

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



The Registrar at an outreach event in Makeni last week

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:

Wednesday, 11 February 2009

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

Wednesday, 11 February 2009

Solo B delivers fourth public lecture today

By Ishmael Bayoh

Former Vice President and Presidential candidate in the 2007 elections for the SLPP Solomon Ekuma Berewa will today deliver his fourth public lecture at the Hill Valley Hotel.

The public lecture is organized by the Special Court for Sierra Leone where the former Vice President is invited as guest speaker to speak on the topic: "Pursuing Justice and Peace in post conflict Sierra Leone, examining the challenges."

The Special Court for Sierra Leone is organizing the public lecture under their project named; legacy project

where the morning session in which the former vice president will be speaking will be chaired by the Speaker of Parliament, Hon Justice Abel Stronge.

Also to speak in the afternoon session on the topic: "what roles can domestic courts, civil society and international tribunals play in securing justice" is the PMDC leader Charles Francis Margai.

Since after losing the 2007 Presidential election, the former vice president made his first public lecture at the British council on how the civil society perceive the public sector.

But before that, he made his first public lecture at a British University, Bradford, his second being in Zimbabwe.

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 10 February 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

Community Residents Express Security Concerns over Armed Robbery Attacks - Police Arrest Several Suspects

(The Independent, The News, National Chronicle, The Parrot)

- The media continued to reflect security concerns by community members following a reported spate of armed robbery in Monrovia and its surrounding communities. Incidents of armed crimes remained at high levels over the weekend with reports of attacks predominately in the Paynesville suburb [Congo Town, Duport Road, ELWA Community, and Thinker's Village Community].
- Cases of armed robberies were also reported in a number of communities in Sinkor including Old Road, 17th and 18th Streets. The National Chronicle, The Independent and The Parrot newspapers speculated that the armed robbers have taken complete control of the security network in Monrovia as they are rather attacking homes and business as early as 8:00 pm.
- Most print media outlets carried articles suggesting that the Emergency Response Unit (ERU), on whose training millions was spent to help mainly combat armed robbery and other violent crimes, have proven incapable to help with the security situation in Monrovia and its suburbs, as the situation turned volatile on a daily basis.
- The public encouraged state security and UN Police officers to increase their night patrols and develop a security strategy to deal with the reported upsurge in armed crimes.

River Gee Citizens Go To the Polls Today

(The News, the Informer, Daily Observer)

- About 22,000 registered voters are expected to vote in the River Gee Senatorial by-election today in south-eastern Liberia. The election is set to replace late Senator Isaac Johnson who died late last year after a brief illness.

MRU Agric Ministers Hold Emergency Confab

(Daily Observer)

- Agriculture Ministers of the Mano River Union (MRU) countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and La Côte d' Ivoire on Friday February 6, 2009 held an emergency conference in Monrovia. The objective of the confab was to discuss and chart the most appropriate approach to combat the hazard that invading caterpillars continue to cause in the sub-region.

Liberia Celebrates Armed Forces Day Wednesday

(Daily Observer)

- The Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) will on Wednesday, February 11, 2009 celebrate the 52nd Armed Forces Day Celebration and the 101st Celebration of the AFL at Barclay Training Center (BTC) in Monrovia.

Radio Summary

Local Media – Star Radio (News culled from website today at 12:00:pm)

New City Mayor Demolishes Market Stalls

- The nominated City Mayor of Monrovia has destroyed several make-shift stalls around the Water and Randall Streets area.
- Madam Mary Broh took the aggressive approach at the head of a small delegation early Monday morning.
- Dressed in a white T-Shirt with the inscription “Keep Monrovia Clean and Green”, Broh threatened to close down stores if the owners are not tidy conscious.
- She said she is executing a Presidential mandate that seeks to ensure that the city returns to its past glory.
- Broh described Monrovia as the most untidy city in West Africa because store owners are not really beautifying their surroundings.
- She said is being given a great task to ensure that the entire city, which is besieged by huge stocks of garbage, must be clean.
- However, several sellers at the Water Street area said they are disappointed by the Presidential mandate.
- They said the government should first establish a place to relocate them instead of breaking down their stalls.
- Meanwhile, Sinoe County Senator Mobutu Nyepan has described as illegal, actions by the newly appointed Monrovia City Mayor Mary Broh.
- Senator Nyepan said in the absence of her confirmation, Madam Broh has no legal authority to function as City Mayor.
- Article 54 of the Liberian Constitution gives the President the right to appoint Mayors with the consent of the Senate.
- Mr. Nyepan however, welcomed Madam Broh’s passion for the job but urged her to proceed properly and within the confines of the laws.
- At the same time, the Executive Mansion says Mary Broh’s nomination as City Mayor of Monrovia is pending confirmation by the Senate.

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

Security Expert Opts for de-politicization of AFL

- A regional security expert wants the Armed Forces of Liberia to remain what he called ill-political.
- Dr. Thomas Jaye said the new AFL must remain a constitutional army and loyal to the state in order to enjoy the confidence of the Liberian people.
- Dr. Jaye indicated that the new AFL must serve as an agent of change and be responsive to the needs of society, noting this can be done based on the training provided the officers.
- He recalled during the era of imperial presidency in Liberia, the AFL and other security institutions were responsible only to the President.
- According to Dr, Jaye, such practice produced counter-productive results at the detriment of the people.
- He also stressed coordination and cooperation amongst security institutions in the country to ensure genuine peace.

- Dr. Jaye, a Senior Research Fellow at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) in Ghana, spoke Monday at a symposium organized by the Ministry of National Defense.
- The symposium was part of events marking the observance of the 151st celebration of Armed Forces Day.

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

Executive Mansion Denies Claims of Paying Superintendent's Rental Fees from County Development Funds

- The Executive Mansion has denied claims that the President directed the payment of Superintendent Catherine Khasu's rental fees from the County Development Funds.
- In a letter of request for the payment of seven thousand two hundred from the CDF, Madam Khasu claimed it was by the directive of the President and Internal Affairs Minister.
- Presidential Press Secretary Cyrus Wleh Badio said the President did not authorize the payment as the CDF is not for paying rents but developments.
- Mr. Badio said Khasu would be made to retribute the money if it is established that she actually took it for rent.
- He said the Internal Affairs Minister has been asked to look into the issue though he's mentioned as one of those who directed the payment.

TNIMA's Rehabilitation Begins Tuesday

- Rehabilitation works on the Tubman National Institute of Medical Arts is expected to begin today, Tuesday.
- The TNIMA is the national nursing training centre and is situated at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Medical Center in Sinkor.
- The rehabilitation is being funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development through the Liberia Community Infrastructure Programme.
- According to a statement issued in Monrovia, the American people provided a grant of seven hundred fifty thousand U.S. dollars to the Health Ministry for the TNIMA.
- Health Minister Walter Gwenigale, USAID Mission Director Pamela White, and a representative of the TNIMA will mark the occasion by mortaring concrete on one pillar of the facility.
- The rehabilitation of this massive three-story building of forty thousand square feet will provide adequate, safe and clean residential living quarters.
- Upon the completion of the rehabilitation, the TNIMA would accommodate 467 future Liberian nurses.
- In addition, the statement said the John Snow International and partners based in the United States will provide four hundred thousand U.S. dollars.
- The money would be used to expand and strengthen teaching capacity and curriculum and provide learning equipment and supplies for the health practitioners.
- USAID Mission Director Pamela White said the contribution from the American people signifies the revival of TNIMA.

International Herald Tribune

Tuesday, 10 February 2009

Court moves to study claims of Gaza crimes

By Marlise Simons

THE HAGUE: The Palestinian Authority is pressing the International Criminal Court in The Hague to investigate potential war crimes committed by Israeli commanders during the recent war in Gaza.

The Palestinian minister of justice, Ali Kashan, first raised the issue during a visit to the court's chief prosecutor late last month, and he and other officials are expected back again in The Hague this week, court officials said.

Luis Moreno Ocampo, the prosecutor, initially said he lacked the legal basis to examine the case. But since the Palestinian Authority signed a commitment Jan. 22 recognizing the court's authority, the prosecutor has appeared more open to studying the Palestinian claim.

"The prosecutor has agreed to explore if he could have jurisdiction in the case," said Béatrice Le Fraper, director of jurisdiction for the prosecution. She cautioned that accepting jurisdiction would not automatically set off a criminal investigation. "We are still very far from any decision. This is just the beginning of a long process," she said.

The prosecutor has received more than 200 requests to look into war crimes during the recent fighting between Israel and Hamas militants. They include accusations from individuals and organizations that Israel has violated the rules of war by targeting civilians and nonmilitary buildings, and by using weapons like white phosphorus illegally.

"Quite a few groups have sent experts to the region, people doing forensic work, studying explosives and other weapons," she said. "The prosecutor can look at all open sources at this stage."

Should a criminal investigation begin, the prosecution would send its own investigators, who would look into possible violations by both sides, including Hamas. But even as envisioned by the Palestinian Authority, the case faces numerous hurdles, specialists say.

The court here is the world's first permanent international criminal court, created to examine war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. It can prosecute any citizen from the 108 countries that are currently members of the court. The United Nations Security Council can bring cases irrespective of the nationality of the accused or the location of the crime.

Israel is not a member and the Palestinian territories, not being recognized as a sovereign nation, appear not to fulfill the requirements. But as a remedy, the Palestinian Authority has taken a first step by presenting a declaration to the court, formally accepting jurisdiction for "an indeterminate duration" over acts "committed on the territory of Palestine" since July 1, 2002, the date when the court's authority began.

Lawyers say such a declaration allows for joining the court on an ad hoc basis and has already been allowed before, in the case of Sierra Leone, which is not a member. But while the Palestinian declaration has been recorded at the court, its validity is far from settled. The big question, lawyers at the court say, is whether the Palestinian Authority can grant jurisdiction in any form, and if so, how that will be defined.

The issue has raised the question of whether Palestinian officials hope to obtain an implicit recognition of statehood through the court.

The court "will not use the term statehood," said a legal expert close to the case who asked not to be named because the issue was still being decided. "The court will avoid defining whether Palestine is a state. The decision will be only if Palestine can be admitted for the purposes of the court statute."

The Palestinian officials visiting The Hague in coming days are expected to try to demonstrate that they have been allowed to sign other international treaties and conventions and can therefore be accepted as a party to the 1998 Rome Treaty that founded the court.

Le Fraper, the director of jurisdiction, said her office would call on international experts to help settle such questions.

Another unknown is whether the Palestinian Authority can bring a case involving jurisdiction in Gaza. The authority is run by Fatah, but its rival faction, Hamas, has declared itself the only authority in Gaza and removed Fatah from the territory.

More than 1,300 Palestinians died in the recent war in Gaza, many of them women and children. Israel has insisted that it respected international law during the fighting. Israel has also said that it will investigate its attacks on UN schools and headquarters and the use of unlawful weapons in urban areas, including the use of white phosphorus.

Human rights groups and several UN officials have called for an independent international inquiry into actions by both sides.

Western politicians and other critics of Israel's recent conduct in Gaza have also said Hamas has violated the rules of war and committed war crimes with indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and the use of its own civilians as human shields.

Such potential crimes could also become part of any criminal investigation. By accepting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court on its territory, the Palestinian Authority has also accepted jurisdiction over any war crimes by its own nationals.

"That's the way jurisdiction works," said a court lawyer. "The Palestinians know that and have taken that risk."

Voice of America

Tuesday, 10 February 2009

UN Chief Urges Sudanese President to Cooperate with ICC

By Margaret Besheer
United Nations



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir should cooperate fully with whatever decision the International Criminal Court, or ICC, issues regarding his case and ensure the safety of civilians and U.N. peacekeepers in Sudan.

The court is considering whether to issue an arrest warrant for Mr. Bashir on charges including genocide for atrocities committed in his country's Darfur region. A decision is expected any day.

Mr. Ban said he is awaiting the independent court's decision and urged Sudan's president to act responsibly.

"Whatever the circumstances or decision of the ICC may be, it will be very important for President Bashir and the Sudanese Government to react very responsibly and ensure the safety and security of United Nations peacekeepers and protect the human rights of all the population there, and also faithfully implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement," Mr. Ban said. "And he should fully cooperate with whatever decision the ICC makes."

The International Criminal Court is expected to decide this month whether to grant chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo's request for an arrest warrant for Mr. Bashir on 10 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide for atrocities committed in Darfur during the last five years.

Sudan has so far rejected the court's authority. If the judges call for Mr. Bashir's arrest and Khartoum does not comply, it could create a very difficult and complicated situation for the United Nations, which has some 20,000 peacekeepers in Darfur and southern Sudan.

Khartoum has said the safety of the peacekeepers is not in jeopardy, but it has warned that it cannot control public outrage if an arrest warrant is issued for the president.

Since the court took up the case of President Bashir, Mr. Ban has sought to limit his personal contact with him. But the secretary-general told a press conference Tuesday that on his recent visit to Ethiopia for the African Union summit, it was necessary that they meet.

"I thought that during this Addis [Ababa] AU Summit meeting that it would be very crucially important as secretary-general, in discharging my duties as secretary-general, in ensuring peace and security and ensuring safety and security of our U.N. Mission and civil population, that I should meet President Bashir at this time," Mr. Ban said.

Mr. Ban credited their talks with fewer casualties in the Darfur town of Muhajiriya, where there were clashes between Sudanese forces and rebels from the Justice and Equality Movement. He said rebels withdrew from the area and the Sudanese military restricted their aerial attacks to the outskirts of the town, avoiding heavy casualties.

Voice of America

Wednesday, 11 February 2009

Opponents of Solitary Confinement Urge Rwandan Lawmakers to Overturn Prisoner Legislation

By Howard Lesser
Washington, DC

Rights activists are urging the government of Rwanda to end its practice of isolating prisoners convicted in Rwanda by holding them in solitary confinement for a minimum of 20 years. The group Human Rights Watch says it has reminded the Rwandan government about legislation enacted by parliament in December that prohibits solitary confinement for genocide suspects transferred from the international criminal tribunal or extradited from other foreign countries. However, Human Rights Watch says those convicted in Rwandan courts often face a different standard that amounts to torture under international law. Human Rights Watch senior Africa advisor Alison Des Forges says that because the legislation is selective, efforts by outsiders to have suspects sent back to Rwanda for prosecution from other places have been unsuccessful.

“The law itself makes a discrimination, makes a choice, and says people who are returned to Rwanda if they were arrested abroad, or who are sent back to Rwanda by the International Tribunal will not suffer this penalty .But other Rwandans captured or arrested inside Rwanda are subject to it if they have committed certain crimes. So here you have a case of a very severe punishment being possibly applied to one part of the citizens, and not to others,” she explained.

In 2007, Rwanda adopted legislation abolishing the death penalty. Although this conformed to international laws observed by others, including the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), located in Arusha, Tanzania, genocide suspects and Rwandans found guilty outside the country still have not been returned to Rwanda for prosecution. The International Court has denied transfer in five cases during the past year, and France recently denied extradition in three cases. Another Rwanda genocide case in the United Kingdom is currently on appeal. Des Forges says that although Rwanda has voiced a willingness to receive cases from the ICTR and help other jurisdictions hear remaining cases, foreign judges remain reluctant to send the prisoners back.

“Generally, the judicial systems abroad have been concerned, particularly about whether or not someone will be able to present a full defense, have access to a full range of defense witnesses in order to demonstrate his innocence of the charges.It may well be that in the minds of some (foreign) judges that this solitary confinement provision may also play a part,” she noted.

In its letter to Rwandan legislators, Human Rights Watch points out that suspects tried and convicted in Rwanda should be treated equally and should not be subjected to this punishment. It urges passage of new legislation that spells out the prohibition for Rwandan prisoners. Alison Des Forges indicates that those being harmed by the current dual legal arrangement go far beyond the prisoners themselves.

“The people who are subject to the punishment are the ones who suffer the most grievously from it, but Rwanda itself also suffers in the international arena because it has made certain promises under international law about how it will treat its own citizens and it’s not keeping its own promises,” she said.

Last year, a constitutional challenge pressed to lift the lifetime solitary confinement punishment, but in August, Rwanda’s Supreme Court said the law was constitutional. Under international law, solitary confinement for prolonged periods of time violates the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and Article 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR).