

**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:

Tuesday, 4 March 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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BBC World Service Trust

Monday, 3 March 2008

By Abdul Rashid, at The Hague (translated from Krio)

RASHID: Prosecution Witness TF1-362 continued his testimony in closed session. All the parties attended the proceedings, including Mr. Charles Taylor.

While this was going on, the representative of the Amputee Association, Jabaty Mambu, who came to observe the Court, said he liked the way and manner the trial is being conducted, and how Mr. Taylor is comporting himself. But Mr. Jabaty Mambu told journalists at The Hague said he would prefer they spend some of the money on amputees who suffered in the war.

The Amputee Association representative said conditions for amputees in Sierra Leone are still bad. Mr. Taylor's Defence receive \$100,000 every month for the trial.

In like manner, the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Stephen Rapp, said that although it's entirely unlikely he will look for more witnesses to testify against Mr. Taylor, he told the press he would keep his options open – although he said maybe the Judges would not allow that if it was too late.

The former Liberian president faces 11 counts at the Special Court at The Hague for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Abdul Rashid for Search for Common Ground and BBC World Service Trust, at The Hague.

BBC World Service Trust

Monday, 3 March 2008

By Abdul Rashid, at The Hague (translated from Krio)

RASHID: The Defence and Prosecution have expressed satisfaction at the pace of the Taylor trial at The Hague. Although the Prosecution already has many witnesses to testify against the accused, Chief Prosecutor Stephen Rapp said he is keeping his options open in seeking new witnesses. He told Abdul Rashid in this interview about the number of witnesses already in his list.

STEPHEN RAPP: Well we're talking about roughly 72 witnesses that we look to bring in person. At the end of the day it may end up in the 60's. It depends how this process goes forward. Keep in mind we've got about another 70 that are prepared to come that are crime base witnesses that we hope to put in their statements in writing, so if the Judges were to deny us that we'd end up with 140 witnesses. But those other witnesses, those 70 or so, would be relatively quick – they'd be crime base witnesses who could testify an hour or two and a little cross-examination, so we could move through them quite rapidly. But we're hopeful what we would be able to do it with about 70 live. We have the 18th witness on the stand today in closed session. We anticipate that concluding today and a new witness on an open session starting like today or tomorrow morning and some more open witnesses between now and the break. So we're a quarter into the case, and by the time we get to the tenth week we're going to be close to a third of the way into the case.

RASHID: Well certainly you will not be seeking new witnesses in the course of the trial.

RAPP: Well that's not impossible. I mean the Judges recently granted a motion to vary our witness list and take some names off and to add others. Our investigators are in the field talking with individuals. There's always the possibility that we'll decide to add a particular witness [though that] would invariably involve us coming forth and saying "Judges, this witness is so important that if e call this one there's three others that we won't need to call." But the later we do that, the less likely the Judges are to approve it. So it's not real likely that we'll be changing the witness list, but we keep that option open.

RASHID: Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone speaking to Abdul Rashid in The Hague.

Running Africa

Sunday, 2 March 2008

War crimes prosecutor seeks \$600M of Taylor's assets as restitution for victims

Stephen Rapp, the prosecutor in Charles Taylor's war crimes trial, is working toward making some of the former Liberian president's assets, said to be worth US\$600 million, available as restitution to the victims of the civil wars in both Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Rapp told the *AFP* that the amounts were "stolen from the Liberian treasury" and largely composed of stolen diamonds from Sierra Leone.

"We're working on the Taylor assets with a special team from the British government (to) make them available to victims both in Sierra Leone and Liberia," Prosecutor Stephen Rapp told the *AFP* in The Hague. "If the judges convict him for pillage, in part for pillaging the diamonds in Sierra Leone, we can then go back to the court after that judgment and say 'these diamonds were worth X amount of money, so we want a judgment for X million dollars,'" Rapp continued in his interview with the newspaper. "We can then enforce that judgment against his assets and ask an order for restitution to the victims and the Sierra Leone government."

The Special Court for Sierra Leone is charging Taylor on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in Sierra Leone's diamond-fuelled civil war during 1991-2002. Since trial, which is taking place in The Hague, opened on January 7, 18 witnesses have testified to Taylor's role in orchestrating rebel forces and their brutality in neighboring Sierra Leone. Some of the witnesses have been put in protective custody, fearing repercussions should they return home to Sierra Leone. The *AFP* noted that, so far, some insiders' testimonies have been able to link Taylor to the people who physically carried out the crimes.

Legalbrief Today (South Africa)

Monday, 3 March 2008

War Crimes Court upholds sentences

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Sierra Leone's War Crimes Court has rejected an appeal by three former militia leaders against long jail sentences handed down last year for atrocities committed during the former British colony's civil war.

'The court finds no reason to interfere (with the sentences),' Presiding Judge George Gelaga King told the Special Court for Sierra Leone. According to a report on the News24 site, the UN-backed tribunal jailed Alex Brima and Santigie Kanu for 50 years each and Brima Kamara for 45 years for crimes committed during the diamond-fuelled 1991-2002 conflict. Gelaga-King said the judging panel 'took into consideration the gravity of the crimes committed, as being the most heinous, brutal and atrocious crimes ever recorded in human history'. The three were convicted of 11 war-crimes charges, including terrorism, enslavement, rape and murder. Last year's ruling marked the first time an International court issued a conviction on the conscription of child soldiers, who in Sierra Leone were often drugged and forced into battle.

Full report on the News24 site

Le Monde Diplomatique

March 2008

'The bad child must stay with the community'

Sierra Leone: revenge and reconciliation

They were murderers, rapists, torturers, butchers and their victims in Sierra Leone's civil war. Now – for the moment, since diamond-funded conflict and chaos could return at any time – they try to fight in less destructive ways and resume the real lives they can barely remember

By Angela Robson

Dabo Seidu has tried to erase his former life. And he would prefer it if his passengers could do the same. "I'm not afraid of people," he declares, barking a command to one of his junior trainees at Kailahun Town's transport yard. "I've always had to defend myself." A frayed black denim waistcoat displays a supremely toned upper body. "This is my own vehicle. I bought it with my own money and I'm proud of it." He jumps on the back of a red and black motorbike and revs the engine.

The motorbike-taxi station is the busiest place in Kailahun and stands opposite Locust Life, one of the town's drinking bars. Around 40 young men are busy at work, either cleaning bikes or heading off with passengers. They are all ex-combatants, some of whom fought each other in the civil war. This bikers' employment scheme aims to reintegrate them into the community. The bikers also provide the only reliable transport in Kailahun District, and in and out of neighbouring Guinea and Liberia.

The anti-government Revolutionary United Front (RUF), backed by Liberia's Charles Taylor, launched its first attack into eastern Kailahun in March 1991. Dabo fought on the side of the RUF between 1992 and 2001. Forced recruitment of children was an early feature of RUF strategy as well as rape, torture, execution, looting and cannibalism.

Dabo shouts rather than talks. "When people came to this town, they didn't tell us what their mission was, what their programme was. If they see you as a young man and strong, they will just recruit you by force – and you will join them. We didn't force any civilians to fight for us. With my own group we never chopped off people's arms and limbs, but I saw it happen."

On the highway out of Kailahun towards Liberia, we drive past a billboard of children's photos. Coloured panels of cloth and ribbons flutter like Tibetan prayer flags from the top. I ask Dabo if we can stop. There are hundreds of pictures, from babies to teenagers, staring out from behind protective plastic coating. Some have been photographed in their Sunday best – girls in long, lace-fringed dresses; boys in black waistcoats and suits.

These are Kailahun's lost children, displaced or abducted during the war. Beneath each picture is the child's name with contact details of the International Red Cross and the relatives who are trying to find them.

Dabo has never noticed the billboard before. When I ask him if these children might be dead, he talks about the appalling roads instead. "Since I was a little boy the road was bad. Nobody can blame the rebels that the road is bad. We just want the road to be developed."

What about his passengers? Are they afraid of the bikers? “People forgive us because we were born here and we live together. We stay here in the same place with our relatives. Our relatives were victims. Our relatives were perpetrators. There is a local saying in Krio, ‘there is no bush in which to deposit a bad child – so the bad child must stay with the community’.”

Casualties of war

“The RUF had terror on its side,” (1) writes the American journalist and author, Greg Campbell, who came to Sierra Leone in 2001 to investigate the country’s implosion from the diamond trade. “Composed almost entirely of illiterate and drugged teenagers, the rebels respected no boundaries... their signature crime was amputation.”

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the majority of crimes were perpetrated by rebels from the RUF and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (2). Government forces and their allies, including the Civil Defence Forces, also committed serious crimes, although on a smaller scale and of a different nature. Children were used by all sides during the 11-year conflict: “Forces failed to distinguish between civilians and combatants. Families were gunned down in the street, children and adults had their limbs hacked off with machetes, and girls and women were taken to rebel bases and subjected to sexual violence” (3).

As many as 257,000 Sierra Leonean women and girls may have been raped during the civil war (4). Physicians for Human Rights found that half of those who came into contact with RUF forces experienced sexual violence (5).

By the end of the war in 2002 the nation’s infrastructure had been seriously damaged. Nearly half the population was displaced. Kailahun was the first district to be attacked in the war, and the last to be disarmed; 80% of properties there destroyed during the conflict. In 2002 the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone and Truth and Reconciliation Commission were set up to consolidate peace.

‘It’s hard for them to readjust’

“Seventy five per cent of youths in Kailahun District were actively involved in the war,” says Dauda Kanu from Plan Sierra Leone, the children’s development agency. Plan runs school programmes for former combatants that incorporate peace-building training and counselling for girls who had children as a result of rape. He has been closely involved with the Kailahun bikers’ project. “The majority of these former fighters will have perpetrated atrocities, such as amputation, rape, killing and destroying property. They were not really conscious of what they were doing. They were over-drugged.” Plan says that many child soldiers were deliberately desensitised to the horrors of killing and violent sexual assault – attitudes they found hard to shake off when they returned to normal society. Large numbers of demobilised child soldiers are now injecting illegal drugs. “They are conditioned to be disinhibited in every way to violent behaviour and sexual behaviour. It’s hard for them to readjust (6).

“Initially, there was a high level of trauma in the population,” says Kanu. “When members of the fighting forces came into the market place, people were shouting and provoking them. The spirit of forgiveness was low and the desire for revenge was high. But things began to change after the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process. People began to accept these fighters back into society.”

He believes the biker reintegration programme is a simple but vital step forward. “Honestly, we must acknowledge the immense contribution that they are making – they are working hard. They are moving traders from one point to another. Particularly with the bad road conditions, business is flowing because of their support in driving people around. They are also providing courier services. You will see a bike-rider and he will tell you that he’s going to this point and you can easily give him a letter and he takes it without any fee.

“In the past, these boys were idle, they had no education, no work. That was the main reason the war broke out. The youths who took part in the war still feel stigmatised and ashamed and cannot come clean about their actions. Things are still a little bit jittery. We’ve got to get them busy.”

’They told us to lie flat on the ground’

In a dimly-lit back room of Locust Life, Kailahun’s Amputee Support Committee is gathering for its weekly meeting. During the civil war, the RUF rebels mutilated 20,000 people, hacking off arms, legs, lips, ears and sometimes breasts and genitals with machetes and axes. Cutting off arms was the RUF’s response to Sierra Leone president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah’s 1996 plea for citizens to “join hands for peace”.

Miriam, a young woman with no lower arms, thrusts out her stumps and tells her story. “I was on my way home through the fields with my husband and we saw boys coming along the road nearby. When we got closer, we saw they were drugged up and had weapons. We had no time to get away. They told us to lie flat on the ground.” She stops talking, sighs and looks at the floor. “We have shared our experiences many times and all we get is promises. Promises of training, employment, new limbs. Nothing ever happens.”

Two other members of the group start shouting. Miriam is right. They are just being used. They didn’t want to come here today; they don’t feel safe; they don’t want to give their names.

The owner of Locust Life, who is serving bottles of beer to passers-by, tells them they have nothing to fear. The chair of the Amputee Committee begins reciting the Lord’s Prayer. Everyone joins in.

“It was over with very quickly,” Miriam says of her amputation. “My husband was shot. They found me bleeding on the road. Amen.”

Diamonds that funded the war

“Diamonds. They washed up in the water of streams, hid in the soft silt beds, even glinted underfoot on the roads and pathways,” writes Sierra Leonean novelist Aminatta Forna in her memoir *The Devil that Danced on the Water*. “It was said that in Koidu people didn’t look where they were going but walked everywhere with their heads bent down, gaze permanently trawling the ground for stones” (7).

Knee deep in orange water, 14-year-old Alfred pours bucket after bucket of gravel into a large circular sieve and searches for diamonds. We are in Dumba, just outside Kenema, a town built on rich, alluvial diamond fields, where the streets are lined with diamond-buying stores. Digging for diamonds has been Alfred’s daily routine since he was nine, when he was brought to a mine by his older brother, Ismael.

Greg Campbell believes that the RUF profited by between \$25m and \$125m per year during the war by delivering rough gem-quality diamonds to the world’s market.

“Because of their diamond wealth, throughout most of the war the RUF was better armed than its adversaries. Diamonds bought Kalashnikovs by the hundreds, Browning 12.7 millimetre heavy machine guns by the tens of dozens, and ammunition in million-block orders. Light artillery included rocket-propelled grenades, mortars, and SA-7 shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles. The RUF bought helicopters for resupply... The RUF funded all this with proceeds from illegal diamond mining.

“There was certainly no lack of buyers. Everyone from legitimate brokers employed by Belgian cutting houses to agents of the Iranian-backed Lebanese terrorist organisation Hizbullah crowded the streets and hotels of Monrovia, eager for the chance to buy diamonds from the RUF: Monrovia was a no-man’s land of freewheeling dealing in diamonds that had been soaked in the blood of innocent Sierra Leoneans” (8).

The NGO Global Witness has also claimed that al-Qaida was able to funnel about \$20m worth of illegally-mined rough diamonds through Sierra Leone during the war (9).

Alfred and Ismael's parents, who were farmers, were killed in the conflict. Ismael was captured by the RUF and forced to dig for diamonds. "We found diamonds, but we got nothing, sometimes not even food. If they felt like it, they would beat you for no reason and they shot people if they thought they were hiding stones."

"A big part of Sierra Leone's recovery is helping the country address what underpinned the war," says Amnesty International's country director in Sierra Leone, Brima Abdulai Shreiff. "Primarily, the inequitable distribution of proceeds from diamond mining. It continues to be a source of tension and much more needs to be done to protect child labourers in the trade."

A report last year by Amnesty claims that, despite the introduction of the Kimberley Process, a certification system for rough diamonds that aims to prevent them from fuelling conflicts and financing terrorist networks, "conflict diamonds from Côte d'Ivoire are finding their way through Ghana into the legitimate diamond market. As the brutal conflict in Sierra Leone has shown, even a small amount of conflict diamonds can wreak enormous havoc in a country" (10).

"Since the war ended, I still dig, though I've not been lucky," says Ismael. He and his brother survive because they work in a gang of 10 men. "If one of us finds a diamond, we all get a share of the money." Alfred, at 14, is the youngest in the group. He would like to return to school but says he has no one to fund him. He points to his chest. "The work pains me, it is too hard, but one day, I'm sure, I will find diamonds."

Rapping on the frontline

High in the hills above Freetown, the road is lined with mango and tamarind trees and the sun beats down from a cloudless sky. Boga Slim, a rapper from the Sierra Leonean hip-hop group Natural Born Niggers, gestures to a collection of buildings on the horizon. On 6 January 1999 rebel forces entered the capital city from this point. They unleashed a campaign of terror, No Living Thing, during which an estimated 5,000 people were killed. Many others had arms amputated.

"I heard fierce firing and screaming," says Slim. "Though we'd been kind of expecting it, the invasion took us by surprise."

During the fighting, Boga Slim was captured by the West Side Boys, a splinter faction of the AFRC. He claims he survived by rapping. "We rapped on the frontline. We got them in the mood for killing. In the evening, we entertained them again. We had no choice. If you're not with them, your life is in danger. But I did not hold a gun."

Issa Davies, who works with youth and children's groups, says that, like other children caught up in the conflict, the West Side Boys were heavy users of homemade palm wine, locally grown marijuana and heroin bought with conflict diamonds.

"After the invasion of Freetown, they immediately transformed themselves as the West Side Boys. West Side comprised the SLA – the Sierra Leone Army – and jobless youths.

"These are the people who fought against civilians, who chopped off people's arms, who burned Freetown. You would see them with the American flag tied on their head; you'd see them with caps turned upside down. It's just like they'd been motivated by these West Coast American hip-hop stars."

Some of the ex-combatants who survived the war are now well-known rappers. Using a blend of hip hop and traditional goombay music, they out-rap each other and speak of peace and reconciliation.

“Hip-hop is popular among the youth,” says Davies. “Now it’s a grassroots, street-level music of rebellion, protest and struggle. The rivalry is still there between ex-combatants, but it’s vented in local soundclash festivals. It’s a way of braving the system and getting themselves to be more outspoken.”

Boga Slim believes music can change things for the better. He performs his lyrics in Krio, the national language, so “people can feel it more”.

Artists are also using soundclash festivals to protest about the way their country is being run. “We’re highlighting corruption and unemployment,” Slim says. “And the government is threatened. They’ve recruited their own rappers to perform on the radio and at soundclash festivals. They know we have influence and it makes them nervous.”

Regional warriors

In its report “Youth, Poverty and Blood: The Lethal Legacy of West Africa’s Regional Warriors”, Human Rights Watch claims that a migrant population of young fighters – regional warriors who view war as an economic opportunity – glide back and forth across the borders of West Africa.

HRW says that the majority of former fighters interviewed who had taken part in the 2000-03 United Nations-sponsored DDR programme “received only partial benefits, were kept out of the skills training component of the programme or failed to receive any benefits at all. They also identified corruption in this process and an inadequate grievance procedure within the DRR program as serious problems. Many perceived the programme’s failure to engage them as having contributed to their decision to take up arms in subsequent conflicts” (11).

Corinne Dufka, the report’s author, says that former combatants are still vulnerable. “Many remain unemployed and frustrated. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If there’s a weak link – and here I refer to a future armed conflict within the region – they may be easily be drawn into what many of them know all too well: the business of war. The laying down of arms in Sierra Leone is a success of sorts. But the issues that gave rise to the armed conflict – mainly poverty, corruption, weak rule of law – have not been adequately addressed by government and civil society. Much of the country has no electricity, unemployment is extremely high, corruption remains systemic. All of these things impact negatively on youth.

“The current administration is saying all the right things. What we’d now like to see them do is moving from rhetoric to action. To address the issues which gave rise to Sierra Leone’s exceptionally brutal war.”

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
3 March 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

TRC Commissioners in Fist Fight in River Gee County

(Daily Observer, Public Agenda)

- Reports coming from Fish Town, the provincial capital of River Gee County, say hearings at Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in that part of the country had been marred by a fist fight that reportedly ensued between two commissioners over the weekend.
- The Public Agenda newspaper quoting sources said the brawl erupted from an argument between Commissioners, Pearl Brown Bull and Massa Washington regarding diverse opinion on official matters. The paper said the scuffle which lasted for nearly ten minutes left Commissioner Bull bruised and injured.

200 AFL Soldiers Begin Warfare Course in Nigeria

(Daily Observer, The Analyst, National Chronicle)

- The first batch of 70 soldiers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) were on March 1, 2008 airlifted by a Nigerian military aircraft, Hercules C-130, to the northern Nigerian city of Kaduna, to begin five months of courses in specialized warfare at one of Nigeria's most accomplished military institutions, the Infantry Corps Centre and Training School, Jaji, Kaduna.
- The soldiers are part of a selected batch of 200 to participate in a string of courses. The training is part of a military assistance package Nigeria had offered to Liberia.
- The specialized warfare course comprises training in jungle warfare, counter-terrorism and Mountain and Desert warfare. Addressing the troops prior to their departure, the Commanding Officer of the AFL, Major General Suraj A. Abdurrahman called on the soldiers to exhibit a high sense of patriotism and dedication in their courses and military assignment. The second and third groups are expected to leave on March 3 and 5 respectively.

Executive Mansion Clarifies Magistrate Taylor's Dismissal

(New Democrat, The Inquirer, Heritage, Public Agenda, The Analyst)

- The media reports that the Executive Mansion has clarified that the recent dismissal of Magistrate Milton Taylor is in keeping with the Constitution that gives President Sirleaf the authority to remove a magistrate from office for cause.
- An Executive Mansion released issued in Monrovia Sunday said President Sirleaf dismissed the Magistrate for his alleged role in releasing from detention 9 Ghanaians arrested with a consignment of cocaine on board a Liberian registered vessel, Blue Atlantic, and not because of the handling of the murder case of 13-year old Angel Togba as was reported.
- The New Democrat reports that the Ministry of Justice said neither the state nor the President would have interfered in the Angel's case and that the judge's dismissal stems from the drugs case. Lawyers for Mr. Hans Williams and his Fiancée, Mardea Paykue held in connection with the death of Angel said he was dismissed because he consented to hear their motion barring the girl's burial and demanding an autopsy and DNA.

Visiting South African Mining Company to invest US\$1.6 Billion in Liberia

(Public Agenda, The News, The Parrot, Plain Truth, The Informer)

- The South African based Delta Mining Consolidated that won the bid for the mining of the western cluster of Liberia says it would invest US\$1.6 billion in its operations in Liberia.
- The Chief Executive Officer of the company, Heine Van Niekerk told a news conference that the investment package would cover infrastructural development and social impact projects which he said would address the needs of the people living in the concession areas.
- Mr. Niekerk said when the official contract is signed, its operations would begin with exploration and feasibility study of ascertain the actual potential of the the mining sites. He said besides its mining activities, the company would also work alongside the communities of those mining areas to provide some of their basic social services. The Delta Chief Executive Officer then explained that the services would be provided based on the priorities the communities would identify.
- On the issue of employment, he said the company would highly consider Liberians mostly experts who have worked with past mining companies in the country. Mr. Van Niekerk spoke to reporters upon the arrival of a delegation of the company in the country.

Radio Summary

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

Executive Mansion Clarifies Magistrate Taylor’s Dismissal

(Also reported on Truth F.M. and ELBC)

Star Radio *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Justice Minister and Former NTGL Chairman Meeting Unsuccessful

- In an interview, Justice Minister Cllr. Philip Banks said a meeting aimed at prevailing on former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant to restitute money he allegedly embezzled has taken place in Monrovia.
- Minister Banks said while government is interested in prosecuting people who violate the laws, it is equally interested in avoiding prosecution when a compromise is reached.
- Minister Banks however indicated that the former Transitional Chairman maintained he is still innocent and does not have any money to restitute leaving government with no alternative but to go ahead with its prosecution against Mr. Bryant.

South African Mining Company Poised to invest US\$1.6 Billion in Liberia

Open Society Justice Initiative

Monday, 3 March 2008

Press Release

New Khmer Rouge Tribunal Report Gives Updates on Five Cases, Budget Needs, More

New York, March 3, 2008—A new report released today by the Open Society Justice Initiative examines the latest news and developments from the Extraordinary Chambers in Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), the court established to try surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge. The report is available by clicking on the icon at right.

The developments described in the report include several major steps over the past two months, including:

- The Pre-Trial Chamber's rejection of Nuon Chea's argument that Judge Ney Thol should be disqualified from participating in his case;
- The hiring of staff for the Victims Unit and the beginning of civil parties' participation in the ECCC;
- The announcement of a revised budget for the court, seeking an additional \$113.7 million, amid reports that the Cambodian side of the court could exhaust its budget by March, 2008; and
- The participation of investigating judges in community outreach meetings held in Pailin, the former Khmer Rouge stronghold.

The 18-page report provides an overview of recent developments in the cases of all five defendants now in the court's custody: Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, Kaing Guek Eav, and Ieng Thirith. The report describes Nuon Chea's efforts to disqualify Judge Ney Thol and provides a critique of the Pre-Trial Chamber's response. The report also looks at action outside the courtroom, including expansion of the Victims Unit, which will help victims become involved in the trials.

In addition, the report addresses some of the court's pressing challenges, including:

- Lack of transparency at the ECCC, as evinced by the court's failure to release pleadings related to Pre-Trial Chamber proceedings, and inadequate information about the progress of investigations;
- The Cambodian government's opposition to the UN proposal for a special advisor to improve the court's administration; and
- The ECCC's announcement of a revised budget, against the backdrop of reported shortfalls in the budget for the Cambodian side of the court.

The new report, *Recent Developments at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia: February 2008*, is the latest in a series of monthly reports offering news, analysis, and recommendations directly from Phnom Penh. Previous monthly reports and other background information on the court are available here: <http://www.justiceinitiative.org/activities/ij/krt>.