

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



Registrar Herman von Hebel receives a plaque from Civil Society at his send-off on Friday.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Tuesday, 19 May 2009

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

Friday, 15 May 2009

Liberia: Trans-Boundary Peace Park for Sierra Leone And Country to Unite the Gola Forest

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Sierra Leonean President Ernest Bai Koroma have launched a trans-boundary peace park for Sierra Leone and Liberia to unite the Gola forests in both countries.

The Peace Park, which is to be built in Leilahun, Kenema District of the Republic of Sierra Leone, will be funded by the European Union. The park will stand as a memorial of the long years of conflict in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. It will essentially provide security zones through which no armed conflict can be waged. It will also facilitate a strategy for cross border movement to protect illegal activities as well as bring civil society groups and communities to protect the interest of both countries.

Speaking prior to the launch, President Johnson Sirleaf said Liberia and Sierra Leone have to build on the strong relations set up by their predecessors. She added that the project must be a symbol of peace for both countries. She informed her counterpart and the people of Sierra Leone that the Government of Liberia has set aside 30% of its forest area to be included a network of forest areas, which includes the Gola Forest.

For his part, President Bai Koroma emphasized that the project needs the collaboration of both governments. He noted that the launching of the park sends a strong signal to skeptics that the project will be successful.

The Project Manager of the Gola Forest Project, Mr. Alistair Gammell, said scientists and tourists flock to Sierra Leone annually to visit the Forest. Through the launch of the peace park, he noted, Presidents Johnson Sirleaf and Koroma have shown their commitment to helping alleviate climate change.

The launch of 'Across the River: A Trans-boundary Peace Park for Sierra Leone and Liberia' also brought together residents of Kenema District, government officials of both countries and international partners.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 18 May 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

JFK awards given to 2 who warned of financial crisis

Source: AP Financial News Date: May 18, 2009

BOSTON_Two U.S. federal regulators who sounded early warnings on the financial crisis and a Liberian peace activist have received the 2009 the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award.

The awards were presented Monday by Caroline Kennedy at a ceremony at Boston's John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

Among those to receive honors is Sheila Bair, chairwoman of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp., who was one of the first to warn about the subprime lending crisis.

Brooksley Born, former chairwoman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, also was honored for warning a decade ago about unregulated financial contracts.

Leymah Gbowee (LAY'-mah BOH'-wee) received an award for organizing a multi-faith group of woman to help end **Liberia's** civil war.

International Clips on West Africa

Women's Empowerment Research Project Launched

Freetown, May 15, 2009 (Concord Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- The Pathways of Women's Empowerment, a network of institutions and individuals based in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and other places, has in collaboration with the Campaign for Good Governance and women's groups in the country launched an international research project consortium to find out ways of enhancing women's empowerment, especially in the three West African countries.

The ceremony, which attracted national women's organizations, the security forces and the media, was held yesterday at the CGG head office, Tengbeh Town in Freetown under the theme, "Monitoring Sierra Leone's implementation of the UN Security Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security".

Local Media – Newspaper

Another Jailbreak at Monrovia's main Prison Centre – President Sirleaf Orders Investigation

(Liberia Journal, New Democrat, The Liberian Express, The Monitor, Public Agenda, The News, The Analyst, The Inquirer and the National Chronicle)

- The Liberian Police force and their UN counterparts have launched a massive manhunt for more than 30 prisoners who escaped from the main prison center in Monrovia last Saturday morning. The inmates at the Monrovia Prison Center broke jail and made their way into the city center.
- How the prisoners escaped is not yet clear but some critics and local dailies including The Monitor and the New Democrat newspapers blamed the situation on serious security lapses at the prison. The papers suggested that UN Police from Nepal and Jordan are providing security at the main prison centre even though they have no instructions to shoot and kill.

- Reports attributed to Police Spokesman George Bardue said the Police re-arrested 14 of the jail breakers following a vigorous search operation. Most of the escapees are hardened criminals and residents fear they might unleash terror into the society.
- Saturday's jailbreak is the second at the Monrovia Central Prison in less than five months. Last December, more than 200 hundred prisoners escaped from the Prison. Most of the escaped prisoners during the December jailbreak have since been rearrested by security forces.
- Meanwhile, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf expressed concerned and has directed an immediate full scale investigation to establish the facts surrounding the jailbreak.
- At least 36 correction officers are undergoing investigation in connection with Saturday's prison break at the Monrovia Central Prison.
- Although an investigation has been launched to determine how the jail break occurred, reporting on the event has been marred by conjectures with most newspapers blaming the situation on either 'security lapses' or 'conspiracy.'

UN Envoy Hails Critical Role of UNMIL Jordanian Medical Contingent

(Heritage)

- [sic:] UN Envoy Ellen Margrethe Løj, has assured Liberians that the UN Mission in Liberia - UNMIL - and other partners in the UN System would continue to work harder to enable Liberia to regain its place in the community of nations - a place where peace, security, freedom and prosperity reign. Ms. Løj made this statement when she awarded 115 Jordanian military medical corps serving UNMIL with UN peacekeeping medals for their contribution to the peace and stability of Liberia. Noting the progress made and mindful of the challenges that remain, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) said: "We have to continue to work with the Liberian security forces to ensure that they are strengthened to deal with both internal and external security threats". UN Envoy Løj expressed confidence that with perseverance and determination, "the peace and stability we have achieved over the years will be sustained, and Liberia can move ahead in its recovery, rehabilitation and development drive". The SRSG commended the Jordanian medical contingent for their efforts, dedication and sacrifice aimed at ensuring that UNMIL peacekeepers are fit to support and maintain the hard-won peace and security in Liberia. She described their role as critical and indispensable, adding, "although the nature of the Jordanian medical team entails operating behind the scenes and out of the limelight, we cannot overemphasize the critical and indispensable role you continue to play to support UNMIL". Ms. Løj paid tribute to the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan on behalf of the UN Secretary-General and recounted the long standing and substantial contributions made by Jordan to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

UNMIL, partners emphasize promotion of human rights at the workplace

(The Informer)

- Deputy Labour Minister for Administration, Mr. John Josiah is calling on people in authority and those serving as chief executive officers of corporations, to exert efforts and protect and respect the fundamental rights of all human beings against corporate abuses. Mr. Josiah made this statement when he addressed the opening of a one-day workshop on the concept of Business and Human Rights. The workshop examined recent developments, tools and ways on how to work in a manner that advances the understanding of human rights and promotes a constructive dialogue among state institutions, the business community and civil society in Liberia. The workshop was organized by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva and the UN Mission in Liberia – UNMIL - Human Rights and Protection Section (HRPS).
- "Business entities must operate within the framework of the laws of the state in which they operate, and those laws must provide remedy to violations," Deputy Minister Josiah stressed. Focusing on human rights abuses on Liberian plantations and in business establishments, Mr. Josiah added that, "we in authority must do everything to protect, respect and provide remedy for our disadvantaged population and those who are helpless".
- Earlier Mr. Eugene Nindorera, Chief of UNMIL Human Rights and Protection Section told participants that Business and Human Rights is an issue that needs to be brought to the attention of everybody. "We have invited a number of participants to discuss the issue of

human rights because in the past, it has always been a challenge working together - how the companies and workers should be aware that human rights must be protected and also promoted". He added that this issue is one of the challenges that many companies in the world are facing, which sometimes causes difficult relationships between employees and employers. "So it is very important to understand that we all have to be aware of the need to find remedy to these issues," Mr. Nindorera pointed out.

Newspaper Claims False alarm over alleged Plot to attack Presidential Flight

(National Chronicle)

- The National Chronicle newspaper carried a significantly distorted front page headline insinuating to its readership that UNMIL and national security apparatus had falsely alarmed that a group of former army personnel headed by retired Colonel Wolo Nagbe had allegedly planned to blow up the chartered flight which conveyed President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf back home from her recent visit to the United States.

Liberia's Auditor General Opts for Changes in Bureau's Law

(The Monitor, Public Agenda, The News, Heritage)

- Speaking at the close of a five-day strategic planning workshop of the General Auditing Bureau, Auditor General John Morlu called for a radical change in the Bureau's law.
- Mr. Morlu believe that the current GAC law gives the Auditor General too much power and thinks something needs to be done to reduce it.
- According to him, a new law being drafted by the European Union will take into account what he called the sweeping power of the office of the Auditor General.

'Negative Peace' - U K Envoy Points Way Forward for Liberia

(The Informer)

- The Political Counselor of the United Kingdom in Liberia says Liberia is not yet enjoying total peace but what she calls 'negative peace.'
- Madam Gillian Dare said the country is at a cross road and all Liberians including the media must play their critical roles to take the country to a nobler destiny, to lasting peace and stability.
- "Liberia is a country in transition - and you have reached a cross roads. At this stage you are still in what I would call negative peace, that is the absence of widespread conflict," Madam Dare said Friday when she served as keynote speaker at programs marking the official launch of "Assessing Media Coverage of the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)" by the Liberia Media Center (LMC) in Monrovia.
- "You are on the path towards sustainable peace and have made great strides towards building a new peaceful Liberia in which ordinary people can go about their daily lives without fear, earn enough to feed the family and can start to look towards the future for their children - education, water, power, health, jobs," Madam Dare noted.

'Police Cruelty Continues Against Motorcyclists' – Local daily alleges (Public Agenda)

- [sic:] The Liberia National Police (LNP) despite its restructuring by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has continued to be a problem child for the government of Liberia. From harassment to extortion, the Liberia National Police has proven to be very hard to refine. And in one of its unprofessional behaviors mid yesterday, two officers assigned with the Police Depot near the New Bridge, adjacent Slipway almost caused the death of a motorcyclist when they jumped in front of the moving bike. At about 1:30 PM yesterday, the LNP officers set an ambush for vehicles and motorcycles at the end of the bridge and while a motorcycle being driven by a Fula national only identified as Barry approached them, two uniformed officers rushed on the moving bike causing it to crush to the ground. Had it not been for the professional driving skills of advancing vehicles, including that of the Public Agenda Newspaper, Barry would have been crushed to death. The action of the two LNP officers caused the bike to slide on the pavement causing advancing vehicles to stop suddenly at the amazement of onlookers. What was even shocking most was when the officers rushed to the driver of the bike and started to beat him despite the minor injury sustained. The editor of this paper who was on the scene was insulted by the officers for attempting to take photo and talking to the victim of the police's action. One of the officers said, "Go and write anything, we are doing our work". The short Police officer and two others held the bike driver by his trousers and forced him into the depot. Other eyewitnesses said this has been the behavior of the police near the bridge. According to them, the LNP men are in the constant habit of stopping vehicles and bikes in the area thereby causing traffic jam on the bridge.

LACE Dedicates Six Sub-Projects in Lofa County

(The Informer)

- The Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE) has dedicated and turned over six sub-projects in Lofa County.
- LACE Executive Director Ramses T. Kumbuyah put the value of the six sub-projects at US\$ 240,000.00. The projects consist of four schools, a bridge and a box culvert.
- Mr. Kumbuyah challenged the various communities to begin initiating plans for the maintenance of the facilities. "Your responsibility is to ensure teachers and students remain in the schools and take advantage of the free primary education policy of the government," he told community people.
- Speaking at the turnover ceremony at the Bakpalasu Public School in Lofa County, Mr. Kumbuyah described the construction of the new facilities as a great opportunity that shouldn't be abused.
- He presented assorted stationery valued at US\$4,000.00 to jumpstart the operations of the four schools.

TRC Begins County Consultations

(Public Agenda)

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia will today begin a week long Regional County Consultations in three major cities around Liberia. From May 18-22, 2009, the commission will convene the Consultations simultaneously in Region I: Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County; Region II: Gbarnga, Bong County; and Region III: Tubmanburg, Bomi County.
- The consultation is designed to promote transparency, inclusion, participation and ownership of the peace-building and reconciliation initiatives that will help support social cohesion, democracy and national development. It is aimed at providing an opportunity once more for Liberians from the 15 counties to share their perspectives on how peace and reconciliation can be sustained in Liberia.
- The consultation is one of the remaining key activities of the TRC Planned ahead of the expiration of its mandate in June 2009.
- Participants of the Regional County Consultations are expected to share their concerns, best practices, lessons learned and recommendations on the peace and reconciliation process. Moreover, the consultations will pave the way for follow up mechanisms and approaches on the implementation of the TRC recommendations.

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

36 Correction Officers undergoing Probe for Latest Jailbreak

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

Auditor General Calls for Change in Current GAC Law

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

Chinese Technical Team Arrives in Country for US\$300M Housing Units

- The Chief Executive of the Hainan Century Cooperation at the head of a 15-man technical team has arrived in the country.
- Dr. Xu Ming said they are in the country to train Liberians to begin the construction of 10,000 housing units.
- Dr. Xu said the Chinese technicians will train Liberians in several areas including carpentry and masonry.
- He said the Haman Century Corporation is investing US\$3 to 4 million in Liberia because the company recognizes the huge housing needs of the population after years of war.

Guthrie Workers Warn of Potential Unrest

- A group of concerned workers at the Guthrie Rubber Plantation have called for government's intervention to stop what it thinks could spark another round of unrest at the Plantation.
- The group wants government's attention drawn to an abrupt salary deduction announced by the Guthrie Management which it says is reason enough for chaos.
- Last week, the Guthrie Management officially informed the workers of its decision to reduce salaries due to its inability to meet up with the production budget despite efforts to satisfy the workers.
- It has meanwhile, instructed that tappers to meet up with their proposed budget of 550-tons monthly, or the management will be forced to cut other benefits.

Truth F.M. (News monitored today at 9:00 am)

Police Arrest Several Students for vandalizing a local High School

- Several students of the George Toe Washington have been arrested for allegedly vandalizing the school.
- On Sunday, the students threatened a strike action if their West African Examination Council identification number was not given them.
- They accused the school's coordinator, Abraham Zion of failing to pay their WAEC fees into government's account.
- The students said while other schools were distributing identification numbers to their students their school is yet to follow suit.
- The exams began today nationwide.

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UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 15 May 2009

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International Clips on Liberia

Amputees in Liberia find hope in football

www.cnn.com

By Mark Wagner

ICRC

MONROVIA, **Liberia** (ICRC) -- On a dusty pitch in the middle of the capital of Monrovia limbless young men play football as though their lives depended on it.

They are members of the **Liberian** National Amputee Football Team and for the most part, victims of the war. Some participated in cruel acts against civilians during the fighting and face a daily struggle to live with both their disability and the past.

"I was at church when armed men came in and killed hundreds of us," says 18 year old Richard Duo, who is now a star infield attacker and one of the highest goal-scorers on the team. "I lost my mother, father and one of my brothers. My other siblings were wounded and I lost my leg.

International Clips on West Africa

GUINEA: Medicines running out

DAKAR, 15 May 2009 (IRIN) - Public health centres in **Guinea** are facing a critical shortage of basic medicines and aid workers and health officials are urgently seeking a way to replenish stocks.

"This is a real problem. We do not have enough medicines for the needs of the population," Mohamed Lamine Tounkara, regional health director in the Kindia region, 137km east of the capital Conakry, told IRIN.

A patient in a public hospital in Kindia today would have to seek most of the medicines he or she needs at a private pharmacy, where prices are far higher than in government health facilities, he said. Kindia – home to some two million people, with five major public hospitals and 51 health centres – is just one of many regions affected, according to UN and government officials.

The lack of medicines stems from a number of factors, including lack of government funds, rising drug prices and poor management, according to Mohamed Lamine Yansané, the Health Minister's chief of staff. **Guinea** has seen sporadic shortages in the past few years but the situation has worsened sharply in 2009, health experts said.

Local Media – Newspaper

Police, Criminal in Shoot-Out – Several Armed Robbers Re-arrested

(New Democrat, The Monitor, Liberia Journal, Liberian Express)

- The Liberian Express reports that Police Wednesday arrested four persons including a notorious criminal convicted for murder after heavy exchange of gunfire in the Paynesville area. Police said Lewis Kennedy linked to several armed robberies was convicted of armed robbery and murder two years ago but escaped during a massive jailbreak at the Monrovia Central Prison last December.

- The New Democrat reports that briefing journalist following the arrest of the robbers; Police said Officers of the Emergency Response Unit (ERU) had been keeping the area under surveillance for some time now following a tip off that they had a hideout in the Pipeline Community.

LTA Commissioner Given 24-Hour Ultimatum to Resign or Be Sacked

(National Chronicle, New Democrat, The Analyst)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has given a 24-hour ultimatum to all Commissioners of the Liberia Telecommunications Authority(LTA) to tender in their resignation or be sacked, saying they contributed to the budget shortfall.
- The New Democrat quoting a senior official of the LTA said the President frowned at the delay in generating revenue at the entity for almost 18 months. The Commissioners involved are Lamini Waritay, Acting Chairman of the LTA, Nathniel Kelvin, Edwin York and Ruth Jappah Samukai.
- Last month, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf suspended the Chairman of the LTA, Mr. Albert Bropleh for time indefinite. At the time, President Sirleaf branded Commissioners at the Liberia Telecommunications Authority as “incompetent” saying since their appointments, the commissioners have been engaging in internal wrangling thereby stalling work at the commission.

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

Presidents Sirleaf and Koroma to Dedicate Peace Park in Sierra Leone Today

- An Executive Mansion release issue in Monrovia says President Sirleaf will today join Sierra Leonean President Ernest Bai Koroma in Gola Forest, Kenema District in Sierra Leone.
- The one-day event would mark the dedication of the Trans-Border Peace Park in the Gola Forest sponsored by the European Commission and United Nations.
- The UN and EU said the establishment of the Trans-Border Peace Park, would pay tribute to the recent history of the two countries, namely the civil wars.
- The Peace Park would be a great symbol for long-lasting peace, security and stability in both countries as well as the entire Mano River Union Region.

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

Local Media Development Group Launches Research of Media Coverage of PRS

- The Liberia Media Centre (LMC) will today launch its research on how the media in Liberia is covering Government Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme.
- The research report is entitled “Assessing Media Coverage of the Poverty Reduction Strategy”.
- According to a statement issued in Monrovia, the research was supported by the Senegal-based group, Trust Africa.
- It monitored and analyzed the media coverage of the implementation of Liberia’s PRS to determine the flow of information of various pillars of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Senate Pro Tempore Apologizes for “Assaulting” Local Journalist

- The office of the Senate President Pro Tempore Cletus Wortorson has apologized to Truth FM Reporter Solomon Ware for the act of aggression against him.
- In a release, the spokesman of the Pro Temp said the apology was in response to the findings of the Press Union of Liberia (PUL).
- The PUL revealed that a video footage showed that Senator Wortorson was guilty of aggressively attacking journalist Solomon Ware during an interview.
- The incident led to a media block-out against the office of the Pro Temp by reporters assigned at the Capitol Building who demanded an official apology.
- Meanwhile, the Legislative Reporters Association says it would meet shortly to decide its next course of action.

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

Representative Neufville Proposes Cut in Salaries of Senior Public Officials

- Speaking to journalists in Monrovia, Montserrado County Representative Rufus Neufville proposed reduction of allowances of government officials to increase the salary of civil servants.

- Representative Neufville called for a twenty percent reduction in the allowances of the President, Vice President, the Speaker, Senate President Pro Tempore and the Chief Justice.
- According to him, as part of the scheme the allowances of lawmakers must also be cut by ten percent while there should be a fifteen percent cut in the allowances of cabinet members, Associate Justices of the Supreme Court and senior government officials among other proposed cuts.
- Meanwhile, the Montserrado County Representative has also proposed an increment in the salaries of the least paid civil servants to US\$150 monthly.

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

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

Stakeholders Provide Expert Opinion on Threshold Bill

- Several stakeholders including lawyers, civil society representatives and political parties' officials are providing expert opinion on the Threshold Bill currently before the National Legislature.
- The discourse is intended to solicit divergent and competing views on the Threshold Act.

United Nations News

Sunday, 17 May 2009

ICC Prosecutor welcomes voluntary court appearance by Darfur rebel leader



Luis Moreno-Ocampo International Criminal Court Prosecutor

17 May 2009 – One of the three rebel commanders alleged to have directed the deadly September 2007 attack against peacekeepers in the war-ravaged Sudanese region of Darfur will voluntarily appear in the International Criminal Court (ICC) tomorrow, a move welcomed today by the Court's Prosecutor.

Some 1,000 rebels attacked the Haskanita camp in South Darfur state on 29 September 2007, killing 12 peacekeepers serving with the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) – a predecessor to the joint UN-African Union peacekeeping mission, known as UNAMID – and wounding eight others.

Last November, ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo presented evidence against the three commanders, who “planned, led their troops and directed the attack and completely destroyed AMIS facilities and property, directly affecting aid and security for millions of people of Darfur who are in need of protection.”

The Prosecution said that there are reasonable grounds to believe the three commanders bear criminal responsibility for three counts of war crimes for murder, intentionally directing attacks against personnel and objects involved in a peacekeeping mission and pillaging.

Bahar Idriss Abu Garda, a member of the Zaghawa tribe of Sudan, will be the first person to appear before the ICC voluntarily in response to a summons and also the first to appear in relation to the investigation into the situation in Darfur, which was referred to The Hague-based Court by the Security Council in 2005.

He arrived in the Netherlands today and at his initial appearance tomorrow, he will be informed of the crimes which he is alleged to have committed and of his rights. After the hearing, Mr. Abu Garda is free to leave the country, but will be required to return to attend a confirmation of charges hearing after which it will be determined whether or not there are substantial ground to believe that he carried out the crimes he is charged with committing.

The names of the other two rebel commanders alleged to have led the Haskanita attack remain undisclosed.

An estimated 300,000 people have died and another 3 million have been displaced in Darfur, where rebels have been fighting Government forces and allied Arab militiamen, known as the Janjaweed, since 2003.

Today, Mr. Moreno-Ocampo paid tribute to the fallen peacekeepers, underscoring that their deaths were tantamount to “the perpetrators [attacking] the millions of civilians who those soldiers came to protect.”

He added, “attacking peacekeepers is a serious crime under the [Rome] Statute and shall be prosecuted.”

The Haskanita incident is the third case arising from the situation in Darfur. The ICC's pre-trial chamber issued arrest warrants in May 2007 for Ahmad Harun, former Sudanese Minister of State for the Interior and now the Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs, and Ali Kushayb, a Janjaweed leader.

In March, an arrest warrant was issued for Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir, the first sitting Head of State to be indicted by the Court, for war crimes committed in the strife-torn Darfur region.

On the heels of the announcement that Mr. Abu Garda will appear of his own accord before the Court tomorrow, Mr. Moreno-Ocampo said today that “voluntary appearance is always an option under the Statute including for President Al-Bashir should he elect to cooperate.”

Also welcoming the development is Silvana Arbia, Registrar of the Court. “The voluntary appearance of Abu Garda might serve to encourage other suspects currently at large to come before the Court to be heard with all guarantees of a fair trial,” she said.

Meanwhile, UNAMID condemned an attack yesterday against a Sudanese military position in North Darfur.

The three-hour attack was carried out by armed elements who are allegedly part of the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) movement in the town of Korno and they are apparently in control of the area.

Soldiers surviving the attack retreated to the town of Tina and Um Baru, where UNAMID peacekeepers provided them with water and medical assistance.

UNAMID forces are monitoring the situation, but to date there is no confirmation of the identity of the attackers and no casualty toll has been confirmed.

North Darfur state's far west has recently witnessed deadly clashes between JEM and the Sudan Liberation Army/Minni Minawi (SLA/MM) faction.

Condemning yesterday's attack, AU-UN Special Representative Rodolphe Adada called “on all the parties to the Darfur conflict to refrain from the use of violence, to seek a peaceful resolution to their problems, notably through the Doha process, and to work towards a cessation of hostilities.”

BBC Online

Monday, 18 May 2009

Darfur rebel appears before ICC

A Darfur rebel charged with war crimes has appeared before the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague.

Bahr Idriss Abu Garda is charged with taking part in an attack in north Darfur in 2007, during which 12 African Union (AU) peacekeepers were killed.

Mr Abu Garda, 46, is the first person from the Darfur conflict to appear before the ICC. He denies the charges.

Sudanese officials, including the president, have been accused of war crimes but have not gone to The Hague.

Mr Abu Garda handed himself in to the court on Sunday.

"The court appreciates very much your volunteer appearance," Judge Cuno Tarfusser told him at the start of proceedings, reports the AFP news agency.

"You have sent out a very good message."

The United Nations estimates that 300,000 people have died in a six-year conflict in Sudan's Darfur region and more than two million more have been displaced.

'Real killers'

Mr Abu Garda, wearing a grey suit, told the court he understood the charges, according to the AP news agency.

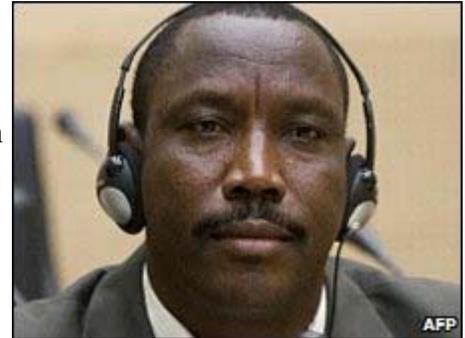
He is charged with three war crimes allegedly committed during the assault on the Haskanita AU camp in September 2007.

ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo has called the incident "the most serious attack against peacekeepers in Darfur".

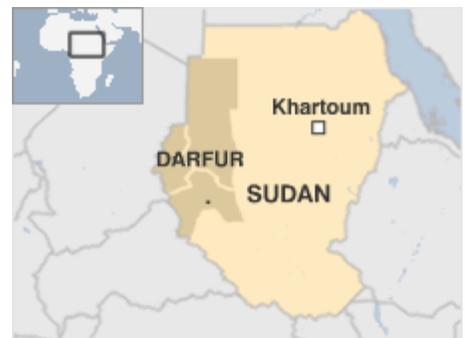
A spokesman for Mr Abu Garda's United Resistance Movement (URF) rebel group told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme that he was happy with the process.

"We are here in respect of international law and in respect of those who lost their lives in Haskanita," said Tadjadine Bashir Niam, who was in court.

"We believe he is innocent. We will co-operate with the African Union, the court and others to find out the real killers."



Bahr Idriss Abu Garda has now formed his own rebel group



Mr Niam said that Mr Abu Garda was the victim of differences between the Justice and Equality Movement (Jem) rebels - the group he left to set up the URF. Jem has said it helped collect evidence against him.

No arrest warrant was issued as Mr Abu Garda had shown a willingness to appear before the ICC, prosecutors said.

In March, Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir was indicted on war crime charges, which were the first issued by the ICC against a sitting president.

In a BBC interview earlier this month, President Bashir dismissed the charges as propaganda.

The ICC has also issued indictments for two other senior Sudanese officials over the Darfur conflict.

Black African rebel groups took up arms in 2003, accusing the government of ignoring the region.

The government denies accusations that it then mobilised Arab militias to take revenge on the local population, in what the US and others have called a genocide.

Voice of America

Monday, 18 May 2009

UN Security Council Reflects On A Tragic Failure: Rwanda

By Peter Heinlein
Kigali

The U.N. Security Council has visited a memorial to victims of the Rwanda genocide and pledged support to efforts to end the fighting that has haunted Africa's Great Lakes region for more than a decade.

The 15 Security Council ambassadors were reminded Sunday about one of the world body's greatest failures during a visit to the Rwanda Genocide Memorial. Honore Gatera, the chief guide at the memorial told them how the United Nations in April 1994 tragically misunderstood the danger as Rwanda's 100 days of ethnic slaughter was beginning.



Rwanda Genocide Memorial

"The UN Security Council on April 21, 1994 passed a resolution withdrawing the troops of the UN mission in Rwanda and only 270 Ghanains volunteers stayed here with Romeo Dallaire from Canada, and thousands of families were abandoned to the mercy of the killers," said Honore Gatera.

The memorial pays tribute to the Canadian General Romeo Dallaire, who led the UN peacekeeping mission whose messages to headquarters in New York about the developing genocide went unheeded by then Secretary-General Butros Butros-Ghali and chief of peacekeeping operations, the future Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

"The reason why we have the memorial here that we'll have for future generations whether Rwandans or foreigners to learn about the mistakes of the past," said Gatera. "Look at the fact that the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, at 10 years he apologized for the failure to protect people in Rwanda."

The leader of the Security Council delegation, British Ambassador John Sawers called the memorial evidence of the Rwandan people's determination to put aside the divisions of the past. But it also highlights the world body's shortcomings.

"The memorial site of the 1994 genocide I'm sure has left us all profoundly moved by the enormity of the human tragedy and by the failure of the international community to be able to address it at the time," said John Sawers.

Washington's U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice said the horrors of 1994 in Rwanda, when more than 800,000 people were slaughtered, is more than ever relevant in the 21st century.

"It's a collective failure, including a failure of the United Nations, and what it reminds me of is less the past than the present and what more we could be doing in present circumstances," said Susan Rice.

During their one-day visit to Rwanda, Council ambassadors visited a camp for former soldiers of the FDLR, or Democratic Force for the Liberation of Rwanda, the rebel force that has operated for years from the nearby eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

They also met Rwandan President Paul Kagame to express support for his peacemaking efforts with DRC President Joseph Kabila. Mr. Kagame welcomed the Council's endorsement and vowed to redouble efforts

to bring stability to a region battered by conflict.

"I think the Security Council team came here having full understanding that we are on the right path and doing these things for the better of our region, and countries Rwanda and DRC," said Paul Kagame. "And the Security Council giving their support to the process is important."

Britain's Ambassador Sawers underlined that Council members had not come to the region with demands, but simply to listen; to avoid the kinds of mistakes made by decision-makers looking at Rwanda from New York 15 years ago.

Rwanda was the second stop on the Council's five day African tour. The next stop is the DRC, where ambassadors are scheduled to hold a similar meeting with Congolese President Kabila.

The tour ends Wednesday in Liberia, a bright spot in the world body's checkered history of peacekeeping. Ambassadors will be talking about the possibility of reducing the size of the UN peacekeeping mission and endorsing the progress toward stability under President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.