

**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:

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Cocorioko

Wednesday, 14 January 2009

Defence Team seeks to discredit Bility's testimony

Written by Mariama Khai Forna reports from the Hague

The Defense Team of indicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor has told the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone that Liberian journalist Hassan Bility was a member two Liberian rebel groups, ULIMO-K and LURD, that fought against Taylor's government.

The Defense team indicated to the Court that Bility has a personal hatred for the former President Taylor. The Defense also declared that Mr. Bility was a spy for several international groups during the presidency of Mr. Taylor. The BBC World Service Trust Mariama Khai Fornah now reports from The Hague.

FORNAH: Charles Taylor's lead Defense lawyer has told the Special Court that Liberian journalist Hassan Bility's desire to testify against Charles Taylor was motivated by ethnic animosity and political affiliation with leaders of two Liberian former rebel groups.

Defense Lawyer Courtenay Griffiths said Prosecution witness Bility was related to ULIMO-K leader Alhaji Kromah and LURD Leader, Sekou Damateo Konneh. The Defense Lawyer told the court that Mr. Bility was a member of defunct rebel group, ULIMO.

GRIFFITHS: The reason why ECOMOG chose you to go to Sierra Leone was precisely because of your ULIMO-K connections. That's why you were an attractive proposition for them. That's the truth, isn't it?

BILITY: Counsel, that is not the truth.

GRIFFITHS: Because it would have been easy for someone like you, Mandingo, connected to Konneh and other people, Kromah, high up in ULIMO-K, to gain access to places in Sierra Leone because there was a force of former ULIMO-K working in the junta government. That's the truth, isn't it Mr. Bility?

BILITY: Counsel, that is far from the truth. That is not the truth. My being Mandingo shouldn't be an issue here. [I said] because if I'm a Mandingo then I was generally report against a particular group who aren't Mandingo – no, I was doing my duty.

FORNAH: Mr. Griffiths also accused Mr. Bility of making a secret trip to Sierra Leone in August 1997, not in his capacity as a journalist, but as a spy.

Legal arguments ensued between the Prosecution and the Defense about who facilitated Mr. Bility's trip to Sierra Leone at the time.

Bility disclosed that it was Nigerian ECOMOG soldiers who took him to Sierra Leone, but the Defense was interested in the names of the soldiers.

The Prosecution went to the Defence of the witness and said the witness as a journalist was protected by several international laws not to disclose his source.

Having listened to arguments from both sides, the Court said the matter was a serious legal issue, so the Defense should make a written submission to the Court on Friday January 23.

Mr. Griffiths insisted that Hassan's trip to Sierra Leone was a secret operation organized by ECOMOG.

GRIFFITHS: You were sneaked into Sierra Leone with the assistance of ECOMOG soldiers. They sneak you across the border between their control zone and the junta control, and insert you in Freetown. Why did they go to all that trouble unless you were a spy?

BILITY: Counsel, nobody sneaked me. I made a conscious decision to go into Sierra Leone, and I also want to remind the counsel journalist going into areas where they are forbidden to report is not anything subversive. For example, you have BBC journalists sneaking from South Africa into Zimbabwe even though they are barred. I was doing my professional and ethical duty I thought was necessary. So ECOMOG had absolutely no stake in it at all.

FORNAH: Mr. Griffiths said Bility's hatred for Charles Taylor was based on his affiliation with the All Liberian Coalition Party (ALCOP), which has Mr. Alhaji Kromah as its standard bearer. Hassan admitted he did some professional writings for ALCOP and was paid, but denied membership with the party. Mr. Griffiths pushed the witness on his association with ALCOP.

GRIFFITHS: And it's right, isn't it, that ALCOP was the political wing of the former ULIMO-K.

BILITY: That's correct.

GRIFFITHS: So you were a paid writer for the political wing of ULIMO-K.

BILITY: I was hired by them to write.

GRIFFITHS: And did you sympathise with their politics?

BILITY: Well that was a matter of personal decision...

GRIFFITHS: That's why I'm asking you.

BILITY: I did appreciate all the politics in Liberia.

GRIFFITHS: Did you support them?

BILITY: What do you mean "support"? Support in what sense, counsel?

GRIFFITHS: In the sense that they were the party you would have preferred to vote for.

BILITY: I would have preferred to vote for the All Liberian Coalition Party. I would have preferred to vote for the Unity Party.

GRIFFITHS: So you would have voted for any of those three?

BILITY: Yes sir. Personally I did not have a preference as such.

FORNAH: The cross-examination of Hassan Bility who is testifying as a torture victim of Charles Taylor's administration continues here in The Hague on Thursday.

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
14 January 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

Liberia signs US\$2.6Bn Investment Term Sheet with Chinese company

(The News and National Chronicle)

- The Government of Liberia and China Union have signed the term sheet of the proposed US\$2.6 billion United States dollars investment for the Bong Mines.
- The signing of the agreement followed six days of intense negotiation between the government investment team and a delegation from China Union.
- The Chairman of the National Investment Commission said the term sheet summarizes all the principle terms that have been negotiated and agreed upon by both parties.
- Dr. Richard Tolbert said lawyers from the Liberian government team and China Union would draft the Mineral Development agreement for onward submission to the President.
- Dr. Tolbert described the China Union investment as the biggest in the country's history and assured it would lead to massive job creation and infrastructure development.
- Speaking on behalf of his entity, the Chief Executive Officer of China Union said the rehabilitation of the economy was a huge event for Liberia.
- Mr. Yin Fuyon assured China Union was interested in playing a key part in revitalizing the economy.
- Mr. Fuyon assured that his company would live up to every term in the agreement and promised to make Liberia an attractive market for iron ore.
- Also, Finance Minister Augustine Ngafuan outlined some of the benefits of the China Union investment in Liberia.
- Minister Ngafuan said the company would create about three thousand jobs and carry out massive infrastructure development in the country.
- According to him, China Union would provide social contribution to three counties over the 25-year period of its investment.
- The company would provide annual support to Bong, Margibi and Montserrado counties through the national budget just like Arcelor Mittal is doing.
- Minister Ngafuan disclosed the Chinese company would also make intervention in the country's hydro-electric power system.
- The Finance Minister said as part of the agreement China Union would pave the road from Kakata to Bong Mines to give people access to market and health care.
- He said it was exciting for such huge investment to come to Liberia amidst the global financial crisis.

US\$100M Infused to Boost Liberia's Agriculture Sector – Says Minister

(Daily Observer)

- [sic] At least US\$100 million dollars have been infused into the Liberia Agriculture sector for crop production, Dr. Christopher Toe, Liberia's Agriculture Minister told the Daily Observer in an exclusive interview at the weekend. This money does not include the NGO or other sources, the minister said, while explaining an extensive programme nationwide that the money was being used for.

Senate Delays Reinstatement of Suspended Leader

(The Renaissance, The News, Daily Observer, Public Agenda, Heritage, Inquirer, National Chronicle)

- The Senate Tuesday failed to reinstate its suspended President Pro Tempore, despite promising to do so.
- Hours of intense negotiations to reinstate Senator Isaac Nyenabo as ordered by the Supreme Court ended in deadlock.
- The President of the Senate, Vice President Joseph Boakai held the failed negotiations with separate groups of Senators.
- Senator Lahai Lassana who presides over the Senate in the absence of the Vice President said consultations were still ongoing to reinstate Nyenabo.
- The announcement came shortly after Senator Lassana ordered the removal of the seat of the President Pro Tempore from its usual position.
- It was gathered that Senator Lassana and his group of Senators reached a decision for the Vice President to preside over the body for now.
- The suspended Pro Temp Isaac Nyenabo for the second time attended the session with the hope of regaining his post.
- Meanwhile, the National Chronicle newspaper supported speculations that the senators are due to shortly elect a new leader replacing Isaac Nyenabo.

Man Nabbed in Fake Check Scam

(Daily Observer)

- A Nigerian believed to be in his late 30s and identified as Ajibogun Taorid Badmus has been arrested and sent to court on a charge of criminal facilitation for his alleged involvement in a fake check scam.

Radio Summary

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

Government, Chinese company sign Investment Term Sheet

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

Senate fails to Reinstate Suspended President Pro Tempore Tuesday

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

Calm returns to UL as administration extends ‘Add and Drop’ Process for Two weeks

- Authorities at the University of Liberia have agreed to extend by two weeks the ‘add and drop’ process for students beginning Wednesday.
- The extension of the process followed days of protest by students for what they considered the UL administration’s alleged refusal to allow them continue the add and drop process.
- UL Acting President Ansu Sonniii told a news conference all mechanisms have been put in place to have the students go through the process.
- Prof. Sonnii said the administration agreed with the extension of the process based on an apology letter written by the students.
- Prof. Sonnii cautions the students to take advantage of the extension period to avoid a recurrence of violence on the campus.
- Meanwhile, the UL Acting President has disclosed that two thousand students have applied for graduation in March this year.
- Prof. Ansu Sonnii said the students would be thoroughly checked to ensure they have gone through the requirements of the university before graduation.

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

Pres. Sirleaf, Nimba Officials Discuss Land Dispute

- President Sirleaf has been holding meeting with senior officials of Nimba County including leading members of the Mandingo ethnic group of the county.
- The President appealed to the officials to exert all efforts to ensure that the peace now enjoy in the country is sustained.
- The meeting by the President comes amid reports of unsettled land disputes in Nimba County, particularly in the commercial district of Ganta.

- President Sirleaf reminded the officials that the issue of land continues to remain a challenge.
- She however, cautioned that unless it is dealt with comprehensively, the issue will continue to confront the country.
- The President informed the officials of Nimba that legislation is now before the National Legislature for the establishment of a Land Commission.
- When established, the President said, the Commission will have the authority to address many of the land issues in the country.
- Until then, President Sirleaf said all sides and parties to land disputes in Nimba must make sacrifices and exercise flexibility in finding a solution to the land issue.

President Sirleaf Addresses Regional Security Forum

- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf says regional approach is crucial to fostering the development agenda of individual Mano River Union State.
- She said unless regional approaches are adopted, national development among MRU member states may be constrained and unattainable.
- Madam Sirleaf observed regional approaches have taken a back seat because member states are still faced with numerous domestic challenges.
- She named some of the challenges as departing from a long history of under development and closed societies and the ability to respond to the needs of the young population.
- Madam Sirleaf said these vices in the past led to violent upheavals that translated into conflict in all of the countries.
- The President called for transformation throughout the region to avoid the risk of repeating mistakes of the past.
- Madam Sirleaf spoke Tuesday at the start of a two-day regional security workshop on States at Regional Risk.
- The workshop is focused on post conflict conversations within and across borders in the Mano River basin.
- Also speaking at the program, a visiting US Professor says youth unemployment must be a priority if countries in the Mano River basin want to avoid the recurrence of conflict.
- Professor Mike McGovern said if youths are not working with deadly weapons, they would not use those weapons to make a living.
- Professor McGovern observed a lot of young men and women in the MRU region made a living with weapons by force or violence during the war years.
- The US Professor said while using weapons at the time, those young people missed the opportunity of acquiring education.
- Professor McGovern said the lack of education has made many of those young people not trained enough to take on “peace time” jobs they might have.
- He spoke Tuesday at a two day workshop under the auspices of the Institute of Critical International Studies of Emory University based in the USA.
- The workshop is bringing together NGOs, governmental and university professors from the MRU basin.

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

Aggrieved Family Implicates VP Boakai in Land Dispute

- A family has accused Vice President Joseph Boakai of purchasing one acre and three lots of land from the wrong individual in Thinkers' Village on the Monrovia-Robertsfield Highway.
- The Borbor Freeman family, which is claiming ownership of the property, said Joseph Trinity who allegedly sold the land to VP Boakai is not the legal owner of the property.
- Mr. Freeman said his family and Mr. Trinity went to the Supreme Court and the court ruled that the land belongs to his family.
- He alleged following the verdict, Mr. Trinity sold the land to Ambassador Boakai and left for the United States.
- Mr. Freeman said he has informed the VP about the situation but nothing was done about in the matter.
- However, the Press and Public Affairs Director in the office of Vice President Boakai denied the allegation.

- Mr. Terrance Sesay said Mr. Boakai informed him that he did not buy any property in the Thinkers' Village area as alleged by the Freeman family.

School teacher picked up for brutalizing female student

- Police in Monrovia early Tuesday Morning picked up a Primary School Teacher after he allegedly stripped a female student naked and violently beat on her.
- The school is the Concerned Women Primary Education, located in the unfinished Central Bank building on Ashman Street.
- Student Cynthia Mitchell complained, Instructor George Gbogo inflicted serious wounds on her body after giving her forty lashes.
- She explained with tears streaming down her cheeks, it followed a confusion involving the girl and another female student.
- Student Mitchell said a lady working with the General Auditing Commission rescued her from the teacher.
- When contacted, instructor George Gbogo denied ever stripping the student naked but admitted giving her ten lashes.

U.S. Ambassador meets Education Ministry officials

- United States Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield says she shares the future challenges faced by the Education Ministry to address the needs of education in the country.
- Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield said education is the key to Liberia's future and in order to get Liberia up and started government must focus on education.
- Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield told Star Radio the US Government is committed in ensuring that more teachers are trained and qualify to teach.
- She said the United States government would work closely with the ministry to revitalize most of the teachers training Institutes in the rural parts of the country.
- Ambassador Greenfield said the US Government would continue to work with the ministry on strategies for tutorial education at the university and high school level.
- Ambassador Greenfield spoke to Star Radio Tuesday when she visited the Education Ministry to assess its on-going programs with the United States government.
- Meanwhile, the Minister of Education says Liberia does not have sufficient schools to accommodate the available school age population at all levels.
- Minister Joseph Korto said the country's educational system lacks several segments including primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions.
- Minister Korto told Star Radio government has planned to decentralize the higher educational system.
- According to Minister Korto, government would construct three colleges in Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh counties.
- He said the project would afford opportunity for students to get education in their areas of origin instead of trooping to Monrovia.

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

Truth FM (News monitored today at 2:00 pm)

France Assures Liberia of More Support

- Discussions have taken place between Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and leading French government officials.
- French Prime Minister Francois Fillon; Foreign and European Affairs Minister Bernard Kouchner and the Secretary of State for Human Rights and Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Rama Yade, were among French government officials who held talks with the Liberian leader during her recent visit to France to attend the 'New World, New Capitalism' symposium.
- In separate meetings, the officials expressed satisfaction over the progress taking place in Liberia and assured the Liberian leader of the French government's support of Liberia's development initiatives.
- They renewed their government's support in capacity-building for the Liberia National Police (LNP). Foreign Minister Kouchner informed President Johnson Sirleaf that his government will

be sending instructors to Liberia to assist with the training of officials of the LNP. France, which is also providing 13 million Euros in bilateral assistance to Liberia, is considering providing logistical support to the Liberian police.

- As part of their bilateral assistance, France will also assist in the construction of a number of customs and border posts for the Liberian Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN).

Africa News

Wednesday, 14 January 2009

Liberia: Former warlord charges

By Mohammed Murtala Kamara, AfricaNews reporter in Freetown, Sierra Leone

The man who made history by butchering Liberia's former head of state Samuel Kanyeon Doe during 1991 has said that he will resist any form of arrest for his role in the country's civil war.



Price Johnson, former warlord turned senator now accused the Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of submitting a confidential report for his indictment including some other members who took part in the 14 years civil war.

Johnson made a horrific statement to the TRC on why he murdered Doe and later burnt the body. He accused the TRC of a ploy to indict him and hundreds of others saying "No one should witch-hunt us; no one should try to arrest me, because there will be resistance," adding that "we former faction leaders, we revolutionaries, we are for peace in this country."

The TRC was set up to look into the root cause of the war and to make recommendation to avoid a recurrence. Hundreds of people have testified before the Commission and it is expected to end its mandate by February this year.

According to the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) it is rare for TRC's testimonies to be used in prosecuting war criminals. Despite Johnson's accusation, legal observers have ruled out any Sierra Leone style of a Special Court to try those that bear the greatest responsibility during the war.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Wednesday, 14 January 2009

Jewel named 'Senator of the Year'

Written by Julius Kanubah

A local newspaper has named the wife of detained former President Charles Taylor as Senator of the Year.

The Renaissance Newspaper presented the award to Senator Taylor for what it termed as her stem against corruption and promoting development.

The award was presented to Senator Taylor by the Managing Editor of the Renaissance Newspaper Moses Sankaly.

The Renaissance Newspaper, an organ of the Renaissance Corporation is run by some journalists thought to be loyalists of Charles Taylor.

Senator Jewel Howard Taylor expressed appreciation for the award and promised to continue her good work.