

**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, 19 June 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.  
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact  
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Standard Times  
Friday, 19 June 2009

## Paddys Entertainment Complex host Primary Schools

**P**addys international on day of African child hosted 150 pupils marking the commemoration of the Day of the African Child. The event was sponsored by Special Court, Sierra Leone Brewery, Merani stores US Embassy and Cold Storage.

The celebration witnesses a number of activities whereby children were entertained in their own right. Children from various schools joined their counterpart in various activities ranging from Quiz competition, dancing, miming and singing competition.

Children from around the country where at the prestigious Paddys international for this year's commemoration of the day of the African Child. The day itself was very a unique a day to reflect on thousands of children killed during the Apartheid era in South Africa. Paddys international for the past years have been holding this event bringing children together in an atmosphere of peace and enjoyment.

The entertainment complex will witness another display of children's activities from around the country. The stage is now set for children in this country who will be treated to as required. This celebration focus mainly on primary school kids in the

country and that the sponsors consented that children will be given maximum support.

Meanwhile, all social club activities at the club have been banned forthwith.

This is as a result of violent activities during such gatherings which normally result in fatal accidents. Most social clubs who hold their programmes at Paddys normally end up in violent activities creating an embarrassment for the management.

This, the management said will not augur well for the club, adding that no social club will be allowed to hold a gathering at the entertainment complex. Paddys international is among the best entertainment clubs in the country. It hosts a number of activities throughout the year.

This has made the club very popular over the years and that is the more reason why this year's day of African child was been commemorated grand style. The entertainment complex will be jam-packed with children today and that every thing has been put in place for this event. Children were admonished to take their studies seriously.

They were further entertained with food and drinks and lot of gifts. The distribution of Books, pens pencils rulers and other school materials climax the programme.

UN News Centre

Friday, 19 June 2009

## **Date set for former Liberian President Charles Taylor's defence at UN-backed trial**



18 June 2009 – The United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone today announced that lawyers for the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, will begin their defence against charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity on 13 July.

Mr. Taylor's lawyers will make their opening arguments on that day in The Hague, where the Court is based, and the preparatory hearing is slated for 6 July. In 2006, the Security Council authorized the trial to be held in the Netherlands, instead of its usual venue in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, citing security reasons.

The Prosecution rested its case against Mr. Taylor in February after presenting 91 witnesses to provide testimony.

The former President has pleaded not guilty to the 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, which include pillage, slavery for forced marriage purposes, collective punishment, and the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

The charges relate to his alleged support for two rebel groups in neighbouring Sierra Leone, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and the Revolutionary United Front, during that country's civil war from 1996 to 2002.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established in January 2002 through an agreement between Sierra Leone's Government and the UN. It cannot impose a life sentence, but it has already sentenced two defendants in another case to 50 years in jail. Britain has said it would be willing to imprison Mr. Taylor if he is found guilty.

## Forward

Wednesday, 17 June 2009

<http://forward.com/articles/108004/>

# When Bad People Want To Be Jewish

**By Rebecca Dube**

Published June 17, 2009, issue of June 26, 2009

Can someone be too evil to convert?

That's one question raised by the reported conversion to Judaism of former Liberian dictator Charles Taylor, who is currently awaiting trial on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in The Hague. Taylor's wife, Victoria, told the BBC that the accused war criminal is "now a Jew. He's practicing Judaism."



**What Conversion?** Former Liberian dictator Charles Taylor, shown here as a rebel leader headed toward the capital of Monrovia in 1990, has embraced Judaism, according to his wife, Victoria.

The authenticity of Taylor's conversion is doubtful, to say the least. There is no evidence that he has been studying with a rabbi or that his conversion is anything but self-proclaimed. Victoria Taylor also told the BBC interviewer that her husband still believes in Christ's divinity, so the former warlord seems to be as unclear on the basic tenets of Judaism as he is on the principles of international human rights.

But what if Taylor sincerely wanted to become Jewish? What if the former dictator — accused of creating an army of child soldiers who went on murderous rampages — actually, genuinely wanted to convert? Would any rabbi take him on as a student? Should they?

The answer: Yes, no or maybe, depending on whom you ask. Questions of good and evil aren't always as black and white as they seem, and opinions varied widely among religious leaders contacted by the Forward.

"My first reaction is, we have enough natural-born Jewish bums, we don't have to import one from the outside," said Rabbi Mitchell Wohlberg of Beth Tfiloh Congregation in Baltimore, the largest Modern Orthodox synagogue in America. It's true that religion can change people for the better, Wohlberg said, but he added, "The Jewish community is not a recovery house."

Repentance and forgiveness are important concepts in Judaism, but occasionally a person commits acts so heinous as to disqualify him or her forever from conversion, said Rabbi Robert Levine of Congregation Rodeph Sholom, one of the largest Reform synagogues in New York City.

- "You would not permit a Hitler or a Haman or a Charles Taylor to say, 'Hey, I want to change my ways [and convert],' when they've shown themselves to be a monster," Levine said. "Judaism is an interlocking system of rituals? and ethics.... There is a small group of people whose total lack of ethics and morality would

But not everyone would close the synagogue doors to Taylor.

"The whole idea of conversion is that one is changing radically," said Rabbi Avi Shafran, director of public affairs for Agudath Israel of America, an ultra-Orthodox umbrella organization. "An intelligent *beit din* would have to see some evidence of him wanting to change his ways, but crime in and of itself is not a bar to conversion."

One person who knows firsthand about the spiritual transformation of people with evil pasts is Rabbi Michael Weisser. When he was working in Lincoln, Neb., a white supremacist named Larry Trapp began threatening and harassing him and his family. Trapp, state head of the Nebraska Ku Klux Klan, had a long history of terrorizing black, Asian and Jewish families in the area.

Weisser decided to confront Trapp. He called the KKK leader's racist hot line and left messages, until one day, he finally got Trapp on the phone and managed to strike up a conversation. Eventually, Weisser and his wife met with Trapp and inspired him to renounce racism and antisemitism. Eventually, Trapp converted to Judaism at Weisser's Reform synagogue, B'nai Jeshurun — the very synagogue that Trapp once had planned to bomb.

Anyone can change, and therefore, anyone can be a candidate for conversion, Weisser told the Forward — even someone as bad as Larry Trapp or Charles Taylor.

“There’s a spark of decency in everybody, no matter how bad they’ve been,” Weisser said. “The truth is, human nature is good, not bad.”

In Trapp’s case, Weisser said, the former KKK Grand Dragon truly repented for his many sins and expressed remorse, asked for forgiveness from those he’d wronged and tried to set things right. Trapp called and met with people he used to harass to apologize and beg their forgiveness, and he spoke publicly to high schools and other groups about how he had repudiated bigotry and hate.

When Trapp first mentioned converting to Judaism, Weisser said he was concerned that guilt was the motivation. But Trapp studied hard, reading about 50 serious books on Judaism, and showed a genuine desire to join the faith for positive reasons.

“If we believe what we say we believe [as Jews], how can you go against it?” Weisser asked. “I think when Larry died, he died a good Jew.”

For someone with an evil past, the process of *teshuva*, or atonement, should happen before conversion is considered, said Rabbi Morley Feinstein of University Synagogue, a Reform congregation in Los Angeles, who pointed to Trapp’s conversion as an example — but a very rare one.

“I’m happy to study with anyone, but that doesn’t mean I’m going to take that individual on as a candidate for Judaism,” Feinstein said.



Getty Images

**An Infamous Conversion:** According to the Talmud, Roman Emperor Nero fled Rome and converted to Judaism.

Both sides of the debate can point to precedents in the Talmud. The Roman Emperor Nero, known for his tyranny and debauchery, may be the most infamous convert: While historical sources say he committed suicide after the Roman Senate

ordered his execution, the Talmud holds that Nero fled Rome and converted to Judaism.

If Nero did it, Shafran asked, why couldn't Taylor? "The implication [in the Talmud] was that it was a good and laudable thing," Shafran said.

But Wohlberg remembered another story in the Talmud, one about King David — himself the descendant of one of Judaism's most celebrated converts, Ruth — telling a group called the Gibeonites that the Jewish people were compassionate and modest and performed acts of loving kindness. "Only he who cultivates these three characteristics is fit to join this nation," the Talmud says.

Too bad for Taylor, Wohlberg said: "I think he's out on three swings."

Of course, most rabbis don't have to worry about an international war criminal or a KKK leader showing up for conversion class. But what about everyday criminals, sinners and just-plain-bad people who might want to join the tribe? There's certainly no background check required for conversion to Judaism. While most rabbis will get a general sense of a candidate's moral and ethical grounding during the yearlong conversion process, the basic question, "Are you a good person?" is unlikely to be asked.

The "Guidelines for Rabbis Working With Prospective Gerim," created by the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 2001, is silent on evaluating the moral and ethical history of would-be Jews, said Rabbi Jeff Goldwasser of Congregation Beth Israel, a Reform synagogue in the northwest Massachusetts town of North Adams.

In his experience with converts, Goldwasser said, "I feel confident in saying that the candidates who make it all the way through the process are those with a strong understanding of Jewish beliefs and ideals and who wish to apply those standards to themselves." Still, he said, it might be a good idea for future guidelines to include something explicit about considering the character of potential converts.

Even if that happens, rabbis still will have to consult their own consciences for guidance if a Charles Taylor type knocks on their doors, seeking to join Judaism.

"Agreeing to bring someone into the covenant is not just a matter of checking off boxes," Levine said. "It's a question of, is this person really ready to stand at Sinai?"

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## UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 18 June 2009

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

### **International Clips on Liberia**

**Published: 2009-06-17**

#### **Visiting UN official happy with progress in Liberia**

MAIN The UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alain Le Roy has expressed satisfaction over the level of progress made by the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the Government of Liberia in securing peace and security. Mr. Le Roy made this statement at the close of a three-day visit to Liberia to assess the level of work done by the Mission. In a meeting with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the Under-Secretary-General said the Liberian leader recognized the valuable contribution of the Mission in sustaining peace and security. He however stressed that despite the progress made, the Liberian Government was aware of the remaining challenges in improving the security sector. Mr. Le Roy cited: the completion of training and operationalizing the new Armed Forces of Liberia; strengthening the Liberia National Police; and improving the justice sector, especially the rule of law institutions such as the Judiciary and Corrections. "UNMIL will continue to support these sectors at the highest level", Under-Secretary-General Le Roy emphasized.

### **International Clips on West Africa**

#### **New date set for Taylor's war crimes defence**

THE HAGUE, June 18, 2009 (AFP) -

The defence case of former Liberian president Charles Taylor will open before the Special Court for Sierra Leone on July 13, the court said Thursday. A court statement said that "Taylor is expected to be the first witness to take the stand" when hearings start. His defence was initially set to start on June 29, but the date was challenged by Taylor's lawyers who said they would not be ready. Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity stemming from his support of Revolutionary United Front (RUF) guerrillas in neighboring Sierra Leone's 1991-2001 civil war. The 61-year-old has been on trial in The Hague since January 2008 following his arrest in Nigeria and his handover to the tribunal. He had gone into exile in 2003 in a deal ending Liberia's civil war. About 120,000 people were killed in Sierra Leone's conflict, with rebels mutilating thousands more -- cutting off arms, legs, ears or noses. Taylor is accused of arming, training and controlling RUF rebels, blamed for many of the mutilations, and of being involved in the "blood diamonds" trade.

#### **Gender Ministry Discusses National Strategic Plan**

Concord, Jun 18, 2009 (Concord Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Ministry of social welfare gender and children's affairs recently brought stakeholders in the eastern region to discuss and make input into the validation of 2009 to 2012 draft national gender strategic plan document in Kenema. Acting deputy minister Jenneh Kandeh disclosed that with support from development partners, gender theme groups in Sierra Leone initiated the development of a national gender strategic plan. She disclosed that the process started in July, 2008 and several stakeholders' consultative meetings have been held, including a national residential retreat, to add value to the document. The minister further maintained that the draft plan has been shared among donors, development partners and parliamentarians as a way of beefing up the document. "Among them are

the first lady of Sierra Leone, Mrs. Sia Koroma, ministers of key line ministries, heads of parastatals and agencies" she said.

### **Local Media – Newspaper**

#### **Opposition Liberty Party Wants Legislature Reject Draft Budget**

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer)

- The Political Leader of the Liberty Party, Cllr. Charles Brumskine has called on the National Legislature to reject the proposed 2009/10 fiscal budget before it.
- Speaking at a new conference in Monrovia yesterday, Cllr. Brumskine argued that the the proposed budget fails to reflect what he calls critical policy thrusts and priorities of Liberians.
- He said budget is a primary tool for achieving national policies and strategies and must reflect the outlook of every Liberian.
- The Liberty Party Political Leader informed the Legislature that much of the funds allocated in the current budget were not used in the interest of the people.

#### **UNDP Hands Over 4 Vehicles to BIN**

(The News, The Informer)

- The German Government through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has donated four vehicles to the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN).
- Speaking at the turning over ceremony, the Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist at the UNDP, Teakon Williams said the gesture was intended to beef up the capacity of the immigration operations at some border points of the country that are very strategic.
- For his part, the Charge d’Affairs at the German Embassy Host Psifer called on the BIN to use the vehicles for the intended purpose.
- The funds for the vehicles which cost US\$135,336.68 was provided by the Government of Germany.

#### **U.N. Under-Secretary Pledges More Support for Liberia**

(The Informer, The Inquirer, The Monitor)

- The U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Mr. Alain Le Roy, says his sector would continue to advocate for additional support for Liberia’s recovery saying it is critical to peace and stability in the sub-region.
- Mr. Le Roy said the UN was keen on reforms within Liberia’s Security Sector especially the police.
- He described as great the cooperation between government and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and that it has provided a smooth avenue to line up strategies for implementation.
- In response, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf described as vital; UNMIL’s operations in stabilizing Liberia saying said Liberia would not have achieved the progress the country has experienced without the support of the United Nations.
- The President reiterated the need for more training for the Liberian National Police to enable the Force provide the needed security for the people

#### **Acting Immigration Boss Thrown Out of Budget Debate**

(The News, Heritage)

- The joint Legislative budget committee on Wednesday threw Acting Immigration Commissioner Archie Williams out of the 2009/10 budget debate.
- Commissioner Williams had gone to defend the draft budget of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization.
- The Committee said Mr. Williams who is Deputy Immigration Commissioner for Administration is not qualified to address it as he has not been confirmed by the Legislature for the position which he serves.
- Mr. Williams, who was appointed since 2006, said he does not know whether his position requires confirmation.

- Meanwhile, the budget committee has rescheduled the budget debate of the Justice Ministry due to the failure of police authorities to appear.

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

### **Opposition Liberty Party wants Legislature Reject Draft Budget**

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

#### **14 Young People Sent to Court for Harper Violence**

- Police in Maryland County have sent 14 people to court in connection with last Thursday's violent demonstration.
- The men were charged with sedition, rioting and criminal mischief following their damaged of the Harper Prison Facility.
- The demonstrators reportedly moved on the prison facility in an attempt to get Edward Wilson, a man they believed was linked to the death of another man in the county.
- Police authorities said the UNMIL Pakistani contingent took Mr. Wilson into protective custody following the mob action.
- Meanwhile, the curfew imposed on Harper following the violent demonstration is still in force and it runs from 6:00PM to 8:00AM.

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

#### **UN Under-Secretary Pledges More Support for Liberia**

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

#### **Public Works Minister Admits Shortfall in Deliverables**

- Public Works Minister Samuel Kofi Woods says not all of the Ministry's deliverables were met in the 2008/2009 fiscal budget.
- According to Minister Woods the Ministry's set deliverables were unfulfilled due to the global financial crisis.
- The Public Works Minister told the legislative budget committee that the Public Works Ministry would ensure its deliverables in the draft budget are implemented.
- He identified projects earmarked by the Ministry as construction service, rural development, highway maintenance and renovation of public buildings.
- The Public Works Ministry currently tops the 2009/2010 proposed budget with an allotment of 39.9million US dollars. \*\*\*