

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



Big Market on a Saturday

Historic postcard of Big Market

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, 17 March 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Charles Taylor Becomes A Father In Gaol

The wife of Liberia's ex-President Charles Taylor - on trial in The Hague for war crimes - has had a baby girl, his family spokesman says. Sando Johnson told the BBC Victoria Addison-Taylor would soon take her back to Monrovia to meet the family. "Mr Taylor is overjoyed with the birth of his daughter," said his lawyer. Mr Taylor denies backing rebels who committed widespread atrocities throughout the 1990s in Liberia's neighbour Sierra Leone. He already has two girls with his current wife, who moved to the Netherlands for the duration of the trial. The baby was born in February but her birth has only just been made public. The spokesman said he did not know how many children Mr Taylor had altogether. He married Victoria shortly before stepping down as president and going into exile in Nigeria in 2003. His first son, McArthur "Chuckie" Taylor, a US citizen, was



Charles Taylor already has three girls with Victoria

sentenced in January to 97 years in prison in the US after he was convicted of torture and war crimes during Liberia's civil war.

Charlesratylortrial.org

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

Sierra Leonean Rebels Captured Arms and Ammunition from Enemy Forces and Purchased Some From Guinean Soldiers, Witness Says

By Alpha Sesay

Sierra Leonean rebel forces captured arms and ammunition from enemy forces and also purchased some from Guinean soldiers, a defense witness for Charles Taylor told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today in The Hague. The witness also denied prosecution allegations that Mr. Taylor supplied Sierra Leonean rebels with weapons during the country's brutal 11-year conflict.

A Liberian national, who in his testimony last week said he was a member of the Sierra Leonean rebel group Revolutionary United Front (RUF), today explaining that whenever the RUF captured positions occupied by forces loyal to government of Sierra Leone, they obtained arms and ammunition from the enemy forces. He also explained how the RUF bought arms and ammunition from Guinean soldiers across the Sierra Leonean border with Guinea.

Prosecutors have alleged that Mr. Taylor provided arms and ammunition to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, which were used to launch attacks and commit atrocities against civilians. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations, insisting that his country did not have arms and ammunition to fight rebel forces in Liberia, so he could not have provided any to the RUF.

The witness's testimony today reiterated the information contained in the 1999 Salute Report prepared by RUF commander, Sam Bockarie, for his leader Foday Sankoh upon his release from jail. In this report, Mr. Bockarie explained how the RUF was run as an organization during Mr. Sankoh's incarceration. Mr. Bockarie reported that arms and ammunition were captured from enemy forces while some were also bought from Guinean Soldiers. The report did not state anything about the RUF receiving arms and ammunition from Mr. Taylor.

Also in The Hague today, newly appointed Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Brenda Hollis, spoke with the press and denied suggestions that the United States and Great Britain had influenced Mr. Taylor's trial. Mr. Taylor and his defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths have consistently said that Mr. Taylor's trial is a result of a conspiracy by Western countries led by the US and the UK. Ms. Hollis today said that Mr. Taylor is on trial because the government of Sierra Leone requested the UN to set up a Special Court for Sierra Leone that would try those who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in Sierra Leone from 1996 to 2002. She added that she is leading an independent team of prosecutors that does not take instructions from anybody. In response to concerns that the position of Chief Prosecutor of the court has been occupied mainly by Americans, Ms. Hollis responded that Desmond da Silva, a British national, and Joseph Kamara, a Sierra Leonean national, have previously held the same position.

Mr. Taylor's trial continues tomorrow.

NEWS ITEM

March 16, 2010

The newly appointed Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Miss Brenda Hollis has spoken to journalists for the first time since she took office as a Prosecutor of the court. Miss Hollis spoke to the BBC World Service Trust on a number of issues ranging from the United States' alleged role in the trial of Former Liberian President Charles Taylor. She also spoke about what the Prosecution might do if the court's judgement goes in favour of Mr. Taylor. BBC World Service Trust, John Kollie has this transcribed report...

The new Sierra Leone Special Court prosecutor denied reports that the United States and Great Britain orchestrated the trial of Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor.

Miss Brenda Hollis said it was the Sierra Leone Government that approached the United Nations for the establishment of the Special Court.

Mr. Taylor has consistently said his trial was United States and Great Britain's way of punishing him for standing against their economic interest in Liberia during his presidency. Miss Hollis also told the BBC World Service Trust that she's heading an independent Prosecuting team that takes instruction from nobody.

She dismissed claims that all of the Prosecutors of the Special Court have been Americans. Miss Hollis emphasized that Desmond di Silva and Joseph Kamara who previously served as Prosecutors were not Americans.

Meanwhile, the Liberian witness testifying in Mr. Charles Taylor's defence continued his testimonies.

The witness testifying under anonymity said the Sierra Leone rebel group, the RUF used arms and ammunition captured from enemies.

He also said the RUF purchased arms and ammunition from Guinean Soldiers

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**UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary
16 March 2010**

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

International Clips on Liberia

Technology helps Liberia turn the page on 'blood timber'

<http://news.smh.com.au/breaking-news-world/technology-helps-liberia-turn-the-page-on-blood-timber-20100317-qcuz.html>

Liberia's rainforests, once ravaged for blood timber sold to fund one of Africa's bloodiest civil wars, are being primed as a lucrative and legal industry using cutting-edge tracking technology. One by one an electronic tag -- similar to bar codes used on consumer products -- is attached to trees in the thick woodlands covering 45 percent of the West African nation, a painstaking process that will allow consumers to trace the end-product right back to the stump. While the use of "blood diamonds" to fund wars in the region is better known, it was timber that propped up armed factions, notably those of former president Charles Taylor, during 14 years of Liberian conflict that left over 250,000 dead. Before a United Nations ban on timber exports in 2003, the timber industry brought in a quarter of Liberia's gross domestic product (GDP), and its revival is key to boosting government coffers in one of the world's poorest countries. In 2006, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf enacted a new forestry law to protect the tropical forests which contain more than 59 species of trees --- and the UN ban was lifted.

International Clips on West Africa

Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast debt rallies on exchange offer

(Reuters) - Ivory Coast bond prices rose on Tuesday in advance of an exchange of around 2.2 billion euros in defaulted Brady bonds for a new 23-year U.S. dollar-denominated issue. Ivory Coast, the world's no 1 cocoa producer, set out terms of the exchange of London Club debt with commercial creditors on Monday and the offer closes on April 6. Holders of the six bonds will get \$800 for every \$1,000 offered in exchange for the new debt. The existing debt rose around 1-2 points after the deal announcement to around 55-58 cents on the dollar, traders and investors said, and has risen steadily over the last year on expectations of the deal. The deal is taking place slightly later than expected after a temporary setback with the dissolution of Ivory Coast's government last month.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone court backs woman chief bid

BBC

A judge in Sierra Leone has ruled for the first time that a woman's bid to become a paramount chief is lawful. The High Court overturned a ban on Iye Kendor Bandabla from becoming chief in Kissy Teng chiefdom in the country's eastern Kailahun district. Women's rights activists hailed the ruling as a landmark decision and vowed to fight similar bans in other regions. Traditionalists oppose women becoming chiefs in most of the country, though they are accepted in the south. The BBC's Umaru Fofana, in Freetown, says activists will use this ruling to strengthen their case in the Supreme Court, where they are lobbying for the nationwide acceptance of female paramount chiefs. The ruling comes months after courts refused to support another woman who was barred from becoming chief - prompting the Supreme Court appeal.

Sierra Leone sacks third minister in anti-graft probe

FREETOWN (Reuters) - Sierra Leone has sacked its fisheries minister, the third minister in four months to be dismissed in an anti-corruption drive, President Ernest Bai Koroma said on Tuesday. The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on Monday charged Minister of Marine Resources Haja Afasatu Kabba with "abuse of office and financial irregularities," which she denied. Among investors in Sierra Leone's fishing sector is CDC, the British government-owned development finance institution, which holds a stake in Sierra Fishing Company, the country's largest fishing business. In November, then health minister Tejan Koroma and minister of state of the vice president Leonard Balogun Koroma were sacked after the ACC accused them of corruption.

Local Media – Newspaper

Liberia, Swedish, Malawian Red Cross Sign Tripartite Cooperation

(Heritage, In Profile Daily)

- The Liberia National Red Cross Society and the Malawi Red Cross Society have signed a Tripartite Cooperation with the Swedish Red Cross Youth to integrate the Girl Unit concept of the Swedish Red Cross into the youth programme of both national societies.
- The Tripartite Cooperation would contribute to the development of the girl groups in all three countries by sharing experiences, knowledge and challenges and jointly work towards solving challenges and incorporate shared experiences and knowledge in the project in all three countries.
- The three national societies in a letter of intent pledged to promote empowerment of girls and fight gender discrimination by creating safe space where girls will be able to interact and discuss the problems they face without interference.

Amid US\$22 Million Revenue Shortfall: Government Restricts Expenditure, Freezes US\$58.5 Million

(Heritage)

- A budget performance report covering the period July 2009 to February 2010 has shown a shortfall in revenue projection in the tone of US\$22 million in the fiscal budget.
- The shortfall in revenue stems from a projection of US\$210.6 million for the period under review.
- According to the budget performance report, at least US\$188.7 million was collected in revenue against a "risk adjusted projection" of US\$191.3 million, including US\$2.8 million brought forward from the 2008/2009 Fiscal Budget.
- On the expenditure side of the budget, the report further states that US\$58.5 million was frozen out of the budget as part of a risk management strategy.

Russian, Italian Ambassadors Present Letters of Credence

(The News)

- The new Ambassadors of Russia and Italy accredited to Liberia last Friday presented their Letters of Credence to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Monrovia.
- Ambassador Vladimir V. Barbin of Russia who earlier presented his letters said he is happy that Liberia is back on the road to recovery and development.
- He said Russia is determined to help Liberia succeeds in its reconstruction drive.
- For his part, Ambassador Giancarlo Izzo of Italy expressed joy that Liberia is now stable after years of war thereby attracting foreign investors.
- Earlier, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf expressed satisfaction that Liberia is able to resume diplomatic ties with Russia and Italy following years of war.

US Government Releases Human Rights Report On Liberia

(The Inquirer, New Democrat, The News, Daily Observer)

- The United States government has released the 2009/2010 human rights report on Liberia highlighting a number of issues on the human rights situation in the country.
- The report said mob violence and land disputes resulted in deaths, and ritualistic killings occurred, while the police abused, harassed, and intimidated detainees and citizens.
- The report added that prison conditions remained harsh while arbitrary arrests and detentions occurred.
- It says judicial inefficiency and corruption contributed to lengthy pre-trial detentions and denial of due process as some incidents of trial by ordeal were reported.
- "The government restricted the press, corruption and impunity were endemic through all levels of government while violence against women, including rape, was a problem, and domestic violence was widespread."
- Some ethnic groups continued to practice female genital mutilation.
- Child abuse and sexual violence against children were problems, and a few cases of human trafficking were reported.
- Racial and ethnic discrimination continued, and instances of child labor were reported, especially in the informal sector," the report said.

'Account for Expended Funds', Finance Ministry Calls on Lawmakers

(Daily Observer)

- Reports say authorities of the Ministry of Finance have formally communicated to the National Legislature calling on both Houses to account for funds they had expended from their respective 2009/2010 budgets and other budget lines, including a list of priorities for which funds had been allocated.
- Finance Minister Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan could not be reached for comments on the reports as his mobile phone was switched off.
- However, the legislative sources say the Finance Ministry has informed both Houses of the National Legislature that the measure was aimed at enhancing government policy of transparency and accountability in the governance system.
- In addition to asking the Senate and the House of Representatives to account for expended funds, the Ministry had also informed the Legislature of a huge revenue shortfall in fiscal budget 2009/2010, leading to a freeze of the lawmakers' salaries and benefits, the reports indicated.

Sierra Leone Rebels Were Trained at Camp Nama, Liberian Witness Tells Special Court

(Daily Observer, The Monitor, New Democrat)

- A 300-strong force of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans were based in Liberia and trained under a top Sierra Leonean rebel leader before attacking Sierra Leone in 1991, a protected Liberian witness told the Special Court for Sierra Leone on March 12, 2010.
- Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, however, denies knowledge of Sierra Leonean rebels training in his country.

- Testifying in open session but whose name and personal information were not shared with the public, the witness told the judges that he was part of the rebel force that trained under Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader, Foday Sankoh, at Camp Nama in Liberia in the early 1990s.
- The witness also recalled the names of other rebel commanders with whom he underwent training at the camp, some of whom have been prosecuted and convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for their role in the crimes committed during the Sierra Leonean conflict.

Supreme Court Justices, Others Should Remain, Until...

(The Inquirer)

- Participants at the just-ended third National Judicial Conference have resolved that no justices of the Supreme Court or judges of lower courts who exhibit the ability to perform the functions of their offices should be retired at age 70.
- In its final resolution, the legal community decided that the retirement age for all justices of the Supreme Court and judges of the lower courts in the country shall surpass the Constitutional retirement age of 70 by reason of strength.
- Article 72(b) of the Liberian Constitution provides that the chief justice, associate justices of the Supreme Court and judges of subordinate courts of records shall be retired at the age of 70.
- The provision which was highlighted during the course of the weeklong conference held in Monrovia last week, members of the legal community resolved to mandate the Liberian National Bar Association to study said provision aimed at organizing a debate which could lead to the next constitutional referendum.

The Final Arguments In The Angel Togba Murder Begin Today

(The Inquirer, National Chronicle)

- Final arguments in the Angel Togba murder trial are expected to take place today in Criminal Court 'B'.
- Judge Blamo Dixon put the final legal battle of the controversial trial to March 16 due to last week's National Judicial Conference.
- The prosecution during the trial said Hans and Mardea Williams killed little Angel Togba before hanging her body in the bathroom of the house.
- The prosecution also said it believes Mrs. Williams met her husband abusing the 13-year old girl and out of anger strangled her to death.
- But the defense dismissed the claims and said Angel Togba killed herself. Judge Dixon who is deciding the case without a jury is expected to bring down the final verdict Friday.

Transparency International Wants Adequate Resources To Anti-corruption Groups

(The Inquirer)

- The visiting Board Chair of Transparency International, Ms. Huguette Labelle has called on government to review the resources given to key anti-corruption institutions in the Country.
- Ms. Labelle named the institutions as the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), the General Auditing Commission (GAC) and the Governance Commission (GC).
- According to her, allocating adequate resources to those institutions would enable them function properly.
- The Transparency International Official also said the role of the Judiciary is vital to the fight against corruption noting that without a highly professional and independent judiciary, people will not feel protected.
- Ms. Labelle following a meeting with heads of the LACC, GAC and the GC, said while her group hails the publishing of audit reports by the GAC, serious actions should be taken.
- She said when actions are taken through restitutions and imprisonments, people will be compelled to conduct themselves properly while serving in public offices.

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

Senate Investigative Panel Returns From Lofa

- An investigative panel of the Senate has returned to Monrovia following days of a fact finding mission on the February 26 violence in Lofa.
- During its visit, the Committee met key stakeholders and other persons with knowledge of how the Lofa violence started.
- A Senate spokesman who accompanied the Committee to Lofa, Mr. Jallahwah Tonpo said the investigation process was thoroughly conducted and targeted Konia, Voinjama and Zorzor.
- Mr. Tonpo said the Committee gathered a comprehensive report which will be submitted to the Senate's plenary in the soonest possible time.

Final Arguments In The Angel Togba Murder Begin Today

Transparency International Wants Adequate Resources To Anti-corruption Groups

Rivercess Wins Land Dispute Over Sinoe, But Sinoe Superintendent Objects

- Reports say the boundary dispute between Rivercess and Sinoe Counties has ended in favor of Rivercess County.
- According to the reports, the matter was resolved through the intervention of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on boundary verification set up by government to probe the boundary dispute between the two Counties.
- The reports say during the investigation, the Committee displayed the maps of both Sinoe and Rivercess Counties including the disputed area.
- Meanwhile, Sinoe County Superintendent Milton Teahjay has rejected the Committee's report on grounds that the contested area belongs to Sinoe.
- For his part, Rivercess County Superintendent Wellington Geevon-Smith has welcomed the report.

UL President Opposed To Warlords Taking State Power

- The President of the University of Liberia (UL), Dr. Emmett Dennis has called on Liberians not to reward people who committed atrocities with the leadership of the Country.
- Dr. Dennis also stressed that Liberians must persevere in pursuing the fact that atrocities are not casualties of war what he called war crimes.
- According to the UL President, it was important that the declaration of war by individuals as a means of changing governments be put to an end.
- He further stressed the need for Liberians to be passionate in pursuing forgiveness after years of war.
- The UL President speaking Monday at official programmes marking the commemoration of the 201st Birth Anniversary of President Joseph Jenkins Roberts, said although there must be forgiveness, such forgiveness must not preclude justice.
- The Liberian academic commended the Joseph Jenkins Roberts Educational Foundation for its support to efforts at tackling the illiteracy rate of the Country.

Former Representative Contender Held For Arson But Released

- A former Margibi County Representative Contender Roland Cooper has been arrested and detained on allegation of arson attempt.
- Mr. Cooper said the Lower Margibi County Police Commander Susanna Blackie ordered his arrest for allegedly trying to burn a Police Station.
- According to Mr. Cooper he had gone to make peace between the police and agitating crowds of people when he was ordered arrested and detained.
- But the Lower Margibi County Police Commander argued that Mr. Cooper was detained based on police report linking him to the violence.
- According to her, the group allegedly led by Mr. Cooper threatened to set another policeman on fire as was done on the Capitol Bye-pass in Monrovia.
- Meanwhile, Mr. Cooper has been released to his lawyer pending further investigation today Tuesday.

Daily Observer

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

Sierra Leone Rebels Were Trained at Camp Nama, Liberian Witness Tells Special Court



A 300-strong force of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans were based in Liberia and trained under a top Sierra Leonean rebel leader before attacking Sierra Leone in 1991, a protected Liberian witness told the Special Court for Sierra Leone on March 12, 2010.

Former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, however, denies knowledge of Sierra Leonean rebels training in his country.

Testifying in open session but whose name and personal information were not shared with the public, the witness told the judges that he was part of the rebel force that trained under Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader, Foday Sankoh, at Camp Nama in Liberia in the early 1990s.

The witness also recalled the names of other rebel commanders with whom he underwent training at the camp, some of whom have been prosecuted and convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for their role in the crimes committed during the Sierra Leonean conflict.

“I can remember Sam Bockarie who is Mosquito, I knew Sam Quelleh, I knew Issa Sesay, I knew Morris Kallon, I knew Augustine Gbao, I knew Jonathan Kposowa, they were many, I can't recall all of their names now,” the witness said.

The witness explained that on March 20, 1991, RUF leader Mr. Sankoh took about 150 trainees from Camp Nama to the Liberian-Guinean border in Lofa County.

He said that on the orders of Mr. Sankoh, 100 men attacked the town of Koindu in Sierra Leone's Kailahun District. The 100 men who launched the first attack succeeded in capturing several boxes of ammunition and military radios from the police station in Koindu.

Prosecutors have alleged that with Mr. Taylor's help, RUF rebels, among who were Sierra Leoneans and Liberians, were trained at Camp Nama in Liberia before the 1991 attack on Sierra Leone.

Prosecutors say that RUF commanders such as Sam Bockarie, Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon were all trained at Camp Nama. Mr. Taylor has denied the prosecution allegations, saying that he did not provide any support in training RUF rebels and that he had no knowledge of RUF rebels undergoing training at Camp Nama. This is the fourth witness to testify in defense of Mr. Taylor who is on trial for allegedly providing support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone during the West African country's 11-year civil war. Mr. Taylor has denied all prosecution allegations against him.

Meanwhile, a Sierra Leonean witness told the Special Court earlier how Sierra Leonean government forces executed suspected rebel collaborators without trial during the country's brutal civil conflict and chose which suspects to kill based on the way they looked.

The Sierra Leonean witness, DCT 068, said he feared for his life and fled Freetown after his government's forces started summarily executing about 20 suspected Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels a day after the country's war broke out in 1991.

“For fear of my life, I fled Freetown and joined the RUF in the Sierra Leonean town of Zogoda in 1992,” the witness said.

Zogoda, also known as Camp Zogoda, served as the headquarter base of the RUF until it was attacked and destroyed by forces loyal to the Government of Sierra Leone in 1996. Describing how government forces carried

out summary executions of suspected rebels and collaborators, the witness explained that “anybody they see, they just say one, two, three, four, five you come out. Then they take them to the cemetery and give them summary execution without going through any judiciary process and I witnessed that in Kenema.”

The witness added that the manner of one's appearance was a determining factor in deciding whether to associate one with rebel forces.

“If you are not well dressed, you know that is how they use to associate you with rebels. If you are in coat and tie, you will not be executed,” he said. The testimony of the protected Liberian witness continues on Tuesday as the court room will be used for other International Criminal Court trials.

Star Radio

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

President Sirleaf releases TRC progress report...no mention of implementation

Written by Julius Kanubah

A report by President Ellen Johnson on the implementation of the TRC report has failed to mention any aspect of the report that has been implemented.

In a report to the Legislature, the President only mentioned steps being taken to ensure the implementation of some aspects of the TRC report.

The report spoke of the setback in the full establishment of the Independent National Human Rights Commission due to the rejection of the nominees.

The President said the rejection of the nominees meant she had to mandate the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to constitute another vetting Committee.

She said the Independent vetting Committee will now recommend qualified individuals to be nominated for confirmation by the Senate.

President Sirleaf also revealed that she has requested the Law reform Commission to work with the Justice Ministry to consider the implications of the TRC report.

She placed emphasis on the recommendations for the setting-up of an extraordinary Criminal Court, a palava hut mechanism and other criminal and public sanctions.

Meanwhile, the Senate has sent the report by the President into Committee room while the House of Representatives says it would debate the report on Thursday.

Star Radio

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

“Challenge TRC report”, Representative Snowe tells Ellen

Written by Onesimus Leigh

A Montserrado lawmaker has called on President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to challenge the TRC report in court if she really wants to contest the 2011 election.

Representative Edwin Snowe said President Sirleaf should consider the TRC recommendation banning her from public office for thirty years as serious.

The Montserrado lawmaker urged the president to take legal action if she feels aggrieved by the TRC report instead of ignoring it.

He believes any other action outside of the law undermines the credibility of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Representative Snowe who is also listed in the TRC report for economic crimes vowed to challenge the report in court.

Scoop World

Wednesday, 17 March 2010

CICC Calls On States To Join The ICC

Press Release: Coalition for the International Criminal Court

CICC Calls On States To Join The ICC Before Kampala Conference

New York – The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC)—a global network of more than 2,500 civil society organizations - called on governments that have not done so, to demonstrate their commitment to international justice and the rule of law by ratifying the Rome Statute, ICC’s founding treaty, before 1 April. By ratifying by this date States would be able to participate in the upcoming Review Conference as a State Party.

Gain More Brain!

“The Court’s jurisdiction grows each time a state ratifies the ICC treaty,” said Brigitte Suhr, CICC Director of Regional Programs. “The Court’s long term effectiveness and legitimacy is dependent on a growing web of states being committed to it. We therefore call on states that haven’t joined, to do so now, and call on those that have joined to recommit themselves publicly to support and cooperate with the Court’s work.”

The Review Conference of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, convened by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, will take place in Kampala, Uganda from May 31 to June 11, 2010. The Conference is a special meeting of ICC states parties to consider amendments to the Rome Statute and to take stock of its implementation and impact.

The Rome Statute and the ICC represent the greatest advance in international criminal law in the last fifty years. The Statute, adopted by a vote of 120-7 in Rome in 1998, called for a review of the Statute and the Court seven years after its entry into force. “The CICC believes the Review Conference offers an excellent opportunity for strengthening the commitment of world leaders and the world community to this historic initiative to end impunity for the worst perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community,” said CICC Convenor William R. Pace.

The discussions at the Review Conference will be centered on two substantive tracks: proposals to amend the Rome Statute and a stocktaking process focused on four important topics related to the impact and implementation of the treaty. “We call on governments that have not done so to complete the process of ratification of the Rome Statute and to prepare national legislation providing for implementation and cooperation with the Treaty and the new system of international criminal justice it has created,” added Pace.

The ICC is complementary to national criminal jurisdictions. States should enact national laws implementing the provisions of the treaty, so that national justice systems can investigate and prosecute individuals accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide and cooperate with the Court in its investigations and prosecutions.

The Coalition also reiterates its call for governments to ratify the APIC and adopt robust ICC legislation in time for the Review Conference, as these actions will enrich and invigorate the work in Kampala, and will ultimately make both the ICC and individual states stronger and better equipped to fulfill their role in ensuring that genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes no longer go unpunished.

The Phnom Pehn Post

Wednesday, 17 March 2010

PM opposes ICC's Bashir indictment

Sebastian Strangio

PRIME Minister Hun Sen has condemned the International Criminal Court (ICC) for issuing a warrant for the arrest of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, telling a Sudanese official the indictment could “adversely affect” peace negotiations in the war-torn African nation.

Koy Kuong, spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that during a meeting last week, Hun Sen told Sudanese Special Envoy and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Ahmet Karti Mohamed that he shared Khartoum’s opposition to the indictment of its head of state.

“During the meeting, Samdech Hun Sen said that the warrant issued by the ICC for the purpose of arresting Omar al-Bashir, an incumbent president, undermines the peace negotiation process,” Koy Kuong said Tuesday.

In March 2009, the ICC, which sits in The Hague, issued an arrest warrant for Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for atrocities allegedly committed in the Darfur region. He is the first sitting head of state ever to be indicted by the ICC.

Hun Sen’s comments, which were reported Tuesday by the Non-Aligned Movement News Network, are similar to his earlier criticisms of internationally-backed legal proceedings underway in Cambodia – in particular, the proposed increase in the number of former Khmer Rouge figures who could be tried by the Khmer Rouge tribunal. Last September, the premier warned that pursuing further indictments risked sparking civil unrest.

Anne Heindel, a legal adviser for the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, described Hun Sen’s comments on the ICC as “notable”, but said they gave no clear indication of his views on the Khmer Rouge tribunal given the many differences between the two institutions.

As a signatory of the Rome Statute of the ICC, she said, Cambodia should support its work, but she added that the efficacy of the Bashir indictment – and indictments of sitting heads of state more generally – was a subject of hot debate.

“The jury’s out on whether [such indictments] contribute to peace or whether they hinder peace,” she said.

This Day (Nigeria)

Tuesday, 16 March 2010

Could FG Be Liable for Genocide in Jos Killings?

JOSEPH CHU'MA OTTEH and EDEM ANDAH argue that government should bear full responsibility for the deaths in the recent Jos killings

Our Constitution declares that “The Federal Republic of Nigeria shall be a State based on the principles of democracy and social justice” and that accordingly, “the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government” –section 14(2)(b) (emphasis added). Yet, our government, in relation to governance, is so patently purposeless. Were this not so, were there some rudimentary benign purpose to governance in Nigeria, maybe five hundred people would not have died so purposelessly and tragically this time again in the Jos South Local Government area. Our government subverts our Constitution and holds itself out as its biggest threat; it takes and enjoys the powers enshrined, but consistently disdains the purposes and responsibilities for which those powers are granted.

This is perhaps the way to interpret the events of Sunday March 7 in the Dogon Na Hauwa villages and two other communities of Jos South Local Government in Plateau State when our government stood by and let a murderous band of herdsmen inflict brutal, calculated, violence on villagers, children, women and men, burning houses, slaughtering villagers under the cover of darkness and making away only after nearly five hundred persons had been horrendously killed. The killers, they say, were avenging the killing of Fulani people in January this year in the Jos North local government area. The sheer brutality of this carnage is only matched by the stark, tragic and inexcusable failure of government and security agencies to prevent these attacks.

Those responsible for failing to stop the mayhem have not ceased to aggravate the pain of this catastrophe by their utterly provocative intrusions into violated spaces. The Nigeria Police Force tells us that we got the number of casualties wrong, and that they – the Police – can confirm the deaths of “only” one hundred and nine persons! The General Officer Commanding the 3rd Armoured Division, Major General Saleh Maina, denies that he received information from officials of Plateau State but admits receiving at about 9pm, “several text messages” alerting him that there were build ups of persons and weapons. He did nothing to prevent to prevent the mayhem.

These killings not only bring indescribable grief and agony, hardship and pain on the survivors and relatives of victims who will forever live under the shadows of this haunting trauma, but also shame, embarrassment and ridicule to Nigeria and our irresponsible governments which stand by and watch defenceless persons get massacred time and time again. A government that lacks the capacity to guarantee the basic, the rudimentary levels of security to life, limb and property! Shame to a broken, disoriented, and confused government that cannot sort out who is actually in charge and commander in chief; to a military that knows how to beat up civilians, denude and dehumanise them, but cannot figure how to respond to imminent life threatening dangers; shame to a Police force that lines its officers along each kilometer of highway to molest hapless commuters but cannot find men to keep the peace in volatile communities; shame to a state government that throws its hands up to say the situation would have been saved had someone else acted.

Accountability for Genocide?

Reports unanimously reflect the deliberate and systematic manner in which the attacks on the villagers occurred. The attacks were intended to destroy the inhabitants of the targeted villages and communities. Such a deliberate onslaught targeted at a specific group based on its ethnic, national, racial or religious identity is arguably a genocide. See for example, Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court where “genocide” includes acts “committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part a

national ethnical, racial or religious group” as “killing members of the group” or “causing serious physical or mental harm to members of the group”. Nigeria has ratified the Rome Statute.

The Nigerian government has an obligation to prevent the occurrence of genocide under a number of treaties and legislations including the Genocide Convention and the Rome Statute and its failure to take effective means to prevent the human carnage in Jos over and over again makes the government accountable. Our government bears full responsibility for this massacre - in addition, of course to the actual perpetrators - for the deaths of hundreds of men, women and children particularly in a case like this where the fatal attacks against ethnic communities in Jos were predictable and foreseeable.

The obligation to prevent genocide is a responsibility that, according to the ICJ in the case of BOSNIA v SERBIA, creates a “normative and compelling” obligation and States must employ all means reasonably available to them so as to prevent the genocide as far as possible.” This is an “obligation of conduct” whether or not the result is achieved and a State would fail its obligations if it “manifestly failed to take all measures to prevent genocide which were within its power and which might have contributed to preventing the genocide”. The obligation arises “at the instant that the State learns or should normally have learned of the existence of a serious risk that genocide will be committed”.

The failure of the Government to prevent the gruesome killing of close to five hundred people even on March 7 in the Jos South Local Government Area when government and security officials admitted to having information of a likely genocide, the failure of government to identify culprits of previous acts of violence or genocide and bring them to justice since 2001, the failure to put in place an effective system to safeguard residents of Jos in the face of repeated and intermittent inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts, makes the government complicit in the killings.

Accountability of Security Chiefs

Heads of security agencies in the country - the Inspector General of Police, the Chief of Army Staff, the Director-General of State Security Service (SSS), the National Security Adviser, the Director General of the Nigerian Intelligence Agency, and even for the Minister of defense, paid from the public purse to maintain peace and order have disappointed Nigerians and should be held accountable. Their collective and individual failures to forestall acts of renewed violence and terrorism against the people and residents of Plateau State evidence serious and intolerable lapses in the discharge of their duties. We just cannot continue to lose thousand of lives at no cost to those responsible for protecting those lives. Also, the Nigeria police has shown, over and over again, that it is institutionally incapable of delivering safety and security services as well as conducting credible investigations that can lead to accountability for gross criminal behaviour and something drastic and far-reaching needs to be done to the police force in this regard.

Conclusion

Government’s failure to stem the spate of religious and ethnic violence in Plateau State by addressing the root issues of that violence in a sincere, fair, participatory and effective manner in the face of repeated genocidal attacks by ethnic and religious extremists in Plateau State underlies much of the problems of not just the Jos, but the Nigerian people. We applaud the recent removal of National Security Adviser Maj-Gen Sakir Mukhtar, and urge that this also be extended to the offices of all the other security chiefs whose failures are implicated in these tragedies. It is crucial that every person involved in the killings in Plateau State, since 2001, be found and made to face full weight of the law.

- Ottey and Andah are Executive Director and Programme Officer respectively of Access to Justice

Naharet (Lebanon)

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Ban Hopeful of 'Progress' in Investigation into Hariri's Murder Case

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he was hopeful that progress will be made in the investigation into the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and related crimes.

"I sincerely hope that there should be progress in the investigation," he told a press conference at the U.N. headquarters in New York.

When asked about when Special Tribunal for Lebanon Prosecutor Daniel Bellemare is coming to New York, Ban said:

"For obvious security reasons, his schedule is not known. Therefore, I'm not in a position to tell you when exactly he will be here. That is his decision and his schedule. If he comes, when he comes, he'll have an opportunity of meeting the people concerned, but please remember that he is an independent investigator of the Special Tribunal, and he has his own programs, own authority and mandate, independent from anybody, including myself.

"It has been almost two years (since) we initiated this establishing of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, and he (Bellemare) has been making great efforts to make progress in his investigation. I'm sure that when he has something to take a legal process, then I'm sure that he will make it known to the world.