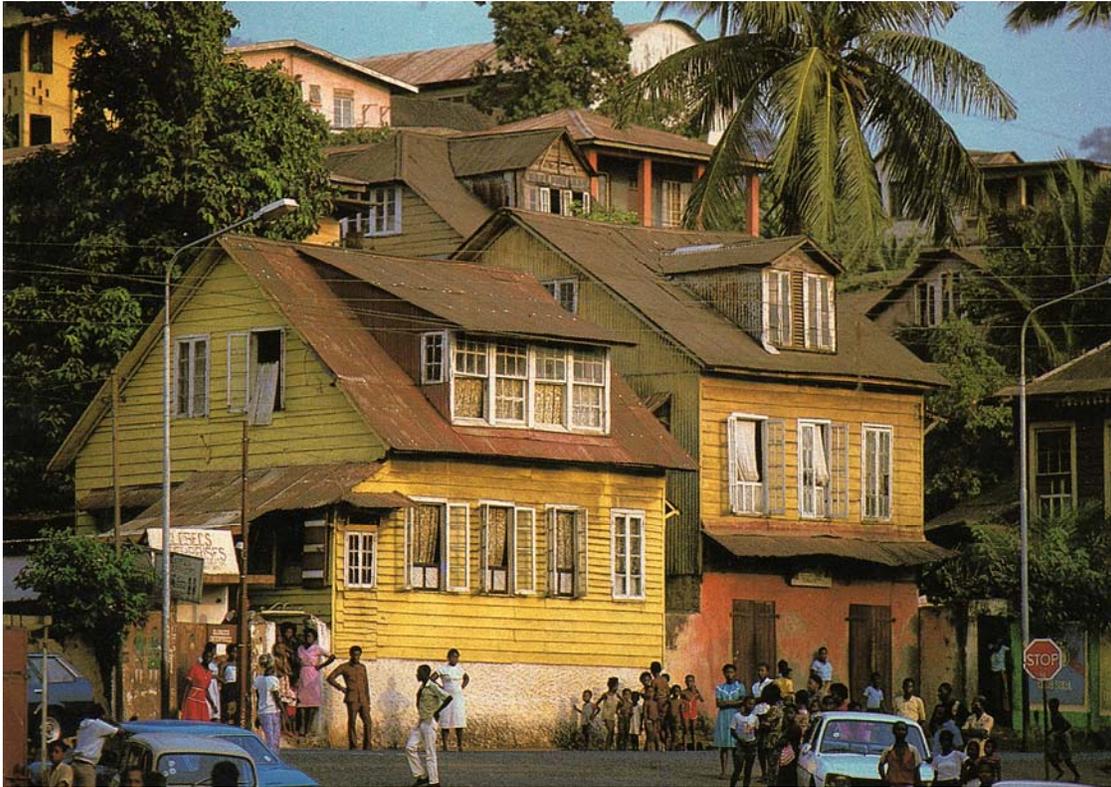


**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



1999 postcard: "Creole houses in Freetown."

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, 29 May 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
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Awareness Times
Friday, 29 May 2009

FBC to represent Sierra Leone in Moot Court Competition

By Augustine Samba

Fourah Bay College (FBC) will be representing Sierra Leone in the Pan Africa International Moot Court Competition scheduled to take place in November this year in Arusha, Tanzania.

FBC on Wednesday 27th 2009 gave a humiliating defeat to the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM), in a debate relating to International Humanitarian Law (IHL).

Both campuses were given 30 minutes each to argue out their points to the hearing of a large gathering of students, lecturers and judges. Representing FBC were Abdul Karim Koroma, Jelo E.M. Kaigo and Ibrahim Kanneh, while Mohamed K. Serry, Timothy T. Fanday and Esther E. Kamara, represented IPAM. FBC acted as the Prosecuting Team, while IPAM acted as the Defence Team. The judges who presided over the

debate were Madam Cosmatina Jarret Sandest Sivakumaran Mr. Joseph Kobba, Captain Ngevaio and Justice John Kamanda.

Several tertiary institutions including Njala University College, Milton Margai College of Educa-

tion and Technology Goderich Campus, Freetown Teachers College and Lisca, have previously partake in the debate which serves as pre-selection for the international competition in Tanzania.

The program as organized by the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) in partnership with the Special Court, with the aim of promoting the IHL.

The Patriotic Vanguard

Thursday, 28 May 2009

New book on post-war Sierra Leone published in Canada

A new book (*Rescuing a Fragile State, Sierra Leone, 2002-2008*), resulting from a conference on post-war Sierra Leone organised by the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS), Academic Council of the United Nations (ACUNS) and the Center for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) at Wilfrid Laurier University in November 2007, has been published in Canada.



The book is put together by prolific writer Lansana Gberie, acclaimed author of “A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone” (Indiana University Press, 2005).

The book collects reflections and analyses by policy makers, diplomats, academics and development experts with direct experience of Sierra Leone - both during the war and in the immediate post-war period.

Like the conference out of which the book issued, this volume is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on what can be loosely described as the political economy of post-war Sierra Leone, with chapters by Ian Smillie (a critical analysis of external assistance to Sierra Leone); Peter Penfold, a former UK High Commissioner to Sierra Leone (a critique of the Special Court for Sierra Leone); Zoe Dugal (an overview of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission); Ozonnia Ojielo (Governance in Sierra Leone Post-TRC); and Lansana Gberie (an evaluation of the role of diamonds in post-war Sierra Leone).

The second section focuses on the security sector, with chapters by Ishmail Rashid (a historical overview of the Sierra Leone army); Mark White (UK’s role in the security sector reform); Major Don Saunders, a Canadian who served with IMATT (on the retraining of the Sierra Leone Army); and Daniel Hoffman on the possibility, or lack thereof, of the emergence of a strong civil defence force in case of praetorian or other threats to Sierra Leone’s security in the context of the trial and persecution of leaders of the former Civil Defence Force (CDF) by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The contributors argue that while progress in Sierra Leone since its war ended has been remarkable, it is important that the country’s development partners remain fully engaged with it for many more years in order for the progress to be sustained. And the book is appreciative but critical of the some of the transitional justice measures implemented in Sierra Leone since the war ended, including the TRC and the controversial Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Photo: Peter Penfold.

BBC Online

Thursday, 28 May 2009

UN court lets Senegal hold Habre

The UN's highest court has accepted Senegal's pledge to keep in the country ex-Chadian dictator Hissene Habre, ahead of his trial for rights abuses.

Belgium had asked the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to order Senegal to place Mr Habre under custody to prevent him from fleeing justice.

But the ICJ said it was satisfied with Senegal's assurances it would not let him go, before the trial in Dakar.

Belgium charged Habre in 2005 with crimes against humanity and torture.

It has also been asking the ICJ to have Mr Habre extradited to Belgium, where survivors have filed a case against him.

'Africa's Pinochet'

But court president Hisashi Owada said: "Senegal gave a formal assurance on several occasions... that it will not allow Mr Habre to leave its territory," reported AP news agency.

Mr Habre, sometimes dubbed "Africa's Pinochet", settled in Senegal after he was deposed in 1990 by Chadian President Idriss Deby. He now lives in a villa in Senegal's capital, Dakar.

He is accused of killing and torturing tens of thousands of opponents during his eight-year rule, charges he denies.

Senegal arrested Mr Habre in November 2005, but a court rebuffed Belgium's extradition request.

Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade warned last year he might free Mr Habre if the international community did not foot the estimated \$36m (£23m) cost of holding the trial.

Reed Brody, of Human Rights Watch, said the court had made the right decision and urged the international community to help fund the trial, for which no date has been set yet.

"The important thing now is to get moving," Mr Brody said.



Hissene Habre denies accusations of murder and torture



Hissene Habre's forces had a scorched earth strategy in south Chad

Voice of America
Thursday, 28 May 2009

World Court Accepts Senegal's Pledge to Keep Habre Under House Arrest

By VOA News

The World Court has accepted Senegal's pledge that it will keep former Chadian president Hissene Habre under house arrest while he awaits trial for alleged human rights abuses.

Belgium had asked the court to order Senegal to keep Mr. Habre in custody, citing fears he could escape and go into hiding.

However, the court - formally known as the International Court of Justice - ruled Thursday in The Hague that no such order is necessary. It said Senegal has given assurances it will not allow Mr. Habre to leave its territory.

A Chadian inquiry found that Mr. Habre was responsible for 40,000 political killings during his eight years as president. He has lived in Senegal since being toppled from power in 1990.

Belgium requested court action after Senegal's president Abdoulaye Wade said he might lift Mr. Habre's house arrest if the international community does not provide complete funding for his trial.

Senegal says the remarks were taken out of context.

Mr. Habre was indicted in Senegal in 2000, but the courts initially ruled he could not be tried there. The Belgian government says Senegal has ignored its repeated requests to bring charges against Mr. Habre or to extradite him to Belgium for trial.

In 2005, Belgium charged Mr. Habre with crimes against humanity, war crimes, and torture under its "universal jurisdiction" law that allows it to prosecute serious foreign crimes.

Senegal, at the urging of the African Union, says it will try Mr. Habre on African soil.

Some information for this report was provided by AFP.

Voice of America
Thursday, 28 May 2009

UN High Court Rejects Belgian Request to Keep Habre In Senegal

By Lisa Bryant
Paris



A 2005 file photo of former Chad dictator Hissene Habre seen leaving the court in Dakar, Senegal

The United Nation's highest court rejected a bid by Belgium to force Senegal to keep Hissene Habre in custody -- after Dakar vowed it would not let the former Chadian dictator go. But the ruling still leaves open when -- if ever -- Habre will face trial for alleged human rights violations.

The ruling by The Hague-based International Court of Justice essentially leaves the fate of Mr. Habre hanging. The former Chadian president remains in Senegal, where he has been for nearly two decades. Senegalese authorities have promised they will not let him go.

Reed Brody, a lawyer for Human Rights Watch who works with victims of Habre's regime, said he was satisfied with the ruling.

"The court said it saw no urgency to issue these preliminary measures but if there was a danger in Hissene Habre leaving the court invited Belgium to come back and make its demand again. So the result is a very good one. Which is Senegal has promised not to let Hissene Habre escape by leaving Senegal," he added.

But prospects for trying Habre appear uncertain. Critics like Human Rights Watch claim that thousands of people were allegedly tortured and killed in Chad during his eight-year presidency. In 1990, the ex-Chadian dictator fled to Senegal after being toppled from power.

Although Dakar has the authority to try Habre, the sum it is asking the international community to pay for the trial is considered excessive. And as the years go by, Brody said, justice continues to elude the victims of Habre's regime.

"The problem is that the victims and survivors of Habre's regime continue to die. They've been fighting for 19 years for justice, so many of the people I work with on this case have already died and we want this trial to happen before there are no victims left," he said.

In 2005, Belgium filed a case at the Hague court arguing Dakar must either prosecute Habre or extradite him to Belgium for trial. The court has not yet ruled on the matter.

The Economist

Thursday, 28 May 2009

Sierra Leone and its diamonds

Digging in the dumps

Diamonds are a luxury—but not to some of the world's poorest who mine them

Panos, a less than brilliant job



THE people of Sierra Leone's Kono district, in the east of the country, know all too well about diamonds—for better and for worse. In the 1990s, the drugged-up rebels of the Revolutionary United Front controlled Kono's mines by means of rape, murder and mutilation. When that bloody civil war ended in 2002, mining companies replaced the rebels but brought their own problems. The largest firm, South Africa-based Koidu Holdings, was pitted against locals over blasting schedules and environmental issues. Small-time local miners, little more than licensed freelancers prospecting by hand, were disappointed to find that most of the mines near the surface had been exhausted. The jobs, the volume of production and Kono's cut of tax revenue from exports disappointed almost everyone. "Progress in Kono has not been commensurate with expectations," admits Ibrahim Kamara, who runs a kimberlite project for Koidu Holdings.

Such are the growing pains of a nascent industry in a dirt-poor African country. Yet Sierra Leone's diamond mining has shown promise. Exports ballooned from a mere \$26m in 2001 to \$141m in 2007. Taxes on diamond exports helped finance the country's post-war reconstruction; a quarter of the 3% tax on sales paid by artisanal miners, as the local small-timers are known, is returned to the people who live around the mines. Bigger companies, such as Koidu Holdings, have negotiated profit-sharing schemes that will benefit the locals once the mines start making money.

But now that virtuous circle may be broken by the collapse in the past ten months of world diamond prices, which have plummeted by nearly one-third. The country will be lucky to export \$50m-worth this year. From Australia to Botswana and Canada, the industry is in the doldrums. Over the past few months De Beers, until recently the world's biggest diamond producer, has seen the value of its "sights"—carefully calibrated sales of rough diamonds to a handpicked club of buyers called "sightholders"—fall from an average of \$650m to a recent low of around \$150m. In response to collapsing demand, mining companies have been temporarily closing mines or reducing production. This does not hurt countries such as Australia and Russia all that much. But it squeezes poorer ones, particularly in Africa, very hard.

Earlier this year, for instance, De Beers temporarily shut mines in Botswana and Namibia that it owns in partnership with those states. At least three-quarters of the companies in Namibia's young cutting and polishing industry have closed. "We are suffering quite severely because of job losses," says Bernhard Esau, Namibia's deputy minister for mines. In India, home to the largest diamond cutting and polishing industry in the world, at least 100,000 diamond polishers are out of work. America, where half of all polished diamonds are eventually sold, is importing less than half the volume of polished diamonds compared with a year ago. "Diamonds are not necessary to live or to survive. It's a luxury product," said

Philip Claes of the Antwerp World Diamond Centre, the industry's leading promotional organisation. "So it's the first thing probably that consumers skip on their lists."

But Sierra Leone relies on those consumers to help prevent it from slipping back into chaos. When Koidu Holdings temporarily halted operations and laid off 540 people, leaving only 60 in work, it was especially nerve-racking. For Kono has the highest concentration of former rebel fighters in Sierra Leone. Despite political stability and fairly harmonious elections since the war ended, the conditions that led to it still prevail. Back in 1991, the rebels gained early if short-lived support by arguing that a country as mineral-rich as Sierra Leone should give all its people a decent living. Yet it was at the bottom of the UN's human-development index when the war started—and is still at the bottom. There is "a time bomb of frustrated, disenfranchised youth", says Joan Baxter of Partnership Africa Canada, a charity.

The diamond slump may have reached its bottom. The De Beers latest sight, last month, was worth around \$250m, up on previous months. Some mines in Botswana have cautiously resumed operations. In Sierra Leone, Koidu Holdings says it will rehire a few hundred workers as the market improves. None of this is a guarantee against unrest. But a return to the diamond-fuelled warfare of the 1990s seems unlikely soon. For one thing, even rebels would have trouble finding a market for ill-gotten gemstones at present.

Besides, the diamonds' recent lack of lustre may bring unexpected benefits. Many artisanal miners are going back to farming. In a country where food prices have doubled in a year, this is welcome. And companies are looking for other minerals that Sierra Leone has in abundance, such as gold, bauxite and rutile, a mineral that is used—among other things—to brighten the whiteness in paint, plastic and paper. In the longer run, a bit of diversity may be healthy.

United Press International

Thursday, 28 May 2009

Sierra Leone officers to support UNAMID

KHARTOUM, Sudan, May 28 (UPI) -- The United Nations says a unit of police officers from Sierra Leone has deployed to the volatile Darfur region of Sudan to support peacekeeping operations.

The deployment came as a welcome announcement as the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur, known as UNAMID, has been working to boost the numbers of troops and law enforcement personnel operating in the region to counter ongoing rebel threats.

Officials say 40 police officers from Sierra Leone arrived in Darfur to support UNAMID Wednesday and that an additional 22 arrived Thursday, the United Nations reported.

The newly deployed officers from Sierra Leone will be assigned to help protect civilians in the region from clashes between Sudanese government forces and rebel Janjaweed militiamen.

According to a news release, the six years of violence in Darfur has resulted in an "estimated 300,000 people (who) have been killed and another 2.7 million have been forced from their homes since fighting erupted."

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United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 28 May 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Police Officers Return from UN Peacekeeping Mission

Harare, May 28, 2009 (The Herald/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- SEVEN police officers have returned from a United Nations peacekeeping mission in Liberia while seven others are expected to leave the country soon for a year-long peacekeeping mission in Sudan.

Addressing the returning and departing officers in Harare yesterday, Police Commissioner General Augustine Chihuri said the force took pride, recognizes and appreciate the indelible mark which it has sculptured itself on the global international peacekeeping terrain.

International Clips on West Africa

Sierra Leone eyes cooperation with China in hybrid rice planting

CHANGSHA, May 28, 2009 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma on Thursday wrapped up his visit in central China's Hunan Province.

During his stay in Changsha city, provincial capital of Hunan, Koroma visited the Hunan Hybrid Rice Research Center, where Father of Hybrid Rice Yuan Longping briefed him on China's research of hybrid rice.

Yuan is the first scientist who successfully altered the self-pollinating characteristic of rice and realized large-scale farming of hybrid rice. This earned him the title Father of Hybrid Rice.

Local Media – Newspaper

Experts Gave Opinion on Electoral Bill

(Daily Observer, The Inquirer, The News, Heritage, The Analyst, New Vision)

- Legal and political technocrats on Wednesday weighed in on the controversial Threshold bill currently before the Upper House of the Liberian legislature with most opting for a reduction in the figure to at least 37,000 per constituency.
- The Daily Observer reports that three prominent politicians, Alhaji Kromah, the Chairman of the Governance Commission, Dr. Amos Sawyer and former National Security Advisor Lewis Brown told members of the Senate to see reason and set a Threshold that would enable each County not to have less than two seats in the Legislature in keeping wit the Constitution.
- However, a representative of the local chiefs insisted that they (traditional chiefs) will accept the 40,000 for the sake of peace expressing disappointment over the manner in which the National Housing and Population Census conducted in March 2008 was handled by the relevant institutions.
- The bill was sent to the National Legislature by the National Elections Commission of Liberia (NEC) and recently sailed through the House of Representatives with the body endorsing a figure of 40,000, people per constituency, 5,000 less than the proposed 45,000 by NEC.

LPRC Board Endorses Zakhem's US\$24.8 Contract

(Daily Observer, The Inquirer)

- The Board of Directors of the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company (LPRC) has divulged that they approved Zakhem's US\$24.8m contract in the interest of the country, but failed to mention if it can be ratified by the Legislature.
- The Chairman of the LPRC Board, Madam Amelia Ward, in a press conference yesterday asserted that the Board of Directors stands behind the two years of intense evaluation, which qualified Zakhem International Construction Company (ZICC) to win the contract.

President Sirleaf on Dual Currency

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer)

- The Daily Observer reports that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, commenting on the astronomical hike in the prices of goods and services caused by the unprecedented rise of the US dollars against the Liberian dollar, says Government will soon decide whether it should use only the local currency or the US dollar as its legal tender or maintain both currencies.
- At present, the exchange rate of the Liberian dollar (L\$) to the United States dollar (US\$) stands at L\$70 to US\$1 and L\$70.5 to US\$1 resulting in the ever rising prices of basic goods and services.
- The Inquirer quotes the President as saying that the major problem that is responsible for the depreciation of the Liberian dollars against the United States dollars is due to the decline in the availability of United States dollars in the country.

Foreign Ministry Dismisses Media Reports of Passports Shortage

(The Inquirer, The News, Heritage, The Analyst, New Vision)

- The media reports that in the wake of directive by Her Excellency, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for a full report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on latest development surrounding the Liberian Passport, the Ministry reiterates that there is no shortage of passports in the country. According to a Foreign Ministry release issued in Monrovia, there are more than 40,000 Liberian passports of varying categories in stock in the vaults at a local bank in Monrovia.
- The Ministry says there is no need for applicants to panic over the misinformation alleging passports shortage in the country. The Ministry, according to the release, is doing everything possible to speedily address the situation responsible for any delay in issuing varying categories of Passports to applicants so as to alleviate the growing public apprehension.

UNMIL Trains Bassa Citizens

(The Monitor)

- [sic:] Ghanbatt 10 of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in Grand Bassa has begun a six-week capacity building training in various disciplines in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County. The training which began last week is being attended by 32 participants from the various ministries of government in the country and from three community radio stations. The three stations are Radio, Gbehzohn, Radio Dukpa and Radio One.

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

Court Decides Couple's Fate in Murder trial today

- The much-talked-about Angel Togba murder trial involving Defendant Hans Williams and his fiancée, Mardia P. Williams, has reached a crucial point with the presiding Judge of Criminal Court 'A,' Emmanuel Kollie, deciding today either to grant or deny defense counsel's motion for double jeopardy, seeking the release of the accused.
- The Defense Team of Mr. and Mrs. Williams filed a motion of double jeopardy before the First Judicial Circuit Court, Criminal Assizes "A" for Montserrado County sitting in its May Term.

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

Armed Robbers Terrorize Frog Island Community

- The Frog Island Community in Paynesville suffers series of alleged armed robbery during the early morning hours of Tuesday, May 26, 2009, in which at least five persons were injured.

- According to residents of the community, the alleged robbers attacked three homes at about 2:00 a.m., Tuesday morning and made away with money and other valuables.

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

Liberian President Signs More Bills

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has signed into law an act to ratify the ECOWAS Convention on small arms and light weapons, their ammunition and other related materials.
- At a brief signing ceremony witnessed by House and Senate Committee members on Executive, the President also signed into law 'An act ratifying the forest management contract Area-B in Rivercess County between Liberia, represented by the Forestry Development Authority and EJ and J Investment Corporation.'
- According to an Executive Mansion release, the President also signed 'An act ratifying the Forestry Management Contract in Area-A in Lofa and Gbarpolu counties between Liberia, represented by the Forestry Development Authority and the Alpha Logging Woods Processing Incorporated.'
- At Wednesday's ceremony, the President also signed 'An act ratifying the management contract area-C in Rivercess County between Liberia represented by the Forestry Development Authority and Liberia Tree and Trading Company Incorporated.'

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Thursday, 28 May 2009

<http://www.rnw.nl/internationaljustice/specials/Truthandreconciliation/090528-liberia-trc-court>

Liberia truth commission to recommend war crimes tribunal

Liberians have asked the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to push for the establishment of a special court to prosecute atrocities committed during the civil war.

The TRC spent last week meeting with Liberians in a round of popular consultations throughout the country. The consultations were one of the commission's remaining key activities ahead of the expiration of its mandate in June.

"The population believes that individuals who bear the greatest responsibilities of atrocities committed during the war should be prosecuted," said TRC spokesman James Kpargo. And because "the TRC works to the wishes and aspirations of the Liberian people, this is just what we will do," he added.

Liberia is recovering from years of back-to-back civil wars that ravaged the country between 1979 and 2003. The conflicts saw massacres, use of child soldiers and large-scale sexual violence. Out of a population of 3 million, an estimated 250,000 Liberians were killed, with as many as 1.5 million displaced.

The TRC was set up in 2006 to probe war crimes and rights violations. Modelled on the South African body which catalogued crimes committed during the apartheid era, the commission has documented the stories of more than 18,000 Liberians, including victims, warlords and President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

But the TRC cannot judge those who testify before it. It can only recommend they be prosecuted in a final report due to be submitted to the Liberian government later this year.

Members of the commission have already said that those who have proven non-cooperative, unrepentant or who failed to respect the TRC must be tried for not showing remorse for the wrongs they have done to the Liberian people.

They said that those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities should be brought before a UN backed hybrid war crimes court, set up in Liberia's capital, Monrovia. The commission also recommended that minor perpetrators be tried before traditional forums while former child soldiers should be granted amnesty.

Liberia's neighbour Sierra Leone already has a special war crimes court which is currently trying Liberia's former president Charles Taylor for his alleged role in arming and controlling RUF rebels during the civil war in Sierra Leone.

However, the court only has jurisdiction over crimes committed in Sierra Leone and cannot prosecute Taylor for alleged brutalities committed in Liberia.

In January, Taylor's son, Charles Arthur Emmanuel, was sentenced to a 97-year jail term by a US federal district court for committing torture in Liberia.

The Morung Express

Thursday, 28 May 2009

Khmer Rouge's killing fields revisited...

Neichu D. Angami



Visitors at the Toul Sleng Genocide Museum

After years of tussle between the Cambodian Government and the International Community led by the United Nations over who should control the Tribunal Court for the Khmer Rouge trial, the UN finally gave the go-ahead for the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), in 2005. ECCC is the name given to the joint tribunal. The first person who stood the charge was none other than the chief torturer,

famously known as Duch, who was convicted with war crimes and crimes against humanity in March of this year. He is one among the top five infirm Khmer Rouge cadres facing various charges. The verdict of the trial is expected later this year. These cadres under the leadership of Pol Pot are responsible for the death of over 2 million Cambodians between 1975 to 1979.

During the time when I lived and worked in Cambodia, 1997-98, I had great difficulty visiting the torture museum known as Toul Sleng and the famous killing fields. My own closest colleague then, Phana, had lost all her three sons, husband, parents and siblings to the regime and would not bring herself to even discussing the horror of those days, let alone visit the places where it all happened. However, on the eve of my departure after one and half year stay in the country, I felt a strong urge to visit the killing fields not so much to see another genocide memorial museum but more so for the need to embrace the suffering and pain of the people I so very much grew to love and respect. That visit became a pilgrimage for me. Since then, I have been to Cambodia for short visits a few times and I make it a point to return to these places. Last week I made another short visit to the country, just to take a break from work in Myanmar, visit friends and do some touristy things. My friend and I visited the killing fields again. And I felt a difference this time.

Although I am acutely aware of the limitations and the lengthy processes of such a trial, I for the first time, felt that this process may be helping the Cambodians to talk about what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime. I saw young Cambodians visiting the sites, something I have never seen before.

We do not know yet how this ongoing trial will affect the Cambodians. We do know that survivors and civic bodies can file motions through their lawyers and will be allowed to ask questions. Some survivors hope the trials will bring an end to their grief and will lead the country to an era of peace. Most importantly, many hope that the trial will educate the young people about an era they know so little about.

But there has been a set back – a very sad set-back, indeed. Cambodia's prosecutor opposed a bid to go after more suspects citing the need for national reconciliation. Many critics are aware that there is a political move to stop the court from digging too deep for fear of implicating former Khmer Rouge figures who are active in the government. Another limitation of the court is that it can only try individuals for crimes committed in Cambodia between April 17, 1975 to January 6, 1979 and cannot try countries or

organizations.

There is always something new to learn when visiting Cambodia. We were invited to dinner by a former colleague and as we were sharing about our day's tour of the city and visit to the killing fields, he said, "Oh, you know what?, we found our father after 30 years". I was stunned. He had lost his mother and brother during the Khmer Rouge regime. He survived with few other siblings. His fathers' whereabouts was never known as he left the country for business purposes just before the Khmer Rouge took over and they never saw him again. They assumed that their father may have been caught and killed somewhere. However, when the surviving children did return to Phnom Penh after the war, they tried to seek information about their father but to no avail.

Their father escaped the regime and has been coming back to Cambodia for many years believing that at least some of his children must be alive. Last year, through an unexpected encounter with someone who suspected that there could be a relation between the Cambodian man he know in Macau and the guy he met in Phnom Penh, connected them, and the two realized they were father and son separated for over 30 years. 'I have always written in my bio-data that my father was deceased ', 'can you believe it?' he said. I could see a spark in his eyes. I can only marvel...

'What do you think of the trial?' We asked him. 'Oh I don't believe it'. 'It's a waste of money. I am deeply hurt and I am still bitter. I have had a very difficult life. I don't believe I will see justice in my life time'. For the sake of this man and millions others who survived but are still bleeding, the world family must seek justice in Cambodia. Can there be reconciliation or lasting peace without justice? Can people heal without being acknowledged of their pain and suffering?

As Walter S. Landor reminds, 'delay of justice is injustice'.

Agence France Presses

Wednesday, 27 May 2009

Judge Threatens to Quit KRouge trial

The French investigating judge at Cambodia's troubled Khmer Rouge war crimes court told reporters Wednesday he would quit his post if he sensed interference in his work.

The UN-backed tribunal, which is trying the regime's former prison chief Kaing Guek Eav - known as Duch, has been plagued by allegations of political interference by the government and claims that Cambodian staff had to pay kickbacks for jobs.

"I came here to work as a judge... The day I will not be able to work anymore, I will leave," said investigating judge Marcel Lemonde at a press conference.

The UN has withheld funds to Cambodian operations at the court in absence of an agreement to stop the alleged corruption, however the global body's talks with senior government officials have ended without a deal.

Lemonde and co-investigating judge You Bunleng said their office had so far interviewed more than 450 witnesses, but their work on the court's second case against four senior leaders would not be completed before the end of the year.

"We are very aware of the necessity to complete the investigation as soon as possible. Our goal is to complete it by the end of 2009," Lemonde said.

However he added "this goal is a very ambitious one, given the complexity of the file".

Two investigators have also been in France since last week to interview witnesses, court officials said.

Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998 before facing justice, and fears over the health of ageing suspects hang over the court.

Former Khmer Rouge ideologue Nuon Chea, head of state Khieu Samphan, foreign minister Ieng Sary and his wife, minister of social affairs Ieng Thirith are in detention awaiting the court's second trial.

The long-awaited first trial has heard Duch acknowledge responsibility and beg forgiveness for overseeing the torture and execution of more than 15,000 people at the notorious Tuol Sleng prison.

Up to two million people were executed or died of starvation, disease and overwork as the Khmer Rouge movement emptied cities and enslaved the population on collective farms in its bid to create a communist utopia.

(AFP)

Amnesty International

Friday, 29 May 2009

Climate of Impunity Persists

Kantipur Report

KATHMANDU, May 29 - Despite a number of measures taken by the state, the process of delivering truth, justice and reparations for violations committed during the conflict did not progress and a climate of impunity persisted in Nepal in the past year, according to Amnesty International (AI) Report 2009 released on Thursday.

The report identifies eight areas of human rights violations in Nepal. These include transitional justice, enforced disappearances, impunity, abuses by police and armed groups, use of children as soldiers, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and violence against women.

“Impunity continued for perpetrators of human rights abuses during the conflict -- no case had been tried before a civilian court and survivors of sexual violence reported that police refused to file their complaints,” states the report.

On torture, the report states that national laws providing safeguards against torture fell short of international standards, and were hardly implemented given that more than 1,300 new cases of torture have been recorded since 2006.

Internationally, people were tortured during interrogation in about 50 percent of all countries in the world and 78 percent of executions took place in G-20 countries. The report has concluded that a human rights time bomb underlies the economic crisis because it has aggravated abuse, distracted attention from them and created new problems.

Regarding transitional justice in Nepal, AI has also pointed out a flawed provision in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which allows general amnesty to perpetrators of serious human rights violations.

The report has also raised alarm over rampant human rights violations by police. “Between 10 March and 18 July 2008, police arrested at least 8,000 Tibetans and other human rights activists, including staff of Amnesty International Nepal, as they demonstrated peacefully in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics. Many protesters reported that police beat them up during demonstrations and while in custody,” reads the report.

The Maoists' Young Communist League, states the report, committed a number of human rights abuses including abductions, over which the National Human Rights Commission expressed serious concern.

AI has also expressed dismay over other political

parties (non-Maoist) following the Maoists. “Instead of condemning YCL activities, other political parties formed armed youth groups, including the Youth Force associated with CPN-UML,” the report points out.

The report also highlights government failure to free over 2,500 child Maoist soldiers languishing in UN monitored cantonments.