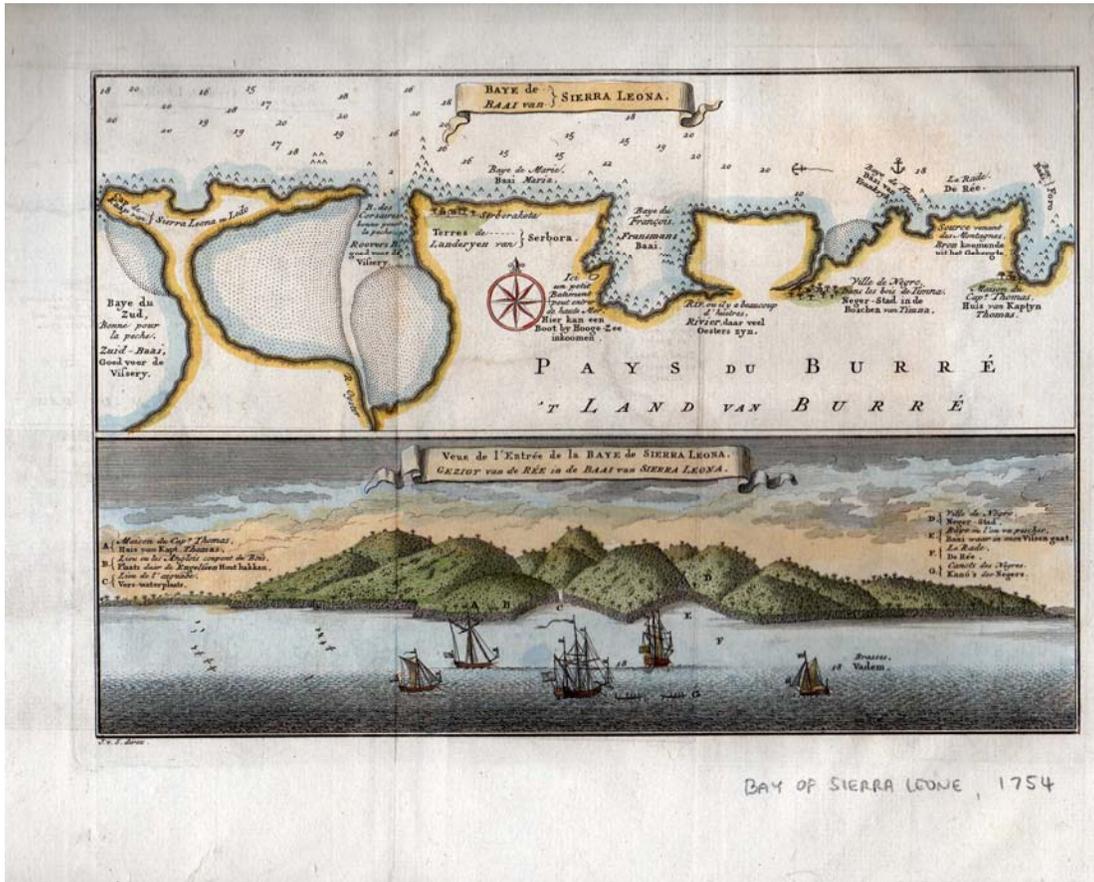


SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



Original 1754 map of the Bay of Sierra Leone.

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:

Friday, 5 March 2010

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

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Premier News
Friday, 5 March 2010

Defence Witness Seeks To Exonerate Taylor

Second defence witness, Yanks Smythe, has ended his testimonies, declaring that neither Taylor nor any member of his security participated in the invasion of Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Before the end of his re-direct examination, the witness said former Special Security Service Director, Benjamin Yeaten's signature was forged on a prosecution document shown to him in court.

John Kollie has this transcribed report from the Hague... Yanks Smythe told the Judges that his former boss, Charles Taylor, played no role in the invasion of Freetown on January 6, 1999.

Mr. Smythe denied Prosecution allegation that Charles Taylor contributed arms and fighting forces during the invasion of the Sierra Leonean capital.

The witness further denied that no member of Charles Taylor's security apparatus assisted the invading forces.

But Defence Lawyer, Morris Anyah, pressed the witness about the Prosecution allegation.

Mr. Smythe also described as incorrect a Prosecution document bearing the name of Former Special Security Service Director, Benjamin Yeaten.

The document titled Operation Orders prepared by one Prosecution Witness, Abu Keita, who allegedly served in Taylor's government spelled Benjamin differently.

Defence Lawyer, Anyah, asked the witness about the authenticity of the spelling of Benjamin Yeaten's name and the accuracy of his signature in the Prosecution document.

The Defence second witness took the stand immediately after Mr. Yanks Smythe concluded his testimonies.

For fear of his or her personal security, the Defence second witness is testifying with some protective measures.

The witness has only been identified as DCT-125.

Through some electronic manipulation, the voice of the witness is distorted and his or her image is not clear to an identifiable level.

Some Prosecution Witnesses used similar protective measures for fear of being identified by the public.

The testimonies of Defence Witness, DCT-125 continues.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Thursday, 4 March 2010

Liberia: Charles Taylor Wanted Power To Empower The Liberian People To Develop Their Country, Witness Says

Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor wanted power to empower the Liberian people to develop their country, a defense witness told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today.

“Charles Taylor wanted power, control his people and to empower them with the authority to develop their country in Liberia,” the witness said today as he testified about the former president’s motivation to wage a rebel war in the West African country of Liberia.

The witness, only identified by pseudonym number DCT-125 started his testimony yesterday. The witness is testifying as a protected witness whose identity cannot be disclosed to the general public. When he started giving his evidence yesterday, the witness’ testimony was heard mostly in private session to the exclusion of the general public. In his testimony today, the witness testified in open session but with voice and image distortion, meaning, no one can identify his face and voice.

The witness described himself as a founding member of the Mataba: that is, the “Libyan Bureau” which provided military and ideological training for revolutionaries from different parts of the world. Testifying about the character of Mr. Taylor, the witness described the former Liberian president as a very secretive person and an “intellectual bourgeois capitalist” — a description which drew a smile from the very attentive Mr. Taylor.

The witness said that like Mr. Taylor, he is a Pan-Africanist who was trained in Libya alongside other revolutionaries from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa, Namibia, Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) and many other countries with an aim of liberating Africans from “neo-colonialism.”

Reading from the Mataba manifesto, the witness told the court that the document called on all revolutionaries around the world to come together and fight against “state sponsored terrorism.”

Mr. Taylor is accused of providing support to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a Sierra Leonean rebel group which prosecutors say committed heinous crimes in Sierra Leone such as rape, murder and “terrorizing the civilian population.” Some prosecution witnesses also testified before Special Court for Sierra Leone judges that with Mr. Taylor’s involvement, terrorist operatives from the fundamentalist group Al Qaeda visited Liberia and RUF controlled territories in Sierra Leone. Defense counsel for Mr. Taylor, Courtenay Griffiths, today asked the witness the Mataba’s position on terrorism.

“The Mataba, according to our aim and objectives, is not a terrorist organization. The Mataba is a combination of all revolutionary forces to devise strategies to face imperialism and its allies wherever they are,” the witness said.

Prosecutors have alleged that Mr. Taylor met with RUF leader Foday Sankoh at the Mataba in Libya in the mid to late 1980s and that the two men formed a common plan to destabilize the West African sub-region through assistance to each other in their respective wars in Liberian and Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has denied these assertions, insisting that he never met Mr. Sankoh in Libya. He has denied providing support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone.

There will be no hearings on Friday and Monday as the court room will be used for other trials conducted by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Witness DCT-125’s testimony will continue on Tuesday.

BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST
Thursday, 4 March 2010

John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

Witness DCT-125 has given the Judges his impression of Charles Taylor, the man he's defending in The Hague. The witness also described himself as a founding member of the Mataba, the Libyan Bureau which provided military and ideological training to Revolutionaries world-wide. John Kollie transcribes reports from The Hague on the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor for the BBC World Service Trust...

The Defence Witness has described Charles Taylor as a very secretive person. The witness said his residence was few blocks away from Mr. Taylor's home in Burkina Faso, but he never knew that Mr. Taylor was planning to launch a revolution in Liberia.

The witness generated smile on the faces of Charles Taylor and the Lawyers when he further described the Former Liberian Leader as an Intellectual Bourgeois Capitalist.

The Lead Defence Lawyer conducting the examination-in-Chief, Courtenay Griffiths asked the witness about Mr. Taylor's motivation to launch a war in Liberia after being trained in Libya.

To protect the identity of the witness, the court has distorts his voice. The witness identified himself as a Pan-Africanist trained to liberate Africans from what he called neo-colonialism. He told the court he was trained in Libya along with revolutionaries from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa, Nimibia, Zaire, many others. Mr. Taylor is accused supporting a rebel group which terrorized the civilian population in Sierra Leone.

The Mataba manifesto or policy read in court called on revolutionaries world wide to combine forces against what it referred to as state sponsored terrorism. Mr. Griffiths asked the Defence Witness about the view of the Mataba on terrorism.

Mr. Taylor's trial has been suspended until next Tuesday to allow other trials conduct their hearings in court room two of the International Criminal Court, the ICC.

BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

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

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberia to generate USD 260 million in tax from iron ore mines

Thursday, 04 Mar 2010

Bloomberg reported that Liberia government aims to generate USD 260 million a year in tax revenue from iron ore mines by 2014 equivalent to 17% of gross domestic product. ArcelorMittal, the world largest steelmaker is expected to ship its first ore from Liberia in 2011 after slowing development last year due to the global slump. Its project will cost more than USD 1.5 billion. The Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy said China Union also has a USD 2.6 billion iron ore project in the West African nation. Elenilto a unit of Israel Engelinvest Group will spend USD 2.4 billion developing Liberia Western Cluster iron ore deposit. Liberia is recovering from a 14 years civil war that ended in 2003.

(Source from www.bloomberg.net)

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea

Guinea releases former minister accused of graft

CONAKRY (Reuters) March 4, 2010– Guinea has released a former mines minister jailed last year on embezzlement charges, a senior police source told Reuters on Wednesday. "Four people, including (former mines minister) Ahmed Kante, have had their charges dismissed by a judge. They are free," the source said on condition of anonymity. Kante, mines minister under former president Lansana Conte in the world's top bauxite producer, had been detained in March 2009 by the then-ruling military junta which accused him of stealing some \$430,000. Kante denied the charges. Guinea is deeply impoverished despite its reserves of bauxite, gold and iron ore, and critics of previous regimes have accused senior officials of using mineral resources for private gain, depriving the treasury of much-needed income. The junta's leader Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, who came to power in a bloodless coup in December 2008 after Conte's death, was wounded in an assassination attempt late last year and evacuated for medical care. His deputy has since formed a transitional government in the west African nation charged with setting elections.

Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast lays claim to Ghana's oil

Thursday 4 March 2010

AfricaNews Accra, Ghana

A dispute could break out between Ghana and neighbouring Ivory Coast, if immediate steps are not taken to enter into appropriate negotiations to redefine the international boundary between the two nations. Ghana's Western neighbour Ivory Coast is reportedly laying claims to portions of the huge oil wealth in the deep waters of the Western Region of Ghana. In a move to save the situation, Ghana has begun an urgent move to pass a new law that seeks to establish the Ghana Boundary Commission to undertake negotiations to determine and demarcate Ghana's land boundaries and delimit Ghana's maritime boundaries. Ghana's Parliament has therefore been tasked to race against time to pass the Ghana Boundary Commission Bill under a certificate of urgency. Speaking to an Accra based fm station, Citi fm, Ghana's Minister for Lands and Forestry, Hon Collins Dauda, who laid the bill before Parliament, said the government is doing everything possible to avoid a full-blown international dispute with the nation's Western neighbour. "There is a critical need for us to put in place a commission that would lead the negotiation for our maritime and land boundaries with our neighbours.

Local Media – Newspaper

UNMIL Rejects Allegation Of Partiality In Voinjama

(Heritage, National Chronicle, FrontPage, The News, The Inquirer, New Republic, Daily Observer, The Analyst, In Profile Daily and New Democrat)

- The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has refuted claims that its forces were partial in last weekend's violent incident in Lofa County.
- The Head of UNMIL, Ellen Margrethe Løj said UNMIL troops acted promptly and supported no side in the violence.
- Ms. Løj said having first heard about a violent demonstration in Konia Town, a batch of UNMIL Formed Police unit was quickly deployed in the Town.
- She said on the morning of the violence in Voinjama, both military and police forces intervened to restore calm.
- She described the incident as unfortunate and said it was based on what she called unfounded rumours that spread from Konia to Voinjama.
- The UNMIL boss said the Lofa incident which has ethnic undertones shows that more challenges still remain despite the progress made so far in maintaining peace and security in Liberia.
- She said while the UN is in Liberia to keep the peace, it is up to Liberians themselves regardless of religious and ethnic affiliation to decide whether they want Peace.
- Meanwhile, UNMIL has confirmed that shot guns and firearms were actually used in the violence by the mob, resulting to four deaths.
- UNMIL police commissioner Gautam Sawang said three bodies were distinct because of the bullet wounds but the other one is yet to be established.

Man Who Sprayed Police Chief Inspector with Gasoline Arrested

(National Chronicle and Daily Observer)

- Reports say the man who allegedly sprayed the gasoline on Police Chief Inspector Amos Tutu before being set ablaze has been arrested.
- Credible sources hinted Aaron Larkay who was apparently fleeing arrest was picked up in Gbarnga, Bong County Wednesday afternoon.
- The sources said a team of police officers arrested Aaron and brought him back to Monrovia where he is currently undergoing investigation.
- An angry mob Saturday night burnt to death Police Chief Inspector Amos Tutu on the Capitol Bye-pass after he allegedly shot and killed one Preston Davies.

Judicial Confab Set For Next Week

(National Chronicle and the Inquirer)

- In a press statement issued in Monrovia, the Supreme Court of Liberia says it will convene a National Judicial Conference from March 8 — 12, 2010.

- The statement said the conference to be held under the theme: "THE JUDICIARY: CORNERSTONE OF OUR DEMOCRACY" will bring together circuit and specialized court judges, stipendiary magistrates and one associate magistrate from each magisterial district.

House, Senate Committees Head for Lofa Tomorrow...To Probe Cause Of Violence

(The Inquirer)

- Members of the committees set up by both Houses of the National Legislature to investigate the recent violence in Lofa County are expected to depart Monrovia for the Lofa County tomorrow to authenticate the actual facts.
- Both committees are to conduct an independent investigation that led to the death of several persons, injury of several others and the destruction of thousands of dollars worth of properties in Lofa County.
- The setting of the committees in both Houses is predicated upon report from the county by the Legislative Caucus of Lofa which visited the county to verify the incident.

UNDP Millennium Village Project to Boost Communication... Sony Ericsson and Lone Star Enter Partnership

(Daily Observer)

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP-Liberia) Millennium Village Project (MVP) in partnership with Sony Ericsson and Lone Star Communications Corporation yesterday held a technical discussion to boost communications for dwellers of Kokoyah District in Bong County.
- Making a presentation at the technical discussion, the Project Manager of the MVP Stephen Kolee highlighted the goals and significance of the rural Liberian development projects.
- He said the Millennium Village Projects are a direct result of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations.
- Meanwhile, representatives of Sony Ericsson and Lone Star Communications said they were pleased to partner with the MVP to boost communications in rural Liberia.

CDA, OXFAM Sign MOU

(Heritage and The Monitor)

- The Cooperative Development Agency (CDA) and the British aid agency, OXFAM yesterday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- The alliance is aimed at building cooperation and capacity, creating awareness on ownership and participation.
- The alliance also includes the reactivation of the pre-war cooperative societies and training.
- The Registrar General of the CDA, Gibson Momoh Tulay and OXFAM's Country Representative, Charles Wontewe signed for their respective institutions.

Media Group Rescues 8-year Old Rape Victim

(Daily Observer and The Inquirer)

- A local Media Child Rights Advocacy group, the Media in Advocacy for Children (MAC) has turned over to the women Aid International an eight-year old rape victim for protection and medical purpose.
- MAC said it turned over the child to the Women Aid International with the involvement of Don Bosco Homes and the Liberian National Police (LNP).
- The group said it discovered the raped victim following a tip off.
- In a press statement issued in Monrovia yesterday, MAC quoted the child as saying that she was raped by her father indentified as Peter Moore, who she said threatened to kill her if she told anyone about the act.
- The Media in Advocacy for Children in its statement said the victim has developed swollen stomach and needs urgent medical attention.

73 Escaped Prisoners Still At-Large In Voinjama

(New Democrat and The News)

- Reports say some 73 prisoners who rampaging mob set free from the Voinjama prison last week remain at-large.
- Lofa County Superintendent, Galakpai Kortimai said a tour of the prison facility showed that all the cells were burst opened, vandalized and littered with rags belonging to the prisoners.
- Meanwhile, Lofa County Attorney, Luther Sumo said many of those who fled the violence are beginning to return to the city.
- County officials say calm is slowly returning to the city with the reopening of business centres and other institutions but other reports say despite signs of calm tension is said to be brewing following unconfirmed reports that three of those who were critically injured in last Friday's incident in Voinjama had died.
- Some media reports say at least 11 persons have so far died as a result of the incident. However, other reports say the death toll remains unclear.

State's Last Rebuttal Witness in Angel Togba Murder Trial Today

(The News)

- The State today produced its last rebuttal witness in the Angel Togba murder trial.
- Five of such witnesses have testified so far, including a Ghanaian crimes investigator.
- Their roles have been to clarify certain claims by defense witnesses that the prosecution lawyers believed are untrue.
- Meanwhile, the final argument will not take place on the eighth of March as was earlier planned tentatively.

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

UNMIL Rejects Allegation Of Partiality In Voinjama

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

US-based Lormas Blame Mandingoes For Voinjama Violence, But...

- The Voinjama District Lorma Development Association based in the United States has issued a statement blaming ethnic Mandingoes for the violence in Lofa County.
- The US-based Lormas believe the February 26 violence in Voinjama was allegedly orchestrated by ethnic Mandingoes.
- The group believes the alleged killings of unarmed and innocent ethnic Lormas allegedly by Mandingoes was unprovoked and premeditated.
- Meanwhile, ethnic Mandingoes through their spokesman Lusene Abdullai-Sheriff have rejected claims by the US-based group that they orchestrated the violence that left Lorma citizens dead in Voinjama city.

FLY Coordinator Denies Fleeing Lofa County

- Reports say the Coordinator of the Federation of Liberian Youth in Lofa County Boakai Kamara has escaped the county.
- The County Attorney of Lofa Luther Sumo said he received information Wednesday that Mr. Kamara escaped to neighboring Guinea.
- Authorities of Lofa County accused Mr. Kamara of organizing the recent street violence in Voinjama.
- But Boakai Kamara has clarified that he was still in Voinjama monitoring events and could not flee Voinjama because he has committed no crime.

Man Who Sprayed Police Chief Inspector With Gasoline Arrested

Another Setback For Keith Jubah Murder Trial

- The Keith Jubah murder trial failed to start Wednesday in Criminal Court A, at the Temple of Justice in Monrovia.
- The lack of a sequestration facility is causing the latest hitch to the start of the murder trial.
- Defense lawyers have asked that the jurors be sequestered, a right under Liberian law, but the available facilities are being renovated.

- Wednesday, defense and prosecution lawyers agreed that Judge Sikajipo Wollor meet Chief Justice Johnnie Lewis to settle the issue.
- Keith Jubah, former chairman of the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission was murdered in November 2009, allegedly by nine men who have pleaded not guilty to the crime.

State's Last Rebuttal Witness In Angel Togba Murder Trial Today

Former PUL Prexy Opposes 10-Year Residency Clause In Constitution

- A former president of the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) has opposed the ten-year residency clause in the Constitution of Liberia.
- Abraham Massalley believes the clause stifles democratic competition.
- He said many Liberians were forced to flee the country due to the civil war.

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

CDA, OXFAM Sign MOU

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

House Orders Labor Minister To Halt Increase In Fees Of Alien Work Permit

- The Plenary of the House of Representatives has ordered Labor Minister Tiawon Gongloe to halt further increase in the fees of alien work permit.
- The House has also written President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf detailing what it refers to as unilateral decision of the Labor Minister to increase alien work permit from US\$450 to US\$1,000.
- The House reached the decision after the submission of a two-page report by its Labor Committee to Plenary.

Daily Nation (Kenya)

Friday, 5 March 2010

Ocampo targets PNU and ODM

By OLIVER MATHENGE

International Criminal Court prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo has accused leaders from across Kenya's political divide and businessmen over their role in the post-election violence.

Details of Mr Moreno-Ocampo's submission to the Pre-Trial Chamber show how the suspects planned and executed what he refers to as a "criminal policy" against civilians.

Their motivation, he says, was to retain or gain power. Some 1,133 people were killed and more than 650,000 evicted from their homes in the wake of the madness that followed Kenya's disputed 2007 presidential election.

President Kibaki of the Party of National Unity was said to have won the election but his rival, Mr Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement, disputed the victory saying the poll had been stolen.

Also targeted by Mr Moreno-Ocampo are Kenya's security forces, whom he accuses of using excessive force against civilians. Mr Moreno-Ocampo says the 20 leading suspects hired, financed and transported gangs to kill, destroy and block roads.

"Many of the political leaders from both sides that incited the attacks are also rich businessmen or land owners and contributed financially to attacks from their own resources," said Mr Moreno-Ocampo in his submission.

He told judges at The Hague on Wednesday that while PNU used State agencies, their opponents in ODM used criminal gangs to execute their politically motivated schemes.

Mr Moreno-Ocampo has asked the judges, in the 19-page submission, to keep the lists of suspects confidential. Naming the suspects publicly, he says, may prejudice independent investigations and endanger the safety of potential witnesses.

"A precise determination of the extent and nature of the links between the individuals allegedly involved and the public and private organisations utilised to allegedly commit the crimes will be made during the course of an independent investigation by the prosecutor, if authorised," Mr Moreno-Ocampo tells the judges in his submission.

He adds that Kenyan authorities had not carried out any investigations or prosecutions targeting the 20. The submission, which borrows a lot from the Waki and Kenya National Commission on Human Rights reports, indicts Kenya's security forces.

The prosecutor says the violence comprised hundreds of incidents with varying degrees of organisation. Inflammatory statements and hate speech disseminated via radio, e-mails, and SMS before the elections were part of the strategy to incite the public, he says.

Tribal networks

PNU and ODM channelled their criminal policy through community structures, he says. The “senior leaders from both parties were guided by political objectives to retain or gain power,” Mr Moreno-Ocampo says, noting that they used personal, government, business and tribal networks to commit the crimes.

The violence, he says, followed a consistent pattern. ODM leaders, he submits, set in motion two parallel attacks to protest against the announcement that President Kibaki had won the elections. “Whereas the party officially called for peaceful mass demonstrations, some influential party leaders especially in the Rift Valley Province launched attacks against civilians perceived to be supporters of PNU,” the document states.

And PNU, which was at the time in government, responded by using excessive police force against demonstrators. This violence, the ICC prosecutor says, was particularly in opposition strongholds of Nyanza and Rift Valley provinces.

After the first wave of violence, he says, leaders of the “victimised communities” formed a policy of launching revenge attacks. This, he adds, explains the rationale behind the violent attacks by Mungiki in Naivasha, Nakuru and Nairobi.

Mr Moreno-Ocampo accuses politicians of being responsible for the expulsion of people from certain areas in the country, leading to displacement of more than 650,000 people. The submission indicates that incitement started during the electoral campaigns and this corresponds to areas where “large-scale attacks were carried out by thousands of raiders”.

It adds that leaders held “clandestine meetings” in Nairobi and Rift Valley to plan the violence. “Meetings of this kind have been consistently reported by witnesses with first-hand knowledge and both the CIPEV (Waki commission) and the KNCHR assessed as credible and reliable,” says Mr Moreno-Ocampo.

Lubanga Trial Website (The Hague)

Wednesday, 3 March 2010

Congo-Kinshasa: Former UPC Man Testifies In Lubanga Trial

Wairagala Wakabi

A witness who said he fought with the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) today started giving evidence in the trial of Thomas Lubanga at the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC alleges that Lubanga headed the UPC, a group that used child soldiers in inter-ethnic conflict during 2002 and 2003.

The witness, the sixth called by the defense, mostly testified in closed session and had protective measures such as face and voice distortion to protect his identity. During the few moments when his testimony was in public session, he was questioned by defense counsel Jean-Marie Biju-Duval about the time he spent with UPC, and also about his brother.

It was not possible to know how the brother to the witness was connected to the trial, or to the UPC. Equally, from the small bits of evidence given by the witness in open session, it was not possible to get an idea of what the gist of his testimony was.

The witness said he was in the UPC until 2003. He deserted the group when the Ugandan army clashed with UPC's fighters in the town of Bunia in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He went to the town of Mongwalu and joined the Peoples' Armed Forces of Congo (FAPC), a militia group in that area.

The witness said he served with the FAPC for a year. Biju-Duval asked the witness whether during his time with FAPC he maintained contact with his mother, brothers and sisters. The witness responded that he had indeed maintained contact with them. Biju-Duval then asked that court goes into closed session for the witness to provide details about those contacts.

Earlier, the witness said his brother about whom he was questioned at length at one time fled to Uganda, but then he returned to Congo and stayed in Kasenyi and in Bunia. He said his brother went back to school when he returned to Congo.

"We did not meet all the time but he would come to my home to fetch some money in order to pay for his school fees," the witness said of his brother.

The witness is expected to continue giving evidence tomorrow, and then the seventh defense witness will appear. Lubanga's defense team has indicated that its first 16 witnesses will show that intermediaries of the ICC concocted evidence and coached prosecution witnesses .

Meanwhile, judges today granted the prosecution's request to meet a defense witness who is expected to begin testifying this Friday. The meeting is anticipated to take place a day before the witness takes the witness stand.

The defense had opposed the application, arguing that the meeting would present an additional stress to the witness on the eve of his giving testimony in court. But the prosecution's Nicole Samson said they wished to ask the witness about some additional aspects of his likely testimony which the defense had only recently provided to the prosecution.

While granting the prosecution's application, Judge Adrian Fulford warned prosecutors against making similar applications when witnesses are about to appear in court.

"We will look at each of them very carefully on their merits and it will need new information of the kind indicated for us to give serious consideration to an application of this kind because it could be very stressful for the witness," said the judge.

Voice of America

Friday, 5 March 2010

Amnesty International Calls for Reopening of Sudanese Human Rights Groups

Joe DeCapua

It was one year ago Thursday, the Sudanese government closed three national human rights and humanitarian organizations. On the same day, it revoked the licenses of 13 international humanitarian groups.

The Sudanese government took the action after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for President Omar Al Bashir, who's accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity stemming from the Darfur conflict.

Amnesty International's Sudan researcher Rania Rajji says on the one year anniversary of the closings, "We are asking for the NGOs, the three NGOs, that are humanitarian and human rights Sudanese organizations, to reopen and resume their activities should they choose to."

Banned groups

The Khartoum Center for Human Rights and Environmental Development, Amal Center and the Sudan Social Development Organization were closed March 4th, 2009.

"We are also calling on the government of Sudan to stop the harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders throughout the country," she says.

Amnesty says the human rights situation in Sudan has deteriorated.

"These organizations were providing very significant human rights services in terms of monitoring and reporting and legal aid to an extent," she says.

Rajji says the remaining human rights defenders in the country "are not able to exercise their activities freely. And so with the absence of these NGOs, and the limitations that are forced upon human rights defenders, there is a very big gap in terms of words reaching outside the country about the violations that are happening, in terms of monitoring these violations on a daily basis."

Any chance of reinstatement?

Rajji says some of the groups were "trying to pursue the legal remedies that they have in terms of appealing the closure decision."

There has been public lobbying calling on the Sudanese government to reverse its decision.

"In April 2009, Amnesty International organized the campaign that was launched in different capitals of Africa trying to put pressure with the voices of African organizations," she says, "addressing the Sudanese government and asking for the decision to be reversed."

The Sudanese Foreign Affairs ministry has labeled the ICC as a political court rather than a legal one as elections in South Sudan approach. It says much of the international community opposes the court.

Recently, an appeals chamber of the International Criminal Court said the pre-trial chamber should have considered the charge of genocide against Mr. Bashir when it issued the arrested warrant.