

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



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:

Tuesday, 16 December 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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International News

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ICRC

Monday, 15 December 2008

Sierra Leone: Seven years after peace agreement, ICRC scales back activities

Nearly seven years after the end of Sierra Leone's decade-long armed conflict, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is considerably curtailing the operations it has carried out in the country without interruption for almost 18 years.

The ICRC will no longer run an independent delegation in Sierra Leone, but will maintain an office in Freetown under the supervision of the ICRC delegation in neighbouring Guinea. The Freetown office will provide support for selected programmes of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society, such as those focusing on restoring family links. The ICRC will also continue to support the government in its efforts to incorporate provisions of international humanitarian law in national legislation.

The decision to wind down operations was taken as a result of progress in Sierra Leone's peace consolidation process. The ICRC, in accordance with its mandate to protect and assist people adversely affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence, may continue to address needs resulting from a conflict after hostilities have ended in order to bridge the gap between emergency aid and development support.

In peacetime, it is typically the role of the National Red Cross or Red Crescent Society to take the lead in domestic matters of humanitarian concern. The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society has a vast pool of motivated volunteers and staff. Together with partners within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, including the ICRC, they performed invaluable services for the Sierra Leonean people during and after the armed conflict. Now that peace has returned, the National Society will take over as the leading Red Cross organization in the country.

During and after the 1991-2002 civil war, the ICRC resolved over 1,600 tracing requests for unaccompanied children and reunited more than 1,200 families. It distributed food and essential household items to displaced persons, built wells and toilets, upgraded the surgical ward of the government hospital in Kenema city, distributed farming tools, seed and fishing nets, constructed shelters for war widows, provided prostheses and orthoses for war amputees and gave medical support to various health facilities.

Among other activities carried out over the years, the ICRC has visited people held in the maximum-security prison in Freetown and in district prisons throughout the country, and people detained under the authority of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The ICRC has also provided financial support for activities of the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society that deal with the consequences of the armed conflict, such as helping to find employment for war amputees and conducting child advocacy activities. Finally, it has worked closely with the country's armed forces and police to provide training in international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
15 December 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

Liberia Eligible for MCC Threshold Programme

(The News, Daily Observer)

- Reports from Washington, D.C. say Liberia is one of two countries named as eligible for a threshold program of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). The other country is Timor-Leste. The MCC, whose Board of Directors is chaired by United States Secretary of State, provides grants to help reform-minded governments improve their performance on the policy indicators necessary for participation in a broader program known as the "compact program."
- The MCC's compact program is a large-scale grant funding under the U.S. Government's innovative foreign assistance program to reduce poverty through economic growth.
- The Millennium Challenge Corporation, a U.S. government agency designed to work with developing countries, is based on the principle that aid is most effective when it reinforces sound political, economic, and social policies that promote poverty reduction through economic growth.

Chiefs and Elders Identify Conflict-Breeding Issues

(The News, Heritage, Daily Observer)

- The Council of Elders and Chiefs of Liberia over the weekend came out with what it calls key issues responsible for undermining peace in the country.
- The Daily Observer reports that at the close of a three-day Peace and Cultural festival, the elders selected from across Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote D'Ivoire, agreed that land ownership, customary and statutory laws, disrespect for elders by youths, the lack of women participation in traditional council, marginalization of people from the leeward counties, corruption, tribalism and weak justice system are the most prevalent issues making the peace in the country fragile.
- Earlier, the Programme Director of International Alert, Phil Vernon welcomed the discussion and said he was confident that the meeting will discover traditional norms and values and how they can be connected to already identifiable structures at the local level.

Key Opposition Politician Abhors Exclusionary Politics

(Daily Observer, The News)

- A key opposition political leader, Cllr. Varney Sherman says the success of one political party in elections should not be used as an opportunity to marginalize partisans and leaders of other political parties in the governance of the country. Speaking at the induction of the new leadership of the Press Union of Liberia at the weekend, Cllr. Sherman said true democracy is not reflect by the mere existence of many political parties saying it would be better to reduce the number of parties and strengthen them.
- He said a democracy with few political parties will end the culture of divisive politics he claimed the country has experienced. Meanwhile, the former Standard Bearer of the Liberian Action Party (LAP) has challenged journalists to help promote a truly functioning democracy in the country. He told journalists in the absence of a functioning democracy freedom of expression and thought would not be realized.

Anti-Corruption Forum Opens In Monrovia

(Heritage)

- Two local groups held a joint forum today on the “rising” corruption in the country. The groups are the National Coalition of Civil Society Organizations of Liberia and the Action for Genuine Democratic Alternative (AGENDA). A statement from the groups yesterday said the anti-corruption discussions will be held under the theme: “Is Corruption Public Enemy #1”
- The forum will be held in commemoration of Anti- Corruption Day celebrated recently. The forum reviewed the Government of Liberia Anti-Corruption policy and programmes and assessed the overall anti-corruption crusade in the country.

Liberia’s Foreign Reserves Hit US\$49M - CBL Reveals

(Daily Observer)

- A huge growth in the country's foreign reserves has been reported. According to Dr. J. Mills Jones, Executive Governor of the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL), the total foreign reserves have grown from US\$5 million in 2006 to over US\$49 million at the end of December 2008. He attributed the growth to robust measures taken by the CBL to ensure stability in the economy.
- Dr. Jones made the disclosure when he spoke at a programme marking the retirement of an Executive of the International Bank-Liberia (IB). Mr. Thomas Jeffrey is retiring after serving IB for over 16 years. The CBL Executive Governor said the bank had been able to accomplish a lot with the cooperation of the banking sector.

Newly Refurbished Medical Centre Dedicated in Firestone

(Liberian Express, Daily Observer, Heritage, The News, New Democrat)

- The media reports that the newly refurbished Firestone Medical Centre in Harbel, Margibi County, has been formally dedicated. The facilities were opened Friday by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. President Johnson Sirleaf in remarks praised the Firestone Company for working towards improving the needs of the workers. The President expressed satisfaction that much of the terms of the contract Government renegotiated with the company under its concession, are now in place.
- The Liberian leader also commended Firestone for producing a five-year development plan under the renegotiation of concession terms. Despite the progress, an Executive Mansion release quotes the President as saying, there is still more that needs to be done. Responding on behalf of the company, the Managing Director of Firestone Liberia, Mr. Charles Stuart, described the Medical Centre as a step in a long journey. He assured the President of his company’s fullest support in Government’s reconstruction drive.
- The ceremony was also attended by Mr. Dan Adomitis, Chief Executive Officer of Firestone-USA and United States Ambassador Linda Thomas Greenfield. Located around the Du-side vicinity, the 300-bed room Medical Centre includes two health centres, four health posts and a mobile unit.

Grand Cape Mount Finally Overcomes Banking Hurdles as LBDI Opens Branch

(Daily Observer, The Parrot)

- The people of Grand Cape Mount County had one of their many wishes accomplished Friday, December 12, 2008 when the management of Liberian Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI) formally opened a branch in Robertsport, the county's provincial capital city.
- The opening of the Robertsport branch of the LBDI immediately brings to an end a long journey and cost-intensive hurdles residents of the county had undergone for many years to have access to a banking facility in their county. Prior to opening the branch, government employees of the county had to travel to Monrovia to encash their salary checks.

Radio Summary

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

Health Ministry to Launch 2nd Malaria Indicator Survey Tomorrow

- The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and its partners are expected to launch the second malaria indicator survey tomorrow, Tuesday.
- The 2008 survey is intended to update the data provided by the 2005 Liberia malaria indicator survey and provide information on the impact of malaria control and prevention.

Unidentified Man Killed by Angry Mob

- An unidentified man believed to be an armed robber was yesterday mobbed to death in a suburb of Monrovia.
- Correspondents say the man's body was left lying on the streets and that no one has been arrested in connection with the incident.

Star Radio *(News culled from website today at 8:30 am)*

Anti-Corruption Forum Opens Today In Monrovia

MRU Security Chiefs Resolve to Reactivate Intelligence Sharing

- Security Chiefs of the Mano River Union have resolved to reactivate the union's community security committee.
- The community security committee is intended to share intelligence on major security problems arising from member states.
- Justice Minister Philip Banks said with the reactivation of the committee problems that once affected the region in the past would be addressed.

Former Presidential Candidate Challenges Journalists

- A former Presidential candidate, Cllr. Varney Sherman has challenged journalists to help promote a truly functioning democracy in the country.
- He said true democracy is not reflected by the mere existence of many political parties, saying it would be better to reduce the number of parties and strengthen them.
- Speaking at the induction of the new leadership of the Press Union of Liberia at the weekend, Cllr. Sherman said he believes a democracy with few political parties will end the culture of divisive politics that the country has experienced.
- He told journalists in the absence of a functioning democracy freedom of expression and thought would not be realized.

Ethiopian Review

Monday, 15 December 2008

<http://www.ethiopianreview.com/content/7738>

The Horn of Fear

By Alemayehu G. Mariam

Donkeys, Liars and War Criminals

What a difference two years make! In December 2006, Zenawi invaded Somalia to save it from the “terrorist axis of evil” — Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab and the Islamic Courts Union. In January 2007, he reassured the world, “We will be out of Somalia in a few weeks.” A year ago he likened opposition members of his Parliament who opposed his Somali invasion to that faithful beast of burden, the donkey. He said “both have big eyes, but suffer from myopia; and have big ears, but don’t hear.” This past September, he declared triumphantly that he had fully achieved his primary objective of destroying and neutralizing the Somali “jihadist” threat to Ethiopia. A few days ago he told his parliament African Union troops have asked for help as they prepare to cut and run out of Somalia: “The African Union, Uganda and Burundi have all asked us to stay behind and provide protection for the safe passage of their troops.” Uganda’s deputy foreign minister, Okello Oryem, said that is a complete fabrication: “This is absolutely not true and this is contrary to everything we have said. Our position has always been that if Ethiopia pulls out of Somalia, we will increase our presence there. Uganda is prepared to increase its battalion if there is a need.” In the 104-page report, *So Much to Fear: War Crimes and the Devastation of Somalia*, Human Rights Watch indicted the Zenawi regime and its military forces in Somalia, the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and Somali insurgent forces for war crimes involving “widespread and serious violations of the laws of war. Frequent violations include indiscriminate attacks, killings, rape, use of civilians as human shields, and looting.”

The Evidence of War Crimes

HRW’s cumulative evidence on war crimes in Somalia is staggering:

Since January 2007 (the onset of Zenawi’s invasion) at least 870,000 civilians have fled the chaos in Mogadishu alone — two-thirds of the city’s population. Across south-central Somalia, 1.1 million Somalis are displaced from their homes.

[Following the invasion] Insurgent fighters quickly adopted hit-and-run tactics...Ethiopian and TFG forces developed patterns of responding to those attacks that have since become part of the day-to-day reality of life in Mogadishu — reacting to indiscriminate mortar attacks in kind, with devastating barrages of rocket, mortar, and artillery fire across populated neighborhoods.

ENDF [Ethiopian National Defense Forces] forces in Mogadishu have routinely and indiscriminately bombarded populated residential areas of Mogadishu since March 2007. They have made regular use of “Katyusha” rockets in Mogadishu, often fired from BM-21 “Grad” multiple-rocket launchers.

Ethiopian forces carried out similar indiscriminate bombardments in fighting in the strategically important town of Beletweyne. ENDF forces responded by indiscriminately bombarding large swathes of the western districts of the town for three days beginning in July 2008. Humanitarian organizations estimated that at the end of July, 74,000 people—more than 75 percent of the town’s population—had been displaced as a direct result of the bombardment and related fighting.

There have been increased reports in 2008 of Ethiopian forces responding to insurgent ambushes and other attacks by firing indiscriminately into populated areas... particularly in Mogadishu, Baidoa, and along the Mogadishu-Afgooye road.

In 2008 the human rights and humanitarian situation in Somalia deteriorated into unmitigated catastrophe... Two long years of escalating bloodshed and destruction have devastated the country's people and laid waste to its capital Mogadishu.

During the past two years life in Mogadishu has settled into a horrifying daily rhythm with Ethiopian, TFG, and insurgent forces conducting urban firefights and pounding one another with artillery fire with no regard for the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in the city. The bombardments are largely indiscriminate... Insurgents lob mortar shells from populated neighborhoods... and Ethiopian and TFG forces respond with sustained salvos of mortar, artillery, and rocket fire that destroy homes and their inhabitants... TFG forces, often commanded or accompanied by Ethiopian troops, commit assaults, rapes, killings, and pillage of civilians during house-to-house search operations... The discipline of Ethiopian soldiers in Somalia has broken down to the point where they increasingly are responsible for violent criminality.

TFG and ENDF forces frequently respond to insurgent attacks by firing mortar shells, artillery, and "Katyusha" rockets—the last being weapons that are inherently indiscriminate when used in populated areas—towards the neighborhoods from which they took fire.

ENDF soldiers have been implicated in serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law against Somali civilians with increasing frequency since the end of 2007.

The Art of Hocus Pocus

On the same day the HRW report was released, the regime's Ministry of Foreign Affairs swiftly responded with a befuddled and incoherent critique of the report's "methodology" and "specific findings".[1] The official statement, in the usual categorically dismissive manner, rejected the HRW report because it was based on "flawed methodology, unsubstantiated allegations, hearsay and second-hand information conversations with anonymous informants." In typical self-serving and sanctimonious hand-wringing style, the statement also declared that it was Ethiopia's manifest destiny to bring peace to the warring factions in Somalia, and is now leaving because peace had become elusive there: "Ethiopia has persistently tried to facilitate peaceful resolution of the problems among the people of Somalia, not least by sponsoring a whole series of peace conferences since 1992... It was natural for Ethiopia to lend whatever assistance it could when called upon by the Government of Somalia... [Unable] to create a credible ongoing peace process... Ethiopia felt it appropriate to withdraw its forces by the end of the year."

Remarkably, the official statement glosses over the serious accusations of war crimes and denies responsibility for any unlawful killing of Somali civilians. It even makes the comical argument that most of the Somali casualties since 2006 were not real "civilians". Rather, "many of the claimed casualties have in fact been of fighters not civilians." The statement denies the occurrence of any specific collateral damage (unintended civilian casualties) from combat operations by "Ethiopian" forces. It categorically and emphatically rejects the occurrence of any barbaric practices of war such as throat-slitting and body mutilation, and attributes such monstrous practices exclusively to Al Shabaab fighters. "Ethiopian" forces would never commit such atrocities because the "the Ethiopian military would not deploy under-trained troops in a combat zone like Mogadishu and... training in human rights and humanitarian law is part of the core curricula of all the country's military training institutions at all levels..."

The regime's criticism of HRW's methodology — that is the claim that the HRW report consist of “unsubstantiated allegations, hearsay and second-hand information conversations with anonymous informants” — shows willful ignorance of facts and constitutes a feeble attempt at diversion from the serious war crimes allegations. The fact of the matter is that by any objective measure, there is nothing unusual or improper about HRW's “methodology”. In “So Much to Fear,” HRW employed the same standard investigative techniques and methods it has used in all other cases of suspected war crimes/crimes against humanity. It has not used any questionable techniques in its Somalia investigation. As a matter of fact, HRW's basic investigative techniques are not much different than those used in ordinary criminal investigations which involve gathering evidence from victims, eyewitnesses, confidential informants, officials, experts and any others sources that are capable of producing material and relevant evidence. In its Somalia report, HRW “interviewed more than 80 victims and eyewitnesses to the patterns of abuse documented in this report.” They interviewed “dozens of analysts, Somali civil society activists, humanitarian workers, diplomats, medical staff, and journalists, some of whom were also eyewitnesses to the events described in this report.” HRW also “met with TFG officials including Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein, with ARS officials, including Sheikh Sharif Ahmed and Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, and with UN officials, including UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah... European Commission officials in Nairobi.” Beyond these evidence gathering techniques, HRW is also experienced in the acquisition of aerial and ground imagery, and analysis of combat operations information regarding collateral damage, cluster munitions and time sensitive targeting as evidenced in another recent report, *Collective Punishment War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity in the Ogaden Area of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State* (June, 2008).[2]

The fact of the matter is that HRW used well-established criminal investigative techniques and procedures. But implicit in the “methodological” criticism is the subtle attempt to cast aspersions on the credibility of HRW as an impartial international human rights organization and create doubt on its investigative methods. The self-serving criticism must be challenged with facts. First, it is an irrefutable fact that there are few organization in the world that have the breadth and depth of war crimes/crimes against humanity investigative experience than Human Rights Watch (and Amnesty International). In the past decade alone, HRW has extensively and repeatedly documented war crimes and gross human rights violations in every corner of the world including Rwanda, Liberia, Uganda, the Sudan, Iraq, the former Yugoslavia, East Timor, Zimbabwe, Chechnya, China, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Sri Lanka and many other countries. Second, HRW has a stellar reputation for impartiality, neutrality, and integrity. Its reports are used in policy making by the highest legislative, executive and judicial bodies in most democratic countries in the world. Third, the countries that lash out against HRW most vociferously are countries with significant and lengthy records of human rights abuses. For instance, China has criticized HRW for preparing its country report “out of thin” air. Sudan savagely criticized HRW after it called for punitive sanctions against the top leaders in the Sudan who supervised the killing fields in Darfur. Last March Robert Mugabe dismissed a report by HRW on Zimbabwe as “rubbish”. A few months ago, Hugo Chavez threw out HRW from Venezuela, claiming that “[HRW] dressed up as human rights defenders, are financed by the United States. They are aligned with a policy of attacking countries that are building new economic models.”

Despite these transparent investigative procedures, one of the central criticisms of HRW by the Zenawi regime revolves around HRW's unwillingness to turn over the names and addresses of the victims who gave evidence: “HRW gives no names of its informants and no addresses, though it does claim to have interviewed some people over the telephone in Mogadishu.” One can only shudder thinking about what they could do with the names and addresses of victims and informants!

What is also equally puzzling in the official statement is the regime's emphatic assertion that, “It should be made clear that Human Rights Watch's first time effort to expose abuses committed by Al-Shabab and other extremist forces in Mogadishu does not make its unsubstantiated allegations against Ethiopia any

more credible.” Simply stated, the fact that HRW is telling the truth about Al Shabaab and the other insurgents for the first time does not mean it is telling the truth about “Ethiopian forces” this time around. Curiously, the regime’s logic compels a much different conclusion: If HRW’s evidence and allegations concerning war crimes/crimes against humanity against “Ethiopian” forces are untrue, *mutatis mutandis* (allowing other things to change accordingly), HRW’s evidence and allegations on Al-Shabaab and the other insurgent groups must be equally untrue. In other words, HRW’s allegations that Al Shabaab used civilians as “human shields”, it indiscriminately used mortars and remote-detonated explosive devices in populated areas, engaged in targeted killings, coerced recruitment and engaged in the use of child soldiers, etc., must also be untrue. It does not make logical sense for HRW to tell the unvarnished truth about Al Shabaab atrocities and fabricate unmitigated lies about atrocities committed by “Ethiopian” forces. As the old saying goes, what is good for the goose is good for the gander!

War Crimes

“War crimes” include a broad class of crimes under international law. There are at least four distinct categories of such crimes: 1) grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, 2) violations of the “Laws and Customs of War”, 3) genocide and 4) crimes against humanity (large-scale atrocity directed at civilian population including murder, torture, rape, etc.) Prosecution of war crimes raise many technical, legal and procedural issues as evidenced in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Some of these issues are jurisdictional, e.g. where to bring the legal action, whether to use an ad hoc tribunal or the International Criminal court. Others are logistical, e.g. how to identify, capture, arrest and transport suspects to the venue of the tribunal. Still other issues involve prosecutorial strategy, e.g. how widely to cast the prosecutorial dragnet, whether to prosecute anyone implicated in atrocities or only those most culpable and responsible, how to distinguish between leaders who gave the orders to commit war crimes from those who actually carried out the worst offenses and those whose offenses were minimal. For instance, many of these issues arose in the Rwandan case. Prosecution of more than 100,000 Rwandan war crimes suspects proved to be an impossibility. For that reason, the Rwandan prosecution focused on the planners and leaders of the genocide, those in positions of authority who authorized, aided and abetted the commission of the genocidal crimes, notorious killers and torturers and others.

The Prima Facie Case for War Crimes: Collateral Damage and Concealment Warfare

At the core of the prima facie (on its first appearance) case in the HRW allegations are two central issues: 1) criminal liability for collateral damage, and 2) lawful responses to “concealment warfare”. Collateral damage generally involves excessive injury or damage to civilians from unintentional or incidental military actions. Intentional targeting of civilians as a military objective is a war crime. Protocols I and II of the 1949 Geneva Conventions codify the principles of distinction, proportionality, necessity and humanity in assessing collateral damage for war crimes purposes. These Protocols require that military objects be distinguished from civilian ones prior to attack in a combat theater. For instance, the principle of proportionality requires that attacks on a specific military objective are impermissible if they “may be expected to cause incidental loss of civilian life or injury that would be excessive in relation to the concrete and direct military advantage anticipated.” A responsible military commander is expected to first determine if the target is a military objective, and then decide whether the collateral damage from destruction of the target is proportionate to the military advantage of destroying it. Combat planners are required to “take all feasible precautions in the choice of means and methods of attack with a view to avoiding, and in any event to minimizing, incidental loss of civilian life...” Similarly, the doctrine of military necessity under the Protocols requires that there be some military advantage gained from the destruction of a target. “Concealment warfare” is often used by insurgents who commingle among the civilian population and launch attacks. For instance, some insurgent groups operating in urban combat environments employ the tactic of placing the civilian population at the center of conflict in an effort to

create a more favorable battle space, and maximize their survivability against forces they are unable to engage under conventional terms. Concealment warfare poses special problems for conventional forces by combining military and civilian targets in the combat theatre increasing substantially the likelihood of significant civilian casualties.

One of the key legal issues in a future Somalia war crimes prosecution is likely to be whether the commanders of the “Ethiopian” forces in launching an attack or counterattack on insurgents concealed in civilian areas knew or should have known their actions would cause excessive incidental death or injury to civilians in relation to the concrete and direct overall military advantage anticipated, but failed to take appropriate mitigating actions. Another issue of criminal liability is likely to involve command responsibility under the Additional Protocol I of 1977 to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 which provides: “The fact that a breach of the Conventions or of this Protocol was committed by a subordinate does not absolve his superiors from ...responsibility ... if they knew, or had information which should have enabled them to conclude in the circumstances at the time, that he was committing or about to commit such a breach and if they did not take all feasible measures within their power to prevent or repress the breach.” Under this provision, command responsibility liability may go well beyond the actions or omissions of “Ethiopian” military commanders on the battlefields. Indeed there are many other legal issues that could be raised in a future war crimes prosecution.

HRW’s Big Message: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity Will Be Punished

Over the past two decades, war crimes have been committed on a mind-boggling scale throughout the world. Most of them have gone unpunished. A year before the Rwandan genocide, the New York Times put out an editorial that began: “Commit atrocities on a large enough scale and you can get away with it.” That prophetic statement proved to be true in Rwanda in 1994 and later in other African countries. The message in the HRW report is not that the Somali war crimes suspects will be identified and prosecuted anytime soon, but rather those criminals should be on notice that the evidence is piling up against them for that day when justice will catch up with them. War criminals generally do not believe they will ever be caught by the long arm of the law. Radovan Karadzic believed as much. He became a mythical figure among some Serbs for evading arrest for war crimes for so many years. In the end, he was caught and is now facing justice in The Hague. No doubt, those who committed war crimes in Somalia will also be caught and brought to justice. But HRW’s report is important both for calling international attention to the “daily horrors of life in Somalia” and for resetting a universal tone of moral outrage so eloquently expressed over one-half century ago by Robert H. Jackson, United States Supreme Court Associate Justice and Chief Prosecutor Nuremberg Tribunals: “The wrongs which we seek to condemn and punish have been so calculated, so malignant and so devastating, that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored because it cannot survive their being repeated.” War crimes must never be tolerated!

BBC Online

Tuesday, 16 December 2008

Tuareg rebels 'holding UN envoy'

The UN's special envoy to Niger has been abducted in the West African country by Tuareg rebels, according to a website representing them.

There has been no independent confirmation of the claim, although UN officials say he is missing.

Robert Fowler, a veteran Canadian diplomat, was travelling with another Canadian and a local driver, about 40km (25 miles) from the capital, Niamey.

Tuareg rebels have been engaged in armed struggles for several decades.

In a message posted on its website, the Front des Forces de Redressement (FFR) said it had taken Mr Fowler and three other people.

It said Mr Fowler was in good health and would soon be taken to a safe place.



Search under way

The diplomat's vehicle was found on Sunday evening with its engine still running, a UN spokesman said.

UN officials said Mr Fowler, who is based in Canada, was in Niger for meetings with officials.

But Niger's foreign ministry said in a statement that Mr Fowler was in the country on private business and had left Niamey on Sunday morning without informing the authorities.

Security forces were searching for Mr Fowler and his companions, the foreign ministry said.

The group visited the gold mining region of Samira before their disappearance, the ministry added.

The region is far from fighting in the north between the army and Tuareg rebels.

Mr Fowler retired from the Canadian foreign service two years after a long career that included postings as ambassador to Italy and the United Nations.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon appointed Mr Fowler his special envoy to Niger in July.