

**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:

Wednesday, 3 February 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

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Awoko

Wednesday, 3 February 2010

Charles Taylor Denies CPJ Report of Repressive Press Freedom

Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor has denied reports by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) that his government was repressive of press freedom.

A report by the CPJ read in court by the Prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of harassment and imprisonment of several journalists. The Prosecution also alleged that Mr. Taylor closed down several media institutions during his Presidency.

Based on the account of the CPJ, the Prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of operating a government that was repressive and intolerant of press freedom.

The Prosecution recalled that Taylor's government arrested and charged Journalists Joseph Bartuah, Bobby Tapson, Abdulai Dukuly and Jerome Dalieh, all of The News Newspaper with espionage in 2001.

The Prosecution quoted the CPJ, saying the Journalists were imprisoned for reporting that the Taylor government wasted money repairing a helicopter and producing Christmas cards.

Lead Prosecution Lawyer, Brenda Hollis reminded Mr. Taylor of his alleged unfriendly attitude towards the press when he was President of Liberia. But Mr. Taylor told the court that some media institutions were closed because they failed to pay taxes. He said some religious stations that deviated from their religious broadcasts were also warned not to engage in politics.

Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court and

the Special Court for Sierra Leone have begun alternating the use of court room number two between Congolese rebel leader, Thomas Lubanga and former Liberian leader Charles Taylor.

The ICC used court room two Monday from 9:30a.m

to 1:30pm for the Lubanga trial, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone heard Mr. Taylor's testimonies from 3pm to 7:30pm Netherlands' time.

According to a release from the Special Court, this rotational use of court room two would continue vice versa until early April.

Premier News
Wednesday, 3 February 2010

A PROJECT OF THE OPEN SOCIETY JUSTICE INITIATIVE

THE TRIAL OF
CHARLES TAYLOR
Defendant



© Michael Keenan / AFP/Getty Images

Charles Taylor Did Not Encourage Press Freedom In Liberia, Prosecutors Say

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor did not tolerate press freedom in Liberia while he served as the West African country's president from 1997 to 2003, prosecutors said today at his trial in The Hague. Mr. Taylor dismissed the allegations as "not correct."

Lead prosecution counsel Brenda Hollis told Mr. Taylor that during his tenure as president of Liberia, several radio stations were closed down and several journalists were harassed and imprisoned. Reading from a report on press freedom in Liberia by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), Ms. Hollis told Mr. Taylor that his government was "repressive and intolerant to press freedom."

"Indeed Mr. Taylor, during your presidency, independent news reporting was cut back substantially, isn't that correct?" Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor.

"That is not correct," Mr. Taylor responded.

Ms. Hollis read from the CPJ report that in 2001, Mr. Taylor's government arrested journalists Joseph Bartuah, Bobby Tapson, Abdulai Dukulay, and James Dalieh. The journalists, who were imprisoned by Mr. Taylor's government according to the CPJ report, were charged for the crime of espionage because they had reported that Mr. Taylor's government wasted money in repairing a helicopter and producing Christmas cards.

Mr. Taylor dismissed as "total nonsense" Ms. Hollis's assertion that after his presidency, there was a massive improvement in press freedom in Liberia.

"Indeed Mr. Taylor after you left office, freedom of expression and freedom of press improved significantly in Liberia, isn't that correct?" Ms. Hollis asked.

"Total nonsense, no, that's not correct," the former president responded.

Responding to allegations that his government closed down media institutions including religious radio stations that questioned his government's violation of human rights, Mr. Taylor said that media institutions were closed down because they failed to pay taxes. For religious stations, Mr. Taylor said that such stations which deviated from their religious broadcast were warned not to engage in politics.

As Mr. Taylor draws closer to the end of his cross-examination, prosecutors have been focusing on the former president's policies in Liberia while he served as the country's president. Prosecutors have accused the former president of running a government which did not have respect for the fundamental human rights of its citizens and democratic standards. As they do this, prosecutors have been trying to establish that the 'Mr. Taylor' who was leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group which is accused of committing atrocities against the people of Liberia was no different from the 'Mr. Taylor' who became president of the country. Prosecutors allege that Mr. Taylor did not tolerate opposition and his violent reign in the NPFL and Liberia was reflective of how the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels operated in Sierra Leone. By questioning Mr. Taylor about his presidency in Liberia, prosecutors also aim to prove that Mr. Taylor has lied to the court in his testimony under direct-examination that he entertained press-freedom in Liberia and that he had respect for fundamental human rights. Mr. Taylor has denied these assertions.

Also in court today, Ms. Hollis questioned Mr. Taylor about his September 2009 testimony that it was only in court that he heard about "Operation No Living Thing" an operation that was launched by RUF rebels in Sierra Leone which

aimed to ensure that anything that had life must be killed. Mr. Taylor has previously denied giving orders to RUF rebels to conduct such an operation. In today's cross-examination, Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor about his September 2009 testimony that he did not know about such an operation.

"Were you telling the judges that prior to coming to this court, you've never heard of 'Operation No Living Thing'?" Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor.

"I could have but I cannot recall," The former president responded.

Mr. Taylor reiterated that he never gave any order for such an operation.

Ms. Hollis also told Mr. Taylor that he ordered Operation No Living Thing in Liberia, an operation that involved Mr. Taylor's Director of Special Security Service (SSS) Benjamin Yeaten and former prosecution witness and NPFL member Joseph Zig Zag Marzah.

"I was not aware and I gave no such order," Mr. Taylor said.

Mr. Taylor is on trial for his alleged association with RUF rebels whose 11-year war in Sierra Leone saw the commission of atrocities such as amputations of the arms and limbs of civilians, rape, burning of houses and the killing of civilians. Mr. Taylor is accused of providing support for the rebels through the supply of arms and ammunitions in exchange for the country's blood diamonds. Prosecutors say that Mr. Taylor occupied a superior position to RUF rebels and that he either ordered or could have prevented the commission of those crimes but he failed to do so.

Charlestaylortrial.org

Monday, 1 February 2010

Charles Taylor Did Not Encourage Press Freedom in Liberia, Prosecutors Say

By Alpha Sesay

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor did not tolerate press freedom in Liberia while he served as the West African country's president from 1997 to 2003, prosecutors said today at his trial in The Hague. Mr. Taylor dismissed the allegations as "not correct."

Lead prosecution counsel Brenda Hollis told Mr. Taylor that during his tenure as president of Liberia, several radio stations were closed down and several journalists were harassed and imprisoned. Reading from a report on press freedom in Liberia by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), Ms. Hollis told Mr. Taylor that his government was "repressive and intolerant to press freedom."

"Indeed Mr. Taylor, during your presidency, independent news reporting was cut back substantially, isn't that correct?" Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor.

"That is not correct," Mr. Taylor responded.

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Mr. Taylor dismissed as "total nonsense" Ms. Hollis's assertion that after his presidency, there was a massive improvement in press freedom in Liberia.

"Indeed Mr. Taylor after you left office, freedom of expression and freedom of press improved significantly in Liberia, isn't that correct?" Ms. Hollis asked.

"Total nonsense, no, that's not correct," the former president responded.

Responding to allegations that his government closed down media institutions including religious radio stations that questioned his government's violation of human rights, Mr. Taylor said that media institutions were closed down because they failed to pay taxes. For religious stations, Mr. Taylor said that such stations which deviated from their religious broadcast were warned not to engage in politics.

As Mr. Taylor draws closer to the end of his cross-examination, prosecutors have been focusing on the former president's policies in Liberia while he served as the country's president. Prosecutors have accused the former president of running a government which did not have respect for the fundamental human rights of its citizens and democratic standards. As they do this, prosecutors have been trying to establish that the 'Mr. Taylor' who was leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group which is accused of committing atrocities against the people of Liberia was no different from the 'Mr. Taylor' who became president of the country. Prosecutors allege that Mr. Taylor did not tolerate opposition and his violent reign in the NPFL and Liberia was reflective of how the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels operated in Sierra Leone. By questioning Mr. Taylor about his presidency in Liberia, prosecutors also aim to prove that Mr. Taylor has lied to the court in his testimony under direct-examination that he

entertained press-freedom in Liberia and that he had respect for fundamental human rights. Mr. Taylor has denied these assertions.

Also in court today, Ms. Hollis questioned Mr. Taylor about his September 2009 testimony that it was only in court that he heard about “Operation No Living Thing”– an operation that was launched by RUF rebels in Sierra Leone which aimed to ensure that anything that had life must be killed. Mr. Taylor has previously denied giving orders to RUF rebels to conduct such an operation. In today’s cross-examination, Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor about his September 2009 testimony that he did not know about such an operation.

“Were you telling the judges that prior to coming to this court, you’ve never heard of ‘Operation No Living Thing’?” Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor.

“I could have but I cannot recall,” The former president responded.

Mr. Taylor reiterated that he never gave any order for such an operation.

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“I was not aware and I gave no such order,” Mr. Taylor said.

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Charlestaylortrial.org

Tuesday, 2 February 2010

As Charles Taylor Ensured The Release Of UN Hostages In Sierra Leone, His Request For A Cease Fire Was Aimed At Helping Sierra Leonean Rebel Forces To Establish More Control In The Country, Prosecutors Say

By Alpha Sesay

When former Liberian president Charles Taylor helped secure the release of United Nations peacekeepers held hostage by Sierra Leonean rebels ten years ago, he was really trying to help the rebels gain more control over his neighboring country, prosecutors alleged today. Mr. Taylor disagreed: the safety of the hostages was forefront on his mind, he said.

Prosecutors further questioned Mr. Taylor's motives in calling for a ceasefire during the hostage crisis, arguing that it would have helped the rebels consolidate control over a key town, Masiaka. Such a ceasefire, prosecutors argued, would have placed the rebels closer to the capital, Freetown, and also provided a bigger buffer zone between the rebel-held diamond mining fields and government-controlled areas. Mr. Taylor denied being motivated by the enlargement of rebel control in Sierra Leone.

"I don't know the different positions in Sierra Leone where they (the Revolutionary United Front) were," Mr. Taylor said during his cross-examination at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Lead prosecution counsel, Brenda Hollis, today focused her questioning of Mr. Taylor on the May 2000 hostage-taking by RUF rebels, who captured hundreds of UN peacekeepers in Sierra Leone — an action that provoked international outrage. Mr. Taylor, who was sitting president of Liberia at the time, negotiated with the RUF rebels and secured the release of the UN peacekeepers. Prosecutors have long alleged that Mr. Taylor was able to secure the release of the UN hostages because he had some special control over the RUF rebel commanders. Mr. Taylor has denied these suggestions, saying that his involvement in the release of the peacekeepers was done mainly because he was asked by the international community to intervene and get the rebels to release the hostages, which he did.

During today's testimony, the court heard that when the RUF rebels released the first set of 139 UN peacekeepers, Mr. Taylor told the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) in Sierra Leone at the time, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, that he wanted an "immediate cessation of hostilities" in Sierra Leone in order to facilitate the release of the remaining hostages.

In doing so, he was concerned that "the lives of the remaining hostages would be at risk if the pro-government forces continued pushing the rebels out of the areas that they had taken," according to Mr. Taylor.

Ms. Hollis noted that at the time of the release of the UN hostages, the RUF rebels had occupied the town of Masiaka, a strategic position that was in proximity to both the country's capital Freetown and the diamond mining areas.

"And also Mr. Taylor, had the RUF been left in place in Masiaka, that would have put them much closer to the capital of Freetown, wouldn't it?" Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor.

"I disagree with your proposition," Mr. Taylor responded.

“And it would have given a larger buffer zone between the diamond areas and the government held-territories. Isn’t that correct, Mr. Taylor?” Ms. Hollis enquired further.

In his response, the former president said that “your proposition, maybe you could very well be correct, but I disagree that that was foremost on my mind. I was mostly concerned about the lives of the hostages.”

In response to Ms. Hollis’s suggestion that while requesting an immediate ceasefire he had actually mentioned the town Masiaka to the SRSG, Mr. Taylor said that “I could have based on his statements to me and the issue was we have people in captivity, there is no point attacking, you could even kill them. And if I mentioned it at that time, it was based on maybe his explanation. My answer to you is that I don’t know the geography of Sierra Leone to determine as to whether it was an important junction.”

Also in his cross-examination today, Mr. Taylor agreed with Ms. Hollis that he paid about 1.8 million United States dollars to US firms to do public relations work for his government, which aimed at improving the image of Liberia to the international community. Asked by Ms. Hollis whether that money was not too much of tax-payers’ money of a war-ravaged country to be spent on public relations work, Mr. Taylor said that “it’s subjective. For me, that was not enough because I know other governments that pay up to five million US dollars to firms in Washington DC, so that was not enough for me.”

Mr. Taylor maintained that he was justified to spend such amount of money because “most little governments, if you don’t lobby in Washington, you really get smashed.”

Mr. Taylor again today dismissed prosecution suggestions that the Liberian government under his presidency did not respect fundamental human rights. When Ms. Hollis pointed out reports of police brutality in Liberia under his presidency, Mr. Taylor maintained that he was not informed of such actions by the Liberian police force.

Proceedings in the Taylor trial will not be held tomorrow as the judges will be using the day to attend to other matters.

Mr. Taylor’s cross-examination continues on Thursday.

Daily Observer

Monday, 1 February 2010

As Prosecution Finds Inconsistencies in Testimonies

THE HAGUE – Charles Taylor told lies during his direct-examination out of desperation to discredit prosecution witnesses while testifying in his own defense, prosecutors told the former Liberian president Thursday, January 28, 2010.

Taylor dismissed this assertion as “incorrect” but did admit to a series of inconsistencies in his own previous testimony as the day progressed.

Prosecution counsel, Nicholas Koumjian, highlighted parts of Taylor’s testimony in direct-examination and told the former president that his accounts of the same events have been different under cross-examination.

In accusing the former warlord of sending Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel commander, Sam Bockarie, to render assistance to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) rebel group in Angola, Koumjian told Taylor that he had given different accounts of his relationship with the UNITA rebel leader, the late Gen. Jonas Savimbi.

Asked whether he knew Savimbi, Taylor responded, “I know of him but I never met him personally.”

Koumjian pointed out that during his direct-examination on August 24, 2009, Taylor had told the court that he had met Savimbi in Ivory Coast through former Ivorian president, Houphouet Boigny. Conceding that his two accounts were different, Taylor responded, “to be honest, I’ve never met General Savimbi. I concede. What I said then was incorrect.”

Koumjian also referred to the 2008 testimony of a prosecution witness who, testifying in private session, told the judges that when Bockarie left Liberia for Angola in early 2001, Taylor’s Chief of Protocol, Musa Sesay, accompanied Bockarie to Zambia. Bockarie was then handed over to the UNITA ambassador to Zambia, the witness said.

However, in previous testimony, Taylor disputed the idea that Sesay could have accompanied Bockarie to Zambia on grounds that he (Taylor) would have known about it– which, he said at the time, he did not.

But on Thursday, Koumjian showed Taylor a copy of a Liberian diplomatic passport bearing Sesay’s photograph and the title “Chief of Protocol, Executive Mansion, Liberia.”

“I recognize this photograph as being that of Musa Sesay,” Taylor agreed.

Koumjian then turned to a page in the passport, where an Abidjan International Airport stamp, dated February 9, 2001, read “Sortie,” meaning “Exit” in French. Another stamp in Sesay’s passport, dated February 10, 2001, but which was not very legible, indicated the word “Entry” with an entry permit valid up to February 13, 2001. A third stamp dated February 13, 2001 indicated that Sesay departed Lusaka International Airport on that date.

“So Mr. Taylor, this will indicate that the person using this passport departed Lusaka on the 13 February 2001,” Koumjian said.

The prosecutor also referred to a fourth stamp, which indicated that on February 15, 2001, Sesay re-entered Abidjan International Airport.

“That is seven days. You would know if Musa Sesay is out for a week, and he wouldn’t go to Zambia without your order,” Koumjian posited.

“He would go to Zambia without my order,” Taylor responded, adding that “for the seven days, yes, I’ll say if he was away, I’ll know.”

Koumjian then pointed out that Taylor had previously said that Sesay did not travel with Bockarie.

“We may have to determine the authenticity of this passport. We have seen many fake passports and fake stamps, so we’ll have to determine the authenticity of it,” Taylor responded.

“The reason you lied to these judges that you are 100 percent certain that Musa Sesay was not in Zambia and you did not know Mr. Savimbi is because you were desperate to discredit the witness who spoke about these issues,” Koumjian confronted Taylor.

“That is incorrect,” the former president responded.

The prosecution also confronted Taylor about having lied about his knowledge of Sanjivan Ruprah, a Liberian ambassador-at-large who was also designated Deputy Commissioner of the Liberian Bureau of Maritime Affairs. Taylor had originally said that he only knew of Ruprah but never knew him personally. Koumjian read a portion of Taylor’s November 2009 testimony in direct-examination when he was asked by his defense counsel who Ruprah was. Taylor had responded at the time that he did not know Ruprah.

“Don’t you consider that a lie?” Koumjian asked Taylor.

“I don’t consider that a lie. If my counsel had asked me to say all I knew of Mr. Ruprah, I would have told him,” Taylor responded.

Koumjian further pointed out that during the previous day’s cross-examination, Taylor had said that his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group had received some arms and ammunition from Burkina Faso. During his September 30, 2009 testimony in direct-examination, however, Koumjian recalled that the former president had said that Burkina Faso was not involved in giving arms and ammunition to Liberia.

Also asked whether he gave RUF commander, Issa Sesay, a satellite phone, Taylor said “yes, I did give Issa Sesay a satellite phone.”

The prosecution again pointed out that in September 2009, during his direct-examination, Taylor had said that he did not give Sesay a satellite phone. Koumjian also read a May 2000 letter, purportedly written to Taylor by Sesay, in which the RUF commander highlighted some conditions required for the RUF’s cooperation in the Sierra Leone peace process. The letter, which was among Taylor’s presidential papers and among the documents he admits were in his possession, purports to come from Sesay but was not signed by him. Sesay’s name was also misspelled in the letter. Taylor said that he had received the original copy of the letter from Sesay.

Asked why Sesay had not signed the letter, Mr. Taylor said that “this might be the original copy and I don’t know why it was unsigned.”

Asked by Koumjian why he would have an original copy of a letter that was not signed by the author, Taylor insisted, “I cannot say why this letter has no signature.”

“Your staff wrote the letter for Issa Sesay” Koumjian told Taylor.

“Even if my staff wrote a letter for Issa, he’ll still have to sign it. I cannot account for why this letter is not signed by Issa Sesay,” Taylor responded.

When Koumjian pointed out that Sesay’s name was misspelled in the letter which was supposed to have come from him, Taylor responded, “You have a point but I tell you, this document was one delivered to my government by the RUF.”

John Kollie

Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor has denied reports of the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) that his government was repressive of press freedom. A report of the CPJ read in court by the Prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of harassment and imprisonment of several Journalists. The Prosecution also alleged that Mr. Taylor closed down several media institutions during his presidency. John Kollie transcribes the Hague reports for the BBC World Service Trust...

Based on the account of the CPJ, the Prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of operating a government that was repressive and intolerant of press freedom.

The Prosecution recalled that Taylor's government arrested and charged Journalists Joseph Bartuah, Bobby Tapson, Abdulai Dukuly and Jerome Dalieh, all of The News Newspaper with espionage in 2001.

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But Mr. Taylor told the court that some media institutions were closed because they failed to pay taxes. He said some religious stations that deviated from their religious broadcast were also warned not to engage in politics.

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According to a release from the Special Court, this rotational use of courtroom two would continue vice versus until early April.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 2 February 2010

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

International Clips on Liberia

Suspended sentences given in Oklahoma abuse case

Published: February 2, 2010

FAIRVIEW— Mary Tyler testified Monday that she thought she was coming to a free country when she was brought to Oklahoma from her native Liberia. But since her adopted parents were accused of abuse, she has felt as if she's in prison, she said. Tyler, 16, was the star witness Monday in Major County District Court for her adoptive parents, Ardee Verlon Tyler, 51, and Penny Sue Tyler, 46. The Fairview couple pleaded no contest to felony child abuse charges in the abuse of another of their adopted daughters, now 13. Prosecutors say the girl, 9 when she was adopted, was abused, raped and assaulted between 2005 and 2007. District Judge Ray Dean Linder sentenced the Tylers to 10-year suspended terms but required Penny Tyler to spend 60 days in the county jail beginning Monday.

Charles Taylor Did Not Encourage Press Freedom in Liberia, Prosecutors Say

www.charlestaylortrial.org 2010/02/01

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor did not tolerate press freedom in Liberia while he served as the West African country's president from 1997 to 2003, prosecutors said today at his trial in The Hague. Mr. Taylor dismissed the allegations as "not correct." Lead prosecution counsel Brenda Hollis told Mr. Taylor that during his tenure as president of Liberia, several radio stations were closed down and several journalists were harassed and imprisoned. Reading from a report on press freedom in Liberia by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), Ms. Hollis told Mr. Taylor that his government was "repressive and intolerant to press freedom." "Indeed Mr. Taylor, during your presidency, independent news reporting was cut back substantially, isn't that correct?" Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor. "That is not correct," Mr. Taylor responded. Ms. Hollis read from the CPJ report that in 2001, Mr. Taylor's government arrested journalists Joseph Bartuah, Bobby Tapson, Abdulai Dukulay, and James Dalieh. The journalists, who were imprisoned by Mr. Taylor's government according to the CPJ report, were charged for the crime of espionage because they had reported that Mr. Taylor's government wasted money in repairing a helicopter and producing Christmas cards.

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea

Guinean commission report casts blame for massacre

The Associated Press--Tuesday, Feb. 2, 2010

A Guinean investigative commission on Tuesday blamed the man who tried to assassinate the country's now-exiled junta leader for a September massacre during which human rights groups say at least 156 people were killed. The report, however, said the junta leader now living in Burkina Faso was not responsible for the violence. That finding contrasts sharply with a U.N. commission report that said Moussa "Dadis" Camara likely bore "individual criminal responsibility" for the soccer stadium massacre. "Lieutenant (Abubakar) Toumba Diakite and a group of red berets from the

presidential guard were responsible for the rapes, murders, injuries and mysterious disappearance of bodies recorded Sept. 28 at the stadium," said Siriman Kouyate, president of the Guinean commission. The commission recommended that Diakite and all the soldiers who committed the acts be arrested and brought before Guinean courts. Diakite, who has been in hiding since the December assassination attempt, told Radio France International he shot Camara because the junta leader had tried to blame him for the massacre and had betrayed the democracy of the West African nation.

Sierra Leone

500,000 pounds to assist fragile families

Awoko 2/2/2010

Project Sierra a family and a future NGO, Soroptimist International and Hope and Homes for Children have raised 500,000 pounds of a targeted one million British pounds to support child and family welfare programmes in Sierra Leone. The two International NGO's are partnering with their local implementing partner, HANCI (Help A Needy Child) and their input includes awareness and advocacy on child and family welfare, social protection models and also fund programmes that strengthens long term capacity for vulnerable women.

Speaking Friday at HANCI head office on Pademba road, Soroptimist International President Mrs. Alice Wells said she was incredibly touched about the stories of some women they have met with during their visit to the project site. She stressed that what they were trying to bring back to fragile families was education stating that they were not giving out hand outs but a hand up to people.

Cote D'Ivoire

Ivorian cocoa arrivals seen at 779,000 tonnes by Jan 31

Tue Feb 2, 2010 1:07pm GMT

(Reuters) - Cocoa arrivals at ports in top grower Ivory Coast reached around 779,000 tonnes by January 31, exporters estimated, compared with 705,900 tonnes in the same period of the previous season. Exporters estimated around 20,000 tonnes of beans were delivered to the West African state's two ports between January 25 and January 31, down from 25,592 tonnes in the same week a year ago. They said they expected deliveries to remain at low levels in the coming weeks. "There are fewer and fewer cocoa beans coming to San Pedro or Abidjan in recent weeks," said the director of an export company in Abidjan. "It's going to continue to fall sharply."

Local Media – Newspaper

President Sirleaf Meets US Assistant Secretary Carson

(The News, New Democrat, The Informer, National Chronicle and Daily Observer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has held talks with US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- President Sirleaf informed Mr. Carson about Government's progress made in meeting some of its agenda despite the difficult economic challenges.
- The President said the global economic crisis greatly affected the implementation of programmes in critical areas of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- For his part, Assistant Secretary Carson assured President Sirleaf of his Government's continued support in addressing the challenges facing Liberia noting that the United States was impressed with the progress Liberia is making.
- Meanwhile, President Sirleaf also held bilateral talks with Canadian Foreign Minister Lawrence Cannon and the Chief Executive Officer of the New Partnership for Africa's Development Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki.

Opposition Politician Says President Sirleaf's Declaration For Second Term Could Damage Dispensation Of Justice

(New Democrat, The Inquirer, Heritage and The News)

- The political leader of the Opposition Liberia Party Counsellor Charles Brumskine has described President Sirleaf's declaration for a second term at the Legislature as wrong.
- Cllr. Brumskine speaking Monday at the Wou Garbie Tappia Memorial Lecture Series at the University of Liberia argued the President's address at the Legislature brought together the branches of government, including the Judiciary which is not a political body.
- He said the declaration exposes the Supreme Court of Liberia to what he called a political cycle and has brought the constitutional foundation of the country under attack.
- According to the Liberty Party political leader, the declaration before justices of the Supreme Court has the potential to damage the effective dispensation of justice in the country.

Ex-rebel Leader Sekou Conneh, Others Sue TRC

(New Democrat)

- A group of individuals implicated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) final report has filed what it calls a class action suit against the TRC.
- Some of the individuals include Thomas Woewiyu, Sekou Damate Conneh, Weade Kobbah Wureh, Sando Johnson, Dopoe Menkazohn and John T. Richardson.
- In a 31-page petition, the individuals prayed the 6th Judicial Circuit Court at the Temple of Justice for what they referred to as declaratory judgment.
- The Petitioners are seeking relief on behalf of themselves and others named by the TRC without what they termed due process.
- According to them, the TRC lacks the jurisdiction to make binding determinations and levy public sanctions on any person, group of persons or organizations.
- The Civil Law Court is yet to assign the case for hearing.

Fire Renders about 200 Persons Homeless

(The Informer, Heritage and The Inquirer)

- About 200 persons were rendered homeless on Monday following a fire incident in the Sinkor suburb.
- Eyewitnesses said the incident occurred when a resident of one of the affected houses left a burning candle in his room when many others were asleep.
- Our reporter who went on the scene gathered that it was in the process that the candle came in contact with some combustible materials thereby setting them ablaze.
- Meanwhile, an Executive Mansion release issued in Monrovia said President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has identified with victims of the fire disaster.
- According to the release, President Sirleaf gave a cash donation of US\$5,000 to the fire victims most of whom were visually impaired people.

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

President Sirleaf Meets US Assistant Secretary Carson

Opposition Lawmakers Release Analysis Of President Sirleaf's Message Tuesday

- Opposition lawmakers in the House of Representatives will Tuesday submit an analysis on President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's State of the Nation Address.
- The Acting Chairman of the opposition lawmakers, Representative George Mulbah of Bong County said they were very concerned about a number of issues raised by the President in her annual message.
- Representative Mulbah said the lawmakers would also review the President's position on the threshold bill including the issue of dual citizenship.
- He said they would also look at the County Development Funds and President Sirleaf's decision to announce her 2011 second term presidential bid in the Legislature.

Opposition Politician Says President Sirleaf's Declaration For Second Term Could Damage Dispensation Of Justice

Defense Minister In President Sirleaf's Defense

- Defense Minister Brownie Samukai has called on individuals criticizing President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's declaration for the 2011 election to take her to court.
- Minister Samukai said it is only the court that will determine whether the President was in error to have declared her intention at the Legislature describing the criticisms as reckless and irresponsible.
- On the TRC report recommending a 30-year ban on the President and others, Minister Samukai said the report cannot take precedent over the constitution.

Ex-rebel Leader Sekou Conneh, Others Sue TRC

Internal Affairs Verification Team Visits Disputed Land

- A verification team from the Internal Affairs Ministry headed by Acting Minister Peter Kamie has visited the disputed land bordering Sinoe and Rivercess Counties.
- The team comprised representatives of the Land Commission, Lands and Mines Ministry, and the National Elections Commission, Senators and Superintendents of both counties and officials of the United Nations Mission in Liberia.
- Senators from the two counties urged the superintendents to remain calm as the Internal Affairs Ministry look into the land dispute.

Ex-president Taylor Denies Running Repressive Regime

- Former Liberian President Charles Taylor standing trial in The Hague has denied reports that his government was repressive of press freedom.
- A report by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) read in court by the prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of harassment and imprisonment of several Journalists and shutting down several media institutions during his presidency.
- Based on the account of the CPJ, the Prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of operating a government that was repressive and intolerant of press freedom.
- But Mr. Taylor told the court that some media institutions were shut down because they failed to pay taxes and some religious stations that deviated from their religious broadcast policies were also warned not to engage in politics.

Contractors Abandoned UN-funded Project In Lofa County

- Reports say contractors renovating the circuit court building in Voinjama, Lofa County have abandoned the project complaining of delay in the payment of wages and the failure by the authorities to bring in building materials for the past eight months.
- The three-month UN-funded project failed to meet its completion period of one year.
- Four UN agencies in collaboration with Government are funding the renovation of the damaged court building.

Agence France Presse
Tuesday, 2 February 2010

Death threats on Kenya post-poll violence witnesses

By International Justice Desk



Iten, Kenya

Witnesses of the post-election violence that broke out in Kenya two years ago have been receiving death threats, as the International Criminal Court

continues its push to prosecute the perpetrators.

"If you don't shut up, we'll send you money to buy your coffins. You talk too much. You're a woman. Shut up!"

The mother of six, who asked to be named only as Margaret for fear of reprisals, scrolls through the inbox of her mobile phone: she has received dozens such text messages over the past three months.

The middle-aged woman, from a small village in the Rift Valley, cringes every time her phone rings and constantly looks over her shoulder in the street.

She is a Kalenjin and her husband a Kikuyu, the two main tribes who fought each other during the weeks of ethnic and political violence that left some 1,500 people dead following the disputed December 2007 polls.

"Having lived with my family in the same village for all those long years, I thought they'd never touch us," she said. "But [...] my shop and home were the first to be burnt down."

She saw women cooking for huge numbers and then 200 young men armed with bows, machetes and clubs returning from their mission and shouting: "We have finished the work."

"I could not stay silent for what I had heard and seen. I wanted to confront my demons to find peace," she told AFP, explaining her decision to testify with Kenya's Waki commission probe into the violence.

Witness fears

That's when her second nightmare began: her account to the homegrown investigation could make her a

witness if the Hague-based ICC or a special local tribunal brought cases against key suspects.

Three ICC experts are currently in Kenya on the latest of a series of trips aimed at consolidating their case and assessing the level of progress made by Kenya's government on setting up a local court.

According to rights groups in Kenya, around 10 potential witnesses have fled the country, with the assistance notably of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.

ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo himself voiced concern over the phenomenon in a letter addressed to Kenya Justice Minister Mutula Kilonzo on 21 January.

"No one will stop the ICC by attacking Kenyan citizens," he also told a Kenyan television network.

One rights activist who has been documenting threats on post-poll violence victims said he was keeping a very low profile for fear of being killed.

"Many of my cases involve people brutalised by gangs, militias and government security forces," he told AFP.

The coalition government formed as a result of an international mediation that followed the disputed 2007 election has fallen behind on every measure pledged and needed to heal the country.

Victims displaced

Despite government assurances that the problem was resolved, tens of thousands of displaced people were not able to return to their homes and their stories are slowly being forgotten.

"The suspects have taken over the voice of everybody else," said Ken Wafula, director of the Eldoret Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. "They are trying to direct the situation, but justice shouldn't be run by the suspects."

Many of the victims of the violence that shocked the world two years ago, from the Kibera slums in Nairobi, to the farmlands of the Rift Valley, are willing to testify but they are increasingly aware of the risks involved.

Lawmaker Martha Karua, justice minister during the violence, warned last month that witnesses were being harassed by suspects.

"It is disappointing that the government can fail to provide security to the witnesses of the post election violence," she said at a public meeting.

According to Wafula, "politicians are leaking out names of witnesses and endangering their lives."

Six cabinet ministers are on a list of key suspects transmitted by the Waki commission to the ICC and who might face arrest warrants should Ocampo not be satisfied with Kenya's own judicial endeavours.

Source: AFP