

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



The Special Court said goodbye to interpreters at a sendoff on Friday evening.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Monday, 30 June 2008

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

Monday, 30 June 2008

Human Rights Reports says conditions in prisons terrible

By Ishmael Bayoh

The first ever report of the Human Rights Commission (HRCSL) of Sierra Leone for 2007 has described conditions in the prisons all over the country as appalling.

The report stated that conditions in prisons and other detention centers throughout the country were over crowded and facilities grossly inadequate as prisoners lived in squalid unsanitary conditions. Compounding the problem further, the report stated were the understaffed and poorly paid prison officers citing instances in Kono and Pujehun where prison officers went for 3 to 4 months without pay.

“To supplement the meager salaries prison officers interfered with the food and exposed the prisoners to excessive

labour for their own

benefit” the report noted. It further added that “a UNIOSIL assessment of prisons conditions concluded that corporal punishment, solitary confinement, reduction in diet and lack of exercise were routine disciplinary measures” used in the Prisons.

An estimated 1,161 prisoners were held in the Pademba road prisons, which was built for a capacity of less than 350 prisoners. In one of their visits to the prison, the report states they found 3 prisoners in a solitary cell sleeping on the bare floor as a disciplinary measure and when they enquired they were told by the prisoners that they have been there for a number of days.

The HRCSL report also quoted a UNDP report

which mentioned that twenty prisoners died during the year as a result of acute malnutrition, lack of hygienic conditions, malaria and heart failure.

“The above conditions are in violation of the prisons Act 1960 and the standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners’ the report maintained adding

that “The HRCSL found that remand inmates constituted the highest number of detainees and prisons continue to hold pre-trial detainees with convicted prisoners”. The report also noted that juvenile offenders were detained with adult prisoners and the detention facilities for juveniles in Freetown were in decay until its recent rehabilitation by the

Justice Sector Development Project and detainees in such centers were poorly fed, lacked vocational training, proper supervision and access to prison rules. They shockingly noted that with the very limited available resources, there were striking imbalances in the provision of services and facilities for women in prison as against those for men.

Cotton Tree News

Friday, 27 June 2008

Sierra Leone marks UN Day against Torture

Written by Zainu Bassie

United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone in collaboration with the Freetown Human Right Committee recently commemorated the UN Day against Torture. Sulaiman Jabbati, Acting Chairman for the Freetown Human Right Committee said Sierra Leone was among the one hundred and forty five countries that were signatories to the Convention against Torture. Mr. Jabbati said in 1999, Sierra Leone ranked top among countries with record of Torture in the world. Kailahun District also observed the World Day against Torture in the town of Pendembu. Mohamed F. Moray, a psychosocial counsellor defined torture as an act in which people inflict severe pain or suffering whether physical or mental on others for the purposes of obtaining information or extracting confession. He encouraged every Sierra Leonean to be tolerant to one another for the betterment of the country.

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 27 June 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

Liberia's Poverty Reduction Forum Kicks off – Germany announces Debt Cancellation

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer, The Informer, Heritage, The Analyst, The News, New Democrat)

- A range of newspaper articles said the German government pledged substantial funding to Liberian infrastructure projects Thursday at the start of a two-day visit by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to Berlin. Germany is cancelling over US\$400 million dollars in bilateral debt Liberia owes the country. The German's pledge was in response to a request by President Sirleaf for additional funding to help the country rehabilitate its damaged infrastructure including roads and the ports, which she said remain seriously underfunded.

President Sirleaf Welcomes U.S. Peace Corps Return

(The New Liberia)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has welcomed the return of the American Peace Corps Volunteers Program. The Program, which operated in Liberia from 1962 to 1990, will recommence in September 2008.
- According to a dispatch from the Peace Corps Press Office in the United States of America, the return was made possible during a meeting held between Presidents George W. Bush and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in October 2007. President Johnson Sirleaf has expressed the hope that the overall focus of the volunteers must be education. The dispatch further disclosed that the return of the Peace Corps Volunteers is based on the period of peace in Liberia.
- The Liberian leader has also commended the United States government's decision to re-open the Peace Corps Volunteers Program in Liberia. The President added that the Program in the past was involved in every facet of Liberia's development efforts, including education, health, agriculture and rural development.

Radio Summary

Star Radio *(News culled today from website at 8:35 am)*

UNMIL and Government 'Stop Rape' Campaign Gains Momentum

- Anti-rape campaigners including the Government and UNMIL are continuing with a national crusade to combat rape, with a particular focus on stopping the act across the country. The collaboration will this Saturday stage a concert at the country's main sports stadium involving top Liberian and West African musicians, using songs to stop rape.
- A number of radio stations acknowledged that UNMIL and the government have been engaged in massive educational efforts – using jingles, printed materials, theatre and signage - to enhance an adequate understanding and retention of the information on the danger of rape. "Rape is evil and we must depart from this evil; we must be able to put rape behind us, it is an act of war therefore no civilized nation like Liberia should allow such act," Deputy Information Minister Gabriel Williams said at UNMIL's press briefing Wednesday.
- Incidents of rape are increasingly high across the country with continuing public recommendation for the establishment of a fast track court to prosecute rape cases. According to Minister Williams, 196 cases of rape were reported between January to February 2006, of which 17 of the victims were infants or under five years.

- Women groups had previously perceived that despite the passage of a new rape law by the National Legislature, which was accompanied by a personal pledge from President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, rape prosecutions were progressing too slowly. While the media supports public view that the courts were supposedly slow in the trial of rape cases, it said that it was also wrong for community members to settle rape cases and other sex-related violence outside the judicial system. President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has promised to come down hard on rapists and end the cycle of sexual violence which had engulfed the country.

(Also reported on ELBC, Sky FM, Love FM, Truth FM)

“Embattled” CDC Chairman Says Party’s Planned March Illegal

- The embattled Chairman of the Opposition Congress For Democratic Change (CDC), Mr. Joshua Sackie has condemned the planned march of the party slated for today.
Mr. Sackie said any march not call by his “legally” recognized leadership is illegal and has no basis saying his leadership would be questioned if the march turned chaotic.
- According to him, organizers of the march do not have the right to call for such a march.
- The Assistant Secretary General of the party, Acarious Gray said despite the claim by Mr. Sackie, the walk for the party’s 3rd anniversary would go ahead today as planned.

Ministry of Public Works Begins Eviction of Unfinished Public Buildings Today

- The Ministry of Public Works said it would begin the eviction of squatters from unfinished public buildings today.
- The Ministry named the New Health Ministry in Congo Town, Housing Bank and the Old Executive Mansion Building as target.
- In an interview, the Ministry’s Public Relations Officer, Fasama Kollie said the demolition would also be carried out in the Dry Rice Market Community and behind the John F. Kennedy Hospital and said the residents of these area have already been forewarned.

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

LEC Announces Increase In Tariff

- Addressing a news conference in Monrovia, the Acting Managing Director of the Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) Joseph Mayah announced the corporation’s plan to increase the cost of electric power effective July 1.
- Mr. Mayah said the increase in tariff was prompted by the sharp rise of fuel on the world market and that the new price structure would be determined after the entity signs an agreement with fuel importers in the country.
- The LEC currently charges 43 cents per kilowatt hour under its phase I emergency power programme.

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

Liberia Civil Aviation Authority Launches Domestic Flight

- The Liberia Civil Aviation Authority (LCAA) has introduced a post-war domestic air transport in the country.
- In an interview, the Director General of the LCAA, Richelieu Williams said the flying of domestic planes across the country would help to alleviate the transport problem in the country.
- LCAA identified one air line, Eulysian Airline to begin the process and said it would be in the country for a period of 3 months to study the market.

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

The Zimbabwean

Sunday, 29 June 2008

Zim running guns for Africa

Waldimar Pelser, City Press

ZIMBABWE has been part of an international gun-running network that supplied Liberian warlord Charles Taylor and other rogue governments with arms for war.

Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe may still be a prime gateway for illegal weapons sales in Africa and beyond, a source close to a United Nations (UN) investigation into Zimbabwe's arms deals said this week. Bank statements obtained by City Press show that Zimbabwe's state arms firm, Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI), dealt directly with a Ukrainian mafia kingpin who was a prime weapons pusher to Taylor. Taylor is currently facing a war crimes trial in The Hague.

The same documents show kickbacks paid by weapons dealers to people in government and other individuals in Zanu-PF, and help to explain how high-ranking people have been able to sustain themselves despite international sanctions and a Western weapons ban on the troubled neighbouring state.

As late as last week, United Nations investigators were in Harare fleshing out the role of the ZDI in laundering huge armaments shipments that fuelled civil war in Liberia and elsewhere, the source said. This has raised fears that the Chinese weapons shipments to Zimbabwe in April might have ended up in the hands of other African rebel groups, or governments who are barred by embargoes from legally buying arms.

Documents in possession of City Press show how senior Zanu-PF officials earned kickbacks worth millions of rands from an arms deal in 1999 with Leonid Minin, an Israeli national born in Ukraine who supplied Taylor with missiles, ammunition and assault rifles at the height of Liberia's civil war.

Unlike Zimbabwe, Liberia is subject to UN arms embargoes.

Arms brokers like Minin acted as middlemen, while companies like ZDI provided false end-user certificates for shipments to hide their final destination.

China is one of many weapons-producing countries which has resisted the secure marking of weapons. This means controllers cannot easily trace where weapons end up – including the three million rounds of AK-47 bullets on board the An Yue Jiang, chased from Durban harbour by dock workers on April 18.

"The Chinese arms might have gone to Eritrea or Somalia. You look at countries with embargoes. They would need another country to acquire weapons for them," said Joseph Dube from the International Action Network on Small Arms (Iansa). "Zim would acquire them and nobody would know. The ZDI played a big role in the supply even when they were not the end user."

Several experts said this week they believed part of the Chinese shipment had arrived in Zimbabwe by air from the Angolan capital, Luanda, on an undeclared flight which traffic controllers failed to pick up.

Human rights groups feared these weapons would be used against opposition supporters in the run-up to Friday's presidential election, but most injuries have been inflicted using "crude" weapons such as iron

bars and machetes, or having burning plastic drip all over the body, according to doctors at a Harare clinic.

"Victims are being forced to walk over burning grass," said a doctor who treats patients from all over Zimbabwe who fear public hospitals. She asked not to be named as the clinic's work might be stopped.

"The Chinese weapons have not been used in political violence in Zimbabwe," said Noel Stott, senior arms control researcher at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in Pretoria.

Dube said the China arms were either "being stashed" or had been sent elsewhere.

Zimbabwe's role as a conduit for weapons shipments to third countries dates back to at least 1999, but ZDI supplied the Sri Lankan military with weapons as early as 1997.

In one of the boldest arms heists in military history, 32 400 mortars which ZDI was providing to Sri Lanka were seized on the high seas on 11 July 1997 by the Tamil Tigers when they hijacked a ship sailing under the Liberian flag.

The heist happened after a briefcase belonging to Tshinga (TJ) Dube, chief of the ZDI, was stolen at a Rome airport three months earlier, containing details of the Sri Lanka shipment.

Dube told Australia's SBS radio ZDI's supplier for the arms was "an Israeli national". Two years later Dube would be in the middle of the Taylor arms deal – receiving kickbacks from Israeli national Minin.

According to an Amnesty International report in 2006, Minin received payment of \$460,000 from the Liberian government in March 1999 for two shipments of weapons, to Taylor in Monrovia and the Liberia-backed RUF in Sierra Leone.

The money was deposited into the Hungarian bank account of Engineering & Technical Company Ltd, which AI claims is a shell company used by Minin to launder arms and weapons payments.

The explosive Zimbabwe link lies in the bank account used by Liberia to pay for rebel arms. Bank statements show four payments between December 1998 and May 1999 from the same account to two key Zimbabweans – including TJ Dube.

The other was Zodwa Dabengwa, ex-wife of Dumiso Dabengwa, a former Zimbabwean military commander. Dabengwa belonged to Zanu-PF's decision-making body in 1998. He broke away from Zanu-PF to join former finance minister Simba Makoni ahead of the March 29 presidential poll, and later supported MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai.

Days before the payments to Dube, which totalled more than R2,3 million, ZDI itself made payments of more than \$3 million (some R24 million) to Minin for weapons.

A source close to the UN said there was no indication the weapons actually reached Zimbabwe, and were instead channelled to Liberia. The AI report shows Minin delivered two weapons shipments to Liberia in March and July 1999 – just when the ZDI deals were being finalised.

Alex Yearsly, head of special projects at rights group Global Witness, said the link between Minin and the ZDI was "critical".

"ZDI has been used by countless regimes from Sri Lanka to Liberia to get hold of weapons." He described the international community's resistance to tightening controls against gun-running through countries like Zimbabwe – which can legally buy on the world market – as a "scandal".

"It is not only China and Russia, but the UK and France. All have resisted attempts to regulate the trade." Calls intensified this week for an international arms embargo on Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwean ambassador to South Africa Simon Moyo, when asked to comment, said: "I know nothing about that". Attempts to reach the Chinese embassy yesterday were also unsuccessful. - http://www.news24.com/City_Press/News/0,,186-187_2348810,00.html

BOX

Zimbabwe's deal with gun runner

IN 1998 and 1999, six transactions for weaponry and kickbacks to Zimbabwean officials passed through the Hungarian bank account of a company linked to Leonid Minin, one of the most notorious gun suppliers to Africa.

Bank statements in possession of City Press, and a 2006 report by Amnesty International, show that these transactions coincided exactly with Minin's alleged shipment of weapons to Liberia:

December 15 1998: Minin pays \$5 000 to Zodwa Dabengwa from a Hungarian bank account.

March 8, 10 1999: John Enrique, Commissioner of Liberia's National Bureau of Immigration for Naturalisation, pays US\$463,470 into the same account.

March 11 1999: A giant Antonov 124 leaves Ukraine with 68 tons of military equipment, including 3 000 AKM assault rifles and 1 million rounds of ammunition, destined for Burkina Faso and then Liberia.

April 22 1999: ZDI pays US\$1,383,150 into Minin's account for weapons.

May 31 1999: ZDI deposits another \$2,103,150.

June 1 1999: Minin pays TJ Dube \$40 000 in suspected kickbacks for the weapons deal

June 16 1999: Another \$80 000 is paid to Dube

June 22 1999: A last installment of \$175,815 is paid to Dube.

United Nations News Centre

Tuesday, 24 June 2008

UN-backed tribunal trying Khmer Rouge leaders calls for more funds

24 June 2008 – The United Nations-backed tribunal trying Khmer Rouge leaders accused of mass killings and other crimes in Cambodia during the late 1970s, which is expected to soon hold its first trial, said today it needs more than \$40 million in funds to continue its work through the end of next year.

The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia has a shortfall of \$43.7 million after pledges received so far, the ECCC said in a press release issued in Phnom Penh, the national capital and the seat of the tribunal.

This includes \$37.7 million for the UN component of the budget and \$6.1 million for the Cambodian component.

Last week a delegation from the tribunal held what it said were “productive discussions... in a most constructive atmosphere” in New York with the Group of Interested States about the ECCC budget through 2010. The talks, based on a revised budget, follow concerns expressed by donors after a draft budget was presented in January.

The statement said the donors had expressed strong support for the ECCC’s work, illustrated by Japan’s contribution last week of almost \$3 million to the Cambodian component of the budget and a commitment by the Cambodian Government of nearly \$1 million.

Briefing reporters in Phnom Penh, the Director of ECCC’s Office of Administration Sean Visoth noted that a recent public survey indicated that Cambodians continue to give their strong support to the work of the tribunal.

“One of the principal reasons for establishing the hybrid model we are following in Cambodia was to hold the trials in a context that is close to the people, offering them the opportunity to visit the court, sit in the public gallery which holds 500 people, and watch the process broadcast live on radio and television throughout the country,” he said.

Under an agreement signed by the UN and Cambodia, the ECCC was set up as an independent court using a mixture of Cambodian staff and judges and foreign personnel. It is designated to try those deemed most responsible for crimes and serious violations of Cambodian and international law between 17 April 1975 and 6 January 1979.

Agence France-Presse

Monday, 30 June 2008

Khmer Rouge appeal case to test limits of international law

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — The first big test of the UN-backed Cambodian genocide court begins on Monday when a former Khmer Rouge foreign minister is scheduled to appear in court to appeal against his detention.

Ieng Sary, 82, is one of five top regime cadres currently detained for crimes allegedly committed during the Khmer Rouge's 1975-79 rule over Cambodia.

He has been charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity and is expected to face trial within the next year.

But his lawyers say that Ieng Sary was absolved of any crimes after he surrendered to the government in 1996, when he received a royal pardon for an earlier genocide conviction.

That conviction was handed down in a 1979 trial in absentia conducted by the government installed after Vietnam occupied the country and ended the Khmer Rouge's bloody reign.

"The court will have to decide whether the amnesty is valid or not. Maybe they will have a conflict between Cambodia's constitution and international norms," said Sok Samouen, head of the Cambodian Defenders Project (CDP).

Deciding whether nationally granted amnesties apply to international trials is a significant area of contention that has been raised in the Sierra Leone war crimes trial and the International Criminal Court, said Rupert Skillbeck, head of the Khmer Rouge tribunal's defence office.

"Amnesty is one of the areas of international criminal law where law and politics collide. But the (Khmer Rouge trial) judges will have to judge it as a legal question to be decided," Skillbeck said.

"It's one of the most significant legal questions for this tribunal to answer and an important question in international criminal law in general," he added.

At Monday's hearing, Ieng Sary's lawyers will seek to have him freed on bail, and are expected to argue later in the week that the charges should be dropped because his amnesty still holds.

As the top Khmer Rouge diplomat, Ieng Sary was frequently the only point of contact between Cambodia's secretive communist rulers and the outside world.

He was also one of the biggest public supporters of the regime's mass purges, researchers say.

"He came as close as any senior (Khmer Rouge) official in power ever did to describing publicly... the policy of executing", said Stephen Heder and Brian Tittmore in their book "Seven Candidates for Prosecution: Accountability for the Crimes of the Khmer Rouge."

Up to two million people died of starvation and overwork, or were executed, as the Khmer Rouge set about dismantling modern Cambodia after seizing control of the country.

But as much as he was an advocate for the regime during its 1975-79 rule, Ieng Sary's later defection to the government proved a fatal blow to the then-disintegrating movement.

His departure came two years before Pol Pot's death in 1998. The two had met as schoolboys in the capital Phnom Penh and later became eager supporters of the communist movement at university in Paris.

His wife Thirith, who also became a minister in the Khmer Rouge regime, was arrested with him in November.

Ieng Sary has suffered from deteriorating health since his arrest, according to his lawyer, highlighting the fragile condition of the tribunal's likely defendants, who are mostly in their 70s and 80s.