and Britain helped the country emerge from the war. Although all sides are implicated in massive human rights abuses, the atrocities committed by RUF have been described as especially horrendous where they hacked off the hands and feet of their victims. UN peacekeepers departed Sierra Leone in 2005 and the military has since fully taken over security. The most recent presidential elections in 2007 were largely peaceful. The new government's priorities under President Ernest Bai Koroma include furthering development, creating jobs, and fighting endemic corruption.

War Don Don is about the trial of RUF leader Issa Sesay. The films director, Rebecca Richman Cohen originally did investigative work at the Special Court for Sierra Leone as a part of the legal defense team for Alex Tamba Brima. While working on Brima’s defense team, Cohen was able to observe the trial of Issa Sesay. U.N. Prosecutors accused Sesay of crimes against humanity and war crimes. In response, Sesay’s defense team asserted that he was a combatant who protected civilians and was crucial to bringing peace to Sierra Leone. In 2009, the Special Court for Sierra Leone found Sesay guilty of 16 out of the 18 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He will serve concurrent prison terms on the convictions, the longest of which is 52 years. This is the longest term the Special Court, which cannot impose a life sentence, has imposed.

The Special Court moved its last remaining case, that of former President Charles Taylor, to the International Criminal Court in The Hague in 2007. As of 2010, the Special Court for Sierra Leone is preparing to be the first major war crimes tribunal to conclude its criminal proceedings since the Nuremberg Trials over sixty years ago. Sierra Leone remains among the poorest countries in the world and ranks near the bottom of the UN’s Human Development Index. The most recent data indicates that over 60% of adults are illiterate, 30% of children under five years old are underweight, and over 30% of people do not survive to 40 years of age. Around half of government revenue comes from international donors.

Additional Resources:
- Film Website: [http://www.wardondonfilm.com](http://www.wardondonfilm.com)
- Special Court for Sierra Leone: [http://www.sc-sl.org](http://www.sc-sl.org)
- Trial Watch: [http://www.trial-ch.org](http://www.trial-ch.org)
- CIA World Factbook: [https://www.cia.gov](https://www.cia.gov)
- [http://www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

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