

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



Eclipse of the moon in March this year

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:

Wednesday, 30 May 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

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Awoko

Wednesday, 30 May 2007

The public's perception: special court is necessary

Most Sierra Leoneans believe that the inception of the Special Court for Sierra Leone is very important as peace cannot be achieved without justice, it's being disclosed in a report launched by the court's Outreach Section on the public's perception of the court.

On the understanding about the role of the court, many Sierra Leoneans reveal that the court has contributed to building peace after intense violence, and that the court is the most appropriate option for addressing crimes

committed during the war.

During a survey, 85% of respondents agree that perpetrators of war crimes should be punished.

On stakeholders' opinion about the court, 48% disagree on the use of the death penalty for addressing impunity, 44% believe in life imprisonment; 78% state that it will be fair and will send a deterrent message to potential perpetrators, while 68% indicate that the verdict will not raise tension in the country.

About 84% state that the verdict will support the process of peace consolidation in the country, and 80% believe that the trials will be fair.

As the report is based on the

survey on the public's perception of the court, the role of the Outreach Section was another area in which people were interviewed on. A high number of respondents state that they know about the Outreach and that that section has been to their various communities.

Most of the people interviewed commend the Outreach Section for its information dissemination concerning the court.

They explain that most of the information they receive about the court is through that section and that the section has been doing a very good job.

New Vision
Wednesday, 30 May 2007

Mano River Bridge Reopens Tomorrow

By Amara A. Samura

The Mano River Union Bridge which shares the border between Sierra Leone and neighbouring Liberia was officially reopened tomorrow after it was closed ten years ago as a result of the rebel war.

The opening ceremony will take place in Gendema and government officials, United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), security forces and Immigration officials from both countries are expected to grace tomorrow's reopening ceremony.

According to sources close to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Foreign Affairs and Internal Affairs Ministers of both countries will be there to formally declare the bridge reopen. Sierra Leone's Foreign Minister, Alhaji Momodu Koroma will likely not witness that important programme due to engagement relating to the arrival of the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair to Sierra Leone this morning.

Several closed door talks are reported to have been held between President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone and his Liberian counterpart, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf with regards the need for maintaining peace and security within the Mano River Union countries.

"The reopening of the bridge is a clear demonstration of the commitment of the two heads of state to maintain peace, security and brotherhood between the two countries," a senior government

official remarked, adding that the countries have given assurances that their countries would never be used as a launching pad to destabilize another country.

News of the reopening of the bridge has been received with joy by both drivers and business people who have been facing difficulties in traveling to Liberia or coming to Sierra Leone through the bridge.

"This will definitely ease the difficulties we have been encountering during our journey to Liberia."

The bridge was closed when the war broke out and when rebels from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) of Charles Ghankay Taylor used the bridge to enter Sierra Leone to cause their rebel activities.

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United Nations **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 29 May 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

There were no relevant stories on West Africa in the international media today.

International Clips on West Africa

BBC Last Updated: Tuesday, 29 May 2007, 11:20 GMT 12:20 UK

Tackling Nigeria's violent oil swamps

By **Senan Murray**, Abuja

Nigeria's oil-producing Niger Delta region may well be the country's biggest cash cow but it also looks set to provide new President Umaru Yar'Adua with one of his biggest headaches. "The biggest problem Nigeria faces today, in my humble opinion, is the problem with the militants in the Niger Delta area," former President Shehu Shagari, 83, told a gathering in Nigeria's oil capital Port Harcourt recently.

Local Media – Newspaper

UNMIL Observes International Day of Peacekeepers

(The Daily Guide, The Informer, The News, The Inquirer, Heritage, The Analyst and The Liberian Diaspora)

- The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) today joined UN Missions and offices worldwide in observance of the fifth annual International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers.
- May 29 each year has been set aside by the United Nations General Assembly to honour peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice to maintain world peace and security.
- Events marking the occasion in Liberia were followed by the laying of a symbolic wreath in remembrance of fallen peacekeepers in Liberia and in other parts of the world, where there have been conflicts and wars.
- Also to mark the day, UNMIL military contingents provided free medical and other humanitarian services to the public across the country, beginning in Monrovia where medical officers of the Nepalese formed Unit offered medical assistance to inmates at the Monrovia Central Prison, while the all-female Indian Formed Police Unit (FPU) screened school children at an elementary school in the capital.

UNMIL Sends Citizens' Petitions to UN Security Council

The News, The Inquirer, Heritage and The Liberian Diaspora)

- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Alan Doss said he has forwarded a petition statement from the Citizens Solidarity Council and the Tribal Governors Association relative to Liberians on the UN travel ban and assets freeze to the United Nations Security Council for action it claims appropriate.

Minister Toe Says Agriculture Crucial to Poverty Reduction

(The News)

- Agriculture Minister Dr. J. Christopher Toe says the agriculture sector of Liberia is crucial to poverty reduction. Dr. Toe said if Liberia must succeed in its drive to reduce poverty, the country's agriculture sector needs to be developed.

School Teacher Dies after Wedding Ceremony

(The Inquirer)

- [sic:] Godwin Broderick [38], a school teacher, died on Saturday, the same day after his wedding reception in Monrovia. The actual cause of his death is unknown. However, family sources said the deceased had complained of persistent pain in his chest before and during the wedding ceremony.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 9:45 am)*

Education Minister Asks Tertiary Institutions to Regularize Status

- During a meeting with proprietors of private universities and colleges in Monrovia, Education Minister Joseph Korto warned that his Ministry would shutdown their institutions if they fail to meet the criteria of higher education, emphasizing that most of the tertiary institutions currently operating in Liberia had no permits to operate.

So-Called Ex-Combatants Protest over Delayed Training Programme

- Some so-called ex-combatants yesterday staged a protest at the offices of the Joint Implementation Unit of the United Nations Development Programme to compel the Unit to accelerate their training activities.
- The group spokesman Emmanuel Lagartey alleged that since the reintegration programme for ex-combatants started, they have not benefited from any training, stressing that over 20,000 of them who's ID cards have already been done, were yet to be trained.
- However, Mr. John Dennis, the spokesman of the National Commission on Demobilition Disarmament Rehabilitation and Reintegration called on the ex-fighters to exercise patience as efforts were being exerted to get them into schools.

Police Refutes Report of Armed Robbery at Police Inspector's Home

- In an interview, Police Spokesman Alvin Jask said that media reports of armed robbers allegedly attacking the residence of Liberia National Police (LNP) Inspector-General Beatrice Munnah Sieh bordered on national security because the reports suggested that the LNP lacks the capacity to effectively combat armed robbery in the Country.

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 or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Weah Karpeh at karpeh@un.org.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 29 May 2007

Liberia Honors UN Peacekeepers

By Phuong Tran
Dakar/Monrovia



The U.N. Mission in Liberia has honored its personnel for International U.N. Peacekeeper Day. Since 2003, about 15,000 U.N. troops have been in Liberia to maintain peace in the war-torn country that has been economically devastated. According to U.N. figures, 92 peacekeepers have lost their lives while on duty in Liberia, mostly through illness and accidents. Phuong Tran has more from VOA's West Africa bureau in Dakar.

The head of the U.N. Mission in Liberia, Alan Doss, helped lay a wreath at a tombstone in honor of past and current U.N. peacekeepers.

Members of UN first all-female peacekeeping troop carries memorial wreath
2003.

Almost 100 have died since the start of this mission in September

For about a quarter century, this West African country has gone through a bloody cycle of war and unstable governments.

Its first democratically-elected female president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, has been in office for a little more than one year.

Despite positive feedback for her efforts to control corruption, analysts point out President Sirleaf inherited decades of economic ruin, ex-fighters, crumbling roads, buildings and an electricity grid that does not work for most of the country.

Earlier this year, the U.N. Security Council said the country is still a threat to regional security and extended its mission until September this year.



UN Special Representative Alan Doss



UN Mission in Liberia Peacekeepers

The U.N. Mission in Liberia is one of the most expensive peacekeeping operations in the world, costing more than \$700 million each year.

It recently welcomed the U.N.'s first all-female peacekeeping group from India earlier this year.

Next week in the Hague, the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is expected to begin the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

It has charged Mr. Taylor with committing crimes against humanity for providing money and weapons to fighters in neighboring Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war that officially ended in 2002.

The East African (Kenya)

Tuesday, 29 May 2007

Withdraw the ICC warrants or we'll fight on: Martin Ojul

[Interview]. Zachary Ochieng .

The International Criminal Court warrants issued against four Lord's Resistance Army commanders remain a sticking point in the Juba peace talks between the Ugandan government and the LRA. Martin Ojul, the rebels' chief negotiator, was in Nairobi recently and spoke to ZACHARY OCHIENG about his organisation's stand

Early this month, the Government of Uganda and the LRA/M signed an agreement on comprehensive solutions to the northern Uganda conflict.

We signed the agreement in the best interest of the LRA. That is why it took us very little time to append our signatures. However, I must emphasise that the agreement only deals with a small part of the root causes of the conflict and its possible solutions. The agreement can only be complete after a protocol on the same is implemented.

We are currently preparing for a consultative meeting with all Ugandans so that the views and concerns raised can be given due attention. The meeting will be held under Agenda No. 2, which looks at the main causes of the conflict. It is this meeting that will inform the basis of the protocol.

The Ugandan government maintains that the ICC warrants issued against your leaders will not be suspended or withdrawn until you have signed a comprehensive peace agreement, but your boss, Joseph Kony, and his deputy, Vincent Otti, say they will not sign any agreement before the warrants are withdrawn. Why are you participating in the peace talks when a stalemate is already imminent?

It is the ICC warrants that will either make or break the talks. While any peace negotiation calls for a spirit of give and take, the Ugandan government is using the ICC warrants to fight the LRA.

Our position is that when we move to Agenda No. 3, which deals with accountability and reconciliation, we will go through the traditional justice system known as Matoput, where we will confess any crimes we might have committed, ask for forgiveness, and where possible, make reparations.

We also have plenty of evidence of atrocities perpetrated by the Ugandan government, including video recordings, which could land some government officials before the ICC. However, if the warrants are not lifted, we shall definitely go back to war.

But Uganda is a signatory to the Rome Statute of the ICC. How do you expect the warrants to be lifted?

When Uganda signed the Rome Statute, it never sought the consent of parliament. Even as we speak, no law has been enacted to officially make Uganda a signatory to the Rome Statute.

In fact, Uganda almost withdrew from the ICC when a warrant was issued against Thomas Olubanga, the leader of a rebel group in eastern DRC and a friend of President Yoweri Museveni. President Museveni wrote to the ICC to withdraw the warrant for the sake of peace in the DRC. We want him to do the same for us.

LRA troops have reportedly been crossing into the Central African Republic for guerilla training, raising speculation that you could be regrouping for war. Is this true?

That is not true. The media reports are part of Museveni's propaganda. All our soldiers are at the assembly points in Owiny-Kibul and Ri-Kwangba. Those at Owiny-Kibul are currently crossing the River Nile to link up with the rest at Ri-Kwangba. In fact, both Dr Riak Machar, the chief mediator, and Joaquim Chissano, the UN special envoy to northern Uganda, met with our soldiers at the assembly points during the period we boycotted Juba. We have no soldiers in the Central African Republic.

When the talks resumed in Juba last month, you indicated that the LRA delegation needed conflict resolution experts in order to participate effectively. Have you made any progress?

So far, the composition of the delegation has not changed. But we hope to get some experts very soon.

You had an ally, the Africa Peace Point, which was initially, in principle, mandated to offer the LRA humanitarian assistance and boost your mediation team, but was inexplicably locked out when the talks resumed. What happened?

There is no explanation as to why the Africa Peace Point was excluded from the talks. But we have talked to Dr Machar and Mr Chissano, who have agreed in principle that the APP can send a team, which will be stationed at the LRA peace secretariat. We have also talked to the Africa Peace Point officials, and they have expressed willingness to go back to Juba. That is one of the reasons we came to Nairobi.

On May 12, you issued a press statement saying the LRA delegation is being denied basic facilities at the Juba Bridge Hotel due to non-payment of bills. What became of the financial pledges by the international community?

The pledges were all verbal, and we would like those who made them to put them down in writing. When we demanded a change of venue, they convinced us to go back to Juba, promising that the situation would improve. But that did not happen. We are forced to use dirty bedding and many of us have fallen ill after eating recycled food. We now buy food from outside to avoid getting sick. If the situation does not improve, we may be forced to review our stand on Juba. Currently, the UN owes the hotel \$167,000 in unpaid bills. There is just too much bureaucracy at the UN with regard to releasing funds.

How soon do you think a comprehensive peace agreement will be achieved?

You cannot give a time frame for the peace process. It will depend on the ability of both parties to agree on the issues at hand. Above all, it will depend on the government's willingness to admit its mistakes. With the ICC warrants still hanging over the heads of our commanders, it is hard to tell how long the talks will take.

Dr Machar continues to be the chief mediator even though you have expressed misgivings about him. How has he handled the LRA delegation since the talks resumed?

Dr Machar is now more flexible. In fact, the agreement on comprehensive solutions was signed in his absence. At least now he is listening to both parties.

Besides the ICC warrant, what other hurdles stand in the way of the peace talks?

The continued presence of UPDF forces, who attack our soldiers. This provocation obviously threatens the peace process.

Al-Hayat (UK).

Tuesday, 29 May 2007

Political Hypocrisy in the Security Council

Mahmoud Mobarak

The draft UN resolution the US, Britain and France are preparing for the Security Council to adopt this week on the international tribunal to try the killers of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri is not a pure legal act according to the international law. In fact, it is an international political resolution by which the Western powers want to achieve their political aims.

The Lebanese issue, due to the tireless US efforts, had been referred to the Security Council shortly before the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri. The UN Security Council resolution No. 1461 (2003), which affirmed the sovereignty of Lebanon, the independence of its territory, and called on the Lebanese government to extend its authority over the south and the rest of Lebanon, was issued more than a year before Hariri's assassination. When the Security Council passed resolution No. 1559 (2004), which called for the Syrian troops to pull out of Lebanon, Hariri had not been assassinated yet. This resolution was interpreted at the time as premeditated intent against the Syrian presence in Lebanon.

Thus, the Security Council has been greatly interested in the Lebanese issue before and after the murder of Hariri. This interest resulted in passing a good number of resolutions including resolutions 1461 (2003), 1559 (2004), 1583 (2005), 1595 (2005), 1624 (2005), 1636 (2005), 1655 (2006), 1664 (2006), 1680 (2006), 1686 (2006), 1697 (2006), 1701 (2006) and 1748 (2007). But it seems that Hariri's assassination came to open the door wide for the US to consolidate its political influence over Lebanon through the Security Council at a time when the international body had lost its credibility.

The Security Council, however, alleges that, by adopting such resolutions, it was doing the job assigned to it concerning preserving the international peace and security, which have been breached by the murder of Hariri. But the question which would not require us to search for international law experts in the international organization's corridors to answer is: will the Security Council shoulder its sublime mission maintaining international peace and security if a head of state, who does not enjoy good relations with the influential Western powers, was assassinated? Or will the Security Council then consider it wise not to interfere in "the internal affairs of a sovereign country" even if "outside parties" were proven to be involved?

Perhaps it is no secret today that the Security Council does not move to maintain international peace and security, as is its duty under the UN Charter, but it moves when the major countries want it to move under the pretext of preserving international peace and security. The Lebanese question is not an exception to the rule.

It goes without saying that the Western official belief that such allegations enjoy popular acceptance is political stupidity, which reflects how far the Western mentality from understanding the Arab peoples' reality is. Believing such a thing needs political credulity that is impossible today. How can one believe the allegation that the Security Council is concerned with the security of Lebanon, while it did not raise a finger when the whole Lebanese nation was assassinated and when Israel has committed the most atrocious war crimes last summer for more than a month? Why did the Security Council not dare to even issue a resolution denouncing the Israeli war?

If the Security Council finds the safety of countries' leaders important, why did it fail to set up an international tribunal to investigate the assassination of late Palestinian President Yasser Arafat of which Israel is suspected? Why an investigation was not opened into the assassinations of other presidents the CIA was accused of plotting like former Pakistani President Zia' ul-Haq?

What is painful about the international tribunal to be established is that accepting such tribunal would be a serious international legal precedent for the entire region. Lebanon, under the proposed Security Council resolution, would sign a blank check ceding its political and legal sovereignty. Setting up an international tribunal to look into an internal affair might be acceptable in case of a civil war or the inability of the incumbent government to extend its political and legal authority over its territory. But the creation of such tribunal while there is a recognized government with undisputed sovereignty is unacceptable and even contradicts with Article 2 (7) of the UN Charter which stipulates that it is not permissible to interfere in the internal affairs of the members states.

Moreover, it is unfamiliar to link this resolution with Chapter 7 of the UN Charter regarding the use of military force, which the US insists be mentioned. Rushing the creation of such a court before completing the investigation and identifying the suspects reflects the strong desire of the US to politicize the international legal issues put forward to the Security Council.

In addition, the proposed draft resolution to set up the international tribunal did not set operational mechanisms for the court to be established nor its location that is not imagined to be inside Lebanon. Also, the representation of Lebanese judges in the international tribunal does not exceed the third. According to the proposed system of the tribunal, the court may summon whomever it wants, regardless of their diplomatic or political immunity. This includes all officials including heads of states, which constitutes a breach of the internal constitutional rights.

Furthermore, the proposed tribunal, under Article 5 (2), is allowed to retry those who had been prosecuted in the past even if they were proven not guilty. This also violates a legal principle recognized and applied all over the world, including in the US, that people cannot be tried twice on the same charge. It is noteworthy that leaving the court to determine the responsibility of subordinates for the crimes of their superiors, as stated in Article 3 (2) of the proposed draft, is feared to be politically misused, especially in the light of the US control of the situation.

Therefore, what Lebanon may lose by accepting the internationalization of the trial of those involved in the assassination of Hariri, from the legal, and perhaps the political, standpoint, is much more than what it may gain. The current Lebanese crisis is serious and dangerous and its internal political signs began to surface and they would increase not decrease. But the solution to this crisis cannot be international judicial or military. The solution must be only political internal. This would not happen unless the different groups get together and put their own interests aside and assume their responsibilities towards their Lebanese nation. The Lebanese issue that is now before the Security Council is primarily an international legal issue that should not be politicized. But it reaffirms how the relationship between the international law and the world of politics is more like pure water mixed with dirt. The world of international law is clean, clear and well defined, but the game of international politics is a dirty game that often prejudices the international law when it mixes with it. Thus, the Security Council resolution that would pass this tribunal some days later would be nothing but 'a rightful word said for an evil purpose!'