AFE BABALOLA UNIVERSITY, ADO EKITI

DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

AN ASSIGNEMNET ON:

YOUTUBE DOCUMENTRIES ON THE SIERRA LEONIAN CIVIL WAR

PRESENTED BY:

RHEMA AYIMO SALAMIS - 16/SMS10/016

SUMITTED TO:

MR. ARIYO ABOADE

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**FIRST DOCUMENTARY**

1. TITLE OF THE DOCUMENTARY: CIVIL WAR IN SIERRA LEONE 1991- 2000 (WAR FOR PROFIT)
2. YEAR UPLOADED: July 22nd 2013

CHANNEL UPLOADED: YELuckyPictures

1. AUTHOR OF DOCUMENTARY : producer/ editor- Jonathan Efrem , Reporter- Nicholas Baret
2. SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENTARY

The documentary refers to the war as one of the most grotesque war in post-independence Africa. It describes it as the perfect stage for man to show hatred for a fellow man in form of rape, murder, displacement and other crimes against humanity which left a permanent scar to the people of Sierra Leone and the region. Sierra Leone is one of the smallest countries in the world but it is blessed with natural resources including one of the richest diamond deposits. These natural resources had been exploited by foreigners since the colonial era. Due to the civil war, it has become one of the poorest nations of the world with a life expectancy of 30.

The civil war started in March 1991 and lasted for 11 years. It begun when the RUF (Revolutionary United Front) which was formed with the support of the Liberian president Charles Taylor, crossed the eastern border of Sierra Leone from Liberia. The RUF was popular for toppling governments. The president of Sierra Leone was said to have alienated many youths in the country by declaring education a privilege and not a right. Foday Sankoh the leader of the RUF in an interview stated his willingness to be a leader of the revolution. He claimed that he had only one vision for the person, which is ‘revolution’, revolution which is ‘progress’ and nothing else. The senior leader of the RUF also spoke about the need for democracy that will ensure that they get education, and equal opportunities. He describes this as a democracy that will elevate them from their degradation to the point where they would live with the community of nations.

The RUF soon became responsible for one of the worst atrocities ever committed. They severed limbs of people they didn’t kill, mostly children. RUF soldiers would go ahead to tell civilians that ‘the government has told you that the future is in your hands but we are the future so we would take your hands’. They wanted to stop people from voting. The leader of the RUF however denied this act and insinuated that the people were lying.

The RUF was estimated to have over 10,000 child soldiers between the ages of 7 and 12. They were asked to kill their parents to prove themselves a d soldiers would pour cocaine into cuts on their bodies to make them ‘fearless’ These Children were put in front of operations, asked to attack villages and guard diamond fields. Many of the girls were forced to serve as prostitutes for the RUF soldiers.

The leader of the RUF said they weren’t soldiers but freedom fighters. They were known internationally for their atrocities especially amputation of limbs. Sometimes soldiers would bet on the gender or an unborn child and cut the mother open to confirm it for fun. The main agenda of RUF soon became obvious; it was to maintain control over the rich diamonds fields of the country which was Sierra Leones legacy. 85 percent of the diamonds were smuggled out of the country for Liberia.

In 1991 the government recruited from among the same alienated youth of RUF and doubled its military to counter the RUF. However, the government couldn’t pay their men. They were poorly trained and disintegrated. The government’s inability to defend the local population led to the development of a militia in 1993, made up of hunters in the south. In 1994 the country collapsed into banditry. Communities were attacked by either RUF or the ne militia. Some people had to hide in the bush and eat raw food to avoid being spotted. In October 1999, The United Nations started sending Peace keeping and when people became aware of the blood diamond situation, they took action.

The civil war ended in January 2002 and since, Sierra Leone has been trying to rebuild. What was once the reason of the bloodshed is now the main funding source of funds used to rebuild one of the world’s smallest countries.

Fankoh sankoh, the leader of the RUF died in July 2003 of natural causes while waiting to be tried for war crimes. In May 2012, The Liberian ex-president, Charles Taylor, was sentenced to 50 years in jail for aiding and abetting rebels in Sierra Leone and the former senior leader of the RUF was sentenced to long jail terms in April 2009.

The Death toll was estimated at 50,000, one third of the population of Sierra Leone were displaced, 10- 15,000 children were abducted and used as soldiers, 100,000 civilians were purposely mutilated . All for a country whose population was just 6 million.

1. REVIEW/CRITIQU OF THE DOCUMENTARY

According to the documentary the political situation and natural resources were the main causes of the war. The political situation was presented to be kind of a camouflage for the main agenda of the RUF which was to remain in control of the Sierra Leonean diamond deposits. The documentary focused more on the inhumane treatment of the local population and the atrocities committed by the RUF but it failed to give a detailed account of events during the civil war. Also, it didn’t discuss the peace attempts and post war activities.

**SECOND DOCUMENTARY**

1. TITLE OF THE DOCUMENTARY: CRY FREETOWN
2. YEAR UPLOADED: 2ND OCTOBER 2018

CHANNEL UPLOADED: The Biafra Digest

1. AUTHOR OF DOCUMENTARY : Sorious Samura
2. SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENTARY

Sorious Samura, a citizen of Sierra Leone and a journalist gives his account of the Sierra Leonean civil war with video footage that he was able to capture. He said for most of his live, Sierra Leone had been a good place to live, rich in natural resources- the envy of the West. Most of their wealth comes from things that people have little knowledge of and instead of it being a blessing, it became a curse. He says diamonds tore the country apart in a bloody civil war ‘for who controls them, controls the country’. He works as a camera man for UNICEF and when the conflict came to free town which he decided he used his camera to take accounts of the civil war. Some images have won him international awards. But most of the footage has not been revealed because it was said to be extreme for television. In this documentary, he makes use of these footages that weren’t released initially

In the battle for Freetown, many bodies were dumped outside the cities mortuary. Lots of lives were lost and most places were converted to battle grounds. Roadside justice was the order of the day. He said people would not understand what went on in Sierra Leone without seeing the pictures of brutality, but the majority was suffering for nothing. Majority of the population had no knowledge of the diamonds, yet they were suffering and nobody came to their aid.

Rebel forces were closing on in Freetown and the democratically elected government organized a rally and its only defenders were the Nigerian led peacekeeping force, ECOMOG. There was no help from the West even though they had blood on their hands. Diamonds were sold to westerners. Government supporters identified in the crowd were to be executed. Four days later, rebels hit Freetown, on the 6th of January 1999. He filmed from a building which he was hiding and he tried not to be noticed to protect his life. After some time, he left and began to film openly but he had to masquerade as a rebel supporter to be prevented from being killed. He gives an account of a family that was burned alive because they refused to be used as a human shield for the rebels. When they tried to escape, they were stoned to death. This was the start of what the rebels called “operations alienate every living thing”.

He was filming on the rebels instructions. They ordered him to gather some local children singing their song “we want peace”. Rebels took control of most of the city except for the west of Freetown which was being held by ECOMOG forces. He was taken to a bridge which protected the rebels from air attacks. He was taken there after they caught him. He and some others were made to witness atrocities for three days before the ECOMOG forces discovered the bridge. Many of the rebels ran for their lives towards the east which was still under their control.

Hundreds of the civilians had escaped from the rebels and they each had ugly stories to tell of what they experienced. They were lucky to be alive even if they would be handicapped. The rebels started chopping hands off during the democratic election campaign in 1996. The election slogan was ‘the future is in your hands’ so they chopped off the hands of any one they could find to stop them from voting. Children were appointed to be the ones to use the axe. The situation was too dangerous for the international press. A camera man was killed and another was seriously injured. The seven remaining fled for their lives. He said if Sierra Leone was not his country, he would’ve left with them. Five days from then, he escaped to the ECOMOG lines and began filming with the Nigerian soldiers who made up, most of the peacekeeping force.

The rebels had killed and shot anything in their way and the ECOMOG forces were fighting back trying to regain ground. They moved into the center of Freetown were civilians were caught in the cross fire. There was an unidentified gunman who was taking out soldiers from a building. An ECOMOG major and captain were shot dead and this triggered the ECOMOG soldiers. Another senior officer and Sierra Leonean soldier was shot, this sniper was really destroying the morale of the soldiers, in his own words .At last the ECOMOG soldiers took the building and found a young boy, as far as they were concerned, the child was the sniper and he as to be shown no mercy. He was tied up and to be executed with all suspected rebels. Another suspect caught in the same building and was shot by an ally to the government and ECOMOG forces. The Sierra Leone minister of information who happened to be in the streets at the time intervened and stopped the killing, sparing the young boys live. ECOMOG viewed everyone as a potential enemy. Any one rumored to have helped the rebels whether from a reliable or unreliable source was captured and considered as a traitor.

The narrator said because he was filming with them, he was allowed to film in most parts of the city but because of his presence, sometimes they would not be so quick to condemn suspects to immediate death sentence. In a way the ECOMOG, the very people who were supposed to protect them found it hard to avoid the same cruel methods as the rebels. He talks about how the family of a person that was rumored to be supporting the rebels was brutally beaten, tortured and executed by the ECOMOG peace keepers. He doesn’t have an exact number of people that were killed by the soldiers but he says surely dozens. The people of Sierra Leone wanted ECOMOG to stay because they were the only barrier they had between more insanity and the peace they pray for

He lamented on how all this brutality started by war over diamonds “we are paying the price for a mineral that here drives everyone crazy with greed and wickedness but in the west, it is a jewel given as an ultimate symbol of love. He talks about how the colonial past that gave much of Africa including Sierra Leone democracy had looked the other way when Sierra Leone needed to be defended. He says Africa is the responsibility of everyone, both those who have benefited from the riches of the country and all Africans. He urges the west to help Sierra Leone resolve their crisis.

1. REVIEW/ CRITIQUE OF THE DOCUMENTARY

The documentary was released in 2000. It is a narrative by Sorious Samura, the author of the documentary. It focuses on the ECOMOG and the brutal human rights violations committed by them against innocent civilians. The author brings to the fore that there has been no accountability for those whose primary mission was to ensure peace during the civil war. The documentary doesn’t discuss the causes of the conflict or the events. It focuses more on portraying the suffering of the civilians and the crisis in the country. It is also a cry for help, to the international community to intervene in the Sierra Leonean civil war