

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



Aberdeen Peninsula, in western Freetown.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Friday, 28 July 2006

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Human Rights Watch

Thursday, 27 July 2006

Uganda: No Amnesty for Atrocities

Genuine initiatives aimed at ending the devastating armed conflict in northern Uganda are welcome, but amnesties for war crimes and crimes against humanity must not be on offer, Human Rights Watch said today.

On July 14 peace talks began between the Ugandan government and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Juba, the capital of the regional government of Southern Sudan. As part of a peace package, the Ugandan government delegation is offering amnesty to all LRA combatants, including five top LRA leaders for whom the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Human Rights Watch has documented human rights violations committed by the LRA over the years, including torture, sexual abuse, mutilations, recruitment of child soldiers, and forcing children to kill even members of their own families.

"The LRA Five are accused of widespread sexual slavery, murder, and brutalization of children over two decades," said Richard Dicker, director of Human Rights Watch's International Justice Program. "Amnesty or similar measures can not be on the table when it comes to these kinds of crimes."

International law rejects impunity for serious crimes, such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and torture. International treaties, including the U.N. Convention against Torture, the Geneva Conventions, and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, require parties to ensure alleged perpetrators of serious crimes are prosecuted. Uganda has ratified each of these in addition to numerous other human rights treaties.

According to U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, amnesties cannot be granted for serious crimes under international law, and peace agreements endorsed by the United Nations can never provide such amnesties.

The creation of the International Criminal Court and other international criminal tribunals to prosecute genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity or other serious violations of humanitarian law illustrates the strong international commitment to justice for serious crimes. "We have seen time and again that turning a blind eye to justice only undercuts durable peace," said Dicker. "How long can a peace based on this kind of deal last?"

The United Nations and key governments, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, should continue to speak out strongly against amnesty for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The devastating effect of amnesties for serious crimes can be seen in the example of Sierra Leone. In 1999 the Revolutionary United Front leader Foday Sankoh, allegedly responsible for brutal crimes including mutilations, murder and rape received an amnesty and was rewarded with control of a government commission in exchange for signing the Lome peace accord, which was supposed to end Sierra Leone's brutal war. Sankoh soon went on to attack both government forces and U.N. peacekeepers, taking hundreds of them hostage. The revived conflict was not declared

over until more than two years later. Meanwhile, prosecution was pursued under the Special Court for Sierra Leone and has helped to marginalize the abusive leaders of the warring parties.

Notably, the peace agreement that settled the 21-year war in southern Sudan in January 2005 did not include an amnesty. The government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), composed of former southern Sudanese rebels, came to power through this agreement, which was approved by the Security Council. The GoSS is now sponsoring the peace talks between the LRA and the Ugandan government.

To supplement investigation and prosecutions by the International Criminal Court, Uganda also should conduct meaningful prosecutions in its own courts, Human Rights Watch said. In addition, the Ugandan government should establish a truth commission or another truth-telling process that would allow people in northern Uganda a forum to speak about the human rights abuses that occurred during the war. This process could work alongside traditional reconciliation measures in which those affected wish to participate.

Background on Northern Uganda and the ICC's Arrest Warrants for LRA Members

The conflict in northern Uganda to depose President Yoweri Museveni began immediately after he took power by force in 1986. The rebel Lord's Resistance Army, based in northern Uganda, struck fear in the civilian population by carrying out mutilations, killings and forced recruitment of child soldiers mostly from the Acholi people of northern Uganda, although LRA leader Joseph Kony is Acholi himself. Human Rights Watch has also documented abuses by Ugandan government forces, including rape.

In December 2003 Museveni invited the International Criminal Court to investigate the LRA. In July 2005 the court issued warrants for the arrest of the top five LRA leaders Vincent Otti, Okot Odhiambo, Raska Lukwiya and Dominic Ongwen, as well as Joseph Kony for crimes including widespread or systematic murder, sexual enslavement, rape, and war crimes such as intentionally attacking civilians and abducting and enlisting children under the age of 15.

Human Rights Watch

Thursday, 27 July 2006

ICTY: Tribunal Sets Valuable Precedent

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia has made precedent-setting decisions on genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, Human Rights Watch said today as it released a comprehensive book that organizes the decisions of that tribunal by topic. "The case law organized in this volume is a legacy that will provide guidance for future generations," said Jennifer Trahan, of counsel to Human Rights Watch's International Justice Program. "The tribunal's work has been immensely important in holding perpetrators of heinous crimes accountable and sending the message that serious crimes will not go unpunished."

The Yugoslav tribunal has played a critical role in determining responsibility for the horrific crimes that occurred in the Balkan conflicts during the 1990s, Human Rights Watch said. The tribunal suffered a setback with the death of Slobodan Milosevic and the abrupt end of his four-year trial. Just recently, however, the Yugoslav tribunal has begun important trials involving senior officials accused of crimes including genocide committed at Srebrenica, and war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Kosovo.

The 861-page book from Human Rights Watch organizes the tribunal's decisions by topic, including war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, command responsibility, sentences, fair trial rights and guilty pleas.

"This book makes the important decisions of the tribunal uniquely accessible because it organizes the law by subject in one volume," said Trahan.

The book applies the law to the facts of selected cases covering atrocities such as the Srebrenica massacre (where approximately 7,000 unarmed men and boys were executed by Bosnian-Serb forces), the siege of Sarajevo, and brutalities perpetrated in camps such as the infamous "Omarska camp" in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The volume, which is available online and in print (see links below), is oriented to practitioners and staff at institutions established to try such crimes – such as the International Criminal Court and the Sierra Leone Special Court. The book will also serve as a tool for academics, nongovernmental organizations working in the field, and students interested in international criminal justice, Human Rights Watch said.

Human Rights Watch's original version of the book, which covered both Yugoslav and Rwandan tribunal law, was well-received by officials of international and "hybrid" criminal tribunals.

Institute for war and Peace Reporting

Thursday, 27 July 2006

Slow Progress at Rwandan Tribunal

At a cost of over a billion dollars, some say the tribunal to try ringleaders of the Rwandan genocide is too expensive and has dragged on for too long.

By Stephanie Nieuwoudt in Arusha

This town in northern Tanzania has always been a bustling place thanks to its proximity to the Kenyan border and tourist attractions such as the 15,000-foot Mount Meru and the Ngorongoro Crater, often called the eighth wonder of the world for its spectacular landscapes and wildlife.

But Arusha has become even busier in the last decade courtesy of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, ICTR. This one-time small town now has a population of just over a quarter of a million and has grown so fast that it was recently awarded city status.

The United Nations Security Council set up the tribunal after the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, in which some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered. With its goal of trying and sentencing those most for these crimes against humanity, the ICTR is widely seen as one of the most important international justice bodies since Nuremberg.

Yet the court has also drawn a lot of criticism, in particular from Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who said the ICTR was established "to do as little as possible".

During a visit to Canada earlier this year, he accused the West of allowing western actors allegedly complicit in the genocide to get off scot-free. Kagame specifically mentioned "French leaders" who he said "directly took part in the genocide by aiding the Hutu militias". French soldiers intervened briefly on the side of fleeing Hutus, as the army of the Tutsi-dominated Rwanda Patriotic Front, RPF, streamed across the border from Uganda and gradually established control of the country.

Rwandan leaders have also said that time and money could have been saved had the perpetrators been tried at home.

In an interview earlier this year, Alloys Mutabingwa, special representative of the Rwandan government at the ICTR, claimed his country would have used the money more productively – not only by prosecuting perpetrators and helping victims, but also by pouring funds into social development projects.

The ICTR focuses solely on the high-level figures alleged to have instigated the genocide.

Meanwhile, thousands of cases have already been tried in Rwanda, either in regular national courts or in a special traditional system of justice known as "gacaca" designed to relieve the burden on prisons and courts.

Gacaca hearings are held outdoors - the word loosely translates as "justice on the grass" - with household heads serving as judges in the resolution of community disputes. The system is based on voluntary confessions, apologies and pleas for forgiveness by wrongdoers.

At an estimated cost of 1.03 billion dollars by the end of 2007, there have also been complaints that the ICTR is too expensive.

Responding to such claims, ICTR spokesperson Tim Gallimore said: "The cost of the tribunal is within the range of what it costs for comparable international criminal legal proceedings."

Many also feel that far too few suspected perpetrators of crimes have been dealt with and that the process has dragged on for far too long. Only 72 suspects have so far been arrested. Of those, 28 have been tried, 24 convicted, and three acquitted.

"It is not physically possible, given the number of judges and courtrooms that we have, to hear any more cases," said Gallimore. "The process is carefully supervised by elected judges from a wide variety of legal systems and countries. They do their best to ensure that the accused get fair trial rights and that the interests of justice are served for the grave crimes against humanity that were committed in Rwanda in 1994. To do all that, it takes a certain amount of time."

The ICTR has four courtrooms and 18 judges, robed in scarlet with black cravats. They hold hearings from 8 am to 6 pm Monday through Friday for 11 months each year.

Gallimore said casual observers of the tribunal may not fully appreciate the complexity of each case and trial and the enormous amount of work that has been involved in completing 27 trials since the tribunal began work in 1997.

The Rwandan government has also been blamed for dragging out the process.

The trial of the former commerce minister Justin Mugenzi - facing at least ten specific genocide charges as well as a charge of murder - could not proceed in May this year because the government failed to honour its undertaking to transfer Agnes Ntamabyariro, another former minister who is to be a defence witness for Mugenzi, to Arusha. Ntamabyariro is in custody in Rwanda for genocide crimes.

"The Rwandan government is bullying us [the ICTR] and we are being too timid. It looks like we are making excuses for the Rwandan government," Jonathan Kirk, co-counsel for Mugenzi, told the Hirondele News Agency, a media organisation which reports on Rwandan affairs.

A lawyer who has been with the ICTR for three years told IWPR that Rwanda's lack of cooperation in the Mugenzi case is indicative of the country's distrust and resentment of the tribunal.

"The critics are right in condemning the process as too drawn out and costing too much," she said. "But this tribunal is unquestionably laying the groundwork for future criminal cases – not only with regard to war criminals but also other criminal cases."

Meanwhile, a senior official at the ICTR, who also asked not to be named, said that international justice does not come cheap, "especially if you want to avoid the trap of victor's justice".

But some accuse the ICTR of doing just that - mirroring the Nuremberg tribunal. So far only defeated Hutus have been tried. There are those who want to see closer scrutiny and the indictment of some members of President Kagame's RPF, which now rules the country with an iron fist.

When the then rebel RPF movement invaded Rwanda from its exiled bases in Uganda and ousted the Hutu government from power, some of its members are alleged to have committed atrocious crimes in the process of putting an end to the genocide. There have been calls for these alleged perpetrators, some of whom are in government, to be brought to justice.

Gallimore denied the claim the ICTR is favouring one side over the other.

"The tribunal does not indict and try individuals based on their ethnicity or any other personal criteria," he said. "Our mandate is to bring to justice those most responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Where there is credible evidence that individuals committed crimes within the jurisdiction of the tribunal, the prosecutor makes a determination about indictment and trial of such individuals, regardless of their ethnicity."

Independent observers as well as those working within the ICTR are concerned that cases currently on trial will not be finished before the tribunal is due to be wound up at the end of 2008. In an effort to lighten the load, the ICTR has asked several countries - including Norway, South Africa, Botswana and Senegal - if they would accept some cases.

However, there are real problems with transferring cases.

Norway indicated that it was willing to try Michael Bagaragaza, the former director general of the state-run tea industry regulator who is alleged to have ordered tea agency workers to kill hundreds of Tutsis who were seeking refuge in a church and a factory. But the tribunal ruled that Norway does not have genocide laws, and therefore could not try a person accused of genocide.

Another stumbling block is that most African countries seem to be reluctant to take cases, because it might jeopardise their diplomatic relations with Rwanda.

Despite the already crowded docket and formidable time constraints, there are many more individuals who could face either the tribunal or national courts.

The Rwandan government in May published a list of 171 people being sought in connection with the killings, many of whom have left the country. Two wanted former Rwandan mayors, Celestin Ugirashabugaba and Charles Munyaneza, are said to be living quite openly in suburban Britain. In newspaper interviews, Munyaneza has denied the allegations against him.

On both the Rwandan and ICTR wanted lists is wealthy Hutu businessman Félicien Kabuga, who is rumoured to be in Kenya. Kabuga's privately Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines called for the mass murder of Tutsis and others ahead of the genocide. Mille Collines achieved notoriety for its calls to Hutus to "stamp out the [Tutsi] cockroaches".

Kabuga is charged with supplying machetes, hoes and other tools for use as weapons by Hutu mobs. He is alleged to have been the main financial backer of the extremist militias which carried out the massacres along with the Hutu-dominated government and military.

"We depend on the co-operation of UN member states to aid us in arresting suspects," Gallimore said. The Kenyan government has denied that it is in any way aiding Kabuga.

There has also been criticism that people are being tried in groups by the ICTR.

Fatou Bensouda, a deputy prosecutor at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, who worked at the ICTR first as legal adviser and trial attorney and eventually as head of the legal advisory unit, condemned the practice of trying groups of people instead of prosecuting individuals.

The most drawn-out case has been the so called Butare case in which two former governors in Rwanda's Butare district, Sylvain Nsabimana and Alphonse Nteziryayo, and two former mayors, Joseph Kanyabashi and Elie Ndayambaje, are on trial. The only woman on trial, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, former Minister of Family and Women's Affairs, is also grouped with these men - accused of instigating rape and murder.

The trial of Nyiramasuhuko's son Shalom Arsene Ntahobali, an alleged militia leader in Butare, opened in June 2001 and has no end in sight. The prosecution took three-and-a-half years to argue its case, and there are indications that the defence attorneys will need the same amount of time.

The Butare case has been marked by internal splits among the accused: Kanyabashi and Nsabimana claim that Nyiramasuhuko and Ntahobali masterminded the violence in Butare. Mother and son in turn blame other senior government officials.

The ICTR is racing against time, but it is undeniably promoting future international jurisprudence. Its very existence makes a strong statement about putting an end to impunity. Long before Charles Taylor, the former ruler of Liberia, was arrested and put on trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the ICTR laid a solid foundation for bringing to justice the perpetrators of crimes against humanity.

Stephanie Nieuwoudt is a South African journalist based in Nairobi who reports from Arusha on the ICTR trials.

BBC Online

Thursday, 27 July 2006

Saddam to learn fate in October

The trial of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein for crimes against humanity has been adjourned until 16 October when a verdict is expected.

The ex-president did not appear in court for the final session of his trial on Thursday.

Prosecutors want the death penalty for Saddam Hussein and two of the seven other defendants. All deny the charges.

On Wednesday, the former leader told the trial he wanted to be shot, not hanged, if he was condemned to die.

Shooting was the appropriate means of execution for a military man like himself, he said.

He also protested that he had been taken to court against his will.

Saddam Hussein is due to stand trial on 21 August to judge his part in the mass killings of Iraqi Kurds in the 1980s during the notorious Anfal campaign.

Criticisms

Two defendants appeared in court on Thursday.

Former Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan refused to allow the court-appointed lawyer to represent him.

"I do not know who this lawyer is or his name," he said.

The other is Awad Hamad al-Bandar, the former chief judge of the court.

Chief Judge Raouf Abdel Rahman once again criticised the defence lawyers for staying away from court.

Saddam Hussein's defence team has been boycotting the trial to demand tighter security, after the deaths of their three colleagues, and replacement lawyers have been named.

"They're sitting abroad now generating fame by issuing political statements on television stations as if this case is a political one. This behaviour will harm you, the defendants. This is a criminal case, not a political one," Mr Rahman said.

Most of Saddam Hussein's legal team is based in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

His trial began in Baghdad last October.



Saddam Hussein did not appear in court for the final day

UN News

Thursday, 27 July 2006

Mongolian sumo star becomes UNESCO Artist for Peace

The professional sumo wrestler known as Hakuho has become the first Mongolian to be designated an Artist for Peace by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in recognition of his work helping young people in East Asia.

UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura awarded the title to Hakuho, otherwise known as Davaajural Munkhbat, at a ceremony today in the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar, as part of the UNESCO Children's Performing Arts Festival of East Asia.

In a statement to mark the occasion, UNESCO said it awards the title Artist for Peace to "personalities who – thanks to their influence, charisma and fame – help to promote UNESCO's message."

Other Artists for Peace include the Brazilian musician Gilberto Gil, Canadian singer Celine Dion, Russian conductor Valery Gergiev and the Japanese ballerina Miyako Yoshida.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 27 July 2006

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

VOA 26 July 2006

Liberian President Unharmed After Presidential Mansion Catches Fire

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has escaped unhurt from a fire at the presidential mansion in the capital, Monrovia. A VOA reporter on the scene, Frank Sainworla, says Mrs. Sirleaf had just entered the building with the presidents of Ghana, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone when the fire was detected Wednesday. He says the presidents were quickly escorted outside and that none of them was harmed. The three leaders were visiting Liberia for the country's Independence Day celebration. The blaze sent up plumes of black smoke but appeared to subside by late afternoon. Firefighters say the fire burned the mansion's fourth floor, where Mrs. Sirleaf's office is located.

BBC Last Updated: Thursday, 27 July 2006, 09:00 GMT 10:00 UK

Liberia probes presidency blaze

Liberia is investigating the causes of the fire that engulfed the presidential building on Wednesday, as a meeting of regional leaders was about to begin. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was hosting the leaders of Ghana, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone when the fire broke out, but all escaped unharmed. Fire-fighters had managed to put out the blaze by late Wednesday afternoon. The fire marred Independence Day celebrations, which had included the restoration of electric street lights. "The situation is now under control and investigations are underway to determine the cause of the incident," presidential spokesman Cyrus Badio told AFP news agency. "

International Clips on West Africa

BBC Last Updated: Thursday, 27 July 2006, 09:05 GMT 10:05 UK

Ivorian militias begin to disband

By James Copnall, Abidjan

Militias who support Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo have begun to lay down their arms, a key part of a peace deal. More than 100 fighters turned up with a pick-up truck full of weapons to disarm in the western town of Guiglo. Tuesday's handover marks a rare advance for the faltering peace process in Ivory Coast, where several disarmament deadlines have been missed in the past. Ivory Coast has been split in two since rebels seized control of the north of the country in September 2002.

UN Security Council condemns Ivory Coast violence

UNITED NATIONS, July 26, 2006 (AFP) - The UN Security Council condemned recent violence in Ivory Coast Wednesday and may impose sanctions on Ivorians threatening the divided country's upcoming elections, France's UN ambassador said. French Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sabliere said the council had asked the sanctions committee to look into the violence between supporters of President Laurent Gbagbo and opposition militants that left at least three people dead and more than 40 injured over the past week. On Tuesday in Abidjan, stones were thrown at the car of Gerard Stoudmann, the UN's special representative for the October elections.

Local Media – Newspapers

Fire Disrupts State Reception at Executive Mansion

(The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst, Heritage, The Informer and New Vision)

- A State reception intended to climax Liberia's 159th Independence Day celebration was disrupted on Wednesday when fire gutted the Executive Mansion, the seat of the Liberian Presidency.
- The fire incident forced President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and three visiting West African Presidents, John Kufuor of Ghana, Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast and Ahmed Tejan Kabba of Sierra Leone, as well as other dignitaries to be evacuated from the grounds of the Executive Mansion.
- The cause of the fire which destroyed the 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors of the Mansion is yet unknown.

Independence Day Orator Challenges Liberia's Legislature

(The News and Heritage)

- The orator of Liberia's 159th Independence Day celebration on Wednesday challenged members of the 52nd Legislature to first learn their functions and listen to the needs and aspirations of the people of Liberia.
- Counselor Emma Shannon Walser, a former Circuit Court Judge, pointed to the need for lawmakers to decentralize their power and take responsibility for the development of the country.

Human Rights Group Opposes UN Sanction on Diamond and Travel Ban

(The News, The Inquirer and Heritage)

- A local human rights group, Liberia Watch for Human Rights, on Sunday called for the lifting of sanction on diamond and the travel ban imposed on relatives and former officials of ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor.
- The group said since the imposition of sanction and the travel restriction, there has been no concrete proof about violation of travel ban by former officials of Mr. Taylor or the clandestine sales of diamonds from Liberia.

Americans Donates US\$6.5 Million to WFP

(The Inquirer and The Informer)

- The United Nations World Food Program on 19 July this year, welcomed the donation of nearly 10,000 metric tons of food aid valued at US\$6.5 million from Food For Peace, the humanitarian arm of the United States government, to feed the most needy and vulnerable people in Liberia.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored yesterday at 6:45 pm)*

Independence Day Orator Urges Lawmakers to Learn their Function

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Government Poised to Probe Fire Incidence at President’s Office

- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf yesterday announced that the government would investigate the fire that gutted the Executive Mansion where visiting Heads of State from Ghana, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire were attending a dinner held in their honour.
- Addressing the nation following the incident, President Johnson-Sirleaf said that the government would hire the services of foreign experts to thoroughly investigate the incident. She said that the fire incident should not defeat the resilience of Liberians to move ahead.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

West African Leaders Commit to Sub-Regional Peace

- Visiting Presidents John Kufuor of Ghana, Laurent Gbagbo of Côte d’Ivoire and Ahmed Tejan Kaba of Sierra Leone yesterday pledged their support for peace and security in West Africa and challenged Liberians to overcome the years of destruction and strive for economic development.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Presidential Spokesman Says Fire Incidence Will Not Deter President

- Mr. Amara Conneh, Deputy Chief of Office Staff at the Executive Mansion, yesterday said that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf would continue her resilience to rehabilitate Liberia regardless of the fire that gutted the Executive Mansion yesterday.
- Briefing journalists following the incident, Mr. Conneh said that all staff members of the Executive Mansion that should have been at work had been accounted for.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Government Launches Re-Electrification Program for Liberia

- The Government of Liberia yesterday launched the re-electrification of Liberia at an elaborate ceremony which was held at the John F. Kennedy Medical Center in Monrovia. The program was graced by the presence of Presidents John Kufuor of Ghana and Laurent Gbagbo of Côte d’Ivoire. President Kufuor switched on the lights in fulfillment of government’s Emergency Power Program for Liberia which was launched in collaboration with Ghana, European Union and United States.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Government Receives Congratulatory Messages on Liberia’s Independence Day

- A Presidential spokesman yesterday said that the Government of Liberia had received from other leaders of the world, congratulatory messages as Liberia celebrated its 159th Independence Anniversary. Those who sent congratulatory messages included United States President George Bush, Chinese President Hu Jintao, Egyptian President Hussein Mubarak, Libyan President Muammar Al-Qaddafi, Queen Elizabeth II of England and Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of The Netherlands.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

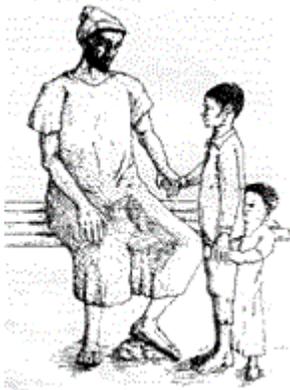
Special Court Supplement

Sierra Leone History – Pa Demba

[Pademba Road stretches from Jomo Kenyatta Road to the Cotton Tree. It was named after Pa Demba. The account below is taken from 'Sierra Leonean Heroes: Fifty Great Men and Women Who Helped to Build Our Nation']

PA DEMBA (1794) A MAN OF COMPASSION

Pa Demba was a simple village headman whose generous offer of help may have saved the Freetown colony.



When Freetown was founded, Pa Demba ruled a small village near the junction of modern Campbell Street and Pademba Road; and his little town was probably the closest Temne village to the Freetown settlement. In September, 1794, five French warships sailed into the harbour and attacked the tiny colony. The French fired their great cannons time and again at the fragile houses, driving the British officers and Nova Scotian settlers into the surrounding countryside. Then they landed and looted the houses and storerooms and set fire to every building, including the church, governor's house, and apothecary shop.

The Nova Scotian settlers were in a desperate situation. The rainy season had not yet ended, and they had no shelter and no food to last them until the harvest. Worse still, they were in constant danger of attack by the Koya Temne, who felt the British had cheated them to obtain land for the new colony. The settlers were helpless and surrounded by enemies, and in this volatile situation, Pa Demba stepped forward. He offered his little village as a refuge for the Nova Scotian school mistress and all the children of the colony, and agreed to take in as many of the other homeless as he possibly could. He made this compassionate gesture despite the fact that it was the hungry season for his own people and despite the bitter feelings of the other Temne chiefs who would have liked to see the Freetown colony destroyed. Pa Demba set aside political differences and did what was humanly right. He is a powerful symbol of reconciliation among the ethnic groups, and his example shows that when times are difficult, Sierra Leoneans come together as one people, and one nation.