

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



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, 10 August 2007

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

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Allafrica.com

Thursday, 9 August 007

Opinion

Elections Are Make or Break

By Abdul Tejan-Cole

This Saturday, August 11, more than two million voters in Sierra Leone will go to the polls to cast their ballots in presidential and parliamentary elections.

These will be the country's second national elections since a brutal, 10-year-long war officially ended in 2002 and its first since United Nations peacekeepers handed over security to newly-trained national police and military forces.

In March 2002, voters resoundingly elected the current incumbent, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. But two years later the opposition All People's Congress (APC), made significant gains in local government elections, including taking control of the capital, Freetown.

With President Kabbah now having completed his second and final term, the electorate will be faced with a choice of seven presidential candidates. However, only two have a realistic chance of winning the polls.

Vice President Solomon Berewa, Kabbah's anointed successor and flag-bearer for the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), is the frontrunner in the race. Berewa, also the former Attorney-General and Minister of Justice who led negotiations with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to end the war, has been the de facto president for most of President Kabbah's second term.

Berewa and his running mate, Foreign Minister Momodu Koroma, face a stiff challenge from Ernest Bai Koroma of the opposition APC.

Koroma, who is inexperienced and has never held elected office, finished a distant second to Kabbah in 2002. This time around he is benefiting hugely from the government's failure to deliver social services such as electricity and water supply, its inability to deal with corruption and its perceived abandonment of the late Chief Hinga Norman.

Although many Sierra Leoneans hailed Norman as a hero for uniting the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) during the war and restoring Kabbah's government, he was arrested while serving as a minister in Kabbah's government and indicted before the Special Court for Sierra Leone, an international war crimes tribunal, on charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The SLPP's support may also be eroded by the split in its ranks in 2005 which resulted in the formation of the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC). Led by Charles Margai, the son of the country's second prime minister, it does not stand any prospect of winning but since it draws most of its support from traditional SLPP strongholds in the south and east of the country, it may seriously dent Berewa's chances.

Sierra Leone has made significant strides since the end of the conflict: diamond exports have risen; the economy has grown by seven percent a year for the past two years; more schools and hospitals have been built and enrolment in primary schools has increased.

Yet the peace is still fragile. The election campaign has been plagued by allegations of assassination attempts and there has been election-related violence in the districts of Pujehun, Bo and Kailahun, and also in Freetown. Spearheading most of the violence are some of the 71,043 demobilised ex-combatants.

For national as well as regional security, it is crucial that Sierra Leone's elections are fair and transparent. If the results are rigged, the ensuing problems may well trigger another crisis in a volatile region.

Last week, the Liberian government of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf announced that it had unearthed a coup plot and arrested six people, including General Charles Julu, who headed the presidential guard during the tenure of Samuel Doe, and George Koukou, a former speaker of the Liberian National Assembly during the post-war transitional government. In Guinea-Conakry and Guinea Bissau, governments are teetering on the brink of collapse following widespread civil and social unrest. In Côte d'Ivoire, there are new tensions following an assassination attempt on the prime minister and former rebel leader, Guillaume Soro.

In Sierra Leone, there are promising signs which augur well for this Saturday's elections, despite the fact that a few commentators are predicting a repeat of the crisis that engulfed the nation in 1967, when it became the first independent African nation in which an incumbent government suffered electoral defeat.

Following the 2004 local government elections, the country's electoral commission was completely disbanded. Based on an assessment conducted by Justice Johan Krieger, who helped conduct South Africa's 1994 elections, a new independent National Electoral Commission (NEC), was established. It has so far gained a reputation for impartiality and independence, although its performance will be hampered by financial and logistical problems arising from the holding of the elections in the middle of the rainy season.

The elections provide Sierra Leone with a great opportunity to consolidate its peace and address the key issues of governance inhibiting its development. It is crucial that their legitimacy should not be tainted by the kinds of problems seen in Nigeria's elections earlier this year. The entire nation and region will be praying it passes off peacefully.

Abdul Tejan-Cole is an internationally-renowned human rights lawyer from Sierra Leone. He is currently the Deputy Director of the International Center for Transitional Justice's Cape Town office and was a former head of Sierra Leone's Campaign for Good Governance.

[Note: Abdul Tejan-Cole also worked for the Special Court for Sierra Leone in the Office of the Prosecutor.]

United Nations  Nations Unies
United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 9 August 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

VOA 08 August 2007

Liberian, Sierra Leonean Refugees Granted Citizenship Rights in Nigeria

By Gilbert da Costa Abuja

Nigeria has approved citizenship status for about 7,000 Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in the West African country. For VOA, Gilbert da Costa in Abuja reports that the refugees opted to remain in Nigeria after the U.N. refugee agency closed their camp in Nigeria. The Economic Community of West African States says the agreement signed with Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the U.N. High Commission for Refugees allows the refugees to settle in Nigeria.

International Clips on West Africa

AP 08/09/2007 08:49:32

Sierra Leone to hold first presidential poll since UN peacekeepers withdrew

CLARENCE ROY-MACAULAY

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone - War-battered Sierra Leone chooses a new president Saturday, the first election held here since U.N. peacekeepers withdrew from the diamond-rich nation two years ago. The vote will test the West African nation's ability to transfer power peacefully after years of coups and conflict. Electoral commission Chief Christiana Thorpe said the poll would "make or break this country."

VOA 08 August 2007

Sierra Leone's Idle Youths Get Political

By Selah Hennessy, Dakar

Bo, the second largest city in Sierra Leone, has long been a political stronghold of the country's ruling party, the Sierra Leone People's Party. But as presidential and legislative elections draw near, young people who make up more than half the city's eligible voting population want solutions to widespread unemployment and poor education throughout the country.

Local Media – Newspaper

More Ammunitions Seized as Immigration Pick Up Guinean in Gbarnga Episode

(Daily Observer, New Democrat, The Monitor and The News)

- The Liberia National Police on Wednesday seized a Russian made single barrel gun and several cartoons of cartridges from suspected armed robbers in the Paynesville suburb *[Congo Town]*.
- According to the Police, one suspect has been arrested in connection with the seizure. At the same time, Officers of the Bureau of Immigration and Neutralization (BIN)

yesterday arrested a Guinea national identified as Al-Hassan Sow who is alleged to be the financier of the cache of ammunitions recently discovered in the provincial city of Gbarnga in Bong County.

Liberia and Benin bolster Ties, Sign Joint Bi-lateral Agreements

(The Inquirer, The News, New Democrat, The Analyst, The Informer)

- The Governments of Liberia and Benin have signed four major communiqués intended to help nurture the existing bi-lateral relationship between the two West African countries. The Communiqués were signed in Monrovia by Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Benin's President Boni Yayi. The communiqués covered four major frameworks including economic, scientific, technical and foreign cooperation between the two countries.

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

Liberia and Benin Sign Bilateral Pact

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Supreme Court Rules into Cases Heard Today

- A Supreme Court of Liberia release said that the Court will today commence handing down opinions and rendering judgment in cases it heard during the March Term of Court. The exercise, expected to end on Friday, will be characterized by the formal sitting of Associate Justice, Counsellor Jamesetta Wolokollie and the induction into the Bar, of several Attorneys and Counsellor-at-Law.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Liberian Refugees Get Permanent Status in Nigeria

- According to correspondents, over 5,000 Liberian refugees in Nigeria have been granted permanent status after discussions with officials of the Economic Community of West African States and UNHCR for the refugees to settle in that Country. More than 2,000 Sierra Leonean refugees were also given residency. Under the agreement, the more than 7,000 Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees will have access to education, health-care and do legitimate businesses as Nigerians.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Information Minister Represents Liberia at World Expo Talks in China

- Information Ministry sources said that Information Minister Lawrence Bropleh travelled to China to ensure Liberia's participation in the World Expo slated for Shengai, China. The World Expo, scheduled for 2010, is a large-scale, global and non-commercial exposition intended to promote the exchange of ideas and development of the world economy, culture, science and technology.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Education Ministry Insists No Graduations Ahead of Examination Results

- In a statement, the Ministry of Education repeated that there will be no graduation programmes ahead of the release of the results of the West African Examination administered to students throughout Liberia.
- The Ministry warned that any school in violation of the decision would be subject to punitive actions, including suspension of the school's permit to operate or fine.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Red Cross Society Launches Spanish Relief-Support Project in Bassa

- In a release, the Liberia National Red Cross Society said that it officially launched a Spanish Relief-support project in Grand Bassa County and dedicated several wells and pit latrines in District #1 of the County and later distributed relief items to inmates at the Buchanan Central Prison.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Voice of America

Friday, 10 August 2007

Namibia's President Unhappy With Referral of Ex-President to the ICC

By Peter Clotney
Washington, D.C.

Namibia's President Hifikepunye Pohamba has hailed former President Sam Nujoma as a unifier who is worthy of praise for spearheading the fight for the country's independence. Pohamba's remarks came after a human rights group asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate former president Nujoma for alleged complicity in human rights abuses during and after the country's fight for independence from South Africa.

The Namibian National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) said this week that thousands of people are still missing while others disappeared between 1994 and 1999. Pohamba accused NSHR leader P. ya Nangoloh of attempting to disturb the country's stability.

From the capital, Windhoek ya Nangolo tells reporter Peter Clotney he is not on a personal vendetta against former President Sam Nujoma.

"The president has got the right like any other citizen to express his opinion. The fact is he did not deny that thousands of people have gone missing, and their fate has not yet been clarified, and this is the point. We are making the point that the violations of international law, which is part of Namibia, have been committed, and efforts to try to resolve these things internally including setting up a truth and reconciliation have been turned down. This is why we were left with no alternative, as a responsible human rights organization to approach the International Criminal Court," ya Nangoloh pointed out.

He said the NSHR is not flouting any regulation by referring the former president and some of his colleagues to the ICC.

"We are not violating any law ... I have personal respect for President Pohamba as a unifier, as a man of reconciliation, but I disagree with what he is now saying," he said.

Ya Nangoloh denied having any personal vendetta against former President Sam Nujoma.

"Absolutely not. I'm saying we based this on the fact that human rights violations have been committed, and they cannot simply be forgotten, and not investigated as this would promote impunity. If we do not deal with our past now, it would come back to haunt us many, many years to come," ya Nangoloh noted.

He differed from President Pohamba that the ICC might not have jurisdiction over Namibia. He adds that the president's remarks are meant to create fear in the ordinary Namibian.

"Our reaction is, what the president is saying can create an impression that to challenge a powerful person in court is an insult. We don't think so. This creates fear in the minds of so many people in this country that it is wrong or it is a crime to challenge someone who is in the high echelon of government. We think this is wrong. It is like we are now being intimidated, simply because we have followed the laws of this country," he said.

Ya Nangoloh dismissed assertions that his action is tantamount to tarnishing the reputation of both the country and former President Sam Nujoma.

"That is not true. What our critics are not saying is that what we are doing is illegal," ya Nangoloh noted.

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The 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary Election Campaign, in Pictures

