

**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:

Thursday, 16 August 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Awareness Times
Thursday, 16 August 2007

Over Failed Amputee Housing Project, NGO cries Foul

By Juliet Ansumana

In an attempt to alleviate the suffering of amputees and war wounded for lack of shelter, a Non-Governmental Organization, the Norwegian Friends of Sierra Leone has embarked on the construction of dwelling houses for these unfortunate Sierra Leoneans in Bo, Kenema and Kailahun Districts respectively.

This charity housing project is successfully being implemented in both

Bo and Kailahun Districts whilst the Kenema phase has witnessed some hiccups. According to Madam Elisa, the project coordinator, the authorities in that City have deliberately decided to throw spanners into the construction project as they are demanding that the land earmarked by these people be bought by the NGO before ever work should commence. She said until the City Council authorities fulfill their side of the

contract, Kenema will not be covered, hence the supposed beneficiaries continue to remain in the cold. Madam Eliza noted that the provision of shelter for amputees and war wounded is an answer to a call made in the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with regards to the provision of housing for amputees and war wounded, and said the project is currently in its pilot phase.

Focus on Africa

Thursday, 15 August 2007

LEAD-IN: The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, accused of war crimes in neighbouring Sierra Leone, is expected to resume next Monday at the International Criminal Court in The Hague, where the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is sitting. The trial was suspended to allow for the appointment of a new Defence counsel after Mr. Taylor sacked his lawyers, demanding more resources and claiming the trial was a political charade. Well, the Court tried to address some of Mr. Taylor's concerns, and he now has a new Defence counsel, the British lawyer Courtenay Griffiths, who is currently visiting the Liberian capital Monrovia. Our correspondent there, Ledgerhood Rennie, asked him if he's sure Mr. Taylor will receive a fair trial.

GRIFFITHS: It will be difficult. I appreciate that we are facing very much an uphill task here, which is why I'm enlisting the support of the people of Liberia to in effect be censorious, to ensure that this Court lives up to its protested commitment to due process and fairness for all persons tried before it.

You're crying already.

GRIFFITHS: I'm crying already, and I have good cause to cry. Because past events since Mr. Taylor since Mr. Taylor [was] arrested suggest that we have good cause to be concerned about the quality of justice which might be dispensed [there]. I've already outlined some of the difficulties he has faced personally in terms of having private conversations with his lawyers in The Hague. Many people in Liberia may well have seen the events of the fourth of June and the exchanges between his counsel and the Court. And already from speaking to people in Liberia it's quite clear to me that many ordinary Liberians are concerned.

Mr. Taylor has raised a lot of issues concerning his trial. What is he saying about his conditions?

GRIFFITHS: For example, any telephone calls he makes are monitored, and before he can telephone anyone, that person's name has to be put on an approved list, and if that person's name isn't approved then obviously he can't contact or indeed see in person that individual, which creates difficulties for a man who's thousands of miles away in a foreign country.

People of your calibre would not want to come here to such a case that is highly politically charged as you are saying. So why did you take up the case?

GRIFFITHS: I've never shied away from a challenge, and throughout my legal career I've taken on many cases which were at the time unpopular. But it seems to me, everyone has a right to a proper legal defence, and it seems to me if given a level playing field I have the opportunity of representing Mr. Taylor, then of course I'm going to do it to the best of my ability.

And so do you go to Freetown also as you've come to Monrovia?

GRIFFITHS: Of course, because I think it would be remiss of me given the nature of the proceedings in which I am engaged to not visit the two countries which feature so prominently in those proceedings. And so I've made a point of coming here before I make my first appearance in the Court in order to gauge the feeling here in West Africa.

And what is that feeling?

GRIFFITHS: Well I get a sense that many people here in West Africa are concerned that Mr. Taylor in many ways is being treated as a scapegoat. And if that is the case, then it seems that it's one of the issues that I will have to tackle. But equally it's an issue which the people of West Africa themselves have to engage with, because it seems to me that if international justice is to mean anything, particularly when [indistinct] is so concentrating its attention on Africa, then Africans, it seems to me, have to have a clear and focused input in that debate.

Courtenay Griffiths, with (sic.) the new Defence lawyer for the former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

[Transcribed by the Press and Public Affairs Office]

Reuters

Thursday, 16 August 2007

Taylor lawyer wants travel ban on Liberians lifted

By Alphonso Toweh

MONROVIA, Aug 16 (Reuters) - Former Liberian President Charles Taylor's defence lawyer has called for the lifting of a U.N. travel ban on Taylor's former associates so they could serve as witnesses in his war crimes trial.

Once one of Africa's most feared warlords, Taylor is on trial by a U.N.-backed court in The Hague accused of instigating murder, rape and mutilation by backing rebels during a decade of civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

The United Nations imposed travel bans in 2003 against members of his administration to prevent them from undermining a transition to democracy in Liberia after he fled the country at the end of its own, parallel civil war.

"We have come here to see whether we can get witnesses and proof that will be used in the interest of Mr. Taylor," Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, told reporters in Liberia's capital Monrovia late on Wednesday.

"There is a climate of fear where those sympathetic to Mr. Taylor are afraid to speak out in case they too are targeted for sanctions. But ordinary Liberians should not be intimidated by these measures," he said.

Griffiths, who was appointed as Taylor's new lawyer last month, has urged the court in The Hague to again delay proceedings which have already been repeatedly postponed.

Taylor boycotted the opening of the trial in a dispute over the resources allocated to his defence, prompting judges to order the court to ensure Taylor had a full defence team by the end of July, ready to resume on Aug. 20.

Griffiths said he had filed a motion with the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is trying Taylor in a special sitting in The Hague, asking for the removal of the U.N. travel ban on certain Liberians, without specifying whom.

"Africans cannot afford to be mere spectators while a son of their soil, Liberia's democratically elected president, is put on trial in a foreign land," he said.

"The Liberian people, who elected him by a landslide, have not been given any opportunity to have an input in the trial or to judge him through a democratic process."

Taylor, who triggered Liberia's civil war when he launched a rebellion from the Ivory Coast border in 1989, was elected president in 1997 during a lull in the brutal war, which killed an estimated 200,000 people.

Taylor's trial is being held in The Hague because of fears that his continued presence in West Africa, close to his former associates, could again destabilise the region.

The Analyst (Monrovia)

Wednesday, 15 August 2007

Taylor's Legal Team Seeks Trial Postponement to Jan. 7

The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity said to have been committed in neighboring Sierra Leone, was to resume on August 20, but this may most likely not go on as planned.

A new variable has been introduced this time around; with the new defense team of Taylor calling for the postponement of the trial so that they may have adequate time to study their client's case.

If the motion is accepted at the August 20 Status conference, it may mean that the timetable already set by the Special Court for the trial will lapse beyond the two year period, without making any essential progress beyond the preliminary appearances for guilty or not guilty oath taking.

By January 7, 2008, the anticipated new trial date chosen by the defense team instead of fast approaching August 20, 2007 when the trial should have commenced.

Mr. Taylor's lawyers in a communication via weblink from Faatimah Hendricks, and posted on 14 August 2007, is herein detailed by highlighting the key points of the defense team's contentions and what the new development may have on the life of the trials.

The special court, trying the former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, will next week consider an application by defense lawyers to postpone the trial until January next year.

According to the website established to cover the entire proceedings for the benefits of Sierra Leonean and Liberians, the Special Court for Sierra Leone announced in The Hague, in the Netherlands, that the trial would not proceed on August 20 as originally scheduled. Instead, the court says that it will conduct a "status conference" to determine the length of the delay.

The determination of the length of delay is basically under the control of the court but requires that it is first discussed, as seen in the status conference to which all parties' litigants form a part.

In a motion posted on the website, Taylor's new defense team asked that the trial be postponed until January 7 to allow "adequate time and facilities for the preparation of [Taylor's] defence, as required by Article 17 of the Statute of the Special Court of Sierra Leone."

The motion did not show why the length of adequate time and facilities had to be stretched to 2008 but it is believed that these lawyers may need more time to look at the numerous volumes of evidence already provided by the prosecution team against the former Liberian leader.

In its response, the prosecution said it was ready to begin leading evidence, but agreed that the defense team's reason for asking for a delay was justified. However, it left the duration of the delay in the court's discretion.

But by this agreement, the prosecution sided with the Mr. Taylor team that postponement was necessary, especially in the aftermath of Taylor's sacking of the ex-British defense counsel, Karim Khan, on the basis of what became known as his indigence to secure lawyers for an effective defense of his interest

Taylor is accused of committing crimes against humanity and war crimes, including mutilations, murder, sexual slavery, sexual violence, recruiting and using child soldiers, abduction and using forced labor.

Taylor's apparent escape from Nigeria, where he had taken asylum with that government eventually brought him under custody of the Sierra Leone Special Court.

It can be recalled that the former Liberian leader is accused by many international organizations that he greatly assisted the revolutionary united front, rebels to carry on their war of amputation of children and people's limbs throughout the conflict.

The Sierra Leonean war was seen as a very deadly conflict on the continent for which he has now been indicted and is facing an eleven count charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and violation of international humanitarian law amongst others.

Agence France-Presse

Thursday, 16 August 2007

Taylor sanctions impair defence, says lawyer

Monrovia, Liberia

Sanctions against former Liberian president Charles Taylor and his entourage are impairing his ability to defend himself against war-crimes charges, his lawyer said on Wednesday.

The sanctions imposed by the United Nations are having a "chilling effect" as witnesses sympathetic to Taylor are afraid to come forward, said Courtenay Griffiths, who was appointed last month as the head of a new defence team.

"There is a climate of fear where those who are sympathetic to Mr Taylor are afraid to speak out in case they are targeted for the sanctions," he told journalists.

Taylor's lawyers asked the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in June to lift the sanctions against Taylor.

Taylor (59), the first African head of state to stand trial before an international court for war crimes, boycotted the opening session in The Hague in June and sacked his lawyer on the ground that he had no chance of receiving a fair hearing.

Once one of Africa's most feared warlords, Taylor has pleaded not guilty to all 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, rape and using child soldiers during the brutal 1991-2001 civil war in Sierra Leone.

Up to 200 000 people were killed in the Sierra Leone conflict, with rebels mutilating thousands more, cutting off arms, legs, ears or noses.

Taylor was also a key player in his country's back-to-back civil wars that spanned 14 years.

He is accused of arming, training and controlling the Revolutionary United Front group of Sierra Leone, responsible for many of the mutilations, in exchange for still-unknown amounts of diamonds used to fund war. -- Sapa-AFP

Daily Observer (Liberia)

Thursday, 16 August 2007

Hiccups in Taylor's Trial

By George Kennedy and Edith Quabo



Defense counsel of Mr. Taylor, R-L: Roger Sahota, Courtenay Griffiths, QC, Cllr. Levali Supuwood and Morris Anyah *photo by George D. Kennedy*

New Lawyers Seek Postponement until January, Raise Impediments to Accused's Acquittal,

MONROVIA, Another snag is seemingly developing in the much-awaited trial of indicted former Liberian president Charles Taylor with his newly appointed lawyers sending fresh signals that could once again delay the start of the trial in The Hague.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 15 August 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberia says "arms cache" was actually scrap metal

MONROVIA, Aug 15 (Reuters) - Authorities in Liberia said on Wednesday a large ammunition cache they thought they had discovered while investigating a possible coup plot was in fact scrap metal destined for recycling. The supposed cache was discovered during a raid on Sunday on an unfinished building in a town on the main road to Ivory Coast, fuelling speculation it was linked to an alleged scheme to smuggle weapons into the country. Liberian police and soldiers from the U.N. peacekeeping force carried out the raid, which police officials said at the time had unearthed mostly new AK-47 machinegun ammunition.

International Clips on West Africa

VOA 15 August 2007

Opposition Candidate Maintains Lead in Early Sierra Leone Results

By James Butty, Washington, D.C.

The independent Electoral Commission in Sierra Leone has released more results from last Saturday's presidential and parliamentary elections. In the latest results released Tuesday, Ernest Koroma of the opposition All Peoples' Congress (APC) party continues to lead incumbent Vice President Solomon Berewa of the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). Charles Margai of the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) party is in third place. Andrew Kromah is executive director of SKYY FM in Freetown and KISS FM in Bo, both VOA affiliates. He told VOA that although it is still too early in the vote count, it appears Vice President Berewa might be in some trouble.

VOA 14 August 2007

Sierra Leone on High Alert during Vote Count

By Phuong Tran, Dakar

Voters in Sierra Leone are anxiously awaiting more election results after a small percentage of the count was announced on Monday. Officials counselled patience while they increased patrols around the country and security forces threatened to shut down an opposition party radio station.

West African bloc inter-parliamentary meeting opens in Cote d'Ivoire

ABIDJAN, Aug 14, 2007 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- The 20th ordinary session of the West African economic and monetary union's inter-parliamentary committee (CIP-UEMOA) has

opened. The ten-day meeting is expected to deliberate on issues concerning the 2008 budget, its implementation and election-observer missions within UEMOA zone, Melegue Traore, CIP-UEMOA's committee president said Monday during the opening ceremony.

Local Media – Newspaper

International Rescue Committee Foots Training for Teachers

(Heritage)

- According to an International Rescue Committee (IRC) release, a 12-month training programme for 400 Liberian teachers has been launched in Kakata, Margibi County and is being carried out by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the IRC and the Liberia Teachers Training Programme. The release said teachers currently attending the workshop have no credentials but have been teaching for sometime.
- Speaking at the launching, the head of the Academy of Education Development (AED), Chris Ashford said that similar programme will be launched in the Southeast between 2008 and 2009. Deputy Education Minister, Peter Ben said teachers' education was crucial for Liberia's reconstruction.

Sea Erosion Renders Dozens Homeless In Sinkor

(The Inquirer and Heritage)

- Correspondents said that scores of people have been made homeless in Sinkor due to sea erosion along the beaches in the area, adding that the waters entered the homes of residents rendering of the beaches and rendered several people homeless.

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

Sea Erosion Renders Dozens Homeless In Sinkor

President Sirleaf Dialogues with Youth Leaders

- Speaking during a meeting with the leaders of the Federation of Liberian Youths (FLY), President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said the best security can be ensured when the needs of the people are met and that the Government was committed to security while measures were being taken to tackle the Country's development needs. The forum was in continuation of the President's consultation with stakeholders.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Teachers Undergo Training

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(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Former Ruling Party Leaders Squabble over Sale of Headquarters

- The Legislative Caucus of the former ruling National Patriotic Party yesterday accused the Party's Legal Counsel, Theophilus Gould and Secretary-General, John Whitfield of planning to sell the Party headquarters in Sinkor.
- Addressing a news conference yesterday, the Caucus vowed to "resist physically" all attempts to lease the headquarters to any one without the consensus of party officials.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Prison Assistance Group Sees Improvement in Prison Conditions

- A local prison monitor, Prisoners Assistance Programme stated that minimal improvement has come to condition of prisons. In an interview, the Director of Community Empowerment and Victim Rehabilitation Program, Daniel Valentine said some of the prisons include the Bondiway in Firestone but however said that majority of the prisons are still below international standards citing overcrowdedness as a challenge to overcome.

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 8:35 am)***Presidency Re-submits Governance Reform Act Lawmakers**

- The Executive Mansion has re-submitted to the House of Representatives a draft Act seeking to establish a Governance Reform Commission as an autonomous institution of government. The Act was resubmitted during Tuesday's plenary and has been sent to its committees on Governance Reform and Judiciary for review.
- It can be recalled, the Executive Mansion withdrew the draft Act it submitted to the Legislature to solicit the input of stakeholders.

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.