

## In Memoriam: Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, Former President of Sierra Leone

March 13, 2014



Sierra Leone's former president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah died March 13, 2014 after a long illness in his home in Freeport, Sierra Leone. He was 82.

An economist and attorney by professions, Mr. Kabbah spent many years working for the United Nations Development Programme. He retired from the UN and returned to Sierra Leone in 1992.

Mr. Kabbah was elected president in 1996, ending a decade of military rule, but was ousted in a military coup the following year. He was returned to power after a military intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), led by Nigeria. An ethnic Mandingo, Mr. Kabbah was Sierra Leone's first Muslim head of state.

As president, Mr. Kabbah opened direct negotiations with the rebels. When a 1999 ceasefire agreement collapsed, he campaigned for international assistance from the British, the UN Security Council, the African Union and ECOWAS to help defeat the rebels and restore peace and order. The decade-long civil war ended in early 2002, and Mr. Kabbah won a landslide victory later that year to a five-year term as president.

President Ernest Bai Koroma declared seven days of mourning, with flags to fly at half mast across Sierra Leone, according to a statement from his office which described Mr. Kabbah's death as "a great loss to his family and the nation."

The late president was a member of UPF's Presiding Council and an Ambassador for Peace. After his retirement from active politics Mr. Kabbah was active in UPF-Sierra Leone and represented Sierra Leone at international conferences convened by UPF; he and his wife Isata Jabbie Kabbah were among the thousands of couples renewing their wedding vows in a World Peace Blessing ceremony in Korea in 2009. Conferences on "Good Governance and Leadership" were held in the Sierra Leone Parliament in 2007 and 2008 to present principles of peace and reconciliation to assist the country in rebuilding after the civil war.