

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:

Tuesday, August 17, 2004

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
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2007: Downplay Personalities, Address Issues - Gambari

This Day (Lagos)

INTERVIEW

August 16, 2004

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Lagos

Professor Ibrahim Agboola Gambari, who became Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs at the age of 39 and the longest serving Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN), having served for ten years from 1989 to 1999, is currently U.N Under Secretary and Special Adviser on African Affairs to Mr. Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General. In an interview with Deji Elumoye, Gambari bares his mind on efforts by the United Nations to end all the crises in Africa. Back home, he berated the political class for failure to embark on the reformation of the polity while also advocating conferences to discuss fundamental issues in the country

(Parts of wide-ranging interview omitted.)

The asylum granted former Liberian President, Mr. Charles Taylor by President Obasanjo has continued to generate condemnation and moreso as the international community is demanding his release for trial. What is the latest development?

I think this is part of the promising development in Africa which I mentioned earlier. You remember I mentioned there were about seventeen conflicts in about four, five years ago; then you now have a situation where the main conflict in Sudan, apart from Dafur, is being resolved, Angola is now at peace, the Democratic Republic of Congo, which was described as Africa's First World War, there is much success in the peace process, to the extent that they are even talking about election in 2005 except in Hituri and Eastern Congo where peace needs to be secured, Sierra Leone, which used to contain the largest single peace keeping mission is now at peace, Burundi also there is progress towards peace. So Liberia was a big junk that has to be addressed and with the exit of Charles Taylor, the condition for peace has substantially improved to the extent that the United Nations now authorised the United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations, called United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) which is now the largest single peace-keeping operation in the world, 15,000 troops which is a commitment to help consolidate the process.

So, Nigeria now as it is, following these understanding between all these key players to keep Charles Taylor, and at the last African Union summit meeting a resolution was passed to say they would call on the international community to show understanding on the issue and to commend the government of Nigeria for being the one that took the risk of getting Charles Taylor out for peace sake. But as the tension continues, I believe that nobody wants a situation of impunity that Charles Taylor or anybody would be accused of terrible things and go scot free. But on the other hand, one has to be concerned about how to just bring peace to this country and the presence of Charles Taylor was regarded

as impediment to peace and whoever then agreed to take him in to give peace a chance deserves some commendation.

Now, there is a tension between those who want justice immediately and would like Charles Taylor to be surrendered to the Special Court in Sierra Leone and those who felt the exit of Taylor was a carefully orchestrated action involving the African Union, the ECOWAS and the United States. So, his exit was a condition for United States' assistance which was essentially because United States pays almost.

The need for restoration of peace in Liberia cannot be traded for anything else should Charles Taylor be spared on the basis of this bearing complaints by victims of his genocide act?

I think there feeling is understandable. It is also often realised that apart from those who lost their relatives in Liberia, the kind of atrocities that the RUF committed against, not just Liberians but against Nigerian troops, find out how many Nigerians died in January of 1999. If we were under a civilian government then, it will have been a problem for such government rising from the number of Nigerians killed by RUF, who are believed to be aided and supported by Charles Taylor. So not just those number of Nigerians that were killed directly or alleged to have been killed on the orders of Charles Taylor but the hundreds who died in the hands of the RUF.

So there is a lot of case to be answered by Charles Taylor but I think it is a question of timing, not whether but when Charles Taylor will answer the questions.

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Opposition Builds Against Taylor's Asylum in Nigeria

VANGUARD (NIGERIA) - ONE year after he fled Liberia to take up political asylum in Nigeria, former warlord and war crimes suspect, Mr. Charles Taylor is an increasingly isolated and hated figure in his adoptive home.

Last August, Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo offered the former Liberian president asylum as part of an internationally-backed plan to revive the west African country's stalled peace process and end its latest round of civil war.

With Taylor gone and United Nations peacekeepers in place, Liberian politicians have been able to set up a transitional government and to begin the process of disarming the rebel armies who challenged his rule.

Obasanjo's statesmanship was widely praised at the time, but Taylor's exile in a luxury villa in Calabar has since become mired in controversy, with many calling for the former leader to face justice.

UN-backed prosecutors at the war crimes tribunal in Liberia's neighbour Sierra Leone want him to answer charges that he sponsored a brutal rebel movement there and shared responsibility for the atrocities it committed.

Obasanjo has refused to hand Taylor over, saying that only a future elected government in Liberia could demand his extradition, insisting that his continued exile in Calabar is vital to the on-going peace process.

Pressure is now however building slowly from within and without Nigeria for Taylor to be handed over.

"Charles Taylor is accused of breath-taking crimes," John Campbell, the US Ambassador to Nigeria, told reporters last week.

"Our view is that he must answer for those crimes and we have a continuing dialogue with the Nigerian government about how to create the context in which this can happen," he said.

The United States is grateful to Obasanjo for the role he and Nigeria's peacekeeping troops have played in Liberia and Washington has been careful not to be seen to be bullying its ally.

But many US lawmakers as well as numerous international human rights groups are determined to see Taylor stand trial, and Obasanjo now faces polite but firm pressure from abroad to hand him over.

The US diplomat stressed that Taylor should eventually be brought before the courts for his role in Sierra Leone.



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Milosevic: No lawyer to be imposed

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands (Reuters) -- Lawyers appointed to ensure that Slobodan Milosevic gets a fair trial have rejected a proposal to impose defense counsel on the ailing former Yugoslav president to stop his ill health further delaying proceedings.

The lawyers, known as friends of the court, said in a submission made public Monday that such a move could worsen the stress on Milosevic and deny the former Serb strongman his right to represent himself as he has done so far.

"To impose counsel against the will of an accused is to contravene his right to self-representation," they said, adding that it could also cause its own delays as the defense counsel would need a long time to familiarize themselves with the case.

"The potentially defective way in which the defense may be conducted by an imposed counsel, against the accused's wishes, may constitute significant grounds of appeal," they said.

They urged the three trial judges to delay a decision on imposing counsel until after Milosevic starts his defense, now due on August 31.

Last month, the judges trying Milosevic for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in the Balkans in the 1990s called for a "radical review" of the trial after the accused's worsening health caused repeated delays.

The judges said Milosevic, who has suffered repeated bouts of 'flu, high blood pressure and exhaustion since the trial started in February 2002, might not be fit enough to defend himself and asked independent cardiologists to examine him.

The 62-year-old has rejected calls to accept a defense lawyer.

He wants to summon more than 1,000 witnesses including former U.S. President Bill Clinton in the 150 working days allotted for his defense.

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IRC VISITS MASS GRAVES

By Saffa Moriba

Members of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL) and the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL) on Thursday 5th August 2004, visited mass grave sites at Kpandubu village, Dama Chiefdom, fourteen kilometers from Kenema town.

Members of the two Councils held an inter-faith memorial service to remember war victims who were brutally murdered in cold blood on 13th February 1994 by rebels of the Revolutionary United Front. The United Nations Development Pro-

gram (UNDP) sponsored the Inter-Religious remembrance service as a conciliatory move and to remember those who innocently fell in the war and were dumped in unmarked graves in the chiefdom during the civil conflict.

Senior UNDP Governance Advisor, Sylvia Fletcher, called on the people to for-

give those who committed heinous crimes against humanity and prayed for the souls of the victims to rest in perfect peace.

Sheik Abu Bakarr Conteh of Hamdalay Mosque, who rendered the closing prayers at the mass grave inter-faith service of remembrance, called on Allah Almighty to forgive the victims as well as the perpetrators if Sierra Leoneans should forge ahead as a prosperous nation.

Bishop Tom Barnett also offered prayers on behalf of



Bishop Humper, IRC President

the victims and invoked God's perpetual light to shine on their souls.

Paramount Chief Momoh Forwai of Dama Chiefdom recalled some of the atrocities committed by the RUF during the war years, adding that about two hundred people were murdered and buried in the mass graves. He further disclosed that the murdered victims were from Gurama-Tunkia and Normo-Faima villages who went to seek refuge in Kpandubu village, Dama Chiefdom during the

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height of the rebel war when they met their tragic demise as they were killed and dumped in pits dug by NGOs for the construction of Ventilated Improved Pit (VIP) latrines for the community. CCSL Secretary General, Alimany Koroma, Kenema district and

IRC VISITS

chiefdom authorities also witnessed the solemn Kpandubu village mass gravesites memorial service of remembrance. The Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone and the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone have been very

instrumental in the peace and reconciliation process in the country's ten-year old conflict, the two Councils are also regarded as the vanguard vehicles in healing the wounds of traumatized victims and perpetrators of the dreadful conflict.

The New Citizen

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