

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:

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The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
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Four Presidential Candidates Outline Visions

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NEWS

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By Timothy T. Seaklon

Appearing in the first of a series of debates organized under the European Commission Electoral Program in Liberia and carried live on four local radio stations, four presidential candidates expounded on their respective platforms, which were coincidentally similar.

Cllr. Varney Sherman of the Coalition for the Transformation of Liberia (COTOL), Dr. Togba Nah Tipoteh of the Alliance for Peace and Democracy (APD), Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of the Unity Party, and Dr. Roland Massaquoi of the National Patriotic Party (NPP) promised to implement policies for the reconstruction of the country.

They individually promised to decentralize power, restore basic social services such as safe drinking water and electricity, and strive for a sound economy.

The candidates also promised to foster peace and reconciliation that will lead to the unification of a people coming out of 14 years of devastating war.

They also expressed similar views on the issue of former President Charles Taylor, noting that if the Liberian people express the wish to have him turned over to the Special Court in Sierra Leone, such will be done.

They concurred that if it is proven that he has violated the deal that took him (former president Taylor) into exile in Nigeria, then, he must be turned over.

Although, the four presidential candidates seem to share similar platforms, they individually responded to callers' concern about their respective past deeds allegedly against the interest of the country and the people.

However, Cllr. Varney Sherman took the debate directly to the doorsteps of the other candidates by cautioning the Liberian people not to vote for those who, he claimed, sponsored and participated in the war and violent situations in the country.

Cllr. Varney Sherman, a corporate lawyer for the past twenty-five years, also came under serious criticism from callers on the issue of the payment of the former workers of the Bong Mines Company. Some callers also expressed fear that he might turn the country over to Lebanese businessman who are

his clients, and expressed serious misgivings about his past representing of corporate entities like the Firestone and the Liberia Agriculture Company (LAC), that they claimed caused the dismissal of poor Liberian employees without proper benefits.

Responding to the myriad concerns from the callers, Cllr. Sherman started by saying, "we had to shuttle between Liberia and Europe to ensure that the Bong Mines workers get their just benefits, although legally such benefits could have come from the company's assets which were already destroyed."

He explained that with him at the head of a strong legal team, the Bong Mines Company's shareholders paid the workers their money, and challenged anyone including the Bong Mines former workers to come and say they did not receive their benefits.

Cllr. Sherman, however said, problem developed when a portion of the workers money, kept at the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI), was withdrawn by the government. He said former Finance Minister Nathaniel Barnes, who is now a presidential aspirant, signed for the money.

The COTOL Standard-bearer said, "We sued the government because of this money and won the case. The case is now before the Supreme Court."

On the issue of giving Liberia out to the Lebanese, Cllr. Sherman said, "I can never do this. I fought when a major concession, the Liberia Agriculture Company (LAC) was given to a Lebanese businessman and won the case."

He challenged anybody who said he has pleaded for corporate entities against the common man, saying "my practice as a lawyer during the past twenty five years was done in line with the laws."

Unity Party's Standard-bearer, Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, came under strong fire from other candidates and the public for what they termed as her alleged participation in the change of government by violent means. The UP flag-bearer was accused of allegedly supporting the then rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) of Charles Taylor and the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

Mrs. Sirleaf, however, made it clear that she spent a good part of her life in political activism in a bid to see a better Liberia that would respect the rule of law.

She did agree of supporting a movement but denied ever being a member of the NPFL or LURD. Mrs. Sirleaf said, when it was observed that the movement was not going in the right direction, she and others dropped their support.

Mrs. Sirleaf said, everybody wanted a change then against military dictatorship, thus she supported the movement whose name she did call as the NPFL.

Asked if she supported a violent change of government by means of her support to the movement, Mrs. Sirleaf who is referred to as the "Iron Lady" of Liberian politics. Responded in the affirmative.

Mrs. Sirleaf, who was questioned more than any other candidate during the debate due to her alleged support to the movement, said, "express your reservation through your votes on October 11, 2005."

Dr. Tipoteh of the APD who was accused by Cllr. Sherman of inciting violent actions during the late 70s and 80s thus pushing the country to the abuse of human rights, said, " I want to give you some

information about myself that you might not know."

The APD Standard-bearer said he is on the Board of Amnesty International, and participated in the election of the first African to head that organization.

"If I am someone who violates the rights of people or incite violent actions, I wouldn't have been on the Board of Amnesty International," Dr. Tipoteh reiterated.

Dr. Tipoteh said since his return to the country in the 70s, he has worked for social justice and peace through the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA).

The APD Flag-bearer who is credited for being the only politician who assisted ECOMOG in the disarmament exercise during the 1990 war said, his concern for ensuring that disarmament exercise, realizing that nobody else was assisting, led to him being almost the last person to declare his intention to contest the presidency in 1996."

He expressed the hope that during the coming elections, the APD consisting of the United People's Party (UPP), and the Liberia People's Party (LPP) would be victorious.

Dr. Roland Massaquoi of the National Patriotic Party (NPP) spoke about his intention to empower rural dwellers who, according to him, have been minus beneficiaries of the natural resources.

Asked why conferences he presided over during the Taylor Administration did not produce any fruit, Dr. Massaquoi said, "we ended the first conference and within a few days there was the Camp Johnson Road fighting."

He said the NPP under former president Charles Taylor was not given a chance to deliver during the international isolation and rebel war.

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UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 19 Aug 2005

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Security Council Calls for Cote d'Ivoire Election Campaign to Be Held in Peace

19 Aug, 2005 (UN News Service/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --The Security Council today called on Cote d'Ivoire's authorities to ensure that the United Nations peacekeeping forces can move about freely and that the upcoming electoral campaigns in the West African country can be held on time in October and in a peaceful atmosphere.

After a closed Council meeting, the president for August, the Permanent Representative of Japan, Ambassador Kenzo Oshima, read a statement to journalists saying: "The members of the Security Council called upon the Ivorian authorities and all parties to bring an end to impediments to the freedom of movement of the Impartial Forces."

Two killed when armed forces clash in western Ivory Coast

ABIDJAN, 22 Aug (AFP) - A government soldier and a member of a pro-Abidjan militia were killed in clashes between members of the allied fighting forces at the weekend in western Ivory Coast, local officials said Monday.

The violence erupted at Duekoue when a patrol of FANCI (government army) troops moved in Saturday against highway robbers who had barricaded a road on the outskirts of the town, said officials speaking to AFP by telephone.

Local Media – Newspapers

UN Secretary-General Appoints Deputy Special Representative for UNMIL *(Liberian Express)*

- United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has named Luiz Carlos da Costa as his Special Deputy Representative for Operations and Rule of Law in Liberia replacing Steinar Bjornsson.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board and would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Ms. Kadiatu Konteh at kontehk@un.org.