

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



Prosecutor Stephen Rapp delivering his opening statement at the start of the Taylor trial

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

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The Patriotic Vanguard

Tuesday, 5 June 2007

Drama at The Hague: Khan versus Sebutinde



By Teddy Foday-Musa, at The Hague.



The Charles Taylor trial at The Hague started in a dramatic fashion yesterday with Taylor himself refusing to make an appearance but sending his lawyer to say he has lost confidence in the court in a way reminiscent of the late Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic who also raved and ranted in similar circumstances.

But the disappointment of the media over the Taylor no-show was partly relieved by the sparring match between Mr. Karim Ahmad Asad Khan, Taylor's lawyer, and Special Court judge Julia Sebutinde. Here is a blow by blow account of what transpired at The Hague yesterday:

1. The trial started at 10:30 (European Paris time). However, the trial itself was initially scheduled for 9:30, but later shifted to 10:30. An opportunity for locally based Sierra Leonean journalists to be able to catch up with the trial, since the Netherlands is two hours ahead of Sierra Leone.

2. The Accused: Mr. Charles McArthur Dahkpanna Gankay Taylor was not present at the trial. He remained sulking in his cell but sent in his lawyer.

Presiding Judge: Justice Julia Sebutinde.

Prosecution team:

- Mr. Stephen Rapp (Lead)
- Mr. Mohamed Bangura.

Counsel for Charles Taylor:

- Mr. Karim AA Khan (Lead)
- Mr. Jalloh.

Mr. Karim AA Khan the lead defence for Taylor walked away from the trial at 11:20 after a heated argument with the Judge. However, his co-defender Mr. Jalloh was directed by the judge to take control of the proceedings in the absence of Mr. Khan.

Acting Court Registrar:

Mr. Herman von Hebel.

2. Arrival of Journalists:

The official arrival time for journalists was 8:00 a.m. However, the entrance gate on the side of the Dutch national telecommunication company-KPN, was already full of journalists even before 7:30 am. Journalists from prominent international broadcasting stations, including their television crews were all represented. Josephine Hazeley of the BBC was also in attendance.

Security was at its highest peak. Journalists were screened through the security check point before being admitted into the building. This was the case for all those who attended. After the screening, journalists were supposed to report at the reception desk in order to exchange their press cards for a special entrance permission card that was prepared for them.

Unfortunately, those cards were not available. Peter Andersen told the journalists that the ICJ (International Court of Justice) men did promise leaving at the reception all the cards, which they had not done. The situation at that point in time became almost unmanageable and embarrassing for Peter Andersen and Solomon Moriba the information men. They worked overtime to settle this thorny issue.

At the end of the day, it was agreed that journalists should enter with their own press cards. They did and later the other cards were distributed to them.

3. The Trial:

- The trial started at 10:30 am.
- This particular opening trial session was dedicated to the prosecutor in order for him to make his opening position statement.
- But before this time, Mr. Karim Khan, the lead counsel for Taylor was called upon by the judge to tell the court why Taylor was not present. This requested became quickly became a dramatic event.
- Khan stood up and spoke about Taylor's loss of confidence and fears that the trial will not be fair.
- However, the judge urged him to come to the point and not waste time.
- Mr Khan accepted but continued on the same theme. He brought up points that were not connected to the question of why Taylor was not in attendance.
- This angered the judge and she gave Mr Khan two minutes to summarise.
- Then Mr. Khan mentioned a letter which he claimed was written by Taylor.
- He read the letter but could not link it again to the question.
- It was at this point that the judge informed Mr Khan that he was "verging on contempt of court" as he was not acting on the directives of the court.
- Then Mr. Khan finally came to the point that he no longer has the mandate to represent Taylor as this has been clearly stated in the letter by Taylor himself.

This was the beginning of the confrontation between the judge and Mr. Khan. The judge requested the following:

- That it was now a directive coming from the court that Mr. Khan should represent Mr Taylor at least for that session (4th June).

But Mr. Khan refused and stressed the following points:

- That Mr. Taylor has officially sacked him. That Mr. Taylor will be representing himself.

- That Mr. Taylor is not convinced that he will be given a fair trial, noting the composition of the 9-man team of prosecution against a 2-man defence team.
- That Taylor has not been given adequate time and resources to prepare for his trial.
- Paramount was that Taylor has been refused to meet with his principal defender.

Upon completion, Mr Khan walked out of court at 11:20.

However, the judge gave another directive to Mr Jalloh the second counsel for Taylor to step into the shoes of Mr. Khan.

At this time, the prosecutor Mr Rapp came in. He said the following:

- That Mr Taylor had long since given a plea of not guilty to this court.
- Therefore, as protocol demands, whether Taylor is present or not, the proceedings should continue.

Rapp's submission was granted by the Judge and he was asked to present his case.

4. The presentation of the Prosecutors: Mr Stephen Rapp and Mr Mohamed Bangura.

The presentation was done in two phases with Mr Rapp presenting the case, and Mr Bangura presenting the specifics of the atrocities committed against the people of Sierra Leone.

Stephen Rapp:

- Started by thanking the Dutch government for hosting the court.
- Also thanked the two former prosecutors.
- He also registered his condolences to the 21 victims of the helicopter crash in Sierra Leone.
- He stated that his prosecution mandate and focus will be from the period: 30th November 1996 to 18th January 2002.
- He went on to give a brief historical background of Sierra Leone. He stressed the fact that it was a peaceful country until Taylor and his men came.
- He spoke about the witnesses and their readiness to prove what they have in store for Taylor.
- He called the names of people with who Taylor had worked both in Liberia and in Sierra Leone, in order to execute his "Common plan".

Mohamed Bangura:

He came in after a break which lasted for one hour. He started at 2:00pm.

He categorised the atrocities in to the following:

- Amputation
- Sexual crimes
- Forced labour

- Conscription
- Child soldiers (SUB-Small Boys Unit) / (SGU-Small Girls Unit)

He also laid emphasis on the specific districts where these crimes took place: Kono, Kailahun, Kenema, Makeni were mentioned.

He also mentioned about the “FITI-FATA” operational code name adopted by the rebels. He explained that it means you can kill at random and at will.

Mr Bangura rounded up with a wise saying in Krio: “Net kam Tay-tay, doe go clean”.....that is, no matter how long the night is, there will be daybreak. He attributed that to what Sierra Leoneans were expecting. Bangura, as a Sierra Leonean himself, was very passionate in his presentation. One can see the emotions on his face as he described the atrocities committed by RUF and Liberian rebels in Sierra Leone. The audience listened with rapt attention.

Second appearance of Stephen Rapp after the break:

Mr. Rapp came in again at 2:35

- He thanked Mr. Bangura for his eloquent presentation.
- This time he spoke about the evidences that they will be using against Taylor.
- He stressed on: Aiding and Abetting.
- He said they will be presenting a host of evidences against the accused, but prominent among them will be two written documents:

The written documents are:

- A report prepared by one of the RUF officials in the form of a diary. This he said, was supposed to inform Sankoh when he was back after he escaped from his house at Spur road. There were references in it linking Taylor.
- An RUF meeting report from 1996-99 about RUF diamond transactions. In this document, Taylor was repeatedly referred to as “Big Brother”.

The prosecutor also made the point that Taylor did receive a host of signals, which would have been enough to let him know that he was doing something wrong to a certain set of people (Sierra Leoneans). He made reference to the following:

- Published reports about the suffering of Sierra Leoneans.
- Liberian newspapers also reported about the horrible plight of Sierra Leoneans. .The apology of the RUF to Sierra Leoneans.

According to him, Taylor was very much aware of what he was doing, and that he was calculative in doing what he did with intent and purpose.

He also rounded up with a Krio parable: “Hundred days for tiff man, wan day for master Ose”...” He rounded up at 3:15 pm.

5. Judge Sebutinde:

- She thanked Mr Rapp.
- She registered her disappointment over Mr Khan walking away from the opening trial in The Hague.

- She made it clear that there are visible problems which have been left unsolved by the registrar
- Against this backdrop, she called on the Court Registrar to tell the court as to whether the principal defender of Mr Charles Taylor has been refused travelling documents to The Hague in order to have an audience with Mr Taylor.

Response by Acting Court Registrar: Mr Herman von Hebel:

He said that it was not necessary for the principal Defender to come to The Hague, since Mr Charles Taylor was already in touch with his defence counsel.

Final response from the Judge:

The Judge concluded that it was the right of Mr Taylor to speak to his principal defender. Therefore, Taylor should not be denied that right. Then she said. "I will call on Mr Jalloh from the Defence team to say something; after that, I am going to give directives to the registrar that should be carried out in the interest of this trial." Mr Jalloh was then called in.

Mr. Jalloh made the following points:

- That time and again, Mr Taylor had expressed wanting to have an audience with his Principal defender, but it is yet to happen.
- That a good legal team has not been assembled for him by the registrar. It is a team of 9 prosecutors against a team of two defence counsels.
- That all the 12 lawyers they have approached declined due to inadequate financial resources.
- That there is no office space for the operational activities of the defence team.
- That the defence team is operating from a cafeteria.

Then the judge gave her directives to the registrar.

The directives:

- To immediately facilitate the travel of the principal defender to The Hague, in order to have an audience with Mr. Charles Taylor.
- To provide Charles Taylor with adequate time and logistics for his trial.

She concluded that these are Taylor's rights, and that they should be given to him.

5. Adjournment:

Court was adjourned to the 25th June 2007 Time: 9: am.

Photos: Justice Julia Sebutinde, left, and Kahn in Freetown on Taylor's first appearance.

Cocorioko

Tuesday, 5 June 2007

CHARLES TAYLOR, THE SPOILT AND PAMPERED BRAT OF LIBERIA.

By Leeroy Wilfred Kabs-Kanu , Editor-In-Chief

All his life, Charles Taylor has always had his way. There are people who seem to have been born with the special blessings to get away with whatever they did. Where others would suffer gory penalties for their deeds, there are others who always seem to sail through their evil doings through fate (?) or the machinations of a machiavellian society that rewards the evil and punishes the just. We have so many of these people in Sierra Leone and Liberia. They always get away with it. And one person who epitomises this characteristic is Charles Taylor.

All Charles Taylor has ever received in life are rewards for his actions. And it is therefore not surprising the events that so far mark the start of his historic war crimes trial in the Hague. Charles thinks he can push buttons again to walk free from prosecution.

It is not a surprise that Charles Taylor thumbed his nose at the world by boycotting the first day of his trial. It has to be that way all the time. As far as Charlie Boy is concerned , others can stuff what they think about him. His own bloated self-concept and self-image are all that matters. He must always seek his own way out of the problems created by his own impunity.

When the late Liberian leader, Master -Sergeant Samuel K.Doe appointed him Director of the General Services Agency (GSA) in 1980, Taylor had a call to patriotic national stewardship. It was a test of his mettle and love for his country.After all, he was one of the members of the members of the Liberian reformist movements in the U.S. shouting their heads off against the late President William R. Tolbert in the late 1970s as opposition heightened against the rule of the True Whig Party (TWP).

But what did Taylor make of the golden opportunity offered him to serve his nation ? He turned it into an orgy of self-gratification and hedonistic enjoyment. A very lucrative job with potential for bribes from other corrupt citizens and residents, Taylor received huge cash payments under the table for granting favours to his cronies and exploitative citizens and residents, with the result that within a year, he had secretly become one of the richest men in his impoverished country. Not only did he fish illegal financial gains in the day; he filched with the city's stunning women at night.

An undeniably handsome man with film-star boyish looks, Charles Taylor was the typical ladies man. My first experience with Taylor left a bitter taste in my mouth about the daunting problems facing my adopted home of Liberia. It was during one of the Redemption Day Celebrations when Liberia at that time exploded with festivities and merriment to commemorate the Saturday April 12, 1980 military coup. I was sitting with friends enjoying the last days of my life as a pagan, in the Little Red Shop along Caldwell Road, by the Anderson Compound , when this flashy-looking young man drove in riding a Hummer-like SUV , accompanied by some beautiful women, drunk like Taylor himself, scantily dressed and virtually putting on show what their mothers gave them. Soon, everybody started whispering quietly: "Oh, dar Charles Taylor ...Dar de Director of GSA "

Taylor stomped into the bar like Lord Palmerstone himself.

CONTINUED TOMORROW

One World US

Tuesday, 5 June 2007

<http://us.oneworld.net/article/view/149990/1/4536>

Rights Groups Welcome Trial of African Dictator

Haider Rizvi

UNITED NATIONS, Jun 5 (OneWorld) - Both the United Nations and some of the world's leading human rights organizations are welcoming the start of the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor.

"This is an important day for the international community," said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's spokesperson Marie Okabe. "This is a significant move towards peace."



UN peacekeepers arresting Charles Taylor. © [United Nations](#)

Taylor is accused of committing war crimes during Sierra Leone's 11-year armed conflict. His trial started Monday in front of a UN-backed special court sitting in The Hague, Netherlands.

Human rights groups said they hoped Taylor's trial would send a strong signal to those who considered themselves above the law.

"The trial of a former president associated with human rights abuses across West Africa represents a break from the past," said Elise Keppler, counsel with Human Rights Watch's international justice program.

Commenting on Taylor's trial, Keppler added in a statement: "All too often, there has been no justice for victims of serious human rights violations. This trial puts would-be perpetrators on notice."

Taylor is the first African head of state to be indicted on serious crimes under international law.

Taylor, who ruled Liberia from 1997 to 2003, is being tried on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity during Sierra Leone's conflict. The alleged crimes include murder of civilians, using women as sex slaves, and using children as soldiers.

The former Liberian leader is charged on the basis of his alleged role as a major supporter of the Sierra Leone rebel group, known as the Revolutionary United Front. Taylor is accused of using Liberian forces to assist the Sierra Leone rebels.

Taking note of the complexities that marked the trial of the deceased Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosovic, Human Rights Watch said trying former leaders is not easy.

"We have seen that trials of former presidents are difficult business," Keppler said. "The Special Court's judges must guarantee Charles Taylor a fair trial, and also conduct proceedings efficiently."

Though based in Sierra Leone's capital city of Freetown, the UN-backed special court relocated Taylor's trial to The Hague last June due to concerns over political stability in West Africa. The trial is now taking place within the premises of the International Criminal Court.

On Monday, for his part, Taylor refused to attend his trial, saying it would not be fair because he only had one defense lawyer. Judge Julia Sebutinde ordered the trial to continue without Taylor, amid intense protests from his lawyer, Karim Khan. Some reports say Taylor's counsel walked out, defying the judge's order to stay seated.

Those watching the case closely say the court proceedings are likely to last between a year and 18 months, and Britain has offered to oversee Taylor's imprisonment if he is convicted.

The Special Court trying Taylor is composed of Sierra Leonean and international judges. It does not have its own mechanism to imprison those it condemns.

The Special Court was established in 2002 by agreement between the UN and the government of Sierra Leone. The court has a mandate to prosecute those responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law that took place in the country since 1996.

As many as eight men associated with the warring factions during the conflict are currently being tried in Freetown by the Special Court. Most of the cases are near completion and the judges are expected to issue verdicts in the next couple of months.

Taylor fled to Nigeria, where he was granted freedom in exile, soon after the court unsealed the indictment against him in June 2003. He was surrendered for trial in March 2006, however.

Following the Special Court's request to relocate the trial, the Netherlands agreed to the trial being held in the Hague, but on the condition that Taylor leave the country after a judgment is delivered.

Metro New York

Wednesday, 6 2007

Atrocity on trial

Stakes high as ex-Liberian leader faces war crimes charges

by jason notte / metro new york

For the record... Elise Keppler, counsel for Human Rights Watch's International Justice Program

INTERVIEW. In late-1990s Sierra Leone, civilians had limbs hacked off and eyes gouged out and saw women raped and forced into sexual slavery by rebel forces.

The man who Special Court for Sierra Leone prosecutors say armed and oversaw the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) — former Liberian President Charles Taylor — is now the subject of a ground-breaking war crimes trial at the Hague. Elise Keppler, counsel for Human Rights Watch's International Justice Program, who attended the first day of Taylor's trial on Monday, said the 11 charges against him that include the recruitment of child soldiers and the seizing of diamonds mined by slave laborers may be just the beginning for Taylor — who has also been linked to crimes in his own Liberia, Ivory Coast and Guinea.

What are the stakes in the trial against Charles Taylor?

The prosecutors are looking to prove that he instigated this campaign of terror and attempted to take over Sierra Leone. They indicated that they intend to show his participation in the crimes — not physical participation, but that he ordered the crimes and aided and abetted the crime. They noted that the evidence was “overwhelming” in regard to aiding and abetting war crimes, crimes against humanity, covering rapes, murder, abduction and child recruitment.

What if they fail?

They said in the event that they were not able to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that there was more direct participation, there is overwhelming evidence of Taylor in his role as a superior having known about the crimes and not preventing and punishing them. I think that the reality is that these are complicated cases and proving war crime and crimes against humanity — which are systematic crimes — is going to be necessary linking these crimes to Taylor.

What is the mood in Freetown as Sierra Leone watches this case?

I spoke to a Sierra Leonean journalist who was at the trial Monday and he intended to report back to about 20 radio stations. My sense has always been that there's been a lot of interest in this trial. When I was in Freetown in 2004-2005, the fact that Taylor had not surrendered seemed to be incredibly significant in undermining the work of the Special Court. Taylor, given his role as a former head of state and someone associated with crimes across west Africa, really captures the interest of people throughout Sierra Leone and other places.

With Zimbabwe's leader Robert Mugabe also facing criticism for human rights violations, what message does this trial send to other African leaders?

I think the key is that this trial sends a strong signal that no one is above the law, to the extent that if there is evidence that leaders from that group have committed serious crimes, there has to be justice for those crimes — that the days of impunity for the most serious crimes are winding down.

Taylor facts

Who is Charles Taylor? From 1989 to 1997, Taylor led the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), a rebel group that sought to unseat Liberia's then-president using child soldiers and brutal abuse of civilians. Taylor was elected president in 1997 and served through 2003, when he was forced out by rebel forces in the Liberian capital of Monrovia. Forces under Taylor's command have also been implicated in supporting and participating in armed conflicts, cross-border raids and human rights abuses

in neighboring countries, including Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast.

What is he charged with?

- Five counts of war crimes: terrorizing civilians, murder, outrages on personal dignity, cruel treatment, and looting;
- Five counts of crimes against humanity: murder, rape, sexual slavery, mutilating and beating, and enslavement; and
- One count of other serious violations of international humanitarian law: recruiting and using child soldiers.

How long will the trial last? The trial has been adjourned until June 25. The Special Court's prosecutor, Stephen Rapp, has estimated that Taylor's trial will last between 12 and 18 months.

Information courtesy of Human Rights Watch

World War 4 Report

Tuesday, 5 June 2007

<http://www.ww4report.com/node/4019>

Charles Taylor defies war crimes trial

Submitted by Bill Weinberg

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor refused to attend the opening of his trial at The Hague for war crimes both in Sierra Leone, where he is accused of supporting a brutal guerilla movement. In a letter, read by attorney Karim Khan, Taylor said: "I am driven to conclude that I will not receive a fair trial before the Special Court at this time and I must decline to attend hearings... I cannot take part in this charade that does injustice to the people of Liberia and the people of Sierra Leone."

The letter protested: "I have only one counsel to appear on my behalf against nine on the prosecution team. This is neither fair nor just... I am driven to conclude that I will not receive a fair trial before the Special Court at this time and I must decline to attend hearings."

Khan told the Special Court on Sierra Leone that Taylor also "terminated his instructions to [his] legal counsel" and asked his defense team to cease to represent him. "He will represent himself," Khan told the court.

Taylor has denied all of the 11 charges he faces of war crimes and crimes against humanity. His hearing was moved from Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, to The Hague for security reasons. Prosecutors say he waged "a campaign of terror against the civilian population of Sierra Leone" by arming and training Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone, fueled by the illicit diamond trade, left at least 60,000 dead and thousands mutilated with limbs, ears or noses cut off. Under the deal to relocate the trial to the Netherlands, Taylor will serve his sentence in a British prison if convicted.

Khan repeatedly complained that he did not have enough time or resources to properly prepare for the trial, and also protested against the change of venue. Human Rights Watch stressed that it was important that the trial stay accessible to people in the region. "People in West Africa need to know what's happening in Taylor's trial," said Elise Keppler of Human Rights Watch's international justice program. (AlJazeera, June 4)

See our last post on West Africa.

See our special report on the Charles Taylor trial.

Time

Tuesday, Jun. 05, 2007

Tell Charles Taylor We're Surfing...

By Johnny Dwyer

Joe Brown doesn't know much about Charles Taylor, blood diamonds, or the International Criminal Court at The Hague where Taylor faces charges of crimes against humanity. But he does know where to find some of the best surfing breaks in Liberia. "The waves are just coming down. But they are very good in Robertsport," says Brown, 13, as he peels his lunch of raw cassava in water from the Atlantic. "Sometimes it gets as big as a tree. People surf here every weekend. White people. And we have our own surfboards. I surf myself."

Brown sits in the sand in a green Adidas soccer jersey, tan swimming trunks and blue flip-flops, staring out at the tepid surf off a beach where 10-foot barrels regularly break. Like many Liberian children, his gaze suggests he has seen more horrors than most of the world's 13-year-olds. Early in 2003, his family made their escape from Robertsport along this immaculate stretch of coast, walking the beaches all the way to the capital, Monrovia. They were escaping the rebel group LURD, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Development, which had overrun the town and set up a regional headquarters. Rebel fighters moved into local homes, took local women as their "wives" and made children carry equipment and weapons. The Brown family decided they'd be safer in the capital, even though it was held by Charles Taylor's forces.

After the war, they returned to Robertsport, fishing mackerel and farming cassava to survive. For young Joe, the end of the fighting meant going back to school — and, when visiting American surfers left him and other locals several boards in 2005, a new pastime.

When he's not in class, Joe — a Congo, or direct descendant of freed American slaves — can be found here, with his friends, on Cassava Beach. There's not much else to do in Robertsport, some 50 miles west of Monrovia, where hillside villas and 19th century churches decay in the tropical heat.

On this weekend day, Joe and Morris Gross, 11, also a Congo Liberian, ask several off-duty development workers whether they could borrow their spare boards to surf. The surfers decline, perhaps observing the boundaries that many Westerners set between themselves and the local population — or maybe they were disturbed by the fact that Brown had appeared on the scene clutching a shattered light bulb.

Recently, he snapped the fins on his board on the black rocks that poke out of the water near some of the best breaks. With no surf shop in this tiny nation where the unemployment rate is 85% and where 39% of the population is lacking a safe water supply, Brown could only watch longingly as the NGO-workers dropped in on the day's waves.

"When these guys ding their boards up, they put 'em back together with tree sap and packing tape," says surfer Luke Deese, 31, a teacher from Eugene, Oregon, who runs a bachelor's degree program in Monrovia. "You work with you've got."

But surfing isn't the only reason Brown and his friends are on the beach. When the ocean calms, he joins other men and boys as they haul massive nets onto the beaches. One head of mackerel will bring in 1000 Liberian dollars, or about \$1.30. On a good week he can net 35 fish. On a bad week — when the waves kick up and fishing becomes impossible — he goes surfing (if he can find a board).

At day's end, a boat with sails stitched together from rice bags passes over the horizon. The sun would set soon, leaving Robertsport — like much of this nation — pitch dark, save for the few buildings equipped with generators.

Brown follows the Western surfers back to their SUVs, hoping to make some change carrying their boards. In a few weeks, the rainy season will begin and the waves will peak. Brown pins his hopes on the reappearance of his American benefactors.

For now, with a broken board and some of the best waves in Africa, Brown could only watch and wait. "Life," he says, "is hard." In a nation so broken by brutality, where the victims and perpetrators of the crimes for which Taylor is being tried continue to mingle on the streets and in the corridors of power in Monrovia, it is Joe Brown and his generation that carry its best hopes.

The Analyst (Monrovia)

Tuesday, 5 June 2007

Dramatic Start of Taylor's Trial

In a dramatic opening to the Charles Taylor trial yesterday, the man long-awaited to face justice in the dock in The Hague failed to show up.

And his lawyer, Karim Kahn, interrupted the opening statement of the Special Court for Sierra Leone's Chief Prosecutor, Stephen Rapp, by clumsily walking out of the courtroom in defiance of a court order to continue representing Taylor for the day - in an unexpected move; Taylor sacked Kahn and asked to represent himself.

Rapp, and his Sierra Leonean colleague, Mohammad Bangura, continued to methodically present the prosecution case, reading out prepared statements across the room from an empty defense section - bar the court-appointed duty counsel, Mr. Jallow, who throughout the proceedings continued to sit back in the second row from where Kahn originally sat, and three seats back from the gallery.

Jallow, from the Special Court's Principal Defender's office, was appointed by the Chamber to represent Taylor in the absence of the accused, and after Kahn walked out despite a threat of contempt of court by presiding judge, Julia Sebutinde.

Opening Statement

Despite the drama, the main event of the day should have been the opening statement by the prosecution team. Rapp and Bangura, regardless of the rocky start, appeared un-phased and continued with their opening statement, which was divided into three main parts:

- (1) An overview of the history;
- (2) A description of the crimes with which Taylor has been charged; and
- (3) A description of the forms of individual liability for which Taylor could be held responsible.

In a nutshell, the key elements of the Prosecution case included:

* Charging Taylor with five counts of crimes against humanity, five war crimes counts and one count of other serious violation of international humanitarian law.

The Prosecution laid out a case which placed Taylor was at the center of a systematic campaign of terror waged against civilians in Sierra Leone after November 30, 1996, which included murder, rape, sexual slavery, amputation of limbs; looting; setting fire to property and conscription of child soldiers.

* While Taylor could be held responsible for participating in a variety of ways in these crimes - including through command responsibility and by acting in concert with others in a joint criminal enterprise - the Prosecution emphasized the "overwhelming" evidence

indicating Taylor had "aided and abetted" the crimes set out in their case by providing financial and other support to the rebel army (the Revolutionary United Front or RUF) and its collaborators in the attacks (the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) - a group comprised largely of former Sierra Leonean Army soldiers) and other Liberian fighters. Taylor's support allowed these groups to undertake systematic attacks against the Sierra Leonean population.

* Taylor, the Prosecution argued, was not only on notice about the fact these crimes had been committed, but had the intent to further them through his active support and encouragement.

* Rapp and Bangura outlined Taylor's key subordinates, or "leaders in the bush," and their efforts to wreak havoc in Sierra Leone in order to fuel a war in which diamonds - and natural resource wealth - played a major role.

* Bangura provided a graphic account of specific crimes, including the plight of amputees, who were told to go to Sierra Leonean President, Abdul Tejan Kabbah, to ask for new hands.

* He also laid out a system of extreme sexual abuse and violence, which saw women having to make strategic choices "that no woman should ever have to make." One victim, Bangura said, described her treatment as being like a "football on a field".

* Rapp closed by stating that the Taylor trial demonstrated that courts are willing to uphold the law, no matter how high level the alleged perpetrators are. Bangura finished his statement with a Sierra Leonean saying - that "no matter how long the night is, light will come" - today, he said, the court was starting to shed light on Taylor's alleged crimes.

Taylor's No-Show and Kahn's Walk-Out

The somber prosecution statement, largely read from notes on the desk in front of them, provided a semblance of normality to proceedings which were book-ended with surprising twists.

In front of two court galleries, packed in with close-to-capacity crowds - including the two former Special Court prosecutors (Desmond De Silva and David Crane); the former Registrar (Robin Vincent) and International Criminal Court Judge Navanethem Pillay - Kahn shook slightly as he began to read out a letter from Taylor.

The letter, in short, stated that Taylor would terminate his participation in the trial by dismissing his lead-counsel. Due to inadequate time and facilities to prepare a case, Taylor believed he could not get a fair trial.

The letter, which Judge Sebutinde truncated by giving Kahn two minutes to explain why his client was not in court, stated that Taylor chose "not to be a figleaf of legitimacy for this court." Kahn described a series of complaints Taylor had, including:

* Taylor's unmet request to speak with the Special Court's Principal Defender, Vincent Nmehielle, on a matter so confidential that he had not shared it with the trial chamber when he had raised it at a prior status conference.

* The inadequacy of facilities and time to prepare. Kahn argued he had not been afforded office space and had been working from local bars and cafes between June 2006 and March 2007 in The Hague. (The Acting Registrar, Herman von Hebel, rebuffed this claim later in the day, telling the court that Kahn at all times had offices available to him in Freetown and The Hague).

* The inequality-of-arms in team composition. Kahn, standing alone (bar for Mr. Jallow from the Principal Defender's office) intended to make his presentation one of optical contrast, as he made his points standing alone, across the room from the Prosecution team, who had seven of its nine lawyers in court today (the prosecution's lead lawyer, Brenda Hollis, was absent, along with another team member).

Yet when asked about the composition of his team, Kahn admitted to having two legal assistants, one part-time pro bono assistant in Monrovia, and one international and one Liberian investigator.

Distinguishing Taylor's stance from that of Slobodan Milosevic - the former Yugoslav President who faced trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and refused to recognize the court's authority over him - Kahn stated that Taylor did recognize the jurisdiction of the court.

Kahn's presentation was marked by increasing tension with Presiding Judge Sebutinde. She sighed loudly and reprimanded Kahn after he interjected without the court's permission; she chided him for speaking too fast for the translators; and after he started to walk out of the courtroom during Rapp's presentation, she told him to take his seat and asserted that "sanity will return to this court."

She repeatedly asked him to comply with the court's order to continue to represent Charles Taylor despite the fact that his client had sacked Kahn as counsel. This increasing tension culminated in a threat of contempt leveled at Kahn, as he rose from his seat, collected his books and notes, bowed to the judges and clumsily tried to open the back door (which was locked).

The judge called him back, but Kahn refused to sit and continue, saying he was "not trying to be difficult but to be principled," apologized to the court for the disruption, and left by a different (unlocked) back door at the far left rear of the courtroom.

Five minutes later, a security guard came back and collected Kahn's suit jacket he'd left behind. Only a green highlighter and a stack of papers with yellow post-it notes sticking from the top, remained as a reminder of Kahn's presence. They were gone when the court resumed after lunch.

The judges returned to this dramatic event at the end of the day. Judge Sebutinde told the courtroom - the gallery of which had dwindled to less than half of the original crowd - that she was concerned about the fair trial rights of the accused.

She said Taylor had been denied the opportunity to have the "bare minimum" needed to address his concerns, and this was fraught with potential to delay the trial. She stated that if the delay does impact the trial, it will be the responsibility of the Registry. Judge Sebutinde laid down two court orders directed at the Registry:

1. Given Taylor's request to meet with the Principal Defender was "a reasonable one," the Registry was directed to immediately facilitate the Principal Defender's travel to The Hague to meet with Taylor.
2. The Registry was to ensure Taylor had adequate facilities in accordance with Article 7 of the Special Court's Statute without further delay.

The Prosecutor, in a statement to the press conference held after the day's events, told a room of international reporters that "His [Taylor's] rights are not being violated by the court. His rights are being violated by himself."

Taylor's Letter to the Special Court

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor, in a letter dated June 1, 2007 and forwarded to the Judges of the Special Court, intimated that it was with sadness and regret that he was writing to inform the judges that he no longer feels able to attend and participate in the trial against him at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

He then blamed his sadness on what he called the confidence that he once had in the court's ability to dispense justice in a fair and impartial manner, which over time, had proven to be misplaced.

Taylor, who said that he believes everyone deserves justice, maintained that Liberians and Sierra Leoneans also deserve justice for the many years of tragic sufferings that they have undergone. To him the African continental independence had been pyrrhic; and that he did not rule out the modicum of justice that belongs to him.

Recounting what he refers to as his sacrifices to peace, he said that he relinquished the Presidency of Liberia, accepted exile in Nigeria in order to ensure Liberians would no longer suffer war.

"As I said on 7 August 2003, when I left Liberia, I relinquished the presidency because I could no longer preside over the suffering and humiliation of the Liberian people," the former leader of Liberia recalled.

He then gave an indictment of the Special Court stating that the court had not demonstrated itself capable of delivering justice. The form of justice that Taylor seeks must be one that is blind; one that pursues truth, one that is fair and immune to politics.

He ruled out any justice that 'preordains convictions' and one that emaciates his defense to the extent that he is unable to launch an effective defense. But implicit in this charge of Taylor is that he has already been convicted before the commencement of the trial process.

He completes the justice argument with the belief that all his rights to a fair trial have been thrown to "the wind of in a headlong rush to trial."

"It seems apparent that there is a plain desire to reach pre-determined decision of guilt in haste and without due regard to even the most basic fair trial rights as enshrined under international law," he claimed in his short letter to the judges of the Special Court.

According to the detained former leader, Article 14 of the ICCPR and Article 7 of the African Charter on Human Rights and People Rights provide for the equity of arms between parties.

He then showed that the Special Court's administration had been so dilatory that he had only one counsel to appear on his behalf. "One counsel against a Prosecution team of nine lawyers: This is neither fair nor just. It is astonishing that, as the custodians of fairness, the Trial Chamber is prepared to countenance this position," he maintained.

He blamed the huge volume of evidence gathered against him as possible due to the number of lawyers on the prosecution team. He sees his one lawyer to the nine prosecution lawyers as a factor that prevented his lawyer from reviewing the volume of materials to do proper defense of his interest.

Taylor further charged that his legal representative had not been provided adequate time and facilities as guaranteed under Article 14 of ICCPR and Article 7 of the African Charter, claiming that the numerous Defense requests for proper time to prepare had been ignored.

The defendant then presented a technical matter dwelling on law to the effect that his lawyer's preparations for trial had been frustrated by "the insidious presence of a camera in conference facilities in of his detention unit, overseeing meetings between lawyer and client that are supposed to be privileged and confidential."

To him this camera insertion in his unit seriously resulted to frustrating and hampering defense preparations for trial. He claimed that the problem persisted continuously for three months, but that the Court only granted an 18-day extension for defense preparation.

"My transfer to The Hague has left me cut off and in almost total isolation from family and those closest to me. Their visits to The Netherlands are restricted to one visa being issued to one visitor at a time, for a maximum period of two weeks" he said.

Based on these and other circumstances, Taylor claimed that the Special Court's administration was ill prepared to handle a trial of the magnitude in The Hague and is unwilling or unable to perform its basic functions.

"Despite this, the Court advances with great haste to trial without any regard to the most fundamental procedural safeguards," he added.

He then concluded by resolving that for all the reasons, he was driven to the conclusion that he would not receive a fair trial before the Special Court at the point in time and has great regret that he must decline to attend any further hearings in this case until adequate time and facilities are provided to his defense team and until other long standing reasonable complaints are dealt with.

Taylor then said that it followed that he must terminate instructions to his legal representatives in this matter. Despite my complete confidence in their ability and competence, I must ask that they cease to represent me before the Special Court and instructed them accordingly.

He then said that he could not participate in a charade of injustice to the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia, and the people of Africa; and do a disservice to the international community in whose name the court claims to speak. I choose not to be the figleaf of legitimacy for this process.

He then concluded by hoping and praying for a fair trial that would perhaps bring to an end cycles of injustice. "I stand ready to participate in such a trial, and let justice be done, for myself, and for those who have suffered far more than me in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Taylor said in closing his brief letter.

But be it as it may, the letter of Charles Taylor does not change the organic issue of his formulating a means of responding to the court charges under the circumstances. The grave charges levied by the court under eleven categories are so pungent that no amount of excuses based on procedural differences will suffice but cooperation.

Observers are of the view that instead of trying to prove confrontational to the court and its officials, he must be seen taking more proactive approaches in talking or coming to the court to show his reservations over the next 18 months.

For obvious reasons, the number of lawyers available to the court may not be known or even if known, may not be available on gratis for representing the war crimes indictee.

Mr. Charles Taylor's Letter (Full content)

1 June 2007

Justice Julia Sebutinde

Presiding Judge

The Special Court of Sierra Leone

Termination of Representation

It is with sadness and regret that I write to inform you that I no longer feel able to attend and participate in the proceedings against me before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Sadness, because at one time, I hoped and had confidence in the court's ability to dispense justice in a fair and impartial manner. Over time it has become clear that such confidence is misplaced.

Every one deserves justice. The people of Liberia and Sierra Leone, who for too many years have undergone tragic sufferings, deserve justice. The people of Africa, for whom the promise of independence was only pyrrhic, deserve justice. And I too, deserve at least the modicum of justice.

I've always, in my small way, been willing to make sacrifices for peace. I relinquished the presidency of Liberia, and accepted exile in Nigeria, to ensure that the people of Liberia would no longer suffer war. As I said on 7 August 2003, when I left Liberia, I relinquished the presidency because I could no longer preside over the suffering and humiliation of the Liberian people.

Till date, the Special Court has not demonstrated itself capable of delivering justice. Justice is blind. Justice pursues truth, Justice is fair. Justice is immune to politics. It is not justice to preordain convictions. It is no justice to emaciate my defense to an extent that I am unable to launch an effective defense. It is no justice to throw all rights to a fair trial to the wind in a headlong rush to trial. It seems apparent that there is a plain desire to reach pre-determined decision of guilt in haste and without due regard to even the most basic fair trial rights as enshrined under international law.

Article 14 of the ICCPR and Article 7 of the African Charter on Human Rights and People Rights provide for the equity of arms between parties. Today marks the start of the trial against me. The Special Court's administration has been so dilatory that I have only one counsel to appear on my behalf. One counsel is against a prosecution team of nine lawyers. This is neither fair nor just. It is astonishing that, as the custodians of fairness, the Trial Chamber is prepared to countenance this position.

Given the size of the Prosecution team, it is not surprising that it has been able to produce a seemingly never-ending volume of materials to be considered in this case. The limited defense

resources have made it impossible to review all of this material and has distracted from the proper preparation of my defense. My legal representative has not been provided adequate time and facilities as guaranteed under Article 14 of ICCPR and Article 7 of the African Charter. The numerous Defense requests for proper time to prepare have been ignored.

Defense preparations for trial have further been frustrated by the insidious presence of a camera in conference facilities in the Detention Unit, overseeing meetings between lawyer and client that are supposed to be privileged and confidential. The obvious result of this has been to seriously frustrate and hamper defense preparations for trial. The problem persisted continuously for three months, yet the Court granted only an 18-day extension for defense preparation.

My transfer to The Hague has left me cut off and in almost total isolation from family and those closest to me. Their visits to The Netherlands are restricted to one visa being issued to one visitor at a time, for a maximum period of two weeks. The special Court's administration is ill prepared to handle a trial of this magnitude in The Hague and is unwilling or unable to perform its basic functions. Despite this, the Court advances with great haste to trial without any regard to the most fundamental procedural safeguards.

For all these reasons, I am driven to the conclusion that I will not receive a fair trial before the Special Court at this point. It is therefore with great regret that I must decline to attend any further hearings in this case until adequate time and facilities are provided to my defense team and until my other long standing reasonable complaints are dealt with. It follows that I must terminate instructions to my legal representatives in this matter. Despite my complete confidence in their ability and competence, I must ask that they cease to represent me before the Special Court and instruct them accordingly.

I cannot participate in a charade that does injustice to the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia, and the people of Africa; and a disservice to the international community in whose name this court claims to speak. I choose not to be the figleaf of legitimacy for this process. I hope and pray for a fair trial that will perhaps bring to an end cycles of injustice. I stand ready to participate in such a trial, and let justice be done, for myself, and for those who have suffered far more than me in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Yours Sincerely,

1st June 2007 - 4:35 P.M.

Charles Ghankay Taylor

The Inquirer (Monrovia)

Tuesday, 5 June 2007

CEDE, JPC Welcome Trial

By C. Winnie Saywah
Monrovia

As the trial of former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor begins at the Special Court in The Hague, two advocacy groups and his family are calling on the court to accord the accused a free and fair trial.

The two advocacy groups, the Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE) and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), yesterday, raised concerns relative to the trial being free, fair and transparent.

The JPC and CEDE in separate statements said that they are in support of the surrender and the subsequent trial for crimes allegedly committed in Sierra Leone but reminded the Court in The Hague to maintain the "presumption of innocence" which is consistent with the due process of law. They noted that consistent with the due process of law, one is not guilty unless proven.

CEDE in a release issued yesterday said it believes that the trial will provide the former Liberian leader the opportunity to defend himself and that the call for justice by victims of Sierra Leone would be heard.

The release signed by CEDE's Director, Ezekiel Pajibo, said the trial of Mr. Taylor shows a significant departure from the past when leaders committed heinous crimes and went with impunity.

It said that unlike others who think and feel that Mr. Taylor runs the risk of not having a fair trial, CEDE has a complete confidence that the accused will be given a free and fair trial looking at the facilities given him while in detention in the custody of the Special Court in Sierra Leone and the Hague.

CEDE noted that the majority of the Liberians have found relief since Mr. Taylor no longer has the capacity to interfere in their lives and that they can begin to rebuild their lives, knowing that the future is more secured.

"It is clear that the Taylor's trial is indeed a welcome news to a battered country that is painfully beginning the process of returning dignity to its citizens and residents," the release concluded.

Similarly, the JPC in a statement read by its National Director, Augustine Toe at a press conference said the Catholic Commission believes that crimes against humanity and war crimes are serious charges that should not be hanging over the head of a former Liberian leader without the opportunity to vindicate him.

The Commission said it is confident that a fair trial for Mr. Taylor in the Hague for crimes allegedly committed in another sisterly African country will not only contribute and advance the nation's quest for lasting peace and democracy but will address the question of impunity, justice, peace and reconciliation.

The JPC concluded that it is also worried about reports coming from The Hague that the accused is not been given good treatment while in detention. However, the commission said as it is done during the course of the ongoing trial, the commission intends to send a delegation to The Hague to monitor the conduct of the trial and investigate the condition of the accused prison cell.

In a related development, the family of the accused has also raised concerns about the proceedings being held in a foreign land.

In a press statement signed by Mrs. Telma Taylor-Saye, the family revealed that the accused is being prosecuted by two political entities, the Security Council of the United Nations and the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The family said they are not sure that their father and brother will ever be given a free and fair trial when precedents were set during pre-trial proceedings, which indicated that the outcome of the trial would not be determined, by law but instructions from powerful countries that are determined to bring a guilty verdict against the defendant.

The family of Mr. Taylor is quoted as saying that the ongoing trial is taking a political position because "even before the commencement of said trial, those prosecuting the accused have already established a prison cell where he is expected to waste and rot upon conclusion of the intimidation being mounted by the Special Court and its backers."

The family has meanwhile blamed the Liberian government for not doing anything to request that the rights of Mr. Taylor, a former President, are upheld though he is still facing trial.

They said the nature of falsehood has been displayed against the accused and added, "regardless of the political differences, Mr. Taylor and the present government may have had, the latter is guilty of complicity in the diabolical conspiracy that is being hatched and executed to exterminate the former Liberian leader."

The family has therefore called on ECOWAS and AU to put in place a legal team of experts who will monitor the day- to-day legal proceedings in the next 24 months.

The Taylor family has also admonished the international press to report on the proceedings from the perspective of professionalism and objectivity.


United Nations **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 5 June 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

UNHCR-assisted returns from Sierra Leone set to hit 100,000-mark

Reuters:(Source UNHCR) June 5 2007 - With today's arrival of a repatriation convoy from Sierra Leone, the number of UNHCR-assisted returns to Liberia will pass the 100,000 mark. The Liberian repatriation has been one of the largest UNHCR operations in Africa for the past two and a half years and it is scheduled to end on 30 June. It will mark the conclusion of large repatriation operations in the West African region. We expect many more Liberian refugees to return before the cut-off date. The landmark convoy carrying 258 returning refugees will cross today from Sierra Leone into **Liberia** at Bo Waterside border crossing.

Zimbabwe's President Risks Liberia's ex-leader's fate- says minister

By Bonny Apunyu

(SomaliNet) June 5, 2007: A British Foreign Office minister said on Monday that Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe risks the same fate as former **Liberian** President Charles Taylor, who is on trial for crimes against humanity.

International Clips on West Africa

Security Council team to leave for Africa June 14

UNITED NATIONS, June 5, 2007 (AFP) - UN Security Council envoys depart June 14 for African tour that will take them to Ghana, Ethiopia, Sudan, Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the council president said Monday.

Belgian Ambassador Johan Verbeke, who presides over the council this month, told reporters here that the mission's first stop on June 15 will be Accra, the capital of Ghana.

Local Media – Newspaper

Taylor Predicts "Unfair Trial" as Lawyer Walks out of Courtroom

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer, The Forum, The News, Heritage, The Informer, The Analyst, National Chronicle, The Forum, New Vision, New Democrat and The Liberian Diaspora)

- Indicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor boycotted the opening of his war crimes trial Monday and vowed not to attend further proceedings because he lacks confidence in the Special Court for Sierra Leone.
- In a letter read by his court-appointed lawyer who later walked out of the courtroom, Mr. Taylor described his trial as a "charade."
- He dismissed defense attorney Karim Ahmad Khan from the case and requested to represent himself.
- Meanwhile, two advocacy groups, the Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE) and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), have urged the Court to accord the accused a free and fair trial.

State University Resumes Classes Following "Violent" Protest

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer, The Forum, The News, Heritage, The Informer and The Analyst)

- Classes have resumed at the State-owned University of Liberia following what is considered a “violent” student protest which disrupted classes at the University on Monday.
- Science students at the University set road blocks and disrupted classes to protest the lack of busses to take them to the University’s Fendell campus, outside Monrovia.
- The resumption of classes follows Monday’s meeting between President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and key stakeholders in the transportation crisis at the University of Liberia.

Criminal Gang “Kidnaps” Three Children in Zwedru

(The News)

- Three children have been kidnapped in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County supposedly by a criminal gang known as “Eleven Brothers.”
- Security concerns have also been reported in Greenville, Sinoe County where residents are said to have formed community watch teams under the supervision of the Liberia National Police and UNMIL to combat crimes in area.
- According to media reports, the residents reached the decision at a town hall meeting last Thursday following threats from “Eleven Brothers” that the group was targeting the City of Greenville.

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

Taylor’s Trial Will Continue Despite Absence, Judges Say

- Judges trying Former Liberian President Charles Taylor say the trial would go ahead despite the absence of Mr. Taylor and his defence team.
- The case was adjourned and would resume on 25 June.
- According to the reports, Judge Julia Sebutinde said the Taylor Defense Team has some points in its demand for better resources and said she was surprised to hear that the defense lawyers were operating from an Internet Café.
- Judge Sebutinde called on the Registrar of the Special Court to put more resources at the disposal of the Taylor Defense Team.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Classes Resume at University of Liberia Following Violent Protest

- In an interview, the Minister of Information, Dr. Laurence Bropleh said classes would continue today at the main campus of the University of Liberia.
- Dr. Lawrence Bropleh said President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf yesterday met key stakeholders in the transportation crisis at the university and assured that government is committed to finding a lasting solution to problems students face with transportation.
- Students of the Science College yesterday disrupted classes at the university to protest the lack of transportation to take them to the Fendell Campus outside Monrovia.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

President Johnson Sirleaf Comments on Visit to Libya

- Briefing the press yesterday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said her recent visit to Libya was to improve bilateral relations and discuss an agreement for the take over of the Ducor Palace Hotel and the construction of low and medium income housing units in the country.

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

Liberia-Sierra Leone Border to Reopen Friday

- Making the disclosure yesterday, security authorities of Liberia and Sierra Leone say Friday, June 8 has been set as the date for the re-opening of Mano River Bridge.

- The decision was reached following a meeting held at Bo Waterside on the Liberian side of the bridge.
- The two countries said those conditions including cross-border attacks and drugs trafficking, that led to the closure of the Mano River Bridge no longer exist.
- The Mano River Bridge links the two countries and provides a major route for commercial activities for the people of the region.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Prison Officers want Autonomous Status for Correction Bureau

- In an eight-count recommendation at the close of a one day workshop, correction officers in the country called for the Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation to be autonomous.
- The officers said they want to take full responsibility of all prisons in the country and want an increment in their salary to commensurate with officers of the Liberia National Police.
- They urged government to relocate the Monrovia Central Prison to provide for the separation of juvenile detainees from adults.
- The Norwegian funds for human rights provided thirteen thousand dollars for a one-year project for human rights education for Liberia's security and judicial officers.

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.

Reuters

Tuesday, 5 June 2007

Zimbabwe: President Risks Liberia's ex-leader's fate- says minister

By Bonny Apunyu

(SomaliNet) A British Foreign Office minister said on Monday that Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe risks the same fate as former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who is on trial for crimes against humanity.

“Robert Mugabe is at one of those points where dictators have to consider whether if they press on they don't fall into the category of committing crimes against humanity on the sort of scale that the law proscribes,” Britain's Africa minister David Triesman said.

“Charles Taylor presented quite a difficult target in the sense of coming to trial, (but) no impunity is a baseline we shouldn't cross. Those who commit terrible crimes will come to trial and be convicted and go to prison,” he told reporters.

The Liberian former president, Charles, Taylor is the first ousted African president to stand trial at a UN-backed court for war crimes and prosecutors hope the case against him for involvement in murder, rape and mutilation will send a message that nobody can escape punishment.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe's escalating political and economic crisis has refocused international attention on President Mugabe's policies.

Mugabe is accused of a brutal crackdown against opposition politicians as well as economic policies which have led to hyperinflation, soaring poverty and chronic shortages of food, fuel and foreign currency.

But the Zimbabwean leader blames the west, led by Britain, for sanctions and diplomatic isolation he says were meant to punish Zimbabwe for his policy of turning over white-owned farms to landless blacks.-Reuters