

**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, 13 January 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

International News

Liberian Journalist Testifies Against Charles Taylor / <i>Cocorioko</i>	Pages 3-4
Court Resumes After Christmas and New Year Recess / <i>Charlestaylortrial.org</i>	Pages 5-6
UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 7-9
Congo's Bemba Accused at Hague of Ordering Rape / <i>Reuters</i>	Pages 10-11
World Should Not Condone Violence Threats by Sudan, Rights Activist Says / <i>VOA</i>	Page 12

Cocorioko

Monday, 12 January 2009

Liberian journalist testifies against Charles Taylor

Written by Joseph Cheeseman

After a relaxing Christmas and New Year Holidays, indicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor comes face to face with one of his own nationals, a journalist who alleged that Taylor's presidency in Liberia had an indisputable character flaw of torturing civilians. Mr. Hassan Bility told the Judges of the Special Court for Sierra Leone that he himself suffered several arrests and mistreatments at the hands of Taylor's security forces for writing news and editorials on the Sierra Leone conflict. BBC World Service Trust Joseph Cheeseman reports.

CHEESEMAN: After the exchange of the New Year greetings by the Judges and the lawyers, the Court got down to serious business with Prosecution witness, Hassan Bility. Hassan said he was constantly in trouble for being critical of Taylor's government involvement in Sierra Leone.

Hassan told the Judges that he first got in trouble with the presidency of Charles Taylor in August of 1997 when he wrote an editorial entitled "Who's the Judas in ECOWAS?" The Prosecution witness said the article questioned the sincerity of the Liberian Government under Charles Taylor to resolve the Sierra Leone conflict in collaboration with other leaders of the West African group, ECOWAS. Bility told the Court a band of Police Officers led by former Assistant Director of Police Saah Gborlie, stormed his office at the National Newspaper with rocket propelled grenade and other deadly weapons.

The Liberian Journalist said he was taken to the headquarters of the Taylor's National Patriotic Party where he was seriously warned by Mr. Taylor himself. **BILITY:** President Taylor came forward and warned me to desist from writing what he thought were publications or articles designed to undermine his government and expose it to ridicule. He also said that he was [indistinct] against continuing to publish stories of that nature. He said if whatever was going on between him, between Mr. Taylor and the Revolutionary United Front was nobody's business. The soft-spoken Liberian journalist testified that he was arrested for the second time when he wrote a news article in The National Newspaper, entitled "In Sierra Leone, Whom is Government Supporting, Junta or Democracy?" Bility told the Court the article sought information about why the Liberian Government was not represented at an ECOWAS meeting on Sierra Leone held in Nigeria. The witness explained that state security rained several punches on his body with their weapons.

BILITY: The police beat me.

COUNSEL: Where did they beat you this time?

BILITY: Punching – I mean hitting – and using the butt of the gun to hit me, and using baton – whatever their hands got on.

CHEESEMAN: Mr. Bility testified that he suffered a total of six arrests where he was tortured by state security for publishing several articles, including "Police, ECOMOG Clash," referring to a fight between officers of the Liberia National Police, and "ECOMOG, Good or EVIL," an article which questioned the government state of emergency, and also an article he emailed to Amnesty International about the sexual abuse of Sierra Leonean refugees. He said his final arrest took him to then-President Taylor, who accused him of subversive activities and told him to implicate present Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and

other in a coup plot. Hassan quoted the former Liberian President as the United States or the Amnesty International could not save him that time.

BILITY: He alleges that I had travelled to Europe, purchased arms in Europe, imported the arms to Liberia and stored the arms at the United States Embassy in Monrovia, and that I had travelled to Cote d'Ivoire and brought into Liberia 24 mercenaries who were staying at the United States Embassy in Monrovia, and that I, along with the current president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Bishop Michael Francis, then-Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Monrovia, Ibrahim [Micho], then an executive of a political party called the New Deal Movement, Alhaji Kromah, leader of the defunct ULIMO-K warring faction, and Robert Perry, the former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs at the United States State Department, that I along with all of these people was plotting to overthrow his government and kill him. Mr. Taylor's eyes were transfixed on Mr. Bility through out the testimonies. Hassan Bility is not a stranger in the Special Court for Sierra Leone. According to the record of the Court, Bility testified in Freetown in the case of the Sierra Leone rebel fighters, RUF, on October 28, 2004. Bility's testimonies on direct examination continue on Tuesday.

Charlestaylortrial.org

Monday, 12 January 2009

Court Resumes After Christmas and New Year Recess

85th Prosecution Witness, Liberian Journalist Hassan Bilitay Testifies Against Charles Taylor

Due to technical problems with the live streaming of the trial, certain portions of the witness's testimony were not recorded in today's session.

10:00am: After the Christmas and New Year recess, the trial of Charles Taylor resumed today Monday January 12, 2009. The judges and lawyers from both prosecution and defence exchanged Christmas and New Year courtesie among themselves before the witness was led in evidence.

Prosecution counsel Mr. Christopher Santora commenced the examination of the 85th prosecution witness, Liberian journalist Hassan Bilitay. In October 2004, Mr. Bilitay also testified against RUF accused persons before the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown. Today, he commenced his testimony against his former head of state, Charles Taylor.

In his testimony, Mr. Bilitay asserted that while serving as head of state of Liberia, Mr. Taylor had an indisputable record of torturing civilians. He stated that he himself personally suffered arrests and mistreatments from Taylor's security forces for writing and publishing articles about Liberian involvement in the conflict in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Bilitay testified that he first got into trouble with Mr. Taylor in August 1997 when he wrote an editorial in his National Newspaper entitled "Who is the Judas in ECOWAS?" The editorial, he said questioned the sincerity of the Liberian government under Charles Taylor to work with other West African leaders to resolve the conflict in Sierra Leone. Mr. Bilitay said that upon the publication of the editorial, armed police officers, led by the former Assistant Director of Police Sahr Gborlie stormed his office with Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG) and other deadly weapons. He said he was taken to the headquarters of Taylor's National Patriotic Party where he was seriously warned by Taylor himself. He said that Taylor warned him to stop publishing stories in his newspaper that would undermine his government and expose him to ridicule. He said Taylor told him that whatever relationship he had with fighters in Sierra Leone was his personal business.

Mr. Bilitay told the court that he was arrested for the second time when he wrote an article in his National Newspaper entitled "In Sierra Leone, Who is Government Supporting, Junta or Democracy?" He said that the article questioned why the Liberian government was not represented in Nigeria for talks held by West African leaders to resolve the crisis in Sierra Leone. The witness said that he was arrested and beaten by police officers using gun butts, batons and other materials. Asked if he knew the police officers by name, the witness said he only recognized their faces.

Mr. Bilitay testified that he suffered a total of six arrests, during which he was tortured by state security officers for publishing articles that the Taylor government found offensive. Among the articles he published were "Police-ECOMOG Clash", which referred to a fight between the Liberian National Police and ECOMOG soldiers in Liberia. He said he also wrote another article entitled "Good or Evil", which questioned the government's state of emergency powers. The witness said he also wrote another article which he sent to Amnesty International about the sexual abuse of Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia.

Mr. Bilitay said that his final arrest took him to Mr. Taylor who accused him of being involved in subversive activities. He said Mr. Taylor accused him of having travelled to Europe to purchase arms and ammunition which he had stored in the US Embassy in Monrovia. He said Taylor accused him of having transported 24 mercenaries from Ivory Coast into Liberia. According to the witness, Taylor told him he had plotted to overthrow his government together with current Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Catholic Bishop Michael Francis, executive member of the New Deal Movement political party Ibrahim Mitchel, leader of ULIMO-K Alhaji Kromah and former Secretary of State for African Affairs at the US Embassy in Liberia Robert Perry.

Court adjourned for the day and the witness is set to continue his testimony tomorrow Tuesday January 13, 2009.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
12 January 2009**

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

Newspaper Summary

ECOWAS Suspends Guinea

(The News, The Monitor, The Inquirer, the Informer)

- ECOWAS leaders yesterday made good its threat to discourage future military coups in the sub-region when it formally suspended Guinea from its fold until constitutional government is restored.
- The suspension was handed down over in a communiqué issued by the extra-ordinary summit of ECOWAS Heads of State which took place at the instance of President Umaru Yar'Adua, in Abuja the nations capital.
- In a communiqué issued by the extraordinary summit of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Heads of State and Government at the end of the meeting, ECOWAS leaders said the punitive action is "to impress it on the military authorities in Guinea the imperative of returning the country to constitutional democracy as quickly as practicable."
- It will be recalled that Guinea had earlier in the wake of the coup de'tat been suspended by the African Union (AU).
- Yesterday's extraordinary session of the sub-regional body was attended by many heads of state and governments in the sub region.
- Among those in attendance at the meeting at the Congress Hall of Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja, were the presidents of Nigeria, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Togo, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Ghana and Sierra Leone. The Prime Minister of Niger Republic was also present while the other countries were represented.
- According to the communiqué, which was read by ECOWAS Executive Secretary, Dr. Ibn Chambas, the body after careful consideration of all the reports and recommendations before it, condemned the coup in conformity with the provision of protocol A/SP1/12/01 on democracy and good governance. In consonance with the principled position of ECOWAS against unconstitutional accession to or maintenance of power, it therefore suspended Guinea from its fold until constitutional order is restored in the country. The regional body however assured the country of its support in its effort to restore democratic rule. It also promised to sustain dialogue with the junta government with the aim to fast-track the return of democratic government.

Senator Johnson alarms over "confidential" TRC document – Vows to resist

(National Chronicle)

- Former rebel leader Prince Johnson has revealed what he considers a secret document prepared by the truth commission to indict all former warring faction leaders for war crimes.
- Retired General Johnson, who is now a Senator for Nimba County, alleged the document contains the names of faction leaders and senior commanders.
- He told reporters more than 150-names of leaders and senior commanders of his former INPFL, ULIMO, NPFL, LURD, LPC and MODEL are on the list.
- Retired General Johnson appealed to the civil society community and well-meaning Liberians to intervene because the former faction leaders would resist any attempt to arrest them.
- According to Senator Johnson, the document is labelled 'confidential' and is a draft recommendation of the TRC to be officially submitted in June this year.
- The Nimba County Senator also clarified that from his source, President Sirleaf is not aware of the draft and appealed to the President to abort what he sees as 'potential trouble.'

- When contacted, the Communication Officer of the TRC said assertion by Senator Johnson is strange and surprising to the commission.
- Mr. James Kpargoi however, said at this stage of the TRC process, all reports of the truth commission are confidential.
- He said the reports will remain confidential until June when the TRC finally compiles and submits its findings and recommendation.

Ex-Liberian dictator's son sentenced to 97 years in US jail

(Daily Observer, National Chronicle, Liberian Express, New Vision, The Monitor)

- "Chuckie" Taylor, son of former Liberian president Charles Taylor, was sentenced in a US federal court Friday to 97 years in prison for torturing and killing people in Liberia.
- Charles McArthur Emmanuel Taylor, 31, a US citizen also known as "Chuckie," was found guilty in October of crimes committed while he was the head of Liberia's anti-terrorist services during his father's 1997-2003 rule.
- Judge Cecilia Altonaga said there was no reason for a reduced, 20-year sentence requested by the defense, instead insisting "1,164 months in prison is the appropriate sentence" for crimes of "universally condemned torture."

Chief Zoe gives Testimonies in Timor Massacre

(Daily Observer)

- Chief Zanzan Karwa, National Traditional Chief Zoe (NTCZ) of Liberia, last Friday, January 9, 2009, told Criminal Court 'B' at the Temple of Justice that the dispute in which 14 persons were killed was not between Senator Roland C. Kaine and Charles Bennie, but rather between A. Y. Kollie and Bennie.

Armed Robbers Hit Central Monrovia

(The News, The Monitor, The Inquirer, the Informer)

- Another of group cutlass-wielding thugs attacked a resident of Bye- Pass/Slipway community and wounded one Joe Bryant, 27.
- This comes in the wake of a recent raid of suspected hide-outs of several suspected armed bandits on the outskirts of Monrovia by the Emergency Response Unit (ERU) of the Liberia National Police (LNP),

Radio Summary

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

Senator Johnson Suspects he Might be Indicted for War Crimes

(Also reported on Star Radio, Sky F.M., Truth F.M. and ELBC)

President Sirleaf Gives Position on Guinean Crisis

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has commended the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for engaging the ruling CNDD military junta in Guinea, while rejecting the coup d'etat which brought them to power. She has also expressed the delight that the two-year limit put forward by the military junta as the period for returning the country to constitutional rule is working towards being reduced.
- The Liberian leader spoke during the closed session of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government's Extraordinary Summit held today in Abuja, Nigeria. The Summit was convened to examine the latest developments in Guinea, following the death of General Lansana Conte, considering in particular the military takeover of government.

- The President said Liberia is aware of the danger that will arise if the Guinean issue is not properly addressed, stressing that ECOWAS needs to act so as not to revert to sub-regional war. She said the placement of political sanctions on Guinea thereby barring the West African nation from attending all ECOWAS Heads of States and ministerial meetings is in the right direction.
- She called for care to be taken before economic sanctions on Guinea are put in place, saying it could further worsen the situation and called on ECOWAS to work with the international community to support Guinea to organize free and fair elections. The President finally disagreed with the ECOWAS Council of Ministers' call for the international community to be encouraged to place general sanctions on Guinea noting that such an action would be detrimental in the long run.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Sky F.M., Truth F.M. and ELBC)

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

Leader Urges Economic Scale Up At Paris Conference On New Capitalism

- An international conference on the global economic crisis has ended in the French capital, Paris, with a call by Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf urging financial institutions and the world's leading economies to focus on finding practical solutions to the economic challenges facing the world.
- The debate, President Johnson Sirleaf cautioned, should not be framed around extreme forms of ideology, a return to closed markets or markets heavily controlled by the state.
- According to an Executive Mansion dispatch from Paris, the Liberian leader expressed concerns about the closing of financial markets as investors become intensely risk conscious.
- She stressed that most developing countries are just beginning to reap the benefits of foreign investment or stronger competition. "I worry about the break in the development momentum of Africa where for many countries, the benefit of sustained economic reform, and private sector led growth are just beginning to be felt," the Liberian President noted.

Reuters

Monday, 12 January 2009

Congo's Bemba accused at Hague of ordering rape

By Reed Stevenson

THE HAGUE, Jan 12 (Reuters) - International Criminal Court prosecutors accused former Congolese rebel warlord Jean-Pierre Bemba of ordering mass rape to terrorise civilians at a hearing on Monday to decide whether he will face trial.

Bemba, 46, faces three counts of crimes against humanity and five counts of war crimes, and is the highest-profile suspect to date brought before the world's first permanent war crimes court, set up in 2002.

Bemba is accused of leading rebels from Democratic Republic of Congo in a campaign of torture, rape and murder in neighbouring Central African Republic. He was arrested in Belgium last May.

The hearing on Monday was to decide whether there was enough evidence to proceed with a trial. Bemba denies the charges.

The charges focus on the period between 2002 and 2003 when Ange-Felix Patasse, president of the Central African Republic at the time, asked Bemba's Congolese Liberation Movement to put down coup attempts in his country.

"Bemba's men went from house to house, pillaging and raping mothers, wives and daughters," said prosecutor Petra Kneuer.

Bemba's troops were instructed to "traumatise and terrorise" the population to prevent them from supporting any resistance against Patasse, the prosecution said.

"To do this, he (Bemba) chose rape as his main method," Kneuer said.

A representative of victims described in detail how a district chief in the capital of Bangui was raped for four hours in front of his wife and children before troops turned to them.

Defence lawyer Karim Asad Ahmad Khan rejected the prosecution's claims against Bemba, arguing that he cannot be held responsible for crimes committed by his troops because they were under the "command and control" of Patasse's government.

"Uniforms, food and money were all provided to MLC troops, not by authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo, not by Mr. Bemba, ... but by the head of state of the Central African Republic," Khan said, adding the prosecution "failed to establish intent and knowledge."

After the four-day pretrial confirmation of charges hearing, the three-judge panel led by Ekaterina Trendafilova has 60 days to decide whether to go forward with the trial.

Bemba, who served as a vice-president to Joseph Kabila in the post-war transition after Congo's 1998-2003 war, is being held at a detention centre near The Hague.

Bemba fled into exile in Portugal in 2007, saying he feared for his life in Congo. His fighters had battled in the streets of Kinshasa with Kabila's presidential guards in clashes that killed several hundred.

Bemba, appearing in court in a navy suit and blue tie, occasionally took notes and passed messages to defence lawyers sitting nearby as he chewed gum.

He joins former Congolese militia Leader Thomas Lubanga and two other alleged Congolese warlords also indicted by the ICC. Former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who is being held in the same detention centre but tried by the separate U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Last month, Central African Republic's President Francois Bozize agreed at talks to negotiate with rebel and opposition leaders on a consensus government. Patasse, ousted by Bozize in a 2003 coup, was among those who took part in the discussion.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 13 January 2009

World Should Not Condone Violence Threats by Sudan, Rights Activist Says

By James Butty
Washington, DC

Sudanese opposition leader Hassan al-Turabi said President Omar al-Bashir should take responsibility for war crimes in Darfur, and surrender himself to the International Criminal Court. ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo has accused President Bashir of orchestrating genocide in Darfur, where the government has been fighting rebels since 2003.

Speaking to reporters Monday in Khartoum about the possible impact if the ICC issues an arrest warrant for Mr. Bashir, al-Turabi also warned that Sudan was at risk of becoming worse than Somalia if central authority breaks down.

Richard Dicker, director of the international Justice Program at Human Rights Watch told VOA al-Turabi's comments are well-founded.

"Before there could be any consideration by the president as to surrendering himself, there first needs to be an arrest warrant from the court. Our expectation is within four weeks time more or less such a decision will be made by the judges. My own expectation is there will be an arrest warrant and giving those conditions it would be entirely appropriate for Omar al-Bashir to take responsibility for crimes alleged in Darfur and surrender himself for a fair trial at the ICC. In that context, the statement by Al-Turabi is well-founded," he said

At the same, Turabi also warned that Sudan was at risk of becoming worse than Somalia if central authority broke down as a result of an ICC indictment of President Bashir.

Dicker hoped Sudanese authorities would have in place a succession plan in the event President Bashir is indicted by the ICC.

"I can't say what al-Turabi had in mind in making these statements. But I can say in the event of Omar al-Bashir's surrender to the ICC, one certainly does not want to see a vacuum at the center of political power in Khartoum, and steps would need to be taken to make sure that no such power vacuum existed and that presidential authority could continue to be exercised by a successor to President al-Bashir," Dicker said.

On Sunday, Sudan state media quoted Salah Gosh, head of Sudan's National Security and Intelligence Service, warned that foreigners could be targeted by radicals if the International Criminal Court indicted President al-Bashir for alleged war crimes.

Dicker said the international community should not tolerate and threat of violence on the part of Sudanese officials.

"There can't be any tolerance by the international community for any violence directed at innocent individuals be they Sudanese or foreign as a reprisal or retaliation for the decision to issue an arrest warrant against President al-Bashir. We are expecting members of the Security Council as well as the U.N. secretariat to convey that message privately and publicly to the Sudanese authority," he said.