

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, January 12, 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
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In pursuit of justice

In a HARDtalk interview on 11th January Stephen Sackur talks to the Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

[Click here to watch the full interview](#)

Sierra Leone is rebuilding itself after 10 years of civil war which ended in 2002. An estimated 50,000 people were killed in the violence and the effects of the war are still visible.

Many civilians bear the physical scars of the atrocities committed by the warring factions and across the country, amputees are a common sight.

The most terrible violence that country has seen in ten years.
Robin Vincent

After the war The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up in conjunction with the United Nations to try those responsible for the worst crimes.

However, the Special Court is restricted by its mandate to only pursue those who "bear the greatest responsibility".

Funding shortage

As the court's Registrar, Robin Vincent is aware that some people think the Court is failing to deliver justice to the people of Sierra Leone.

He told Stephen Sackur that the role of the court was to indict "People who orchestrated the most terrible violence that country has seen in ten years."

The court was initially funded through voluntary contributions but the United Nations has agreed funding until December 2005.

it is not a question of if (Charles) Taylor comes, it's a question of when Taylor comes
Robin Vincent

Stephen Sackur asked Mr Vincent what plans the court had to secure funding beyond that date.

He remained optimistic and said, "We will spend the next year trying very hard to encourage the international community to give us that voluntary contribution".

He pointed out that the cost of other similar tribunals lead to the "very deliberate" mandate of only pursuing those in command.

Charles Taylor

Of the thirteen people originally indicted by the Court, two are dead one is missing and the most wanted suspect, former Liberian president Charles Taylor, is in exile in Nigeria.

He is accused of arming and training Sierra Leone's most brutal rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front, in exchange for profits from the country's vast diamond resources.

In August 2003, he accepted an offer of exile to Nigeria after his country was crippled by a brutal civil war. When asked how he felt about Charles Taylor not being in his court, Mr Vincent admitted feeling dissatisfied.

He said, "I feel very frustrated about that...I think it would dilute the Special Court in terms of its impact on Sierra Leone and also international justice generally".

Nigeria has come under pressure from the international community to hand Charles Taylor over to the Special Court but they refused.

The government say that President Taylor will leave Nigeria if Liberia hosts democratic elections and ask for him to be returned to the country. Until then, they won't send him to Sierra Leone.

Stephen Sackur asked why the Special Court cannot go to Nigeria and bring him to justice.

Mr Vincent was adamant that the court would not use force:

"I want Taylor to come to the court either under his own free will or to be surrendered by the Nigerians".

He was clear that "No court can have any potential indictee delivered to them in any way which is going to cause any kind of controversy".

Mr Vincent concluded by sharing with Stephen Sackur that he had been told "by a number of diplomats from major states that it is not a question of if Taylor comes, it's a question of when Taylor comes".

HARDtalk can be seen on BBC World at 04:30 GMT, 1130 GMT, 1530 GMT, 1930 GMT, 0030 GMT

It can also be seen on BBC News 24 at 04:30 and 23:30

Story from BBC NEWS:
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/programmes/hardtalk/4164829.stm>

Published: 2005/01/11 14:25:18 GMT

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RUF accused refuse to continue trial

By Tamba Borbor
Accused persons of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) standing trial at the Special Court yesterday refused to continue with the trial. First accused- Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon- all through their respective

Defence Counsels- Wayne Jordash and Melron. Nicol-Wilson expressed this to the Court. Before responding to the decision taken by the accused persons, the Presiding Judge of the Trials Chamber- Benjamin Mutanga Itoe stressed that the Court would not condole

obstructionist tendencies, as the Court would not be held hostage by anybody not even the first accused. This was in response to Defence Counsel Wayne Jordash's plea to the Court that he be given a 10-minute adjournment in order to consult with his

client- Issa Sesay regarding the tendering of a letter prepared by the first accused. The said

letter which was tendered in as 'exhibit 11' according to Jordash borders on charges made

against the first accused by the Court. While Issa Sesay was insistent on having his

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RUF accused refuse to continue trial

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letter read in the Court. Presiding Judge Benjamin Itoe objected to it, saying that it be tendered in as exhibit.

RUF accused person- Morris Kallon requested that he see the said letter and thereafter requested that it be read out by a member of the Court

Management. This also was not granted by the Presiding Judge who said that his Defence Counsel- Mr. Toure would read it and then relay the contents

to him (Morris Kallon). As the Court resumed after 10 minutes of adjournment, Defence Counsel Wayne Jordash however conveyed to the Court his client's decision not to continue with the trial. In response, Presiding Judge- Benjamin Itoe emphasized that Issa Sesay should respect the Court as much as the Court respects him and

his Defence; adding that he should not try to set a calendar for himself regarding when he wants to attend Court sittings and when he does not. He maintained that Issa Sesay is fit and that there has not being presented any reason to prove otherwise. Asked by Judge Itoe whether he would not be attending further proceedings of the Court, Issa Sesay refused to give a direct answer and

tried to add some details; to which Judge Itoe disagreed; saying that he give a straight answer. However, as the two RUF accused persons refused continuing yesterday's trial, Presiding Judge- Benjamin Itoe after adjourning again for ten minutes; upon resumption said that upon consulting with other members of the bench, the accused would be given up to today in order to decide whether they would continue attending trials or not.

Macko

Wednesday, January 13, 2005



Peacekeeper's Conspiracy Haunts Malu

The Analyst (Monrovia)

NEWS

January 11, 2005

Posted to the web January 11, 2005

- *Regrets Taylor's Asylum*

- *Questions Obasanjo's Sense of Morality*

The ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which intervened in the Liberian civil inferno to prevent the annihilation of Liberians by Taylor's fire-spitting NPFL, was greeted by hail of mortar rounds from Taylor's resistant forces on August 24 and 25, 1990 as they forced-landed at the Freeport of Monrovia.

The soldier's courage that compelled ECOMOG to force-land became lukewarm by the time of the signing between 1991 and October 1992 of the Yamoussoukro series of agreements between the Interim Government and the rebel NPFL.

Thence to the amazement of observers, Taylor obtained ECOMOG's bias and international sympathy in spite of his prosecution of a surrogate war in neighboring Sierra Leone, the numerous instances of human rights violations inside Liberia, the wanton murder of peacekeepers and civilians from countries contributing troops to ECOMOG, and his vow to forcibly take over Monrovia and install himself as president of Liberia against all odds.

The mystery of the Taylor saga folded up with "Bloody Solja" ECOMOG Force Commander Victor Malu certifying "complete and comprehensive" disarmament with the acquiescence Daniel Ishmael Opande then head of UN Military Observer Mission in Liberia. But the whole thing came to a head when Taylor double-crossed the whole peacekeeping conspiracy and ran ECOMOG out of Liberia before the terms of Abuja II could be practicalized.

Now Malu will not forgive Taylor. The Analyst's Staff Writer looks at Malu's concerns and the contentions of the government of Nigeria's.

"I have heard it argued that the departure of Taylor was necessary and crucial to stop the circle of violence in Liberia and get U.N involved. I do not accept this argument for many reasons. Nevertheless, was it also necessary that he should come to Nigeria?" These were the words of "Bloody Solja" Samuel Victor Malu, the man who as force commander of the ECOWAS Peace Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) presided over the enthronement of warlord Charles Taylor at the end of a nearly decade-long civil war in Liberia.

Malu was rejecting justifications for Taylor's asylum in Nigeria recently when he addressed the annual general conference of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) in the Nigerian federal capital, Abuja.

The Lagos Vanguard newspaper, January 7, 2005, quoted Rtd. Gen. Malu as questioning the propriety of the Nigerian government granting asylum to Taylor after all he had done to Nigerian peacekeepers and civilians

both in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

According to the Vanguard, Malu's position is shared by the entire human right community of Nigeria, who did not only query the arbitrary nature with which the federal government brought Taylor to the country, when the action was not approved by the National Assembly.

The paper revealed that the worst part of the Nigerian government's action was the bringing in of a person who holds Nigerians in contempt, to safe haven in the same country, something it quoted Malu as saying is politically unproductive and amoral.

It then went further to quote Rtd. General Malu also former Army Chief of Staff: "My difficulty with the decision of our (Nigerian) government to host Taylor is that it portend nothing useful or positive for us, instead it has brought all kinds of problem and bad image for us, and most importantly our people do not approve of it. Those who persuaded us to accept Taylor, if in actual fact were persuaded, would never go against the wishes of their population on the issues of this nature, nor would they brook any suggestion to even offer a visiting visa to anybody who has murdered and violated their nationals and embassy with such impunity and has remained totally unapologetic to the country and people of Nigeria." He did not name names, but observer say he was referring to the United States of America and the United Kingdom which President Obasanjo has persistently said influenced his government to take Taylor in as part of a grand process to end the fighting in Liberia.

The paper further quoted Malu as contending that if indeed the US and UK pressured or persuaded Nigeria to take Taylor in, they would not have been prominent amongst the countries that were requesting his surrender to face criminal and human rights charges before the court sitting in Freetown.

"Taylor as rebel leader ordered the death of two Nigerian journalists and the routine execution of our nationals that were forcibly detained in his enclave," Malu was quoted as saying.

"[He] ordered the violation of our Embassy in Monrovia by ransacking it and taking Nigerians who were seeking refuge there and held our Embassy staff hostage; held our soldiers who were deployed in his rebel enclave hostage following agreements and commitments he made to ECOWAS leaders; masterminded the humiliation and death of our soldiers in Tubmanburg in December 1996 and abused and ridiculed Nigerians and their leaders in the international media and ordered the killing of Nigerian soldiers who were taken prisoners of war by his rebel NPFL soldiers as a way to 'teach Nigeria a lesson,'" he was also quoted as saying.

According to the paper, Malu could not understand how a government that was humiliated would, "for what ever reason, for what ever justification, welcome such a person into her country and give him and his entire family, sanctuary. Provide him (Taylor) with all the comfort, when this same person subjected Nigerians resident in his country to hell.

"Could the US or Britain, South Africa or any of the countries that supported Taylor coming to Nigeria have ever accepted Taylor, if its citizens had suffered what Nigerian civilians and soldiers suffered in the hands of Taylor?" he wondered.

Malu, the man who created the impression that the political playing field was level for all political contenders in the 1997 general and presidential elections against arguments by opposition parties of lingering insecurity, then went on to catalogue Taylor's atrocities that he found expedient at the time to keep under the carpet for unexplained reasons.

"As the Liberian President," Malu revealed, "Taylor breached the Abuja Agreement, especially the last stages of it and as a correspondence led to the crises that culminated in his down fall; supported and aided RUF in Sierra Leone which led to the death of hundreds of our soldiers there and the mutilation and death of Nigerians resident in Sierra Leone; and virtually chased out ECOMOG from Liberia after all the sacrifices

made in both human and material resources by the member countries especially Nigeria." While many think Malu's stance on the presence of Taylor in Nigeria may impact greatly on that country's position on the extradition of the war fugitive, some are cynical of his obsession, calling it 'the haunting of the peacekeeper's conspiracy'.

"The chickens are coming home to roost, and Malu is finding it difficult to accommodate his buddy," said one observer.

How valid is such a charge is cannot be said, but observers say if Malu must be seen by thinking Liberians as an advocate of justice, he must first answer for the role of his troops in the elections that brought Taylor to power against the will of the then, as now, war-weary Liberians.

Malu may notwithstanding be the only senior person directly involved in decision-making in the Taylor saga that is fighting desperately to use Taylor's past to break Nigeria's protective shield around him, but he is by no means the only Nigerian who wants to see Taylor on his way to Sierra Leone for prosecution.

Said a Vanguard commenter: "If one gives a second thought to Malu's latter contention, one would find that his argument can hardly be faulted. Again, if we accept that the US and Britain prevailed on Nigeria to accept Taylor, one can then ask, would it have been possible for any of these countries to accept somebody that has killed its citizens, directly or indirectly?"

We all knew what Libya went through in the hands of Britain, US and France over the Lockerbie bombing, which the Libyan government maintained even till date, that it never carried out, nor sponsored, let alone, when the Nigerian government was aware that Taylor masterminded the butchering, maiming and killing of Nigerians civilians and soldiers and the destruction of properties belonging to Nigerians." According to him, when Taylor finally settled in the country, many Nigerians who suffered various levels of human rights abuses in his (Taylor) hands, both as a rebel leader and as the President of Liberia approached Nigerian courts, seeking to have the federal government give up Taylor, so that he can go to face the indictment against him, before the United Nations Special Court for Sierra Leone, in Freetown.

He noted that human right community and many Nigerians who had a first hand experience on the atrocities committed by Taylor against Nigerian citizens stepped up a campaign for the federal government of Nigeria to reconsider its position on the asylum, but at the end, President Obasanjo went ahead to bring Taylor to the country, even when popular opinion was very much against it.

There is no denying that the human rights and legal communities in Nigeria, UK, and U.S. are mounting sustained pressure on President Obasanjo to release Taylor to face trial in Sierra Leone for his 17-count role against hapless civilians in Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war, but Abuja is not taking the criticism of insensitivity lying down.

It is playing the dignity tune and Foreign Minister Olujini Adeniji is the lead vocalist: "Countries have honour to protect like individuals. You don't give your word to people, you don't become part of a multi-lateral arrangement and then suddenly jump back and do the opposite. The admission of Charles Taylor into Nigeria was a carefully negotiated issue." He was responding to an Africa Today magazine query regarding whether Nigeria would "ultimately turn over Taylor" to the UN Special Court in Sierra Leone.

According to him, Nigeria has nothing to return Taylor to since it was clear from the beginning, through understanding reached amongst several heads of state and government, that she would not be required to do so.

The Nigerian envoy recalled that Nigeria agreed to take Taylor basically to get the peace process that had stalled by then reenergized in order to end the nightmare that was raging unabated inside Liberia.

He explained: "And it involved not only west African countries, but also some other African counties It

involved the President of South Africa and the chairman of the AU President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique and the immediate past chairman of the AU.

Everybody agreed. Nigeria was approached by everyone.

It involved 'extra-African' countries who pledged that everything should be done to get Charles Taylor out of Liberia otherwise the peace process cannot resume." Ambassador Adeniji revealed that at the time of the deal to take Taylor into Nigeria, it was unanimous, even with representatives of the international community, that that offered the best solution of getting over the internal conflict.

He said there was general agreement that the understanding would not only benefit Liberia, but that it would also benefit the whole of West Africa.

"Because you know these conflicts just circulate.

It's the same group of guerillas who migrate from country to country. And we have to try and put a stop to that," the Nigeria foreign minister noted, alluding to allegations that Mr. Taylor is the epicenter of disruptive politics in the subregion.

Without saying so, the Nigeria foreign policy architect indicated that Taylor in Nigeria is a much lesser threat to regional peace and stability than a Taylor in Sierra Leone facing war crimes charges.

The Nigerian Foreign Affairs minister believes that surrendering Taylor for trial will not only jeopardise the Liberian peace process with dire consequences for the entire West African subregion, but is also a dishonorable thing to do, according to Africa Today.

How much of that matches up to counter-arguments that Taylor's trial will serve as a warning and deterrence to warmongers across the subregion, cannot be said readily.

But this position effectively set Nigeria on a lonely path apart from the countries and governments that Mr. Adeniji claimed agreed that Taylor would live in Nigeria in luxury and pageantry in spite of determined efforts to have him face trial in Sierra Leone for crimes against humanity.

What this argument would mean for the pressure being mounted by the rights community is yet another question that observers say would be difficult to answer for a long time to come.

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Mbeki seeks to push Ivorian peace

Thabo Mbeki has arrived in Ivory Coast for further talks to try to end the civil war.

On Monday, African leaders called for the reinforcement of United Nations troops there with a beefed up mandate.

An African Union security summit also said a critical constitutional change easing nationality restrictions could be put to a referendum.

Mr Mbeki has been mediating since an army attack on the rebel-held north last November.

Sanctions

The AU also called for an extension of the deadline on a second round of UN sanctions, which would include the freezing of assets of people who are not engaged in the peace process.

This is intended to give Mr Mbeki more time to convince all sides in the conflict that disarmament and constitutional reforms can make presidential elections feasible within 10 months.

The summit, held in Gabon, also said a referendum on the country's controversial eligibility laws for the presidency could be an option to ease tensions.

The amendment has been a key sticking point in the peace process, and would allow the main opposition candidate to stand.

President Gbagbo has said he wants a referendum. Opposition politicians oppose the move.

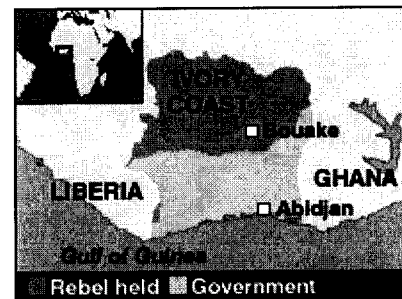
"We are going to push very hard to make sure all of these matters that need to be addressed are addressed," Mr Mbeki told the BBC from the summit in Libreville, Gabon.

Other business

The AU Peace and Security Council also addressed the conflict in Sudan's western region of Darfur.

It called on African states which have agreed to deploy peacekeeping forces to ensure their commitments were honoured in time.

On renewed fighting in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the AU made a resolution saying it would help the country in disarming and neutralising militias linked to Rwanda's 1994 genocide.



“ We are going to push very hard to make sure all of these matters that need to be addressed are addressed ”

Thabo Mbeki
South African President

The AU meeting said ending these conflicts was vital for the development of the whole continent, and called on the international community for support.