

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of the latest local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as of:

Wednesday, April 28, 2004

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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Special Court is a threat to regional peace

-Edo Okanya

Nigerian-born Barrister, Edo Okanya who described himself as a "conflict resolution

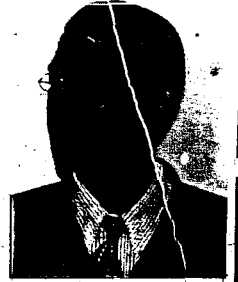
and regional security expert, last Saturday said he shared the opinion of

ECOWAS leaders that the Special Court for Sierra Leone is a threat to regional security. Speaking to this press at his Aberdeen guest house, Barrister Okanya, who said he was on a one-week visit to Sierra

Leone, insinuated that the Special Court is an annex of Central Intelligence Agency and Western propaganda machine intended to prolong conflicts in the

West African sub-region. He opined that the "Special Court undermines regional effort towards peace," and added that its formation was "not necessary again where a

Contd. page 2



Edo Okanya: vibrant

Special Court is a threat

From front page

peace has already been achieved and needed only to be consolidated".

The controversial Nigerian lawyer also claimed that he has had meetings with the nine indicted Special Court detainees re-

cently, and revealed it was evident they are not pleased with the modus operandi of the Court, which they accused of "manipulation and delaying justice", in contravention of international standard and the basic rights of accused persons.

"It is also evident that their only logical reason for such criminal delay is because of

lack of evidence to prosecute them," Okanya charged, adding that public opinion on the need for the Special Court is "less than impressive", as the Court is seen more of an outlet for creating jobs for agencies of Court officials mostly Commission of

The Exclusive

Wednesday April 28, 2004

Kabbah finally sacks Norman



Sam Hingu Norman

The confirmation of George Banda-Thomas as Minister of Internal Affairs by President Kabbah Monday finally means indicted war crimes suspect, chief Sam Hingu Norman has finally been dropped from cabinet.

Banda-Thomas who was until recently also Political and Parliamen-

tary Affairs Minister has been acting in his now confirmed capacity ever since Norman was arrested March 10, last year.

According to a State House Press Release, the President has now nominated Eya Mbayo to takeover from Banda-Thomas as Political and Parliamentary Affairs, and will also serve as Adviser to the President on Foreign Affairs.

Among the three new faces in the President's cabinet are: Dr. Sheku Sesay who has been nominated to takeover from the defeated Paramount Chieftaincy aspirant, Foday Yumkella as Minister of Presidential Affairs and Sannah B Marah who is a Deputy Minister of Finance nominee.

With the exception of Banda-Thomas, all the other nominees are subject to parliamentary approval.

Special Court

Somersaults Again

When you tell a kid that there is flesh on the palm nut he will tell you he has not got to the kernel yet. When we told Sierra Leoneans that this Special Court thing is a malicious and perfectly deliberate attempt to possibly eliminate some prominent personalities in our midst, some white fowl's theorists branded us as Mende men trying to defend another Mende man. But we shall never be bothered by those people, as they might have been acting out of ignorance - in fact conscious ignorance.

Fact

The fact of the matter is that, Chief Sam Hinga Norman has been disgracefully arrested and indicted for partially leading a group that resisted RUF's war of elimination of a particular people. The Special Court says Chief Norman killed, maimed and raped innocent civilians. The Court also alleges that he recruited children into the ranks of the Civil Defence Forces. These are the crimes for which Chief Norman was handcuffed in the full view of his staff and whisked to a Special Court detention centre. Since then, life for the national hero has been decorated with sad stories. Today, you will hear that Chief Norman has been deprived of the use of communication set because he was using it to spark off civil unrest in the country. After a while, you hear that he has been given permission to use the same set. Tomorrow, you hear the family of Chief Norman has been prevented from seeing him. And just the next day, the same family is allowed to see him.

Bank Account

Again you hear the other day that the Special Court has ordered the freezing of Chief Norman's bank account. After some intense legal battle with Chief Norman's legal luminaries, you hear that the Special Court has given up the battle and surrendered to justice and fair play. The next morning, we were told that the court has lifted the freeze on the account. But tell me, was the account ever frozen by the bank? No! A big no! The bankers at the Union Trust Bank have their wits around them. They knew it was illegal to go by that order. The question on the lips of most well-meaning Sierra Leoneans is, why in fact do people want Chief Norman's accounts frozen? What is the rationale behind this secret move? Was it not a calculated and wicked attempt to cripple the man and his family?

Wealth

The Court, without first investigating, jumped to the conclusion that the money in Chief Norman's account was an ill-gotten wealth possibly acquired as war booty. But war or not, this man was cabinet minister for a little over half a decade. And I don't think any reasonable being will expect him to live without a single bank account. But it was good the court advised itself against pursuing the matter. That was going to be human rights abuse to the highest degree. It was good Thompson and co. decided to somersault again. Of course they are a skillful tight rope walkers, as they can get to the end of the rope and quickly return to the starting point.

Courage

My only advice to Chief Norman and his family is for them to remain courageous. Life is never smooth for people who save the lives of others. Even Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, went through difficult times and at the end, allowed himself to be crucified that mankind will live a virtuous life. He received 5480 blows, shed blood seven times and went through several other difficulties to ensure that mankind is forgiven. For those of us grateful Sierra Leoneans, we know what you and your group did for us. I have said this several times before for the benefit of the so-called political analysts in our midst. The Kamajoh movement was a major factor in the decade-long Sankoh madness. Yes, we agree that the UN came in and finally effected disarmament and demobilization of fighters. But I tell you, had there been no force opposing Sankoh,

things would have been very different. The UN would have stayed here much longer than expected. Consider how long the UN has stayed in Eritrea and Ethiopia just to settle a border dispute. What about DR. Congo, what progress have they made there? Now, imagine the RUF was occupying the forest of Pujehun, Moyamba and Bo, and the swamps of Bonthe, when would UNAMSIL have deployed in all these areas? Call a spade a spade. About two thirds of this country was perfectly liberated before the arrival of UNAMSIL. And who liberated these areas? The Kamajohs of Course.

Liberation Struggle

In every liberation struggle there must be human and property sacrifices. Nobody can tell me a war can be fought for ten years without civilian casualties or destruction of property. You know how many innocent civilians and American troops that have been killed in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere? You know how many structures may have been destroyed out there? You know how many women they might have raped? We are not talking against punishing people who might have committed crimes against innocent people. We are only talking against convicting people before trial. As we can read between the lines it appears Chief Norman has been found guilty even before the commencement of the trials proper. We have received several signals to buttress our suspicion. But we are going to assume a wait and see posture.

The Democrat

Monday April 26, 2004

<http://www.dailynewsinquirer.net/news>

KABBAH REPLACES HINGA NORMAN IN CABINET

Tuesday April 27, 2004

The post of Internal Affairs Minister, which was last held by former Kamajor Commander , Chief Hinga Norman, has been filled. State House announced yesterday that President Kabbah had appointed new ministers to cabinet , one of whom was George Banda Thomas , who becomes Sierra Leone's new Internal Affairs Minister.

Yesterday's announcement from Independence Avenue represents a shift in stand on Norman's position in the cabinet by President Kabbah. On August 5 last year , while addressing fighters of the Kamajor militia at the Bo Town Hall in an attempt to pacify them after news that they had planned to disrupt the Presidential visit to Bo, Kabbah assured the warriors that he and Chief Norman were friends and that was why though he had been indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Special Court, his last held post of Internal Affairs Minister had still not been filled substantively.

Other Ministers appointed were veteran career diplomat, Eya Mbayo as Minister of Political and Parliamentary Affairs and adviser on Foreign Affairs ;Dr.Shekou Sesay as Minister of Presidential Affairs and Sana B. Marah as Deputy Minister of Finance.

Unlike Banda Thomas , whose appointment has already been confirmed, the others will have to go through parliamentary scrutiny.However, President Kabbah comes out admirably once again as an inclusive leader with a much -appreciated penchant for satisfying the interests of all the regions in the country when it comes to appointments to government.

Source: [News & Business](#) > [News](#) > [News, Most Recent 90 Days \(English, Full Text\)](#) 

Terms: **warlords must face justice arming children** ([Edit Search](#))

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The News (Nigeria) - AAGM April 25, 2004

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The News (Nigeria) - AAGM

April 25, 2004

LENGTH: 443 words

HEADLINE: WARLORDS MUST FACE JUSTICE FOR ARMING CHILDREN, WEAH SUGGESTS

BYLINE: Sheriff Z. Adams

BODY:

UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador and Liberian soccer legend George Weah has suggested that heads of warring factions in the country should **face justice** for **arming** innocent Liberian **children** during the country's recent bloody conflict.

Weah said it was a violation of local and international laws, conventions and treaties for **warlords** to have given weapons to **children** to fight. He observed that most of the **children** who joined the various armed groups, were either raped or conscripted against their will. The UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador pointed out that it was important for **warlords to face justice** in order to explain why they armed innocent Liberian **children**. Weah spoke over the weekend when he addressed Journalists at the conference room of UNICEF to mark the end of his visit to Liberia. Weah told journalists that his statement calling for **warlords to face** court trial was not personal, but that it was a way to ensure that the rights of people, especially **children** are protected. He said during the war all sort of ill-humane treatment were meted out against these **children** by these armed groups, as a result, he argued some of them are left with a bleak future. "It is not appropriate to rape and give arms to **children** It is a violation of for **children** under age to be given weapons to fight," Mr. Weah maintained The UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador said reports of rape and other violations against **children** are sufficient grounds to have **warlords face justice**. The UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador arrived in the country last week to participate in the DDDR process. Since his arrival, he has visited cantonment sites in Gbarnga, where he helped encouraged ex-combatants to disarm to the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). His visit at the cantonment sites last week encouraged scores of child soldiers to turn in their weapons to the UN peacekeepers. Addressing other issues regarding the DDDR, Weah frowned on politicians who he claimed are campaigning when the disarmament of combatants is going on. He said politicians need to abandon their political activities for a moment and join the DDDR, which he stressed is significant to peace and the democratic process. Weah said if the arms are not taken from the fighters, there would be no elections, adding, "you cannot run any effective campaign in the midst of arms." "Now is the time to give back to our country what we have destroyed and plundered, Weah said, adding, " Now is the time to restore our international respect and dignity, and now is the time to educate our **children** and reconstruct communities and family life.

LIBERIA: Bring out hidden weapons, says UN force commander

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**LURD commanders surrender
arms to Gen Opande**

TUBMANBURG, 26 Apr 2004 (IRIN) - The commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping force in Liberia, General Daniel Opande, has warned fighters of Liberian warring parties not to hide weapons during the war-torn country's disarmament programme.

"For any former fighter to be caught with hidden arms will constitute a criminal offence," warned Opande. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) commander was speaking in Tubmanburg, 60 kilometres north of the capital Monrovia, where 250 former combatants from the former rebel movement Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) were disarmed at a third UNMIL cantonment site.

Flanked by UN force officers, Opande warned former fighters of all sides: "If they have any hidden weapons, they must now turn those weapons over to UNMIL."

The UNMIL disarmament programme was re-launched in the LURD stronghold of Gbarnga on April 15. Days later a second cantonment site was opened to disarm fighters from the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) in their eastern stronghold, Buchanan.

Although UNMIL chiefs have praised the peaceful manner in which the process is being conducted, there is growing concern that not all the weapons in circulation are being collected from fighters.

"If you have more than one weapon, do not give me one and keep the other," Opande told ex-combatants. "If you have a hundred rounds of ammunitions, a hundred weapons, bring them all! UNMIL will not allow anyone to hide weapons and let this be a clear message for LURD, MODEL and former government fighters".

In the streets of Tubmanburg, LURD fighters were seen carrying ammunition, hand grenades, mortar rounds and rocket grenades as they headed jubilantly for the disarmament site.

Some of the fighters chanted: "The war is over! We want peace - no more war!" as two UN fighter helicopters flew overhead.

General Prince Seo, acting Chief of Staff of LURD, handed in his AK47 assault rifle. Six other officers from the LURD top brass also surrendered weapons. Seo told IRIN that all of his men were ready to be disarmed by UNMIL.

"Today, it is time for peace, yesterday was for war and we are now assembling all

of our fighters in far away villages to disarm to UNMIL," said Seo, who made a further presentation of two-truck loads of mostly anti-aircraft rounds and an anti-aircraft machine gun.

LURD leader Sekou Conneh and other members of the rebel movement's political leadership did not attend the disarmament ceremony.

According to Opande, over 3000 fighters have been disarmed since the UN's programme was re-launched in mid-April. Once relieved of their weapons, fighters will be placed in a cantonment unit for one week, where they will receive medical attention and psychological counselling as well as discussing vocational training options. At the end of the week, each will be given US\$ 150.

A further US\$ 150 payment will be made to help fighters reintegrate when they return to their hometowns and villages for the vocational training.

In neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire, where a UN peacekeeping operation is just beginning, former combatants will receive twice as much money for the guns that they hand in.

There is concern in Liberia that the disarmament scheme is open to abuse with even some non-combatants trying to benefit from the disarmament package on offer. Monrovia residents have reported cases of fighters who have given out weapons to people who have never previously born arms in return for a share in their disarmament payments of US\$ 300.

There are an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 former combatants in Liberia. Opande said that Tubmanburg was the starting point for the expansion of the disarmament exercise in LURD's western and northern territories.

"In the next few weeks, we will extend the disarmament to Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu [in the far north-west] before reaching as far as Lofa in the north," Opande added.

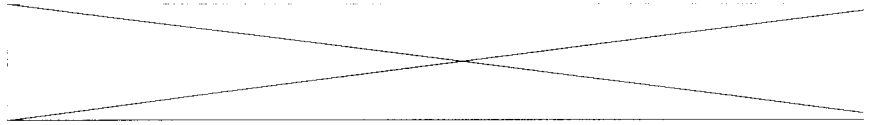
Lofa county saw some of the fiercest fighting in Liberia's 14 years of brutal civil war. The conflict ended in August last year with the signing of a peace deal and the international community's approval of a 15,000-strong UN peacekeeping force.

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UN Mission Continues Disarmament of Ex-Rebels in Liberia

UN News Service (New York)

NEWS

April 26, 2004

Posted to the web April 27, 2004

The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) continues to disarm and demobilize ex-fighters from the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel group, collecting weapons over the weekend from about 270 former combatants.

The town of Tubmanburg, about 35 kilometres northwest of the capital Monrovia, witnessed combatants marching Sunday to pick-up points with rifles and boxes of ammunition. The group of 268 combatants included 51 women and 75 children.

UNMIL Force Commander Lt. Gen. Daniel I. Opande received weapons and ammunition from senior LURD generals Prince Seo, Alieu Donzo and Abass Kanneh, and a female general, Massa Seo, at a ceremony marking the launch of the programme in Tubmanburg.

"These weapons have fought all the wars from the border up to here. Now the guns are going to be silent once and for all, and you will not be engaged in any more fighting. I am quite sure that all the children that fought with you under your command will disarm," General Opande told the LURD commanders.

Meanwhile, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said it was resuming full operations in Liberia, sending staff to previously inaccessible areas on the heels of UN peacekeeping troops to pave the way for organized repatriation later this year.

UNHCR has also completed the airlift of 239 Liberian refugees stranded in Mali.

April 27, 2004

What's Wrong with Africa?

by Marian L. Tupy

Marian L. Tupy is assistant director of the Project on Global Economic Liberty at the Cato Institute.

Driving from the far reaches of Western Cape to Cape Town during a recent holiday in South Africa, I switched on the car radio to listen to the news.

That morning, the news included only three items that did not concern cricket or rugby. The stories, however, illuminated what I think are among the most important problems facing Africa: misguided foreign policy, corruption and disrespect for human rights.

Foreign Policy

According to the broadcast, the South African government "acknowledged" Saddam Hussein's capture by American forces, but "ventured no opinion." The announcement was a sample of the way the South Africa Broadcasting Corporation would report on Saddam's detention for days to come. According to the SABC, the Iraqi "president" refused to cooperate with his American "captors" and so on.

There is legitimate disagreement among people in the United States and elsewhere about the wisdom of expending America's blood and treasure in the deserts of Iraq. Nonetheless, most people welcomed the demise of one of the world's most bloodthirsty and corrupt dictators and, unlike many African governments -- including South Africa's -- those people "ventured" an opinion.

So, why do some African countries pick meaningless fights with the United States and engage in grandstanding on issues that win them no friends and make many Americans question whether Africa is worth caring for?

The case of South Africa is illustrative. Over the past 10 years, relations between South Africa and the United States cooled considerably. Nelson Mandela, for example, claimed that President Bush "cannot think properly" and "wants a holocaust." During his address to the Non-Aligned Movement in 2000, South African President Mbeki singled out the United States as a country of increasing racism and xenophobia. During the U.N. Conference Against Racism in Durban, the anti-American and anti-Israeli hysteria ran so high that the United States pulled out. The list goes on.

South African anti-Americanism has deep roots in the ideological background of the African National Congress, which President Mbeki heads. But it serves no useful purpose today. The ANC should recognize that it no longer is a Marxist revolutionary movement,

but a governing party, which should act in the best interest of South Africa. Making Americans mad is hardly the wisest of policies, especially because President Mbeki's plan for African renewal (NEPAD) depends, in large part, on American investment.

Concomitant with growing anti-Americanism is the increasingly interventionist South African foreign policy. The ANC government has recently made commitments to spend over 100 billion rands (\$16 billion) on upgrading the South African armed forces. Considering how poor most South Africans are, that expenditure is a waste -- especially when one considers that South Africa faces no foreign threat.

Greater military spending is, however, essential for Mbeki's vision of himself as the leader of Africa. Because the United States has (wisely) decided to stay away from African conflicts, Mbeki assumes that it is his responsibility to bring an end to African civil wars. But if U.S. taxpayers are unwilling to pick up the tab for solving the perpetual conflicts in Africa, why should South Africans do so? Has anyone asked them if they want to pay for peacekeeping in Burundi and Congo? Let us hope that 20 years from now we will not look at misguided foreign policy as a contribution to South Africa's economic collapse.

Corruption

The second item on the news show was the following bizarre story: A policeman on patrol in Johannesburg noticed a fully loaded police car, which he then followed into an industrial suburb. When the car stopped, he approached it and was shot in the chest. The heroic policeman somehow managed to return fire and killed his assailant. The assailant turned out to be a high-ranking police officer who supplemented his income by stealing sheep from surrounding farms and selling them in the city.

That story reminded me of the jubilation of Kenyans after the long rule of Daniel Arap Moi -- a corrupt dictator -- which came to an end in 2002. As many Kenyans remarked, their neighborhoods became much "safer" because policemen were called back into their barracks. They weren't harassing the populace. A year later, I participated in a conference in Mombasa, Kenya. One of the participants came from Uganda. She told me how difficult it was for her to get to the conference -- policemen routinely stop travelers along the road and demand bribes. They are, in effect, Africa's highwaymen.

Of course, corruption among Africa's officials is endemic. A reason why Americans should be suspicious of President Bush's decision to spend \$15 billion on fighting AIDS in Africa is ... corruption. Consider a South African estimate that approximately 50 percent of all drugs delivered to the country's government-run hospitals are stolen.

Politicians are the most corrupt members of African societies. Joseph Mobutu of Zaire -- who changed his name to the more widely recognized Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga (which translates to "the earthy, the peppery, all-powerful warrior who, by his endurance and will to win, goes from contest to contest leaving fire in his wake") -- stole about \$8 billion. Famously, he enlarged the airport in his hometown to

accommodate landings by Concordes-- which he leased from Air France--all the while his people starved. Nigeria's Sani Abacha stashed away \$4 billion. Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe just moved into a \$6 million villa in Harare, even though 50 percent of his countrymen face famine. The list is inexhaustible.

Human Rights

According to the last item on the newscast, the Nigerian government declared that it would arrest or "kill" anyone who tried to kidnap Charles Taylor. Taylor, who resides in Nigeria, is the former strongman of Liberia and a man responsible for much bloodshed in that country. He has also been indicted by the U.N. Special Court for Sierra Leone, which accused him of "the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law" in Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war. An international warrant for his arrest carries with it a \$2 million reward.

The Nigerian attitude epitomizes the way African leaders, even those who commit gross abuses of human rights, continue to be gently treated. Take the supposedly reformist government of Mwai Kibaki in Kenya. One of the first things Kibaki did after coming to power was to declare that Daniel Arap Moi, a corrupt dictator, who ruled Kenya for two decades, would be left alone. Mengistu Haile Mariam, otherwise known as the "Butcher of Addis Ababa," lives happily in Zimbabwe under the protection of Robert Mugabe. Famously, Idi Amin and Mobutu Sese Seko escaped, or were allowed to escape, punishment.

The exception to the rule is Frederick Chiluba of Zambia. Having replaced Kenneth Kaunda by promising to stamp out corruption, Chiluba proceeded to embezzle millions of dollars during his 10-year rule. As he famously declared only two weeks after coming to power, "power is sweet." Chiluba currently faces corruption charges in Lusaka. But, the case stands. African leaders, treated with utter deference while in power, seldom have to answer for their actions when they are out of power. That too has to change.

This article was published in FOX News Online, Jan. 28, 2004.

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Terms: **meeting seeks to boost un cooperation with west africans** ([Edit Search](#))

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Africa News April 27, 2004 Tuesday

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Africa News

April 27, 2004 Tuesday

LENGTH: 292 words

HEADLINE: West Africa;
Meetings **Seek to Boost UN Cooperation With West Africans**

BYLINE: UN News Service

BODY:

A meeting of representatives of the **United Nations** and the Economic Community of **West African States** (ECOWAS) in Senegal this weekend will explore how best the two organizations and civil society can implement **UN** Secretary-General Kofi Annan's recommendations on stabilizing **West** Africa, the **UN** regional office said today.

Mr. Annan has recommended ways of eliminating cross-border problems in **West** Africa by ending the spread of small arms, the recruitment of child soldiers, the employment of mercenary soldiers and the erection of roadblocks.

"It is high time to deal with these scourges that have afflicted our region for many years," the Secretary-General's Special Representative for **West** Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah said in announcing the 30 April meeting in the Senegalese capital, Dakar.


"With the Security Council having now formally endorsed the practical and concrete recommendations made by the Secretary-General, all relevant actors - whether in the international community, ECOWAS, national governments and civil society organizations - have to work on credible action plans to implement those recommendations," he said.

"This is what we will be attempting to do next Friday," he added.

A Security Council Presidential Statement issued on 25 March said the Council would take a regional approach to **West** Africa as part of a wider strategy of conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict stabilization there.

On 29 April representatives of **UN** peacekeeping operations in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone will meet to strengthen mission **cooperation**, including joint patrolling and monitoring and the possibility of "hot pursuit" cross-border operations, the **UN** Office for **West** Africa (UNOWA) said.

LOAD-DATE: April 27, 2004

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Nigeria Backs Elections Timetable, Wants Govt Support for Press Freedom

The NEWS (Monrovia)

NEWS

April 27, 2004

Posted to the web April 27, 2004

Monrovia

The Nigerian Government says it supports the election timetable contained in the Comprehensive Accra Peace Accord to ensure that general and presidential elections are held according to scheduled in October, 2005.

The Deputy Chief of Mission at the Nigerian Embassy, Mr. Folu Ogunbanwo spoke Saturday when he proxy for President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria at programs marking the 15th Anniversary of Liberia's oldest independent daily, The NEWS Newspaper.

President Obasanjo was selected by this Paper as its Man-of-the-Year, 2003 for playing an influential role in helping to restore peace and stability to Liberia when the country was engulfed in a bloody conflict.

President Obasanjo's decision to persuade and offer former President Charles Taylor asylum in Nigeria helped reduce tension in the country.

Addressing staff, honoree and guests of The NEWS Newspaper on the Topic: "The Role Of The Press In Building A New Liberia," Mr. Ogunbanwo said Nigeria remains committed to economic development and political stability in the country.

He said his country considers the democratic elections as an important political transitional that would lead to the restoration of peace and stability.

"This award will further encourage Nigeria to remain committed to political stability, economic development and internal security of the country," the Nigerian diplomat said.

Mr.Ogunbanwo assured that Nigeria would not only continue to support the peace process, but to ensure the success of the ongoing peace process in the country.

The Nigerian Deputy Chief of Mission stressed that the media in Liberia has a responsibility to sensitize its people regarding the democratic process and to promote the spirit of national unity and healing.

He indicated that although the Liberian media has limited resources, considering the current state of affairs, it was however performing well.

Mr. Ogunbawo urged the media to join hands with the Transitional Government to promote unity, stability and peace in order to create a suitable atmosphere for national development.

He said the present dispensation needs a peaceful and stable atmosphere to be able to execute the programs and enhance the welfare of the common man.

The Nigerian diplomat said Journalists should educate the people and mobilize the minds in order to prepare them for national development.

In this regard, Mr. Ogunbanwo admonished the media to discourage rumor mongering which he said would undermine their own profession.

"In the performance of their mandatory role, the Liberian press should within its limited resources, be proactive and resourceful in the dissemination of information. The Media has a responsibility to sensitize and mobilize citizens to all the programs of the Transitional Government, particularly the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) program", he emphasized.

The Nigerian Deputy Chief of Mission said it is the responsibility of the Liberian media to foster national harmony and promote the spirit of national reconciliation, particularly in the circumstances of post-war Liberia.

As an important stakeholder in Liberia's enterprise, Mr. Ogunbanwo said the media should engage government in useful dialogue and to be constructive in preparing the agenda for the new Liberia.

He warned the media against engaging Government in unnecessary confrontational stance.

Similarly, Mr. Ogunbanwo urged the Transitional Government to regard the media as partners in building a new Liberia, adding that Government needs the press to project the image of the country.

" The Liberian press also has the additional role in building a new Liberia. With the country just returning from a protracted civil war, it is the sacred duty of the press to foster national cohesion and endanger a sense of belonging in the people," the Senior Nigerian Embassy official maintained.

He expressed President Obasanjo's facilitation on the 15th anniversary of The NEWS newspaper, saying that it was gratifying to note that inspite of the protracted civil unrest in the country, The NEWS was able to rise above the storm by providing selfless service to the Liberian people.

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