

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



Sand mining at Taia River, Taiama

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, 24 March 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Local News

Another Sierra Leonean Testifies for Taylor / *The Exclusive* Page 3

International News

ULIMO Rebels Supplied Arms and Ammunition To The RUF.../ *Charlerstaylortrial.org* Page 4

Charles Taylor Provided Support To The RUF But Only In 1991.../ *Charlerstaylortrial.org* Page 5

Taylor Supported RUF Only in 1991 Witness Says / *Daily Observer* Pages 6-7

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / *UNMIL* Pages 8-12

Peacekeeping – What We Learned after 20 Years / *Daily Observer* Page 13

For Peace and Justice / *World Affairs* Pages 14-18

Mutula Criticises ICC judges / *Kenya Broadcasting Corporation* Page 19

Kenya Witness Protection Program Unsafe / *Kenya Broadcasting Corporation* Pages 20-21

ICC Prosecutor: Sudan Poll like Vote Under Hitler / *Reuters* Page 22

Hariri Tribunal Rattles Hezbollah / *UPI.COM* Page 23

Attempted Arrest of War Criminal - Cronin to Blair in Brussels / *Thepeoplesvoice.org* Page 24

The Exclusive
 Wednesday, 24 March 2010

Another Sierra Leonean Testifies for Taylor

Another Sierra Leonean has begun giving testimonies in defence of Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, the man standing criminal trial for allegedly supporting rebels who murdered and raped Sierra Leoneans. The witness said he was captured and trained in guerrilla warfare by Liberian and Sierra Leonean RUF Fighters in 1991. John Kollie has this transcription from the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor in the Hague... Charles Ngebeh, a Former RUF Fighter said the rebels captured him and his parents from their village in Kailahun District in Si-

erra Leone. Mr. Ngebeh said they were later taken to the Sierra Leonean Town of Pendembu where life became difficult for them.

The Defence witness explained to the court how Former RUF Leader FodaySankoh convinced the people of Kailahun District to join the RUF rebels. Mr. Ngebeh said FodaySankoh told Kailahun District that the All People's Congress, the APC political party was exploitative and he wanted to replace it with the Sierra Leone People's Party, the SLPP.

Mr. Ngebeh said an in-fighting broke out between Charles Taylor's

National Patriotic Front of Liberia, NPFL and FodaySankoh's RUF in 1991. The witness said the in-fighting between the NPFL and the RUF terminated the relationship between Mr. Taylor and Mr. Sankoh.

Mr. Ngebeh said Mr. Taylor ended his support to the RUF and ordered the withdrawal of the all NPFL Forces from Sierra Leone. The witness testified to the source of the RUF weapons at the initial stage of the Sierra Leone civil war. Mr. Charles Ngebeh is the second Sierra Leonean to testify in defence of Mr. Taylor. Mr. Ngebeh's direct examination continues on Tuesday.

Charlerstaylortrial.org

Tuesday, 23 March 2010

ULIMO Rebels Supplied Arms and Ammunition To The RUF, Sierra Leonean Defense Witness Says

By Alpha Sesay

A Sierra Leonean witness, who yesterday commenced his testimony in defense of Charles Taylor, has today told the Special Court for Sierra Leone judges that Sierra Leonean rebels received supplies of arms and ammunition not from Mr. Taylor as alleged by prosecutors, but from another rebel group in Liberia.

Prosecutors have alleged that Mr. Taylor, while leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and then as president of Liberia, supplied arms and ammunition to Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone. These supplies of arms and ammunition, prosecutors allege, were used by the RUF to commit heinous crimes against the civilian population of Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor is on trial as being responsible for the crimes committed by the RUF because according to prosecutors, he knew or had reason to know that the RUF rebels were committing crimes in Sierra Leone but that he failed to prevent the commission of those crimes or that he failed to punish those who committed such crimes. The former Liberian president has denied all the allegations against him.

At his trial in The Hague today, the Sierra Leonean witness and former arms repairer for the RUF, Charles Ngebeh, denied prosecution allegations that Mr. Taylor supplied the RUF with arms and ammunition during the West African country's conflict. Under direct-examination today, Mr. Ngebeh told the judges that the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), a rival group to Mr. Taylor's NPFL, supplied the RUF with arms and ammunition. He explained that sometime in 1996, the RUF Battle Front Commander Sam Bockarie established a relationship with ULIMO that led to the Liberian rebel group supplying arms and ammunition to the RUF.

On the types of weapons received by the RUF from ULIMO, Mr. Ngebeh mentioned "AK-67, G3, GMG and RPG."

Asked by defense counsel for Mr. Taylor, Terry Munyard, what the state or condition of the arms and ammunition received from ULIMO were, the witness explained that "all the materials that we obtained from ULIMO, I repaired them. Most of the arms were rusty, the ammunition too were rusty, they were hidden under the ground, they were hidden under the ground. I would go and clean them up, I service them before we were able to use them. They were rusty," the witness explained.

The witness added that the RUF also bought arms and ammunition from Guinean soldiers.

The witness also affirmed today that RUF rebels forced civilians to get involved in mining activities and that those who refused were either beaten or killed. Prosecutors have alleged that RUF rebels committed crimes of forced labor by forcing civilians to mine diamonds for them. These diamonds, prosecutors say, were transported to Mr. Taylor in Liberia in return for arms and ammunition. In his testimony today, the witness explained how the rebel forces engaged in forced labor.

"It was the soldiers who would go to look out for the civilians. The AFRC and the RUF, they would go and search for the civilians," the witness said.

"How would they make sure that the civilians did what they wanted," Mr. Munyard asked the witness.

"They monitored them," he said.

Asked what would be done to the civilians if they did not do what the rebels wanted, the witness explained that "if you are unlucky, they will kill you. If you are lucky, they'll beat you up. That's the advice. They'll take you by force. That was the options that they gave."

Mr. Ngebeh's testimony continues tomorrow.

CharleTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Tuesday, 23 March 2010

Liberia: Charles Taylor Provided Support To The RUF But Only In 1991, Witness Says

Alpha Sesay

Yesterday, a Sierra Leonean witness commenced his testimony in defense of Charles Taylor at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The witness told the judges that the former Liberian president provided support to Sierra Leonean rebel forces but that such support ceased in 1991 when Mr. Taylor withdrew his Liberian fighters from Sierra Leone.

Charles Ngebeh, a Sierra Leonean who was a member of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group, a group that Mr. Taylor is accused of supporting, today testified that at the initial stages of the war in Sierra Leone, Mr. Taylor did provide support to RUF rebels through the supply of manpower and materials, such as food, medicine, arms, and ammunition. The witness said that such support, however, ceased when RUF rebels and Mr. Taylor's Liberian fighters in Sierra Leone clashed in what has been called "Top 20, Top 40 and Top Final."

Prosecution witnesses testified during the presentation of the prosecution case that in 1991, members of Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), who were fighting alongside rebel forces in Sierra Leone, had a conflict with their RUF counterparts that led to the Liberian fighters leaving Sierra Leone and returning to Liberia. In Mr. Taylor's testimony as a witness in his own defense, the former president addressed the same issue, telling the judges that he did have Liberian fighters helping RUF rebels along the Liberia-Sierra Leone border but that such fighters were withdrawn when they had clashes with the RUF. Mr. Taylor also said that within this period, he did help the RUF with arms and ammunition because they were fighting a common enemy in the United Liberian Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), who were attacking the NPFL with support from the Government of Sierra Leone.

In his testimony today, the defense witness, Mr. Ngebeh, told the judges that when he was captured and taken to the training base in 1991, he was trained by RUF and Liberian NPFL fighters.

In response to a question by Mr. Taylor's defense counsel, Terry Munyard, about who conducted his training when he was taken to the training base after his capture by RUF rebels in 1991, the witness said that "it was a combined forces of RUF and NPFL."

The witness affirmed that at the initial stages of the conflict, Mr. Taylor did provide some support to the RUF but added that such support ceased when the RUF had clashes with the NPFL fighters in Sierra Leone.

"At the initial stage of the war in 1991, RUF used to have assistance from Mr. Taylor. After that infighting, Mr. Taylor withdrew all his men and the weapons they had," the witness said.

Asked to tell the court what kind of support the RUF used to receive from Mr. Taylor, the witness explained that "we used to get food from Liberia, they used to send us medicines and some few ammunitions."

The witness explained that the two sources of ammunition for the RUF at that time were supplied from Mr. Taylor and those obtained after attacking enemy forces.

"There are only two sources that we used to get ammunition from: Mr. Taylor and attacking our enemies," he said.

He explained that after Mr. Taylor withdrew his support from the RUF in 1991, RUF leader Foday Sankoh returned from Liberia and said "he'll never step his foot on Gbarngba [NPFL headquarters at that time] because Taylor had sent an order to arrest him."

"Minus Taylor, plus Taylor, I will fight my war," the witness quoted Mr. Sankoh as having said at that time.

Mr. Ngebeh's testimony continues tomorrow.

Daily Observer (Liberia)

Wednesday, 24 March 2010

Taylor Supported RUF Only in 1991 Witness Says



A Sierra Leonean witness has commenced his testimony in defense of Charles Taylor at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, telling the judges that the former Liberian president provided support to Sierra Leonean rebel forces but that the support ceased in 1991 when Mr. Taylor withdrew his Liberian fighters from Sierra Leone.

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

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

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea

Guinea bauxite output falls 16.4 percent in 2009

(Reuters) - Guinea's annual output of the aluminium ore bauxite fell by 16.4 percent in 2009 versus 2008, according to a government document seen by Reuters on Tuesday. The West African country, which depends on mineral exports for much of its foreign currency income, also produced 15.8 percent less alumina in 2009 than it did in 2008, figures from the finance ministry document showed. Guinea, the world's biggest exporter of bauxite, is trying to emerge from a political crisis which has disrupted relations between the government and some mining firms, and slowed the pace of business since a military coup in December 2008. Total production of bauxite was 14,774,200 tonnes in 2009, and total production of alumina was 500,400 tonnes.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone Takes Steps to Combat Drug Trafficking and Corruption – UN official

http://standardtimespress.net/cgi-bin/artman/publish/article_4544.shtml

Sierra Leone has made considerable progress in its efforts to combat the problems of illicit drug trafficking and corruption, but little has been done to implement programmes to create employment for the youth in the West African country, a senior United Nations official said today. The establishment by the Sierra Leonean Government of the Joint Drug Interdiction Taskforce with support from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other partners was a significant achievement, Michael von der Schulenburg, the Secretary-General's Executive Representative to Sierra Leone told a Security Council meeting in New York. The taskforce will now be upgraded to a transitional crime unit, he added. Mr. Schulenburg also noted the "bold steps" taken by Sierra Leone in the fight against corruption, citing a string of recent arrests and convictions of both low-ranking and senior officials on charges related to corruption. Efforts to create employment opportunities for the youth have, however, not been as successful, said Mr. Schulenburg, who is also the head of the UN Integrated Peace building Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). "Over the last two years, there have been many plans and assessments but they have resulted in relatively few tangible programmes that would significantly impact the lives of a sizeable number of the youth," Mr. Schulenburg said when introducing the Secretary-General's fourth report on UNIPSIL to the Council. "I believe the responsibility for this must be equally shared by the Government and its international development partners," he added.

Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast growth could fall to 3 percent - IMF

(Reuters) - The International Monetary Fund said on Monday that Ivory Coast's economic growth could fall to 3 percent this year, after weeks of political instability shook the nation and power cuts hurt business. "The economic program for 2010 is being pursued in an economic environment that has deteriorated significantly. The socio-political events of February and recent power shortages have led to a slowdown in activity, and economic growth could fall slightly to 3 percent," IMF official Doris Ross said in a press release, after a visit to the country. It was below the Finance Ministry's own forecast of 4 percent. Growth in 2009 was 3.8 percent, she said, noting that this was despite the financial crisis and that it marked the first uptick in GDP per capita since 1998, a year before a coup threw the country into turmoil. "Benefiting from abundant rainfall and the rise in world cocoa prices, in particular, agriculture achieved significant progress," she said. Ivory Coast is awaiting elections needed to draw a line under years of instability and stalemate that followed a brief but divisive 2002-3 civil war.

Local Media – Newspaper

Keith Jubah Case Begins

[The Inquirer, The News, New Democrat]

- The State's first witness in Keith Jubah's murder trial has dispelled accusations of torture by all nine defendants to provide statement during police investigations.
- All nine defendants averred that they were being tortured, coerced and intimidated which led them to admit committing the crime.
- They also claimed that they were not told of their constitutional rights; "meaning right to remain silent because anything said will be used against you in a court of jurisdiction", and right to have a counsel at all aspects of the investigation.
- They prayed to be granted a motion for the suppression of the evidences from which the indictment was drawn charging them with the commission of the crime of Murder, Criminal Conspiracy and Criminal Mischief.
- Judge Sikajipo Wolloh denied the motion and ordered the case proceeded with for trial.
- But yesterday, the head of the investigation team, Witness John Kollie, clarified in open court that it was from their voluntary statements that "we prepared a comprehensive report followed by a charge sheet."
- "First person picked up was defendant Joseph Kerkula and immediately cautioned of his Miranda rights which he willingly gave and confessed to the investigation that he was part of the act.
- There he started naming his colleagues," the witness explained.

US Ambassador Gowned "Paramount Chief"

[The Inquirer, The News]

- US Ambassador to Liberia, Linda Thomas Greenfield, was yesterday gowned paramount chief of Suakoko, Bong County for the hard work she has done and continues to do to help the Liberian people.
- Speaking at the programme at the headquarters of the National Traditional Council of Liberia, Ambassador Greenfield thanked the chiefs and elders and promised to do more to help the people of Liberia.
- Ambassador Greenfield was given two lots of land in Suakoko, Bong County as paramount chief to enable her have her own house in Bong County.
- The US diplomat was overjoyed by the honor given her by the traditional people of Liberia.

AU Envoy Pledges Support For Liberia's Reconstruction Efforts

[The Inquirer, The Informer]

- The African Union (AU) Ambassador to Liberia who is also the Special Representative of AU Chairperson, Akin Fayomi says the AU will continue to partner with UNMIL, ECOWAS, other agencies and the Government of Liberia, to ensure that post conflict structural development of Liberia remains on the right track.
- Ambassador Fayomi made the statement during a familiarization visit to the headquarters of Sector A and the Nigerian Contingent at Camp Abuja, Star Base in Monrovia.

- He stressed that his coming early this year was auspicious, considering the fact that AU considers Liberia as a strategic partner.
- Earlier, the Nigerian Contingent Commander, Brigadier General Ebiobowei Awala gave the AU envoy an update of the Contingent's contributions in the Liberian peace process.

WAEC 58th Annual Meeting Opens Today

[The Inquirer, The News]

- The 58th Annual Council Meeting of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) will commence today at the Samuel K. Doe Sports Complex in Paynesville with a special edition of the WAEC Endowment Fund Lecture.
- The Registrar of the Council, Alhaja Mulikat A. Bello stated Thursday that the former Minister of Education, Dr. D. Evelyn Kandakai will serve as keynote speaker at the Endowment Fund lecture forum.
- Madam Bello further stated that the official opening of the Council Meeting will take place Tuesday, during which time the Liberian leader, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will deliver the keynote address and declare the Meeting open.
- According to the Council Registrar, the Annual Council Meeting will receive reports from its various international committees and various national offices for 2009/2010 relating to their work and challenges.

Defense Minister Faces Legislative Inquest Today

[Heritage, The Informer]

- Defense Minister Brownie Samukai is expected to face legislative inquest today, Tuesday before the plenary of the House of Representatives for reportedly inciting the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) against the Legislature.
- The plenary, which reached the decision last Thursday, wants Minister Samukai appear to provide justification for assertions he reportedly made, while appearing on a live television talk show.
- Minister Samukai, according to the lawmakers, reportedly asserted that plans were underway by the legislature to increase their allowances in the 2010/2011 Fiscal Budget, while members of the AFL make only US\$90.00.
- The reported assertions by the Defense Minister, the lawmakers emphasized, aim to provoke the military against the Legislature.

President Sirleaf Welcomes State Department Report

[The News, The Analyst]

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has welcomed the Report released few days ago by the US State Department on human rights issues in Liberia, saying that it points to the many challenges she has sought to resolve since assuming office in 2006.
- The State Department Report, among other issues, speaks about corruption, poor judicial process, but Presidential Press Secretary Cyrus Badio at his regular Monday press briefing said the issue of corruption is not new in Liberia.
- But what is new, according to him as far as the issue of corruption is concerned, is that the President following in the footsteps of the United States has begun the process of creating institutions to check corruption.
- He named the creation of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, the General Auditing Commission, the Governance Commission and many other institutions that have been made independent and given the means to work freely, in an atmosphere of unprecedented freedom of speech.

LD1 Million, Unspecified US Dollars Missing At FI Bank

[New Democrat]

- [SIC] Over Liberian one million dollars, along with an unspecified amount of US dollars, has been reportedly stolen from the First International Bank Liberia Limited (FI Bank) with several top employees being linked.

- The theft is said to have occurred at the bank's Clara Town branch during the weekend, with L\$1.4 million withdrawn from depositors' accounts.
- Several United States dollars were reportedly stolen but the actual sum has not been established.
- Officers at the National Bureau of Investigation confirmed the theft case but gave no details.
- Police have said they are still gathering information on the matter.

ECOWAS Confab Begins Today

[New Democrat]

- A 5-day Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) international conference commemorating and evaluating twenty years of involvement in peace process in West Africa opened in Monrovia with the view of learning from the region's past.
- Organizers say the conference is intended to take a look at the past, learning lessons and consolidating achievements with specific focus on accomplishments shortcomings and lessons learned from crafting and implementing of peace agreement in the region in order to enhance future interventions in conflict, a press release from the Ministry of Information said.
- The conference will bring together over 150 participants comprising of former Heads of States and former Force Commanders from the region.

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

President Sirleaf Addresses ECOWAS Conference Tuesday

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will today Tuesday deliver the keynote address at the opening of an International conference of ECOWAS convening in Liberia.
- The conference which runs from March 23rd to 28th is to commemorate and evaluate the organization's twenty years involvement in peace process in West Africa.
- Presidential Press Secretary Cyrus Badio says President Sirleaf will address issues relating to the achievements and failures of ECOWAS.
- The President will also speak on lessons learned in the organization's two decades of peace process in the sub region.

President Sirleaf Welcomes US State Department Human Rights Report on Liberia

Prince Johnson's Party Official Reports Attack, Rape In Home

- [SIC] An executive member of Senator Prince Johnson's proposed National Democratic Union of Progress Party has reported an attack on his home.
- Former Nimba County lawmaker Benedict Bartuah said fifteen men armed with AK-47 rifles broke into his house early Monday morning and raped his daughter.
- Mr. Bartuah said the men told his nineteen-year old daughter to take responsibility for whatever they had planned to do to him.
- According to him, he had gone to a relative's house on the Old Road after an interaction with Senator Prince Johnson Sunday when the men attacked.

Government Loses Millions Of Dollars

- The Ministry of Commerce says government is losing millions of dollars in revenue due to a poorly developed Intellectual Property system.
- Commerce Minister Miata Beysolow said unlike Liberia, intellectual property has become a major source of wealth creation in modern economies.
- Minister Beysolow expressed frustration that Liberia has not been privileged to benefit from such massive wealth creation exercise.
- According to the Commerce Minister, owners of intellectual property in Liberia continue to live in poverty just because of the lack of knowledge.
- The Minister said steps were now being taken in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organization to tap into the wealth that can be derived from Intellectual Property Rights.
- Minister Beysolow spoke Monday at the start of a three-day National Symposium on Intellectual Property Education, Training and Research.

Government Minister Holds Secret Meeting To Remove County Superintendent

- [SIC] Tension is reportedly brewing between Posts and Telecommunications Minister Jeremiah Sulunteh and Bong County Superintendent Ranney Jackson.
- Superintendent Jackson accused Minister Sulunteh of holding secret meetings in the County to unseat him.
- The Bong County Superintendent claims Minister Sulunteh met with youths in Gbarnga to concoct lies against him to anger President Sirleaf.
- But Minister Sulunteh over the weekend denied the allegation and said Superintendent Jackson is speaking out of fear because of information that he may be appointed as Internal Affairs Minister and accused the Superintendent of secretly lobbying with some Senators not to confirm him if he is appointed.

Two Men Arrested With 130 Kilograms Marijuana

- The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in Bong County has arrested two men with 130 kilograms of marijuana valued at three hundred ninety thousand Liberian dollars.
- Darius Jacob and Richard Kollie were arrested separately with the illegal substance at the Gbarnga Iron Gate following a security tip off.
- According to reports, the men have admitted to ownership of the drug and have been sent to court for prosecution.

NEC Co-Chair Off To Ghana

- The Co-Chairman of the National Elections Commission (NEC) has left the country for Accra, Ghana to attend an international conference on electoral violence.
- A NEC release said Counsellor Elizabeth Nelson is among scores of participants drawn from governments and electoral bodies across Africa, UN and EU.
- According to the release, the conference which runs from March 22 to 24 is being held under the theme: preventing electoral violence and will reflect on effective prevention and mitigation of violence through credible elections and good governance.
- Participants at the conference will also address the question of inclusion and exclusion, share best practices and strategize on ways of harnessing collaboration.

Daily Observer (Liberia)

Tuesday, 23 March 2010

Peacekeeping – What We Learned after 20 Years

History was made 20 years ago when the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) set up an intervention military force to undertake a peacekeeping mission in Liberia, a member country. The political and social situations in Liberia had completely broken and become totally intractable, desperate and there was need for foreign help. ECOWAS came to Liberia's plight by dispatching a military force as peacekeeping machinery. Towards this end the contingent, known as ECOMOG wore white helmets.

The war is over and Liberia is now at peace; however, ECOWAS is holding a meeting here this week assessing the role of ECOMOG in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau determining the pros and cons in their operations.

Liberians who remained in the theater of operation most of the time always look back and hail: "Thank God for ECOMOG!" One should take this as a clear satisfaction for the role the Peacekeeping Unit played in the Liberian civil war. ECOMOG came, indeed, on a peace mission, but no sooner had they landed than the hawkish attitude of Taylor's forces led ECOMOG to discard their white helmets in order to speak their language.

By readily familiarizing themselves with the situation on the ground and assimilating with the people, most of who were in desperate need, the Peacekeepers found themselves among friends. This was not the case, however, in areas held by the rebels. On many occasions ECOMOG arranged peace-building trips into areas held by the rebels and at all times the intentions gained naught.

Realizing the positive role the media play in confidence building, ECOMOG had the local journalists in Monrovia to re-emerge from hiding to create a newspaper called the TORCHLIGHT with the intention of building goodwill and understanding. Many in and out of Liberia rejoiced to see the paper when it came out and all factions in Monrovia cooperated in its production. The Taylor group, however, contented themselves by vilifying the Monrovia press.

Looking back after 20 years, however, Liberians have learned much out of war. They learned that in time of need our African neighbors cared for us far more than we had thought. Liberians, too, developed a closer bond for their African brothers.

The ECOMOG Mission also taught us that regional cooperation in terms of peace-building and peacekeeping is better served when we work together in the interest of the region depending on friends from afar.

In this world of global changes, the ECOMOG mission has taught us that we ought to pool our resources together and expand the operation of ECOMOG to work towards Regional Disaster Relief.

The frequency of flood bringing about food shortage and the displacement of people because of the destruction of towns and villages tell us that we alone cannot do it. Chile, with its long experience in earthquake visitation, could not go it alone; Haiti could not go it alone. These natural disasters need the combine cooperation of all forces in certain regions. And the combined efforts deployed globally to aid Haiti should serve as a worthwhile lesson for us emulate. Planners of ECOWAS ought to harness their energies, resources and training to combat the global struggle brought on us by climate change. This is our new challenge.

World Affairs

Tuesday, 23 March 2010

For peace and justice

BETWA SHARMA

in Khartoum & Darfur

A ceasefire with the main rebel group opens the road to peace, but finding a political solution remains a challenge.

ALBERT GONZALEZ FARRAN/REUTERS



President Omar al-Bashir (centre) arrives at El Fasher International Airport, north Darfur, on February 24. He is getting ready to contest the elections in April.

All her life, Sarah Rahman has seen her homeland bruised by savage violence. Even as North Sudan and South Sudan made peace after four decades of fighting, the conflict in Darfur persists. But the 24-year-old businesswoman sees “real peace” coming soon. “I believe this time all the killing will stop,” she

said.

The ceasefire signed in February by the government and the main rebel group in Darfur has already been marred by fierce clashes between the Sudanese army and the splintered insurgent forces. Finding a political solution and working out a genuine power-sharing formula in Darfur lies at the heart of a real peace deal. In the recent excitement, the arrest warrant issued against the Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir, for crimes in Darfur has been sidelined. Fear of being apprehended in another country might have made him restrict his movements, but the “wanted” man is getting ready to contest national elections in April.

Despite bleak chances of enforcement, the arrest warrant, issued in March 2009, remains valid. One year on, the indictment highlights the limitations of the international legal machine when faced with a politically volatile situation. For seven years now, the Arab-dominated government in Khartoum has fought a bloody battle against African rebel groups in Darfur. At the heart of the conflict lies the neglect of a large chunk of Sudan’s citizenry. It is often said that the rulers see the country as the “foot of Arabia and not the head of Africa”.

Darfur means the ‘land of the Fur’, the largest African tribe of the region, and the Fur share their land with more than 30 Arab and non-Arab tribes. The government has been accused of ethnically cleansing black African tribes, especially the Fur, the Zaghawa and the Masalit. Millions of people have been displaced and thousands killed.

Like the rest of the country, Sarah Rahman is assessing the impact of the first arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) against a sitting head of state. Born to a Fur father and an Arab mother, Sarah Rahman describes the ICC decision as “very good and fair”. The young woman wants justice for her father’s tribe and peace for her country. “Whoever replaces him (Bashir) will bring more war,” she said.

The indictment revealed a disconnect between the ICC’s objective of promoting justice in the face of a peace agenda and assertions of sovereignty. Several Arab nations and the African Union insist that indicting Bashir will frustrate the endeavours for peace in Sudan and prolong the war. The opposing camp is adamant that justice is at the heart of the peace process. International non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in particular, insist that the trial of Bashir will be a victory for human rights and an end to impunity.

The international community is trying to figure out if peace and justice are inseparable or whether settling for peace without justice is acceptable in a situation of ongoing violence and unspeakable suffering. The Sudanese people are divided in their allegiance to Bashir and their support of the ICC, but with the media and public opinion so tightly controlled by the government, it is difficult to put a finger on the pulse of the nation.

Two friends, Rayan Kamel and Salma Mohammad, both 19, sit near a shady column at the Afhad Women's University building in Omdurman city. "What has happened in Darfur is terrible, but only the people of Sudan can punish Bashir," said Salma.

Many feel that justice has to be local. "We don't need the white man to come in," said Mansour Al Ajab, a Member of Parliament. "We have our own experts, mediators and facilitators to discuss the problem."

A camp for the displaced in Darfur

One alternative to international justice is to have domestic trials in Sudan, but the public opinion is that free and fair trials are impossible. "There is no justice in this country," said Khalid Abdelwahab, a college student from Donogla city in North Sudan.

Stout houses and soaring mosques make up capital Khartoum's skyline. Oil money gleams through the hefty bridges across the confluence of the White Nile and the Blue Nile. New cars whizz back and forth on the broad roads and sturdy flyovers.

Life is slow. Women sell sugar-soaked tea in small, grimy glasses at every street corner. The dull skyline is being transformed by dogged construction. Among several of the new buildings, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's \$5-billion hotel stands out. Its outrageous glass edifice, shaped like a gigantic egg, sparkles bluer than the Nile.

A young photographer from Khartoum describes the ICC action as both ignorant and arrogant. "It is a threat to a sovereign country," said Issraa El Kogali. "There is no defence of what happened in Darfur, but there is much more at stake here."

Characterising the West's concern as phoney, Issraa El Kogali, who has been educated in the United States, mocks American teenagers who wear "Save Darfur" wristbands but cannot place Darfur on the map. "It has become fashionable to take up a cause," she said. She wants practical measures like national elections in 2010 and getting the rebel groups to the table to work out a durable peace agreement with the government.

The first presidential and parliamentary elections in more than 20 years will be held in April. Bashir, who came to power in a military coup in 1989, is standing again. A win, which is quite likely because of his National Congress Party's enormous influence, will allow the President's supporters to ask the ICC to back away from a "democratically" elected leader.

There are others who simply point out that the country has been at war for 44 out of the 54 years since independence. "People want their homes built, the economy revitalised and safety established in their villages," said

Mahjoub Haroun, the director of Future Trends Foundation, a think tank based in Khartoum. “The ICC is not best suited to do justice in Sudan.”

Whispers in Darfur

The rickety Soviet-era aircraft starts moving to Darfur at the call of ‘Allah-o-Akbar’. When the altitude drops suddenly during the flight, the shadows of scorched villages in the desert below become visible. Military helicopters neatly line the airport in Nyala, the capital city of South Darfur. Local people make fun of the handsome road into the city. “It is to impress foreigners,” they say.

Nyala is dotted with military jeeps, machine gun positions and students with bulky backpacks. A whiff of urbanism lingers over the main marketplace – a grubby labyrinth of small traders, hardware stores and vegetable sellers. The second largest displacement camp called Ottash with 80,000 residents is on the outskirts of the city. Local people describe it as a “five-star” one since foreign diplomats and journalists are shown only this camp and similar better-off ones.

The site resembles a small town of concrete houses, brick cabins, mud huts and tattered tents. Many residents work in the city and return home in the evening. The sun beats down on tea sellers, merchants on donkey carts, and children who clamour to be photographed. One of the inhabitants, Omar Mohammad Yukub, came four years ago after his village was scorched by the Janjaweed, a ruthless Arab militia group accused of killing and raping thousands of Darfuris.

Wary of the government official (who is always present with a journalist), Yukub does not say whether he wants *kanoon* (justice). “God will bring peace,” he said. “Not the ICC or the United Nations or the government.”

In the camp marketplace, a group of men sit under the shade of a dusty sheet. All of them talk about peace and returning home. Only Suleiman (first name not used) braves a comment on the ICC. “No one is expecting peace in the near future,” he said. “The ICC decision means that the world has recognised the plight of the people.” The group quickly requests that the topic be changed as they anticipate trouble from the camp guards.

A humanitarian worker from India in Darfur, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, “The feeling I get is that people in the camps are not so angry with the President.” There are many Sudanese who believe that Bashir shares the blame but the true villains are other high-ranking officials and army personnel. But his colleague (name concealed), who is a Darfurian, has a different vibe on the matter. “As international pressure grows, people are confident that Bashir will not be around for much longer,” he said.

The flights back from Nyala to Khartoum can be delayed for hours. The canteen, which serves good tea and bland biscuits, fills up with an intriguing assortment of foreigners who try to find the least dusty seat. “Don’t worry, talk freely,” said a chatty airport official with a half-wink and then proceeded to slam the ICC as a tool of Western imperialists bent on re-colonising Africa. “This is all a big game and we are just pawns,” he said.

The ICC has also come under considerable fire for not trying the officials in the Bush administration in Iraq and for the Israeli action in Gaza. “Why not the U.S. and Israel?” has become the auto response for many Sudanese who are deeply suspicious of the court’s motives.

Back in the capital, millionaire-businessman Ahmed Abdellatif is outraged. “If George Bush and Dick Cheney were to have a fair trial in the International Court, then I will be the first one to say to our President, please go and face the music,” he said.

One of the richest men in Sudan, Abdellatif is worried about commerce and industry getting buried under the debris of the indictment. “We have lost our credit lines with the European banks. Nobody wants to risk having their money or supplies in Sudan,” he said. “Unfortunately, it looks like a head-on collision with the international community.”

At one point, over 30 African member-states of the ICC considered a mass withdrawal from the tribunal to protest against Bashir’s indictment and the targeting of African leaders. Jack Snyder, a leading political scientist at

Columbia University, foresees the court running into more trouble. “Things are going really bad for the ICC,” he said. “The ICC can be a useful institution, but it needs a change of policy and procedure if it wants to survive.”

However, an anthropologist at Khartoum University, Abdul-Jalil, who asked his full name not be used, dismisses the theories of Western imperialism. “It is always a power game,” he said. “There are no angels behind the ICC, but you cannot allow extremists to go unpunished.”

Forgive and forget

Many Darfuri politicians, such as Member of Parliament Abdul Rahman Adam Salih, see the indictment as a tool for leverage. “It is a kind of pressure that is being put on the government, which is now carrying out the necessary development projects,” Salih said. He predicts that if Bashir delivers on the promise of prosperity in the region, he may even be let off the hook. “Forgiveness is part of Sudanese culture,” he said. “If Bashir comes to Darfur and says ‘I am sorry, I made a mistake’, people may forgive him.”

The groups that oppose the indictment want the Security Council to defer the case and see if the Sudanese government mends its ways with the arrest warrant hanging over its head. “The ICC threat can have a salutary effect as a threat,” said Mahmood Mamdani, an Africa expert at Columbia University, speaking at a Darfur debate. “But if the threat is delivered, it can have dangerous and unintended consequences.”

In 2009, the Sudan report of U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that “key outstanding issues – most notably elections and the referendum – are highly sensitive and will have the greatest impact on Sudanese political life”. Meanwhile, the ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, is pursuing the enforcement of the arrest warrant, which so far has seen no practical implementation except for Bashir staying close to home.

In December 2009, while presenting his latest report on the ICC to the Security Council, Moreno-Ocampo stressed that indicted leaders had to face responsibility in court. “President Bashir is not doing that. He is not going to court. He is not appointing a lawyer,” he said. “Instead he is choosing as his defence line a political campaign.... The last one is exacerbating the conflict in the South to try to shift attention from the victims in Darfur.”

The Brazilian lawyer also opened up two more fronts of potential criminal prosecution for war-related crimes. The first “next new form of crime” is any forced evacuation, in 2010, of displaced people back to their villages that may lack water or still be unsafe.

The second area of court action being considered by the office of the prosecutor is against those government officials who have actively denied the alleged crimes in Darfur. “Part of the activities of President Bashir is covering up his own crimes. Whoever is part of this cover-up could be prosecuted by the ICC,” Moreno-Ocampo said.

Even as the political blizzard against Bashir seemed to have softened into an occasional gust, the ICC prosecutor is in no mood to forgive or forget. “The arrest of President Bashir will take time, maybe two years, maybe two months, maybe 20 years and the court could wait,” Moreno-Ocampo said. “He definitely needs to face justice the same way as President [Slobodan] Milosevic [of former Yugoslavia], President [Charles] Taylor [Liberia], and [the former] Prime Minister of Rwanda.”

But experts point out that all these cases, including the Nuremburg trials, are instances of victors’ justice over the accused who had been utterly vanquished. In Sudan, Bashir remains politically and militarily a personality who enjoys extensive popular support. The ICC may simply not be strong enough to punch out Sudan’s regime. Moreno-Ocampo’s decisions are “governing political and humanitarian outcomes”, according to Snyder. “The ICC is a legal organisation that is trying to solve political problems with legal tools,” he said.

Those who oppose the arrest warrant point to the South African leaders who opted for Truth and Reconciliation Commission instead of trials. Trials correspond to victors’ justice but mechanisms like the TRC are for “survivors’ justice”, according to Mamdani. “It was born out of the realisation that in African conflicts there are no victors,” he said.

The Haboob

Every year, Khartoum is visited by a fierce dust storm called the Haboob. The sky suddenly turns rusty red and the colossal cloud of dust scurrying towards their homes sends people scrambling to close doors, shutter windows, and stuff the cracks in the walls with wet towels. So describes Zahya, an aged Darfuri woman who squats near Khartoum University and does not know her age. The tea seller refuses to talk politics, but her croaky voice paints a vivid picture of the city being flattened in an orange and brown blur.

“It gets blown away,” she cackles, pointing just above her head to a grimy cloth on four flimsy sticks that shade her kettle and stove.

Slow-moving and treacherous, Sudan may soon have to face a legal and political Haboob that can blow away more than Zahya’s rags.

Betwa Sharma is a New York-based journalist.

Kenya Broadcasting Corporation

Tuesday, 23 March 2010

Mutula criticises ICC judges

Written By: KBC reporters

Justice Minister Mutula Kilonzo Tuesday accused the International Criminal Court of delaying justice in the prosecution of suspected perpetrators of the post election violence.

Mutula hit out at the ICC pre-trial Judges accusing them of taking too long to either grant or deny ICC prosecutor Louis Moreno Ocampo permission to commence investigations into the Kenya situation.

He said the victims of post election violence were getting frustrated over the delay as they wait for justice to prevail.

The Justice Minister said he would revive the quest for a local tribunal to deliver justice to the victims. He also pledged to fast-track the witness protection act to protect who hold crucial information on post poll chaos.

Ocampo presented additional information to the pre-trial Judges early this month to guide them deliver their judgment.

The minister who was Speaking in Nairobi during the launch of a guide to transitional justice in Kenya said the book, which would aid public education and transitional justice process in Kenya, signified the Government's commitment towards addressing the past injustices in the country.

While commending the authors of the guide, the minister said the book would increase the participation of citizens in the Truth Justices and Reconciliation Commission

"I am aware the research took into account various experiences on transitional justice mechanisms in the continent since it addressed critical issues on the same in other countries and offered lessons for future truth commissions", the Minister noted.

He encouraged Kenyans to make every effort to heal the wounds that history has inflicted on the people.

Embattled Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission Chairman (TJRC) Bethuel Kiplagat attended the ceremony.



Caption: Mutula said that the ICC pre-trial Judges were taking too long to either grant or deny ICC prosecutor Louis Moreno Ocampo permission to commence investigations

Associated Press
Tuesday, 23 March 2010

Witnesses: Kenya witness protection program unsafe

By TOM ODULA

NAIROBI, Kenya — Kenya's government is trying to launch a witness protection program, yet those who were threatened after the country's post-election violence left more than 1,000 dead say they're so afraid that they want no part of it.

The International Criminal Court is investigating whether to open a formal case into the 2007-2008 fighting and is now gathering testimony in Kenya.

But some witnesses fear the country's power players could hunt them down for retribution even if they were protected by a government witness protection program.

"We will die if we go there," said Samuel Kimeli Kosgei, who testified during a government inquiry after watching a church filled with women and children set on fire. Dozens died in that attack.

Kosgei is one of two witnesses who told The Associated Press about living in hiding after their names were leaked out of a government commission, even though they were assured they would remain anonymous.

Government spokesman Alfred Mutua declined to comment.

The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno Ocampo, has asked the court's judges for permission to start investigations into Kenya's violence. Ocampo has said he believes top officials from Kenya's major political parties were responsible for crimes against humanity.

More than 1,000 people were killed and 600,000 forced from their homes after Kenya's electoral commission declared that President Mwai Kibaki had won a second term in the December 2007 poll.

Raila Odinga's opposition party claimed the vote was rigged, leading to two months of upheavals. Many protesters who clashed with police were killed, but the violence also erupted along tribal lines. Odinga later became prime minister under a power-sharing deal that was later reached.

The ICC also has a witness protection program that Kenyan witnesses could take part in even at this early stage of the investigation, but they must be referred by the prosecution or defense, according to an ICC official who spoke on condition of anonymity in line with official policy.

Kenya launched a witness protection program in 2008 following international pressure to protect those willing to testify, but the program came under heavy criticism. The government strengthened the program's independence from the Attorney General's office earlier this year, but parliament still must approve the changes.

Hassan Omar Hassan, the vice chairman of the government-funded Kenya National Commission of Human Rights, said once parliament approves the changes witnesses may be well protected by the program. But others are not convinced.

"You cannot trust this government. They protect each other," Kosgei said.

A political cartoon in Tuesday's edition of the Daily Nation newspaper depicts a policeman offering a shirt to a high value witness as "protective wear." The shirt has a bulls-eye painted on it.

Kosgei said he does not know who exposed his identity following his testimony to the commission in August 2008. He said he has received death threats and was forced into hiding with his wife and infant child.

For about a year a non-governmental organization gave him money for his upkeep but funding has run out and he is scrounging in the streets of Nairobi. Still, he said he prefers a life of misery to the government protection program.

"If you have sensitive information in Kenya be prepared to die when you give it out," Kosgei said. "My life is hell now."

Associated Press Writer Mike Corder in The Hague, Netherlands contributed to this report.

Reuters

Tuesday, 23 March 2010

ICC prosecutor: Sudan poll like vote under Hitler

BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) said on Tuesday that monitoring Sudan's election next month would be like monitoring a vote in Hitler's Germany.

Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo pressed for the arrest warrant issued by the ICC a year ago against Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur region. Bashir is contesting the poll.

Speaking a day after Bashir threatened to expel international election monitors for saying the vote may have to be delayed to deal with logistical problems, Moreno-Campo told a Brussels seminar:

"It's like monitoring a Hitler election. It's a huge challenge."

Moreno-Campo is not involved in election monitoring. The European Union plans to send 130 observers to Sudan in April to assess the election, the country's first multi-party vote in more than two decades.

Accusations of fraud have mounted ahead of the vote. The only long-term international observer mission in Sudan, the Carter Center, has said the election remains "at risk on multiple fronts" and urged Sudan to lift harsh restrictions on rallies and end fighting in Darfur ahead of the ballot.

Bashir expelled major aid agencies from Darfur after the ICC last year issued its arrest warrant on counts that include murder, rape and torture.

Many opposition parties have called for the elections to be postponed, saying Sudan needs time to pass democratic reforms.

The vote is part of a 2005 peace agreement that ended more than two decades of civil war between north and south Sudan.

UPI.COM

Monday, 22 March 2010

http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2010/03/22/Hariri-tribunal-rattles-Hezbollah/UPI-

Hariri tribunal rattles Hezbollah

BEIRUT, Lebanon, March 22 (UPI) -- The U.N. investigation into the 2005 slaying of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri could create trouble for speaking with Hezbollah, officials said.

Wi'am Wahhab, the leader of the pro-Syrian Tawhid Movement, said there could be "problems" after allegations surfaced that the U.N. panel examining the Hariri assassination spoke with members of Hezbollah, Lebanon's Daily Star newspaper reports Monday.

German news magazine Der Spiegel in 2009 said it obtained evidence from the Special Tribunal for Lebanon that showed Hezbollah was involved in the plot.

Der Spiegel said cellphone records linked Hezbollah operatives to the planning of the February 2005 operation, which killed several others in a massive suicide bombing in Beirut.

Hezbollah and Syria were linked to the plot to kill the pro-Western Hariri as his motorcade traveled through downtown Beirut.

Nawwaf Moussawi, a lawmaker with Hezbollah, said the Shiite resistance movement would comment on the U.N.-backed probe "in due course."

Lebanese lawmakers said, even if the panel interviewed Hezbollah, it doesn't mean there is a link to the assassination.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah issued a public statement on the Der Spiegel report in 2009, saying it was "fabricated" in an attempt to "create sedition and conflict between the Sunnis and the Shiites, mainly Hezbollah."

Thepeoplesvoice.org

Wednesday, March 24, 2010

<http://www.thepeoplesvoice.org/TPV3/Voices.php/2010/03/24/attempted-arrest-of-war-criminal-cronin->

Attempted Arrest of war criminal - Cronin to Blair in Brussels

Re-reported with comment by Carolyn Bennett

"You are guilty of war crimes, a war of aggression, military conflict waged without the justification of self-defense, in breach of customary international law specifically the Nuremberg Principles under the rubric of the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court the legal body exercising jurisdiction over the crime of aggression..."



Irish journalist, Citizen David Cronin attempted to arrest former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and escort him to the nearest Brussels police station to be charged formally with these crimes.

If successful and "found to be eligible for the bounty," Cronin said, "he would prefer that the money go to a Palestinian human rights charity in the Gaza Strip."

Reports said Blair "momentarily flinched" at the attempted arrest; but a bodyguard "quickly pushed" Cronin away. The former UK prime minister is in

Brussels for a hearing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Belgium and the UK have ratified the Rome Statute but all parties to the text have yet to adopt a definition of the "crime of aggression." In a review conference to be held later this year, parties to the Statute are expected to come to an agreement on the definition of "crime of aggression."

"My motivation in trying to arrest Blair," Cronin told the press, "is entirely based on my contempt for the

crimes Adobe Audition 3.0.Ink he [Blair] has committed and abetted in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, Lebanon and Serbia ... Perhaps one million lives were lost in Iraq alone."

This news item gives pause to consider another living quarter for the dock: Bush-Clinton-Bush-Obama.