

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



The late David Oluma, former Procurement Officer

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:

Monday, 6 July 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Eldred Collins' short route to APC

Eldred Collins was one time RUF spokesman and the fact that he was not part of the military wing, save him from being indicted by the Special Court.

In 1997, the 'sobel government' comprising soldiers and rebel which overthrew the SLPP and Tejan Kabbah, Collins was appointed Minister of Energy and Power. We nor know whether na bin unity gofment or coalition gofment or power sharing gofment.

But he later boasted that during his tenure "light bin dae fiti fatta".

Their rebel outfit was later transformed into a political party called RUF.

Den contest de 2002 election wae even den yone rebel fambul den sef nor vote for dem en de party sef fordome later.

2007 Collins was with the SLPP praying that the party win re-election so hope will be restore to his hopelessness. SLPP loss de election en hardup turn Collins paddy.

De man tayah for de pass en ask for transport everyday for go Allen Tong so for gee himsef moral e say e dae revive RUF. Collins dae look for short cut for go APC since all man know say e bin dae SLPP.

Just recently, he said he was not a member of the SLPP but just an observer.

Ow e yone observer go vote for Solomon Berewa as Presidential candidate en for de SLPP candidate wusai e vote for Parliament?

Ow observer again go vote for SLPP pan de local council election?

Who dat bin appoint am as observer en which observer mission e bin dae represent?

Ow e yone observer even after election bin dae still go na SLPP party office? For observe ow de office dae run

Na bin just SLPP observer or national election observer?

If na bin national observer, why e nor bin dae go na APC office or PMDC office?

According to him, RUF has no source of funding and it is the people of Sierra Leone who are going to provide the funds. People's Power Indeed. Dis nor to revolution tem oh

Make Collins waka na tret now en tell anybody but RUF party if nor to curse den go troway pan am.

E nor go tae again we go yeri say RUF don ready for support APC for 2012 election even wae e dae far fors.. En na dis Collins dae look for make e go chap money. From Ernest Koroma of course!

Associated Press

Monday, 6 July 2009

Prosecutors label Taylor witness list excessive

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Prosecutors at a U.N.-backed court for Sierra Leone say the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor could take up to four more years if his lawyers call all their witnesses.

Taylor is due to begin his defense case next week answering 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone.

Prosecution trial lawyer Brenda Hollis said at a hearing Monday that Taylor's lawyers have lined up an "excessive" list of 256 potential witnesses to testify.

The defense lawyers are not expected to call all the witnesses to testify.

His lead attorney Courtenay Griffiths said prosecutors listed some 200 witnesses and called 91.

Griffiths told judges he has "no intention of being here another four years."

Reuters

Monday, 6 July 2009

Charles Taylor defence trial set to start July 13



AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - The defence phase of the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor on war crimes charges will start on July 13, judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone ruled Monday.

Following the opening statement Taylor will take the stand as the first defence witness, which is expected to be either that afternoon or the following morning.

Taylor, 61, has pleaded not guilty to 11 counts involving murder, rape, conscripting child soldiers and sexual slavery during the intertwined wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, in which more than 250,000 people were killed.

Defence lawyers have said Taylor should be acquitted because there was no evidence he planned or instigated atrocities in Sierra Leone, but judges rejected that last month.

Prosecutors say he directed the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in a campaign of terror against civilians.

The prosecution closed its case in February.

Taylor has been on trial in The Hague since June 2007 at facilities provided by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Prosecutors say he sought to control Sierra Leone's diamond mines and destabilise its government to boost his regional influence.

(Reporting by Svebor Kranjc, writing by Harro ten Wolde; Editing by Jon Boyle)

The New Vision (Uganda)

Friday, 3 July 2009

Justice Ssebutinde gets Edinburgh PhD



Justice Ssebutinde

By Josephine Maseruka

THE University of Edinburgh, Scotland, has awarded Ugandan judge Julia Ssebutinde an Honorary Doctorate of Laws degree in recognition of her judicial service.

The function, held at McEwan Hall at the university on Tuesday, coincided with the centenary of women studying law at Edinburgh. Ssebutinde was a student at the university 19 years ago.

In her acceptance speech, Ssebutinde, who is on the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone, said: "I am privileged to be serving as an international judge on the war crimes court in Sierra Leone. It is an opportunity to contribute to the end of impunity on our continent and bringing justice to millions of innocent victims of the heinous crimes against humanity of our time."

Commenting on past and present conflicts in Sudan, the DR Congo, Central African Republic, Rwanda and Uganda among others, Ssebutinde observed that the majority of the conflict victims were women and children.

"In this line of work, as I listen to horrific testimonies, I feel the pain of a mother whose teenage daughter was abducted and turned into a sex slave."

She added: "I feel the shame of a sixty-year-old housewife and mother who is gang-raped and has to publicly relieve her ordeal as she testifies. The more I hear, the more I am convinced that I am in the right job at the right moment."

Ssebutinde dedicated her prestigious award "to the beautiful women in my life", namely, her late mother Ida, her daughters Annabel and Grace, her sister Christine, "who shares my every joy and sorrow."

She also said she was dedicating the award to "the men in my life, my Father who never ceases to pray for my success and well being, and to my husband, John who has made untold sacrifices in letting me fly, and to my many friends who came from Africa to share in my joy."

As a judge of the United Nations Special Court in Sierra Leone, Ssebutinde presided over the trial of the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Before taking up a post on the international court, she presided over judicial commissions that investigated corruption in the Police and the Uganda Revenue Authority.

International Criminal Court

Friday, 3 July 2009

Joint Declaration of the Registrars following their ‘Round Table on the Administration of Justice’



Left to right: Herman von Hebel, Silvana Arbia, Binta Mansaray, Adama Dieng and John Hocking

Joint Declaration of the Registrars following their ‘Round Table on the Administration of Justice’ in Venice, 2-3 July 2009

The Registrars of the International Criminal Court, Ms Silvana Arbia, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, Mr John Hocking, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Mr Adama Dieng, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Ms Binta Mansaray (Acting Registrar) and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, Mr Herman von Hebel (Acting Registrar) held a round table on the administration of justice from 2 to 3 July 2009, in Venice, Italy.

The Registrars provided an update on the progress made by their respective institutions. Bearing in mind the Registrar’s role as principal administrative officer of the court, the meeting concentrated on the securing of adequate funding and the efficient use of resources. In this respect, comprehensive governance arrangements, effective decision-making and a sound budgeting process were identified as primary areas to address.

The Registrars stressed the importance of retaining qualified and committed staff, a particular challenge for the tribunals/courts nearing completion. They agreed to further develop their cooperation with regard to mobility of staff between their institutions.

With respect to co-operation with states on matters such as enforcement of sentences, arrangements following acquittal/interim release and the protection of witnesses, the Registrars also agreed to explore the possibility of common strategies.

The meeting also discussed challenges stemming from the closure of the courts/tribunals and the transition to residual mechanisms.

The significance of the enduring legacy of the international/internationalized courts/tribunals was emphasised by all Registrars. They underlined the benefit of a co-ordinated approach to external communications, public information and outreach to highlight the value of international criminal justice in the wider context.

Jurist

Friday, 3 July 2009

Liberia truth commission urges war crimes prosecutions in special court

Bhargav Katikaneni

[JURIST] Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) [official website] urged Thursday that several one-time military and political leaders be prosecuted in a special Liberian court for war crimes. Those named include ex-president Charles Taylor [BBC profile; JURIST news archive], now on trial at The Hague, and Prince Y. Johnson [BBC profile], a senator elected in 2005.

The commission made the recommendation in a new report [text; PDF] detailing atrocities committed during the country's two recent civil wars. The commission called for the Liberian government to set up an "Extraordinary Criminal Tribunal for Liberia" and prosecute all those persons listed as war criminals by the TRC. Prince Johnson has said [AP report] that an amnesty law passed in 2005 forbids the government from prosecuting him for crimes committed during the civil wars.

The TRC also said that those recommended for prosecution be barred from holding elected office for 30 years. Initially, the report had included the name of current Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf [BBC profile] before quickly backtracking [VOA Report] and removing her name from the report.

The TRC held its first public hearings [JURIST report] in January and indicated then [JURIST report] that it would be recommending the creation of a war crimes court. Taylor, the commission's top target, is currently being prosecuted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCL) [official website] but he may be released [JURIST report] due to a lack of funds to continue the proceedings.

The Informer (Liberia)

Friday, 3 July 2009

Liberia: TRC Throws Bomb - Former Rebel Leaders, Others for Prosecution

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Liberia has finally concluded public hearings and submitted a report of its works with recommendations.

Addressing journalists in its final conference, TRC Chairman Cllr. Jerome Verdier said the report is made against the background of rising expectations, fears, and anxiety.

Cllr. Verdier pointed out that the vast majority of the Liberian people who are victims or survivals of massive wave of atrocities induced by the conflict, expect that all of the recommendations contained in the report will be implemented and reparations in the forms of compensation, policy and institutional reforms, specialized services, restitution or financial relief, will address all the social and economic cultural, civic and political rights issues, ensure accountability, impunity and foster national healing and reconciliation.

The TRC Chairman said the few Liberians who commended armed forces, financed, resourced and provided political and ideological guidance to several warring factions; he said the commission fear alienation, prosecutions and other forms of public sanctions which may undermine Liberia's current socio-economic and political stature during the conflict period.

Cllr. Verdier noted that the outcome of the report is the product of deliberation planting and engagement with all segments of the Liberian society centering on all 15 counties of Liberia and the Diaspora.

He said capturing over 22,000 written statements, several dozens of personal interviews and over 500 hundred live public testimonies of witnesses, including actors, perpetrators, and direct victims.

The Commission's Chairman stated that a national regional consultation with county stakeholders and a national conference on reconciliation and the way forward provided the Commission a national perspective of the conflict, its causes, trends, impacts and the vision and aspirations of the people of Liberia for better future.

He told a news conference that the Commission incorporated desk research, media publications and human rights reports of very prominent international and local human rights institutions into a work so guided and informed, the commission is well poised to make this report and draw the conclusions making the recommendations contained in this report which in four volume documents the comprehensive works of the commission.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has recommended that those associated with former warring factions, their leaders, political decision makers, financiers, organizers, commanders, foot soldiers shall be subject to public sanction in one form or another.

He said among those who are recommended to be barred from holding public office include President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former Pro tempore of the Liberian Senate, Isaac Nyenebo , Former Transport Minister Jackson E. Doe, Liberia Produce Marketing (LPMC) Managing Director, Nyan Mentan, Former Police Director, Paul Mulbah and Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Kabineh Ja'neh among others.

Nimba County Senator Prince Johnson was placed in the category of notorious perpetrators thus recommending for prosecution for gross human rights violations and war crimes.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 03 July 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberia commission recommends warlord prosecution

Source: AP Online Regional - Africa Date: July 02, 2009

MONROVIA, Liberia_Liberia's truth and reconciliation commission recommended Thursday that ex-President Charles Taylor and seven other former warlords be prosecuted for crimes against humanity for their alleged roles in the West African country's civil war. The commission now will submit its recommendations to the country's legislature for consideration. It is not clear when it would start dealing with recommendations contained in the report. Liberia's back-to-back wars, which lasted from 1989 to 2003, sparked vicious factional fighting that killed an estimated 250,000 and displaced millions. Taylor, who launched the 1989 invasion, is on trial at The Hague, accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity in neighboring Sierra Leone. The Liberian commission recommended that he and seven other former warlords be prosecuted for offenses including "human rights violations, violations of international humanitarian law, international human rights laws, war crimes, egregious domestic economic crimes," the report said. Among those recommended for prosecution was Prince Johnson, a former rebel leader who won a landslide victory in the 2005 postwar election and is now a sitting senator.

Student finds determination to succeed

Source: McClatchy-Tribune Information Services Date: July 03, 2009

Jul. 3--Bernardine Okyne has come to Coastal Georgia all the way from war-torn Liberia thanks to her lifelong dreams and her steadfast determination. She is now a student at the Brunswick Job Corps, and while it may seem like she's a long way from home, she has made Brunswick her home and the people at Job Corps her second family. "They make you feel at home," she said, "They show you love and care and support." Okyne, 23, was born in Liberia, but fled to Ghana with her family when she was 6 years old to escape the Liberian Civil War. She now carries herself with the kind of confidence and strength of someone born to succeed. "Whatever happens in life happens for a reason. Never regret," Okyne said. She wants to be a neurosurgeon, and she has a firm path planned to take her there. Her dream of being a doctor developed naturally for her as a child growing up in Africa. "I'd see people in Africa, and if they had a brain tumor I would think, 'I wish I was a doctor so I could help them,'" she said. "I want to save lives and prevent suffering."

International Clips on West Africa

Sekou Conneh Is Treated As A Guinean

Jul 03, 2009 (All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Reacting to public outcries relative to the reticence of the Liberian Government on the detention of Sekou Conneh in Guinea, former leader of

one of the warring factions in Liberia, Information Minister Dr. Laurence Bropleh has set the record straight, saying that the detained Conneh is being treated as Guinean national and not a Liberian citizen. Saying that the Government of Liberia was concerned about his condition, he indicated that they (government) cannot do much because the former warlord is prominent citizen of Guinea. Apart from saying that he is a Guinean national, the Information Minister in the same vein noted that the Liberian government has not received any formal communication from the military government of Guinea, neither Ambassador E. Sumo Jones who follows the activities of all Liberians in that country.

Local Media – Newspaper

TRC Recommends President Sirleaf, Others Be Barred From Public Office for 30 Years

(Daily Observer, Liberian Express, Heritage, The News, The Inquirer, The Informer, New Vision, New Democrat, The Analyst, National Chronicle, The Independent, The Parrot)

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has finally released the listing of people recommended for prosecution and public sanction.
- Those recommended for prosecution include former President Charles Taylor of the defunct National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) Prince Johnson of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) and Alhaji Kromah of United Liberation Movement for Liberia (ULIMO) K.
- Others are George Boley of Liberia Peace Council (LPC), Thomas Yaya Nimely of Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), and Sekou Damante Konneh of Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).
- The TRC also recommended that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Senator Isaac Nyenabo, Justice Kabineh Ja'neh, Toga McIntosh Gayewea and Joe Gbala among others to be barred from holding public office for 30 years.
- The Truth Commission named Lewis Brown, Oscar Cooper, Coochoo Dennis, Cora Peabody, Emmanuel Shaw and Edwin Snowe as those who committed economic crimes.
- Former Maritime Commissioner under Taylor, Mr. Benoni Urey, Charles Taylor, Lonestar Communications, Firestone Corporation are also among people and institutions accused of committing economic crimes.
- Under its further investigation column, the TRC wants Daniel Chea, Peter Coleman, Cyril Allen, Siaka Sherif and others to be further investigated.

Senate Finally Passes “Controversial” Population Threshold Bill

(Daily Observer, The Informer, New Vision, The Parrot, The News, The Analyst, Heritage)

- The Senate has finally passed into law a compromise version of the controversial population threshold bill
- The Senate passed the bill at 40,000 provided no County has less than two representations in the House of Representatives.
- The passage of the threshold bill came as a result of over five hours of closed doors discussions by the Senate.
- A conference committee would now be set up to harmonize the two versions of the threshold bill passed by the both Houses.
- The House of Representative earlier passed the bill at 40,000 without a condition.

US Funds Renovation of Harper City Hall

(The Informer)

- Maryland County authorities have turned over the Harper City Hall to the Liberia Community Infrastructure Program (LCIP) for rehabilitation and construction works.
- The renovation which is expected to last for four months has already been sub-contracted to GILGAL, a local construction firm, to implement the rehabilitation and construction of the hall.
- During programs marking the turn over of the hall, LCIP's representative, Heather Robertson said LCIP has rehabilitated nine administrative buildings in the country, and the project in Harper will raise the number to 10.
- She said administrative buildings in five other counties have been worked on by the United Nations.

- The renovation of the Harper City Hall is being done with funding from the United States Government.

New Transport Fares Released -Violators To Face The Law

(Heritage, The Informer)

- After months of confrontation between commuters and commercial vehicle drivers, the Government of Liberia has finally released new transport fares for Monrovia and its environs.
- Announcing the new transport fares at the joint news conference hosted by the Ministries of Commerce and Transport, Commerce, Minister Miata Beysolow said the new fare structure is due to the increase in the price of petroleum products especially gasoline.
- A gallon of gasoline is now being sold at a retail price of 230 Liberian dollars.
- In the new fare structure, from Central Monrovia to Paynesville Red-light is 45 Liberian dollars in taxi cab while from Monrovia to Oldroad is now 30 dollars.
- Acting Transport Minister Julius Caesar said the decision was taken in consultation with the Ministry of Commerce and Transport Unions.
- He said inspectors would be deployed to monitor adherence and warned, serious measures await violators.

Local Media – Star Radio (*culled from website today at 09:00 am*)

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

Senate Finally Passes “Controversial” Population Threshold Bill

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

Finance Minister on Liberia’s Fiscal Status

- Finance Minister Augustine Ngafuan says Liberia is in a tight financial situation and that the country’s policy of cash based balanced budget was limiting expectations for spending in key sectors.
- According to the Finance Minister, Liberia has revised expectations in terms of Gross Domestic Products and export growth.
- Minister Ngafuan said while other countries have the abilities to borrow, Liberia is constrained to cut back during this period of the global economic slowdown.
- Minister Ngafuan said this was hindering development and key poverty reduction deliverables.

Governance Holds Retreat on Draft National Policy on Decentralization

- The Governance Commission today held a one day decentralization retreat for the House and Senate Committees on Governance.
- According to a statement, the retreat will explain key issues within the draft National Policy on Decentralization and local Governance.
- The statement said awareness on the draft decentralization policy will build consensus on the way forward.
- The policy came out of nearly three-year of nationwide consultations by the Governance Commission, key Government Ministries and Partners.
- The passage into law of the National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance will eventually lead to a constitutional referendum in 2010.

Former President Charles Taylor to Begin Testifying July 13

- Former President Charles Taylor’s lead defense lawyer says his client’s testimony would be an integral part of the reconciliation process in Liberia.
- Mr. Courtney Griffiths said if the Liberian government is committed to promoting truth and reconciliation, it should pay attention to Taylor’s testimony.
- Former President Taylor is to give his account of the war in Sierra Leone on July 13.
- Though the testimony would focus on the Sierra Leone crisis, Mr. Griffiths also encouraged all Liberians to pay attention to what Taylor has to say.
- The Former Liberian President is being tried on eleven count criminal charges for allegedly supporting rebel forces in Sierra Leone from 1996 to 2002.

Voice of America

Monday, 6 July 2009

AU Ignores Bashir ICC Arrest Warrants, Human Rights Groups Outraged

By Peter Heinlein
Addis Ababa



Omar al-Bashir (file photo)

Human rights groups are expressing outrage at the African Union decision to ignore the International Criminal Court arrest warrant for Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir. Several African countries are distancing themselves from the AU action.

A joint declaration issued at the end of an African Union summit in Libya said member states would not cooperate in the arrest and surrender of Sudan's president on war crimes charges. Summit host, Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi was quoted as saying the ICC represents a "new world terrorism".

The declaration puts the 30 AU states of the International Criminal Court at odds with the body's founding principles. It is far less, however, than what Mr. Gadhafi wanted. His earlier attempt to have all African members states withdraw from the ICC in protest was rejected last month.

Nonetheless, it is a symbol of collective African frustration at what AU sees as the refusal of the international community to hear its views on a matter involving Africa. The heads of state at the AU's last summit had asked the U.N. Security Council to use its power to defer the Bashir indictment for one year. The request was denied.

AU Commission Chairman Jean Ping told reporters that the declaration of non-cooperation shows the world that "if you don't listen to Africa, and take our proposals into account, we are going to act unilaterally."

The decision drew dismay from the human rights community.

Richard Dicker, Director of International Justice Programs for Human Rights Watch in New York, calls it a "manipulated consensus".

"It's necessary to put this decision into context," said Richard Dicker. "And, that context involved unprecedented bullying, arm twisting and strong arm tactics by the host state, directed against first the foreign ministers and then the heads of state themselves. This is a product of the Libyan and, I would say, Sudanese effort to railroad a so-called 'consensus'. The evidence of that is manifold."

Several African members of the International Criminal Court say they are uncomfortable with the AU declaration. A statement issued by Botswana's Foreign Minister, Phandu Skelemani, says his country does not agree with the declaration and wishes to reaffirm its position that it has treaty obligations to cooperate with the ICC in Mr. Bashir's arrest.

Sudan's rival, Chad, has also indicated it would not honor the decision.

Human Rights Watch's Richard Dicker says he is especially disappointed to see South Africa joining the consensus, after the government had made a point of saying that Mr. Bashir would not be welcome at the recent inauguration of President Jacob Zuma.

"It's a profound disappointment to see no sign of leadership coming from President Jacob Zuma," he said. "South Africa had played a strong leading role in enabling ICC state parties to organize themselves and stand up for their obligations to the court. President Zuma's silence certainly contradicts that and seems to be an abdication of the leadership role that South Africa could be providing the continent."

A Sudanese government spokesman was quoted Sunday as saying that Mr. Bashir is free to travel anywhere in Africa, even in ICC member states.

But ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo expressed confidence that the Sudanese leader would eventually be brought to justice. Speaking to al-Jazeera television, Ocampo said the destiny of Omar al-Bashir is to face charges - whether it is in two years or 20 years.

The Guardian

Monday, 6 July 2009

War crime suspects may see UK immunity loophole closed

Article history

There has been a huge increase in action against suspected war criminals by the UK authorities, the Guardian has learned, as anti-genocide campaigners await an announcement on Tuesday on whether the government will act to end immunity for genocide suspects.

In the last six months, there has been a five-fold increase in cases screened for possible war crimes by the Border and Immigration Agency. Of the 1,006 cases, immigration action was recommended in 121 cases, with a further eight suspects referred to the police.

The news comes days after a report by the Aegis Trust anti-genocide group revealed that 18 suspected war criminals from countries including Sri Lanka, Iraq and Sierra Leone were living with impunity in the UK.

The individuals, most of whom have not been subject to any legal proceedings, include a Janjaweed militia member, accused of involvement in civilian attacks in the Darfur region of Sudan, and Chucky Taylor, son of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who is on trial for war crimes at a UN tribunal in The Hague.

"This jump in activity by the war crimes team is to be welcomed," said Nick Donovan, head of campaigns at the Aegis Trust. "But these figures also highlight the need to close legal loopholes which prevent the prosecution of war criminals here."

Campaigners argue that gaps in the law mean people suspected of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes cannot be prosecuted in the UK for acts which took place before 2001.

In addition, the requirement of "residence" for war crimes means that asylum seekers and other suspects who do not meet the legal definition of residence cannot be prosecuted.

Sally Ireland, of human rights group Justice, said: "People suspected of some of the worst crimes in history – including mass murder – are able to visit the UK and even live freely in our communities."

"The suspects are in limbo," said David Brown of the Aegis Trust. "The government has refused them asylum because they are suspected of war crimes or crimes against humanity and they don't qualify for refugee status as a result. But they also can't be removed because of the risk of torture or that they won't get a fair trial."

The House of Lords has proposed amendments to the coroners and justice bill to close the loopholes. The government's response is expected tomorrow.

"There is a real desire to deal with these genocide suspects," Brown said. "They are a headache for the government."

Amnesty International

Thursday, 2 July 2009

Amnesty: "Israelis and Palestinians committed war crimes"

By Hermione Gee



Gaza City, Palestinian Territory

Palestinians and Israelis are both guilty of war crimes, says the first comprehensive report on the 22-day Gaza conflict earlier this year.

9 Israelis and some 1,400 Palestinians – including around 300 children - were killed during the conflict.

The Amnesty International report is based on evidence gathered during a field mission to Gaza and Southern Israel during and after the conflict.

Donatella Rovera headed the research mission and authored the report.

“On the side of the Palestinian armed groups, the war crime is the indiscriminate attacks against Israeli population centres. The rocket attacks -- all of those attacks are unlawful because they are unguided projectiles and therefore indiscriminate.”

Battlefield weapons

According to the report, Israel’s war crimes consisted of using weapons meant for the battlefield – including white phosphorous mortars - in highly populated residential areas. But Israeli forces also used high precision weapons that can see their targets in detail, Rovera says.

“It is quite astonishing how many civilians – people who were very obviously civilians -- were killed in such attacks. Those are attacks carried out with hellfire missiles by helicopters, unmanned drones, tank strikes, in situations where there was no military confrontation between the Israeli army and Palestinian armed groups. These were people who were in their homes, sitting in the yard, children playing on the roof, women hanging the laundry and so on.”

'Unreliable'

Yigal Palmor is a spokesperson for the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He dismissed Amnesty's findings, saying the methodology of the field mission was unreliable.

"It's not really a report, it's a Soviet style trial. You don't know who your judges are, you don't know where the witnesses come from and all evidence that contradicts the official line is discarded and ignored."

You don't know who the members of the investigative team are. You don't know anything about the witnesses. Do they work for Hamas? You don't know anything about their credibility.

And all the innumerable press reports and testimonies that contradict Amnesty's line have been completely ignored because they don't want you to have any doubts about the veracity of their official line. So this is a self-righteous report that reminds me more of a Kafka novel than a human rights work."

UN Gaza Commission

The report calls on Israel to cooperate with the ongoing United Nations Gaza Commission, headed by former South African judge Richard Goldstone. The investigation now offers the best means of establishing the truth about what happened during the Gaza conflict, Amnesty says.

Richard Goldstone, meanwhile, is well aware of the challenges facing the Commission:

"The middle east is such a fraught area. There's so many different views, infighting on all sides, which makes it very difficult. Everybody's looking at it from their particular perspective. You have to go about it and try and be as even handed and fair to all sides as possible, to take into account all relevant circumstances from whichever corner they may come. It's difficult in the sense that, I suppose, if we do a really good job, it's going to make everybody unhappy."

The Gaza Commission held public hearings in Gaza City earlier this week and heard testimony from Gazan war victims.

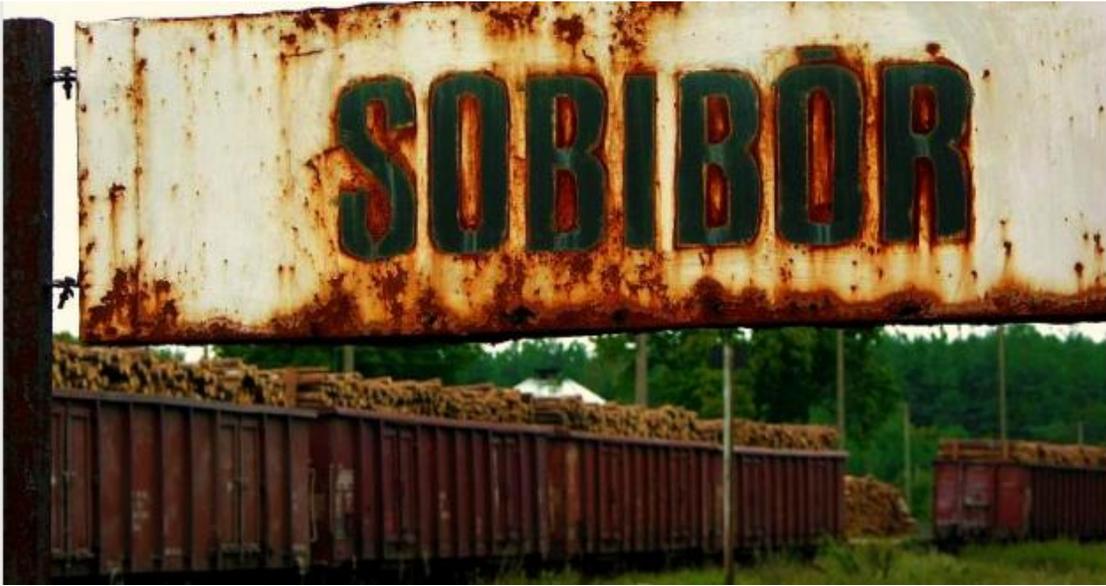
The Commission is now heading to Geneva to hear from residents of Southern Israel affected by the conflict. Israel will not allow the inquiry to gather testimony on its territory, saying that the mandate of the commission is "inherently biased".

Radio Netherlands

Friday, 3 July 2009

Demjanjuk pronounced fit to stand trial in Germany

By International Justice Desk



Munich, Germany

The trial against a Sobibor Nazi Death camp guard continues. Doctors say John Demjanjuk is fit enough to stand trial in Germany for helping to kill 29,000 Jews during World War Two.

His trial is expected to be Germany's final major Nazi war crimes court case.

The 89-year old was deported from the United States to Germany in May. He is held at Stadelheim jail, where Hitler was held after a failed 1922 coup attempt.

Demjanjuk suffers from spinal problems, kidney failure and anaemia, according to his family. Medical experts limited the court to hold no more than two 90-minute sessions a day.

State prosecutors expect charges to be raised against Demjanjuk in July. Both prosecutors in Munich and Demjanjuk's defence attorney, Guenther Maull, says the trial could begin by autumn.

When he arrived in Germany, pictures showed Demjanjuk lying on a stretcher in an ambulance wearing a baseball cap with tubes coming out of his nose.

Born in Ukraine, Demjanjuk tops the list of the International Jewish human rights organisation Simon Wiesenthal Center of its 10 most-wanted suspected war criminals. Munich prosecutors want him tried for assisting in murders at Sobibor extermination camp, in what is now Poland.

He denies any role in the Holocaust.

According to the Wiesenthal Center, Demjanjuk pushed men, women and children into gas chambers.

Demjanjuk has said he was drafted into the Soviet army in 1941, became a German prisoner of war and later became a guard in German prison camps until 1944.

He was stripped of his US citizenship after he was accused in the 1970s of being "Ivan the Terrible", a notoriously sadistic guard at the Treblinka death camp.

He was extradited to Israel in 1986 and sentenced to death in 1988, but Israel's Supreme Court overturned the conviction when new evidence showed another man was probably "Ivan".

He regained his citizenship in 1998, but the US Justice Department refilled its case against him in 1999, arguing he had worked for the Nazis as a guard at three other death camps. His citizenship was stripped from him again in 2002.

Radio Netherlands

Friday, 3 July 2009

Rwanda Tribunal finds former investigator guilty of leaking information



By Thijs Bouwknegt
Filed under:

A former Rwandan investigator for the United Nations tribunal set up to deal with the mass killings that engulfed the small African nation in 1994 was found guilty by the same court of leaking protected

information.

Léonidas Nshogoza, who worked for the defence during the trial of Jean de Dieu Kamuhanda, was given a 10-month sentence by International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which sits in Arusha, Tanzania.

Charged with contempt of the Tribunal for repeatedly meeting with and disclosing protected information about two witnesses, Mr. Nshogoza was acquitted of three other counts today.

In its judgment, the trial chamber said it took into account aggravating factors, including his repeated meetings with protected witnesses, his legal background and his position as an investigator in the Kamuhanda defense team.

But it also noted that it had considered mitigating factors, including the family situation of Mr. Nshogoza, who has three teen-aged children.

Mr. Kamuhanda is serving a life sentence after being convicted of genocide and extermination by the ICTR, which found that he had supervised the killings in his native Gikomero commune in the Kigali-Rural prefecture.

The ICTR was set up by the Security Council in the wake of the genocide, in which an estimated 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates were killed, mainly by machete, during a period of less than 100 days starting in early April 1994.

Black Star News

Friday, 3 July 2009

The Hidden Story Behind Rwanda's Tragedy

By Christopher Black



Former President Clinton--the Rwanda calamity occurred under his watch and former U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali said the U.S. was "one hundred" percent responsible

[Op-Ed: Africa Mass Killings]

Editor's Note: The Op-Ed is written by a Canadian attorney who represents a defendant before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania, on war crimes charges. The attorney offers a counter-view to the one-sided representation of the Rwanda narrative. Readers are encouraged to submit their comments and reactions.

Rwanda before 1990 was considered the Switzerland of Africa, a model of social development.

The result of the 1959 social revolution that deposed the Tutsi monarchy and aristocracy and freed the majority Hutu population from serfdom and a lifetime of humiliation was the establishment of a collective society in which both Hutus, and Tutsis as well as Twas lived together in relative harmony.

Tutsis were members of the government, its administration, present in large numbers in the education system, the judiciary and controlled most of the large private commercial companies in Rwanda.

The Rwandan army was a multiethnic army composed of both Hutus and Tutsis and it stayed a multiethnic force even when the Rwandan Army was forced by the invaders from Uganda to retreat into the Congo forest in July 1994 because it ran out of ammunition due to the Western embargo on arms and supplies.

Rwanda descended into chaos in 1990 when the self-described Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) forces launched a surprise attack on October 1, 1990 from Uganda. In fact, every one of the men and officers of that invasion force were members of the Ugandan national Army.

It was an invasion by Uganda disguised as an independent force of "liberation". Liberation from what, has never been stated.

Initially the justification put out by the RPF was that of attaining the return of Tutsi "refugees" from Uganda to Rwanda. However, that problem had been resolved by an agreement between the RPF, Uganda, Rwanda, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the OAU a few weeks earlier. The Rwandan government had agreed to the return of all those Tutsis in Uganda who wanted to return to Rwanda.

That accord required that Tutsi representatives of the refugees travel to Kigali for a meeting to determine the mechanics of that population movement, and how to accommodate all those people in a small country. They were expected at the end of September 1990. They never arrived.

Instead of civilians returning in peace, Rwanda was viciously attacked on October 1, 1990 by a force that unleashed unbridled savagery. During that invasion the RPF forces of the Ugandan Army slaughtered everyone in their path, Hutu or Tutsi. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians, the majority Hutu, were butchered. These crimes have never been accounted for.

The RPF's favorite method was the bayonet or knife with which they disembowelled men and women or to tied their hands behind their backs and smashed their skulls with hoes, the farm tool iconic of the Hutu peasantry.

After several weeks of intense fighting, the RPF forces were destroyed by the small Rwandan Army and the remnants fled, on US instructions, back into Uganda to regroup and reorganize.

The RPF still never justified this aggression and the needless slaughter of civilians in a peaceful country. Individual Tutsis had always been allowed to return to Rwanda from the early 1960s and several times the Rwandan government invited them all to return. However the Tutsi aristocracy, jealous of its lost power and which viewed the Hutus as nothing but subhuman, refused to return unless their absolute power was restored. This the people of Rwanda, even the Tutsis who remained in the country, refused.

In the 1960s and early 1970s various Tutsi groups in Uganda and elsewhere had organized terrorist raids into Rwanda in which they murdered without pity anyone they caught. These raids were repelled by Rwanda's tiny armed forces. The years that followed were a period of development and peace for Rwandans. Even though one of the smallest and poorest countries in the world it had the best road system, healthcare, and education systems in Africa. Until the late 1980s it prospered and received help from both the socialist countries of the USSR, North Korea and China and West Germany, France and Israel and others.

Some Tutsis in Uganda became involved in the civil wars there between the socialist Milton Obote and the US- and UK puppet Yoweri K. Museveni who was supported by the West to get rid of socialism in Uganda. By 1990 Tutsis composed a large section of the Ugandan Army and all the senior officers of the RPF were high officers in the Ugandan Army, the National Resistance Army. Paul Kagame himself was one of the highest-ranking officers in the intelligence services of the Ugandan army and was notorious for enjoying torturing prisoners.

Rwanda until 1990 was a one party socialist state. The ruling party the National Movement For revolutionary Development (MRND) was not considered a party as such but rather a social movement in which everyone in society took part through local elections and the mechanism of consensus much like the system in Cuba.

The fall of the Soviet Union led to pressure from the West, notably the United States and France to dismantle the one party state system and permit multiparty democracy.

The President, Juvenal Habyarimana, instead of resisting, agreed to a change in the constitution and in 1991 Rwanda became a multiparty democracy. The fact the Rwandan government did this in the middle of a war is more than remarkable. It was also an offer of peace. The RPF, since its abject failure in 1990, had changed its strategy from a frontal assault to the tactics of terrorism.

The RPF likes to refer to this phase as the guerrilla. However, it was not the guerrilla of a liberation struggle like the FLMN in Vietnam or the FARC in Colombia. It was instead a mirror image of the Contras campaign of terrorism conducted against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Its purpose was not to make revolution. Its purpose was to overthrow the 1959 revolution. And, like the contras, the RPF was supported by the United States.

This was clear from the beginning of the war.

When the RPF launched their attack, President Juvenal Habyarimana was in Washington, lured out of the way, by the State Department. The evidence that the US was aware of and supported the October surprise attack was the US

Administration's offer to Habyarimana of asylum in the United States if he surrendered power to the RPF.

Habyarimana refused and immediately flew back home. There was no condemnation of the Ugandan-RPF aggression by the United States, a matter which France raised at the United Nations, or any of its allies despite the big noise they made at the same time about the advance of Iraqi forces into Kuwait. Further, the Rwanda ambassador to the UN, then on the Security Council, filed a protest in the Security Council but the US had it taken off the agenda.

In fact the US and its allies supported the aggression against Rwanda from the beginning and US Special Forces operated with the RPF from the beginning. Recently, while former president Bill Clinton was in Toronto, he denied any involvement in Rwanda--this is one of the big lies of the century. Clinton and George W. Bush are up to their necks in the blood of the Rwandan and Congolese people.

With the arrival of multiparty democracy in 1991, the RPF took full advantage and created several front parties to take away support from the popular MRND. These parties though claiming to represent different political views in fact were, in the main front parties for the RPF.

The press was expanded and many of the new papers were financed by and acted as mouthpieces for the RPF. At the same time as these parties sprang up, criticizing the government, the RPF continued its terror campaign: planting mines on roads that killed Hutu and Tutsi alike; assassinating politicians and officials; and, blaming it, with the help of various NGOs funded by western intelligence agencies, on the government.

In 1992 a coalition government was formed with the RPF or its front parties seizing control of key ministries and appointing the prime minister. Through these agents they also controlled the civilian intelligence services that they then began to dismantle. The RPF engaged in a "talk and fight" strategy. Always agreeing to a ceasefire, pressing for more power, then launching new attacks on civilians. The most egregious was their breaking of the ceasefire and their major offensive in February 1993 in which they seized the major town of Ruhengeri in the process murdering 40,000 civilians most of them Hutu.

The Rwandan Army, even though hamstrung by the civilian ministries that were controlled by the RPF, managed to drive the RPF back. Finally in August 1993 the Arusha Accords were signed under pressure from the United States and its allies in which the RPF obtained major concessions in return to the formation of a broad-based transition government to be followed by general elections.

However, they knew they could not win such elections as the RPF was not only unpopular with the majority Hutu population it did not even enjoy the support of many internal Tutsis whose lives and businesses had been destroyed by the war they did not see a need for.

Instead of preparing for elections the RPF prepared for their final offensive. As far back as December 1993, UN reports document the massive build-up of men and weapons coming in from Uganda. The UN force that was deployed supposedly to ensure a peaceful transition; in fact, it was a cover for the US and its allies to assist in this build up.

General Roméo Dallaire, the Canadian general in charge of the UN force hid this build up from the Rwandan army and the President. The build-up was accompanied by death threats against the president.

According to an account of Habyarimana's last conversation with president Mobutu Sese Seko of what was then Zaire, just two days before he was murdered, Assistant U.S. Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen had, in October 1993, told Habyarimana, that unless he ceded all power to the RPF they were going to kill him and drag his body through the streets.

These threats were punctuated by the murder of the first Hutu president of neighboring Burundi, Melchior Ndadaye, by Tutsi officers in October 1993 in which Kagame and the RPF also had a hand; the officers who committed the murder, including Lieutenant Paul Kamana, later fled to Uganda. Ndadaye was in office a mere four months, having won the country's first free elections. In the aftermath of that murder 250,000 Hutus were massacred by the Tutsi army of Burundi and hundreds of thousands of Hutus fled to Rwanda.

The result of the 1993 offensive was that one million Hutus fled the terror of the RPF in northern Rwanda towards the capital, Kigali, so that by April 1994 over a million refugees were encamped close to the capital and hundreds thousands more in camps in the south all fleeing RPF terror.

The RPF did all it could in 1994 to paralyse the functioning of the government, to exacerbate racial tensions, and prepare for war.

Then on April 6, 1994 they launched their final surprise attack by shooting down the presidential plane returning from a meeting in Tanzania that Uganda's Museveni had arranged. In fact it is known that Museveni's half-brother general Salim Saleh was at the final meeting at which the date for the shoot down was agreed.

The missile attack killed Habyarimana, as well as Burundi's new Hutu president Cyprien Ntuyamire, and Rwanda's military chief of staff, and others on board. This was the first massacre of 1994 and it was a massacre of Hutus by the RPF.

The RPF then immediately launched attacks across Kigali and the north of the country. In the sector of Kigali known as Remera they killed everyone on the night of the 6th and the 7th, wiped out the Gendarme camp there, wiped out the military police camp at Kami and launched a major attack against Camp Kanombe, Camp Kigali and the main gendarme camp at Kacyriu.

The Rwandan government and army called for a ceasefire the same night and next day. The RPF rejected the call. The Rwandan government asked for more UN help to control the situation. Instead, the US arranged that the main UN force be pulled out while flying in men and supplies to the RPF using C130 Hercules aircraft.

The Rwandan Army, short of ammunition and unable to contain the RPF advances even offered an unconditional surrender on April 12th. The RPF rejected even this offer and instead shelled the Nyacyonga refugee camp where the one million Hutu refugees were located provoking their flight into the capital.

The effect of one million people flooding into a small city that itself was under bombardment cannot be described. The RPF used this flood of people to infiltrate its men behind army lines. This created panic among the Hutu population that began killing anyone they did not recognize. It was clear that the RPF was not interested in saving lives, even Tutsis, but in seizing total power and did not want to negotiate at all.

The late Dr. Alison Des Forges, the American who was considered a noted scholar on Rwanda, in her testimony in the Military II trial at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in 2006 testified that the RPF claim that they attacked to stop a "genocide" was a myth; just propaganda to justify their attempt to seize power by force of arms.

She also testified that the Rwandan government did not plan and execute genocide. This accords with the testimony of General Dallaire who also confirmed an earlier statement that there was no planned genocide by the government as did the deputy head of Belgian Army intelligence, Col. Vincent, who also testified at the ICTR that the idea of a genocide was a fantasy.

The fighting in Kigali was intense. UN officers—confirming what has been said by Rwandan and RPF officers who have testified—state that the RPF was launching hundreds of Katyusha rockets every hour round the clock while the Rwandan Army ran out of hand grenades in the first few days and was reduced to fighting the RPF with hand made explosives.

The vaunted RPF could not take Kigali. The siege of Kigali lasted three months and only ended when the Rwandan Army literally ran out of ammunition and ordered a general retreat into the Congo forest.

RPF officers have stated that the RPF killed up to two million Hutus in those 12 weeks in a deliberate campaign to eliminate the Hutu population. The Akagera River, the length of which was under RPF control throughout, ran red with the blood of the Hutus massacred on its banks.

The RPF claimed these were Tutsis but there were no Tutsis in that area and only the RPF had access to that area.

Robert Gersony, of USAID in a report to the UNHCR in October 1994, filed as an exhibit at the ICTR, stated that the RPF carried out a systematic and planned massacre of the Hutu population. Please see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Gersony

As the Rwandan Army, including Tutsi officers within that army and men retreated into the Congo forest, the Hutu population, in fear for their lives fled with them in their millions. In local villages, Hutu neighbours attacked Tutsis in revenge for the murder of Hutus or fearing death at their hands. Tutsis also attacked Hutus. It was total war just as the RPF wished. The RPF later pursued the Hutus through the Congo forest between 1996 to 1998 and killed hundreds of thousands and possibly millions. They were shelled, machine gunned, raped, cut to pieces with knives. Accounts of that trek are difficult to bear.

The RPF was assisted in its offensive by the United States. The UN Rwanda Emergency office in Nairobi was in fact manned by US Army officers and acted as the operational headquarters of the RPF and gave them intelligence on Rwandan Army movements and actions and directions.

Prudence Bushnell the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs telephoned the Rwandan Army chief of staff in May 1994 and told him that unless he surrendered he must know that he was fighting the United States of America and would be defeated. US Special Forces fought with the RPF. There is also evidence that Belgian forces of the UN were involved as an intercepted radio message from Kagame to his forces in the field refers to the help they had received from the Belgians.

There is also evidence that Canadian forces were also involved and Atoine Nyetera a Tutsi prince, who was in Kigali in that period testified for the defense in the Military II trial and stated that not only were there no massacres committed against Tutsis by the Rwandan Army but that it was the RPF that began the massacres after they took Kigali and began killing Hutus.

Nyetera testified that despite the claim by the RPF of being a Tutsi liberation group, when he saw their long columns enter the capital he saw that most of them were Sudanese, Eritreans, Ethiopians, Tanzanians and others speaking Swahili or Sudanese languages, in other words, mercenaries.

Several RPF officers have testified at the ICTR and stated that they fled the Kagame regime as they had been promised that they fought for liberation of the Tutsis. However, when they wanted to take over the streets of Kigali to stop reprisals against Tutsis by Hutu civilians the junior officers were forbidden to do so, putting the lie to Kagame's claim that he attacked to save Tutsis.

These officers testified that Kagame wanted deaths to justify his war. The RPF could have controlled large parts of Kigali as they had at least 15,000 men in or near the capital opposed to 5,000 Rwandan Army forces. Instead Kagame used his men to ethnically cleanse the rest of the country of the Hutu population.

The Rwanda War was a total war. All means were used to destroy that country and the Hutu people. The ultimate objective, the resources of the Congo. The US agreed to support the RPF in return for the RPF acting as a US proxy force to invade the Congo and seize its resources.

The US now has several military bases in Rwanda and the country is nothing more than a US and UK colony run by thugs who keep control of the majority of the people by intimidation, murder and disinformation.

None of this could have happened if those in the UN such as Kofi Anan, then in charge of the Department of peacekeeping operations, had done his job. None of this could have happened without the connivance of the NATO countries and Uganda, from where the invasion was launched.

Ultimately, the prime responsibility rests with the United States of America and in particular the regimes of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush and now President Barack Obama. As Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then UN Secretary General, stated to Canadian historian Robin Philpot in 2004: "The United States is one hundred percent responsible for what happened in Rwanda."

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