

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Wednesday, 31 March 2010

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

Wednesday, 31 March 2010

“Reconciliation should be Sierra Leone driven” - US Chief of Mission

By Ishmael Bayoh

The Deputy Chief of Mission of the United States Embassy, Glenn Fedzer has called on Sierra Leoneans to lead the reconciliation process and take ownership of it.

Glenn Fedzer was yesterday speaking at the launch of the second report of Fambul Tok at their headquarters at Robert Street where he also said the reconciliation process should also be driven from within Sierra Leonean, communities and not to be allowed to be driven from outside. He thus recognized that there should both be an external and

internal change for peace to prevail and for communities to prosper. He however noted that until communities and the people realize that they should work together, total peace will be far achieved and went on to explain that the United States has given support to the TRC, the Special Court being few of the areas they have supported since the end of the war. Both Paramount Chiefs, Alfred Ndwama Banya of Kargboro Chiefdom and Cyril Foray Gondor of Upper Bambara, Kailahun District explained progress made in reconciling war victims in their Districts, Kono, Moyamba and Koinadugu. PC. Cyril Foray recounted

March 23, 1991 when the war started and wished the day would be recognized as a public holiday. He pointed out that the TRC report should not only be based or implemented in Freetown, but should be implemented in all areas of the country.

Explaining as part of the series of reconciliation methods held by Fambul Tok, the Paramount Chief said confessing, forgiveness, trauma healing, identifying the perpetrators and victims were extensively used. He therefore appealed to donors and the government not to neglect the activities of Fambul Tok

Charlestaylortrial.org (The Hague)

Tuesday, 30 March 2010

Sierra Leone: Charles Taylor Did Not Send Traditional Herbalists To Prevent RUF Rebels From Bullets, Defense Witness Says

Alpha Sesay

Today's defense witness denied knowledge of Charles Taylor's alleged involvement in sending Liberian traditional herbalists – or “juju” men – to Sierra Leone to perform ceremonies for rebel forces to protect them from enemy bullets. The former Liberian president is on trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone for allegedly supporting rebel forces in neighboring Sierra Leone during its brutal 11-year conflict.

John Vincent — a former Training Commandant for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels – was responding to claims by a prosecution witness about Mr. Taylor's role in relation to the “juju” men. In 2008, former RUF radio operator Alice Pyne said she was present when the Liberian herbalists arrived in Sierra Leone and that she was part of the RUF rebels who participated in the ceremony. Ms. Pyne also said she had spoken with one of the herbalists who had told her they were sent by Mr. Taylor from Liberia.

Mr. Vincent said he had heard of the RUF using herbalists to protect their fighters from bullets, but did not know or hear about the group Ms. Pyne spoke of.

“More specifically Mr. Vincent, did you ever hear of Charles Taylor sending herbalists to the RUF to use to protect their fighters?” defense counsel Morris Anyah asked the witness.

“No,” the witness said, emphatically.

In cross-examination today, the witness recounted his days as a trainee for the RUF at Camp Nama in Liberia. He said RUF leader Foday Sankoh only told the RUF rebels his real name when they entered Sierra Leone in March 1991. At Camp Nama, he only knew the RUF leader as Pa Morlai or God Father.

“It would make sense, doesn't it to you, that Foday Sankoh, being supported by Charles Taylor in NPFL territory, that Charles Taylor would want to hide his support for the Sierra Leone dissident from the government of Sierra Leone for as long as possible. That's why Foday Sankoh didn't use his name...isn't that true?” Mr. Koumjian asked the witness.

“I did not have such an idea,” the witness responded.

Mr. Taylor also today gave permission for trials to proceed in his absence tomorrow as he will stay in his cell celebrating the Jewish Passover holiday. Mr. Taylor, who was a Baptist while in Liberia has converted to Judaism since his relocation to The Hague to face trial for his alleged role in supporting RUF rebels in Sierra Leone who committed serious international crimes. This week, Jews around the world will celebrate the Passover holiday, an event that commemorates the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

Mr. Vincent's cross-examination will continue tomorrow.

John Kollie

 NEWS ITEM-Report from The Hague

As Jews around the world celebrate the Passover Holiday this week, Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor who is now a Jew has waived his right to be present at his trial on Wednesday. A Prosecution Witness in 2008 accused Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor of sending Liberian Juju men to the RUF to protect them against bullets. But the Former RUF Training Combatant, John Vincent testifying in Mr. Taylor's defence denied the testimonies of the Prosecution Witness as he ends his direct examination. John Kollie has this transcribed report from The Hague...

Mr. Taylor's war crimes trial will proceed on Wednesday in his absence. He will join Jews around the world to celebrate the Passover. The Passover is a Jewish holiday that commemorates the deliverance of the ancient Hebrews from slavery in Egypt.

Before his conversion to Judaism, Mr. Taylor was a Baptist Deacon in Liberia. Meanwhile a Prosecution Witness, identified as Alice Pyne told the court in 2008, that Mr. Taylor sent a group of Juju men to the RUF to mark their fighters against bullets.

On cross-examination, Mr. Vincent said Former RUF Leader, Foday Sankoh did not disclose his real name to RUF Trainees at Camp Naama.

But Defence witness John Vincent denies and rather says Mr. Sankoh told the trainees that his name was Pa Morla or god-father. The Defence Witness also told the court that their training base at Camp Naama was code named Sokoto, the name of a Nigerian Military base.

He said Foday Sankoh told the RUF fighters his real name after they entered Sierra Leone on March 22, 1991.

Prosecution Lawyer, Nicholas Kumjian wondered why Foday Sankoh kept his real name secret. Mr. Vincent cross-examination continues on Wednesday.

Radio Netherlands

Wednesday, 31 March 2010

Taylor war crimes trial moves to Hariri tribunal

By International Justice Desk



The Hague, Netherlands

Charles Taylor's trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague may move to the Hariri Tribunal in a nearby town due to lack of space at the ICC, court sources said.

Former Liberian president

Taylor is currently being tried by the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL), which originally started in Sierra Leone's Freetown. However, in 2006 the United Nations decided to move the trial to the Netherlands for security reasons. At that time, the ICC had court rooms available since no trials were held there.

As in July the case former Congolese vice-president Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo will start at the ICC, the Court will need all its three court rooms. This means that there will be no space for the Taylor trial.

Taylor's case is likely to move to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) - also known as the Hariri Tribunal - in Leidschendam.

The STL, formed by the UN in 2007, is the first international tribunal to investigate terrorism. It focuses on the attack of 14th February 2005 that killed Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and 22 others. Until now, however, the STL has not made any formal indictments.

Charles Ghankay Taylor is accused of eleven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He was president of Liberia from 1997 until 2003, but stands trial for accusations of supporting Sierra Leonean rebels, specifically the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), during the country's bloody civil war.

Taylor was transferred to the SCSL in 2006. He is the second former head of state to be tried before an international criminal tribunal after Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic. The former Liberian president says he has been a peacemaker instead of a war criminal.

The SCSL was set up jointly by the Government of Sierra Leone and the UN in 2002 and is mandated to try those who bear "greatest responsibility" for atrocities committed Sierra Leone's civil war between 1991 and 2002.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 30 March 2010

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

International Clips on Liberia

Ritualistic Killings in Liberia's Southeastern Maryland County

By James Butty | Washington, DC 30 March 2010

VOA

There are reports of a resurgent of ritualistic killings in Liberia's southeastern Maryland County region. About 18 people have been arrested in the provincial city of Harper, including a top government official in the region. Maryland County is notorious for these types of murders. Justice Minister Christiana Tah, who has just returned from the region, said President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was concerned about the peace and tranquility of the region. "We have reports of the disappearance of individuals in the last month; we've had reports of two individuals disappearing – a 19 year-old boy and then a young girl whose age is underdetermined disappeared. In both cases we have not seen any bodies. There's no evidence that they have been killed. They just simply disappeared," she said. But Tah said President Sirleaf dispatched her and the internal affairs minister to the region because the residents there were becoming very anxious and tension was building in the region. She said adding to the tension in the region was the fact that a witch doctor provided the list from which the 18 suspects were arrested. "We had 18 persons arrested based on a list that had been produced by a traditional doctor upon which a warrant was obtained to search the homes of these suspects. This also is not consistent with our laws," Tah said.

International Clips on West Africa

Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast remembers stadium disaster; injured say they haven't received compensation

<http://www.metronews.ca/toronto/sports/article/490272--ivory-coast-remembers-stadium-disaster-injured-say-they-haven-t-received-compensation>

People injured in a fatal stadium stampede in the Ivory Coast gathered on its one-year anniversary Monday to commemorate the tragedy, but say they still haven't received compensation donated by FIFA. Nearly 30 Christian and Muslim leaders led the ceremony outside Abidjan's Felix Houphouet-Boigny Stadium, where 22 people were killed and 130 injured on March 29, 2009, before a World Cup qualifier against Malawi. Ivorian Football Federation (FIF) president Jacques Anouma laid a wreath at Gate 23, where the tragedy occurred. "We've taken every precaution to see that this type of event will never happen again," Anouma said. He also unveiled a plaque above the gate featuring the words "In memory of the victims of 29 March 2009". After the ceremony, dozens of those injured - as well as relatives of the dead - protested that \$93,000 donated by FIFA had not been redistributed by the Ivory Coast government. "We've been promised compensation, but now it's been a year and we still don't know if, when and how much we'll receive," said Tairou Ouattara, a member of the parents of victims association. FIFA fined the FIF \$46,800 last July and donated money to support the families of victims.

Sierra Leone

Lagan lands £8m contract to redevelop Sierra Leone airport

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/business-news/lagan-lands-pound8m-contract-to-redevelop-sierra-leone-airport-14747622.html>

A Northern Ireland company has won an £8m contract starting next month to redevelop an airport in Sierra Leone. Lagan Construction will carry out a complete refurbishment of the airside infrastructure of Freetown Lungi International Airport, which was previously a UK Royal Air Force station. The airport handles most international and domestic flights in and out of Sierra Leone. Lagan's international division will deliver the project, which it said would entail resurfacing the main bituminous runway, and widening turning loops and Charlie and Delta taxiway accesses, by reconstruction and reprofiling the existing bituminous shoulders. Aircraft holding positions will be relocated and new runway hold signs and markings provided. Lagan was awarded the contract by the Government of Sierra Leone, part-funded by the World Bank. Work is due to start next month and will continue until January. The project is Lagan's first in Africa. The company said it marked an early success in the expansion of its operations into the African sub-continent. Lagan Construction specialises in airport revamps. It is carrying out a £105m scheme at the new Benazir Bhutto International Airport at Islamabad, Pakistan, as well as projects at Bermuda International Airport, Heathrow Terminal Five, Aberdeen Airport, London Luton Airport and the new Newquay Cornwall Airport.

Local Media – Newspaper

Oranto To drill US\$50 Million Well

[Daily Observer]

- Oranto Petroleum Limited, a UK-based oil company, plans to embark on the drilling of its first well next year at a cost of US\$50 million.
- The company was the first to “complete the very crucial 3D seismic data acquisition, processing and interpretation at a cost of US\$25 million,” a release from the company's said.
- The company's release also rubbished a media report carried in an article published in a local newspaper, entitled: “Bribes, Deals, Audit Reveals at NOCAL.”
- The article alleged that lobbying fees had been paid as bribe for the ratification of the Petroleum Production Sharing Contracts of Oranto Petroleum Limited and another contractor.

Economy Slumps, Decline In Many Sectors: CBL

[New Democrat]

- The Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) has reported a decline in key economic activities, including shipping, manufacturing and mining.
- The CBL in its Third Quarterly Report for 2009, revealed that the country's industrial sector has been unproductive and that it has not impacted the country's economy growth.
- “The industrial sector has not made any significant contribution to the growth of the economy,” the CBL declared.
- The CBL made the revelation despite the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's forecasts signalling growth in the Liberian economy.

Ghanaian Pathologist Testifies In Keith Jubah Murder Trial

[The Informer]

- The fourth witness in the ongoing murder trial of the former Chairman of the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission (PPCC), Keith Jubah, Monday took the witness stand to testify in favor of the prosecution.
- In his testimony, Dr. Edwin Wiredu, a professor at the University of Ghana told Criminal Court 'A' that his work on the body of the deceased showed that he died due to injury that he received during the incident.

- Dr. Wiredu, a pathologist consultant asserted that he retrieved four pellets from the body of the deceased during the conduct of his autopsy, thus proving that Mr. Jubah was shot and killed

SAMFU, FAO Launch Forest Connect In Liberia

[The Inquirer]

- Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU) has launched Forest Connect (FC) Liberia, a component of the community-based enterprise development initiated by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
- Forest Connect is an alliance dedicated to action learning in support of small medium forest enterprises.
- At the launch of the project Friday in Monrovia, FC focal person, Robert Nyahn said forest people around the world are faced with the problems of marginalization in the decision-making process about their enterprises.
- Mr. Nyahn classified the four interlinked issues as inappropriate laws and policies; locally weak institutional relationships without sufficient clout to influence the laws and policies and the isolation of the poor from supportive infrastructure and services.
- The project in Liberia will conduct diagnostic study of small medium forest enterprises and their associates, conduct survey of service providers, set up FC steering committee, host forum for sharing information and conduct a detailed analysis of small forest enterprise policies in the country.

World Bank Announces New Budgetary Support To Liberia

[The Informer, The News, National Chronicle, The Inquirer]

- The World Bank has announced it will provide direct budgetary support to Liberia's next fiscal budget.
- World Bank Vice President for the Africa Region said the direct budgetary support will be in the tune of US\$11 million.
- According to Ms. Obiageli Ezekwesili, the World Bank has also raised additional funding for its portfolio in Liberia.
- Ms. Ezekwesili said the bank has identified US\$32 million under its crisis response window to finance additional projects in the Country.
- She disclosed the bank is providing US\$16 million for youth employment programme and the completion of the Cotton Tree-Buchanan Road, which will total about US\$40 million.
- The World Bank Vice President for the Africa Region also announced that the bank will make available US\$2 million to the Monrovia City Corporation for its sanitation and solid waste programme.
- The World Bank official spoke after a meeting with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Monday.
- President Sirleaf in a brief statement commended the bank for its continuing support to Liberia's reconstruction.
- President Sirleaf said government was gratified for the level of technical assistance the bank was providing including its support to debt reduction and employment.

LACC Boss Says Corruption Remains A Challenge

[Daily Observer, The News, The Inquirer]

- The Executive Chairperson of the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) says corruption remains a serious crime and a challenge that undermines economic development.
- Cllr. Frances Johnson Morris believes corruption also undermines poverty alleviation, democratic governance, and framework of justice and the rule of law.
- Cllr. Morris speaking at an interactive forum with students and faculty of the D. Twe High School in the Borough of New Kru Town.
- She spoke against the acceptance of resignation from public officials accused of corruption without being investigated.

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

Vice President Boakai Says Education Remains Key Pillar

- Vice President, Joseph Boakai says education remains the key pillar of government's programmes in the Country.
- Vice President Boakai said government will do everything possible to support the education sector to make it more viable and functional.
- According to him, without education there will be no progress in the Country.
- The Vice President spoke at a dinner in honor of the West African Examination Council delegation to the WAEC's 58th Annual conference held in Monrovia.

Senate Holds Confirmation Hearing For Four Assistant Justice Ministers-designate

- A confirmation hearing has taken place at the Senate for four Presidential nominees due to possibly take up assignments at the Justice Ministry.
- The Senate Committee on Judiciary, Claims, Petitions and Human Rights conducted the hearing for the four assistant ministers designate.
- They include Abraham Fahnbulleh, Assistant Minister-designate for Codification; Assatu Bah Kenneh, Assistant Minister-designate for Public Safety; Emma Wuor, Assistant Minister-designate for Rehabilitation and Corrections; and Adella Cooper, Assistant Minister-designate for Economic Affairs.
- During the hearing Monday, all of the nominees promised to perform their respective duties with diligence if confirm by the Senate.

(Also reported Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Lawmaker Unveils Plans For Commercial Court In Liberia

- A member of the House Committee on Banking and Currency says plans are underway for the establishment of a Commercial Court in Liberia.
- Representative Regina Sokan Teah said the Court when established would try business people and creditors.
- Representative Teah believes the establishment of the Court was necessary because it would help make the business atmosphere conducive in Liberia.
- The Montserrado lawmaker observed there are a lot of challenges in the business sector with some creditors failing to pay debt.

ECOWAS Adopts 16-Count Resolution

- ECOWAS member countries have adopted a sixteen-count resolution aimed at strengthening preventive diplomacy.
- The Monrovia declaration also looked at conflict management, resolution and peace building in the West African sub-region.
- The resolution was adopted at the end of a weeklong conference evaluating ECOWAS two decades of peace keeping mission in the sub-region.
- The declaration mandates ECOWAS to strengthen its mechanism to ensure the enforcement of the constitutional convergence principles contained in the supplementary protocol on democracy and good Governance.

World Bank Wants Key Legislations Pass

- The World Bank has expressed concern about the delay in passing key legislations that will see Liberia achieve final debt waiver.
- World Bank Vice President for the Africa Region said there is a need to timely pass these legislations to enable Liberia meet the HIPC June deadline.
- Ms. Obiageli Ezekwesili cited the passage of the draft Investment Act of 2009 and Public Financial Management Law among others.
- The two draft legislations have been languishing in the corridors of the National Legislature for several months now.
- Meanwhile, the House of Representatives is to take a vote today on the passage of the draft Investment Act of 2009.

LACC Boss Says Corruption Remains A Challenge

World Bank Announces New Budgetary Support To Liberia

(Also reported Radio Veritas, Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Nimba Mandingoes Demand Return Of Property, Threaten July '26' Boycott

- Thousands of Mandingoes have threatened to boycott this year's Independence Day celebration to be held in Nimba County if their land and houses are not given back.
- Nimba Mandingoes complained they have been denied access to their land and houses in Ganta, Sanniquellie and other places despite having legal claims to them.
- A spokesman for the aggrieved Mandingoes Jurah Sanoe alleged Mandingoes in Ganta were sleeping in mosques while their houses were being occupied by other people.
- Mr. Sanoe claims the land in question was legally acquired during President Barclay's Administration and regrets that Government was not paying enough attention to the scale of injustice being meted out to them in Nimba.
- Responding, Acting Information Minister Cletus Sieh said Government was not in the business of isolating any segment of the society and noted that land issue is legal and needs time to be fully addressed.

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

President Sirleaf Pledges Support To Restore Democracy To Niger

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has pledged her commitment to work toward the restoration of democracy in Niger.
- President Sirleaf called on the new government to set up a road map that would lead to free and fair elections within a reasonable timeframe.
- The President said her government will engage all partners, including ECOWAS, the African Union, the United States, and the European Union to support the road map.
- The Liberian leader according to an Executive Mansion release was speaking when a high-power delegation from Niger paid her a courtesy call at her Foreign Ministry's office.
- The head of the delegation, Lt. Col. Mamane Souley assured the military is committed to return the country to democratic rule, but emphasized that the situation in Niger must first be stabilized to avoid a repeat of the political crisis which led to the military takeover.

VOA

Tuesday, 30 March 2010

Frenchman Leads Drive to Prosecute Perpetrators of Rwandan Genocide

Lisa Bryant

Alain Gauthier has founded an association with a long-standing goal of bringing to justice the perpetrators of Rwanda's 1994 genocide who may be living in France. VOA's Lisa Bryant in Paris looks at the man known in France as the Rwandan genocide hunter.

"France is actually one of the leading countries where genocide suspects have sought refuge." -Leslie Haskell of Human Rights Watch

Earlier this month, French police briefly arrested Agathe Habyarimana, the widow of a former Rwandan president who is suspected of instigating Rwanda's 1994 genocide. The arrest was made shortly after French President Nicolas Sarkozy paid a groundbreaking trip to Kigali that was widely seen as turning the chapter on bitter French-Rwandan relations.

Rwandan authorities have called on Paris to pursue genocide suspects living in France. So has 61-year-old French school teacher Alain Gauthier, who founded the French association Le Collectif des Parties Civiles pour le Rwanda nearly a decade ago with his Rwandan wife.

Gauthier has been compared to famed French Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld.

But Gauthier says he is just an ordinary citizen whose life was torn apart by the genocide. Gauthier's wife lost about 100 members of her family in the massacre that killed about 800,000 people, mostly ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus. That included Gauthier's mother-in-law, who was gunned down in a church where she had sought shelter.

A 1977 file photo shows the wife of Juvenal Habyarimana, Agathe, during an official meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris

Gauthier's association has filed several complaints in French courts against suspected genocide perpetrators, including one against Agathe Habyarimana.

But Gauthier says not a single genocide suspect has faced trial in France to date, although Paris has deported three Rwandans to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, Tanzania. By contrast, several trials linked to the Rwandan genocide have taken place in neighboring Belgium.

Leslie Haskell is Rwanda researcher for Human Rights Watch in Geneva:

"France is actually one of the leading countries where genocide suspects have sought refuge," said Haskell. "We count about six cases where there have been requests to extradite Rwandans to Rwanda for trial on genocide charges. And there are another eight cases that are under investigation that would be subject to an extradition request or tried by the French courts," she added.

Haskell notes investigating the cases has been very time consuming and complicated, especially during the period when France and Rwanda broke off diplomatic ties. But she sees new movement, including France's recent decision to create a special investigative unit to examine genocide and crimes against humanity committed abroad.

These changes have helped energize the Gauthiers' work, and brought Rwanda back into the French media spotlight. Some French schools have asked Gauthier to give presentations on the Rwandan genocide.

Gauthier says it is critical to keep teaching about the Rwandan genocide, just as it is important never to forget the Nazi-perpetrated Jewish Holocaust. He says education helps keep the memory of what happened alive, and teaches a new generation to say no to genocide in the future.

ICC

Tuesday, 30 March 2010

International Criminal Court launches YouTube channel



*The Hague,
Netherlands*

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has launched an official YouTube channel, to make information on the Court and its activities more accessible and bring it closer to the general public.

The video channel allows viewers to follow the various cases before the ICC, offering weekly uploaded summaries of the proceedings under the title *In the Courtroom*.

The playlist *In the Field* includes ICC outreach activities conducted in the countries where the ICC is involved.

Also available are the programmes, *Ask the Court* with responses to frequently asked questions, and at *Meeting the Press*, conferences and briefings with journalists. Other Court related events and activities can also be found on the channel including, swearing-in ceremonies of elected officials and the welcoming of new States Parties to the Rome Statute. Videos are produced in English, French and Arabic.

Social media

In the upcoming months the ICC intends to continue developing its online communications, using new media tools such as Flickr, for posting and downloading photos, and the social networking tool, Twitter, to send real-time updates on the Court and Court officials' activities. These new ICC online services will complement information currently available on the Court's website, which continues to be the main source of official information for the general public.

(Source: ICC)

Associated Press

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

Serbian parliament adopts landmark Srebrenica apology

By Stephanie van den Berg

BELGRADE — The Serbian parliament early Wednesday passed a landmark resolution condemning the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of some 8,000 Bosnian Muslims but stopped short of labeling the killings a genocide.

The adoption of the text with a majority of 127 of the 173 lawmakers present ends years of denial by Serbian politicians about the scale of the killings.

"The parliament of Serbia strongly condemns the crime committed against the Bosnian Muslim population of Srebrenica in July 1995, as determined by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling," the text says.

The lawmakers also formally extended "their condolences and an apology to the families of the victims because not everything possible was done to prevent the tragedy."

The ruling coalition which proposed the resolution hailed its adoption after 13 hours of often heated debate but warned this was only the beginning of the process for Serbia of coming to terms with its recent history.

"This declaration is only a beginning because the issues it treats are only the tip of the iceberg of the past we have to face," ruling coalition member Nenad Canak said after the vote.

"(The resolution) was the most difficult step but I am convinced that we will now open the process of reviewing recent history; this will be long and painful."

In the text the parliament also vowed to continue its cooperation with the International Criminal Court for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and stressed the importance of "the discovery and arrest of Ratko Mladic so that he might stand trial before the ICTY".

Mladic, the UN war crimes court's most wanted fugitive, was in charge of the Bosnian Serb troops who overran the UN protected enclave in July 1995. He is believed to be hiding in Serbia.

The timing of the historical declaration coincides with Serbia's push to join the European Union with Belgrade hoping to achieve candidate status next year. The EU has made full cooperation with the ICTY a prerequisite for being allowed to join the bloc and has hammered on the importance of reconciliation in the region.

Although Serbian President Boris Tadic attended the 10-year-anniversary of the massacre in 2005 and apologized to survivors there, he was widely condemned for doing so at home.

The pro-European Tadic has pushed for the Srebrenica resolution and was expected to react to the vote later Wednesday.

Belgrade is also keen to show it respects rulings of the ICJ ahead of an expected advisory opinion of the highest UN court on the legal status of Kosovo, which declared independence from Serbia in 2008.

Although the Srebrenica massacre has been ruled a genocide by both the ICTY and the ICJ, the resolution avoids using the term in order to ensure the widest possible backing in parliament.

Still, many hours of debate on Tuesday were devoted to the definition of genocide and opposition parties complained the text branded all Serbs as guilty over Srebrenica.

The massacre is the only episode in Bosnia's bloody 1992-95 war to have been ruled as genocide by the international courts.

In their ruling, ICJ judges cleared Serbia of responsibility for the actual killings themselves but said Belgrade was responsible for doing nothing to prevent the massacre.

After separating the men from the women, Bosnian Serb troops led by Mladic summarily executed some 8,000 Muslim men and boys and buried the bodies in various mass graves.

Fifteen years after the killings, the remains of thousands of massacre victims have been exhumed from more than 70 mass graves around the town of Srebrenica, with more than 5,600 victims identified by DNA analysis.

But for many years Serbia downplayed the scale of the killings and many here still consider Mladic a war hero who fought for Serb interests.

Newstraittimes

Wednesday, 31 March 31, 2010

http://www.nst.com.my/Current_News/NST/articles/20100328135852/Article/index_html

Asians are under-represented at ICC

NEW DELHI: A top judge from Japan has called on more Asian governments to be part of the International Criminal Court (ICC), to enable the global judicial body to have a fair representation of judges from the region.

"Only two Asian judges (are) in the ICC at present, from Japan and South Korea. I want to see more of my Asian colleagues in ICC.

"Asia and the Middle East are under-represented in the court, there is no geographical balance," Kuniko Ozaki, a sitting judge at ICC, told Bernama in Delhi.

South Korea's Song Sang-Hyun, current president of the Hague-based court set up in 2002 primarily to prosecute perpetrators of serious crimes against humanity, is the other Asian judge.

The court, governed by the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, has 111 state parties to date, and its judicial division comprises 18 judges.

Bangladesh became the latest Asian member last week, pushing the region's membership to 15 in the ICC currently.

At present Africans, Europeans and Latin Americans largely dominate the international court.

"Asia and the Middle East have long traditions, a lot of experience in handling serious crimes (crime against humanity) but they are not widely represented.

"They can contribute to international law and help shape a global legal standard," Ozaki said.

The 54-year-old judge, a law expert who had worked extensively for the Japanese foreign and justice ministries, was elected from Asia last January.

Ozaki was in Delhi to attend the third lecture series of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Organisation (AALCO) at which she delivered a paper on "Universalisation of the International Criminal Justice System: The Role of the International Criminal Court". -- BERNAMA