

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



A poster for International Women's Day, with Parliament in the distance.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Tuesday, 10 March 2009

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

| Local News | |
|---|-------------|
| Special Court / <i>New Citizen</i> | Page 3 |
| International News | |
| Ex-Militant Leaders Convicted of Forcing Women to Marry / <i>The Voice</i> | Pages 4-5 |
| Rights & Wrongs: Sierra Leone, Sudan, Women of Courage and More / <i>WPR</i> | Pages 6-7 |
| UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries / <i>UNMIL</i> | Pages 8-13 |
| Sudan Leader's Warning in Darfur / <i>BBC</i> | Pages 14-15 |
| Darfur Victims Also Had Enough of You AU Chairman Ping / <i>Sudan Tribune</i> | Pages 16-18 |
| Sudan's President Charged with War Crimes. Will He Be Tried? / <i>Time</i> | Page 19 |
| Special Court Supplement | |
| International Women's Day at the Special Court, in Pictures | Pages 20-21 |

New Citizen

Tuesday, 10 March 2009

SPECIAL COURT

At a press conference past Thursday 5th March 2009 at the Ministry of Information, the Minister of Information, Alaji Ibrahim Ben Kargbo, took Sierra Leoneans to task for not coming up with clear suggestions as to what to do with the facilities of the Special Court at New England Freetown, when it closes down in the near future.

The minister praised the Special Court for erecting a modern facility in Freetown to try people who carried the greatest responsibility for the crimes committed in the eleven year war in Sierra Leone. According to the minister, the Special Court infrastructure can be described as modern and truly multi-purpose. "But now that the Special Court is closing down we have asked Sierra Leoneans to make concrete suggestions as to how the Special Court facilities can be used in the near future"

The Minister said that by

way of conversation some people have suggested that the Special Court facility is fit for a university or a place of higher learning.

Some have also suggested that it can be used as an extension of the court system of Sierra Leone.

"But as a government that speaks to its people and always willing to carry out the wishes of the people, we want to hear from you what you think this modern infrastructure can best be used for."

The Minister added that good governance requires that the governed is frequently consulted on important issues, because we are a democracy and we will do just that.

He concluded by soliciting the cooperation of all Sierra Leoneans in determining the best use of the Special Court facility after it closes down.

"Send your suggestions to us in writing, through the ministry of Information and Communication, and do it as quickly as possible."

The Voice

Sunday, 8 March 2009

<http://www.voice-online.co.uk/content.php?show=15222>

Sierra Leone: Ex-Militant leaders convicted of forcing women to marry

BY



TRIAL: Issa Sesay (left, taking gun), Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa were convicted in Special Court

Men found guilty after four-year war crimes trial

THREE FORMER leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) are to be sentenced this month for 'forcing marriage' on several women.

A United Nations tribunal convicted the three men on February 25, reportedly the first time a court has convicted on the charge of 'forced marriage'.

The conviction followed a four-year trial. Former RUF interim leader Issa Hassan Sesay and RUF commander Morris Kallon were found guilty on 16 of 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Former RUF chief of security Augustine Gbao was convicted on 14 counts.

During the trial, the prosecution argued that forced marriage should be considered a crime against humanity. They said it should be seen as separate to other forms of sexual violence such as sexual slavery, because of the length of the association and its domestic nature, according to news website AllAfrica.com. "Our position is that sexual slavery is a horrendous crime. Victims would be held for days or weeks and forced into sex acts. Forced marriage is all of that plus essentially being consorts to the rebels," said lead prosecutor Stephen Rapp.

HORROR

He said the victims endured not only the horror of being forced to marry and be sexual slaves, they suffered stigma in a culture where women are also blamed for the crimes of their 'husbands.' Two of the three convicted men, Kallon and Sesay, were also found guilty of forcing children as young as eight years old to become soldiers.

The court was set up to try those who committed atrocities during an 11-year civil war that killed up to 50,000 people.

Some Sierra Leoneans told IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks) they now felt they could finally move on. “It is necessary. If you don’t [have a] Special Court to bring punishment, other men will just bring war again,” said Alpha Tommy Conteh, whose wife was killed by a stray bullet in a January 1999 rebel attack on the capital, Freetown.

Online bloggers have welcomed the tribunal’s decision. Tamba korgba-faiduwoh wrote on AllAfrica.com: ‘Bravo!!!! Justice done is freedom restored!!! The suffering masses of Kono and Sierra Leone as a whole will only praise God for the justice bestowed on some of those who plundered and help under develop Sierra Leone during the bloody civil war.’

Another, Ibrahim Sorie Mansaray, who said he lost two children, added: ‘These people who where convicted should pay the price of what they do to their country. They did very bad things to their country. ‘They should be kept in prison till the end of their life.

Thanks to the international community for the good work that they are doing, to show the world that if you do bad there is a price.’

World Politics Review

Friday, 6 March 2009

Rights & Wrongs: Sierra Leone, Sudan, Women of Courage and More

Juliette Terzieff | Bio | 06 Mar 2009

World Politics Review

ADVOCATES CHEER AL-BASHIR WARRANT -- Human rights groups from around the world cheered the issue of an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir by the International Criminal Court to face charges of crimes against humanity.

"The ICC represents the best hope for justice for the victims of Darfur," Dismas Nkunda of the International Refugee Rights Initiative said in a statement released by the Justice for Darfur coalition. "The international community must ensure that Sudan complies with its obligation to cooperate with the ICC, including by handing over anyone subject to an arrest warrant."

Bashir has long been a target for rights advocates' ire over the brutal violence that continues to unfold in the Darfur region.

Sudanese authorities have indicated Bashir has no intention of submitting to ICC authority, and officials had warned that issuing the warrant might affect Sudan's ability to guarantee the safety of U.N. and humanitarian staff in Sudan. In the immediate wake of the court's decision, Khartoum ordered several humanitarian groups, including Oxfam and Mercy Corps, to leave the country.

"It is unlikely that Bashir will be handed over to international authorities any time soon. Nonetheless, the warrant sends an important message that even sitting heads of state cannot act with impunity," the Los Angeles Times wrote in response to the news.

SIERRA LEONE REBEL LEADERS CONVICTED OF WAR CRIMES -- A special tribunal in Freetown found three top rebel leaders guilty of crimes against humanity Feb. 25, for their commanding roles in a brutal 11-year civil war that left a half a million people murdered or mutilated.

"Some of the most heinous and brutal acts in the history of human warfare were committed here. It was a campaign of terror. And this was not a war fought as we think of it, but one exclusively targeted at civilians. These convictions mean that suffering is recognized," prosecutor for the Special Court of Sierra Leone Stephen Rapp told Time in an interview after the verdicts.

Isaa Hassan Sesay and Morris Kallon were convicted on 16 of the counts, and Augustine Gbao on 14, including acts of terrorism against civilian populations, forced marriages, sexual slavery, rape and the use of child soldiers. All three were commanders of the Revolutionary Armed Front (RUF).

This was the first time the court handed down a conviction for forced marriage.

The RUF and other militias roamed Sierra Leone raiding villages and conscripting "volunteers" as they sought to control the country's diamond fields. Mass rape, murder and destruction of property were accompanied by the widespread use of amputation -- a practice where perpetrators askz their victims, "Long sleeve or short sleeve?" and cut off the length of the victim's arm corresponding to the answer.

The Special court had previously tried five other masterminds of the conflict, and its last case is that of Liberian leader Charles Taylor, which has been moved to The Hague for security reasons.

U.N. TARGETS SEXUAL VIOLENCE ON WOMEN'S DAY -- U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made ending sexual violence the United Nations theme for this year's International Women's Day, celebrated on March 8 around the world.

Ban called on men and women to unite in a joint effort, and urged the world's politicians to take a stand, saying: "Violence against women cannot be tolerated in any form, in any context, in any circumstance, by any political leader or by any Government."

Sexual violence is a major risk factor increasing women's chances of contracting the HIV/AIDS virus, the United Nations says, and continues to be used as a weapon of war by combatants on battlefields around the world. Rights advocates also condemn female circumcision, child marriage practices, and domestic violence, all still socially acceptable in many countries.

In addition to stopping the actual acts of violence, the United Nations and rights groups urge increased efforts in training for medical, armed forces and police personnel, and for expanding capacity of communities to cope with the medical, emotional and economic fallout from violence.

U.S. NAMES WOMEN OF COURAGE WINNERS -- Women from Afghanistan, Guatemala, Niger and Yemen are among the 2009 recipients of the U.S. State Department Women of Courage Awards for their work on human rights.

Afghanistan's Wazhma Frogh is a national leader in the fight against marital and child rape, Malaysia's Ambiga Sreenevasan uses her legal skills to advocate for women's equal status, while Iraqi lawyer Suaad Allami has created a center offering free medical care, literacy training and legal advice.

Each year U.S. Embassies around the world are asked to nominate remarkable individual females for the award, which was created and instituted by former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in 2007.

Juliette Terzieff is a journalist who specializes in human rights. Her regular WPR column, Rights & Wrongs, appears every other Friday.

Photo: An empty chair awaits Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir, president of Sudan, before the opening of the 20th session of The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) at the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Jan. 30, 2009 (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Jesse B. Awalt).

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
9 March 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

Hundreds Of Women Want Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325

(New Democrat, The Informer, Daily Observer, Heritage, Public Agenda, Liberian Express, The Monitor, New Vision, The News and The Inquirer)

- Hundreds of women leaders from around the world have called for the full implementation of U.N. Security Council resolution 1325.
- The resolution calls for the protection, participation and promotion of women's rights.
- They also want all countries to adopt U.N. resolution 1820 addressing the issue of sexual violence against women as a tactic of war.
- The women want countries around the world to present their plan of action and accomplishments at a ministerial meeting in 2010.
- At the same time, the women called for profound changes in priorities that shape policies and resources allocation locally and globally.

War Crimes Court for Liberia Activist Arrested

(Heritage, Public Agenda, The Monitor, Plain Truth and The News)

- The Executive Director of the Forum for the Establishment of a War Crimes Court in Liberia, Mulbah Morlu along with several others have been arrested in Monrovia.
- They were arrested for what the police called "illegal demonstration".
- According to Justice Minister, Counselor Philip Banks, Mr. Morlu and his men had gathered to demonstrate without getting a permit from government. Mr. Morlu has however challenged his arrest claiming it was illegal.
- Meanwhile several former Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) personnel were also arrested for similar act.

State Witness In Economic Sabotage Case Say Defendants Engaged in "Corporate Gangsterism"

(The News and Heritage)

- Testifying as expert witness for the State in the economic sabotage case, a financial expert, Theo Joseph described as "corporate gangsterism" the manner in which public funds were stolen from the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Company (LPRC) during the transitional regime of Gyude Bryant.
- Mr. Joseph said former Speaker Edwin Snowe, Senator Richard Divine, Mr. Siaka Sheriff and others grossly disregarded corporate governance policies and procedures while serving as Managing Director and deputies at the LPRC during the transitional government.
- The men are accused of embezzling nearly US\$1million from the entity during the transitional period and were charged with theft and economic sabotage.

President Sirleaf Breaks Ground For Angie Brooks Centre

(The Inquirer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has broken ground for the Angie Brooks International Centre in Fendall outside Monrovia.
- The groundbreaking ceremony was part of the International Colloquium on Women's Empowerment, Peace and Security in Liberia.

- President Sirleaf said with the centre, women would be pledging their commitment and re-dedication to women's empowerment.

Over US\$300,000 Forged Documents Discovered At Senate

(National Chronicle and Heritage)

- [SIC]The Chairman of the Senate Committee of Ways, Means, Finance and Budget, Senator Richard Devine is said to have forged the signature of Pro-temp Isaac Nyenabo on official purchase and special service vouchers of the Liberian Senate processed to the Ministry of Finance for payment.
- According to an investigation, Senator Devine claimed that his action was in consultation with the "majority" bloc of the Senate.
- Some members of the bloc have however distanced themselves from the "illegal" act by the Bomi Senator.

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

Hundreds Of Women Want Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325

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

President Sirleaf says Empowering, Protecting Women Remains a Priority

- Speaking to reporters, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has assured that the impact of the International Women Colloquium will be felt through the implementation of national programmes.
- The President said the progress would be monitored through the Angie Brooks International Centre launched on Sunday.
- President Sirleaf who co-convened the colloquium believed the issues of empowering and protecting women against violence remains a priority.
- She believes the hosting of the colloquium in Liberia is a clear recognition of the role women played in promoting peace in Liberia.

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

Fire Destroys 15 Houses in Suburb of Monrovia

- Reports say about fifteen houses in the 11th street community were early this morning gutted by fire.
- Correspondents blamed the cause of the fire on a candle while others attributed it to a lit cigarette from a nearby "ghetto".
- Eyewitnesses say community residents jeered fire fighter who arrived on the scene late thereby making it impossible for those affected to salvage any of their possession.

BIN Nabs Guinean National for Falsifying Liberian Citizenship

- The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) has arrested a Guinean national for falsifying Liberian citizenship.
- Officers of the BIN picked of Mohammed Sow while in the process of obtaining a Liberian birth certificate.
- Immigration authorities said documents found in the possession of the Guinean suggests he was impersonating as a Liberian. He is currently detained undergoing investigation.

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

State Witness In Economic Sabotage Case Say Defendants Engaged in "Corporate Gangsterism"

Truth F.M. *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

Advocate for Setting up Of War Crimes Court in Liberia Arrested

Notorious Armed Robber Killed in Pre-Dawn Shooting

- A man believed to be a notorious armed robber was early yesterday shot dead by the police Emergency Response Unit (ERU) in the Stephen Tolbert suburb of Monrovia.
- An eyewitness said the robber was shot while attempting to escape a crime scene.
- The armed robber and his men reportedly terrorized several homes in the community before the ERU arrived.

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United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
6 March 2009**

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Newspaper Summary

Government Confirms Recruitment for Iraq, Orders Halt to Process

(The Inquirer, The News and The Analyst)

- The Liberian Government has corroborated reports of recruitment for security guard services in Iraq but has ordered the process halted for now until permits were secured by the local security firm doing the recruitment.
- Information Minister, Laurence Bropleh said government's action to halt the recruitment exercise was based upon reports that the C&J International, a local security firm responsible for the recruitment began the exercise without obtaining a permit from government.

About 1,500 Workers of American-run Inter-Con Security Firm Cries Foul

(The News)

- About 1,500 workers of the American-run Inter-Con Security Firm have accused their management of bad labour practice.
- A spokesman of the group alleged the management is excessively using them without due compensation.
- The aggrieved workers said the management receives huge sums of money from their services but remains insensitive to their plight.
- They said they have tried to engage the management on the issue but to no avail.
- When contacted the Manager of the security outfit, Horisho Hanadez declined to comment saying the matter was currently at the Labour Ministry.

Finance Ministry Suspends, Dismisses Several Employees...Cites Payroll Tampering

(Heritage, The Independent, Public Agenda, The News and The Inquirer)

- The Ministry of Finance has suspended and sacked of several of its employees from the Expenditure and Debt Management Department with immediate effect for their alleged involvement in a payroll tampering.
- In a statement, the Ministry said the suspension of four of its employees and dismissal of one of them is consistent with the ongoing clean-up and reorganization exercise that is intended to improve efficiency and service delivery to the public.

Colloquium Draws Eminent Persons.....Finnish President, Others Arrives Today

(Heritage, The Independent, Public Agenda, The News, The Inquirer, The Independent, The Parrot, Liberian Express, National Chronicle, The Analyst, Daily Observer and New Democrat)

- The media reports that several eminent persons among them the President of Finland, two African heads of state, the Governor General of Canada, the Vice President of Spain and a Vice President at the World Bank are expected in Monrovia this weekend for the International Women Colloquium.
- The President of Finland, Tarja Halonen will in the country today and hold bi-lateral talks with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.
- President Halonen is slated to address a joint session of the National Legislature.
- An Executive Mansion release said an investiture and state dinner will be held following the address to the Legislature.

- Presidents Sirleaf and Halonen will then co-convene the International Women's Colloquium schedule for March 7 and 8 in Monrovia.

Senate Majority Bloc Experience "Dissent" over Removal of Pro-temp Nyenabo

(Heritage and Inquirer)

- [SIC] The Heritage reports that at least four Senators of the "majority bloc" of the Liberian Senate seeking the withdrawal of President Pro-temp Isaac Nyenabo have withdrawn their support from the campaign.
- According to Senate sources the Senators withdrew their support from the campaign on grounds that the approach being taken to have the Pro-temp resign his post is taking a different trend.
- Meanwhile, Bomi County Senator Richard Devine was yesterday queried for statement made against the Pro-temp that he will not honour or respect the signature of Pro-temp Nyenabo something that nearly cost his suspension.

Sweden Cancels US\$20.1M for Liberia

(Daily Observer and The Analyst)

- The Swedish Government has cancelled Liberia's debt in the tune of US\$20.1 million. The amount constitutes 67% of the total debt Liberia owed Sweden since the early 1970s. Liberia's total debt owed Sweden is US\$30 million.
- Speaking at the Finance Ministry Thursday afternoon, Swedish Representative to Liberia, Anders Olstman, said the balance 33% or US\$10,057,090 owed by Liberia had been rescheduled 'until the country completes the decision point of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative'.

Radio Summary

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

Finnish President Arrives in The Country Today

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

FDA Turns Over Cache of Gunshots to Police Today

- The Forestry Development Authority (FDA) will today turn over a cache of single barrel gunshots to the Liberia National Police.
- FDA rangers assigned to the Sapo National Park seized the 340 gunshots from an illicit miner.
- In a release, the FDA said the seizure of the shots forms part of the authority's effort to bring to a close the wanton destruction of the Sapo Park.
- This is the second time rangers have confiscated gunshots from illegal miners in the park. Over 500 shots were seized by the park rangers last year.

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

About 1,500 Workers of American-run Inter-Con Security Firm Cries Foul

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

Truth F.M. *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

WACSI Official Says International Women's Colloquium Chance for Liberian Women

- In an interview, the Programme Assistant at the West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI), Adama Sera Bah says the hosting on the International Women's Colloquium in Liberia is an opportunity for Liberian women.
- Ms. Bah said this would provide the opportunity to share ideas on how women can contribute to leadership development in Africa.

Special Youth Forum Convenes Today In Monrovia

- With a day to the start of the International Colloquium, a Special Youth forum will convene today in Monrovia.
- 40 international youth delegates to the colloquium will join the local delegates for the day-long forum.
- Some 40 Liberian youth delegates have ended a pre-Colloquium Youth Seminar preparing them to elaborate on issues affecting them in society.
- The training was facilitated by the UNFPA, UNICEF, the Ministry of Youth of Sports, YWCA and the Girls Guide Association.

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BBC

Sunday, 8 March 2009

Sudan leader's warning in Darfur

Sudan's president has issued a warning to peacekeepers, diplomats and aid staff while visting Darfur, in the wake of a war crimes warrant against him.

Omar al-Bashir said all foreign missions in Sudan must obey the law or face expulsion, as he visited the North Darfur capital of El Fasher.

Mr Bashir was greeted by thousands of flag-waving supporters, many riding camels and horses.

Correspondents described the trip as a calculated show of defiance.

The UN estimates that 300,000 people have died and 2.7 million displaced in Darfur, since black African rebels took up arms in 2003 against the Arab-dominated regime demanding a greater share of resources and power.

Analysts say Mr Bashir placed himself in some personal danger by visiting El Fasher, despite the heavy security, because most people in Darfur are said to support the war crimes indictment against him.

The most active rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement - which last May launched an unprecedented attack on Khartoum - has threatened to target El Fasher in the past.

Nevertheless Mr Bashir, 65, travelled from El Fasher airport on Sunday in an open vehicle to the centre of town along a route lined with cheering supporters.

Waving flags and pictures of the president, the crowd chanted his name, as well as slogans against International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo and the West.

Mr Bashir warned foreign peacekeepers, diplomats and aid workers to obey Sudanese law or face expulsion.

"I have a message to all the diplomatic missions in Sudan, the non-governmental organisations and the peacekeepers," he said.

"They have to respect the rule of the country. If anyone goes further than the rule of the country, we will kick them out directly."

On Saturday in the capital, Mr Bashir described as "thieves" and "spies" the 13 aid agencies he kicked out following the ICC indictment.



“ We will kick them out directly ”

President Bashir

Mr Bashir accused aid groups of taking "99% of the budget for humanitarian work themselves, and giving the people of Darfur 1%".

The United Nations says the expulsion puts more than a million lives at risk.

The ICC issued a warrant for Mr Bashir on 4 March, accusing him of two counts of war crimes and five crimes against humanity in Darfur.

It is the first such indictment against a serving president.

International divisions

The UN Security Council, at its first meeting since the arrest warrant was issued, failed on Saturday to agree on a statement asking Sudan to reverse the decision to expel the aid agencies.

The key powers at the UN Security Council - Russia, China, France, the US and Britain - met to discuss a statement which called on Sudan to reverse the expulsions.

But diplomats say China, which buys Sudan's oil and sells it weapons, objected.

A delegation from the African Union and the Arab League is due to ask the Security Council to suspend the war crimes case against Sudan's president.

Sudan Tribune

Tuesday, 10 March 2009

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article30447>

Darfur victims also had enough of you AU Chairman Ping

By Wasil Ali

March 9, 2008 (WASHINGTON) – If anyone has any doubt in their minds about the negative and biased role played by the African Union (AU) in the Darfur crisis, they should look at the statements made by AU commission chairman Jean Ping in the Sudanese capital today.

“It is clear that the decision of the International Criminal Court (ICC) undermined and jeopardized the problem of ... reconciliation in Darfur.... enough with these people”.

Ping was clearly upset with the ICC arrest warrant against Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir; surely more so than the decision by the embattled president to expel over a dozen aid groups from Darfur putting lives of millions of civilians at risk.

As was to be expected from the AU chairman, the issue of the ejected aid organizations was not serious to the point where he would condemn this move or explicitly call on Khartoum to reverse its decision.

There are two reasons for this. First Ping rushed to Khartoum primarily in order to show his support to Bashir irrespective of the gravity of charges brought by the ICC against him. It is simply a continuation of a long standing non-written rule at the Pan-African body to support rulers even if it had to be the expense of the ordinary citizens or victims.

Second the AU commission chairman took the opportunity to bash at the ICC, as it has been his habit over the last few months, accusing it of being a “Western” body enforcing “Western” principles of prosecuting individuals accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Ping was essentially saying that the ICC is “anti-African”.

In his statement Ping made his endlessly repeated and meaningless cliché about the AU being against impunity and human right violations in Darfur. However nowhere does Ping mention any practical steps taken in this regard since the conflict broke out in 2003.

Yet the Gabonese diplomat speaks about a “High Level Panel led by former [South Africa] President Thabo Mbeki to investigate how best to develop a whole package that includes, justice, truth, healing and reconciliation, as stated in the UN Security Council Resolution 1593 (2005)”.

Interestingly enough Ping has been promising this panel since August 2008 and reportedly did not see the light till this very day because of objections raised by Khartoum about its mandate. Furthermore even after Mbeki was chosen to lead the panel his visit to Sudan kept getting delayed for unknown reasons.

Clearly in light of the ambiguity of the panel’s mandate coupled with Ping non-stop statements blasting the ICC as well as the AU silence on the issue of Darfur war crimes all these years leads to one conclusion; the AU is seeking ways on how to let Bashir and other Darfur war crimes suspects off the hook.

It is becoming more evident Ping is unconsciously damaging his moral standing as well as the organization he is representing by saying that the ICC is targeting Africans. It is an argument he repeatedly made without noting that those suspects the court is after are accused of committing gross human right abuses against African citizens not Westerners. On top of that Uganda, Central African Republic (CAR) and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) referred their cases to the ICC. There are also several African States such as Kenya which is mulling asking for ICC intervention or in the case of Ivory Coast asked for it but the prosecutor has decided not to open an investigation. But these hard facts mean nothing to Ping as he seeks to simply to side with those who can get him re-elected.

The Darfur case in itself demonstrates how Africans played the major role in bringing that case to the ICC and make it see the light as shown below.

- UN Security Council Resolution 1564 which established an international commission of inquiry gained the blessing of two African countries sitting on the council at the time, Angola and Benin while Algeria abstained.
- The five member International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur consisted of predominantly African figures which included Mohammed Fayek, from Egypt, Dumisa Ntsebeza, from South Africa and Theresa Striggner-Scott, from Ghana. They were the ones recommending that the case be referred to the ICC.
- UN Security Council Resolution 1593 which referred the Darfur case to the ICC was approved by Tanzania and Benin while Algeria abstained.
- There are three notable African figures who handled the Darfur case at the ICC. Deputy prosecutor Fatou Bensouda from Gambia, Judge Akua Kuenyehia from Ghana and senior Trial lawyer Essa Faal from Sierra Leone.

Yet despite the overwhelming proof of Africans leading the ICC Ping chose to speak of the court in a demeaning and disrespectful manner, holding its lawyers, judges and staff in contempt.

It is also worth comparing Ping's statements with that of the Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa who met with Bashir and emphasized the importance of handling the justice issue without discounting the court or making any accusations against it. The discrepancy in position is very ironic given the fact that the Sudanese government considers itself far more Arab than African.

We must also remember that it was Ping who signed off on a report to the UN Security Council (UNSC) last September showing among other things Sudan's efforts in "combating impunity" which he said "demonstrates its commitment...to achieve lasting peace and security in Darfur".

But examining the impunity portion of the report Ping forwarded to the UNSC it outlines seven cases related to carjacking, robbery, mischief and torture of few individuals with a promise to keep investigating. The AU commission chairman must somehow be convinced that these seven cases caused the displacement of 2.5 million Darfuris in three countries and the death of 300,000 more. And he wants to sell this to the UNSC so they can suspend Bashir's indictment and is upset that they did not buy it.

There is also one major question Ping should answer. Would he support deferring prosecutions of the three rebel commanders who led attack that killed African troops from Mali, Botswana and Senegal? After all it can also be argued that this move would anger the rebels and jeopardize peace efforts. Would Ping approve of that?

Ping's situation should not be separated from an impotent AU which has recently picked the Libyan leader Mu' ammar Ghaddafi to lead them. One of the first statements Ghaddafi made after being elected was defending the Somali pirates who terrorized ships in the Red Sea saying that they are trying to "make

a living” and “feed their children”. As such, little meaningful action or positions can be expected from the AU or officials like Ping.

Therefore it is of no surprise that Darfuri displaced and refugees hold an extremely unfavorable view of the AU and African governments in general. Africans solving their own problems is a myth refuted by the reality. The AU has far more failures than successes in resolving conflicts plaguing the continent. There is little hope that this will change anytime soon because of African leaders’ mentality.

One video aired by Reuters last year asked African people on the street if they support Bashir going to the ICC. It was refreshing to see that the overwhelming majority supported it. This is the kind of spirit that Africa needs. One that values human rights much more than outdated African nationalistic rhetoric that has done more harm than good making the continent one of the most backward on the face of the earth.

The best recent example of the spirit Africa needs is the Nigerian Nobel Literature Prize Winner, writer Wole Soyinka who made statements from United Arab Emirates (UAE) today saying “Who is Omer Al-Bashir compared to women who were raped and elders who were exterminated”.

“I will not listen to anyone defending Bashir unless one of the fathers whose women were raped comes and family displaced comes forward saying I do not want Bashir indicted” Soyinka said.

Ping must understand one thing. It is not the ICC which created the Darfur conflict and the humanitarian tragedy but rather the climate of impunity for those figures behind it since they felt the comfort of not being held to account and that they can continue fueling the war in Darfur without fear whether on the government side or the rebels.

Time

Wednesday, 4 March 2009

Sudan's President Charged with War Crimes. Will He Be Tried?

By Alex Perry

Enforcing global justice has to be the legal challenge of all time. The International Criminal Court has worldwide authority, but its executive power is limited to a few buildings in the Hague and its budget to \$125 million, one-thirtieth the size of the New York Police Department's. It has wide agreement on what constitute the worst offenses, but its mandate to prosecute them is rejected by the governments of more than half the world's people.

On Wednesday, the ICC issued a warrant for Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity — the first time in its history that it has charged a sitting head of state. A charge of genocide was not included, despite ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo's request and the U.S.'s repeated allegations that al-Bashir is guilty of the crime. ICC spokeswoman Laurence Blairon accused al-Bashir of "intentionally directing attacks against an important part of the civilian population of Darfur, Sudan, murdering, exterminating, raping, torturing and forcibly transferring large numbers of civilians and pillaging their property." (See pictures of Darfur descending into chaos.)

Still, there is almost no hope the warrant will be served. "As soon as al-Bashir flies outside Sudan, he could be arrested," Moreno-Ocampo told al-Jazeera on March 3. Which is to say, never.

The ICC is undermined by several enduring controversies. Supporters say lasting peace demands justice and point to the arrest and conviction of Sierra Leone's warlords — in a joint U.N.–Sierra Leonean process — which has not restarted that war, as some had feared it would. Sierra Leone "indicates how important it is to have justice if you are going to have peace," the prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone told TIME when the last three militia leaders were convicted last week. But opponents argue that peace often requires amnesty more than it does justice and point to how the 2005 indictment of Ugandan militia leader Joseph Kony led him to spurn peace talks. That militia, the Lord's Resistance Army, has now expanded into new areas, committing atrocities and killing hundreds in Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic.

There are also questions over how meaningful the ICC really is. It was set up in 2002 after 66 countries (out of the world's 195 countries) ratified the Rome Statute; today only 108 countries have ratified it. (The contradiction escalates in al-Bashir's case, which was initiated by a U.N. Security Council referral even though three of the Security Council's five permanent members — Russia, China and the U.S. — have not signed on to the statute.) Plus, the ICC has thus far only pursued Africans, in the Central African Republic and Congo as well as Sudan and Uganda. "That," said African Union chairman Jean Ping in February, "is a problem." Asking why no cases had emerged from conflicts in Gaza, the Caucasus, Colombia or Iraq, Ping said, "We don't want this double standard." (See pictures of Sudan's slow-motion tragedy.)

The danger is that the victims of the world's worst crimes will be lost in all this noise. In Sudan's case, that would be the 300,000 dead and 2.7 million refugees the U.N. has counted in Darfur. Global justice might be tough to implement. Those figures are why it's worth trying.

International Women's Day at the Special Court Sunday, 8 March 2009



