

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Friday, 12 June 2009

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

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UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 11 June 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Manhattan student raises \$300,000 for war-torn Liberia

BY Edgar Sandoval and Leo Standora
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

Thursday, June 11th 2009, 11:02 PM - The needs of Third World nations hit home like a hammer for 17-year-old Eugenie Iseman last summer as she told a Liberian teen about the wonders of New York and the waterways that surround it.

"Which river do you wash your clothes in?" the teen asked. "I could barely find the words to explain we didn't wash our clothes in any rivers because we have machines to do it," the willowy Brearley School senior said.

Eugenie and some friends were in Liberia for 10 days last June visiting clinics, schools and other facilities in the rural West African town of Karnplay as part of an International Rescue Committee program.

One clinic, she said, "had no electricity and no running water. Pregnant women walked miles to give birth in a dirty room with very little medical attention."

So Eugenie came back to her home on the upper East Side determined to do something to help the people she had met more than 5,000 miles away.

With a group of friends, she organized Student Rescue: N.Y.C. Students Rebuilding Liberia.

Thursday night, she raised \$300,000 during an event at Butter Restaurant in NoHo. The money will go to IRC to build a new and well-equipped clinic in Karnplay, a region devastated by 10 years of civil war.

Local Media – Newspaper

Liberia Joins Africa Finance Corporation

(Heritage, Daily Observer, The Inquirer)

- Liberia has signed up as the newest member of the African Finance Corporation (AFC) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) entered with the agency and the Liberian Government Tuesday, and an accession to membership signed Wednesday, June 10, 2009, in Monrovia. AFC Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Andrew Alli, was in Monrovia to see both instruments through.

Liberia's Maternal Mortality rate among Highest Worldwide – Says Health Ministry Official

(Daily Observer)

- [sic] The Director of Family Health Division of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW), Dr. Saye D. Baawo, has disclosed that Liberia has reached the top of the ladder in terms of the country's maternal mortality rate in sub-Saharan Africa. He added that the mortality rate of Liberia is also among the highest in the world. According to the Director, in

Liberia, with a population of 3.5 million, about 1,400 women die annually while 4,500 newborns die annually as a result of maternal mortality.

Nigerian Company Reaches Oil Exploration Agreement with NOCAL

(New Democrat, Daily Observer, The News,)

- The multi-million dollar oil giant, Oranto Petroleum Ltd, based in the West African state of Nigeria, yesterday signed a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) LB-14 with the Government of Liberia (GOL), through the National Oil Company of Liberia (NOCAL). Oranto Petroleum Limited has been exploring the possibility for oil in Liberia, investing over US\$30 million in the exploratory initiative which commenced a few years ago.

Thousands Benefit from Bed Nets Distribution in Northern Liberia

(Daily Observer)

- [sic] Over thousands of people in the Northern Liberia county of Nimba have been benefiting from mosquito net distribution, which kicked off a few weeks ago by a humanitarian organization, Equip, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health County Health Team and the National Malaria Control Program. According to the Head of Equip Field Office in Ganta, Mark Chapeskie, the exercise covers the entire county. "The distribution should have been completed by now but it was due to the polio vaccinating campaign that we delayed," he said.

Top UN Envoy Wants Girls Education Prioritized in Liberia

(Daily Observer)

- The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Madam Ellen Margrethe Løj, said boys in Liberia should leave girls alone in order for them to finish their education. She made the statement June 7, 2009, at Antoinette Tubman Stadium where she spoke Sunday at the just-ended End-Hunger, Walk the World program.

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

Public Works Minister Clarifies use of US\$9M Allotment in 2008/2009 Budget

- The Public Works Ministry says the US\$9 million allotment in the 2008/2009 Budget for the purchase of road equipment was not implemented.
- According to Public Works Minister Samuel Woods, instead of purchasing the equipment, the Ministry used some of the money for road rehabilitation saying the change of priority was to embark on hard visibility projects in certain counties given the constraint of the rainy season.
- The Public Works Minister made the clarification when he faced the joint Public Works Committees of the Legislature on the Ministry's draft budget.
- Correspondents say the expenditure of the US\$ 9 million by the Public Works Ministry during the administration of Lusene Dunzo has led to serious protest at the Legislature with some lawmakers arguing that the Public Works Ministry had no authority to change the priority of the money without their input.
- During his appearance Wednesday, Minister Woods appealed to the Legislature to approve the US\$39.9 million draft budget of the Public Works Ministry for infrastructure development.

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

UNDP Administrator in Liberia for Two-day Visit

- The Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ms. Helen Clark arrived in the country on Wednesday at the start of a two-day official visit.

- While in the country, Ms. Clark will hold bi-lateral discussions with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Head of UNMIL and senior government officials.
- She will also hold talks with representatives of women groups and donor institutions.
- At the same time, Ms. Clark will participate in a town hall meeting and the launch of the Volunteers for Peace program in Kakata, Margibi County.
- The visit is the first official visit out of New York for her since she was appointed as Administrator of UNDP on April 17, 2009.

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

Liberty Party Takes Issue with President Sirleaf's Latest Appointment

- Liberty Party has criticized the appointment of Madam Mary Broh as acting Mayor for the Monrovia City Corporation.
- In an interview, the party's chairman Israel Akinsanya said the appointment contravenes the laws of the city charter arguing that there are no provisions in the city charter which calls for the appointment of an acting city Mayor.
- Mr. Akinsanya said the legal implications of appointing a mayor needed to be addressed before any nomination.
- The Liberty Party chairman wants the legislature to critically look at the President's latest action.

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

Global Women Organization Upbeat about Entrepreneurship in Liberia

- The International President of the Sisterhood, Alpha Kappa Alpha says there's a wonderful entrepreneur spirit in Liberia.
- Madam Barbara McKinzie however noticed the businesses are being carried out in the absence of systems to make them better.
- Madam McKinzie disclosed her group has been talking with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on how to help empower women entrepreneurs saying a project is being formulated to support the President's vision of empowering women entrepreneurs through the Sirleaf market women fund.
- Madam McKinzie assured education for better business skills and provision of safe place for children will form part of the project.
- President Sirleaf is a member of the Alpha Kappa Alpha, a sisterhood of college-trained women, which engages in issues of women empowerment globally.

Former NDPL Standard Bearer Joins 'Dormant' Party

- The Standard-bearer of the National Democratic Party of Liberia in the 2005 elections has joined the Liberian National Union Party LINU.
- Cllr. Winston Tubman officially declared his membership for LINU, a party that has been dormant since the 2005 elections.
- Cllr. Tubman described his membership with the "not so vibrant party" as a symbol of national unity.
- Cllr. Tubman said in the midst of the class-divide and corruption in Liberia, his decision was necessary.
- He says it's time that Liberians combine efforts to fight corruption and what he called native and Congo scenario.
- The Chairman of the Liberian National Union Party lauded Cllr Tubman for the decision and dispelled rumors that the party has been bought.

The Phnom Penh Post

Friday, 12 June 2009

What need for a truth commission?



Written by Sok-Kheang Ly

Dear Editor,



Photo by: GEORGIA WILKINS

The exterior of the main courtroom at the Khmer Rouge tribunal earlier this month.

The idea of creating a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has been raised and considered as a possible substitute for the ongoing legal proceedings at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. ('KRT suspect hearing cancelled', June 3).

A TRC can be an important process for investigating widespread and systematic human rights abuses committed by a former regime. Its work is believed to contribute to national reconciliation and unity, and to help victims achieve a certain, but not complete, degree of closure. The "truth" produced by a TRC can foster reconciliation and has done so, at least in the South African context. But the South African TRC was shaped by its unique cultural characteristics - political pluralism (competing powers) and the rule of law (universal standards for judging behavior). As such, TRCs may come into existence, and prove successful, only because of cultural and institutional attributes and support.

South Africa's TRC was regarded as effective because the work fit its Christian culture and politics. Most post-atrocity countries where TRCs have been established are predominantly Christian. Hence, it may be asked whether mostly Buddhist countries like Cambodia would benefit from taking up the same idea as South Africa and to what extent doing so would help Cambodians find truth and healing.

Notably, before the establishment of the ECCC, Cambodians and their government carried out many social, political, religious, traditional and cultural activities to address the legacy of the KR. Although not called a "TRC", these efforts were designed to help people overcome trauma, loss, hopelessness and the tremendous suffering Cambodians experienced during the KR regime.

Previous attempts

For example, thousands of survivor accounts (known as the Renakse petitions) were collected in the early 1980s. Both individual and collective petitions describe the sufferings of that era: the loss of family members and community members; the destruction of property; and the prohibition of culture, religion and tradition. The process was undertaken to publicly reveal the truth about the KR crimes and to seek acknowledgment from the international community.

Also, on the annual celebration called the "Day of Anger/Remembrance", people gather together to speak out about their losses and sufferings and to condemn the Khmer Rouge crimes publicly. The local government officials acknowledge their hardship and sufferings. During the gatherings, the Buddhist ceremony baing skol has also helped the victims mentally.

These two instances can be understood as aspects of an informal truth commission that Cambodian people have participated in since the end of the regime. Up to now, what Cambodians most lack is a sense of justice. Therefore, punitive justice at ECCC should be complementary to the many local efforts made since the fall of the KR regime in 1979. In this respect, all stakeholders should keep offering constructive comments for the sake of an internationally and nationally accepted justice. Afterward, symbolic collective reparations supplementing the ECCC verdicts should also be a means of assisting victims in gaining a sense of closure.

A national-level TRC appears unrealistic considering Cambodia's culture, religion and political climate. Therefore, continued commemorations, ongoing work at the grassroots to collect and share accounts from the period, and assistance to the ECCC process are more constructive efforts than pressing for the creation of a national-level TRC.

Sok-Kheang Ly
Phnom Penh

AllAfrica.com

Thursday, 11 June 2009

Rwanda: Genocide - Justice to Spare the Powerful?

Ibuka, Avega and Aerg

Press Release

In response to a 1 June Human Rights Watch letter calling for the transfer of Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) soldiers to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), the umbrella organisation IBUKA expresses concern over the absence of measures to bring Western parties complicit in Rwanda's 1994 tragedy to task. While broadly applauding Human Rights Watch's commitment to justice, IBUKA and its associates AVEGA and AERG take issue with the letter's suggestions that RPF soldiers should be tried in the same manner as genocidaires. Missing from the discussion, IBUKA contends, is the role of Western governments in the genocide, an omission which needs to be swiftly rectified if rich countries are not simply to be immune from international justice.

As the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) begins to wind down its activities, strident calls have now surfaced that it must not do so before it indicts and tries soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) 'who committed crimes against humanity and war crimes in Rwanda in 1994'. The latest of these calls is a 1 June letter written by 48 academicians to Ban Ki-moon, secretary general of the UN, President Barack Obama of the United States and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. We applaud the commitment of the authors to see justice done. But we are also struck by the fact that in tone, style and language this letter mimics recent letters and press statements released by Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, who during his visit to Rwanda in March 2009 laughably found a 'power of horror', as he put it in his Los Angeles Times article of 11 April 2009. The purpose of this article is to answer this persistent and - as we shall show - diversionary call for the transfer of RPF soldiers to the ICTR.

Our response is in five parts. First, notwithstanding the claims the letter makes, its practical effect is to introduce moral equivalence between the actions of those who committed the genocide and those who fought to stop them. Second, the letter ignores the circumstances of the genocide and of the events surrounding its end. Third, the letter says that Rwanda has not prosecuted RPF soldiers yet the fact is that over 46 trials of soldiers who committed crimes in 1994 have already taken place. Fourth, while there can hardly ever be a justification for the killing of civilians, the tragic history of warfare early in the 20th century and more recently in Afghanistan and Iraq shows that this will always happen, odious and unfortunate as it is. Finally, we are troubled by the selectivity of both Human Rights Watch and its supporters regarding the legal treatment of the events revolving around the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

HOW THE LETTER MAKES THE CRIMES OF RPF SOLDIERS THE MORAL EQUIVALENT OF GENOCIDE

In the third paragraph, the letter glibly states that the authors 'certainly recognize the RPF's crimes against humanity and war crimes are not comparable to the genocide, either in scope or extent'. This legalistic formulation ignores the fact that there has been a strenuous campaign by genocidaires living in exile and their families who use the evidence of crimes committed by RPF soldiers to make the odious claim that the war to stop the 1994 genocide was in effect a reverse genocide. Academicians and human rights activists are, in effect, ignoring this travesty of the truth and indirectly supporting the efforts of the revisionists and genocidaires. Indeed, the transfer of RPF soldiers to the ICTR would be the ultimate diplomatic and moral coup for the historical revisionists and genocide deniers. The trial of those who planned and executed genocide in the same court with those who put their lives in line to stop it but committed crimes in doing so is precisely the moral fillip the killers are looking for.

The real issue for debate here is how to hold everyone to account by: a) giving fair treatment to fundamentally different kind of acts; b) not giving a moral and diplomatic victory to the genocidaires; c) endangering the process of reconciliation; and d) reinforcing the views of the historical revisionists. Genocide is an exceptional crime and its unique moral repugnancy should never ever be softened by spurious comparisons with other crimes.

THE LETTER IGNORES THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE 1994 EVENTS

All historical events belong irreducibly to their time. Once events are removed from their historical context, they cannot be understood or explained. We know this much to be true: Some RPF soldiers committed crimes against humanitarian law. However, every objective account of the 1994 war invariably makes two observations: a) that the RPF was a remarkably disciplined fighting force given the circumstances; and b) the RPF as an organisation never sanctioned either revenge killings or other reprisals against the general population. The killings that occurred were committed by errant elements. Many of those who committed crimes were soldiers who arrived in their village and found their families exterminated and neighbours wearing clothes of the deceased, or holding their furniture and other property of the dead in their houses.

But it is also important to understand exactly how the genocide was organised and how it was stopped in order to discuss this matter in a meaningful manner. The genocide was perpetrated by the armed forces, security agencies such as the gendarmerie and the police, political party militias and, critically, a sizeable part of the general population. As studies show - including those by Human Rights Watch - enough machetes were bought to arm nearly one million men. Civilian involvement was central to the ideological and political objectives of the genocide, as well as to its efficient execution.

At the same time one must remember the extraordinary circumstances under which the war to stop the genocide was fought. The urgency of stopping the genocide as fast as possible and the acute asymmetry of means between the genocide forces backed by the government, the French, and Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) soldiers required the latter to take tremendous risks and often fight above their physical and psychological capacities. This war was not fought from the sanitised cockpit of a jet fighter. It was not fought from behind the armour-plate of tanks or armoured personnel carriers. It was fought on foot and through one decimated village after another. There was nothing to shield RPA combatants from the immediacy of the horrors of the genocide. Soldiers were crossing a blood-soaked terrain littered with the defiled and mutilated bodies of children and pregnant women. Toward the end of the war, when professional government soldiers and propagandists had understood the game was almost over, the hardest battles were fought not against soldiers but against militias and armed civilians galvanised by the radio RTLM (Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines), which used to tell them that RPA bullets were nothing but peas or pellets of water. Often individual RPA soldiers were not sure whether the civilians were killers or innocents.

The reality, as we have seen in other war zones, is that individual soldiers whose sense of proportion is cauterised by horrors beyond description often descend into bouts of violence or engage in revenge killings. Of course, they too are wrongdoers, but the burdens and psychological pressures of their personal circumstances are different from the circumstances of the killers who deliberately planned and executed mass murder. On account of these extraordinary circumstances, we categorically oppose prosecution of RPA combatants who halted the genocide and saved us in the same forum that is trying the genocidaires. Some of us do not even understand why those we consider as heroes should be tried at all, considering the sacrifices they made trying to save us while the rest of the world blankly abandoned us.

Reading the letter of the scholars, it is as if not a single RPF soldier to have committed crimes in 1994 has ever been tried. Indeed, the letter makes the patently false claim that the RPF 'never prosecuted any of its soldiers for war crimes in 1994 until this 2008 case'. That there have been over 45 indictments and trials of soldiers accused of crimes in 1994 has been completely ignored, as has the fact that those who have been convicted have actually been handed jail sentences ranging from two to 10 years. It is instructive that in one case the trial court had awarded the sentence of life imprisonment, before it was reduced to six years on appeal.

LESSONS FROM RECENT AND MORE REMOTE WESTERN HISTORY

We keenly support the advancement of international humanitarian law, not only because of its role in rendering justice in the face of gross human rights violations but particularly because it is the basis for prosecuting those who killed our families, friends and community during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis. However, we firmly reject the formalistic and narrow interpretation favoured by Human Rights Watch and its supporters. This interpretation essentially seeks to turn the liberators and the victims that tried to defend themselves into killers. Further, this interpretation of international humanitarian law is socially and politically concocted; it ignores the utmost importance of physical security in many parts of the world. It stems from a section of Western society that has

enjoyed extended economic opulence, political stability and dominance and almost total collective physical security.

Some of the scholars that signed the letter calling for the prosecution of RPA soldiers by the ICTR are known supporters of the *genocidaires*. Others seem to fall under the intellectual spell cast by those who argue for the unquestioned triumph of Western liberalism, characterised most profoundly by American political philosopher Francis Fukuyama's book, 'The End of History'. The end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Fukuyama famously stated, marked 'the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government'. Less than 10 years later, Fukuyama was proved wrong in a horrible turn of events. On 11 September 2001 - '9/11' - America was attacked by terrorists, the collapse of the Twin Towers claiming the lives of 2,976 innocent people. In the terms of Fukuyama, the US and more generally the Western world re-entered the realm of history; it was the first time homeland America had been attacked since Pearl Harbor. We did not rejoice in this act of terrorism; the horrors of the New York cold-blooded killings painfully reminded us of our own recent experience in the 1994 genocide. Despite the fact that the USA alongside the international community failed us in our time of need, we came to consider the USA as our friend.

But we are interested in what happened subsequently, since it relates to some of the arguments now being made against Rwanda. The 9/11 attacks sparked a security response that came to be known as the 'War on Terror', a 'war' which has allegedly led to human rights abuses under several policies adopted by the US government. These include 'enhanced interrogation techniques', special rendition - described by critics as torture by proxy - the indefinite incarceration of people accused of terrorism, and more recently, thousands of deaths resulting from air strikes by NATO troops in Afghanistan. Few of these alleged abuses have become the subject of legal prosecution under international humanitarian law.

For the sake of this discussion allow us to make comparisons, although this is in no way to seek to trivialise the atrocities of 9/11. The victims of 9/11 were less than 0.001 per cent of the American population; in contrast, in Rwanda, around one million people were killed, about 8 per cent of the total population and 75 per cent of the targeted Tutsi population.

Indeed, in terms of the magnitude and intensity of the existential threat and nature of the enemy, the events of the summer of 1994 in Rwanda could be more appropriately compared with 60 years ago during the Second World War. The war against the Nazis led to, among other outcomes, the Anglo-American bombardment of German cities. After the German bombing of London, Britain responded with an intense bombing campaign between early 1942 and 1945 - approximately 75 per cent of these bombs were dropped in commercial and densely populated residential areas. The result was that most victims were civilians - women, infants and elderly people because the men were away on military duty.

Following suit, the Americans soon abandoned their precision-bombing doctrine, and embraced the British approach toward the end of the war. Some 72 per cent of the bombs that they deployed were dropped in the last 10 months of the war after 1 July 1944, that is to say, after the Luftwaffe was defeated in April 1944 and the German armies were collapsing on all fronts. The most emblematic of these air strikes was the last great raid of the town of Dresden in February 1945 using incendiary bombs.

Another example of the deplorable side effects of warfare is the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 August 1945, which caused the deaths of countless civilians. The role of the bombings in Japan's surrender and the United States' ethical justification for them have been the subject of continuing controversy, with some critics calling the bombings a 'crime of war'. When asked about the bombing of Hiroshima during his first ever press conference in Tokyo in 1975, Emperor Hirohito answered: 'It's very regrettable that nuclear bombs were dropped and I feel sorry for the citizens of Hiroshima but it couldn't be helped because that happened in wartime.'

Finally, one could also cite the fate that befell the French civilians summarily executed (between 10,000 and 40,000; the figures are disputed) for their alleged collaboration with the Nazis during the 'épuration sauvage' phase of the country's liberation.

These figures are cited not to make what would be morally reprehensible comparisons between categories of atrocities against civilians in Europe and in Rwanda, but to underline the fact that these killings were carried out by

nations that were heirs to European humanism against civilians who were in many cases certifiable non-combatants. In contrast, many of the civilian deaths that occurred in 1994 occurred in circumstances in which certifiable civilian genocidaires and combatants and militias were mixed with innocent civilians. Indeed, in its 1999 report on the genocide, Human Rights Watch itself observes that: 'It is impossible to say how many of those [killed] were active participants in the genocide or were engaged in any military action against the RPF when they were killed.'

The second lesson that recent history teaches us is that progress in these matters is not in any society a foregone conclusion.

A RACIALLY TAINTED SELECTIVITY

In 2004 the UN proclaimed a responsibility to protect, but in truth that responsibility has always been part of international humanitarian law. If Human Rights Watch and scholars who support its campaign are keen to see to it that all sides are held to account for their role in the genocide as they say, then we should scrutinise all who are in breach of their obligations. Under Article 1 of the Genocide Convention, 'Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish.' There is a duty to punish genocide but, more critically, there is a legal - not merely moral - duty to prevent genocide. Indeed, the convention explicitly obliges contracting parties to call upon 'the competent organs of the United Nations to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide.'

From the beginning of 1994, General Roméo Dallaire requested in vain that his UN superiors allow him to take firm action against extremists because he had received evidence of a plot to commit mass murder against the Tutsi and the political opposition. On 21 April 1994 and two weeks after the beginning of the genocide with the killings at their most intense, the very same the UN Security Council the scholars are appealing to indict RPA soldiers shamelessly decided to reduce the UN peacekeeping force from 2,500 men to a purely symbolic 270 soldiers. This event weakened the force at its greatest hour of need and, more importantly, explicitly signalled to the genocidaires that they had the warrant of the international community to do as they wished with their victims without the interference of the UN.

Earlier, on 11 April, one of the most horrible acts of cold abandonment took place at ETO Kicukiro school in the vicinity of Kigali. A well-armed contingent of Belgian UN soldiers were protecting about 5,000 mostly Tutsi residents, who came to take refuge after the genocide began. The Interahamwe militia soon got wind of this and kept a murderous vigil around the school, day and night. On the morning of 11 April, the UN forces informed the refugees that they had orders to withdraw and that they would have to leave that very day. The pleas by the refugees that this would effectively deliver them to the killers were ignored. In an event that will forever shame the uniform of the UN forces, trained soldiers left unarmed civilians at the mercy of killers sworn to exterminate them. In desperation, some of the refugees even flung themselves in front of the moving cars. The UN forces responded to this by shooting in the air to scatter them. The dust had barely settled when the Interahamwe moved in, rounded up the unarmed refugees and marched them to Nyanza Kicukiro, a rubbish dump and start to kill them. Of the 5,000 refugees less than a hundred survived, partly because the killers got tired and a nearby platoon of RPF fighters moved in to rescue them in the night.

Yet this analysis does not even begin to deal with the moral, material and ideological support that the French government continued to give to the genocidal Rwandan government until the very end. Ironically, Human Rights Watch has been instrumental in documenting elements of French complicity in the genocide.

In March 1998 President Bill Clinton in Kigali formally apologised for the conduct of his country during the genocide. In April 2000, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt did the same. Four years later a representative of the UN secretary general read a message expressing Kofi Annan's regrets for the role of his organisation during the genocide.

If Human Rights Watch and the scholars that support its campaign against the RPA want bring to account every party involved in the events revolving around the genocide, why they don't call for France, the UN, Belgium and the USA to account for their deeds, be they actions or omissions?

The selectivity regarding the genocide in Rwanda that is now being pursued by these campaigners mirrors that of the International Criminal Court (ICC), which up to now only seems interested in prosecuting Africans. This selective approach neither advances the application of the international humanitarian law nor encourages poor and weak countries of the world to support any form of international justice. The evidence they see is that international justice is a one-sided affair that spares the wealthy and the powerful.

* IBUKA ('remember') is an umbrella organisation concerned with the rehabilitation of survivors of the Rwandan genocide and Rwandan society in general. AVEGA (Association of widows from the genocide Agahozo) and AERG (Association of student survivors from the genocide) are associations involved in IBUKA.

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Associated Press

Friday, 12 June 2009

Human Rights Watch: Mexican military abuses rising

By MICHAEL E. MILLER

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Abuses by the Mexican military have surged since the government deployed troops to fight drug cartels more than two years ago, and too little is done to investigate allegations of rapes, killing and torture, a rights group said Thursday.

Mexico's government disputed the charges made by Human Rights Watch in a report to the United Nations, insisting it takes abuse allegations seriously.

Human Rights Watch criticized Mexico's reliance on military tribunals to investigate soldiers charged with abuses, saying such cases should be handled in civilian courts.

"The dysfunctional Mexican military justice system routinely takes over the investigation of even the most egregious abuses, including alleged rapes, killings, arbitrary detentions and torture," said Juliette de Rivero, the Geneva advocacy director for the New York-based organization.

De Rivero read a statement before the Geneva-based U.N. Human Rights Council, which is conducting a review of Mexico's human rights record, something the institution does for all U.N. member states every four years.

In its own report to the council, the Mexican government denied it ignores abuses. "Mexico continues its prompt investigation of all allegations of human rights violations," it said.

The statement said 14 military personnel had been convicted of abuses but provided no timeframe or details on the cases. The country's Defense Department did not return calls seeking comment.

Tamara Taraciuk, a researcher for Human Rights Watch, said Mexico's National Human Rights Commission, an autonomous government agency, received 1,230 abuse complaints against the military in 2008 — a sevenfold increase from 182 cases in 2006.

Human Rights Watch criticized the lack of detail in Mexico's statement, saying that only two months ago the government was unable to provide a single example of a soldier being convicted of human rights violations in a military court in the last 10 years.

"This just raises a ton of questions for us," Taraciuk said of the government's statement. "The ball is still in their court to prove the Mexican military justice system is not ensuring immunity for military abuses committed during the drug war."

Since taking office in December 2006, President Felipe Calderon has deployed more than 45,000 soldiers to fight ruthless drug cartels that control swaths of the country and are responsible for most of the narcotics smuggled into the U.S. Drug violence has since surged, claiming more than 10,800 lives.

The U.S. government has backed Mexico's battle with at least \$700 million in training and equipment, but some of that aid is conditioned on State Department confirmation that Mexico meets human rights and police corruption goals.