

HAPPY
INDEPENDENCE DAY,
SIERRA LEONE!



In honor of today's celebration, let's
walk through Sierra Leone's history.





PRE-COLONIAL SOCIETIES

MANY OF THE TRIBAL GROUPS THAT MAKE UP TODAY'S POPULATION WERE ALREADY SETTLED WELL BEFORE THE EUROPEANS' ARRIVAL. ONE OF THE LARGEST GROUPS, THEN AND TODAY, THE MENDE, WERE SETTLED IN WEST AFRICA AS EARLY AS 4,000 B.C.

A map of West Africa is shown in the background, with a semi-transparent dark teal rectangle overlaid in the center. The map includes labels for countries like Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire, and cities like Bissau, Conakry, Freetown, Bamako, and Yamoussoukro. A thin dark teal horizontal line is positioned above the text box.

TRADING ROUTES

SINCE THE 11TH CENTURY, TRADE ROUTES IN THE REGION LINKED ALL OF WEST AFRICA. AS EUROPEANS COLONIZED THE REGION, THESE TRADE ROUTES DISAPPEARED DUE TO SEPARATE EUROPEAN STATES LIMITING TRADE WITH ONE ANOTHER.

THE PORTUGUESE & TRANS-ATLANTIC TRADING

THE PORTUGUESE WERE THE FIRST TO ESTABLISH
TRADING POSTS IN WEST AFRICA IN THE 1400S,
WITH THEIR MAIN POST BEING IN WHAT IS TODAY
KNOWN AS PORT LOKO ON THE COAST OF SIERRA
LEONE.

A detailed black and white engraving depicting a busy slave market scene in West Africa. In the foreground, several African men are shown, some with their hands and wrists bound in chains. They are surrounded by a large group of European men, some on horseback, who appear to be trading or inspecting the captives. The background shows a dense crowd of people and a building with a thatched roof. The overall atmosphere is one of a large-scale, organized trade in human beings.

THE SLAVE TRADE

BY THE 1550S, THE DEMAND FOR SLAVES IN THE AMERICAS HAD INCREASED SO MUCH, THAT SLAVES BECAME THE MOST COMMON EXPORT FROM WEST AFRICA. ISLANDS ALONG THE COAST, INCLUDING TODAY'S BUNCE ISLAND, WERE BASES FOR EUROPEAN SLAVE TRADERS.



THE PROVENCE OF FREEDOM

IN 1787, THE BRITISH ESTABLISHED THE SETTLEMENT OF "THE PROVENCE OF FREEDOM." THIS WAS A SETTLEMENT OF FORMER SLAVES FROM NORTH AMERICA. TODAY, THIS AREA IS KNOWN AS FREETOWN, THE COUNTRY'S CAPITAL.

BRITISH COLONIZATION

BY 1800, THE BRITISH WERE USING SIERRA LEONE AS THE "CAPITAL" OF THEIR PRESENCE THROUGHOUT WEST AFRICA. FOR THE NEXT 150+ YEARS, SIERRA LEONE WOULD REMAIN COLONIZED BY THE BRITISH.

A flagpole with a gold finial is positioned on the left side of the image. The flag of Sierra Leone, featuring three horizontal stripes of green, white, and blue, is flying from the pole. The background is a solid blue color.

APRIL 27, 1961

ON THIS DAY IN 1961, SIERRA LEONE GAINED INDEPENDENCE FROM THE BRITISH. AS AN INDEPENDENT NATION, SIERRA LEONE HELD GENERAL ELECTIONS, CREATED A PARLIAMENT, AND DRAFTED ITS FIRST CONSTITUTION.



CIVIL WAR, 1991 – 2002

IN 1991, CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT WHEN AN ATTEMPTED COUP SUPPORTED BY LIBERIAN REBELS FAILED. THE CIVIL WAR LASTED 11 YEARS, ENGULFED THE ENTIRE COUNTRY, AND LEFT OVER 50,000 SIERRA LEONEANS DEAD.



EBOLA OUTBREAK

IN 2014, THE EBOLA EPIDEMIC SPREAD HEAVILY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE GOVERNMENT DECLARED A STATE OF EMERGENCY AND NATION-WIDE QUARANTINES. IN 2016, THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION FINALLY DECLARED THE COUNTRY TO BE EBOLA-FREE.



SIERRA LEONE, TODAY

TODAY, SIERRA LEONE IS A FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY, HAS A POPULATION OF OVER 7 MILLION PEOPLE, AND RANKS 5TH AS THE MOST PEACEFUL COUNTRY IN AFRICA, ACCORDING TO THE 2020 GLOBAL PEACE INDEX.