

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



Registrar Herman von Hebel said good bye to members of Civil Society at today's SCIF meeting in the Old Courthouse.

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:

Friday, 15 May 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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The Daily Star (Lebanon)

Friday, 15 May 2009

Funding, transparency seen as key to tribunal success

By Eugene Yukin
Special to The Daily Star

BEIRUT: Sufficient funding and transparency will be two of the most important issues facing the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) according to Jeremy Waiser, special assistant to the prosecutor of the Sierra Leone Crimes Court (SLCC). Waiser was speaking at the American University of Beirut at a lecture organized by the Issam Fares Institute on Wednesday evening. Throughout his talk Waiser pointed to similarities between the SLCC and the STL and tried to underline some major lessons which the STL could learn from the Sierra Leone experience.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon was established following the assassination of former Lebanese Premier Rafik Hariri in February 2005 to find and prosecute those responsible for Hariri's death and the assassinations of other political figures who were killed around that time. The Sierra Leone Crimes Court was established in 2002 following a long civil war and was requested by the Sierra Leonean president in 2000 to the International Community to try those responsible for the conflict's horrible crimes.

"The STL is not a carbon copy but very similar to the Sierra Leone Crimes Court," Waiser said.

Waiser pointed out that the STL and the SLCC are especially similar because they are hybrid courts, which are international courts or tribunals with a mixed panel of national or international judges in the affected country or abroad.

"If you're going to have a court it's going to be extraordinarily expensive," Waiser said. As of now the STL's funding is coming equally from both the international community and the Lebanese government.

Waiser stressed the need to keep good relations with those countries funding the STL. "Donors are going to get angry and upset when things slow down ... You need to make things look good in the press and when things do get delayed you need to let them know why," he said.

International tribunals and courts are very expensive to run and to fund them is always an incredibly difficult task.

Waiser recounted how difficult it was to get governments to continue funding the SLCC and pointed to the fact that Lebanon will have to maintain good relations with donor countries.

"If you don't have good relations with these countries and they don't believe that what you're doing is really good then they might not give you money and then you risk going broke," Waiser said. When courts do not have sufficient money there can be lengthy delays and this can easily lead to the defense asking for their clients to be set free.

A change in government and public opinion are some factors that could jeopardize Lebanon's standing with donor countries and its support for the STL. Despite these possible problems Waiser said, "Lebanon has to cooperate fully [with the tribunal] and so far it has and it seems like it will."

For this reason transparency of the court is very crucial to the success of the tribunal.

Waiser referred to the Sierra Leone experience to underline how damaging a lack of information and misinformation could be to the perceptions of the general public.

For example Charles Taylor's defense in the SLCC would often call the court a "white man's court" or "colonialism in disguise." These accusations would most likely be used by the defense in the STL as well. "The defense will make the same statements and it will be effective," Waiser said.

Based off the SCLL experience, the best way to prevent this is transparency. For this reason the court should make all the facts available to the public. Other than spreading the evidence in the media, a good way to engage the public is to hold open meetings at universities, schools and town halls all over the country according to Waiser.

Other than the issues of funding and transparency, Waiser mentioned the legacy of the Special Tribunal to be also very significant. Despite the challenges he has faced in the SLCC Waiser remained optimistic that the STL would hopefully "strengthen the Lebanese judiciary and the rule of law in the country" and concluded that "the lesson from the Special Court for Sierra Leone is that these tribunals are necessary, these tribunals are effective if done right, and it's not a question of 'if' but a question of 'when' these people responsible for great crimes will face justice."

New Democrat (Liberia)

Tuesday, 12 May 2009

Liberia: Taylor's Bid for Trial Delay Rejected

Othello B. Garblah

Monrovia — Mr. Charles Taylor has suffered another legal blow in weeks, with the Court rejecting his lawyers' bid to delay his trial from the agreed upon date of June 29 to August. His first setback was when the Court ruled that he must answer to all 11 counts because the prosecution has presented sufficient evidence to back the indictment. Mr. Morris Anyah, one of Mr. Taylor's defence counsels, in submitting his oral application Thursday, requested the Court to reassign the hearing date of the defence case saying they needed more time.

But according to the Court's Presiding Judge, Mr. Taylor's lawyers have not introduced any new evidence that would warrant a reconsideration and hence the court's decision remained unchanged. "I would just add this. We don't make this request lightly. We appreciate the fact you gave due consideration to the issues even before your Honours rendered your decision on Monday, the 4th. In fact, you had indeed indicated on 9 April that you would in fact proclaim and put forth a date on which the Defence case ought to start on 4 May. So we know your Honours gave thoughtful and careful consideration to the issue, but we come in seeking reconsideration having considered the significant effect that a start date of 29 June would have on the smooth ..." Mr. Anyah was quoted as saying according to a Court transcript forwarded to this paper by the UN back Special Court for Sierra Leone.

But the presiding Judge maintained: "The Trial Chamber has considered the arguments of the Defence in support of its application for the Trial Chamber to reconsider its decision of last Monday in which it fixed a hearing date for the commencement of the Defence case as 29 June. The Trial Chamber has also considered the response by the Prosecution.

"In the Trial Chamber's opinion the Defence has not presented any new facts, or any change of situation, which would justify the Trial Chamber revisiting and/or reconsidering its opinion of last Monday and we decline the Defence application.

Relevant Links

However, we do not wish to leave the Defence without access to a remedy. We note that the time for applying for leave to appeal expires today, so we now make an order extending that time to next Monday, which is 11 May, as the limit for the Defence to file any such application for leave. When I refer to Monday, I mean close of business next Monday, 11 May," the presiding Judge said.

Speaking on a local radio here Monday, Mr. Courtenay Griffiths indicated that he which the defend had up to August to open its case, suggesting that June 29 was too short a date to open the defense's case. He spoke of filing an appeal in that direction.

But in an interview with this paper Monday, the Special Court's spokesperson Peter Andersene, said the Court was yet to receive a written appeal from the Defense team.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 13 May 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Improve Coordination, Funding for Disaster Risk Reduction, Governments Urged

Nairobi, May 13, 2009 (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Better coordination between countries and aid agencies is necessary to improve preparedness and response to local and trans-boundary disasters, delegates at the second Africa meeting on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), held in Nairobi, said.

They also challenged governments to improve funding for DRR activities.

"Sierra Leone, **Liberia** and Guinea are affected by similar hazards such as army worms and flooding, but each country has its own preparedness and response plans," said Mary Mye-Kamara, Sierra Leone's disaster management department director.

International Clips on West Africa

AfDB and Member Countries Ready to Tackle Vulture Funds

May 13, 2009 (African Development Bank/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- The African Development Bank (AfDB) and 29 Regional Member Countries (RMCs) have, so far, signed an agreement to establish The African Legal Support Facility (ALSF), which will become fully operational by the end of June.

Out of the 29 countries, nine have deposited their instruments of ratification acceptance or approval of the Agreement with the Secretary-General of the African Development Bank, acting as the Provisional Depository. The AfDB at the 2009 Annual Meetings in Dakar, Senegal urged that further signatories to the Facility's agreement will facilitate the timely operationalization of its activities.

The countries that have signed the agreement include: Belgium, Benin, Burundi, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chad, **Cote d'Ivoire**, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali.

Local Media – Newspaper

Lawmakers ask Deputy Minister out of Chambers –Cite Improper Dress Code

(The News, The Informer, Daily Observer, National Chronicle, New Democrat)

- Deputy Finance Minister for Revenue, Mrs. Alfreda Tamba, caused uproar at the House of Representatives Tuesday when she was stopped from taking oath and asked out of the Chambers due to "improper dress code."

- She was in readiness to raise her hands when the Sergeant-At-Arms noticed the exposed parts of some of her body and approached the Deputy Speaker who was presiding.
- It was then ruled that the Minister should leave and return properly dressed.
- “Madam Minister, it has been brought to the attention of the Chair that you are not properly dressed. We ask that you come back in the next 30 minutes properly dressed,” said Deputy Speaker Togbah Mulbah.
- But Minister Tamba rejected the decision and said she would not return, insisting that she was properly dressed.
- However, some legislators disagreed with the dress code decision after the Minister’s departure, but the majority said the decision was right. Minister Tamba was at The House to explain the payment of real estate taxes for additional revenue

Three Police Officers Disrobed over stolen money

(Daily Observer)

- [sic] The Liberia National Police (LNP) says it has disrobed three of its officers that tried to conceal money seized from two kids and earlier stolen from the guardian of one of the children. George Bardue, spokesperson of the LNP said that some three police officers (names not given), while trying to check the total amount, tried to conceal some of the money but were caught in the act and arrested.

Teenage Motherhood Alarming

(New Democrat)

- [sic] At least one out of three girls ages 15-19, have had children, while more than one out of six girls between the same age group (15-19) give birth every year and almost one in seven of their infants die within a year, according to the Liberia Demographic Health Survey. The situation experts say results to a lot of complications in the lives of teenage mothers including loss of school year (s) or total withdrawal from school, reduced self esteem, reduced earning capacity as a result of truncation of education. These effects, experts say have social change implications that gradually reduce the potentials of girls maturing into adulthood. These were made known Sunday during the launch of a program designed to teach teenagers how to abstain from sex in order to prevent teenage pregnancy and avoid contacting HIV/Aids at the Redeemed Christian Church of God. The program dubbed "No Marriage, No Baby" is intended to support and assist determined youth attain their expressed goals spiritually, physically, financially and morally, says Pastor Wilson Nnanan of the Redeemed Church.

Press Union says reported attack on Journalist by President Pro-tempore Unacceptable

(The Inquirer, The Informer, Heritage)

- The Press Union of Liberia has termed as unacceptable the recent “aggression” on journalist Solomon Ware by President Pro-tempore Cletus Wotorson.
- Last week, journalists assigned at the Capitol accused Senator Wotorson of attacking their colleague and announced a news block out on the pro-temp.
- The Press Union said after conducting an investigation into the incident it was established that the Pro-temp acted improperly.
- The Union said information gathered from the public and support by the video footage contradicts the Senator’s contention that it was the reporter who pushed him.

Local Media – Star Radio (News monitored today at 09:00 am)

EU Gives Over US\$12M for Community Development

- The European Union (EU) said it has approved 160 community based projects for Liberia.

- Speaking during the turnover of six projects in Lofa County, the EU Project Manager for Infrastructure, Paul Smith said the cost of the projects is valued at €8.5 million a little over US\$12 million.
- He said the EU has signed an agreement with the World Bank for the projects to be implemented by the Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE).
- He said the three-year project include schools, clinic, market buildings and bridges.

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

House Tables Discussion on 2009/2010 Draft Budget

- The House of Representatives has tabled discussions into the 2009/2010 draft budget submitted by the Executive for approval.
- The House said it would not debate the draft budget unless 64 copies are made to it by the Executive.
- Meanwhile, the Civil Servants Association of Liberia has called on the National Legislature to reject the proposed budget statement from the Executive citing the need for further increment in civil servants salaries.
- The Association wants the Legislature to ensure that Civil Servants are paid the minimum of US\$100 per month as oppose to the US\$80 proposed by the Executive.

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

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

Nigerian “Businessman” Wants Money Back

- [Sic:] Speaking in a telephone interview from Nigeria, Valentine Ayika whose US\$508,200 was confiscated by government in 2006 appealed to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to intervene and ensure that he gets his money back.
- He denied the money was gotten illegally saying it was acquired through a loan transaction which he has not been able to pay back up to present.
- The Nigerian “businessman” however admitted not declaring the money upon entry into Liberia something Government said was one of the reasons for seizing the money.
- Meanwhile, one of the lawyers claiming to be the attorney of the Nigerian has said he is not aware of a lawsuit instituted against Government by another lawyer in favour of Valentine Ayika.

Justice Minister Says Efforts Are Underway to Build Capacity of Prisoners

- Speaking at UNMIL weekly press briefing today, Justice Minister Philip Banks said government is making immense efforts to build the capacity of inmates and improve the standards of various correction centers across the country.
- Minister Banks said Government has put in place a monitoring system at the Monrovia Central Prison and provided a data base to also indentify prisoners at various centers.
- He disclosed that Government recently launched a pilot agriculture project at the National Correction Palace in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, to improve the living standard at the prison.

Voice of America
Thursday, 14 May 2009

Ivory Coast Sets Date for Long-Delayed Vote

By Scott Stearns
Dakar

Ivory Coast said its long-delayed presidential election will be held November 29.



AFP Photo

Prime Minister Guillaume Soro said the new date is more realistic than previous attempts to hold this much-postponed vote.

Soro read a decree signed by President Laurent Gbagbo that set the election date for Sunday November 29 between the hours of seven and five.

He told reporters in Abidjan that more than six million Ivoirians have already registered to vote, representing about 70 percent of those thought to be eligible.

Because so many people have registered, Soro said the electoral process will be representative of the Ivorian population.

Ivorian PM Guillaume Soro reads a decree on the elections at the Presidential Palace, Abidjan, 14 May 2009

Former rebel leader Soro became the prime minister of a unity government as part of a 2007 peace deal. The accord formally ended a brief civil war in 2002 and 2003 but left the world's largest cocoa producer divided between the government-run south and northern provinces controlled by Soro's rebel New Forces.

President Gbagbo's mandate expired in 2005 but he has continued in power because there has been no election to replace him. The last planned ballot in November of 2008 was postponed when the government said it needed more time to prepare voter rolls.

The United Nations has repeatedly called on President Gbagbo's government to set a date for the vote with Secretary General Ban Ki-moon last month saying the country "urgently requires credible and transparent elections" to conclude the current transitional government. His comments followed the warnings of a UN panel that said former rebels were re-arming.

Ivory Coast's U.N. ambassador responded by urging the world body to "not get discouraged" by the successive postponements of the presidential vote. Iahiri Djedje appealed to the UN to continue helping the nation "to effectively overcome the crisis by holding elections in 2009."

The peace deal that made Soro prime minister says all former rebels will be fully disarmed at least two months before the vote. Asked about that condition Thursday, Soro said the government will take "all the necessary measures" to ensure that the election is peaceful.

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

Saturday, 9 May 2009

Matar: Released former security chiefs could still face trial

By Therese Sfeir
Daily Star staff

BEIRUT: The prosecuting attorney in the case of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's assassination said Friday that the four former security officers who were recently released by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon could still face trial. "The decision to release the four generals does not prevent them from being tried and is not a verdict of their innocence," Matar said during a news conference at the Press Federation.

"They can still be accused in light of investigations which will be conducted by the prosecutor general at the STL," he added.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) issued a decision to release the four officials after nearly four years of detention without charges.

Matar said: "The provisional detention period in the crimes attributed to the defendants does not fall within Article 108 of the rules of criminal procedure, which stipulates a maximum detention period."

He said the article excluded murder crimes and crimes that threaten state security, adding that media propaganda and campaigns launched after the issuance of the STL's decision were not based on legal foundations, "but on political intentions."

"Those who launched these campaigns were seeking to mislead the investigations into this major assassination and into other crimes targeting MPs, ministers and journalists," he said.

Matar added that those campaigns "attacked the dignity and integrity of the Lebanese judiciary" and described them as interference in legal affairs.

Regarding an interview with former Minister Michel Samaha on Al-Manar last week, Matar said Samaha should have submitted information he unveiled during the interview to the STL, "instead of spreading it in the media and using it for political goals." He added that the tape of the interview should be "referred" to the STL.

In the interview aired last week on Al-Manar television Samaha said he possessed information vital to the Hariri case.

Modern Ghana.Com

Thursday, 14 May 2009

Attritions of June 4 revisited...

By theghanaianjournal - The Ghanaian Journal

BY ATO KEELSON &TIMOTHY ANTWI-OTOO

Several decades after the execution of eight senior military of officers, including three Former Heads of States, a Veteran Politician, Joshua Attoh Quarshie, is furious over why the International Criminal Court, International Court of Justice, International Human Right Activists, and other International Human Right Organizations, have not queried former President Rawlings and his then second in command at the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) junta, that carried out that heinous act.

The AFRC overthrew the Supreme Military Council II (SMC II) government of General Fredrick William Kwesi Akuffo on June 4th 1979 at the time that the SMCII was preparing to hand over the reigns of power to a constitutional government. The intervention of the AFRC shifted the handing over to Dr. Hilla Limann's People's National Party (NPP) government from an earlier date to September 24, 1979.

As part of its house cleaning exercise, the AFRC junta executed three former Heads of State, General F.W.K. Akuffo, General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong and Lt. General Akwesi Amankwaah Afrifa, together with Major General Edward Kweku Utuka, Real Admiral Joy Komla Amedume, Major General Robert Ebenezer Abossey Kotei and Colonel Roger Feli at the Teshie Military range.

Mr Attoh Quarshie is worried about the hypocrisy of these organizations which have indicted and accused some former Heads of States of genocide, execution and war crime related issues and have brought them to face the law.

Speaking to TODAY in an exclusive interview, Mr Attoh Quarshie said “these International Human Right Activists and Organizations stood against the Ex-President of the US, George W. Bush, when he arrested the Ex-President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, prosecuted and finally had him executed, yet those who perpetrated similar atrocious killings in Ghana have not been brought to book and are walking freely.

“Despite the fact that Saddam Hussein had killed several innocent people, yet people protested against his execution, and why not the same in Ghana against the killings of our Former Heads of State in 1979?” the Veteran Politician questioned angrily.

Mr Quarshie said he personally confronted Major Boakye Djan on this issue and he confessed that he, Mr Boakye Djan, was not happy about the killings, since it was based on tribal sentiments, and no particular accusations were raised against them which deserve executions.

He said the “International Criminal Court has arrested the Ex-President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, and is being tried in a Special Court in The Hague for and genocide and crimes against humanity, yet those who were responsible for the killing of Ghana's three former Heads of State, Afrifa, Akuffo and Acheampong, and five respected, handsome, intelligent and experienced high ranking officers are walking freely, why? Is Ghana killers above the international human rights laws?”, queried Mr Quarshie.

“If the truth and justice prevailed in The Hague, and they are not hypocrites, they should let Ghanaians know why these people were executed. How can they issue an arrest warrant against Sudanese President

who has not invited people to witness the killings in Sudan? This shows the international hypocrisy or so-called International Human Rights.”

He explained that the perpetrators invited people to come and witness the killing at Kpeshinaa, near Labadi Beach, but people have kept silence over all these things.

He also took a swipe against critics, spiritualist and traditionalist accusing them of being hypocrites.

“None of them was bold to condemn the killings of these people, adding, all these eight people had traditional rulers, yet none of them spoke against this wicked execution though the evil executioners invited all the citizen of this country, as well as international and local journalists to come and witness the killings and in the face of these the country do not demand the reason why they were killed up to today. How can God bless such a cruel nation?”

Mr Attoh Quarshie revealed that “though we shall cry for God to help and bless us, but He will not listen to us, till we take away this abominable crime from our shoulders”.

He warned that if this is not done, no one should talk about democracy in this country or spiritual leadership in the country since they are all cowards.

He noted that “anyone who fails to speak the truth over this issue is equally guilty as well as the perpetrators”. The Veteran Politician called on wulomei (fetish priests) and traditional rulers who knew that such bloodshed occurred in their holy place, Accra, to go and perform the necessary rituals and take away the spirits of those executed.

Mr Quarshie intimated that it is his belief that “these people's spirits are walking up and down at Kpeshinaa in spirit, and advised that something should be done”.

Further, he also urged the Wulomei to do this as early as practicable, since it is a taboo on the Ga Land, advising, all God-fearing Ghanaians to endeavour to read the following memory verse: Isaiah 33:1-2 and Isaiah 10:1-3.

Source: theghanaijournal - The Ghanaian Journal