

**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:

Tuesday, 16 June 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Concord Times Online

Monday, 15 June 2009

Sierra Leone: MP Back After AU Summit in Ethiopia

Ben Samuel Turay

Freetown — Sierra Leone's member of parliament Hon. Claude Kamanda, representing constituency 95 in the Western rural area has returned home after taking part in the ministerial meeting of African State Parties to the Rome Statute in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The All People's Congress MP, who led the Sierra Leone delegation, said the aim of the summit was to discuss issues relating to the international criminal justice in the region and worldwide since 1998; to discuss good governance, rule of law and democracy.

The summit started from June 8 - 9 this year. He reassured the gathering that his government was very concerned with the International Criminal Court, ICC since 2002.

"Throughout that time, Sierra Leone has been a driving force, consistently expressing its commitment and dedication in international and regional fora, including directly talking to His Excellency President Ernest Bai Koroma during the meeting with Parliamentarians on the margins of sub-regional seminar organized by Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) in cooperation with Manifesto 99 and No Peace Without Justice in January 2008," he called.

"Sierra Leone has lived up to its commitment to international criminal justice by setting up the Special Court for Sierra Leone and then taking a very hands-off approach to its operations, while continuing to provide the Special Court with all the support and cooperation it needs to fulfil its mandate."

The MP concluded by assuring the summit of peace, rule of law, good governance and democracy in his country.

Cotton Tree News

Monday, 15 June 2009

Symbolic reparation goes north

Written by Aruna Augustine Kamara

The Provincial Secretary North has noted that the recognition and compensation of war victims is crucial to efforts aimed at peace building in Sierra Leone. Mr. Abdul Robert Dumbuya, was speaking in Makeni during the symbolic reparation programme in the Bombali district. The Head of Programmes, National Commission for Social Action, NaCSA, Dr. William Conteh said the event was the third symbolic reparation programme since the start of the process.

Obai Buya Kamara, Director of Reparation, NACSA said the symbolic reparation programme brought together war victims, local authorities and other stakeholders to reflect on the legacies of the war. He said it was also a means of sympathizing with victims. He reassured the people that government was committed to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Sieh Mansaray, Chairman of the Amputees and War Wounded Association in the North said they were happy that government was implementing the long awaited reparation programme.

He called on government to enact laws to prevent provocation of war victims. Mayor of Makeni, Moses Sesay called on war victims to forgive the perpetrators of the war.

The Liberian Journal

Monday, 15 June 2009

Liberian TRC: Reconciliation before the Truth?

By: Dr. Abdoulaye W. Dukulé

TRC Hearing



Like many people in the country, I was surprised by an announcement last week that the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the institution set up by the Accra Peace Accord to investigate the Liberian civil war and foster national reconciliation, would organize a national reconciliation conference, at the Unity Conference Center, in Virginia, starting June 15, 2009. A gathering of such magnitude takes long preparatory efforts and the participation of many institutions. According to press reports, the conference will bring together some 400 people, 20 representing each of the 15 counties and 100 people representing diverse organizations. The broad agenda seems to center on “reconciliation.” It is hoped that the conference will end with resolutions calling for the implementation of many decisions

that could impact the national reconciliatory process.

As it has happened for the greatest part of the existence of the Commission, this conference will not go without controversy. First, according to news reports, the media event where the conference was announced was attended by only a few members of the Commission. It is said that one member, Counselor Pear Brown Bull who claims to represent the Western counties disrupted the press conference and later “held” her own media briefing in her office. Her pronouncements were almost the opposite of what the TRC Chairman said in the other event, whom she accused of carrying out his own agenda.

Personality differences exist in any organization where people, from different cultural and political backgrounds have to work together. The task of the TRC involves highly charged emotional issues which can exacerbate those differences. The challenge for those involved in the process consists in elevating the national interest above their own preferences and dislikes. However, with accusations and counter-accusations that marred its work from the beginning, the TRC seems not to be able to move away from the personal to embrace the national. The question now is whether people who could not put aside their petty issues to work as a team could reach any level of cooperation to bring about national healing.

In our traditional setting, under the Palava hut – now Peace Hut – elders judge quarrels and misunderstandings. Everyone trusts their judgment, based on a lifelong experience. They don’t allow their personal feelings to get involved when they are seeking the truth. Their decisions and judgments are accepted by all because they are “after any personal gain” in the process. In other words, their age and the wisdom they acquired put them above suspicion. The South African TRC worked mostly because nobody could doubt the sincerity and impartiality of Bishop Desmond Tutu.

The other problem facing the Reconciliation process comes from the fact that for the past few weeks, the leadership of the TRC has introduced another word that was not its mandate and that is the word “justice.” This had led to speculation that the TRC was recommending and emphasizing the establishment of a war crimes tribunal. The mandate of the Commission, inscribed in its name, was to find the truth about our national upheaval and lead us onto a path of national reconciliation. It may be that Liberians, after knowing the truth, could decide to seek justice

or simply move on.

We believe that the truth about what happened between 1979 and 2003 is yet to be told on many levels. We have heard personal stories from many Liberians, including the President but we are far from knowing the truth.

We do not know who did what on the fateful day called the Rice Riots in 1979. We do not know how many people were killed and who gave the order to shoot. We do not know who actually killed President William Tolbert. Conspiracy theories abound in all directions. Was Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe really the mastermind behind the coup? Why then, on the morning of the coup, after the President was “assassinated” – the exact word used in the first press statement read by Samuel K. Doe – were the soldiers wrangling about leadership? If we fast forward to 1985, we may ask who funded the Thomas Quiwonkpa coup attempt. Who helped Charles Taylor escape from jail? Who financed his movements in the sub-region as he traveled and organized his military group? How did he get to Burkina Faso and Libya?

Beyond those issues, we must also find out the level of responsibility of other state agents: Cote d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Libya, Nigeria, Guinea, France and the United States. Who did what and when? In each of those countries, there are people who have taken active part in what happened. For example, what is the level of responsibility of Burkina Faso and Libya who made no secret about training and arming Charles Taylor? What kind of relationship existed between General Ibrahim Babangida and President Samuel Doe? Why did Herman Cohen, the then Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs at the US State Department “re-assured President Houphouet-Boigny that the war would not spill over and would be contained inside Liberia?” Mr. Amara Essy who affirmed this fact was Foreign Minister of Cote d’Ivoire and in charge of the Liberian dossier and is well and alive. The questions are many and their responses could lead Liberians to understand what happened to their country.

The primary condition for reconciliation is the truth, not necessarily justice. After a fight of any sort, two people can decide to reconcile, especially after each recognizes their part of responsibility. There is always the possibility of one party deciding to go to justice. If Liberians do not know the truth about what happened how could they reconcile? Is justice more important than national reconciliation? What is the ultimate objective of the TRC? Is-it in its mandate to lead Liberia towards a war crimes tribunal or a genuine reconciliation process?

There is no way to prejudge an event that is yet to take place. The National Reconciliation Conference could lead to another stage in our search for the truth... Maybe, one resolution could be that we must go back to the drawing board and start all over. We deserve to know the truth, the whole truth before we can reconcile or taken anyone to court...

Agence France Presses

Monday, 15 June 2009

Liberian truth commission calls for unity

MONROVIA (AFP) — The chairman of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Monday called on his countrymen to strive for unity to overcome the scars left by years of civil war.

"We should stop seeing ourselves as Grebo people, Loma people or Kpelleh people. We should begin to see ourselves as one people, one nation, and all Liberians," TRC chairman Jerome Verdier said at the opening of a five-day national conference to discuss the commission's findings and the way ahead for reconciliation.

"At one moment we had 15 tribes and maybe 15 political parties and so we had 15 different nations existing in one border. We have to advance ourselves beyond that and make sure that united we will progress as a nation, and divided we will remain poor," he told delegates from 17 political parties, diplomatic observers and national and international human rights groups.

The mandate of the commission, modelled on the similar South African body which catalogued crimes committed during the apartheid era, is due to end June 30 when the commission will publicly announce its recommendations.

The TRC was set up in 2006 to probe war crimes and rights violations during the back-to-back civil wars that ravaged Liberia between 1989 and 2003 and left some 250,000 people dead.

In past years the commission has heard from key figures in the civil war including some notorious warlords, but it cannot force anyone to take the stand. Neither can it judge those who testify before it but it can recommend they be prosecuted in its final report.

In January commission members had already said they would be recommending a special court be set up to try those guilty of war crimes and human rights abuses during the conflict.

Last weekend Prince Johnson, a former warlord turned senator, warned again that he would resist any attempt to prosecute him.

"I am saying again that any attempt to arrest me, there will be trouble," he told journalists.

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 the RUF rebels during the civil war there.

Maxim News Network

Tuesday, 16 June 2009

<http://www.maximsnews.com/news20090616broadcasttuesday10906160101.htm>

LIBERIA STILL REMAINS A FRAGILE STATE

The UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Alain Le Roy is in Liberia, where he has been having meetings with top officials of the UN Mission in Liberia, UNMIL. Le Roy is expected to hold discussions with Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf tomorrow.

Meanwhile, in a report on Liberia that is available as a document today, the Secretary-General says that Liberia still remains a fragile state though the country has made commendable progress since the end of fourteen years of conflict. He is therefore calling on all international partners to continue with their valuable assistance and support so the country could further consolidate the peace and establish the conditions for lasting stability.

The Secretary-General is also recommending that the current troop strength of the UN Mission in Liberia, UNMIL, of 10,231 personnel should be reduced to 8,202 by May next year and be maintained through to the elections scheduled for 2011. This will include UNMIL military guard force of 250 troops that will continue to provide security at the Special Court for Sierra Leone until the completion of the Court's work.

The report further states that the final withdrawal of UNMIL after the 2011 elections should be planned after a further technical assessment and should involve the Government, the United Nations, and other partners, including member states of the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 15 June 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

International Clips on West Africa

Zainab Bangura Addresses UN Security Council Meeting

Freetown, Jun 15, 2009 (Concord Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Sierra Leone's minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation, Zainab Hawa Bangura has told a New York meeting of United Nations Security Council that Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma has always ruled out failure as an option. She thanked the current chair of the country configuration, Ambassador John MacNee of the Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations and his predecessor, Ambassador Frank Majoor of The Netherlands for the consistent manner in which they have carried out their work. The minister also praised the Executive Resident Representative of the Secretary General and the office of the UN in Sierra Leone for their tireless effort in helping to bring all political parties together for a peaceful co-existence that will impact on the good and prosperity of the country.

SLAJ Blacklists Judiciary

Freetown, Jun 15, 2009 (Concord Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Members of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists Saturday unanimously agreed to declare a one-week news blackout on the judiciary effective Monday 15 June 2009. The decision was reached at an emergency general meeting convened in Freetown following its expression of dismay over the Supreme Court's failure to deliver judgment in a case seeking a repeal of Part 5 of the Public Order Act of 1965 which criminalizes libel. That, according to the association, was a violation of the country's constitution by the highest court in the land. It argued that the failure by the Supreme Court therefore to rule in the matter up to now, after the final arguments had been made on 9 March 2009, leaves so much to be desired.

Rains threaten Ivorian cocoa mid-crop size, quality

ABIDJAN, June 15 (Reuters) - Unusually heavy rains in Ivory Coast's coastal and eastern cocoa-growing regions last week threaten the quality and size of the mid-crop while damage to roads has prevented some produce leaving plantations. Farmers and exporters said on Monday the rains had been particularly heavy in the coastal regions of Sassandra, San Pedro, Tabou, Abidjan and the eastern region of Abengourou. "It's been raining heavily for a week and there's not enough sun. It's difficult to get to the fields because the rivers have burst their banks," said Joseph Amani who farms near Abengourou. "This rains need to stop, or else it will be dangerous for the cocoa because diseases could make a come back," he said.

Local Media – Newspaper

Three Suspected Armed Robbers Lynched to Death

(New Democrat, New Vision, The Inquirer)

- Three suspected armed robbers were early Saturday morning mobbed to death in the Jamaica Road community.
- The men in their early twenties were reportedly part of a larger gang of robbers that launched an all night raid in the Jamaica Road suburb.
- It is not exactly known how the men were killed but police sources say they were gathered from three different spots in the Jamaica Road area.
- There have been conflicting accounts regarding the actual identities of the men but some community residents described the trio as notorious armed robbers who were residing in the vicinity of Jamaica Road.

Over US\$1.1M Attempted 'Fraud' Saga: CBL Deputy Executive Governor to Resign (Liberian Express, The Analyst, Daily Observer, Liberian Journal, New Vision, Heritage, New Democrat, The Inquirer, The News)

- The embattled Deputy Executive Governor of the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL), Ethel Davis says she has resolved to resign her post at the CBL.
- The Deputy CBL Governor planned resignation is in connection with an alleged attempt to defraud government of over US\$1 million.
- It followed a purported letter reportedly written by President Sirleaf directing the Executive Governor to transfer the amount into an account at Eco-bank.
- Mrs. Davis said she resolved to officially tender in her resignation this week due to immense pressure but that she was never a part of any criminal gang to defraud government of the US\$1.1 million.
- Meanwhile, the Board and Executive Governor of the Central Bank of Liberia have welcomed the planned resignation of Madam Ethel Davis.

National Reconciliation Conference Opens in Monrovia

(Liberian Express, Public Agenda, Heritage, The Analyst, The Inquirer, The News, New Vision)

- A weeklong National Reconciliation Conference aimed at affording Liberians a final opportunity to impact the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) peace building initiatives has opened in Monrovia.
- A TRC statement said the conference will discuss the issues that led the nation to conflict and is expected to begin the process of reconciliation.
- The meeting is aimed at also bringing to a closure Liberia's bitter past and establish a national consensus on the implementation of the TRC recommendations.
- Victims and perpetrators are expected to engage each other at the weeklong gathering.

10 Persons Injured in Presidential Convoy Collision

(The News, New Democrat, Heritage)

- About 10 persons including a ten year old boy were injured last Friday along the Monrovia-Gbarnga highway when a taxi cab collided with the Liberia National Police (LNP) highway patrol vehicle leading the Presidential convoy en-route to Gbarnga, Bong County.
- According to eyewitnesses, the taxi driver allegedly failed to yield to the police vehicle's emergency signals and siren.
- Following the accident, President Sirleaf arrived on the scene and instructed that the injured be taken to the Phebe Hospital for urgent medical attention.
- Meanwhile, the New Democrat newspaper reports that the President has cautioned motorists along the highway to give the right away to the Presidential motorcade to protect their lives and those riding with them.

Executive Order Number 20 Establishes Law Reform Commission

(The Analyst, Plain Truth, Liberian Express)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has issued Executive Order Number 20 establishing a Law Reform Commission headed by former Justice Minister Counselor Philip Banks.
- The issuance of the Executive Order was created because of the need for a comprehensive reform of Liberia's governance framework, as recognized in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra.
- It also follows the identification of flawed, outdated, inconsistent and underdeveloped laws as an impediment to the good governance pursuits of Government.

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

National Reconciliation Conference Opens in Monrovia

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

Three Suspected Armed Robbers Lynched to Death

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

“National Virus”, Finance Minister on Corruption

- Speaking at the induction ceremony of a local citizens' group, Finance Minister Augustine Ngafuan described corruption as a national virus eating up every sector of the country.
- According to Minister Ngafuan corruption remains what he called the common enemy and government was serious to defeat it in whatever form or manner.
- He said corruption is the legacy which dragged the current government into huge domestic and foreign debts.
- The newly inducted National Chairman of United Nimba Citizen's Council (UNICCO) Johnson Gwaikolo promised to unite all Nimba citizens both at home and in the Diaspora.

Global Week of Action Against Gun Violence begins Today

- Liberians United to Expose Hidden Weapons has announced the official start of the Global Week of Action against gun violence which is organized by the International Action Network on Small Arms.
- According to a release the activities are intended to draw attention to the human cost of gun proliferation and misuse and the need for a legally binding international instrument for the global transfer of weapons.
- This year's campaign is targeted at the need for the Liberian Government to play an active role in the forthcoming UN discussion on an arms trade treaty.

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

Police in Maryland County Charge 14 Persons with Sedition

- The Liberian National Police have charged 14 suspects with sedition following an attempt to vandalize the police station in Harper, Maryland County.
- Police authorities says the men made away with several valuables including computers, generators and other items intended for use at the prison centre.
- The police say they have arrested 4 persons that broke jail as a result of the incident and are still in search of others.

BBC Online

Tuesday, 16 June 2009

Congo's Bemba to stand ICC trial

Congolese ex-Vice-President Jean-Pierre Bemba will face five counts of war crimes, the International Criminal Court has ruled.

The charges relate to the actions of his troops in the neighbouring Central African Republic in 2002 and 2003. But his lawyers are appealing, saying the militia was not under his command once they had crossed the border.

Mr Bemba led a rebel movement during DR Congo's long civil war but became vice-president under a peace deal.

He is the most high-profile of four Congolese warlords facing trial at the ICC.

A pre-trial panel of judges "found that there is sufficient evidence to establish substantial grounds to believe that Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo is criminally responsible" for murders, rapes and pillaging, said a statement from the ICC.

He is to face trial on three counts of war crimes and two of crimes against humanity.

Fighters from his Movement for the Liberation of Congo were accused of committing atrocities when they intervened in the conflict in CAR.

At a pre-trial hearing in January, the prosecutor said Mr Bemba "wanted to traumatise and terrorise the civilian population so they would not support the rebels". "He chose rape as his main method... rapes against mothers in the presence of their children and rapes of children as their parents were forced to watch," the prosecutor said.

The BBC's East Africa correspondent Will Ross says there is no doubt that some of Mr Bemba's troops were responsible for murder, rape and pillaging.

The ICC prosecutors will try to establish a direct line of responsibility between those crimes in the Central African Republic and Mr Bemba himself.

But defence lawyer Aime Kilolo argues that Mr Bemba cannot be held responsible as they were not under his command.



Jean-Pierre Bemba's troops are accused of rape, murder and pillaging

JEAN-PIERRE BEMBA

Son of famous businessman

Former assistant to Mobutu Sese Seko

1998: Helped by Uganda to former MLC rebel group

2003: Becomes vice-president under peace deal

2006: Loses run-off election to President Joseph Kabila but gets most votes in western DR Congo

2007: Flees after clashes in Kinshasa

[Warlord trial gives victims hope](#)

[Profile: Jean-Pierre Bemba](#)

"The most important thing now to do is that for us we submit the case to the appeal and the judge is going now to decide between Mr Jean-Pierre Bemba and the former President Ange-Felix Patasse of the Central African Republic, who was really the commander of the troops," he told the BBC's Network Africa programme.

'Politically motivated'

Human rights groups will welcome the trial as an effort to help end impunity, our correspondent says.

But the ICC does have its critics who accuse it of being selective in its application of justice and wonder why all the current cases are against Africans, he says.

Mr Bemba, 46, was arrested in Belgium last May and extradited to The Hague in July.

One of his defence lawyers has suggested that the charges may be politically motivated, to remove Mr Bemba from future elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

He lost a landmark run-off election against President Joseph Kabila in 2006.

He fled the country after being charged with treason after his bodyguards clashed with the army in 2007.

Voice of America

Monday, 15 June 2009

ICC Orders War Crimes Charges Against Former Congo Vice President

By VOA News

The Hague-based International Criminal Court has ordered the Democratic Republic of Congo's former Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba to go on trial on five charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Lisa Bryant has more from Paris.

A statement from the court said that a panel of judges had found there was sufficient evidence to believe that former Congolese Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba was criminally responsible for murder, rape and pillaging.

Those atrocities took place in the Central African Republic between 2002 and 2003. Prosecutors claim Bemba sent up to 1,500 troops to CAR to retain control of a Congolese border area.

But Bemba's defense attorneys argue that the troops were not under Bemba's command. In an interview with French radio earlier this year, one of Bemba's lawyers, Nkwebe Liriss, laid the blame on former Central African Republic President Ange-Felix Patasse.

Liriss argued that prosecutors had absolutely no proof against Bemba. He said Bemba might have been in telephone contact with the troops, but that all of the orders were given by Patasse and his government. Mr. Patasse, he said, not Bemba, should be on trial in The Hague.

The son of a rich businessman, Bemba ruled over a vast area of northeastern Congo as a warlord. In 2006, he lost to Joseph Kabila in a bitterly disputed Congolese presidential election. A year later, his private militia was routed by government forces and in 2008, Bemba was arrested during a visit to Brussels.

Bemba is the most senior personality in the criminal court's custody. The court has an arrest warrant out for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir. (SIGNED)

Mail Online

Tuesday, 16 June 2009

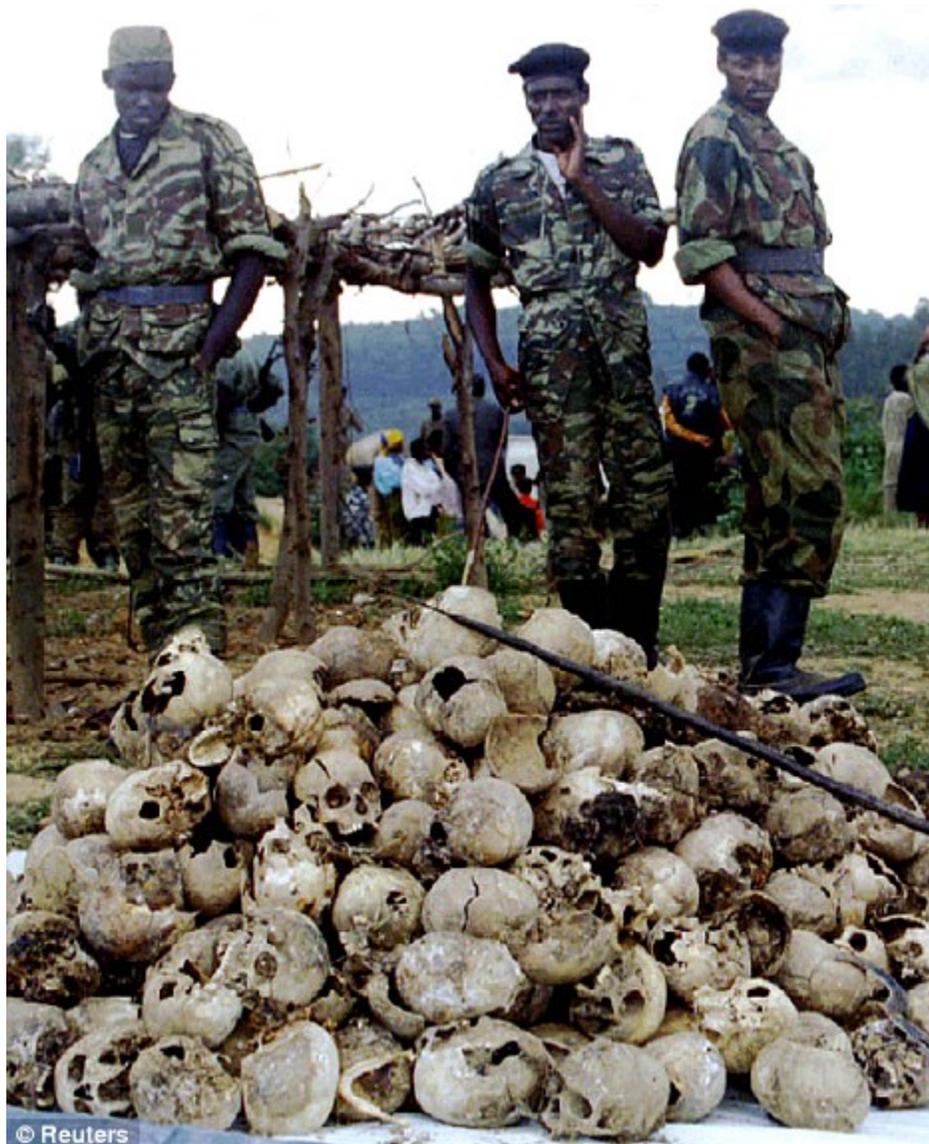
Free to walk our streets, the war criminals we cannot deport because of their human rights

By James Slack and Matthew Hickley

Hundreds of war criminals are walking the streets of Britain with impunity, a shocking report reveals today.

Around 300 people suspected of war crimes or genocide have been referred to the immigration services or police for action, said the Aegis Trust.

But glaring legal loopholes mean they cannot be deported because sending them home to face a possible death penalty would breach their human rights.



Rwanda flashback: Skulls of genocide victims

The trust, an independent group working to eliminate genocide, said the suspects cannot be prosecuted here because only British residents can be arrested and charged under the Government's war crimes legislation.

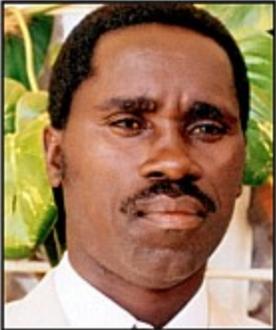
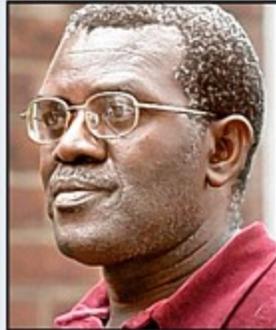
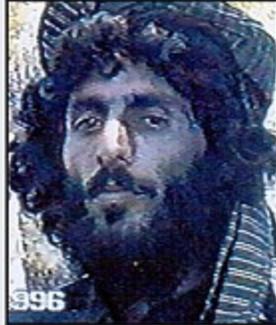
And the law only applies to crimes committed after 2001 - despite many of the worst genocides taking place before this, including in Bosnia and Rwanda.

The report's authors unearthed asylum and immigration case files relating to suspects living in the UK.

These included an alleged Zimbabwean torturer, an Iraqi torturer who worked for the Saddam Hussein regime, a member of the Sudanese militia and a Sri Lankan Tamil Tiger assassination squad driver.

Also found was a member of the Sierra Leone 'Mosquito' rebel group notorious for murder, rape, looting, burning, sexual slavery and forced amputations.

WHY ARE THESE MEN IN OUR COUNTRY?

		
<p>NAME: Colonel Tharcisse Muvunyi. ACCUSATION: Mass murder during the Rwandan genocide, including the deaths of 25 children. WHEREABOUTS: London.</p>	<p>NAME: Celestin Ugirashebuja ACCUSATION: Mass murder and distributing guns in Rwanda. WHEREABOUTS: Walton-on-the-Naze, Essex.</p>	<p>NAME: Emmanuel Nteziryayo ACCUSATION: Taking part in the murder of more than 87,000 people during the Rwandan genocide. WHEREABOUTS: Manchester.</p>
		
<p>NAME: Dr Vincent Bajinya (now known as Vincent Brown) ACCUSATION: Mass murder during Rwandan genocide. WHEREABOUTS: North London.</p>	<p>NAME: Faryadi Zardad ACCUSATION: Charged with torturing captured prisoners in Afghanistan and convicted at Old Bailey. WHEREABOUTS: A British prison.</p>	<p>NAME: Felicien Kabuga ACCUSATION: Masterminding the slaughter of nearly one million people in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. WHEREABOUTS: Unknown, but known to visit Britain.</p>

Other immigration files list child soldiers from Sierra Leone, officers in Charles Taylor's army in Liberia, a Somali warlord, a member of the Serb militia 'Arkan's Tigers' and a rebel from Angola implicated in hostage-taking.

In April, four men accused of mass murder in the Rwandan genocide won their battle to stay free in Britain.

The four are wanted to stand trial for their part in the 1994 massacre in which 800,000 people were killed in 100 days. But the High Court ruled that there was 'a real risk they would suffer a flagrant denial of justice' if returned to Rwanda.

Nick Donovan, head of research for the Aegis Trust, said: 'There are two 'impunity gaps' in UK law which prevent prosecution for international crimes.

'Those suspected of genocide, crimes against humanity and most war crimes cannot be prosecuted in the UK if they committed those acts before 2001.

'And non-residents such as students, tourists or asylumseekers without residence status can't be prosecuted even if those acts were committed after 2001.

'This is not a hypothetical issue. It's about individuals suspected of heinous crimes: individuals who this country needs to bring to justice if we do not want to remain a haven for war criminals.'

Proposals to close the loopholes have been tabled in Parliament by the Liberal Democrat Peer Lord Carlile. But ministers have only said they are prepare to debate changes.

The Aegis report came as ministers faced a separate attack over deportation.

In a report today, Parliamentary spending watchdogs warn the backlog of asylum cases is growing fast because efforts to deport foreign prisoners are swamping detention spaces.

The Public Accounts Committee said the backlog doubled to 8,700 last year.

This does not include hundreds of thousands of 'legacy cases', some of which have been stuck in the Home Office system for years.