

**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:

Monday, 10 September 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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International News

Chief Norman: Would He Have Been Found Guilty, If Alive? / <i>International Justice Tribune</i>	Page 3
Sierra Leone: Election Could Turn on Kamajor War Heroes / <i>Criminals</i> / <i>IRIN</i>	Pages 4-5
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 6-7

International Justice Tribune

Monday, 10 September 2007

Chief Norman: would he have been found guilty, if alive?

Trial Chamber One at the Special Court for Sierra Leone issued its judgment in the controversial Civil Defense Forces (CDF) case on August 2. High Priest Allieu Kondewa and Director of War Moinina Fofana were acquitted of crimes against humanity and found guilty of war crimes. But the meaning of this trial really centered on its primary defendant: Chief Samuel Hinga Norman, former National Coordinator of the CDF, who died six months ago in the midst of judicial deliberations [IJT-63].

The CDF trial heard from 119 witnesses and scrutinized 230 documentary exhibits over 162 trial days spread over two and a half years. It has been punctuated by moments of high drama and political controversy throughout. The CDF was a popular militia with its roots in local hunting societies - the la...

IRIN

Friday 7 September 2007

Sierra Leone: Election Could Turn on Kamajor War Heroes / Criminals



Photo: UNICEF/IRIN

Kamajor fighters during the civil war

FREETOWN, 7 September 2007 (IRIN) - In Sierra Leone's closely fought presidential election both sides are in their own ways vying for the support of the Kamajors, a former civil defence force whose leaders have been indicted by a UN-backed war crimes court. But for many citizens they remain heroes for having defended the country against brutal rebels.

Traditional hunters before the decade-long civil war which ended in 2002, the Kamajors grew in number to over 20,000 and fought alongside British and Nigerian forces to reinstate and then defend the democratically-

elected Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). However, in the 11 August parliamentary and presidential elections, the SLPP lost massively in most areas where the Kamajors are strong.

Overall the SLPP lost its majority in parliament, and for the presidential run-off election set for 8 September the SLPP candidate Solomon Berewa is trailing opposition leader Ernest Bai Koroma. In the first round Koroma took 44 percent while Berewa won only 38 percent.

Though traditionally SLPP, many Kamajors have joined a new breakaway party called the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), whose leader, Charles Margai, is also lead defence counsel for one of the indicted Kamajors. In the upcoming election Margai, who came third in the first round of presidential elections on 11 August, has thrown his support not behind the SLPP, but behind the long-time rival opposition party.

This is particularly significant as the Kamajors have an important place within the social order of the Mende ethnic group; the SLPP's traditional base is Mende, while the opposition's traditional base has come mostly from the ethnic groups in the north.

Blind justice

Special Court for Sierra Leone spokesman Peter Andersen said it would be inappropriate for him to make any comment on election-related issues as the court must remain blind to such matters.

However, Sierra Leone's politics have never been blind to the court. "The Special Court has become a big political issue," Ibrahim Bangura, director of PRIDE, a non-governmental organisation working with ex-combatants, told IRIN. "Many Kamajors thought the court would try only rebels. They now feel betrayed."

“...Many Kamajors thought the court would try only rebels. They now feel betrayed...”

The international court was created in a 2002 agreement signed by the UN, and SLPP candidate Berewa, who at the time was the attorney-general and minister of justice. The court went on to indict the person many saw as Berewa's main rival for the SLPP candidacy - former Deputy Defence Minister Hinga Norman, leader of the Kamajors.

Norman died in detention in February. His death has served to deepen the rift between the SLPP and the Kamajors who still have a military-style command structure, Bangura said. “The Kamajors disarmed after the war but they did not demobilise and some former commanders wield more influence than do local chiefs.”

Endorsement of criminals

Six months after Norman’s death, and just nine days before the first round of the elections, the Special Court handed down guilty verdicts to two remaining Kamajor indictees. The only Sierra Leonean judge on the case, Justice Bankole Thompson, dissented. Though outvoted, his verdict was “not guilty” on all eight counts against the Kamajors.

The Special Court allows detainees to make public statements only during their trials. But before Kamajor leader Norman’s death, a purported representative claimed that Norman and the two other indicted Kamajors had resigned from the SLPP and joined the breakaway PMDC.

To date their family members and friends have not refuted the statement, though SLPP supporters have denied its accuracy.



Photo: Special Court

Accused Kamajor leaders on the first day of trial at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, 3 June 2004

When it became clear that the SLPP had lost the first round of the presidential election in many Kamajor strongholds, three top SLPP officials paid a visit to the court to meet the two Kamajors in detention apparently to seek the indictees’ support for the second round.

Shortly after the meeting, another statement was issued purportedly on behalf of the indicted Kamajors, saying they had refused the SLPP bid.

Still, there are Kamajors who remain firm in their allegiance to the SLPP, so divisions have emerged. “For some Kamajors, politics is primarily ethnic,” PRIDE’s Bangura said. “As Mendes, they believe that they must support the SLPP no matter what.”

The opposition has accused the SLPP of rearming those Kamajors and using them to intimidate their supporters - an accusation the SLPP denies.

However events unfold, observers say that if political parties are seeking the endorsement of indicted war criminals then the court who judged them hardly reflects the judgement of many Sierra Leoneans.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 7 September 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

International Clips on West Africa

Local Media – Newspaper

Nigerian Volunteers End Technical Mission to Liberia

(The Inquirer, The News, The Informer and The Analyst)

- The government of Nigeria has ended a two-year Technical Manpower Assistance Programme to Liberia.
- Addressing a news conference on Thursday, the Deputy Chief of Mission at the Nigerian Embassy, Chief Essien Ntekim said the program was carried out in two phases.
- The first batch consisted of trained medical practitioners and the second batch covered two medical doctors, one pharmacist and 15 qualified teachers in Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics.
- According to him, the program was part of the Nigerian government's continual commitment to the rebuilding of the country after the war.
- In May 2005, the Nigerian Government offered a two-year Technical Manpower Assistance Programme to Liberia as a means of assisting the country rebuild its human resource capacity.

Drawdown of UNMIL Troops will Reduce Territorial Threat Says Doss

(The News, The Informer, The Analyst and National Chronicle)

- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss, briefing the UN Security Council in New York, said that the proposed drawdown plan of troops of the United Nations Mission in Liberia is to reduce threats to territorial integrity and to also deal with any serious disruption to the Country's stability.
- Mr. Doss also said that the recently approved national budget had doubled in two years and that State revenues were up 74 percent. He reported that the Liberian Government has taken additional step to enhance the rule of law while working with UNMIL and the UN Country Team to tackle gender-based violence especially rape in the Country.
- Mr. Doss informed the Council that he admonished the Liberian Government to reinforce its effort to promote reconciliation, accountability, ensure effective security forces, implement economic reform, tackle corruption and strengthen the rule of law.

Government Abhors Illicit Mining by Foreigners

(The Inquirer, The Informer, The Liberian Diaspora, Daily Observer and Heritage)

- Addressing reporters in Monrovia yesterday, the Deputy Lands, Mines and Energy Minister Kpandel Fayiah said that the Government is concern about the presence of a large number of aliens and Liberians currently engaging in illicit diamond mining but

noted that the Government is determined to break the chain of the illicit activity despite the huge challenges posed by the Country's porous borders and entry points.

- Mr. Fayiah emphasized that there are daily reports of illicit mining activities heavily taking place in the jungles of Gbarpolu and Grand cape Mount Counties, but stressed that the Government has put in place a system allowing 10 local offices throughout the Country to issue diamond license.

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

SRSB Says Drawdown of UNMIL Troops will Reduce Territorial Threat

(Also reported on Truth FM, Star and ELBC Radio)

Government Expresses Concern about Illicit Mining by Foreigners

(Also reported on Truth FM, Star and ELBC Radio)

Suspect Probed following Police Chase for Kidnapping

- Police sources told Radio Veritas that the security forces were still questioning a suspected criminal in Monrovia after a gang fired at a police vehicle as the police chased a car allegedly carrying a kidnapped person Wednesday evening.

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.