

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



A night view of the Lagoonda Entertainment Complex, at Aberdeen

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, 23 December 2008

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

Tuesday, 23 December 2008

Judges, Magistrates and masters on 3 gender Acts

A one day Workshop organized for Judges, Magistrates and Masters on the three Gender Acts has ended at Hotel Barmoi in Freetown.

Speaking about the registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act of 2007, Justice Adeliza Showers said that Customary Marriage laws are varied in the extent to which they protect human rights, are very uncertain and are mostly unwritten.

She added that, the new Act provides for certainty and protection in the essential framework of marriages, while allowing for regional differences outside those basic rules.

On polygamous marriage, she noted that, under the new Act, if a man marries a woman in a Christian, a Mohammedan (Muslim) or a civil marriage, he will not subsequently be allowed to marry another woman in a customary marriage.

She stated under the new Act, if a man enters a customary marriage with one woman, he shall not then be entitled to enter a Christian, Muslim or civil marriage with another woman unless he divorces the first woman.

This she said intends to stop the practice of men not taking the first customary marriage seriously and deserting their wives without support or the

opportunity to remarry.

Justice Showers pointed out that under the old law, girls were marriageable in customary law at puberty, adding that this has serious consequences for the girls and society.

The new Act introduces a minimum age of 18 years for marriage, in accordance with international standards and the laws of commonwealth neighbours stated the Judge.

She further stated that, under the old law, a woman's consent was not required to enter a customary marriage and if a woman goes into marriage against her will it will likely be an unhappy union which may well erupt into violence, with repercussions for the entire family, the spouses and any children.

The new Act, she said introduces the bride's consent as an essential requirement for a customary marriage to be valid.

On legitimation of partners cohabiting for more than five years, she noted that under the old law, when a couple, whose personal law was customary law, did not get married but lived as husband and wife for many years, when the relationship came to an end, either through separation or death the vulnerable party was not protected.

Under the new Act, partners who cohabit as husband and wife for more than five years will be afforded the same protections as a couple married under customary law, as long as neither party is already married to another persons.

The new Act she said, requires that all customary marriages and divorces be registered.


United Nations **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
22 December 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

Restructured Liberian Army and Police in Fist Fight – Several Wounded

New Democrat, The Analyst, Daily Observer)

- At least four officers of the re-vetted Liberia National Police (LNP) and a number of soldiers from the restructured Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) sustained injuries on Saturday, December 20, 2008, when some officers of the two security apparatuses clashed at the ELWA Junction outside Monrovia while several residents fled in all directions.
- The New Democrat newspaper said the violent clash which brought vehicular traffic and normal activities to a standstill at the ELWA Junction ensued when the Police and road construction workers attempted to divert some military vehicles from a road repair scene. But the soldiers insisted that they had to use the main ELWA road, where repair work was in progress. However, UN peacekeepers intervened and restored calm in the area.

UN Security Council Says Assets Freeze on Taylor's Buddies Must Be Enforced

(The Analyst, New Democrat)

- The Security Council on Friday voiced concern at the lack of progress in freezing the financial assets available to former Liberian president Charles Taylor, now on trial at the United Nations-backed court for Sierra Leone for war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as to his family and associates.
- In a unanimously adopted resolution, the 15-member body extended for another year the Panel of Experts looking into issues of diamonds, timber, sanctions, arms and security in Liberia as it recovers from 14 years of devastating civil war, and called on the Government to continue to make all necessary efforts to enforce the assets freeze.
- The Council renewed an embargo on arms supplies, except in certain cases for the Liberian police, security and armed forces, as well as a travel ban by all States on Mr. Taylor's associates and family members, except for humanitarian situations.
- "Despite significant progress having been made in Liberia, the situation there continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region," the resolution said.

Bong Citizens Rally Support to Impeach Senator Taylor

(The Inquirer, The Informer, Heritage, National Chronicle)

- A group of citizens hailing from Bong County say they have acquired thousands of signatures from their kinsmen to impeach their senior Senator, Madam Jewel Howard-Taylor.
- The citizens said they have planned a big march to be stage at the Capitol Building in early January when the lawmakers returned from their agriculture break to present their petition and signatures to the National Legislature for the removal of Senator Taylor as Senator of Bong County.
- Addressing a news conference over the weekend in Monrovia, a citizen of the county who claimed to be the Chairman of the Bong County Political Bureau, Mr. Jacob Menyonga said their decision to impeach Senator Taylor is on the basis that Madam Taylor is the source of division amongst citizens of the county.
- Mr. Menyonga alleged that Senator Taylor and Representative Bill Conneh are both antagonists to development in their county and that Senator Taylor is creating problems and causing confusion for the people of Bong County.

(Daily Observer)

- [sic] After a 71-day gruelling process featuring about 1,000 contestants, Nicholas Buigar, 18, on Saturday, December 20, emerged as the new champion of Liberia's famed under-20 talent hunt, 'A Star Is Born.' Ms. Helen Pajebo and Victoria Tiah were declared first and second runners-up respectively at this third such annual event.
- "A Star is Born," was jointly organized by the Liberian Government and the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and held at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in downtown Monrovia.
- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was a special guest at the event, congratulated the winners and commended the organizers and sponsors for being able to bring Liberia's young people out to show off their talents. "We have seen talent today; we now have to nurture this talent; let us give some wonderful encouragement to our young people," the Liberian leader said.

Radio Summary

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

Five Persons Confirmed Dead in Early Morning Accident

- At least five people have been confirmed dead in an early morning accident in Monrovia.
- Police sources say a taxicab early this morning knocked down and killed an Indian police officer of UNMIL and while trying to escape collided with another taxi killing four more persons.
- Hospital sources confirmed the deaths but said their identities remain unknown.
- Meanwhile, five other persons including the "hit and run" driver is wounded and undergoing treatment at a local hospital. Four of the wounded are said to be critical.

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

President Sirleaf Visits Patients at JFK Hospital

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has distributed gifts among patients at the John F. Kennedy Medical Centre in a gesture marking the Christmas season.
- The gifts included toys for kids and other pleasantries as well as food items including a consignment of rice and fish.
- An Executive Mansion release says the President made the presentation Sunday when she visited the patients to identify with them in keeping with the spirit of the Christmas holidays.
- The President's tour covered the paediatric ward, an HIV room treating critical patients with the virus, the hospital's pharmacy; the Intensive Care Unit, and the male and female wards.

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

Star Radio (News monitored today at 9:00 am)

U.S. Based Human Rights Group Alarms Over Plight of Stranded Liberians

- The U.S. Based Universal Human Rights International says the plight of 7,000 Liberians stranded in that country is worsening.
- The Chief Executive Officer of the group, Torli Kruah said the desperate Liberians are currently depending on charity for survival.
- The Liberians were evacuated to the U.S. during the rebel incursion on Monrovia in 2003.

Catholic Cleric Still Favours Establishment of War Crimes Court for Liberia

- Speaking during the launch of a Human Rights resource centre by the Catholic Church in Liberia, the Apostolic Administrator of the Church, Monsignor Andrew Karnley maintained his stance for the establishment of a war crimes court in Liberia.
- Monsignor Andrew Karnley said he believes Liberians must break the culture of impunity despite the contrasting view on the establishment of the court in the country.
- In July this year, speaking at a memorial service for victims of the Lutheran Church massacre, Monsignor Karnley said the Church will support any efforts leading to the establishment of a war crimes court in the country.
- However, weeks after his statement, the Catholic Bishop Conference of Liberia (CABICOL) said the Catholic Church is officially in support of the TRC process rather than the establishment of a war crimes court.

PUL Wants Revision of Agreement regarding Headquarters Building Project

- The Press Union of Liberia has halted the construction being carried out by the company the former leadership claimed won the bid.
- A group of journalists led by the new leadership of the PUL visited the construction scene at the weekend and halted the work by serving the company a formal letter of its decision.
- The new leadership wants a total review of the contract, which it said breaches the union's constitution.
- According to the PUL's constitution, the President, Secretary General and Financial Secretary are authorized signatories to every financial transaction of the union.
- On the contrary, the contract between the PUL and the Arno Contractor Company was only signed by the then President, George Barpeen.

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

Voice of America

Tuesday, 23 December 2008

Former Taylor Wife to Sue Liberian Government If Assets Freeze Order is Issued

By James Butty
Washington, DC

Sources in Monrovia say Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will issue an executive order sometime this week to freeze the assets of former President Charles Taylor, his immediate family and associates. The U.N. Security Council imposed the assets freeze and a travel ban in 2004 because then President Taylor and his associates were interfering with the efforts to bring peace to Liberia. Taylor is currently on trial in The Hague for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

In a unanimous resolution over the weekend, the Security Council called on the Sirleaf government to continue to make all efforts to enforce the assets freeze.

Among those whose assets would be frozen is Senator Jewel Howard Taylor, former wife of Ex-President Charles Taylor. She told VOA she will sue the Liberian government if President Sirleaf goes ahead to issue an Executive Order.

“This is a rumor that started in 2006 when she became president. There were indications then that they might be considering an executive order to freeze the assets of persons on the assets freeze list. And this was vehemently opposed by civil society, and I think some members on the assets freeze list had taken the government to court at that time. And it was stated through the court process that no one can arbitrarily freeze peoples’ accounts without due process. I don’t think this is going to work because if something like that happens, we’ll definitely take the government to court because it is against our constitutional requirement,” she said.

Taylor hoped President Sirleaf would not go against her own promise to uphold the rule of law in Liberia. The former first lady said President Sirleaf should go through the national legislature to create a new law that would enable her to implement any assets freeze.

“Either the laws are enforced or you create a new law to give everyone their day in court. And I think Jewel Howard Taylor as an individual has been charged with ongoing ties with Charles Taylor. Let me say in this public manner, because I know others will be listening, that I do have two children that belong to Charles Taylor. Those children have to have access to their father; he has to speak to them, and I am not going to cut them from their father because I’m on the assets freeze list. If the government intends to freeze assets that I might or might not have it will have to go through a due process out of which I will be declared innocent. Anything outside this would be unconstitutional, and we will take them to court,” Taylor said.

She said whatever executive powers the president of Liberia might have should not contravene the constitution.

Taylor said she is legally divorced from former President Taylor and does not understand why her name is still on the U.N. travel ban list.

Besides the former Liberian first lady, others on the U.N. travel ban and assets freeze list include former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Edwin Snowe, former chairman of Taylor’s National Patriotic Party, Chief Cyril Allen, and former Commissioner of Maritime Affairs of Liberia Benoni Urey.

Former First Lady Taylor also played down reports of a movement to impeach her as senior senator from Bong County.

“I’ve been hearing on the radio and reading in the newspapers that a few people from the county have set out to start a process of impeachment. But I would like to say that our laws do not provide for the impeachment of any senator or any representative for that matter. A sitting senator can be removed for proven cause as for the court of conduct or if she or he does something against the Liberian Senate. And that is not the case here, Taylor said.

She said the efforts to impeach her are politically motivated because she had recently been talking about corruption issues in Bong County.

“If you want to say that Jewel Howard Taylor can be removed from her seat only because she speaks about corruption in the county and the county development funds, then it’s a sad day. But I don’t think this is something that has any bearing on the work that I continue to do for the people of the county. So I’d like to say it is purely politically motivate. I’m a prominent member of the Liberian Senate, I’m a hardworking representative of the people of Bong County, and I think I continue to enjoy their confidence,” Taylor said.

Newswise

Monday, 22 December 2008

<http://www.newswise.com>

War-Crime Expert Assists in "Killing Fields" Trials in Cambodia

Description

In just a few months, five leaders of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime will go on trial before the U.N.-established war crimes Tribunal in Cambodia (known as the ECCC). Case Western Reserve University School of Law's globe-trotting professor Michael Scharf and two of his students recently traveled to Phnom Penh to help the ECCC prepare for the historic "Killing Fields Trials."

Newswise — Michael Scharf, a war-crimes expert who has helped shaped trials in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Sierra Leone, is lending his expertise to the upcoming trials of five former leaders of the Khmer Rouge.

The trials of the accused, believed responsible for the deaths 1.7 million Cambodians, will take place before a U.N. war-crimes tribunal and are scheduled to begin in late January or early February.

Case Western Reserve University law professor Michael Scharf

Scharf was called on to draft a prosecution brief in response to a defense motion to exclude "joint criminal enterprise" liability from the trial. Joint criminal enterprise is a legal doctrine used to convict a defendant of crimes committed by others in the interest of a common plan. Joint criminal enterprise liability is considered key to obtaining convictions of the Khmer Rouge leaders.

"This could be the most important of the pre-trial decisions the tribunal will render," said Robert Petit, the tribunal's international prosecutor, who approached Scharf this summer for assistance.

Scharf arrived in the Cambodian capital Phnom Penh in early November with binders of Nuremberg-era cases and relevant decisions from the Yugoslavia and Rwanda tribunals, as well as the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

With help from two Case Western Reserve University law students, Margaux Day and Niki Dasarathy, who interned at the tribunal, Scharf produced a 30-page brief, which will be submitted to the judges before the court's Dec. 30, 2008, deadline. A decision on the joint criminal enterprise liability issue should be announced shortly thereafter.

Scharf, who directs Case Western Reserve University School of Law's Frederick K. Cox International Law Center and its War Crimes Research Office, is the only law professor to have been invited to serve as special assistant to the prosecutor for these proceedings. In addition to drafting the brief on joint criminal enterprise liability, Scharf lectured to the tribunal's staff, including its judges and defense counsel, on "avoiding chaos in the courtroom."

"Members of the tribunal need to expect the unexpected, be prepared for disruptive defendants and defense counsel, and avoid inflating public expectations," Scharf says. "War crimes trials have traditionally been among the messiest of the great trials in history."

Maintaining control of the Khmer Rouge trials is likely to be a challenge, Scharf warns. The lead defense attorney is Jacques Verges, known for his unconventional tactics in high-profile cases involving accused terrorists and war criminals, including Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein. Scharf points to the accounts in his recently released book *Enemy of the State: The Trial and Execution of Saddam Hussein*, in which he describes the courtroom theatrics firsthand.

The Case Western Reserve professor currently is in Kampala to help the government of Uganda establish a domestic war crimes tribunal and truth commission.