

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



The IPAM team lifts the trophy in 6th annual Moot Court competition on international humanitarian law, sponsored by the Sierra Leone Red Cross, and backed by the Special Court. More photos' s from Friday's Moot Court finals in today's '*Special Court Supplement*'.

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:

Tuesday, 8 June 2010

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

Local News

Another Police Officer Killed / *Awareness Times* Page 3

International News

ECOMOG Mobilized ULIMO Fighters To Fight Against Charles Taylor... / *CharlesTaylorTrial.org* Pages 4-5

13th Defense Witness Agrees With Prosecutors... / *CharlesTaylorTrial.org* Pages 6-7

Report from The Hague / *BBC World Service Trust* Page 8

'Family Talk' Heals Old Civil War Wounds in Rural Sierra Leone / *Voice of America* Pages 9-10

ICC Review Conference: Sierra Leone Adopts Kampala Declaration / *The Patriotic Vanguard* Page 11

US Genocide Lawyer Denied Bail / *BBC Online* Page 12

All Charges Against Ngirabatware Maintained / *Hirondelle News Agency* Page 13

Why International Criminal Court Needs More Than Time / *BBC Online* Pages 14-16

UNICEF Pressing to End Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Central Africa / *Voice of America* Page 17

Special Court Supplement

Sixth Moot Court Finals, in Pictures Pages 18-19

Another Police Officer Killed

By Aruna Turay

The remains of a Sierra Leone Police (SLP) Officer attached to the Special Court of Sierra Leone have been discovered at the Malama Athletic and Football Association (MAFA) field, Babadorie, Lumley in Freetown.

According to the Local Unit Commander (LUC) for the Lumley Police Division Chief Superintendent Alhaji Gibril Kabbah Kamara, at about 11:00pm on Friday 4th June 2010, a police officer attached to the Malama Police Post Constable 9781 Bangura M. came to the Division and reported a case of a dead body that has been discovered lying at the

MAFA field. That same night, the LUC went on, a team from the Operations and Support Department of the Division headed by one Inspector Carmannoh visited the scene and discovered the corpse. After inspecting the corpse, a squad mate among the team was able to identify the corpse as a police officer. He said the corpse was searched and a police officer's identification card bearing the information. Constable 7721 Sillah attached to the Special Court of Sierra Leone, a Special Court identification card and a 17 (seventeen) rounds magazine was found in his possession.

LUC Kabbah went in that the remains of the police officer has been taken to the Mortuary of the Cannought Hospital awaiting postmortem, while two suspects have so far been arrested and put under police custody as investigations are still ongoing.

However, community residents revealed to Awareness Times that at about the same time that night, they heard loud shouting outside but was unable to investigate the cause of the shouting till day break when they were greeted with the tense police presence in the area that they were able to know what was going on.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org

Monday, 7 June 2010

ECOMOG Mobilized ULIMO Fighters To Fight Against Charles Taylor in Liberia And To Attack AFRC/RUF In Sierra Leone, Former ULIMO Fighter Testifies

Charles Taylor's 15th defense witness commenced his testimony today, telling the Special Court for Sierra Leone judges that Nigerian led West African peacekeepers mobilized several fighters to attack Mr. Taylor's forces in Liberia as well as rebel forces in Sierra Leone during the conflicts in the West African region.

The witness, who is a Liberian by birth with Sierra Leonean parents, is testifying with partial protective measures and therefore identified only by Pseudonym Number DCT-190. He told the court that he was a member of one of the rebel factions in Liberia – the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia, loyal to Roosevelt Johnson (ULIMO-J).

According to the witness, sometime in 1998 when skirmishes broke out between ULIMO-J leader Mr. Johnson and Mr. Taylor, Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeepers provided ULIMO-J leaders with arms, ammunition, and trucks to attack and overthrow Mr. Taylor's government in Liberia. The ULIMO-J fighters, the witness said, were transported from Duala to Camp Johnson Road in Monrovia to attack Mr. Taylor's forces. The witness further stated that the objective of this attack was to attack the Barclay Training Center in Monrovia, secure the safety of the ULIMO-J leader Mr. Johnson, and overthrow Mr. Taylor's government.

“The objective was to take Barclay Training Center in Monrovia with a view to obtaining arms and ammunition to overthrow Mr. Taylor,” the witness told the court today.

Asked by Mr. Taylor's defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths whether the mission was successful, the witness told the court that “the mission was a failure, total failure because we were not able to take BTC and the next objective was to escort the leader (Mr. Johnson) to the American embassy.” He said that Mr. Johnson was escorted to the United States embassy.

The witness also told the court that within this period, ECOMOG peacekeepers planned to use ULIMO fighters in an operation code named “Operation Eagle,” which had a stated aim of capturing Mr. Taylor alive in Monrovia. He said that the plan was for ULIMO fighters to wear ECOMOG peacekeeping military uniforms and attack Mr. Taylor's convoy near the James Spriggs airfield in Monrovia. This mission, the witness said, could not succeed because Mr. Taylor had an effective intelligence network that detected the plan. The witness said he was one of the ULIMO fighters engaged in implementing this mission.

Mr. Taylor in his testimony told the court about ECOMOG's plans with ULIMO fighters to overthrow him while he was president of Liberia. This witness's account today corroborated Mr. Taylor's testimony.

Also today, the witness told the court that in 1997, the government of Sierra Leone and ECOMOG peacekeepers recruited UMILO ex-combatants and transported them in ECOMOG trucks with a mandate to fight against Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and Revolutionary United Front (RUF) junta forces, who had overthrown the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone in May 1997. He said that the Liberian fighters were fully supported by ECOMOG forces during the attacks against AFRC/RUF forces.

“At Ricks Institute...we were being fed, taken care of by ECOMOG,” the witness told the court.

The witness added that ECOMOG directly provided them with arms and ammunition. Asked by Mr. Griffiths whether they underwent any training, the witness explained that “yes, because they knew we were fighters, so basically what they needed was effective command and control on the ground. That was basically what we trained at Ricks Institute.”

Mr. Taylor, who is on trial for providing support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone through the supply of arms and ammunition, has told the court that several other players were responsible for the movement of fighting forces between Liberia and Sierra Leone because the region was already a volatile one due to the conflict.

The witness today, in giving the background to the formation of ULIMO, told the court that when Mr. Taylor’s rebel forces attacked Liberia in 1989, Liberians who ran to Sierra Leone later formed the Liberians United Democratic Forces (LUDF). This group, which according to the witness was supported by the government of Sierra Leone, later became ULIMO-J. The aim of this group, the witness said was first to help the government of Sierra Leone in their fight against the RUF and then to attack Mr. Taylor’s forces in Liberia. He said when they eventually entered Liberia, they received support from ECOMOG forces in their fight against Mr. Taylor.

“ECOMOG sent trucks for us and we were collected from Bomi Hills to Monrovia to assist them in Operation Octopus,” the witness said. Operation Octopus was an operation launched by Mr. Taylor’s forces to capture Monrovia and finish the Liberian war.

Mr. Taylor has testified that because of the government of Sierra Leone’s support to ULIMO, he had cause to establish a working relationship with the RUF in Sierra Leone in the early 1990s because they had a common enemy.

“I wanted to fight ULIMO in Sierra Leone in order to prevent fighting them in Liberia,” Mr. Taylor told the court in his previous testimony.

DCT-190’s testimony continues tomorrow.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Thursday, 3 June 2010

Liberia: That Charles Taylor Lied Under Oath While 14th Witness Denies Cooking Sam Dokie's Liver

By Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor lied in his testimony when he told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges in The Hague that he had not negotiated to have a senior Sierra Leonean rebel commander, who was based in Liberia, taken back to Sierra Leone, Mr. Taylor's 13th defense witness agreed with prosecutors today in The Hague.

Another defense witness, who commenced her testimony today, denied allegations that she cooked the liver of a Liberian politician who was allegedly murdered by rebel forces loyal to Mr. Taylor in 1997.

Mr. Taylor's 13th defense witness, a former executive member of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who has been testifying with partial protective measures today concluded his testimony, during which he agreed with prosecutors that Mr. Taylor lied under oath when he testified that he had not spoken to RUF leaders to take Sam Bockarie back to Sierra Leone after the RUF commander had relocated to Liberia in 1999. Mr. Bockarie, who was a senior commander in the RUF, fell out with the rebel group's leader Foday Sankoh in 1999 and relocated to Liberia with several forces loyal to him. They were all granted Liberian citizenship and were enlisted into Mr. Taylor's security forces. After the arrest of RUF leader Mr. Sankoh by the government of Sierra Leone in 2000, Issa Sesay became interim leader of the group. Prosecution witnesses testified that Mr. Taylor tried negotiating with Mr. Sesay to allow Mr. Bockarie to go back to Sierra Leone and rejoin the RUF. Mr. Taylor, while testifying as a witness in his own defense denied this claim by witnesses. Today, the former president's own witness, DCT-292, told the court that it was in his presence that Mr. Taylor had tried talking to Mr. Sesay to allow Mr. Bockarie to go back to Sierra Leone and rejoin the RUF. Prosecution counsel Nicholas Koumjian asked the witness whether Mr. Taylor had lied to the judges when he denied saying this. The witness agreed with Mr. Koumjian that that was the case.



"Mr. Taylor was asked by his counsel "now, did you suggest that Mosquito [Sam Bockarie] be taken back," and Mr. Taylor said "no, I did not suggest that." Mr. Witness, Charles Taylor lied to these judges because you were present when he asked Issa Sesay to take Sam Bockarie back to Sierra Leone, correct?" Mr. Koumjian asked the witness.

"Yes my lord," the witness responded.

Another witness, a Liberian national, Mrs. Annie Yoney commenced her testimony today as Mr. Taylor's 14th witness. Mrs. Yoney told the court about how she joined Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) willingly when the war started in Liberia, having seen how former Liberian president Samuel Doe had persecuted people from Nimba County. In her testimony, Mrs. Yoney told the court that prosecution witness and former member of the NPFL, Joseph Zig Zag Marzah, lied when he told the court about how she had been engaged in cannibalism with Mr. Taylor. Mr. Marzah in his testimony told the court that on Mr. Taylor's orders, when former Liberian politician Sam Dokie was killed in 1997, his liver was removed, cooked by one "Annie Yoney" (the current witness) and eaten together with Mr. Taylor. Mrs. Yoney denied ever engaging in such a practice.

"It is not true. That is what we call assassination of character, for a woman like me to cook a human being, it is not true. I am speaking to my God I serve, He knows my heart," Mrs. Yenedy told the court.

Mrs. Yenedy took some moments to sob when speaking about Mr. Dokie's death because according to her, Mr. Dokie's wife was her sister who was also assassinated alongside the Liberian politician. She said she was informed that it was Mr. Marzah who had killed her sister and her brother-in-law.

Mrs. Yenedy explained that it was Mr. Marzah's practice to eat human beings and brag about it, telling people that he did not have a jail to keep his enemies.

"Zig Zag Marzah used to say these things in Gbarngba. He used to say he hasn't got a jail house, when he arrests any war criminals, he'll eat them," she said.

Describing Mr. Marzah, the witness told the court that "Zig Zag Marzah used to rape, he used to steal."

"Zig Zag Marzah was not correct in his head, he was half mad, he used to naked himself and run in the streets," she said.

Mrs. Yenedy's description of Mr. Marzah corroborates what Mr. Taylor and his 11th witness Timan Edward Zammy told the court about the prosecution witness. Defense lawyers concluded Mrs. Yenedy's direct-examination within a couple of hours and prosecutors immediately commenced her cross-examination.

Tuesday, 8 June 2010

By John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor is accused of funding Sierra Leone's former rebels, the Revolutionary United Front, the RUF by selling diamonds on their behalf and buying weapons for them. But a Liberian-born Sierra Leonean who fought for the ULIMO-J rebel faction said the West African Peacekeeping Force, ECOMOG engaged in diamond mining in Sierra Leone too. The Defence 15th witness testifying under anonymity also said Former ULIMO-J Leader, Roosevelt Johnson connived with ECOMOG and attacked the government of Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor. John Kollie reports for the BBC World Service Trust on the trial of former president Charles Taylor in The Hague...

The Defence 15th witness only identified as DCT 190 said the West African Peacekeeping Force, ECOMOG mined diamonds in the Sierra Leonean Town of Tongo during the civil war in that country.

Former Liberian Leader, Charles Taylor is the only foreigner accused in collaboration with the RUF in looting the diamonds of Sierra Leone. But a Former fighter of the Liberian rebel faction, ULIMO-J testifying in Mr. Taylor's defence alleged ECOMOG commanded by Major General Maxwell Khobe in Sierra Leone did diamond business with the locals.

The witness further said the Sierra Leone Government and ECOMOG recruited and armed Ex-combatants of both ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K at the Ricks Institute in Liberia. He said the recruits from the Ricks Institute were armed and taken to Sierra Leone by ECOMOG Forces to assist restore the ousted government of Former President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in 1997.

The witness testified that the Liberian fighters were fully supported by ECOMOG during their attacks against the combined RUF and AFRC forces in Sierra Leone.

The Defence witness also told the court that the African Peacekeepers provided ULIMO-J leader, Roosevelt Johnson with trucks, arms and ammunition to attack and overthrow the government of Charles Taylor in 1998.

He said ECOMOG loaded a truck with ULIMO-J fighters from Duala and transported them to Camp Johnson Road to fight the Taylor Government forces. The witness, a Sierra Leonean partly educated in Liberia, said the primary instruction to ULIMO fighters was to attack the Barclay Training Centre in Monrovia.

He told the court that the second instruction was to take Mr. Johnson to safety. According the Defence witness, ECOMOG had further planned to use ULIMO Fighters in an operation code named Operation Eagle to capture Mr. Taylor alive in Monrovia.

The witness said the plan was for ULIMO fighters wearing ECOMOG uniforms to ambush Mr. Taylor's convoy near the James Spriggs Airfield. But he told the court the plan failed because Mr. Taylor's intelligence picked up the information.

Voice of America

Monday, 7 June 2010

'Family Talk' Heals Old Civil War Wounds in Rural Sierra Leone

Fid Thompson | Dugba-yeima, Sierra Leone

In the remote village of Dugba-yeima, hundreds of people gather around a bonfire for 'fambul tok' a special reconciliation ceremony where victims and offenders alike speak openly about the atrocities committed during the war.
Photo: F. Thompson, VOA



In the remote village of Dugba-yeima, hundreds of people gather around a bonfire for "fambul tok" a special reconciliation ceremony where victims and offenders alike speak openly about the atrocities committed in their community during eleven years of civil war.

Eight years after Sierra Leone's civil war ended, some communities have yet to come to terms with the destruction, murder and rape committed on them by their own people. Many have never spoken of what happened to them during the war and most have never confessed

to the crimes they committed. Until now. A unique community healing process is reuniting villages that suffered some of the worst violence of the conflict.

The masked "devils" of the local women's secret society dance to traditional drums in the tiny village of Dugba-yeima, hidden in the remote hills along Sierra Leone's eastern border.

As the sun sets, hundreds of people from nearby villages gather around a crackling bonfire to celebrate a unique event. Eight years after the end of a decade-long civil war, people will talk publicly for the first time of atrocities committed in their communities. Most of these people never witnessed the work of the nation's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Many have never spoken of the atrocities they committed or witnessed during the war.

Massah Jusu, from nearby Baiima village, has come to tell the story of her daughter's death. He says everyone fled when the rebels came to their village. She and her pregnant daughter were running through the bush when they came upon a group of rebels. They killed her daughter in front of her, she says. Then they slit open her stomach and took out the baby. One rebel called "Devil" chopped the baby in half with a machete. It was then, she said, that she started crying.

Jusu does not know the rebels who killed her daughter, but she is not afraid to speak out in front of her community.

The ceremony is part of a community reconciliation process led by the Sierra Leonean peace-building organization, Fambul Tok.

Fambul Tok, or Family Talk in the local Krio language, draws from traditional mediation and conflict resolution methods. Before the war, many rural communities gathered around a bonfire to tell stories, discuss the day's events and resolve problems.

Now village committees organize a special bonfire ceremony where witnesses, victims and offenders can attest publicly to atrocities committed. The aim is neither to judge nor to force forgiveness, but rather to foster understanding.

Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up in 2002 to document the human rights abuses committed during the war and foster healing. The commission held public hearings in Sierra Leone's major cities and regional towns, but did not reach remote villages like Dugba-yeima.

Fambul Tok director, John Caulker, believes that Sierra Leone needs a reconciliation model that relies on community dialogue and collective reckoning. "The aim of Fambul Tok is to provide space for dialogue between victims and offenders in the safe environment which is mostly in the communities. It is different from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission where they bring people to the big towns. But Fambul Tok is organized at the community level, which is the safest space for victims and offenders to tell their stories," he said.

Fambul Tok has helped thousands of people in the war-battered south and east of Sierra Leone come to terms with what happened there over a decade of violent conflict. They recently expanded their interventions to the country's northern zone.

At the end of ten years of violent civil war, the Lome Peace Accord gave a blanket amnesty to all fighters except a handful of leaders "who bore the greatest responsibility" for the war crimes committed.

Many of those fighters were children, drugged and forced into murdering and mutilating their own people and sometimes their own families. The United Nations estimates 10,000 children were abducted and forced to fight.

At the bonfire ceremony in Dugba-yeima, Massah Jusu tells the gathering about her daughter's death. While she is speaking, a young man runs into the middle of the ceremony.

The young man is Jusu's next door neighbor, Foday Allieu. He confesses to her daughter's murder and begs her to forgive him.

Like many former rebels, Foday Allieu is both victim and perpetrator of war crimes. He was twelve when the rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front, attacked his village and abducted him and four other boys. He fought with them until the end of the war.

For him, the reconciliation process has only just begun. He did many bad things, he says, but he is asking for forgiveness.

Allieu says he was afraid of speaking to Jusu ever since he returned to the village after the war. But now, he says, if he gets anything, like money, he will give it her to help her forget what happened in the past.

Allieu would like to build a new house for Jusu, but he does not have the means right now.

Jusu says she was tormented when she heard Allieu confess to the killing of her daughter and grandchild. But she has decided to forgive him. No good, she says, can come from holding on to that bitterness.

The Patriotic Vanguard

Tuesday, 8 June 2010

ICC Review Conference: Sierra Leone adopts Kampala declaration

By Emmanuel Turay, PV East Africa Bureau Chief, Nairobi, Kenya



The ICC Review Conference in Kampala, Uganda, has concluded its general debate by reiterating their commitment to the ICC mission of fighting against impunity, bringing justice to victims and deterring future atrocities.

According to a recent press release, Sierra Leone is among a total of 84 States (67 States parties and 17 observers), along with Palestine, international organizations and NGOs that took the floor in affirming their position on the Rome statute.

The press release further stated that regarding the stocktaking of international criminal justice, a number of states emphasized the need for cooperation for the effectiveness of the ICC, the role of victims as the main stakeholders of the ICC system and mutually reinforcing the relationship between peace and justice efforts.

According to the press statement, the importance of complementarity was highlighted and measures on strengthening national jurisdictions to prosecute international crimes were welcomed. There was also a general call for universal ratification of the Rome Statute.

As regards the inclusion of the crime of aggression in the Court's jurisdiction, the statement further revealed that many states considered it essential that an amendment to the Statute be adopted at the Review Conference.

The Sierra Leone delegation led by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs & International Co-operation, Hon. Vandi Chidi Minah (photo) participated in the pledging ceremony where the co-focal points for pledges, Mr. Ernst Hirsch Ballin, Minister of Justice of the Netherlands, and Mr. Gonzalo Gutiérrez, Permanent Representative of Peru to the UN, announced that they had received 112 pledges from 37 states and regional organizations, representing all regions of the world. These pledges cover: financial contributions, enforcement of sentences agreements, agreements on privileges and immunities, relocation of witnesses, cooperation with the Court and between States in various forms, complementarity, outreach and the designation of focal points.

The Conference, according to the press release, also adopted the Kampala Declaration which deals mainly with the reaffirmation of the commitment of states to the Rome Statute and its full implementation, as well as its universality and integrity.

Sierra Leone, among other state parties, reiterated its determination to put an end to impunity for perpetrators of the most serious crimes of international concern and emphasized that justice is a fundamental building block of sustainable peace. The delegates from Sierra Leone also declared their country's readiness to continue to strengthen their efforts to promote victims' rights under the Statute.

The states present also decided to celebrate 17th July, the day of the adoption of the Rome Statute in 1998, as the Day of International Criminal Justice.

BBC Online

Tuesday, 8 June 2010

Rwanda: US genocide lawyer denied bail



A judge in Rwanda has refused bail to a US lawyer charged with denying the 1994 genocide and publishing articles threatening Rwanda's security.

Peter Erlinder arrived in Rwanda last month to help defend opposition leader Victoire Ingabire Umuhiza on charges of promoting genocide ideology.

The US has called on the Rwandan authorities to release Mr Erlinder, who has denied all the charges.

The genocide claimed the lives of about 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

Mr Erlinder is the lead defence counsel for top genocide suspects at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania.

After the bail hearing, Rwanda's justice minister said the prosecution was not a "political tactic".

"It is an act of justice," Foreign Affairs Minister Louise Mushikiwabo said in a statement.

"The Rwandan government takes no pleasure from Mr Erlinder's plight, but this needs to be understood: flagrant and orchestrated breaches of our genocide ideology laws will be met with the full force of the law."

Ms Ingabire, an ethnic Hutu, was arrested for allegedly propagating genocide ideology after she called for action to be taken against those responsible for killing Hutus during the 1994 conflict.

She was freed on bail but her passport was seized and she was banned from leaving the capital, Kigali. She could be sentenced to more than two decades in prison if convicted.

Hirondelle News Agency

Monday, 7 June 2010

All charges against Ngirabatware maintained

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (TPIR) rejected on June 3rd a motion filed by former Minister of Planning Augustin Ngirabatware seeking revocation of the charge of having used public funds to finance the extremist Hutu militia.

Augustin Ngirabatware is charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. The Prosecution alleges he launched appeals to kill Tutsis during numerous meetings in his home region in 1994.

He is also accused of having delivered weapons to the Interahamwe and of having used public funds to finance the "Hutu power" militia.

In a motion filed on May 13, the defence team had requested the chamber to revoke this section of the indictment, arguing that it was not substantiated by any evidence.

However, the request was rejected by the Chamber on grounds that the Prosecution had not entirely finished to present its case.

Ngirabatware hails from what used to be the Nyammyumba district in the Prefecture of Gisenyi (North of Rwanda). He is the son-in-law of a wealthy businessman on the run, Felicien Kabuga, the alleged sponsor of the 1994 genocide.

The former minister was arrested in Germany on September 17, 2007, and has been in ICTR custody since October 8, 2008.

A doctor of economics from the University of Freiburg (Switzerland), Ngirabatware taught at the National University of Rwanda (1986-1990), before he became Minister of Planning (1990-1994).

He fled Rwanda in July 1994 and subsequently worked in various research institutes in Gabon and in France.

ER/GF

© Hirondelle News Agency

BBC Online

Saturday, 5 June 2010

Why International Criminal Court needs more than time

By Karen Allen BBC News, Kampala



Luis Moreno Ocampo's name is synonymous with hope for many victims

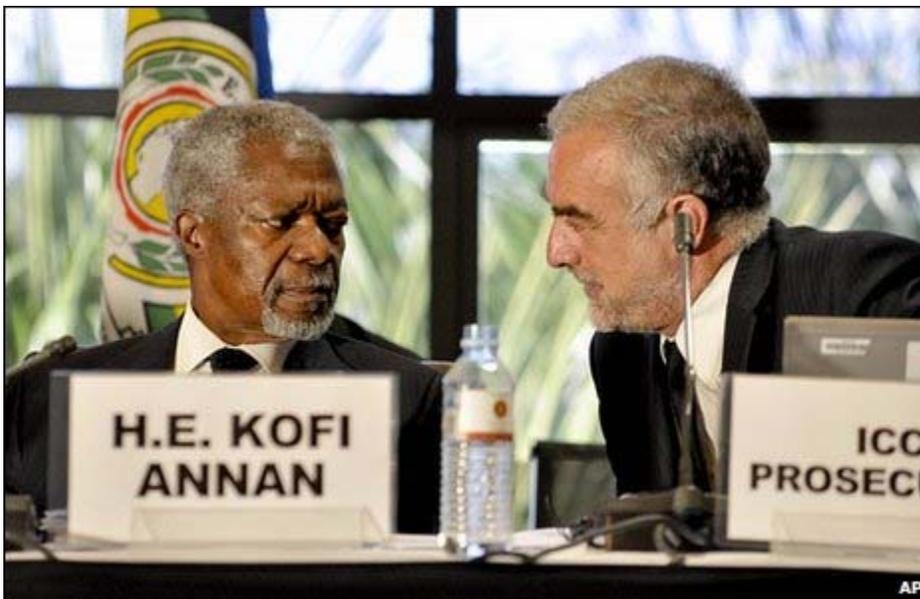
"Justice takes time." For the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Luis Moreno Ocampo, it is a phrase that he wearily repeats.

Twelve years after the Rome Statute paved the way to creating the ICC, the first permanent war-crimes tribunal, the court has still not secured its first conviction.

But does that mean it is failing?

Five countries are now facing investigations - Kenya, Uganda, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sudan.

All of them are African states, and all states where the phrase "why pay a lawyer when you can buy a judge?" rings true.



The ICC can only be as strong as its members

There may be legitimate arguments that this looks like selective justice and the ICC would do well to cast its geographical net wider.

But the official response to this criticism is that the court "targets impunity and not individual states".

It is an argument that may be hard to swallow for some.

As delegates gathered in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, at a major conference to review the performance of the ICC, news emerged that Israeli soldiers had raided a flotilla of Gaza-bound aid ships and killed a number of activists.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made it clear he wanted answers about the Israeli raid.

But Israel is not a signatory to the Rome Statute - meaning it is not subject to ICC jurisdiction. The ICC is only as strong as the sum of parts.

Which is why Kofi Annan, who has acted as a negotiator in some of Africa's most bitter disputes, struck a chord during an open forum when he said: "In the end we are all going to need the ICC."

Though the court may not have yet secured the arrest of President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan - the first serving leader to be indicted for war crimes - the ICC argues it has reduced his travel opportunities.

But the existence of an arrest warrant, obliging 111 states to detain him should he enter their territory, is an example of what could be called justice by stealth.

It is an attempt to change the culture in which impunity exists and, in the longer term, bring the alleged perpetrators to justice.

Angry child



This deterrent effect of the ICC, it is argued by its supporters, is as important as the court itself.

ICC members have criticised Israel, which is not a member

It is impossible to measure how much the threat of an ICC indictment changes the behaviour of governments, rebel

movements and individuals, the court's supporters insist that anecdotal evidence suggests a shift in attitude.

Kenya - the most recent country to be investigated - has been forced kicking and screaming like an angry child to begin the process of setting up a home-grown tribunal to investigate post-election violence that racked the country for weeks after the 2007 vote.

It is not known how the local courts will operate, but the hope is that they will work in tandem with the ICC. Mr Moreno Ocampo says he wants the kingpins in the post-election violence to be brought to book before Kenya goes to the polls again in 2012.

What the ICC's existence has done, without doubt, is to slowly send signals to ordinary citizens who so often feel their voice goes unheard that no-one is above the law in the end.

Sense of hope

Even on the minibus taxis in Kenya, where the names of football heroes and popstars are adorned, the name of Luis Moreno Ocampo can now be seen.

There is a sense of hope here, however remote.

But the ICC's capacity is limited by the failure to get all five of the permanent members of the UN Security Council to sign up. The US and China remain outside the court's jurisdiction.

The US has energetically backed the indictment of Mr Bashir from the sidelines.

But until it commits itself to the court, its absence from the top table will always be used as a stick to beat the ICC.

Behind closed doors, the Obama administration is in talks which could pave the way to the country becoming a signatory.

But as one diplomat put it, the "comfort threshold" for the US is going to have to be pretty high to convince it to join the club.

Politically charged

Which is why human rights organisations are warning the ICC to tread carefully when it considers complex proposals in the coming days on how to define the crime of aggression.



So far, the court has brought little closure to victims of atrocities

Although the crime of aggression is already part of the court's brief, member states still have to come up with a definition.

Would the war in Iraq have met the definition? Or would Ethiopia's operations in Somalia?

More importantly, the ICC must list a set of guidelines under which jurisdiction the crime of aggression falls.

Richard Dicker, from Human Rights Watch, has argued that the ICC is in danger of compromising its neutrality by essentially overreaching itself - straying into territory which is highly politically charged.

The events in the Gaza Strip may limit the amount of debate given to the prickly issue of crimes of aggression.

Some insiders at the ICC conference are even hinting that delegates may have got cold feet, and the much expected vote on the subject could be put on ice.

Voice of America

Monday, 7 June 2010

UNICEF Pressing to End Recruitment of Child Soldiers in Central Africa

Scott Stearns



Photo: AFP

Children soldiers in the Chadian Army on the battlefield in Hadjer Marfain, east of Chad, after a fight against rebels. (File Photo - 14 Dec 2006)

The United Nations Children's Fund is pressing to end the recruitment of child soldiers in Central Africa. The campaign also seeks to improve educational opportunities for former child soldiers.

UNICEF has officials from Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Niger, and the Central African

Republic meeting in N'Djamena to discuss cross-border issues relating to the exploitation and forced recruitment of child soldiers.

The three-day conference is part of a campaign pressing for the ratification of an optional protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child relating to the protection of children in armed conflict.

Marzio Babilie, who heads UNICEF operations in Chad, says there are one-quarter million children under the age of 18 involved in more than 30 conflicts worldwide.

"It's a phenomenon, unfortunately, in countries that are fragile, conflict prone, or that exit conflict like Chad and Sudan," said Babilie.

Babilie says the goal of this conference in N'Djamena is to get all five governments to sign a binding agreement to stop the recruitment of children and create better opportunities for former child soldiers in school and in the workplace.

"UNICEF is working very hard together with governments to overcome the problem of demobilization and social reinsertion," added Babilie.

UNICEF has helped demobilize more than 800 child soldiers in Chad over the last three years. Babilie says one of the obstacles in Central Africa is that some children join conflicts willingly because there are few other opportunities at home. Being a combatant increases their stature in the community.

"Obviously having a child who is a combatant, a child who is a fighter is a sort of pride for the family and for the community," added Babilie.

The sub-regional conference will hear testimony from former child soldiers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

Special Court Supplement
Moot Court Finals Between LICSSAL Business College and IPAM, Won by IPAM
Friday, 4 June 2010



