

**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:

Monday, 20 April 2009

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

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Concord Times
Monday, 20 April 2009

Special Court receives funding reprieve



Special Court Registrar
Herman von Hebel

The Special Court for Sierra Leone has received US\$6.5 million in new contributions - enough, court registrar Herman von Hebel says, to avoid a shortfall that could have enabled former Liberian leader and war crimes defendant Charles Taylor to go free. In March the court forecasted that funds would run out at the end of April, leading to concern that Taylor's trial could be delayed or discontinued, according to Special Court (SCSL) prosecutor Stephen

Rapp. "I could have the best evidence in the world, I could have the strongest advocacy, but if we ran out of funds, the court might have to let the accused go," Rapp told IRIN. "You can't hold them if you don't have the resources to finish the trial. I don't want that to happen." The recent donations will allow the court to continue functioning through June, according to von Hebel. Other contributions are expected to come through in the coming months. The

court has said it needs \$28 million for 2009. Anger Many Sierra Leoneans are angry at how much the court has cost. "My whole family was displaced during the war. I needed money to build a new home, to send my children to school, to feed my family - we are living in poverty here. What has been the point of all this spending [on the court]? Why does it need more money?" Alison Turay, who lives in Kroo Bay slum in the capital,

Freetown, said. Victims of the conflict in Makeni, 120 miles away from the capital Freetown, said that while they supported the work of the Special Court, programmes to help Sierra Leoneans recover their lives should also not be overlooked by donors. Up to 100,000 Sierra Leoneans - among them amputees and other war-wounded, victims of sexual violence, war widows and children who are eligible for post-war reparations - have yet to

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receive any compensation. The National Commission for Social Action (NACSA), which is running the reparations programme, has less than \$3.5 million to run the programme in 2009-10 - far less than the \$14 million it requires. Funding voluntary Unlike the international tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, where funding by UN members is stipulated, funding for the Special Court for Sierra Leone - a unique hybrid national/international body - is voluntary. The SCSL's mandate is also limited, focusing on

"persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law" from 1996 to the end of the 11-year civil war in January 2002. Thirteen people were indicted by the court. Financial squeeze Von Hebel said sluggish funding does not mean dwindling support for the court's work. "The political will is still there, but the financial means are more limited." With similar tribunals now starting in Lebanon and Cambodia, there is more demand for money for international justice at a

time when donors are facing the global financial crunch, Dominic Stanton with the British High Commission in Freetown said. The last trial to be held in Sierra Leone is nearing completion; three former leaders of the rebel Revolutionary United Front were sentenced on 8 April and appeals are expected to be completed by October. Charles Taylor's trial is taking place in The Hague. Von Hebel expects Taylor's trial to wrap up at the end of 2009, with sentencing and appeals continuing through 2010. The court's budget will drop to \$12.7 million in 2010, he said.

For di People
Monday, 20 April 2009

The Next Thing-Wayne Jordash And Co

WHAT HAS Wayne Jordash and Chief Taku, counsels for Messrs Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon in common—because they seem to be insensitive to all the blood and fire that once obtained here by calling the trial a politically motivated one?

by ELIAS
BANGURA

They say this trial is an unfair one, but what can they say about the unfair trials civilians suffered at the hands of the Ruf and others; is it because of this that Augustine Gbao has so nobly asked for forgiveness from one and all—what's wrong with you and your clients by not following suit? And one can hardly believe you to say the trial was unfair through out. Why didn't you resign your job then or was it because the pay was good? And about your appeal—what about if your client's years are increased at the end of the day like it happened with the others who lost their appeal?

But honestly, I wonder how it would have felt to you if your clients had walked out free from this trial; all other flaws of the court would have been overlooked, huh? Well, how about your entering, albeit so late now, a plea of guilty and plead like Courtenay Griffiths, Taylor's lawyer at The Hague, on our humanity and reason and let the judges here temper justice with mercy?

Oh stuff, you won't do it because already you have claimed the Prosecution brought in paid witnesses, and a whole lot more. Well, old fellows, am putting it to you the sentences were lenient and very reasonable, compared to their crimes. But six years is a long time for one to be in a trial, in the process you have grown intimate with your client who is of course a likable person, and so you hate to see

him go to jail. Truth is you ought to be weary by now, but that's going to be compensated by the lot of keepsakes this country has offered you. Hey, it can't be denied, this is a fine country, along with its folk, more than your England. It is people like your client who once set out to destroy it: do you see the backwardness, the amputees and more all around?—Your clients made a huge contribution to it but such bad contributions you seem to support now if you see your clients as innocent.

After the years, generations, do you know nothing would remain for your clients except the hated memory of their names and their actions during the civil war here? You would do them the best service if you'll advise them to say sorry and go in and serve their sentences.

I know we are not averse to showing mercy—we aren't a people with the bosom of Shylock, no. Mercy for them from us is all right, though they are not worthy of it—but who is seeing the irony here? Their crimes were huge and various and we offered sometime back the most sincere sympathies to the victims, yesterday; but today we are turning up as mercy priests for them to be forgiven and let us move ahead. Okay; so where is the essence of the Special Court then? There's no need, at the outset, to have set it up if we knew our aim at the end of the day was just to forgive them. Rot it, mercy hollers; you're not godly but hypocrites. And for sure, you are the finest hypocrites.

To err is human, but to continue erring is devilish—and that's who the Ruf along

with the others were. Devils like them, therefore, do not deserve our mercy. Or if they do, there was then no need to sympathize with the victims. Well, now I know why donors are slow with their contributions towards the Reparation Programme.

They think Issa was innocent-like Jesus in the midst of a sinful and perverse group—and so he should be forgiven and allowed to walk away free. The naysayers of his conviction—foremost among them is crafty, smooth-tongued Wayne Jordash—are now fanatics, forcy and desperately bitter about nothing but the unfairness of his trial. "International justice has never been so degraded as the trial of Issa Sesay and his friends," is his mantra; and he vows never to practice law again but return to his native England to do something else, if they lose their appeal and this 'unfair' trial is allowed to stand.

It is what you'll end up doing, Wayne, I am sure as about death, that you are going to lose your appeal. Nevertheless, I share one concern with you very strongly—this Court *ought* to be fair! There's no need to be otherwise. Even in a children's court, they won't walk away free, talk less about one with some of the ablest lawyers on Earth! Issa and his comrades could have equaled the devil for wickedness, yes, but they deserve a fair trial, like any one. Giving them an unfair trial would blind them, and myself, against their crimes and let them only see the trial as a witch-hunt, a politically-motivated one whose aim at the outset had always been to nail them, and satisfy the donors of the court, but they won't satisfy us the victims with 'such an unholy charade of justice.' The

Prosecution's victory for us shouldn't be a bought one as it would end up as hollow, something far from a swan song or a credible thing. Let it be something which indeed 'generations and others in the future will cite from'—give us the real McCoy, Stephen Rapp, and end as a champion fit to share a pedestal with the noble, and the honourable and the just.

Therefore, we say to the Appeals Chamber, be vigorous; be thorough and certain about each and every allegation and their supporting evidence from the Prosecution. Give us and posterity what is fair and true and essential.

And the Prosecution, if they have the evidence—which abunds like dirt—must put it forth like a sore thumb. Why, since day one they have been our hope, after God, to give us sincere justice. They shouldn't give a hoot to the cheeky propaganda Wayne Jordash and the rest are saddling Sierra Leoneans now with.

The next best thing, Wayne Jordash, is to lead your client to the path of asking for sincere forgiveness—not the one he's given which the judges can't tie up with his plea—from their victims. After that, he should turn aside with the same request to his Maker.

Your other point about where your client spends his sentence is foolish, or does a prisoner chose where he's to be taken in to? Mercy me, but wait, after all, the Ruf and others gave their victims a choice, "Long sleeve or short sleeve, wus wan you want?" so, let's grant them that request but the options for them shouldn't include Sierra Leone, by no means.

Hmm, the tone of the Press and Civil Society itself has been less and less concerned about what the victims and Sierra Leone went through—which should never be allowed again; instead it is for

the perpetrators who have unfittingly reaped every essential sympathies; many have joined Wayne Jordash in shouting from the rooftops that this is an unfair trial.

Pity! Imagine our sitting down, amputated, poor, grief-stricken and more, and be lectured by a two cents worth English guy. His impotency is nigger-like but Truth will beat him in this game, since Truth is also a Nigger, who's been obsessed with his clients' cruelties, although mingled with one or two genialities. And the reason for that is simple—they had already lost the war; everything and everyone was already closing in on them: so they thought cooperating to bring peace was the best next choice to which

they gave their devotion like a Saint Paul. But the results (52, 40, 25 years) have surprised them and a good many.

But we are no more to be acquiesced either by religion, fine rhetoric or anything about this matter which ought to be behind us now ten years after our war, or any other matter henceforth. We are tired of being bullied, bought, maimed, fooled, taken for granted by priest or politician. Yes, they think and we feel; and since we feel, we're not to be coerced into forgiving like we were before now into enduring various brutalities. Amen.

Africa News

Friday, 17 April 2009

S Leone: Special Court gets \$6.5 million

Murtala Mohamed Kamara, Africa News reporter in Freetown, Sierra Leone

The Special Court for Sierra Leone announced that it has received \$6.5 million in new contribution out of the \$28 million it budgeted for this year and it is expected that the money will enable the trial of Liberia's former President Taylor. The court forecasted that its funding will run out in April this year.

Commentators earlier predicted that former President Taylor who is standing trial on 11 counts at the UN backed court might be set free because of the lack of funding.

Stephen Rapp, Special Court Prosecutor told IRIN on the lack of funding that "I could have the best evidence in the world, I could have the strongest advocacy, but if we ran out of funds, the court might have to let the accused go. You can't hold them if you don't have the resources to finish the trial. I don't want that to happen."

The Court Registrar who will be taking up his new assignment in a similar court for Lebanon, Dutch born Von Hebel, assured that other contributions are expected to come this year.

The court has recently served longer jail terms to senior Revolutionary United Front Leaders for their role in the country's civil war while Taylor remains the only accused standing trial in The Hague out of the others.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was created by an agreement between the government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations to try those who bear the greatest responsibilities in the Sierra Leone civil war after the Lome accord.

Associated Press

Friday, 17 April 2009

Hariri tribunal loses its registrar

THE HAGUE (AFP) — The registrar of a landmark international tribunal to try the suspected killers of Lebanon's former prime minister Rafiq Hariri, has resigned just six weeks after it opened, the court said Friday.

"The Registrar of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, Mr Robin Vincent, has resigned from his position effective June 2009," said a court statement, without giving reasons.

Vincent has been the registrar of the tribunal, which officially opened its doors on March 1 but has yet to set a first trial date, since March 2008.

"Mr Vincent will leave the tribunal with the firm foundation required to achieve its important mandate," said the statement.

Under his watch, the court's rules of procedure and evidence had been adopted and officials sworn it.

Tribunal spokeswoman Suzan Khan told AFP Vincent did not make public the reasons for prematurely ending his three-year contract, and was not available for comment.

The tribunal, the world's first anti-terrorist court, was created to try those responsible for Hariri's death in a massive Beirut car bombing in February 2005 along with 22 other people.

Vincent had previously served as registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and has advised on the creation of several international tribunals.

"The United Nations will begin the recruitment and selection process for a new registrar in the coming weeks," said the statement.

SW Radio Africa

Wednesday, 15 April 2009

<http://www.swradioafrica.com>

How can we forgive, without justice?

Remembering T Chiminya and Talent Mabika; Lest We Forget Mr Prime Minister Tsvangirai

By SANDERSON N MAKOMBE

I write this article with deep regret Mr Prime Minister. Regret because today the 15th of April marks the 9th anniversary of the death of your close associates, Tichaona Chiminya and Talent Mabika near your home area in Buhera in 2000. Brutally burnt to death by Zanu Pf youths led by Joseph Mwale. Mwale, a CIO operative is still employed by the government that you are leading right now. No meaningful murder investigation was undertaken and despite Mwale being subpoenaed by former Justice Devitte, he remains in contempt of court. All prosecutors who have tried to bring him to justice have lost their jobs especially Mr Levy Chikafu. Unfortunately I write this article at a time when you have just lost your beloved wife in a tragic accident and worse, just recently lost your grandson by drowning in a pool inside your own premises. These are hard times for you Sir understandably. I feel for you and your family for I was with Tichaona and Talent when they were killed and I knew your wife considerably well.

It has become fashionable that after every conflict situation, there is a call for a truth and reconciliation commissions to be established. Moreso after the much written success of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC]. There is an underlying assumption that truth commissions are a path to reconciliation and peace for all post conflict societies, Zimbabwe included. Apparent also is the notion that they are to be preferred to other transitional justice mechanisms available.

What is seldom told is that truth commissions in almost all cases recorded lead to amnesty for perpetrators of gross human rights violations. Whereas blanket amnesty is easily rejected and considered abhorrent, the same attitude is not displayed regarding Truth Commissions. The difference in attitudes being attributed to the fact that in truth commissions confessions and apologies are traded for amnesty. Either way however, the culture of impunity prevalent in our societies is evident and prolonged. The circle of violence is not broken, violations continue unabated as perpetrators are consciously aware that they will not be held criminally accountable.

That Zimbabwe has suffered so much violence, wanton destruction of property, murder, rape and other sexual offences, and torture is well established and documented. This is both in pre and post independence Zimbabwe. Three distinct periods stand out: the liberation war period up to 1980, the internal disturbances that culminated in the worst post colonial Zimbabwe atrocities in Matebeleland, infamously called the Gukurahundi era and the period from 1990 to the present day attacks mainly on opposition and civic group activists. In 1980 Mugabe, clouded under the euphoria of independence preached reconciliation and all past atrocities were made 'let bygones be bygones'. In 1987 the Unity Accord between Zanu Pf and Zapu led to cessation of hostilities and a political settlement without any effort to account and deal with the atrocities committed. In 2009 we see the formation of a government of national unity/ inclusive government [whatever the difference is am yet to know] and the question remains on what has to be done to perpetrators of gross human rights violations. It is imperative that at this juncture Zimbabwe seriously deals with its ugly past once and for all for the society to be healed.

My argument is that truth commission in themselves are not enough for they do not tell the whole story. Rather they centre on the generality of the patterns of the violence without establishing individual culpability. The end product is a scheme that has the potential for national reconciliation and peace but not for individual reconciliation. National reconciliation is expounded by absence of the patterns of violence

of the past whereas individual reconciliation means a mending of community and personal relationships, a restoration of the dignity of the victims, and their personal circumstances. In most cases victims want to see criminal accountability in tandem with reconciliation efforts. The SA TRC aptly displayed the notion that truth commissions are a soft option that suits the perpetrator best. In addition it is on record that most perpetrators just offer bare apologies without any sense of remorse for their actions, increasing the victim's pain. For that, they are rewarded with their freedom from prosecution and left to roam the very neighbourhoods that they terrorised. Criminals allowed to roam free in societies that they terrorised does not eradicate national fear. Rather it enhances a constant reminder that the past can be repeated with impunity. Perpetrators have more to gain by receiving amnesty than victims have through reparations. What makes a murder committed in a political context more acceptable and pardonable than a non political crime is really beyond my apprehension.

The failure of the 'brains' behind the atrocities to appear in truth commissions is another cause for concern. These are the same people who in international criminal law bears the 'greatest responsibilities' for the crimes committed. Their culpability is not ascertained whereas in a court of law such doctrines like command responsibility, joint criminal liability would definitely establish their criminal intent. The evidential burden threshold in criminal courts is not the same with that required in truth commissions. It is easy for a perpetrator to just bluff off without giving much evidence and still get a pardon for their crimes. Theodore Bagosora the brains behind the Rwandan genocide would have been pardoned in a truth commission if one had been used in Rwanda despite the grotesque human rights violations he orchestrated. International law requires that these perpetrators be punished in a competent court of law. There is enough body of legal opinion establishing that to grant amnesty is inconsistent with states' obligations under international law to punish perpetrators of serious human rights violations.

TRCs are a result of political expediencies. In most cases their recommendations are not carried out by the incumbent government. This is especially true on the issue of reparations for victims, a critical aspect of restorative justice. Victim groups have been formed in some societies which have established TRCs to pursue purely legal challenges on their constitutionality and also seeking damages. The Khulumani Lawsuit by apartheid victims was launched in the United States against some multi national companies allegedly for aiding and abetting the racist regime by doing business in that country. The US Supreme Court ruled the case could be brought under the Alien Tort Claims Act. Elliot Pfebe, Adella Chiminya et al also sued Mugabe and Zanu Pf using the same act and were awarded damages by a US District Judge who found Zanu Pf liable for the deaths of the plaintiff's relatives. The crucial point is that organisations and companies that have aided and abetted the human rights violations in Zimbabwe will not stand before a truth commission if one is established yet would have contributed as much to the atrocities. The role of organisations like ZBC, ZANU PF and other government institutions like the CIO, army, police, war veterans association, and the national youth service can not be underestimated. Society demands that the leadership of these institutions brought before a court of law to account for their actions.

As Ingatjeff writes 'justice itself is not a problematic objective, but whether the attainment of justice always contributes to reconciliation is anything but evident'. Indeed a retributive penal system has shown it has no deterrent effect on would be violators. If it had, there would not have been violations in Darfur, in Burma, DRC, Uganda etc especially with indictments on Slobodan Mlosevic, Charles Taylor, prosecutions through the International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Iraq Hybrid Court, and the Cambodia Special Courts for prosecuting Kymer Rogue leaders. However the traditional criminal justice system has an important role to play in transitional societies. Criminals just have to be punished, full stop. Whether that's beneficial to the society is neither here nor there. It is just deserts. They have to suffer the consequences of their actions and that is a cost that communities are prepared to bear and have been bearing since time immemorial. Society demands justice and authorities have both a moral and legal obligation to punish those who wrong society.

It is for these reasons that prosecutions have been held in societies mentioned above. Sierra Leone provides probably the best scheme of dealing with past violations, of avoiding the dichotomies of; truth

versus trials, justice versus peace and reconciliation versus justice. It set up truth and reconciliation commission in addition to a special court established to prosecute violators. Most importantly appearance in a truth commission was not a bar to prosecution. However information revealed in the truth commission could not be passed to the special court. Zimbabwe needs such an approach to deal with its past. A truth commission alone is hardly enough.

I suggest Zimbabwe also needs to set a truth and reconciliation commission running parallel to a specialised local Ad Hoc criminal court. This commission will have two chambers. The first chamber will deal specifically with the Matebeleland atrocities and the second chamber will deal with all other politically related atrocities from 1990 to 2009. Crucially amnesty should not be an automatic condition for appearance. The commission will have power though to grant amnesty and impose community sentencing depending on the level of culpability, participation and gravity of the crime. Serious cases will have to be referred to the established court for prosecution. The carrot will be that those who voluntarily appear before the commissions will use the appearance as a mitigation factor in sentencing if indicted by the criminal court. A directive for sentencing will be that a certain proportion of the sentence will automatically reduced if found guilty. It could a quarter, third or half of the sentence tariff.

The special ad hoc criminal court would have jurisdiction over the more serious cases and ring leaders. Two trial chambers will be established to serve each commission chamber and those who would not have appeared in any of the commissions. The courts will have jurisdiction over all politically motivated murder, torture, rape and other sexual offences. Information revealed in the truth commission will not be passed to the prosecuting court to avoid self jeopardy and self incrimination. Those who have outstanding cases before the courts will be passed straight to the special criminal court without the benefit of going through the commissions.

Crucially the needs of the victims have to be catered for. It is recognized that victims have a right to reparations after a conflict, a topic that I will discuss later in other articles. Zimbabwe has to set up a scheme that recognises its obligation to its victims both materially, psychologically and sentimentally. At the same time also enacting laws that make political parties vicariously accountable for the actions of their supporters and liable for damages caused.

Yes Prime Minister, Chiminya's widow Adella, his son Bright, and daughter Faye demands justice, Trymore Midzis family in Bindura demands justice, so are the families of Beta Chorurama, Godfrey Kauzani, Tonderai Ndira, Mathew Pfebve etc. It is still like yesterday when I survived that fateful day on 15 April 2001. I still remember vividly the two burning bodies of Talent Mabika and Tichaona Chiminya. How Mr Chiremba, the late Mr Hwata, the late Ricky Chikwinya and me lifted the burning bodies of our two mates with our bare hands, with fresh burning flesh peeling from their hands and legs as we put them in the back of the police car. The cries of Talent Mabika asking 'Gwanya why are you killing me?' echoing in the night. Eight years on no one has been prosecuted.

The need for political pragmatism should not stand in the way of justice. Rather justice has got an important role to play in political pragmatism. Justice delayed is justice denied.

HOW CAN WE FORGIVE WITHOUT JUSTICE MR PRIME MINISTER?

The writer is a former National Youth Coordinator of the MDC

Abugida Ethiopian American Information Center

Monday, 20 April 2009

<http://www.abugidainfo.com>

The Arc of Justice

Alemayehu G. Mariam

“We Shall Overcome...”

In 1965, in a commencement address at Oberlin College, Ohio, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King spoke about the ultimate victory of good over evil, justice over injustice, right over might, truth over lies and human rights over government wrongs. “We shall overcome,” he said “because the arc of a moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice... No lie can live forever.... Truth crushed to earth will rise again.... ‘Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the demon known, stands a God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.’”

No Lie Can Live Forever

These past few months have been unkind to global criminals who believed they can commit crimes against humanity with impunity. Recently, former Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori was found guilty of mass murder and kidnapping by a Peruvian court. Judge Cesar San Martin declared that Fujimori was guilty “beyond all reasonable doubt” for authorizing a secret police death squad (“Colina Group”) he created commit massacres in the Barrios Altos area of Lima in 1991 and at La Cantuta University in 1992 that left 25 dead, and for the kidnap-murders of a journalist and a businessman in 1992. Fujimori’s defense: “I knew nothing about the killings!” He blamed his intelligence service chief for the crimes. After years of evading justice, the truth rose again from the slums of Barrios Altos and the campus of La Cantuta University and crushed Fujimori at age 70! He was sentenced to 25 years in prison. He may yet face trial for corruption and misappropriation of public funds.

George W. Bush’s legal bushwhackers in the “war on terror” are under investigation for crimes against humanity. All indications are Spanish prosecutors will soon make a formal announcement to seek criminal charges against six top former officials — Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, Assistant Attorney General (and now federal appeals court judge) Jay Bybee, Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo, Defense Department general counsel William J. Haynes II, Vice President Cheney’s chief of staff David Addington, and Undersecretary of Defense Douglas J. Feith — in the torture of five Spanish citizens held at Guantánamo. With the stroke of the pen, President Obama illuminated Bush’s tapestry of lies and legal sophistry to conduct torture secretly and illegally spy on American citizens.

Sudanese president Omar al-Basir is a fugitive from justice. He is wanted by the International Criminal Court for “masterminding with absolute control” a criminal plan “to destroy in substantial part the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups.” He is accused of causing the deaths of 35,000 people “outright” in the Darfur region since 2003. International Criminal Court prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampos stands ready to bring al-Bashir to the bar of justice to face the truth.

Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao, top leaders in the Revolutionary United Front, were convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity during Sierra Leone’s civil war. The monstrous brutality of this evil trio included forcibly recruiting child soldiers, amputating hands and arms and carving the initials “RUF” into the bodies of their victims. They will be serving long prison terms. Charles Taylor, former president of Liberia, is in the second year of his trial in The Hague for crimes against

humanity. Pol Pot's chief torturer Kaing Guek Eav (Duch) is one of 5 suspects currently on trial in Cambodia for genocide and crimes against humanity. And the list goes on...

The widely-respected human rights organization Genocide Watch recently requested the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to "investigate the brutal massacre of 424 Anuak carried out in Gambella, Ethiopia in December of 2003" and the "extra-judicial killings, rape, disappearances, destruction of livelihood and the displacement of thousands of Anuak [which] continued into late 2005." Genocide Watch accuses the dictatorial regime and its leader in Ethiopia of "perpetrating crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide" in the name of "counter-insurgency." The request for investigation concluded: "Despite the violation of international law, not only has no one been held accountable for these crimes which occurred over five years ago, but worse than that, such crimes continue in other places in the country."

Angels, the Demon Known and Lies

In June and November, 2005, 196 innocent people were massacred by the security forces of the ruling dictatorship in Ethiopia, and 763 wounded. The Angels gunned down in broad daylight include : Tensae Zegeye, age 14. Debela Guta, age 15. Habtamu Tola, age 16. Binyam Degefa, age 18. Behailu Tesfaye, age 20. Kasim Ali Rashid, age 21. ShiBire Desalegn, age 21. Teodros Giday Hailu, age 23. Adissu Belachew, age 25; Milion Kebede Robi, age 32; Desta Umma Birru, age 37; Tiruwork G. Tsadik, age 41. Admasu Abebe, age 45. Elfness Tekle, age 45. Abebeth Huletu, age 50. Etenesh Yimam, age 50; Regassa Feyessa, age 55. Teshome Addis Kidane, age 65; Victim No. 21762, age 75, female. Victim No. 21760, male, age unknown, and so on. In December, 2003, 425 Anuaks were massacred in Gambella and thousands more displaced. Tens of thousands were massacred, raped and displaced in the Ogaden region and the rest of the country. Tens of thousands of innocent Ethiopians currently languish in the regime's dungeons as political prisoners. And on and on...

A spokesman for the "Ethiopian Embassy" in Washington, Woindimu Asamnew, offered the usual dismissive blanket denials: "We don't take seriously their allegations and fabrications. They are totally unfounded, fabricated lies... We don't take this kind of idea [outside investigation of genocide] seriously. We have a parliament; they do take care of these kinds of issues. There is no any need of inviting international body for this purpose because of unfounded allegations. An outside investigation is unnecessary and unacceptable. We have investigated the matter and taken corrective measures, otherwise this kind of exaggerated and unfounded lies are not taken seriously by our government. What I'm saying is that any individual can say whatever he wants, but alleging something and the realities on the ground are totally different matter."

Truth Crushed to Earth Will Rise Again

Those familiar with the criminal law know that the first line of defense among the hardened criminal classes is: "Deny the truth. Deny it Again. Deny it a thousand times. When the evidence (the truth) is overwhelmingly against you, ridicule the charges, call them 'totally unfounded, fabricated lies' and blame someone else, or the trees, the moon, the sun and the stars." But sophisticated criminals do not simply deny the truth; they make it an art form: They weave a dazzling tapestry of lies to evade responsibility for their actions. They dehumanize their victims and profess moral sanctification by condemning their critics. By claiming to "investigate the matter and having taken corrective measures," they audaciously seek to exonerate themselves from the monstrous crimes they have committed. By trivializing the devastating consequences of their crimes, they continue to dehumanize and brutalize their victims virtually implying that the victims are responsible for causing the criminals to inflict suffering and sorrow upon them. By condemning their critics as falsifiers and spiteful, they hope to draw attention away from themselves and fixate it on the motives, intentions and purposes of their critics. But truth crushed to earth will rise again!

The truth will rise again thunderously from the silent graveyards of the thousands of massacre victims; it will be heard in the agonizing wails of the torture victims; the truth will be told in the plain words of political prisoners; it will be recounted in the graphic testimony of eyewitnesses; the truth will ooze out of the sewer mouths of the murderers and torturers who will tell their dirty secret tales to save their skins; the teardrops of women who were raped and violated will paint the truth on the canvas of justice; reporters and journalists who were muzzled and jailed will write the truth in endless volumes; the truth will come alive in high resolution satellite photographs and amateur videos; it will be depicted in the photographs of the mutilated bodies of victims and it will be scientifically reconstructed in the forensic laboratories. The criminals' own signatures will rise up from the official documents and orders like the ghosts of Rwanda and scream: "J'accuse!". It is very true that the "the realities on the ground" are very different for the criminals and their victims. The victims demand justice; the criminals seek to evade it.

Wrong NOT Forever on the Throne!

Human rights will be the crown jewels of human liberty. As Gandhi taught, "There may be tyrants and murderers, and for a time, they may seem invincible, but in the end, they always fail. Think of it: always." In other words, wrong will not remain on the throne forever. That is why we must learn the right lessons from those who have done humanity so much wrong. The rule of law is on the rise ever so slowly in the world, and dictatorship on a precipitous decline. Neither Fujimori, al-Bashir, Gonzalez nor the other criminals ever thought that they would be held accountable for their crimes in a court of law, or even in the court of world opinion. All of them believed they were above the law, and sneered at the rule of law. They perverted justice and subverted the democratic process; they eliminated the normal checks of an independent judiciary and evaded the supervision of a legislature freely elected by the people. They stonewalled the independent media from investigating and reporting their crimes, corruption and abuses. The fact of the matter is that people, even the poorest ones, know their basic human rights. Oppressed people the world over are crying out for justice, and for wrongs committed against them to be righted. In sum, they want and demand the rule of law!

Keeping Watch

Ethiopians shall overcome because "truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again" in our beautiful homeland. With the faith in the truth, to paraphrase Dr. King, "we will be able to hew out of the craggy boulders of crimes against humanity, a shining marble temple of democracy, freedom and human rights. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood, sisterhood and human rights and speed up the day in Ethiopia when, in the words of the prophet Amos, 'Justice will roll down like waters; and righteousness like a mighty stream.'" No truth, no justice; no democracy, no peace!

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Thursday 16 April, 2009

Peru's example of justice

Opinion Editorial

Guest editorials do not necessarily reflect Herald-Leader views.

Cincinnatus, the Roman who was called to serve as dictator and then returned to his farm when the job was done, is an exception in the annals of power. More common is the leader who wields extraordinary power in a time of crisis and promptly forgets the difference between ends and means and is never held to account.

So it was heartening last week to see a three-judge panel of the Peruvian Supreme Court find Peru's former president, Alberto Fujimori, guilty of human-rights abuses and sentence him to 25 years in prison.

Fujimori arguably had the makings of a Cincinnatus. He was an obscure agronomy professor in 1990 when he was elected president, and he worked wonders: He curbed hyperinflation and restored economic stability and crushed the Shining Path terrorist organization. He also systematically abused his power. Among a list of horrifying crimes, the court found him guilty of the murder of 25 people, including an 8-year-old boy, by a military death squad. In 2000, facing corruption charges, Fujimori fled to Japan. Convinced that he was forever a hero, he flew to Chile in 2005 with plans to make a comeback. Instead, he was extradited to Peru.

At his trial, Fujimori assailed his prosecutors for failing to distinguish "between hate and evidence." The court, however, found that it was Fujimori who failed to distinguish between authoritarian excess and the rule of law. It may be, as the fallen president's supporters have charged, that Peru's current president, Alan Garcia (who was also Fujimori's predecessor), is not a great improvement. But if so, he is now on notice that Peru's citizens and its legal system are watching.

That's why this trial is so important. International tribunals, like those dealing with Rwanda, Yugoslavia or Sierra Leone, are an essential last resort in the battle with tyranny. They are unlikely to have the cleansing or educational power of a country's judicial system affirming the primacy of law. However popular Fujimori may once have been in Peru, by the end of his trial, polls found that a large majority agreed that he was guilty as charged.