

**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:

Thursday, 29 January 2009

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

BY: I.B.M. KAMARA

As you go through these series, one thing for certain is that you will get a feel of what this country and its people have gone through. Some of the after effects of that war and military coup of Johnny Paul Koroma are still with us today. His coup was of a disastrous difference to other coups in Sierra Leone, because of the unholy marriage with the most inhuman bandits called the RUF rebels. That marriage resulted to the bitterest taste of the rebels, 'sobels' and junta boys in our capital city Freetown. January 6, 1999 (J-6) will hardly be forgotten so easily.

The mayhem leashed out on innocent inhabitants will always remain vivid in the minds of the many who survived the onslaught of extreme brutality in the hands of insane and barbaric mortals. Killings, amputations, burning of houses and persons, looting with utmost impunity and massive infrastructural destruction were the events that characterized January 6, 1999 (J-6).

Today as we look back on those days, we cannot but accept the stark reality that war in whatever form is not good and there is hardly a winner. On both sides of the warring factions, human lives were cut short on this earth or in this world.

It is because of that sad experience one keeps reminding our society through these articles as to avert those things that led to our self-destruction, because if it happens again, it is Sierra Leoneans more that will perish. We do have the strong conviction that that day (J-6) and the entire events of 1991 to 1996 will never, never again happen to us as a nation. To strengthen that belief, I would want you to be quite aware and knowledgeable on the events that took place; so go ahead and continue reading from where I stopped in the last article.

On 23rd October 1994, reinforced by more soldiers and captured villagers, the rebels staged the most audacious attack on a convoy, killing over sixty civilians and soldiers. Many rebels were also killed. The survivors dispersed, and on 31st October having regrouped, attacked the gold mining towns of Kalmoroh and Mansumbrie. On Tuesday 1st November, they moved in on the old and historic town of Mabonto, whose inhabitants had fled the day before, on the same day, the prosperous and populous town of Bumbuna and site of the country's \$100 million hydroelectric project was invaded and several houses burnt.

The rebels then moved with lightning speed destroying the towns of Bendugu and Alkalia, and on the 7th November, they struck Kabala, the principal town

of the northern Koinadugu district and home of the famed Tamaboroh warriors.

The rapidity with which the rebels had covered enormous territory all on foot was amazing. Between 31st October, when they attack Kalmoroh, and 7th November when they eventually hit Kabala in the far north, they had covered a distance of approximately 110 miles of very mountainous terrain.

But perhaps even more intriguing in the attacks on this region were certain salient facts. Firstly, the insurgents had covered a large swathe of territory along open motor roads and familiar footpaths over a considerable distance without any opposition or interception by government forces. The latter had been kept fully informed of rebel movements along a well-defined route. The response to each attack always came a day or more after the rebels had left town.

Secondly, a contingent of heavily-armed soldiers had been stationed rather irrelevantly in the junction town of Matham following the attack on Masanga Leprosy hospital town. The troops arrived days after the attacks and stayed for about a week.

viciously stabbed and clubbed to death.

The course of the war, its intractable nature, the defiance of the insurgents and the apparent inability of government forces to bring them to heel, produced a mood of deep despair and confusion among many in the military. But among the civilian population who had primarily been the innocent victims of rebel atrocities, and occasionally those perpetrated by government troops, the mood was one of anger and lost confidence in the national army.

In most places affected by the conflict, educational and medical services were now totally non-existent, while several towns had been thoroughly looted or destroyed. In the nation's capital of Freetown which in 1991 had seemed remote and unaffected by the war, a mood of uncertainty about the nation's future stability slowly crept in, as refugees from the war zone began to trickle into the city. There were now the routine helicopter flights bringing slain officers into the capital for burial.

It was a result of this deep frustration and a realization that even after two years of the coup, the

aimed at settling scores

- Ulimo soldiers should be withdrawn and check points manned by police and not soldiers.
- Discipline of soldiers in their fighting efforts should be enhanced.
- Chiefs should take active part in recruiting soldiers within their chiefdoms.
- Government should ensure that the army personnel at the war front be adequately catered for in order to avoid looting by soldiers."

The Chiefs also felt strongly that their personal involvement in the war especially in recruiting disciplined youths instead of thugs, could influence in a positive way the course of events. They stated that the fighting men were being neglected by their field commanders and the military authorities in Freetown. This was partially responsible for the unending looting by soldiers.

Ironically this fact had been the immediate rationale for the coup as the Junta Chairman on 30th April 1992 stated;

"Our soldiers continue to sacrifice their lives on the war front in spite of very poor logistics sup-

should talk to those people who have influence over Charles Taylor so that these rebels can tell us what their demands are so that we can come to a point of compromise.."

The article acknowledged that the main intention of the rebels was:

"to drain the country economically, create a reign of terror and in the process make the country ungovernable." For this reason an effort should be made "to locate the leadership of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and pass on a message to that leadership that we in Sierra Leone are tired of the destruction and that we need peace."

This was one more instance of the sort of naiveté that characterized the entire perception of the rebel conflict. It was obvious that by mid 1993, very little in the way of concrete information was known about the whereabouts of the leadership of the RUF.

And for over a year from late 1993 to all of 1994, the RUF Commander Foday Sankoh had stopped communicating with the BBC. He was by this time variously rumoured to be dead, or had fled to Liberia or was being carried in a hammock due to paralysis.

The insurgents were thus apparently lacking in an unidentifiable political leadership that could be contacted or even a central and unified military command structure. The killer commandos in the field often operated as independent units maintaining their links with rogue military officers.

By this time also, it was generally agreed that the Liberian rebels of the NPFL who had formed the bulwark of the initial invasion force were hardly any longer in Sierra Leone.

The insurgents were now nationals, forcibly or willing inducted into rebel ranks. Charles Taylor therefore had little influence over the activities of these groups by this time.

What was even more significant was the fact that by late 1994, Charles Taylor himself was facing mounting military pressure in Liberia from the forces of the Liberian Peace Council and Ulimo.

The latter had laid a crippling siege on Taylor's headquarter at Gbanga, while his NPFL organization was experiencing several defections by former close and trusted companions like his long time Defence Minister Tom Woewiyu. Woewiyu not only abandoned Taylor, but challenged his leadership of the NPFL.

Taylor was fighting not only for the existence of his organization but even for his very life. The war in Sierra Leone which the NPFL had initiated was now of little interest to him.

Sierra Leone's Darkest Period...1991 to 1996

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They were eventually deployed in Mabonto, long after the rebels had struck Kabala and disappeared.

Thirdly, it had been observed by many in Kabala, that prior to the attack on the town, a military truck with heavily armed soldiers had passed through Kabala, ostensibly to interdict rebels in their northward advance. When the truck returned a day after, the soldiers were no longer on board. Two days later these same government soldiers were widely believed, by those who had seen them previously to be part of the rebel force that invaded Kabala.

More telling was the fact that a military officer already a familiar sight in Kabala was to give the signal for the attack on the town at 4.00pm.

Many houses burnt in several towns were often those of specifically targeted individuals or families. In Kabala the attack seemed more out of revenge against the Tamaboroh fighters, for which their leader Dembaso Samura was

primary goal of ending the war was still elusive, that the regime tried another solution. It was decided that since this was a rural insurrection, the chiefs who wielded local traditional authority should be formally involved in the war effort. A Conference of the nation's Chiefs was convened on 14th June 1994.

In his formal opening statement, the NPRC Chairman remarked that it was now obvious "that the war has taken an unpalatable twist that needed concerted efforts". Had lamented the dubious role of many citizens; "who knows that even in the Western Area and perhaps even in this very hall there may be rebels or rebel sympathizers."

In their candid response, the Chiefs expressed frustration at the army's apparent inability to end the war, and the dubious role of the soldiers in the field. In resolutions passed at the end of the deliberations, the Chiefs declared that:

"The war should not be reduced to atrocities and feuds

port provided by the government whose leadership is in Freetown enriching themselves by gross misappropriation of war funds."

If the Chief's Conference was impressive in organization, the result was hardly so, and the depressed mood of these traditional rulers was scarcely affected. Most Chiefs in war devastated areas were now themselves displaced citizens. Those in unaffected areas still lived in fear of both rebels and soldiers who behaved with equal banditry. But while many people concluded that only military force could overcome the rebels, others thought differently.

The idea of a diplomatic solution to the conflict had been proposed before but the government had initially rejected it, in a special commentary, the New Citizen reflected the views of the proponents for such a solution, saying that:

"We must at all cost, using all our international contacts, identify these rebels and talk to them to see reason. In the name of peace we

BBC World Service Trust

Wednesday, 28 January 2009

Report from The Hague

A Prosecution witness at the Charles Taylor trial has alleged that several hundred children were abducted by the RUF and AFRC during the conflict in Sierra Leone. The witness said he was caring for many of the children abducted by the rebels. Joseph Cheeseman reports

CHEESEMAN: The recruitment of children under 15 is one of the counts in the prosecution indictment against the former Liberian leader.

Testifying from behind a screen, the protected witness told prosecuting lawyer Nicholas Koumjian that most of the abducted children were in bad health. His voice is distorted to protect his identity.

WITNESS: Some of them had fevers. Others were just stomach ache.

KOUMJIAN: Were any of the children in the centre ever seriously ill?

WITNESS: Yeah, some were amputees, some came with bullet wounds. Some they have venereal disease like gonorrhoea, syphilis; some high fevers.

CHEESEMAN: The Prosecution crime base witness said that a number of the children were recaptured by the RUF from his care centre in Makeni.

Some of them died as they were being taken to rejoin the fighting at Lunsar.

He said one of the children who survived told him that forty-five of his friends were killed when the vehicle they were travelling in was struck by a bomb.

The witness read out a letter he and others wrote to religious leaders to highlight the plight of children in war-torn Sierra Leone.

The letter sought assistance from what he called 'people of good will.'

WITNESS: The children of Sierra Leone have experienced a loss of family members, abduction and forceful training into the fighting forces. Girls have been raped and entered adulthood too quickly. Most especially, children in and around Makeni have had their education disrupted.

CHEESEMAN: According to the witness, most of the war-affected young girls said that rebel commanders used them as wives.

He said the ages of the girls ranged from 13 to 15. Some were known as 'government women'.

These women had no special husband, and any man could use them for sex, he said.

Cocorioko

Wednesday, 28 January 2009

Prosecution witness tells about massacre by Sa. Leone government militia

Written by Joseph Cheeseman in the Hague

For the first time in the year-old war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, a Liberian lawyer has joined the Defense team. Counsellor Lavala Supuwood has travelled to The Hague to help the Defence prepare its case. Meanwhile, a Prosecution witness has been telling the Court of a massacre committed by the government-supported Civil Defense Forces of Sierra Leone. Joseph Cheeseman reports

CHEESEMAN: After a week of closed session, the Special Court for Sierra Leone has heard the testimony of the Prosecution's 92nd witness, in a partially open session.

The witness, only identified by a number, testified behind a screen. He spoke in Krio with the aid an interpreter. He was asked by Defence lawyer Courtenay Griffiths to recall a massacre which took place in Tongo Field in Kenema District, when several soldiers and their wives were killed. Mr Griffiths said the killings were committed by the CDF or Kamajors.

GRIFFITHS: But when the CDF came, you remember they lined up 20 men and 4 women where were Limba, Temne and Lokos, and killed them in cold blood, didn't they?

WITNESS: The four women that I am sure of, it was not because they were Loko or Limba. They were killed because they were wives of soldiers. The 20 soldiers whom I saw, it was because they were SLA soldiers.

GRIFFITHS: They were hacked to death in cold blood by the CDF, weren't they?

WITNESS: Exactly. They were hacked with machetes. I did not see them fire a gun. I saw machetes.

CHEESEMAN: The Prosecution 93 witness, identified as TF1-174, later took the stand and testified to massive looting and raping in the Sierra Leonean town Makeni during what he called 17-day period by the rebels.

He testified that the rebels went on a looting spree after the West African peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, dropped a bomb in Makeni. For the personal security of the witness, he is testifying from behind a screen and his voice is distorted.

COUNSEL: Now you've mentioned looting during this period. Can you tell us in some detail what was looted?

WITNESS: All houses were looted, everywhere. The mission was looted. The seminary was looted. The schools in Makeni, primary, secondary and even the college were all looted. There was rampant looting, the Bishop's vehicles in the mission were looted.

COUNSEL: Now sir, were you aware of any sexual violence during this 17-day period?

WITNESS: It was very, very rampant, and all over, when night comes, from all the houses people were shouting, "Don't rape me! I have been raped!" Most girls.

CHEESEMAN: The witness said he took care of over 100 child soldiers captured by the joint RUF/AFRC Forces at the Teko military barracks in Makeni. The testimony of the prosecution 93 witness is expected to continue on Wednesday.

Meanwhile a Liberian lawyer has joined the Defense team of Charles Taylor in The Hague.

The appearance in Court of the first Liberian lawyer for the Defence is a sign that the Prosecution case is almost complete. Counsellor Lavala Supuwood was dressed in the black and white gown used by lawyers of the International Criminal Court. He sat close to lead Defense counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, as he carried out his cross-examination.

Counsellor Supuwood is the first Liberian lawyer to work at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Charlestaylortrial.org
 Wednesday, 28 January 2009

Afternoon Session: Witness TF1-174 Concludes His Testimony; Witness TF1-303 Commences Examination-in-Chief

3:00pm: Court resumed and witness TF1-174 concluded his testimony while prosecution witness TF1-303 commenced her examination-in-chief.

Examination of Witness TF1-174

Prosecution counsel Nicholas Koumjian continued and concluded the examination of witness TF1-174. Counsel asked several questions about Operation Barras and the witness's continued work with children in Makeni. When asked about Operation Barras, the witness said that the said operation took place at the end of 2001. He said it was an operation by British Forces to secure the release of their abducted nationals by the West Side Boys, who were a group of renegade AFRC soldiers. According to the witness, after this operation, 30 children were brought to the Interim Care Center. He said that there were family reunifications for some of these children. Asked about the kinds of drugs used by the children, the witness said that few of them took cocaine while the majority of them smoked marijuana since it was cheaper to obtain. Asked whether he still sees the effects of the war in daily lives, the witness responded that several post-war effects include scars on the bodies of children, lack of education among them, some still remain un-reunified with their families and remain in difficult circumstances. About the girls, the witness said that single parenthood is prevalent among them and some can no longer marry because people don't want to be associated with them.

Thus ended the examination of the witness.

Cross-Examination

Defence counsel for Mr. Taylor, Courtenay Griffiths QC commenced the cross-examination of the witness. Counsel first commended the witness and expressed admiration for his work during those troubling times in the country. Counsel then asked the witness about the RUF presence in Makeni. The witness agreed with counsel that when the RUF entered Makeni in December 1998, there were fightings for 3-4 days, lots of looting but no burning of houses. When asked about rape, the witness said that he heard of rape cases during the attack. He agreed with counsel that Issa Sesay's effort brought about some calm but that the observance of the rule of law was intermittent. He said he cannot agree that there was order in Makeni or any period of calm. He also agreed with counsel that in February and December 1998, there were two episodes of violence in Makeni. He said that Issa Sesay was in charge in Makeni up to the time of the disarmament in the country. He further said that for the most part, some parts of Makeni were calm while some were not. He gave as an example the fact that the rebels were always on food finding missions.

Counsel asked the witness about General Bropleh and the STF. The witness said that he cannot say whether the STF were part of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA). He said that the STF were working with the RUF in Makeni. Asked what the STF was before their association with the RUF, the witness said he did not know. He said he also cannot say whether the STF were ever part of ULIMO.

January 1999 Attack on Freetown

When asked about who led the January 1999 attack on Freetown, the witness said that based on what he heard, the fighters were led by the AFRC soldiers but that he cannot divorce the RUF from the operation

since they were all working together. He agreed with counsel that since he was not in Freetown during these attacks, most of the information he heard was either from people or from the radio. He said he heard that the attack was led by SAJ Musa. Asked whether the RUF refusal to take part in the attack was the cause of infighting between the two groups, the witness said he cannot say. Counsel quoted the witness's first statement to the prosecution on August 14, 2003 that the attack was mostly led by the SLA and that the job of the RUF was to give a helping hand. He said that because the RUF refused to give the SLA said helping hand, that was the cause of the infighting between the two groups. The witness denied saying this and said he cannot say why such a thing was written in his statement. The witness said when his statement was read to him, the contents were not explained. Counsel referenced his February 11 2004 statement in which it is stated that the witness had made corrections to his earlier statement. Counsel asked the witness why he had not corrected the portion in question. The witness responded that he read the statement in haste and that he originally did not take the whole issue seriously as he was opposed to the Special Court. He said that he cannot give a full account of who was responsible for the Freetown invasion of 1999 because he only heard stories. He said he knew the troops were led by SAJ Musa but cannot say whether the RUF fighters only stopped at Waterloo.

Counsel sought to get information from the witness about infightings between the RUF and AFRC. The witness explained that Superman tried to kill Issa Sesay and the latter fled to Magburaka. He said that for sometime, Superman controlled Makeni but that Issa's loyalists fought back on April 22-23 1999. He agreed with counsel that in October 1999, the AFRC soldiers left Makeni and that the RUF remained in control of the town until the time of the disarmament process.

The witness said that since he did not interact much with Issa Sesay, he cannot say he would recognize his voice. Counsel asked the witness whether he thought Issa was the person who spoke with the BBC during the January 1999 invasion of Freetown. Prosecution counsel Mr. Koumjian raised an objection on grounds that the evidence did not state that Issa was the person who did the interview but that it was one Col. Sesay.

Counsel asked the witness about children whom he said had gone to Liberia. The witness explained that the children shared their experiences with him that they had accompanied their commanders to Liberia where they had taken diamonds and obtained new guns and clothing. He said the children did not tell him they fought in Liberia.

Counsel asked the witness whether he knew of a letter written by Issa to Sankoh seeking his approval before taking up the leadership of the RUF. The witness said he knew of no such letter. He also could not say whether West African heads of states had called Issa to a meeting in Liberia and convinced him to take up the leadership of the RUF.

Thus ended the cross-examination of the witness.

Re-Examination

Prosecution counsel Mr. Koumjian re-examined the witness. During re-examination, the witness explained that during the periods of calm, there were child soldiers in Makeni and that commanders kept abducted girls as their wives. He said that there were food finding missions and abduction of children continued during the periods of calm.

Counsel indicated that he was finished with re-examination of the witness. He then tendered various exhibits into evidence.

Thus ended the testimony of the witness.

Examination of Witness TF1-303, Finda Gbamanja

The next prosecution witness was led in evidence by Ms. Brenda Hollis. The witness, a female is testifying in open and in the krio language. The witness said that when rebels attacked Kono in 1998, she was in Koidu, Kono District. She said that because of the rebel attack, she left Koidu and together with her family and other civilians, they ran to the bush. She said that during the rebel attack, many civilians were caught in the cross-fire. She said she heard that the rebels were trying to escape with Johnny Paul Koroma. According to the witness, his brother, who returned to Koidu came back and told her that many civilians were killed during this period. The witness said that she moved to a village called Baima but had to leave for the bush again when the rebels got to the village. While hiding in the bush, she said that the rebels came and captured civilians, killing some and raping girls in the process. She said a boy was killed in her presence. The boy, she said was carrying a baby in his arms. The rebels, she said took the baby from the boy's arms, threw the baby into the bush and killed the boy. The witness further explained that the rebels chased them in the bush and that in the process captured some ladies and raped them. Asked how she knew that the girls were raped, the witness explained that the girls told her about it and that she saw them bleeding. The witness said that she was older than the girls who were raped.

Court adjourned for the day and the witness is set to continue her testimony tomorrow.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

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

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

Newspaper Summary

Ministry of Agriculture Moves to Contain Army Worms Spread

(Daily Observer, New Democrat)

- The Ministry of Agriculture has announced that it has intensified efforts to contain the spread of "army worms" that have been destroying crops and infesting creeks and drinking water in parts of Bong, Lofa and Gbarpolu Counties.
- A Ministry of Agriculture release said as part of efforts to eliminate the pests, it has brought into the country motorized sprayers and cypemethrim chemicals. The new equipment according to the release has the capacity to spray beyond seven to eight metres high and said the chemicals are environmentally friendly. Meanwhile, the New Democrat newspaper reports that the retreating caterpillars according to the Army Worms Taskforce have attacked 84 additional towns and villages in Zota District. The Government on Monday declared a state of emergency against the army worm infestation.

Senate Summons three Security Officials over Spate of armed robbery

(The News, National Chronicle)

- The Senate has summoned three security officials amidst growing concerns over the protection of its members as a result of armed robbery activities.
- The three officials are Justice Minister, Cllr. Philip Banks, National Security Minister, Peter Bonner Jallah and Police Inspector General, Beatrice Sieh-Browne.
- The three officials were summoned following an armed robbery attack on the home of Margibi County Senator Clarice Jah over the weekend.

Japan Reaffirms Commitment to improving Liberia's Health Sector - Signs US\$3.4 Million pact with country

(Heritage, The Informer)

- The Liberian and the Japanese Government have signed a nearly US\$3.4 million agreement to rehabilitate the Liberia-Japanese Friendship Maternity Hospital at the John F. Kennedy Medical Centre in Monrovia.
- According to a Foreign Ministry release, Foreign Minister, Olubanke King-Akerele, signed on behalf of the Liberian Government while Japanese Ambassador, Keiichi Katakami, signed for his government.
- Speaking during the signing ceremony, Ambassador Katakami said the Government of Japan is deeply committed to improving the maternal and infant health situation in Liberia, which is critical for the reconstruction and development of the country's future.

Another Death Reported in Timor Murder Trial

(Daily Observer, Public Agenda, The Inquirer)

- A member of the empanel jury, Joy Fayiah, hearing the Timor Murder trial involving Margibi County Senator Roland Kaine died Tuesday morning following a brief illness. Joy died barely four days after the sudden death of Clan Chief Singbah Duu, one of the defendants in the massacre trial.

Government Honours Civil Servant Who Turned Down US\$20,000 Bribe

(Daily Observer, The Informer, The Inquirer)

- A Liberian civil servant, Mr. Richard Karyea who turned down a US\$20,000 attempted bribe has been honoured in Monrovia.
- Mr. Karyea was among eight (8) civil servants honoured Tuesday by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at a ceremony organized by the Civil Service Agency (CSA) of Liberia for the invaluable services they have rendered their respective ministries during the past year.
- The exercise, according to Civil Service Agency Director General Dr. William Allen was designed to give recognition to the eight civil servants who had set standards in the discharge of their duties.

Radio Summary

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

Liberia, Japan Sign US\$3.4 Million Agreement

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

Civil Servant Who Turned Down US\$20,000 Bribe Honoured

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

Three Security Officials Summoned

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

ABA says Rule of Law Key to Poverty Reduction Strategy

- The Country Director of the American Bar Association (ABA), Anthony Valcke has described the rule of law as a key component in Liberia's quest to reduce poverty among its citizens.
- In an interview, Mr. Valcke said for the next three years his institution will continue to work with Government in achieving the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) pillars of Governance and Rule of Law.

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

Amnesty International Says Women Associated With Fighting Forces Not Reintegrated

- A research conducted by Amnesty International in Liberia revealed that Women Associated with the Fighting Forces (WAFF) were not reintegrated in the mainstream Liberian society.
- According to the research, the women did not take part in the process being implemented by the National Disarmament Agency for fear of being stigmatized.
- Two officials of Amnesty International believe the DDDR process is not gender sensitive.

Daily Observer

Thursday, 29 January 2009

Rebel Ex-commander Admits to 'War Crimes'

Accuses TRC Commissioner of Factional Links

MONROVIA, A commander of the defunct ULIMO-J faction has reportedly admitted that he and men he commanded during the civil war carried out mass executions and committed acts of human rights abuses including cannibalism.

A dispatch from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) quoted Phillip Wlue, as telling the Commission's ongoing public hearings Tuesday that as a death squad commander, he led a unit of fighters that beheaded enemy combatants using chain saw.

The dispatch added that the man who was known during the war as Sheikh Kafumba Konneh 'Rambo', claimed to have his victims beheaded, disemboweled and their intestines used as strings to erect checkpoints. Wlue said that the unit was named and styled 'Power Saw Unit'.

He also admitted ordering fighters under his command to chop off the ears of 11 Tanzanian peacekeepers in 1993, who were seen as colluding with rival faction National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by detained former President Charles Taylor.

Wlue also disclosed that 800 Nigerian peacekeepers serving in the West African Peacekeeping Force, ECOMOG, were killed by ULIMO-J forces in 1994 during a protracted war between his faction and the regional force in Tubmanburg, Bomi County.

He explained that following recapture of territories lost to a splinter faction ULIMO-K in Bomi County, he and his fighters ate a meal of human flesh and cooked rice left behind by the fleeing enemy fighters. He claimed ULIMO-K fighters cooked in the soup a hand of a Nigerian peacekeeper, whose head and uniform were discovered in the house where the meal was found.

'Rambo' confessed conscripting child combatants into the ranks of his fighting unit, saying that he accepted responsibilities for any deaths and injuries that resulted from their recruitment.

He apologized for his role in the civil conflict but said he was willing to avail himself of any future decision to prosecute members of the former warring factions.

Under the TRC act, some of the crimes to which Wlue admitted cannot be pardoned.

Meanwhile, Wlue has claimed that long-time social justice advocate and moderate Muslim clergy Sheikh Kafumba Konneh, who currently serves as a TRC Commissioner, had been an executive member of ULIMO.

Responding to an inquiry from Commissioner Konneh, Wlue said: "Papay because you old now, you think I don't know you. When we use to bring our looted things from the frontline, we use to give it to you and others here and you will sell it and gave us pass to return to the frontline. Papay you know me, not because you are old now."

He also claimed that the Commissioner was the national coordinator of the rebel group.

But responding to the witness comments, Commissioner Konneh challenged him to provide evidence if any, saying, "I challenge you to provide any evidence that I was a member of ULIMO."

A former senior commander of the defunct ULIMO rebel group, testifying before commissioners of the TRC last year also accused Sheikh Konneh of being a founder of the group.

Rebel general Ofori Diah said he was recruited by the Commissioner into the rebel group, adding that Sheikh Konneh provided financial and logistical support for the armed faction. The TRC Commissioner also refuted that allegation.

TRC Chairman Jerome Verdier recently ordered an investigation into the allegations against the Commissioner but hardly had the probe kicked off than the Commission's special magistrate Andrew Togba Davies was taken ill and died.

But speaking to journalists recently, Verdier said that the Commission was considering hiring the services of an independent investigation firm to probe the allegations against the Commissioner.

The Liberian journal

Tuesday, 27 January 2009

Liberia's Quest for Justice: Benjamin Yeaten, TRC and the Justice Ministry (Guest Commentary)

By: Kai G. Wleh

On January 21, 2009, the government of Liberia through its Ministry of Justice ordered the arrest of former presidential security commander Benjamin Yeaten. The Justice Ministry said an indictment to prosecute General Yeaten on charges of murder is based on instructions to personnel assigned to him and his active participation in the murder of Samuel Dokie, John Yormie and Isaac Vaye – the accused and victims are former warlords of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia led by Mr. Charles McArthur Taylor who is being held for war crimes charges in The Hague.

The government of Liberia also maintained that “its decision to order the arrest of Mr. Yeaten was based on the request of family members of the deceased as far back as 2006 for justice to be served and for the government to bring the killers of their relatives to trial for the crime committed.”

This is the second time the Ministry of Justice has issued an arrest warrant for Mr. Benjamin Yeaten. It can be recalled that then Justice Minister Mrs. Francis Johnson-Morris issued similar instructions to local and international law enforcement authorities seeking the apprehension of General Yeaten on alleged plots to assassinate top government officials with the intent to destabilize the West African nation.

A January 21, 2009, foreign news agency report quoted Mr. Yeaten as saying that “he heard about his arrest two weeks ago.” Mr. Yeaten argued that “the call for his arrest was not coming from family members of Dokie or vaye, but rather a campaign by the special war crimes court.

Liberia is a country dogged for justice but when and how such justice will be delivered has become a theatre of debate. Important too, the structure through which any form of justice will be dispensed to bring about closure to the devastation and reckless destruction of lives occasioned by a bush war sponsored by some Liberians in the United States and executed by mostly child -militias in Liberia continue to brawl a nation paralyzed by anguish and hopelessness.

However, the Justice Ministry's affirmation that the case of General Yeaten should “serve to inform all criminal elements that it would not passively stand by and see any abuses meted out against our people go unpunished and that it would not relent to bring to justice all persons engaged in such conduct regarding whom evidence has been gathered,” emerges to put the government into a reddened environment.

While the government's arrest order of General Yeaten provides muscle plunging anticipation, it seems to question the equilibrium of the county's justice system especially at a time when the very Justice Ministry is denying thousands of Liberians the opportunity to get the benefit of having President Sirleaf appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Critics have persistently accused the Liberian leader of financing and unswerving a bush war led by a former Boston gas station attendant Charles McArthur Taylor. The war murdered over two hundred thousands people.

Most importantly, critics and associates of Mrs. Sirleaf have argued that prior to setting an eye on the presidency, she led and supervised a Washington D.C. based Association for Constitution Democracy. The Association will admit providing an initiation funding of \$10,000.00 to the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) to wage a brutal war on Liberia. For instance, Mr. Thomas Woewiyu, a former war-time ally of Mrs. Sirleaf, and Defense Minister of the rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia –NPFL- in a pre-election publication in 2005 vividly described Mrs. Sirleaf's role in the devastation and destabilization of

the West African nation. Mrs. Sirleaf admitted making what she called “foolish” statements during the battle for Monrovia but felt short of taking responsibility.

A peace accord broken in Accra, Ghana provide for a South African fashioned True and Reconciliation for Liberia (TRC) in place of a war crime court. Additionally, The Commission is granted lawful character by an Act of the National Legislature of Liberia which was approved by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The TRC has since heard testimonies from hundreds of warlords, politicians, civil leaders and other citizens of Liberia – detailing the role in the Liberian civil crisis. On December 19, 2009, the West African Nation’s TRC provided an opportunity to the Chief Executive but Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf now President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf will not attend despite her earlier pledge to do so, claiming concerns.

Mr. Yeaten will be facing trial for the alleged murder of three of his war-time allies – Mr. Samuel Doekie, Mr. John Yomie and Mr. Isaac Vaye - all senior rank commanders of the rebel National Patriotic Front of Liberia – a group blamed for the extrajudicial killings and wanton destruction of properties in the tiny West African nation.

Mr. Samuel Saye Dokie served as Deputy Minister of Local Government in the People’s Redemption Council Government following the April 12, 1980 coup led by Sgt. Samuel Kayon Doe. Dokie soon lost favor with the military government and fled into exile. Dokie will be named in the 1983 Nimba Raid, the November 12, 1985 abortive coup against C-I-C- Dr. Samuel Kanyon Doe before joining the National Patriotic Front of Liberia – a guerrilla movement. Dokie rise to become the rebel’s Internal Affairs Secretary and Speaker of Liberia’s Transitional Parliament. He along with Mr. Thomas Woewiyu will break ranks with Mr. Charles Taylor and the NPFL in support of Dr. Amos Saywer’s Monrovia based Interim Government of National Unity. Reports of Dokie’s murder will shower Liberia with grief after Taylor’s election as President of Liberia.

Mr. John Yomie, a former rebel commander of rebel NPFL and later Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia was seen in a widely circulated rebel video giving instructions for the decapitation of President Samuel Kanyon Doe at the Free Port of Liberia in September 1990. Yormie will be awarded with a senior position in the country’s National Security Ministry by the Charles Taylor regime. His death will be announced as rebels entrapped Monrovia in 2003. Mr. Isaac Vaye was listed as a rebel commander of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia whose eminence to the rebel movement rewarded him a junior cabinet post in the Taylor government. It is their death that the Sirleaf’s administration is determined to prosecute with the view to providing justice to the families of the victims.

While I support the prosecution of “all criminal elements,” it is what appears to be a potential double-standard by our Justice Ministry that seems to generate concerns. Since the pronouncement of the indictment, several questions came to mind. Is the government prepared to prosecute “all criminal elements” and bring closure to families of all victims of the Liberian civil war? There is nothing in the government’s assertion that suggests that. However, the government has also made no full disclosure as to the number of families that have approached the country’s Ministry of Justice with evidence regarding individuals and/or groups that wreaked sadism, cruelty and brutality on the West African nation.

It would have been a motivating reconciliation had the government informed the public on the manner and form in which the grievances of the Dokie, Yormie, and Vaye were ejected from the litigation binders of the Justice Ministry or the path and order of prosecution. Will there be more indictments? Will the indictment ends with Yeaten? Will others similarly situated in the Sirleaf administration be indicted? As I continue to ponder on answers to the above questions, I quickly caught myself that Nimba has more electoral votes than Sinoe and more representation in the Legislature should the new Election Bill become law. I also consoled myself that presidential election is in two years and I hope the indictment of Yeaten is not another election swindle.

I hold no esteem for General Yeaten and sincerely share the feelings of the families of the three victims, but I believe that prosecuting “all criminal elements” while defending the non-compliance of President Sirleaf before the TRC may raise more inauspicious concerns. It must be made crystal clear that President Sirleaf is not charged with a crime – her appearing before the TRC is part of the nation’s healing process and detailing her experience and issuing rebuttal of the swam of allegations against her may maintain her political investment.

Amusingly, Justice Minister Philip Banks cited Article 61 of the Liberian Constitution as legal authority for shedding President Sirleaf from the True Commission. Article 61 of the Liberian Constitution state that “The President shall be immune from any suits, actions or proceedings, judicial or otherwise, and from arrest, detention or other actions on account of any act done by him while President of Liberia pursuant to any provision of this Constitution or any other laws of the Republic. The President shall not, however, be immune from prosecution upon removal from office for the commission of any criminal act done while President.” Here in applying the interpretation of Article 61 to President Sirleaf and immunity, Justice Minister Banks is legal, factually incorrect.

The key point of interest is that Article 61 is not retroactive. It does not protect individuals who become President after allegedly engaging into a criminal enterprise rather alleged crimes committed while in office. For the Justice Minister Banks to demonstrate such a rudimentary lack of interpretative comprehension should be embarrassing to our home government.

I have no doubt that if our government is serious in prosecuting abuses and other mayhem and atrocities during the civil war, it should have taken a comprehensive approach where all victims will have an opportunity to seek closure and justice – justice that is void of political overtone and benefits. Additionally, to think that the murder of the three former Taylor associates far exceeds the thousands of our relatives and murdered by those who are freely working the corridors of influence in Liberia is nothing but a mistaken belief and a political capital that the government would not want to forfeit.

I believe also that the prosecution of Mr. Benjamin must be concomitant with the appearance of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf before the TRC – at least that is what some of the citizens of Liberia are demanding right now. If the TRC process provides the ultimate vehicle for healing and reconciliation, then President Sirleaf must make good her pledge- Her Excellency must redeem her check to the Liberian people by humbling her authority to the forum created to bring relief to the victims of the bush war.

I am of the conviction that anything on the contrary may dent the President’s approval rating among the Liberian citizenry and expose her influence to international contempt. Furthermore, the President’s absence from the records and proceedings of the TRC has the potential to weaken the commission’s work-product and sink the excitement that greeted the birth of the Verdier Commission. I urge President Sirleaf to exhibit the political will that she is noted for and move beyond the counsel of Mr. Philip Banks who should be parading before the TRC to explain his role as member of Liberia’s war-time Collective Presidency (Council of State) and Justice Minister of the Interim Government of National Unity – IGNU, a government that “traded corruption for peace.” I strongly believe that prosecuting General Yeaten is the legal and moral thing to do and that such prosecution must be matched with President Sirleaf’s appearance before the TRC so the our country does not make one of Liberia’s brutal generals, Benjamin Yeaten, an overnight hero.

Meanwhile, our Town Crier reminds us that “a village that is in search of lasting peace must drink from the top of the fountain.”

Editor’s Note: Kai G. Wleh is a Public Relations Consultant and Media Expert who lives and works in Washington, D.C., USA.

Belfast Telegraph
 Tuesday, 27 January 2009

Horrific allegations heard as case against Congolese rebel begins in The Hague



Alleged Democratic Republic of Congo warlord
 Thomas Lubanga

A horrific world where children are used as cannon fodder, human shields and sex slaves in Africa's wars was brought to life in The Hague yesterday on the first day of a historic trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The case against the warlord Thomas Lubanga Dyilo will focus on his alleged conscription, training and exploitation of thousands of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic

of Congo(DRC).

Human rights groups have hailed the proceedings as the first international criminal hearing to focus on the issue of child soldiers and to give 90 of them a voice for the first time.

"This first ICC trial makes it clear that the use of children in armed combat is a war crime that can and will be prosecuted at the international level,"

said Param-Preet Singh, counsel involved in Human Rights Watch's international justice programme.

The trial opening marked the birth of a permanent ICC, which will replace the ad hoc tribunals used to deal with genocide in Rwanda and war crimes in former Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone.

Mr Lubanga, the former leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots militia in the Ituri district of north-eastern Congo, is charged with using children aged under 15 in combat between September 2002 and August 2003. The case is expected to last for months.

The chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno- Ocampo, told the three-judge panel: "Lubanga's militia recruited, trained and used hundreds of young children to kill, pillage and rape. The children still suffer the consequences of Lubanga's crimes. They cannot forget what they suffered, what they saw, what they did."

The court was shown footage of Mr Lubanga at a training camp for young men and children, some of whom were dressed in military fatigues, and of a pick-up of armed bodyguards, including at least two who seemed to be children, following his vehicle.

Carla Ferstman, from the rights group Redress, which works with victims, said the DRC had one of the worst records in Africa for using child soldiers.

"They made up as much as half of the ranks of rebel armies, they were used and abused, put out in front ahead of adults as human shields," she said.

The boys and girls had suffered terrible initiations and had been used as sex slaves and porters and made to kill.

“For the ICC to start with child soldiers as the focus sends an important message,” she said. Mr Lubanga was expressionless in the court as his lawyer said he denied the charges.

The United Nations estimates that up to 250,000 child soldiers are being used in world conflicts.

The trial, which was meant to start last June, will test the credibility of the ICC. Given a permanent home in The Hague, it has already made a number of controversial decisions, including the indictment of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, which analysts fear will make matters worse in Darfur.

The court has been criticised for only indicting Africans or those involved in African conflicts. Countries including the US and Israel have said they will resist efforts to indict their citizens.

The trial starts amid renewed calls for the arrest of another ICC indictee, Bosco Ntaganda, the self-proclaimed leader of the CNDP Tutsi rebels who was an associate of Mr Lubanga.

Eyewitness accounts: Children’s evidence

CHILD A: I was in school when I was taken in March 2002 by rebels. I was 13. They took me to a training camp where I stayed for two months. Our commander ordered us to kidnap women. I participated in a number of battles. I was injured with a gunshot wound to my leg. I am very behind in my schooling but I am trying to catch up.

CHILD B: I was taken by rebels when I was 13. I lost about four years of schooling. They taught us how to use guns.

They also taught us how to rape, steal, kill. I used an AK47 and fought in a number of battles. When I returned to my village people were afraid of us and rejected us.

CHILD C: I was going to the market when the rebels kidnapped me. Sometimes they made us get water, sometimes they made us steal to get food. During one battle I was able to escape with friends.

When I came back home, I was very violent. I missed out a lot on school.

CHILD D: I was treated like an animal. I was forced to carry arms and to steal. I often think back and I see monsters in my dreams. When I left the rebels I went back home, but my family wasn’t there. I still don’t know where my father is. I now suffer from insomnia.

Extracts from conversations with child soldiers in the Eastern DRC, from the Redress NGO

BBC Online

Wednesday, 28 January 2009

DR Congo warlord witness retracts

The first witness at the war crimes trial of DR Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga has retracted his testimony at the International Criminal Court.

Testifying from behind a screen, but visible to the defendant, he first said he had been recruited by Mr Lubanga's fighters on his way home from school.

But after a break in proceedings he denied this.

The court in The Hague was adjourned after the prosecution asked for witness safety to be reviewed.

Mr Lubanga, the first person to be tried at the ICC, denies using hundreds of child soldiers in Democratic Republic of Congo's five-year conflict, which ended in 2003.

His trial opened on Monday after a seven-month delay, as judges and prosecutors disputed confidential evidence.

Witness 'concerns'

Correspondents note that while the unnamed boy's identity was concealed from the public gallery, he could be seen by Mr Lubanga, 48, who glared at him as he testified.



Thomas Lubanga insists he was trying to bring peace to the Ituri region

THOMAS LUBANGA



Leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots, an ethnic Hema militia
 Accused of recruiting children under 15 as soldiers
 Arrested in Kinshasa in March 2005
 Held by the ICC at The Hague since 2006
 Born in 1960, has a degree in psychology

Asked by prosecutor Fatou Bensouda whether he had attended a military training camp, he replied "No", and the defendant was seen to give a smile, the AFP news agency reports. [Trial starts road to justice Profile: Thomas Lubanga](#)

Ms Bensouda then requested, and obtained, a delay of the trial to investigate "concerns the witness has about protective measures... what happens after he gives his testimony and returns home".

"We are convinced it has an effect on the testimony the witness is giving now," she told the three judges.

The witness gave testimony in Swahili from behind a screen to protect him from public view and his voice was electronically distorted.

Earlier, the witness said that "Thomas Lubanga's soldiers" had recruited him one day as he was walking home from school with friends.

Mr Lubanga insists he was trying to bring peace to Ituri, a region in the east wracked by years of conflict between rival groups seeking to control its vast mineral wealth.

Seeking a sentence of up to 30 years, prosecutors say child soldiers enlisted for Mr Lubanga's Hema militia were used to kill members of the rival Lendu ethnic group, or as his bodyguards.

Children were allegedly abducted on their way to school or to sports fields and young girls were taken as sexual slaves by militia commanders as soon as they reached puberty.

The UN says more than 30,000 children were recruited during the fighting, which saw some 60,000 people lose their lives.

BBC Online

Tuesday, 27 January 2009

Congo war crimes trial 'unfair'

The war crimes trial against former Congolese militia leader Thomas Lubanga is "prejudicial", his lawyer has told day two of the case at The Hague.

She claimed the prosecution's use of anonymous witnesses and secrecy clauses for the International Criminal Court (ICC) trial would hamper the defence.

Mr Lubanga, 48, denies using hundreds of child soldiers in DR Congo's five-year conflict, which ended in 2003.

The case is the first to come before the ICC.

Mr Lubanga was the leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) and its armed wing at the time of the alleged crimes in 2002-2003, and still has strong support among his Hema community in Ituri.

'Political trial'

Defence counsel Catherine Mabilille told the court: "How can we have a fair trial under [these] conditions?"

"There has been a wholesale abuse of the rules by the office of the prosecutor. The [situation] is prejudicial and detrimental to the defence."

She complained that the majority of alleged victims represented at the trial are anonymous and many prosecution witnesses will testify behind closed doors.

Claiming the defence and the public had been excluded from about half of pre-trial hearings, Ms Mabilille also said this prevented her client from defending himself adequately.

"If we do things this way, international criminal justice will become very secretive," Ms Mabilille told the three presiding judges, according to the AFP news agency.

Her colleague Jean-Marie Biju-Duval said the trial was political and that government forces had recruited child soldiers.

"The prosecution has chosen to spare those who bear the highest responsibility and rather focus on somebody there is a desire to eliminate for political reasons," he said.

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Voice of America

Thursday, 29 January 2009

AU Peace and Security Chief Warns Against ICC Arrest Warrant for Sudan's President

By James Butty
Washington, DC

The commissioner for Peace and Security has been commenting on a number of issues confronting the continent ahead of this week's African Union summit in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Ramtane Lamamra said it would be tantamount to pouring fuel on fire if the International Criminal Court goes ahead to issue arrest warrants against Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir.

On democracy, Lamamra told VOA that Africans and their leaders are acquiring what he called a democracy culture. But he said when it comes to deepening the roots of democracy, particularly during elections, Africa is confronted with democracy technicality which he notes often leads to violence.

Lamamra noted that the current political violence in Madagascar sparked by confrontation between the mayor of the capital Antananarivo and President Marc Ravalomanana is an example of democracy technicality.

"I think the leaders as well as the people at large in Africa are certainly acquiring democracy culture which cause them to interact with each other in the respect of certain number of norms and principles without resorting violence to solve differences of views. But we have in many cases throughout Africa really democracy technicality which involves elections and at least theoretically separation of powers. Then when it comes to the daily operation of these institutions, sometimes a very small misunderstanding which can be overcome through abiding by the rule of law and the constitution, sometimes the situation generates into trouble," he said.

Lamamra expressed regrets over the loss of life in the Madagascar confrontation. But he said the crisis appeared to be calming Wednesday perhaps in preparation for the dialogue between Antananarivo mayor and opposition leader Andry Rajoelina.

"This happening only a few days before the opening of the African Union summit, I'm sure that the leaders would wish to exchange views not only on the situation as such in Madagascar, but also on the overall democracy process in Africa, including the resurgence of the phenomena of military coups or unconstitutional change of all governments in general," Lamamra said.

On the political impasse in Zimbabwe over the formation of a unity government, Tamamra said he was hopeful the success of last weekend's Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit would lead to a quick resolution of the impasse.

"Africa is definitely determined to find African solutions to the African problems. But those African solutions would definitely be consistent with the values that we share with the rest of the world, including democracy, human rights and good governance," he said.

Lamamra said from the peace and security point of view the overall landscape of Africa has been encouraging, including post-conflict situations in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Comoros Islands and others which he said are moving toward positive resolution such as relations between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda.

But he expressed concern over the situation in Somalia and recent military takeovers in Guinea and Mauritania.

On the International Criminal Court's decision to bring charges against Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir for genocide in Darfur, Lamamra said enhancing peace in Sudan should take precedence over justice.

"We in the African Union have stated very openly that encouraging now the International Criminal Court to issue arrest warrants against the President of Sudan or even against the key players in Sudan, including the leaders of the rebel movement would be tantamount to pouring fuel on fire. And that's not what we need under the present circumstances," he said.

Lamamra said the African Union has asked the United Nations Security Council to activate Article 16 of the Rome Statute under which the ICC was established.

"Article 16 provides for the U.N. Security Council to postpone the proceedings of the International Criminal Court for 12 months, and that means clearly that justice would not be jeopardized. It would just give the opportunity for the peace process to proceed and for the democratization process in Sudan to proceed," Lamamra said.

BBC Online

Wednesday, 28 January 2009

Sudanese 'war crimes spy' jailed

A Sudanese man has been jailed for 17 years for passing on sensitive files about a Darfur war crimes suspect to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Mohammed Alsary Ibrahim was convicted of spying, criminal conspiracy and passing on confidential military documents about a Sudanese minister.

Mr Ibrahim, who denied the charges, is the first person in Sudan to be prosecuted for helping the ICC.

Tension is high, as ICC judges decide whether to indict Sudan's president.

The ICC prosecutor has accused President Omar al-Bashir of responsibility for war crimes in Darfur, prompting angry responses from his government.

Mr Ibrahim was accused of trying to link Ahmed Haroun - Sudan's state minister for humanitarian affairs - with the Janjaweed militia, which is accused of widespread atrocities in Darfur.

'Harsh'

The trial in Khartoum last month heard that Mr Ibrahim had been caught in a sting operation receiving secret documents from a Sudanese police contact.

A security officer told the court Mr Ibrahim had planned to pass the files to a Sudanese-American contact for money so they could be handed to the global court.

Mr Ibrahim, who has two weeks to appeal, remained silent as the verdict was read out but his three sisters burst into tears, AFP news agency reports.

Judge Abdel Wahab Ismael said the sentence was harsh but that the spying charge could have carried the death penalty, according to Reuters news agency.

In 2007, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Ahmed Haroun on 51 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Sudan's western Darfur region in 2003 and 2004.

Among the charges, which he denies, were the alleged murder and rape of civilians in Darfur while he served as minister of state for the interior.

Sudan has always refused to hand him over.

The ICC is deciding whether also to indict President Bashir on 10 counts of genocide and other charges in Darfur, after prosecutors asked for an arrest warrant in July 2008.



Ahmed Haroun - Sudan's humanitarian minister - is wanted by the ICC



Members of the Janjaweed are accused of atrocities in Darfur

Sudan argues that such a move would only make things worse in Darfur.

After intense Sudanese lobbying, the African Union and Arab League have called for a one-year suspension of the legal process.

The UN estimates that up to 2.7 million people have been forced from their homes in Darfur and some 300,000 have died during nearly six years of conflict.