

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:

Thursday, August 04, 2005

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 Feature

What Has Special Court Achieved?

Since the establishment of the Special Court in Sierra Leone, questions have been raised as to what the court stands to achieve in the ongoing trial of those who bear the greatest responsibility of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

One prominent personality who had criticised the establishment of the court is the former British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone, Mr. Peter Penfold. The former diplomat was very opposed to the arrest and detention of Chief Hinga Norman of the CDF, expressing dissatisfaction with the operation's of the court in articles published in a British newspaper barely a year ago.

An issue raised by observers not only Mr. Peter Penfold, is the formation of the Civil Defence Forces which had parliamentary immunity or approval before it sets out its mandate to defend the country's sovereignty and protect the citizens. It could be argued then that the formation of the CDF was woven around articles 51 of UN Security Council which has been subjected to much "creative reinterpretation" to allow the extension of the right of self-defence to cover an even greater array of situations: retaliations against terrorist attacks, armed intervention to protect or rescue citizens living abroad; anticipatory action against an imminent and overwhelming armed attack; and "robust" humanitarian or peace keeping operations.

It is safe to suggest that article 51 of the UN Security Council was used to justify President George Bush's attack on Iraq. So what distinction can be made between Americas self-defence imposed on Iraq and the Civil Defence Forces self-defence imposed on the RUF/AFRC?

Apart from personal sentiment expressed by Ambassador Peter Penfold and others, one is inclined to ask what the Special Court stands to achieve, bearing in mind that the key players who formed the bedrock of the war in Sierra Leone are dead?

To a large extent, the death of Foday Sankoh (the main brain behind RUF) and Sam Bockarie (Mosquito) puts question marks on the operation of the Special Court. Even at that, Sierra Leoneans still point fingers at key players who formed the nucleus of RUF/AFRC and are supposed to have faced the ongoing trial, but are walking free in the streets because the court did not indict them.

Going further, another key player in the person of Johnny Paul Koroma, who headed the AFRC seems to have escaped justice or the wrath of the court. It could be deduced that Johnny Paul Koroma was in the country when the Special Court commenced sittings. If there was the mood for the court to arrest him, it could have easily been effected before breaking the security apparatus to take to his heels. All this goes a long way to explain what observers believe as a smoke screen behind the operations of the Special Court.

Now will the special court, America, Britain including the international community in general convince observers that they do not know the whereabouts of Johnny Paul Koroma?

Charles Taylor

The issue of Charles Taylor remains complicated or interesting given the fact that the special court was set up when the former president was still in Liberia. He was forced by President George Bush to step down and whisked-off to Nigeria under protective custody of President Obasanjo through a decorum reached between other ECOWAS leaders. What makes Taylor's issue complicated is that: Why did the special court or UN fail to arrest him immediately he stepped down as president, stripping-off his immunity of arrest?

All said, we are well aware that UN humanitarian laws make provision or safeguards for asylum seekers who face political persecution in their country or elsewhere. This gives the impression that President Obasanjo, under no circumstances, will succumb to international pressure to breach the UN humanitarian laws regarding the protection of those who face or are threatened by political prosecution.

Article 10: seat of the Special Court

The doubts over what the special court has achieved so far are becoming glaringly clear, considering the overwhelming lapses or shortcomings accompanying the court's operations. Referring to Article 10 of the court's mandate or jurisdiction, it states that: "the special court shall have its seat in Sierra Leone. The court may meet away from its seat if it considers it necessary for the efficient exercise of its functions and may be relocated outside Sierra Leone, if circumstances so require and subject to the conclusion of Headquarters Agreement between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone, on the one hand and the Government of the alternative seat, on the other".

This points to the issue of the court having the capacity to go as far as Nigeria, if agreement is reached at to try people like Charles Taylor. So the question of piling up pressure for Taylor to be arrested in Nigeria or deported from Nigeria to face trial in Sierra Leone is subject to a rethinking.

By and large, as long as Johnny Paul Koroma and Charles Taylor who are two key players in Sierra Leone's civil conflict are yet to face trial, the question of what the special court stands to achieve remains a long debate.

Nana Kofi Sarpong is Secretary-General of the Pan-African Organisation promoting human rights and democracy in West Africa. Response: e-mail: nanakoficntcmag@yahoo.ca

Standard Times. Thursday August 4, 2005.

BY ABU BAKARR KARGBO

Following the writ of summons issued by Chief Hinga Norman, requesting the Supreme Court to impose a permanent injunction against the forthcoming SLPP Convention scheduled to take place this month, Dr. Sama Banya has

said that the party is ready to respond to Norman's actions adequately when the time comes.

The ruling party chairman admitted receipt of the writ of summons and he revealed that

the SLPP is prepared to go to court. "This is not the first time we are going to court on such a matter. We'll go with him till the end," Dr. Banya said.

"Nobody will challenge us at the ninth hour when the convention is near. He has the right to do so, but we did

not expect him at this time round. We'll challenge that," he went on.

It could be recalled that the Special Court indictee, through his Lawyer, Bubaakie Jabbie, filed a writ of summons at the Supreme Court for an injunc-

tion against the Sierra Leone Peoples Party.

In the meantime, Chief Norman's legal team has formally filed in other legal documents at the Supreme Court in support of their application for a permanent injunction.



Presidential Aspirant Claims to Be Able to Free War Indictee

The Independent (Freetown)

NEWS

August 3, 2005

Posted to the web August 3, 2005

By Mohamed Mansaray
Kenema

As John Leigh continues to tour the country drumming support to win the Sierra Leone Peoples Party leadership and incidentally the presidency in 2007, he is reported to have used the Hinga Norman card also played by Charles Margai.

The Special Court for war crimes in Freetown presently tries Hinga Norma. He was the coordinator of the pro-government Civil Defense Force during the war and later deputy minister and minister of Internal Affairs in President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's government. Talking about Sam Hinga Norman and the Yenga land crisis between Sierra Leone and neighboring Guinea, while in Kenema, east of the country, former ambassador to the United States and lawyer John Leigh lamented over the detention of Hinga Norman adding that Charles Taylor, the former Liberian President and the fugitive Johnny Paul were the biggest criminals but were not caught.

"I am the only one with the legal skills to free Hinga Norman and others and the Special Court in Sierra Leone was to teach people about justice but it has been contrarily based on political victimization" John Leigh said.

"Lansana Conteh (president of Guinea) is my friend. He sent his ambassador to understudy my job in America. I can talk to him to remove his men from the land (Yenga) and for Kailahun people to be freed" John Leigh added.

Earlier, Rev. Hindolo Butcher and the audience observed a minute silent prayer for the late party founders. Rev. Butcher referred to Mr. Leigh as a "good Angel for SLPP". According to Rev. Butcher, John Ernest Leigh, Salia Jusu Sheriff, S.B. Marah and others were in the wilderness with SLPP for over 30 years.

"John Leigh stood for presidency and lost but yet still he paid \$10,000 and several huge amounts to SLPP" Rev. Butcher maintained.

"Many people are coming here to declare in Kenema but you the decision makers have to compare and contrast and decide who should govern you in the country" Rev. Hindolo Butcher emphasized.

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Nigeria clamps down on Charles Taylor critics

Reuters, 3 August 2005

LAGOS: Nigeria is clamping down on human rights activists criticising its asylum protection for former Liberian President Charles Taylor, a civil liberties campaigner said.

The State Security Service has confiscated thousands of "wanted" posters printed by activists in a campaign to see war crimes charges brought against Taylor by a U.N.-backed court in Sierra Leone, said Chima Ubani, director of the Civil Liberties Organisation yesterday.

Nigerian security operatives also raided the office of and issued an arrest warrant for a human rights lawyer behind the poster campaign.

"Rather than repress public opinion, the government should hand Charles Taylor to the tribunal in Sierra Leone," Ubani said.

Taylor, a former warlord seen as the mastermind behind a web of intertwined conflicts in West Africa, was elected president in 1997. His departure to Nigeria in 2003 helped end 14 years of civil war.

Having originally backed the asylum deal, the United States has put increasing pressure on President Olusegun Obasanjo to give him up for trial.

Nigeria has said it will hand over Taylor only when a democratically elected Liberian government requests it, as agreed when it granted asylum. Liberia is set to hold its first post-war elections in October.

The interim government in Liberia, along with neighbours Sierra Leone and Guinea, issued a statement last week calling on Nigeria to review the terms of Taylor's asylum.

Taylor's spokesman dismissed the calls, saying the interim government had no right to make such demands while Sierra Leone and Guinea were trying to cover up what he called their political ineptitude.

LIBERIA: West African leaders call for review of Taylor's asylum deal

01 Aug 2005 18:26:12 GMT

Source: IRIN

Background

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MONROVIA, 1 August (IRIN)

- The leaders of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone have publicly asked Nigeria to review the asylum deal which stands between former Liberian president Charles Taylor and a trial to face charges of crimes against humanity.

Accusations have been mounting that onetime warlord Taylor, currently holed up in a luxury compound in the remote town of Calabar in the Niger Delta, has been violating the terms of his exile agreement that was drawn up in August 2003 and helped end Liberia's 14-year civil war.

"(We) agreed to suggest to the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria that there may now be need for a review of the terms of the temporary stay granted to Charles Taylor," Liberian interim leader Gyude Bryant, Guinean Prime Minister Cellou Diallo and Sierra Leone's President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah said in a joint statement, a copy of which was obtained by IRIN.

The three leaders met in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, last week.

A UN-backed court in the same city wants to try Taylor on 17 counts of crimes against humanity perpetrated in Sierra Leone's civil war, which officially ended early in 2002.

The former Liberian leader is accused of funding the Revolutionary United Front campaign, keeping the rebels stocked with guns and ammunition in exchange for smuggled diamonds.

The joint statement from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, which came to light over the weekend, made reference to a number of recent allegations that, if true, would violate Taylor's exile agreement.

It noted accusations that Taylor had been involved in an assassination attempt on Guinea President Lansana Conte in January 2005, that he had been backing armed groups in Liberia

and making telephone calls to senior government officials there as the country prepares for crunch October elections designed to return it to democracy.

The three leaders raised the possibility of Nigeria referring the matter to the regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) if needed.

The question of Taylor's asylum has cropped up with increasing frequency for Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.

US President George W. Bush referred to it at the White House earlier this year, international rights groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have launched campaigns to bring Taylor to justice, and UN human rights chief Louise Arbour last month called for him to stand trial.

Obasanjo has always said he would hand Taylor over, should a future elected government in Liberia ever decide to press charges and demand his extradition. Liberians go to the polls on 11 October to vote in new leaders, but whoever wins will not take power until January.

Nigerian officials were not immediately available for comment on Monday on the joint statement.

Taylor, after training as a guerrilla fighter in Libya, launched a bush war in Liberia on Christmas Day 1989. His faction gained the upper hand and he was finally elected president in 1997 but it was to be another six years before the war finally ended.

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SSS hunts for activist over Charles Taylor

By Ise-Oluwa Ige & Innocent Anaba

Posted to the Web: Thursday, August 04, 2005

ABUJA — DIRECTOR-GENERAL of the State Security Service (SSS), Mr Kayode Are, has ordered the arrest of the Senior Legal Officer of Open Society Justice Initiatives, Professor Chidi Anselm Odinkalu. He is to be questioned for the printing of INTERPOL red notice posters by a pressure group called Campaign Against Immunity, calling for the release of former Liberian warlord, Mr Charles Taylor, by the Federal Government to face trial in Sierra-Leone.

A team of SSS men has been set on his trail even though he is not the leader of the Coalition for Impunity, a group canvassing the release of Charles Taylor to face a UN-court based in Sierra Leone over war crime charges

Already, two professional printers who worked on the posters have been arrested by men of the SSS and detained as "hostages" at its headquarters in Aso Drive, Abuja.

In a statement, the Open Society Justice Initiative alleged that men of the SSS vowed not to release the two printers until Chid Odinkalu was arrested. The association which condemned the arrest of the printers has, however, written a letter to the Attorney-General of the Federation, Chief Bayo Ojo (SAN) asking him to prevail on the SSS to release them.

The detained printers, Steve Omali and Michael Damisa, are staff of True-Expression Limited.

Meanwhile, the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Chief Ojo, yesterday said he would personally contact the SSS to ascertain why it was "looking" for human rights lawyer and African Director of Open Society Justice Initiative (OSJI), Prof Chidi Odinkalu.

Odinkalu, a visiting Law Professor of Harvard University who has gone into hiding following the SSS visit to his Abuja office said he had lodged a complaint against the siege laid to his office since the beginning of the week by men of the SSS to the Minister of Justice.

reacting, chairman of Centre for Free Speech, Mr Richard Akinola, condemned Federal Government clampdown on activists who are calling for the trial of Charles Taylor before the War Crimes court.

Akinola said: "The government should respect the rights of Nigerians to express themselves on issues they feel strongly about. Those calling for the trial of Taylor have the rights to do so. They should not be arrested or threatened for exercising their freedom of expression by calling for the trial of Taylor. The indictment against Taylor was made by the War Crimes court and not Nigerians. So, calling on Nigeria to hand over Taylor to face the tribunal is not against any known Nigerian law."

The Perspective

Atlanta, Georgia

August 3, 2005

Corruption, Charles Taylor and Elections

By Abdoulaye W. Dukulé
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—SNIP—

Taylor and Stability in Liberia and in the sub-region
For months, the former prosecutor of the United Nations Special tribunal in Sierra Leone, Mr. David Crane, called for the transfer of Charles Taylor to Freetown to have his day in court. Mr. Crane was joined in this campaign by the European Union and numerous human rights organizations throughout the world. President Olesugun Obasanjo has resisted the call so far, arguing that Mr. Taylor was in Nigeria under an agreement brokered by the international community. While in Washington, Obasanjo hinted however at the possibility of surrendering Charles Taylor to the tribunal if it is proven that he had broken the terms of his asylum. At the recent ECOWAS meeting and prior to it in Niamey, Niger, the Special Negotiator of ECOWAS former Nigerian Head of State Abdulsalami said that there was no proof that Taylor was meddling in Liberian affairs. Chairman Bryant said the same thing, just two weeks ago.

Then last week, in Freetown, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea said at a Mano River Meeting in Freetown that they now possess irrefutable proofs that Mr. Taylor was still carrying out destabilizing actions in the sub regions and was still involved in Liberia politics, including making pay-offs to some of the leading candidates in the upcoming elections. He was also linked to the assassination attempts on President Conteh in Guinea in February 2005. Much of the proofs were gathered and presented by a new Liberian watchdog group called Liberians For Transparent Elections. The group provided to the Mano River leaders as well as to other international security agencies telephone numbers, faxes, pictures, recordings and emails of Taylor to make their case. They even provided precise description of the aircraft used by Taylor to travel to Burkina Faso and Libya in December 2004 and again in Burkina Faso in February 2005. With these new revelations, President Obasanjo could find it hard to resist international pressure to hand Mr. Taylor over to the Sierra Leone war crimes tribunal.

The meddling Mr. Taylor in Liberian politics comes as no surprise. His political party is very functional and could be the richest and most structured political body. If elections hinged on rice as was the case in 1997, Taylor's NPP could easily win. His followers are present at all levels of the government, including the current speaker of the house. His business partners control most of the Liberian private sector. With President Obasanjo repeating constantly that he would hand over the former dictator at the request of the next

elected Liberian president, it is natural that Mr. Taylor, if he has any survival instinct left in him, would ensure that the next leader of Liberia is a friend, not a foe.

Mr. Taylor's former partners have no interests in him facing a tribunal where he would have a microphone and a world audience. Beyond Liberia, these partners are in Burkina Faso and Libya where he received logistics and training for his wars in the sub-region, in Cote d'Ivoire where he was given sanctuary, training grounds, troops and economic facilities, in France where he made his best timber deals, in the Middle East where he transacted arms for diamond, and the list goes on. Even in Nigeria, from where his NPFL, while under ECOWAS and UN sanctions, received cheap Nigerian oil to run "Greater Liberia." If Mr. Taylor is at all as rich as he is purported to be, the story is far from being over...

—SNIP—