

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

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

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Salone Institute of International Law Inaugurated

By Betty Milton

At the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone Institute of International Law was inaugurated as a center intended to create a vehicle through which the interest of the country and others in the sub region on international rule of law can be further explored.

In his inaugural speech foundation member of the Institute Ambassador Allieu Kanu who was also the Chairman of the occasion said that the Institute of International law should also stand as a testament to the very impact that international law can have on

He echoed that Special Court is not responsible for the Institute but its presence in the country has greatly contributed to the interest of Sierra Leoneans across the country in International law.

The President of the Institute Justice Abdul Koroma in his statement read by the MC Abdul Rahman Kamara, it was stated that because of the shocking civil war that it endured, the country made and continues to make, notable contributions to the international community's efforts to curb the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, efforts to combat the child soldier phenomenon, efforts to regulate and



Justice Bankole Thomppson, Ambassador Allieu Kamara and Justice Renata Winters

the lives of individuals in the betterment of the human condition and on helping countries achieve sustainable peace and prosperity.

Ambassador Kanu stressed that a predictable legal system with a participatory law-making process, impartial law enforcement mechanisms and a fair, transparent and effective adjudication system is essential to the credibility of the law as a means to protect individuals against lawless acts of private individuals and organizations or the arbitrary use of State authority.

The Institute he went on will be a center for "academic excellence on International law in Sierra Leone and the region and will focus on the promotion of fundamental principles of international law and its progressive development."

The Chairman said that a strong rule of law, requires a strong foundation and fair and effective application of legal rules, and it also requires strong institutions to develop, support, strengthen and defend legal rules.

Ambassador Allieu Kanu added that the fact that the court's legacy is something it has been concerned about from the very beginning sets the Special Court miles apart from any International court that has come before, and sets the bar very high for those that are coming after it.

combat the global trade in conflict diamonds and develop credible systems of individual accountability to assist societies transiting from "collective trauma" to "collective peace."

The aims and objectives of the institute President Kamara said was to "investigate and record our contribution to the development of international law. It also aims at disseminating and advocating respect for international law, particularly human rights and international humanitarian law, with a view to ensuring their respect and preventing their violation as we experienced during the civil war." The Institute he went on also aspires to work with other institutions of human rights, international humanitarian law, international justice, and members of the country's civil society to contribute to local and international dialogue, to advance the cause of human rights, justice and international rule of law in Sierra Leone. Justice Bankole Thompson one of the vice presidents of the institute said that the establishment of the institute as an autonomous institution, academic and professional entity can be perceived in a collateral context as the realization of a juristic vision of the architects of the Special Court, as an institution designed to arrest and eradicate the phenomenon of impunity that is now regrettably, the bane of modern civilization. ■

Amnesty International

Monday, 27 April 2009

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Sierra Leone: President Koroma must commute all death row prisoners

Amnesty International is calling on President Koroma to use his constitutional power provided for in article 63 of the Constitution on Sierra Leone's 48th Independence Day to commute all 12 sentences to terms of imprisonment, including the three women currently on death row.

As of 24 April 2009, 138 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice.

Amnesty International calls on the Government of Sierra Leone to join this worldwide trend to abolish the death penalty and remove the capital punishment from national legislation.

In 2005 Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report found the continued existence of the death penalty on the country's statute books to be "an affront to civilised society based on the right to life". The TRC made the abolition of the death penalty an imperative recommendation of the report, requiring that the government implement it without delay. The Government of Sierra Leone is under a legal obligation to implement all the recommendations of the TRC report.

Sierra Leone is a state party to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. In November 2008, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights at its 44th Ordinary Session in Abuja, Nigeria, adopted a resolution calling on state parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to observe a moratorium on the death penalty.

Brima Sheriff of Amnesty International in Freetown states that "President Koroma should show leadership and abide by its international and national obligations and abolish the death penalty in Sierra Leone. First and foremost he should make history in Sierra Leone by commuting the sentences of all those currently on death row".

There are twelve people on death row including three women. The last execution in Sierra Leone was carried out in 1998, and three new death sentences were imposed in 2008.

Pending steps towards total abolition of the death penalty, Sierra Leone must ensure that in death penalty cases, the most rigorous internationally recognized standards for fair trial are respected, and provisions in legislation providing for mandatory death sentences are removed.

Background

The resolution of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights expressed concerns about the failure of some African states "to give effect to the UN resolutions and African Commission's own 1999 resolution calling for a moratorium on executions". By adopting the resolution, the African Commission aligned itself with the global trend towards abolishing the death penalty, and supported the call for African states that still retain the death penalty to demonstrate commitment to observing a moratorium on executions as the first necessary step towards abolition.

ISRIA

Monday, 27 April 2009

<http://www.isria.info/>

European Parliament: Human rights: women in Afghanistan, situation in Camp Ashraf, Special Court of Sierra Leone

In three resolutions adopted at the end of this week's Strasbourg plenary sessions, the European Parliament strongly condemns discrimination and violence against women in Afghanistan, voices concern at the possible closure of Camp Ashraf, Iraq, and expresses support for the Special Court of Sierra Leone.

Revise laws that discriminate against women in Afghanistan

In a resolution adopted by 388 votes to 4, with 7 abstentions, the EP calls for the revision of a draft law in Afghanistan on the personal status of Shiite women, which places severe restrictions on women's freedom of movement and legitimises 'marital rape'. It also urges the repeal of "all laws which give rise to discrimination against women and which breach the international treaties to which Afghanistan is a party".

According to the 2004 constitution of Afghanistan, "men and women have equal rights and duties before the law." In addition, "Afghanistan is a party to a number of international agreements on human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Rights of the Child", points out the EP.

However, the rights of women are being threatened by the draft law, which would affect around 15-20% of the Afghan population. Although it has not yet come into force as it has not been published in the Government Official Journal, it has been signed by the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai. Following criticism both within Afghanistan and from abroad, the law has been sent back to the Afghan Ministry of Justice so that its compatibility with Afghan law and with the international agreements signed by Afghanistan can be verified.

EU backing for Afghan women

The EU's strategy document on Afghanistan for 2007 - 2013 recognised gender equality and women's rights in particular as being vital to the development of Afghani society. The EP wants to encourage women in Afghanistan not only to participate in the August Presidential election but also to stand as candidates. In order to further support the promotion of women's rights, the EP is calling on the Commission to provide direct funding and assistance to the Afghan Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Protection of human rights campaigners

Finally, the EP strongly condemns the deaths of a number of prominent women's rights activists, including Sitara Achakzai, Malai Kakar, Gul Pecha, and Abdul Aziz. MEPs are also appalled that the Afghan Supreme Court has upheld the 20-year prison sentence of journalist, Perwiz Kambakhsh, who wrote an article concerning women's rights under Islam, and are calling for his release. In light of these cases, the EP wants Afghan authorities to make all possible efforts to protect women "against sexual violence and other forms of gender related violence", and to ensure that the perpetrators of such acts are brought to justice.

Backing needed for the Special Court of Sierra Leone

MEPs want to ensure that anyone convicted of human rights abuses by the Special Court of Sierra Leone actually serves their sentence. There is currently a risk that this will not happen, which would defeat the purpose of the court. Other international tribunals face similar problems, thereby jeopardising the very idea of international justice.

The Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) was established by the UN in 2000, in order to bring to justice those who have committed war crimes or crimes against humanity. The mandate of the Court is due to end in 2010, but the Government of Sierra Leone has indicated that it will not be able to enforce the sentences of those convicted.

Today's EP resolution on the SCSL was adopted by 381 votes to 4, with 7 abstentions. It urges the Council and the EU Member States to find a solution together with the SCSL "in order to ensure that the persons convicted serve their sentences, without which the effort of the SCSL and the credibility of the international community, including the EU, will be severely undermined".

The SCSL has concluded an agreement with states including UK, Sweden and Austria to ensure that some of the convicted persons serve their sentences in these countries. The European Parliament believes that "more agreements are needed to ensure that all persons already convicted, and those that are standing trial and may face convictions, actually serve their sentences".

Supporting international courts

The Court has set a number of significant precedents for international courts, as it is the first to indict a sitting African head of state for war crimes and is the first to be established in the country where the alleged crimes occurred.

The EP welcomes the progress made by international courts and tribunals, but recognises that a lack of assistance will put this process at great risk. It therefore calls on Member States and other international institutions to provide the necessary financial support to the SCSL and other international courts.

Humanitarian situation in Camp Ashraf

Members of the People's Mujahedin Organisation of Iran in Camp Ashraf, Iraq, must be treated according to the Geneva Conventions and not forced to go back to Iran, where they would run the risk of ill-treatment, says the EP in a resolution adopted by 284 votes to 42, with 75 abstentions.

Camp Ashraf was established in the 1980s for the people of the Iranian opposition group, People's Mujahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI). Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, American forces disarmed the residents of Camp Ashraf and provided guarantees that they would be "protected persons", under the Geneva Convention. However, recent statements from the Iraqi National Security Advisor indicate that the Iraqi authorities intend to make life 'intolerable' for the people in Camp Ashraf, and may even expel or forcibly displace them.

In its resolution the EP calls on the Iraqi authorities "to protect the lives and the physical and moral integrity of the Camp Ashraf residents" and "to treat them in accordance with obligations under the Geneva Conventions, notably not to forcibly displace, deport, expel or repatriate them in violation of the principle of non-refoulement".

The dangers of returning to Iran and ending the blockade of the camp

The EP is concerned that Iranian nationals who are forcibly returned to Iran may be at risk of "serious human rights violations", and believes that no one should be made to return to a situation where their lives might be at risk. Therefore, the Council, Commission and Member States, need to work alongside the UN and the Iraqi authorities to ensure that a satisfactory, long-term solution is found for the legal status of the people in Camp Ashraf, according to MEPs.

As well as respecting the status of Camp Ashraf residents as "protected people", the Iraqi authorities need to end their blockade of the camp, as this is putting lives at risk. The EP is calling on the Iraqi government to ensure that people in Camp Ashraf have "full access to food, water, medical care and supplies."

The vote on today's resolution was preceded by a lively debate, with MEPs differing over, and in the end rejecting, amendments that focused on allegations of ill-treatment by the PMOI of dissidents within its ranks.

On Monday 26 January 2009 the EU Council of Ministers agreed to remove the PMOI from the EU terror list.

Washington Post

Tuesday, 28 April 2009

Why We Must Prosecute

Torture Is a Breach Of International Law

By Mark J. McKeon

On Sept. 11, 2001, when the twin towers were hit, I was sitting in a meeting in The Hague discussing what should be included in an indictment against Slobodan Milosevic for war crimes in Bosnia. I was an American lawyer serving as a prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and there was no doubt that Milosevic should be indicted for his responsibility for the torture and cruel treatment of prisoners. As the head of state at the time those crimes were committed, Milosevic bore ultimate responsibility for what happened under his watch.

While at The Hague, I felt myself standing in a long line of American prosecutors working for a world where international standards restricted what one nation could do to another during war, stretching back to at least Justice Robert Jackson at the Nuremberg trials. Those standards protected our own soldiers and citizens. They were also moral and right. So I didn't understand why, a few months after the attacks in 2001, the Bush administration withdrew its consent to joining the International Criminal Court. Wasn't accountability for war crimes one of the things America stood for? Although staying with the court did mean that the United States would be subject to being charged in that court, how likely was that to happen? Surely we would never do these things. And, in any event, the court could only assume jurisdiction over a person whose own government refused to prosecute him; surely, that would never happen in the United States.

And yet, seven years later, here we are debating whether we should hold senior Bush administration officials accountable for things they have done in the "war on terror."

In 2001 and the following few years, we at the international tribunal built a strong court case against Milosevic. We presented evidence that he had effective control over soldiers and paramilitaries who tortured prisoners, and did worse. We brought into court reports of atrocities that had been delivered to Milosevic by international organizations to show his knowledge of what was happening under his command. And we watched as other heads of state were indicted for similar crimes, including Charles Taylor in Liberia and, of course, Saddam Hussein in Iraq.

At the same time, I watched with horror the changes that were happening back home. The events are now well known: Abu Ghraib; Guantanamo; secret "renditions" of prisoners to countries where interrogators were not afraid to get rough; secret CIA prisons where there appeared to be no rules. I tried to answer, as best I could, the questions from my international colleagues at The Hague about what was happening in and to my country. But as each revelation topped the last, I soon found myself without words.

I hope that the United States has turned the page on those times and is returning to the values that sustained our country for so many years. But we cannot expect to regain our position of leadership in the world unless we hold ourselves to the same standards that we expect of others. That means punishing the most senior government officials responsible for these crimes. We have demanded this from other countries that have returned from walking on the dark side; we should expect no less from ourselves.

To say that we should hold ourselves to the same standards of justice that we applied to Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein is not to say that the level of our leaders' crimes approached theirs. Thankfully, there is no evidence of that. And yet, torture and cruel treatment are as much violations of international humanitarian law as are murder and genocide. They demand a judicial response. We cannot expect the rest of humanity to live in a world that we ourselves are not willing to inhabit.

The writer was a prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia from 2001 to 2004 and a senior prosecutor from 2004 to 2006.

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 27 April 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

UNMIL Driver, Others Arrested For Theft at Freeport of Monrovia

(New Democrat, Liberian Journal and Heritage)

- [SIC]The New Democrat, Liberian Journal and Heritage newspapers quoting “credible” sources say an employee of the World Food Programme (WFP) and a staff member of the U.N. Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) have been arrested in connection with the disappearance of 11 containers from the Freeport of Monrovia.
- The New Democrat however reports that UNMIL Spokesperson, Maimouna Mills declined to comment about the alleged involvement of the mission’s personnel in the container theft, saying that investigations were ongoing.
- Meanwhile, seven persons have been arrested in connection with the container theft and are currently in police custody.

Syndicate Uncovered At Finance

(The Informer)

- The Ministry of Finance said it has discovered a complex syndicate involving the smuggling of 14 Suit Cases in the country.
- A Finance Ministry release quoting the Anti Smuggling Division of the Bureau of Customs said the suit cases contained dutiable items and were allegedly smuggled into the country through the Roberts International Airport by a Lebanese Business man.
- Authorities at the Finance Ministry said the accused has since been turned over to the Ministry of National Security for full scale investigation.

Liberians Serving U.N. Travel Ban Want Government's Intervention

(New Democrat, Liberian Journal, Heritage and The Inquirer)

- The media reports that Liberians placed on the travel ban by the U.N. have appealed to the Liberian government to intervene in a statement made against them by the French Ambassador.
- Ambassador Jacques Gerard reportedly told Senate Pro-Temp Cletus Wotorson that the affected Liberians would use their alleged hidden wealth to destabilize the country.
- Ambassador Gerard made the remarks when Pro-Temp Wotorson requested the intervention of France in the removal of the travel ban on the Liberians.
- They include Randolph Cooper, Cyril Allen, John Richardson, Representatives Edwin Snowe, Kai Farley and Senator Jewel Howard-Taylor.

Government Warns Against Sale of Malaria Drugs

(The Informer, and The Inquirer)

- Health and Social Welfare Minister, Dr. Walter Gwenigale has warned health officers of all government hospitals and clinics against the sale of malaria drugs intended to treat those with the illness.
- Speaking over the weekend, Dr. Gwengale said his office has noticed that malaria drugs brought into the country, some of which are donated by international partners, including UNICEF and WHO, were being sold to commercial clinics or kept for their private use, thus causing the unavailability of the drugs for infected patients.
- Dr. Gwenigale has meanwhile promised drastic action against anyone caught selling the drugs.

Radio Summary

Star Radio *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Workers at Catholic–Owned Local Hospital Stage Protest to Demand Salary Increment

- Reports say some workers at the St. Joseph Catholic Hospital are staging a go-slow action in demand of salary increment and other benefits.
- In an interview, the spokesperson of the workers, Jimmietta Harmon said the workers also want to know how the hospital's administration was using government's subsidies given to it.
- The workers' spokesperson alleged that professional nurses and other workers at the Catholic Hospital make far less than those at other hospitals.
- Meanwhile, the Administrator of the Hospital, Dr. Lily Sanvee has vowed to operate the hospital without the workers.
- The hospital is one of Liberia's leading private hospitals, and crippling its operations could have a serious impact on the already struggling health sector.

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

Police Rescues Man from Ritualistic Killers

- [SIC]Reports say police at the weekend rescued a man who was allegedly being killed for ritualistic purposes.
- Police sources say the incident which occurred in Mount Barclay outside Monrovia was intercepted by highway patrol officers leading to the arrest of one of the suspects while the others are still at large.
- According to the source, the men were using sharp instruments in an attempt to chop off the victim's head.
- The victim is said to be at a local hospital currently undergoing medical treatment.

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

Justice and Health Ministries to Justify the Removal of 35 Children from Adoption Agency

- Criminal Court "A" has mandated the Justice and Health Ministries to provide justification for removing some 35 children from an adoption agency.
- Judge James Zota's order followed government's admission that it removed the children to protect their welfare.
- During a habeas corpus proceeding last week, government said it was not opposed to adoption but wanted to see it done legally.

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

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

Two-Day Media Conference Begins in Monrovia Today

- A Press Union of Liberia (PUL) release issued in Monrovia said a two-day conference for media owners, managers and other stakeholders' opens today in Monrovia and is expected to begin a debate leading to the adoption of the collective bargaining agreement for journalists.
- The gathering which is organized by the PUL and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) is intended to discuss some issues affecting the media including the conditions of service of journalists, sustainability and trade union development.

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 24 April 2009

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Newspaper Summary

Four Opposition Parties Want Legislature Pass Threshold Bill

(The Analyst, The Inquirer)

- The leadership of four opposition political parties have requested the National Legislature to pass the new Population Threshold Bill currently before it. The four parties - Congress for Democratic Change (CDC), Liberty Party (LP), the National Democratic Party (NDPL) and the National Patriotic Party (NPP) - said the census has been conducted in line with the constitution and therefore wanted the lawmakers to pass the threshold bill which is intended to establish electoral constituencies in the country.
- On Wednesday, former President Pro-Tempore of the Liberian Senate, Isaac Nyenabo said the preliminary census results submitted to the National Legislature cannot be used to enact the threshold bill saying it would be legally wrong for a national law to be based on initial results which are subject to changes.

Justice Minister Explains Controversial US\$500,000 Capital Flight from Central Bank

(Heritage, Daily Observer, The Analyst, The Inquirer)

- Justice Minister Philip Banks has disclosed the US\$500,000 that reportedly vanished from the Central Bank of Liberia vault was put in government's coffers.
- Speaking at a news conference Thursday, Minister Banks said the amount was confiscated from a Nigerian national at the Roberts International Airport in 2006.
- The Minister said when the man was arrested by security officers he had the amount plastered to his skin.
- According to Minister Banks, the money was ordered confiscated by the court and placed in government's coffers saying it is currently being used for security operations in the country.

For WFP Container Disappearance at Port...LSP Director Suspended Indefinitely

(Daily Observer, Liberian Journal)

- Liberia's Seaport Police Director Ashford Peal has been suspended for time indefinite as a result of the disappearance of three containers and 450 bags of rice over the last few days from the Freeport of Monrovia.
- During a visit to the Freeport of Monrovia Thursday, Internal Affairs Minister and Acting President Ambulai Johnson confirmed that Mr. Peal had been suspended for time indefinite, and four other persons dismissed pending investigation into the matter.
- Minister Johnson said the relevant authorities were conducting investigation into the circumstances surrounding the WFP containers and the 450 bags of rice and that an official report will be forwarded to the President upon her return. Meanwhile, reports say the containers belonging to the WFP are still missing while a truck carrying the consignment of rice has been arrested and is in police custody.

Regional Maritime Rescue Centre Inaugurated in Liberia

(Daily Observer, The Analyst, The Inquirer, New Democrat)

- The Monrovia Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre has been inaugurated in Monrovia.
- Speaking during the inauguration, the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization, Efthimios Mitropoulos described the newly established Monrovia Regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre in Liberia as a difficult task saying it will require what he called undiminished vigilance, high standard of professionalism and sharp reactions.
- Also speaking, Maritime Bureau Commissioner, Binyan Kesselly renewed Liberia's commitment to professionally manage and operate the centre.
- According to Mr. Kesselly, the establishment of the centre places Liberia in a ready position to meet the challenges posed by the growing maritime trade in the sub-region.

World Bank Approves US\$44M

(Daily Observer)

- The World Bank Group has approved an (International Development Association) IDA Grant of forty-four million United States Dollars (US\$44m) equivalent for Urban and Rural Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project for Liberia.
- The development objective of the project is to support Government's goal of improving road access in Monrovia and targeted rural areas, as well as improving institutional structure for technical management of the road sector. The Urban and Rural Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project will finance several critical components of transport infrastructure around the country.

Radio Summary

Star Radio *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Justice Minister Clarifies how US\$500,000 confiscated from Nigerian National was used

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

Regional Maritime Rescue Centre Inaugurated in Liberia

Executive Wants Legislature Use Preliminary Census Result to Pass Threshold Bill

- The Executive Branch has called on the National Legislature to use the data submitted by the Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS).
- Speaking at a regular press briefing Thursday, Acting Information Minister, Cletus Sieh said the current preliminary results of the census would make no difference to the final draft accusing some lawmakers of using the issue to stall the Threshold process.
- On Wednesday, Former President Pro-Tempore of the Liberian Senate, Isaac Nyenabo said the preliminary census results submitted to the National Legislature cannot be used to enact the threshold bill saying it would be legally wrong for a national law to be based on initial results which are subject to changes.

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

Government Re-arrests 35 of the Escapees from the Zwedru Correction Palace

- Government says 35 of the 40 inmates who broke jail at the Zwedru Correction Palace in Grand Gedeh County have been re-arrested.
- Acting Information Minister Cletus Sieh said the inmates were re-arrested following a rigorous operation launched by the Joint Security.
- Acting Minister Sieh said efforts are underway to re-arrest the remaining five who are at large.
- He said most of those re-arrested are hard core criminals who are capable of causing havoc in the country.

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

Boat Accident Leaves Two Dead

- Two persons are reported dead following separate accidents in Grand Bassa County.
- The first death occurred when 19 persons onboard a sinking boat jumped into the sea to swim ashore.
- The 19 persons including crew members were on board the MV Jeffery sailing from Monrovia to Maryland County.
- The other death occurred when an ambulance dispatched to transport the victims from the boat to Buchanan for treatment involved in an accident.
- Police accounts say the accident occurred when a motorcycle collided head on with the ambulance leaving the motorcyclist dead.

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AllAfrica.Com

Monday, 20 April 2009

Liberia: After War, Creating Jobs for Peace

Accra — It was just a small loan worth the equivalent of \$100, from a local microfinance bank. But it enabled Mojamah who had just come back to her home in Kenema, Sierra Leone, after the country's civil war, to set up a dressmaking business to support her family of six.

In neighbouring Liberia, Amelia, a single mother with five children, got a loan of \$83 to help expand her work crushing rocks used to build roads. The loan worked so well she applied for another, worth \$200, so she could hire workers to help meet the growing demand for road materials, as Liberia rebuilds itself after the war.

Helping the poor find a way to make a decent living is at the heart of the continent's development plans and the ultimate goal of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the blueprint adopted by African leaders in 2001. Achieving that goal, however, has proved to be difficult, especially in countries struggling to recover from years of civil strife.

With so many poor and angry young people in the armed groups that had ravaged their countries, the governments of both Liberia and Sierra Leone are clear on the danger of failing to provide employment for 15 to 35 year olds. It is a simple equation: "If they have an alternative, they do not fight," says Andrea Tamagnini, who heads up the reintegration, rehabilitation and recovery arm of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Today, creating jobs, particularly for young people, is central to efforts to reduce poverty in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Despite the recent steady economic growth, there are still few opportunities for employment and the numbers of unemployed or underemployed - that is, people in jobs that keep them from rising above the poverty line - remain stubbornly high, at 70-80 per cent of the work force.

Some 70,000 ex-fighters in Sierra Leone and more than 100,000 in Liberia, as well as many displaced people, benefited from aid-financed reintegration schemes. Job training was a central part of the scheme in Sierra Leone. But according to a review by the UN Office of the Special Adviser for Africa, such reintegration efforts were "stymied by low levels of economic growth, a lack of employment opportunities and poverty."

The programme in Liberia faced similar problems. A 2006 UN survey found that some 28 per cent of the 60,000 of people who had been helped by the programme said they were unemployed, while only 8 per cent said they had seen a rise in their standard of living. More recent surveys show improvements, but the continuing high number of unemployed or underemployed youth "remains a particular concern that could be used by spoilers seeking to undermine stability," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned in a February report on Liberia to the Security Council. In January, Mr. Ban voiced similar concerns about Sierra Leone.

Trying for the longer run

The biggest challenge Mr. Tamagnini says is trying to create long-term employment for all. This is particularly so in Liberia, where the final phase of the reintegration programme - and the cash it provides - ends in April 2009.

Between 2006 and 2008, over 60,000 people were employed in Liberia's programme to rebuild the country's main roads. Carried out over two dry seasons, the programme created an estimated 2 mn

working days and injected some \$6 mn in cash payments and food into the local economy. Importantly, the programme was not limited to ex-combatants, who made up only 30 per cent of those employed.

Mr. Tamagnini describes work schemes as "the 'peace dividend' for poor people," but they need to be widened and funded over several years if peacebuilding efforts are to be successful, he says. He does not underestimate the long-term challenge. "Liberia's economy simply doesn't offer enough jobs for everybody," he points out. Both Liberia and Sierra Leone are feeling the impact of the current global economic slowdown.

Both countries, backed by aid funds, are trying to run ambitious youth employment schemes. Like Mojamah's dressmaking business and Amelia's rock-crushing enterprise, a lot of the effort is focused on developing small-scale business enterprises, funded through microfinance schemes. According to Kenyeh Barlay, an adviser with UNDP's microfinance programme in Liberia, many loans go to women's groups, especially those involved in trading activities. Loans to start up a business in "taxi-bikes" have been popular with ex-combatants in both countries.

The challenge is to ensure that projects "are not just drops in the ocean," Claudia Coenjaerts of the International Labour Organization says, but are "scaled up" so they make a real dent in the formidable levels of unemployment in both countries. For this to happen, the plans need not only funding but also capacity at both national and local level to develop and run an integrated approach covering all sectors of the economy.

Even if such efforts bear fruit, not enough jobs can be created without the revival of the countries' agricultural sectors, experts agree. A recent study by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization found that Liberia's agriculture has considerable potential to provide jobs and income, but it needs to be commercialized and its productivity must be raised.

But nobody is underestimating the scale of the challenge. "Nobody is selling farming as a business. A lot of people are running away from agriculture here," observes one Liberia-based official. "People have to be brought back to cultivating the land," another adds.

About the Author: Mr. Roy Laishley is a writer for United Nations Africa Renewal magazine. Please e-mail your comments to africarenewal@un.org.

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BBC Online

Sunday, 26 April 2009

Rwanda bans BBC local broadcasts

Rwanda has suspended BBC broadcasts in the local language Kinyarwanda because of what it says is bias in BBC reports concerning the 1994 genocide.

A statement announcing the temporary ban singled out a programme it said amounted to blatant denial of genocide against the Tutsi and moderate Hutu.

The editor of the BBC programme denied that there had been any bias.

He said that the programme had offered to include a government spokesman in the programme, but it had declined.

The government added that Rwanda believed in differences of opinion and press freedom and had patiently continued to seek common ground and co-operation on the part of the BBC Great Lakes leadership.

But broadcasts giving free scope to "genocidaires and negationists of the genocide" would not be tolerated, said Minister of Information Louise Mushikiwabo on Rwanda Radio.

The editor of the BBC programme, broadcast at the weekend, Ally Mugenzi, said the difficulties had arisen because of the interpretation which the government was putting on the genocide.



Some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed during the genocide

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DRC Ex-Combatants Form Political Party to Contest Future Elections

By Peter Clotey
Washington, D.C

Sixteen of the 21 former rebel groups who recently signed a ceasefire agreement with Kinshasa have formed a political party to contest future elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The party, known as the Patriotic Coalition for the Defense of Democracy (PCDD) aims to address what its founders described as the ineptitude of President Joseph Kabila's government. The former combatants accused the government of failing to alleviate the suffering of the ordinary Congolese.

Didier Bitaki is a leading member of the new party. He told VOA the new party is generating a lot of grassroots support after Kinshasa failed to live up to its promises.

"The reason why the party was created was that first 16 years we have been fighting in different wars, but didn't get the solution to stabilize the country. And now among the reason why there was a war... we can select for example political issues, political problems, which have to be resolved. Social problems and diplomatic problems," Bitaki said.

He said Kinshasa has so far failed to resolve the country's problems.

"Our political leaders were not able to place the country on the place where it should be placed. Unfortunately, there is looting, there is corruption money laundering and many things. So, we are just doing our best to improve on that situation through the new political party we are creating as a main aim of our party," he said.

Bitaki said the new party would ensure that it addresses the concerns of ordinary Congolese.

"Because we were fighting and we were looking for solutions by making the way unfortunately we did not do so. Now, we are deciding to lead our party and wait for the elections to prove that we are patriots. The people are with us and the population understand why Mai Mai we are fighting and I think in short that is the reason," Bitaki said.

He said the new party is credible and has the support of the people and would seriously challenge the ruling party in future elections.

"The first thing is that we are credible because the reason why is that if you ask who is the Mai Mai and what does the Mai Mai people need? Mai Mai people need is patriots and due to their patriotism that is what has led to the fighting of Mai Mai is that all of the people were behind Mai Mai combatants. Now, because we have already resolved the military question and I think due to the need of the population, we noticed that we need to deal with the political issues," he said.

Bitaki said most ordinary Congolese support the former combatants to bring about change in how they are governed.

"We are saying that we are going to fight all of what is bad for our population; it means that the people understand our cause and all of them are mobilized behind us that to make a change in the country," Bitaki said.

He accused some political leaders for embezzling funds he said belong to the country.

"In political issues, do you see how the country is? So that for someone to be rich to find money to become very strong, he has to become a political leader in the country starting by stealing money from the national treasury and build house. And I think buying a house is the political aim of our political leaders now in our country now, we need to bring change there," he said.

Bitaki said the country has not had good relationship with its neighbors.

"The Democratic Republic of Congo is the only country around the world that doesn't have any embassy out of the country for real. They are not paying even the ambassadors and there is a very bad relationship with our neighbors. So we want to resolve that issue," Bitaki said.