

**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

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Charles Taylor Denies Supporting Plans To Attack Sierra Leone While In Libya

By Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor did not support plans to attack Sierra Leone while he was in Libya, the accused former Liberian president told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today while being cross-examined by the prosecution.

Mr. Taylor was today responding to questions under cross-examination by lead prosecution counsel Ms. Brenda Hollis on his associations in Libya where rebel forces were being trained to eventually invade Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1989 and 1991 respectively. Mr. Taylor has on numerous occasions insisted that he never knew about the formation of the Sierra Leonean rebel group Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and that he never met the group's leader, Foday Sankoh, in Libya. The former president has said that he instead met the leader of Sierra Leone Pan-Africanist Movement, Ali Kabbah, who was a former University of Sierra Leone student leader.

As Mr. Taylor was being cross-examined today, he challenged prosecution claims that Mr. Kabbah and Mr. Sankoh had a schism in Libya because they both had disagreements as to what measures were needed to bring about change in Sierra Leone. Mr. Kabbah, the prosecution claimed, met with Mr. Taylor and told him he wanted to embark on ideological education in Sierra Leone as a means of bringing about change in the country, while Mr. Sankoh preferred a military revolution. The prosecution put it to Mr. Taylor that he supported Mr. Sankoh over Mr. Kabbah because he (Taylor) was also in favour of a military revolution in Sierra Leone, just like the one he was planning for Liberia. Mr. Taylor denied the prosecution's claim, insisting that he never knew Mr. Sankoh in Libya.

"You favoured Foday Sankoh over Ali Kabbah because Sankoh was in favour of a military option right?" Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor today.

"I could have only favoured one over the other if I knew the other but I did not know Sankoh," the former president responded.

"I do not know what happened behind the scenes but that is not what Ali Kabbah told me and other people," Mr. Taylor added.

Mr. Taylor challenged prosecution claims that Mr. Kabbah had told him (Taylor) that he did not want a military solution to Sierra Leone's problems but rather an "ideological training as a means of taking power" in the country.

"That is not my information," Mr. Taylor said. "The Ali Kabbah I met did tell Charles Taylor that he had contacts within the government and the military in Sierra Leone and that he only needed a spark for a military takeover in the country," he added.

Mr. Taylor also denied prosecution assertions that when he met with Muamarr Ghadaffi, he spoke to the Libyan leader about the schism in the RUF and his support for Mr. Sankoh and his military option.

"No. I never knew of any schism in the RUF. Everyone in Libya had to mind their own business. When I spoke to Ghadaffi, I did not talk about nonsense. I spoke about revolutionary ideas. I did not speak to him about Sierra Leone at all," he said.

Since Mr. Taylor started testifying as a witness in his own defense on July 14, 2009, he has consistently denied ever helping to plan the invasion of Sierra Leone while in Libya. The prosecution has alleged that Mr. Taylor has been involved in a joint criminal enterprise with RUF leader Mr. Sankoh since the late 1980s when the two men allegedly met in Libya. This alleged criminal enterprise, the prosecution says, continued with the invasion of Liberia in 1989 and Sierra Leone in 1991, and up to the end of the conflict in Sierra Leone in January 2002. Mr. Taylor has denied the charges against him.

Also in his cross-examination today, Mr. Taylor denied prosecution claims that when he travelled to Ghana in 1985 after his escape from a United States prison, the Ghanaian government arrested him because he was recruiting people for The Boys Brigade, a Ghanaian group opposed to then Ghanaian president John Jerry Rawlings.

“No, that is not correct. I was busy recruiting the Special Forces. That was a trick those boys put together to arrest me. It’s a blatant, blatant lie,” Mr. Taylor said.

After Mr. Taylor’s release from prison in Ghana, the former president said he travelled to Ivory Coast, then to Burkina Faso before travelling to Libya where his men were trained to attack Liberia in 1989.

The prosecution also questioned Mr. Taylor today about the role of the Association for the Legal Defense of Charles G. Taylor, a group established by close associates of Mr. Taylor in Liberia after his arrest by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Asked about the purpose of the group’s establishment, Mr. Taylor told the judges that “dissemination of information about the trial in Liberia is very poor and their purpose is to disseminate information about the trial to the Liberian people.”

On suggestions by Ms. Hollis that the group’s purpose is to coordinate investigations and witnesses for Mr. Taylor’s defense, Mr. Taylor said that “there is no defense office for me in Liberia other than the one in this court. That is a no no.”

When asked by Ms. Hollis whether the group had bank accounts in various countries, Mr. Taylor said “I have no idea and I doubt it very much.”

Mr. Taylor is presently being cross-examined by the prosecution, having testified in direct-examination as a witness in his own defense. He is being tried on charges that he provided support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, a group that fought an 11-years rebel war in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has denied providing support for the Sierra Leonean rebel forces or ever helping them plan operations on how to plunder the country’s diamonds and capture political power.

By John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

Prosecutor on Taylor Associates

Prosecutors in the war crimes trial of the Former Liberian President Charles Taylor have been pinning him down on the role of each of his associates who may have aided his efforts one way or the other amounting to indictable offences.

Lead prosecuting Attorney, Brenda Hollis emphasized the roles of Former National Patriotic Front Navel Commander, General Coco Dennis, Former Defence Minister, and Daniel Chea and Former Bomi County Representative Sando Johnson. Miss Hollis said these individuals together with Former National Security Adviser, John Richardson and Former Senate President Pro Temp, Grace Minor played key roles in the timber sector, the military or bank transactions. John Kollie reports for the BBC World Service Trust on the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor....

Miss Hollis put to Mr. Taylor whether he could agree that during his administration in Liberia most of the logging companies had their own private militia and that General Coco Dennis stood out as the commander of the SMI militia.

She said SMI stood for Salami Malawi Incorporated, one of ten main logging companies operating in Liberia during the time.

The United Nations accused Taylor of using Timber resources to fuel conflict in the Mano River region. Miss Hollis accused Coco Dennis of arranging lodging for Burkinabe mercenaries coming into Liberia and recruiting Liberian and Sierra Leonean fighters who she alleged invaded Coted'ivoire in 2002.

The lead prosecutor said General Dennis and his SMI militia had also fought alongside government troops in Lofa in their attempt to beat back LURD rebel forces.

Mr. Taylor denied logging company's maintained private militias.

As for Former Defense Minister Daniel Chea, Miss Hollis said he had coordinated logistics for the Revolutionary United Front and justified the use of child soldiers during the conflict in Liberia. She also said Chea was key in the formation of the Anti Terrorist Unit, accused of torture and extra-judicial killings in Liberia.

Mr Taylor responded that Chea assisted in a way in forming the ATU, and spoke with the trainers of the force regularly, but he rejected that Chea coordinated logistics for the RUF and justified the use of children to fight war.

Regarding Sando Johnson, the prosecutors said he reacted negatively to the attempt of the Catholic Church to institute an investigation into the death of the five American Catholic Nuns.

She said Johnson and John Richardson, as members of the Associates of Taylor were coordinating defence mechanisms for Taylor including, mobilizing witnesses and resources in Monrovia.

Taylor had long denied he ever had a bank account in any part of the world. Miss Hollis said Senator Minor had established a bank account for Taylor in Switzerland in 1993.

All these allegations Taylor said were false. He Senator Minor had established a bank account for him in 1997, but in was in Monrovia.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 18 November 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Prosecution Reads Statements By The International Community Condemning The Actions Of Charles Taylor's Rebel Group In Liberia

Nov 18, 2009 (CharlesTaylorTrial.org/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Prosecutors spent much of today's cross-examination of former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, reading out statements by other West African leaders condemning Mr. Taylor Liberian rebel group for crimes committed against Liberians and members of international humanitarian agencies, including American Catholic nuns and peacekeepers during his country's civil war. In a 1992 statement read by lead prosecutor, Brenda Hollis, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) leaders condemned Mr. Taylor's rebel group (the National Patriotic Front of Liberia - NPFL) for their actions against West African peacekeepers serving in Liberia under the banner ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The ECOWAS leaders had "warned all warring factions against the commission of war crimes" in Liberia. The statement alluded to the killing of civilians, peacekeepers and American Catholic nuns during "Operation Octopus," an operation launched by Mr. Taylor's NPFL on the Liberian capital Monrovia in October 1992.

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea

Uncertainty Over Toxic Chemicals in Conakry

Dakar, Nov 18, 2009 (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- The recent upheaval in Guinea has thrown into question the status of toxic chemicals discovered earlier this year at several sites throughout the capital Conakry, according to UN experts. The products, which can be used to make or refine narcotics, were found in buildings near people's homes; they are inflammable and pose a public health threat. Instability following a military crackdown on demonstrators has blocked UN drug and crime experts from visiting the sites since August. "Beyond the fact that these are products that can be used for making narcotics, they are substances that have a very high toxicity level for the population," Alexandre Schmidt, West Africa head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), told journalists in the Senegalese capital Dakar on 16 November. "So there is a public health problem there.

Cote d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire: Decree signed approving army ranks of former rebels

Source: Missionary International Service News Agency (MISNA) Date: 18 Nov 2009-Ivory Coast's President Laurent Gbagbo signed a decree assigning military ranks to former rebels of the New Forces who fought against the government in a 2002 failed coup. "This concern, said Defence Minister Michel Amani N'Guessan, adding that the move was "a big step towards peace". Gbagbo signed the decree in Mankono, north-west of the capital, on the first day of a visit to the Worodougou region, controlled by the New Forces since 2002. The President was accompanied on the visit by Prime Minister

Guillaume Soro, former rebel leader, and the military chief of general staff, General Philippe Mangou. The assignment of ranks is based on a principle of "harmonizing" the former fighters with those of the loyalist army, under a peace accord signed last December in Ouagadougou ('Ouga IV') that foresees the fusion of the forces into an 8,000-strong Integrated Central Command (CCI).

Sierra Leone

UK's Blair encourages investment in Sierra Leone

Source: English General News Date: November 18, 2009 LONDON_ Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said Wednesday that Sierra Leone has recovered from its brutal civil war and now offers opportunities in agriculture and tourism, with millions of hectares of arable land and kilometers of untouched beaches. Blair said Sierra Leone's president, Ernest Bai Koroma, has reduced corruption and made the country accessible to foreign investors. Koroma fired one of his ministers for corruption earlier this month and has promised to make the government more transparent. "Progress (in Sierra Leone) is no longer measured by an absence of conflict," Blair said. He said Sierra Leone is improving the reputation and efficiency of its mining industries and becoming known as a country that promotes religious tolerance between its Christian and Muslim populations. Blair was speaking at a London conference aimed at encouraging investment in the west African country.

Local Media – Newspaper

Professor Tarpeh Dismisses Media Report of Alliance with UP Run-off

(The News, The Inquirer, Heritage, The Analyst and Public Agenda)

- The Alliance for Peace and Democracy (APD) candidate in the first round of Montserrado Senatorial by-election, Professor Wilson Tarpeh has dismissed claims that he had endorsed the Unity Party's candidate, Clemenceau Urey for the run-off.
- There have been media speculations that Professor Tarpeh and Independent candidate, Alhaji Kromah had pledged their support to the Unity Party.
- A group claiming to be supporters of some political parties including the Alliance for Peace and Democracy had endorsed the candidacy of Mr. Urey for the run-off.
- Mr. Tarpeh in a statement issued in Monrovia said the so-called allegiance was the work of unscrupulous individuals exploiting money and other economic gains under the pretext of supporting contending parties in the by-election run-off.
- Observers say the latest denial by Mr. Tarpeh is a blow to the ruling party which has been frantically trying to woo candidates that accumulated considerable votes during the first round of the by-election.
- The University Professor came in third place with 16.3 percent of the total votes cast.

UNFPA Launches State Of The World Population

(The News)

- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) today launched a report on the State of the World Population under the theme "Facing a Changing World: Women, Population and Climate."
- Vice President Joseph Boakai launched the report which highlighted the human angle of climate change by exploring the connections between population dynamics and climate change.

Election Observers Disappointed In NEC...Cautions NEC Ahead of Runoff

(The News, Heritage, The Analyst)

- The Liberia Civil Society Election Observer Coalition has expressed disappointment over what it termed as the poor coordination by the National Elections Commission (NEC) that caused general irregularities across the process.
- In a release issued in Monrovia Tuesday, the group said as a consequence of the level of confusion during the first round of the by-election some voters did not exercise their franchise.

- The election monitoring group said while this level of disorganization caused much disappointment and disillusionment, the coalition however believes that such problems were not sufficient to constitute fraud, least to disqualify the process.
- The coalition especially regrets the quite low turnout for the elections and further challenged candidates and the NEC to exert all efforts to convince more voters to participate in the remainder of the process.

Opposition Politician Wants Rerun Of Senatorial By-election

(New Democrat, Liberia Journal, Public Agenda)

- Opposition Politician Togba-Nah Tipoteh has called for a re-run of the November 10 Montserrado County Senatorial by-election.
- According to Dr. Tipoteh, a re-run was necessary because the by-election was not credible and did not meet the basic standards acceptable to the Liberian people.
- The opposition politician has called on President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to reconstitute the National Elections Commission (NEC) saying all elections including 2011 can only be successful under a reconstituted NEC supervised by the international community.
- Meanwhile, though full scale campaign has begun for the run-off, the National Students Intellectual Council (NASICOL) has detected a discrepancy in the final results of the first round of the Montserrado Senatorial by-election.
- The student group claimed the total votes given in the official result were less than the total valid and invalid votes announced by the commission. They claimed the discrepancy amount to 355 votes.

Former President Taylor Admits CIA Links

(The News, New Democrat, Heritage, Daily Observer, and Liberian Express)

- After the cross-examination of former President Charles Taylor got off to a stumble last week over the use of "new evidence", he admitted to sharing information with the United States Central Intelligence Agency which he accused of plotting his downfall.
- Mr. Taylor who denied suggestions that he was a CIA agent however said his defunct rebel group the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) exchanged information with the CIA and the collaboration and exchange continued into his presidency.
- The former Liberian President is standing trial in The Hague for alleged supporting the former Sierra Leonean rebel Revolutionary United Front during that country's civil war.

Police Boss Against Low Salary For Police...Wants Salary Augmented To US\$300

(The Analyst)

- Police Inspector General Marc Amblard wants an increment in the salaries of police officers saying it would help prevent bribe taking and corruption in the force.
- The minimum take home salary for officers is US\$90 per month but the Police Boss wants the amount augmented to US\$300.
- There has been mounting public outcry and criticism of the police for not performing well.
- Critics say the failure of the police to perform their duty well has resulted into many communities in and around the city serving as breeding grounds for crimes and other criminal related activities.

New Citizen's Identification Card Underway

(The Inquirer)

- The Ministry of Internal Affairs in collaboration with Liberia Institute for Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) and partners have held series of discussions aimed at establishing a National Registry Framework (NRF).
- The NRF is part of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' 90-day deliverables in the poverty reduction strategy.
- As part of the strategy, the Ministry would design and endorse a policy framework and standard operating procedures for a National Biometric Identification System.

Ex-LURD Leader Sekou Damante Conneh Arrives

(The Inquirer, Liberia Journal)

- Reports say the ex-leader of the disbanded LURD rebel movement Sekou Damante Conneh is in the country.
- Mr. Conneh reportedly arrived in Monrovia Tuesday through the Liberia-Sierra Leone border.
- Earlier this year he was detained in Conakry, Guinea but was later released by the military junta.

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

Government Announces U.S. \$ 1.6 Billion Agro Investment

- The Liberian Government has announced a US\$1.6 billion investment agreement with a leading Indonesian Agro Company, the Golden Agro Resources.
- The Chairman of the National Investment Commission (NIC) Richard Tolbert said the agreement when finalized, would enable the company investment in the oil palm industry of the country.
- According to Mr. Tolbert, the investment by the company would be carried out in Southeastern Liberia and would create thousands of jobs for Liberians.
- He said the company intends to build about 20 oil mills and a refinery that would purify the oil.

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

UNFPA Launches State Of The World Population

New Citizen's Identification Card Underway

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

Ex-LURD Leader Sekou Damante Conneh Arrives

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

Togba-Nah Tipoteh Wants Rerun Of Senatorial By-election

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

Children Parliament Against Delay In "Angel's" Murder Case

- The Liberian Children Parliament says it is worried about the continuous delay in the trial of the Angel Togba's murder case.
- The Speaker of the Parliament Stephen Kalimu described the delay as a total violation of the Liberian Constitution which calls for speedy trial of persons accused of committing a crime.

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

Radio Veritas (*News monitored today at 09:45 am*)

NEC Begins Civic And Voter Education Campaign

- The National Elections Commission (NEC) has begun a vigorous civic and voter education campaign for election workers.
- The campaign is in preparation for the run-off senatorial by-election for Montserrado County slated for Tuesday, November 24.
- Meanwhile, the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC) has pleaded with Liberians mainly registered voters to remain calm and peaceful during the run-off by-election.

Truth FM (*News monitored today at 10:00 am*)

Strange Disease Hits Jorquelleh District, Bong County

- Reports from Bong County speak of an outbreak of a strange disease affecting residents of Jorquelleh District.
- According to reports the disease causes sore to develop on the foot of an individual which later becomes complicated.
- Eyewitnesses say over 200 persons have been affected so far.

Associated Press

Wednesday, 18 November 2009

US envoy attends international court meeting

By MIKE CORDER

The United States attended a meeting of the International Criminal Court's management board for the first time Wednesday in a sign it has stopped shunning the world's only permanent war crimes tribunal.

The United States has not ratified the court's founding treaty, the Rome Statute, partly because of fears the court could become a forum for politically motivated prosecutions of U.S. troops.

U.S. war crimes ambassador Stephen Rapp sat as an observer near the back of the hall during the opening session of Assembly of States Parties, which is made up of the 110 countries that recognize the court's jurisdiction, and oversees its activities.

Rapp, a former chief prosecutor at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, is expected to make a statement to the assembly on Thursday. He did not say what he would discuss.

He told The Associated Press his presence is a sign the Obama administration wants to "re-engage with the court" but said Monday while visiting Kenya that possible ratification by Washington of the Rome Statute is likely still years away.

Assembly President Christian Wenaweser, a diplomat from Lichtenstein, said Rapp's presence was "the most concrete expression we have seen so far that the policies in place under the past administration are changing."

Focus Media (Kigali)

Wednesday, 18 November 2009

Rwanda: International Court Prosecutors Call for More Cooperation

Abraham Rumanzi

At the end of the 5th colloquium of prosecutors from various international criminal tribunals, held in Kigali last week, participants called for more cooperation from governments to arrest suspects against whom international arrest warrants have been issued, in order to fight impunity.

Hassan Bubacar Jallow, chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha (ICTR), challenged countries that were giving asylum to genocide fugitives despite having full knowledge of their crimes.

The ICTR prosecutor explained that impunity had hindered the execution of the court's mandate since out of the indicted 93 leading genocide suspects, 11 still have managed to evade arrest.

Rwanda's judiciary for its part has been requesting the transfer of the remaining cases to the country, but the ICTR has so far refused claiming that it still lacks capacity in the judiciary. Yet Jallow remarked that this doesn't mean that the prosecution might not make fresh applications, given reforms made in Rwanda considering treatment of suspects and prisoners.

He noted, however, that Rwanda ought to improve its witness protection program to convince the ICTR to transfer any cases.

But the ICTR prosecutor commended Rwanda for abolishing the death penalty and the construction of a jail in Muhanga which has been approved by the UN as meeting international standards. As a result, the International Tribunal for Sierra Leone sent eight convicts to serve their sentences in Muhanga prison.

Moreover, according to prosecutor Joseph Kamara of the Sierra Leone court there had been several consultations with the country's judicial officials on matters related to jail conditions before the decision to send the convicts was taken.

He also refrained from pressuring the ICTR to follow suit, saying it was up to the Arusha court to make its own investigations and see whether their requirements were met. "We sent our convicts here because we are comfortable with the conditions," Kamara remarked.

Fatou Bensouda, deputy prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Netherlands, urged governments to put more efforts in maintaining peace, since conflict hindered the court's investigation process because of the lack of witness protection.

Helping victims

She pointed out that the ICC itself has established a trust fund to help victims improve their livelihoods until they are fully compensated by the perpetrators, which can only be done after the trials are over.

So far, out the 13 ICC arrest warrants 8 remain outstanding, including those against Bosco Ntanganda and Joseph Kony.

According to ICC prosecutor general Louis Moreno-Ocampo, the ICC is often faced with a lack of cooperation from governments, both in countries that have or have not ratified the Rome statutes (which established the ICC).

Due to such challenges related to impunity of indicted people who enjoy protection from their respective governments, the judicial process has been slowed down, he said.

His deputy Bensouda added that countries that have ratified to the Rome statutes should ensure that indicted persons step down from leadership positions so as to facilitate speedy and transparent investigations. "Some of the indicted leaders have taken advantage of their position to hide evidence," she remarked, highlighting the case of Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir who she said has ignored the arrest warrant charging him with war crimes in Darfur.

Yet international justice is still evolving, and as Moreno-Ocampo pointed out, lessons should be learnt from past and present trials to improve those of the future. "People should ensure that same mistakes are not repeated," he said.

Reuters

Wednesday, 18 November 2009

FACTBOX: Khmer Rouge casts lingering shadow over Cambodia

Closing arguments begin next Monday in the trial of chief Khmer Rouge interrogator Duch, the first senior Pol Pot cadre to face a U.N.-backed "Killing Fields" tribunal investigating Cambodia's genocide.

Here are some facts about the Khmer Rouge and how Cambodia is dealing with its legacy:

THE KILLING FIELDS

- Pol Pot's ultra-Maoist Khmer Rouge guerrillas launched a bloody agrarian revolution in 1975, five years after King Norodom Sihanouk was overthrown in a right-wing coup.
- An estimated 1.7 million people -- 21 percent of the population -- were executed or died of disease, starvation or overwork over the next four years in rural labor camps that became known as the "Killing Fields."

THE FALL OF THE KHMER ROUGE

- Vietnamese troops invaded in late 1978 and installed a communist government made up mostly of former Khmer Rouge cadres, including current Prime Minister Hun Sen. Hanoi withdrew in 1989.
- Fighting continued between the government and Khmer Rouge remnants between 1979 and 1991. Millions of Cambodians remained in refugee camps during the unrest.

SLOW ROAD TO JUSTICE

- A 1991 U.N.-brokered peace pact led to elections in 1993 and the restoration of Sihanouk as a constitutional monarch.
- In August 1999, two years after Cambodia asked the United Nations and the international community to help set up a Khmer Rouge genocide tribunal, the government said it wanted to maintain overall control of the court.
- The plan languished for years. Draft laws flew back and forth between Cambodia and the United Nations. The tribunal's legitimacy was questioned in Cambodia and there were calls for world leaders -- from former U.N. leaders to Jimmy Carter, Margaret Thatcher and Henry Kissinger -- to be subpoenaed over their support for Pol Pot's regime.

CRUNCH TIME

- The United Nations gave the go-ahead for a \$56.3 million, three-year trial in April 2005, but officials disagreed over the legalities of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, as the joint tribunal is known.

They finally agreed on the basic rules of the court in June 2007, allowing the tribunal to proceed in earnest. Full trials are expected to start next year, but prosecutors say they need more time and cash.

Sudan Tribune

Thursday, 19 November 2009

Sudan will 'conditionally' accept hybrid courts for Darfur crimes

The Sudanese government softened its resistance to the African Union (AU) proposal of establishing a hybrid court to try the Darfur war crime suspects saying it may accept it under certain conditions.



Sudanese presidential adviser Mustafa Ismail

The AU high level panel on Darfur (AUPD) led by former South African president Thabo Mbeki said in a report last month called for a "hybrid Criminal Court which shall exercise original and appellate jurisdiction over individuals who appear to bear particular responsibility for the gravest crimes committed during the conflict in Darfur, and to be constituted by judges of Sudanese and other nationalities". It further outlined the modalities for the formation its formation saying that it would consist of a "Hybrid Criminal Chamber, which should be composed of panels of highly qualified and suitable individuals of Sudanese and other nationalities".

Sudanese officials rejected the proposal saying it violates the Sudanese constitution and the independence of its judiciary.

The Sudanese presidential adviser Mustafa Ismail acknowledged in an interview with Al-Mushahid Al-Siyasi magazine that his government has reservations on the idea.

"We in Sudan want a comprehensive justice with transparent and absolute confidence in the court and we are working towards making Darfuri people have complete faith in the court" Ismail said.

"However, we want to make sure that this court will not be at the expense of Sudanese independence and its sovereignty" he added.

The Sudanese official said the proposal is not a new one having being recommended during meeting between Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir and his Egyptian counterpart Hosni Mubarak as well as by former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo but that the former AU commissioner Alpha Omer Konare "was no enthusiastic about it".

Ismail said Sudan "wants a dialogue" with the Sudanese judiciary on the mandate of the hybrid court and the limits of its jurisdiction adding that they accepted the proposal after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant last March for Bashir.

Earlier this month Fathi Khalil the head of the Sudanese bar association blasted the proposal and pledged to resist the proposal until it is "aborted" saying that is needed to "preserve the prestige of Sudanese judiciary".

Today Sudan official news agency (SUNA) carried views of international law experts who echoed the views of Khalil saying that endorsing hybrid courts undermines the integrity of the Sudanese judiciary.

Following a meeting of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) last month, Mbeki told reporters this week that Khartoum accepted hybrid court but that it would need further discussions with the AU especially where it concerned the hybrid court.

"They will look at what the Sudanese constitution allows with regards to that because this will be a precedence that has not been tried on the African continent before," he said.