

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



A three-day preview exhibition of the Peace Museum opened Thursday at the Special Court.

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:

Monday, 2 May 2011

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Special Court for Sierra Leone
Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 29 April 2011

Peace Museum Preview Opens at Special Court

Sierra Leone's new Peace Museum opened a three-day preview exhibition Thursday at its future location on the Special Court complex in Freetown. The opening ceremony was chaired by the President of the Special Court, Justice Jon Kamanda. Michael Schulenberg, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, represented the United Nations and the UN Peacebuilding Fund, which is funding the establishment of the Museum.



The Peace Museum was proposed by the Government of Sierra Leone as a future use of the Special Court site. When it opens officially in 2012, the Museum will tell the story of Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war and its return to peace, and honour the

victims of the conflict. It will also contain an archive of war-related materials, including the permanent archives of the Special Court.

The preview was organized as part of celebrations for Sierra Leone's 50th Independence Anniversary. Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, a Commissioner for Sierra Leone's Human Rights Commission, declared the exhibition officially open.

On display this week are videos, including "The Sierra Leone Story," on the country's independence; materials relating to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's "National Vision," and a preview of the Special Court's archives. A number of historical documents are on loan from the National Archives, including the 1788 treaty between King Naimbama and the British Government.

Thursday's exhibition was organized by the Peace Museum Project Management Team, which includes representatives from the Special Court, the Ministry of Justice, the Sierra Leone Judiciary, the Human Rights Commission, the Sierra Leone Museum, the National Archives, the Monuments and Relics Commission, and Civil Society.

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Patriotic Vanguard (website)

Saturday, 30 April 2011

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[Note: The SCSL press release also appeared on Cocorioko, Sierra Express Media, and other websites.]

IPP Media (via the Guardian)

Thursday, 28 April 2011

UK pledges further funding for criminal tribunals

The British Minister for Africa Henry Bellingham has announced a further contribution of £3m to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The court is the first international criminal tribunal to be funded entirely from voluntary contributions from international donors.

According to a press statement availed to 'The Guardian' in Dar es Salaam yesterday, supporting and promoting international justice widely was a key element of the United Kingdom's foreign policy. As such, the UK was active in all six existing international criminal tribunals.

Bellingham also confirmed an additional contribution of £1m to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia and a further £1m to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

Speaking during his visit to Freetown, Bellingham said: "The government is fully committed to the principle that there should be no impunity for the most serious crimes at the international level. Our contributions have helped the Special Court for Sierra Leone successfully investigate and prosecute eight of those who bore responsibility for serious crimes during its bloody civil war."

The effective prosecution of those who commit crimes, he said, was fundamental to the development of more stable and prosperous communities.

"I applaud the important work of all of the international tribunals," he added.



Voice of America

Sunday, 21 April 2011

US Works with African Countries to Address Human Rights Crimes

Peter Clottey



Photo: VOA

Stephen Rapp, US Ambassador-at-large for War Crimes Issues

The U.S. ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues, Stephen Rapp, says he is working with a number of African countries to establish domestic justice systems for investigating and prosecuting war crimes.

"[We are] looking at...places in Africa as a way to strengthen judicial systems [and] that is very consistent with [the idea of] complementarity. [That means] the ICC [International Criminal Court in The Hague] gets involved only when there is no will or capacity at the national level [to investigate or try those accused of war crimes]," said Rapp, a former chief prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone

One way to handle such crimes at the national level is through a "mixed chamber," a national, civilian judicial institution that prosecutes serious human rights violations with the help of international experts.

Rapp said the Obama administration supports the ICC in its effort to prosecute individuals or groups of people who have allegedly committed human rights abuses or war crimes.

"The cases that have been taken up so far in Africa cry out for justice, he said, "[for example] where women have been raped and children kidnapped and thousands of

innocents targeted intentionally. Those cases require justice and if it is impossible to deliver them at the national level, then you need an international court," he added.

Rapp said he is working with the U.S. Justice Department and civil society groups to establish a mixed chamber in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

He is also working with Senegalese authorities, he said, to establish an ad hoc court to try former Chadian leader Hissen Habre under the African Union's mandate.

In another case, six suspects recently appeared before the ICC, accused of masterminding Kenya's 2007 post-election violence, which left more than 1300 people dead.

"We are very much for accountability for the crimes committed after Kenyans were brutally murdered and 300 thousand dislocated. Kenyans strongly believe that there need to be justice before the 2012 elections because it could be worse the next time," said Rapp.

"We had pressed from very early on for a special tribunal in Kenya to do that. We supported the report of Justice Phillip Waki [urging the creation of a tribunal].... I was meeting the police commissioner this week, saying we are still willing to help in any way that we can. But, there hasn't been any progress on that," he added.

Daily Star (Bangladesh)

Saturday, 30 April 2011

US envoy for war crimes arrives Sunday



US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues, Stephen J Rapp, is flying in on Sunday on a three-day visit.

He will have a round of meetings with senior Bangladeshi government officials including the law minister, political leaders, civil society groups and the media.

Before leaving, Ambassador Rapp will hold a press conference on May 3.

Rapp visited Dhaka in January. He then visited International Crimes Tribunal, met with law minister and lawyers of the accused who have already been arrested.

Prior to his appointment to the present post, Ambassador Rapp served as Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone beginning in January 2007, leading the prosecutions of former Liberian President Charles Taylor and other persons alleged to bear the responsibility for the atrocities during Sierra Leone civil war.

During his tenure, Rapp's office achieved the first convictions in history for sexual slavery and forced marriage as crimes against humanity as well as convictions for attacks on peacekeepers and for the recruitment and use of child soldiers as violations of international humanitarian law.

International Justice Tribune

Wednesday, 27 April 2011

Ivory Coast: truth or Justice?

How salubrious and healing are Truth and Reconciliation Commissions? This question rears its head again in Ivory Coast. The country's new president hopes such a commission would restore the calm needed for a future of peace. At the same time, it could offer Ouattara the possibility of not having to appear in court.

By Thijs Bouwknecht, Amsterdam

One of the first statements made by Alassane Ouattara as president, after he had finally crushed his rival, was: 'a truth and reconciliation commission is going to heal the wounds of the civil war'. Ouattara is facing the emblematic problem of political transition: he has to rebuild the country and settle the past.

Ivory Coast's much divided population must find a way to live side by side, while the two former presidential rivals must bear responsibility for possible crimes against humanity their troops might have committed. Is it a matter for a TRC, or for judges in a court of law?

Ouattara looks at South Africa, which serves as the classic example of dealing with a brutal past without the interference of judges. Desmond Tutu's truth commission in the 1990s uncovered the atrocities of Apartheid. Victims were heard in public, while perpetrators were offered amnesty in exchange for confessions. The commission's purpose was to document past atrocities, reconcile the black and white populations, and reach justice. In South Africa, healing was more important than retribution in court.

Global trend

They became a global trend: official probes into large scale human rights violations, repression or disappearances. Often these commissions dealt with recognising the victims' suffering, documenting crimes and reconciling former rivals.

Historically, TRCs have been popular in dealing with military juntas in Latin America. Reconciliation initiatives after the war in the former Yugoslavia, however, failed. The US city of Greensboro looked into racial unrest in 1979, while in Canada a commission is currently probing the treatment of its indigenous people.

TRCs were also set up in Asia. Earlier this year, the South Korean commission published an extensive report on human rights violations dating back to the 1950s. Last year, Thailand created a commission which examined the country's bloody political unrest earlier that year.

Africa

Africa has the highest number of TRCs. Often these proved to be a façade for impunity. The world's first truth commission was set up by Uganda's mass murderer Idi Amin. Conclusions from a number of other TRCs remain obscure to this day. Who would still remember Robert Mugabe's murderous campaigns in Matabeleland in the 1980s? A commission of inquiry examined the matter, but its report remained confidential.

In Liberia, Ivory Coast's neighbour, the TRC was seen as the only solution for answering the question of justice after a decade of civil war. However, notorious warlords consequently escaped prosecution. Other TRCs were doomed to fail. Burundi was too divided to discuss its genocidal episodes, while in Eastern Congo the examiners had blood on their hands. In Kenya, where hearings started last week, political wrangling overshadows the content of the subject matter. Chad reached a small victory: documented atrocities formed the basis of a court case against former President Hissène Habré.

West-Africa

Ouattara does not mention TRCs in the region. Yet West Africa has shown that it has the capacity for self reflection, albeit not as effective as that of Tutu's South African commission. Neighbouring Guinea announced an investigation in January into the mass killings and rapes at Conakry's largest stadium two years ago.

The TRC in Sierra Leone published a substantial report on child soldiers and blood diamonds, but reconciliation was hardly present. Potential perpetrators stayed away from the hearings, afraid of prosecution by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown. The report, 'Witness to Truth', is gathering dust as the cash-strapped government of Sierra Leone is unable to follow up on the report's recommendations.

Ouattara could reach out towards the east. In Ghana, efforts towards a TRC led to limited reparations to victims by a succession of corrupt regimes.

ICC

While Ouattara considers his options, the ICC prosecutor is looking over his shoulders. Luis Moreno Ocampo will point out to the new president that recent ethnic killings could not just be dealt with by truth commissions. Judges, preferably in Ivory Coast but otherwise in The Hague, must look into these crimes against humanity, the prosecutor said.

Truth commissions are good sources of material for prosecutors, but impunity is a taboo for Ocampo. His credo is that "one does not cancel out the other." Both Laurent Gbagbo and Ouattara are well aware of The Hague. Both men – Gbagbo already in 2003 and Ouattara a few weeks ago – have sent a letter to the ICC giving Ocampo the mandate to carry out an investigation.

And now we have to wait to see whether Ouattara could realise his concoction of truth, reconciliation and justice. Ivorians and the international community will closely watch his promises.

Washington Post

Friday, 29 April 2011

James Brabazon's "My Friend the Mercenary"

By Michael Mewshaw

A common occupational hazard for war reporters is the conviction that they have a book in them. British journalist and documentary filmmaker James Brabazon, suffering an acute case of this malady, has crammed half a dozen books into one. The result, "My Friend the Mercenary," is a mash-up — part memoir, part adventure yarn and part-account of his relationship with Nick du Toit, a notorious former special forces operator in South Africa during the apartheid era.

Brabazon set off in 2002 to cover a rebellion in Liberia. Eager for "a genuine scoop" that "could make my name as a journalist," he confesses: "I had promised not to implicate the Guineans, or the Americans, in a war that they both supported; I had agreed to act as a de facto agent for US Intelligence and give an as-yet-undisclosed amount of (someone else's) money as a 'security' payment to a rebel commander; and I had agreed to allow someone in my professional charge to help shoot down a helicopter on the basis that I could film it."

When his interests, not to mention his life, are on the line, Brabazon possesses an unfailing gift for rationalization. After all, Liberian leader Charles Taylor richly deserved to be deposed. (Taylor is now on trial at the Hague for war crimes.) And since Brabazon needed to provide for his own security, what better bodyguard than du Toit, a mercenary with three decades of experience and powers of rationalization that exceeded even Brabazon's?

No sooner were they embedded with a rebel group called LURD than du Toit was exploring side deals in blood diamonds. Still, dewy-eyed and dazzled by du Toit, Brabazon admits, "I was in awe; a little boy surprised to find his Action Man had come to life." The two of them nursed each other through dysentery, shot hours of "bang-bang," including summary executions and cannibalism, and discussed plans for future projects.

When du Toit revealed he was involved in a plot to depose the dictator of Equatorial Guinea, install a puppet ruler and take over the oil-rich country with mercenaries paid by a consortium of international investors, Brabazon felt some compunctions, but none that he couldn't overcome. Although the coup "would break laws in at least four countries" and might constitute "an international war crime," Brabazon agreed to become the Leni Riefenstahl "of [Nick's] coup d'état."

When the plot proceeded without Brabazon, and du Toit and his men landed in prison, one might assume that the author would revise his view of mercenaries and become a model of journalistic propriety. To the contrary, he pitched the idea of a documentary about his friend and business partner. As Brabazon reasoned, if he didn't do it, someone else would.

A British network financed this boondoggle even after Brabazon acknowledged "that doing my job as an independent, impartial journalist would be impossible." To save face, the network simply recut the film without Brabazon's knowledge and replaced his narration with an actor's voice. That's the new journalistic reality: Because of budget cuts, more and more coverage is outsourced. As with "extraordinary rendition," by which suspected terrorists are dispatched to foreign countries while the United States maintains plausible deniability, networks have shifted the dirty work to freelancers about whose affiliations and finances they claim ignorance.

Not that the publishing industry is above reproach, either. After this book's release in Britain with what seems to have been minimal editing, the U.S. edition arrives apparently untouched by rewriting. At best, the prose rises to breathless journalese: "More machine gun fire, the searing lead licking up the dust about our heels, harried us down the street." For long stretches, the dialogue is reminiscent of Uncle Remus. "De foi' brigade divahdeh in two battaliahn', an' each battaliahn ge' about tree or fou' companie.'" At its frequent worst, the style veers close to illiteracy ("Red berets had whisked Nick and I through immigration") and unintentional comedy ("After an hour of sliding over narrow jungle tracks, the headquarters of the rebel army emerged from the bush"). In the end, "My Friend the Mercenary" isn't so much an indictment of the shabby deals needed to make coups and commercial television as it is another example of them. James Brabazon now lectures on journalistic ethics.

Michael Mewshaw is the author of eight books of nonfiction, most recently "Between Terror and Tourism: An Overland Journey Across North Africa."

IPP Media (via the Guardian on Sunday)

Sunday, 1 May 2011

EAC: Africa`s new tool against war crimes

With the recent establishment of the African Court on Human Rights and People`s Rights in Arusha, the East African region and the rest of the continent now have an instrument to deal with cases of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

While there has been a push by the African Union (AU) for the deferral of Kenyan cases pending before the International Criminal Court (ICC), few African countries have utilized the institutions of justice available on the continent.

The African Court on Human Rights and People`s Rights, created by the AU, is aimed at enhancing the protection of human rights on the African continent. Working closely with the new court is the recently-activated Pan African Union of Lawyers (PALU), which engages AU organs and institutions on democracy, good governance, rule of law and human rights.

In the past, there have been few trials in the continent on crimes against humanity, except for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha and the Sierra Leone Special Tribunal currently trying the former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, within the ICC premises at The Hague.

For instance, to make use of the AU court, the victims of Kenyan post-election violence could use the African Court on Human Rights and People`s Rights and the African Commission on Human and People`s Rights in Banjul, Gambia, to seek justice.

Donald Deya, the PALU chief executive and the former Executive Secretary of the East African Law Society (EALS) told the independent East African News Agency (EANA) in an interview that Africa has created many organs and institutions do deal with issues of human rights, international crimes and economic injustices but they are hardly in operation because many African countries have not enlightened their citizens that these institutions, such as the COMESA court in Lusaka, are at their disposal.

While the ICC is good for guarding against human rights abuses in the world, Deya said, there is still need for the continent to strengthen its own African institutions so that the majority of cases can be held in the Africa. If the state is unable, or unwilling, to handle these cases, then they can be held at the sub-regional or continental level.

“We are potentially looking at a situation where the African Court of Human and People`s Rights would be able to try not only genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, which are the only three crimes the ICC can be able to try, but try other international crimes of concern to Africa such as piracy, terrorism, international corruption and the new crime of unconstitutional change of governments,” Deya said.

Undoubtedly, Africa's Horn and the Great Lakes regions have been the scences of war crimes, with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Uganda, Burundi, Somalia, Ethiopia, Rwanda and of late Kenya, being some of the countries where crimes against humanity have allegedly been committed over the years.

The challenge facing the continent is the current trend in which African presidents who have been defeated in elections refuse to surrender power, creating grounds for political upheavals and the resultant crimes against humanity.

The Constitutive Act has the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. It has a committee of sanctions on unconstitutional change of governments under the Peace and Security Council.

The debate now is whether refusal to hand over power after defeat should be considered in the same category as the “unconstitutional change of government.

Deya argues that the AU has very strong laws of human rights and governance, but they have to be made more robust because they are sometimes not applied fully in certain cases. He gave the example where these rules were fully applied in Madagascar and recently in Ivory Coast, but were not applied effectively in the case of Zimbabwe.

“While it would be preferable for African leaders to internalize human rights and good governance issues, the worst case scenario the AU can apply is the forceful removal of a leader who is in office unconstitutionally by the African Standby Brigade; that is what will actually give our leaders the message that Africa can act,” he said.

Both DRC and Uganda have referred their nationals to the ICC for their alleged involvement in the commission of crimes against humanity. Presently, two cases from Ituri in the DRC are before the ICC - the cases against Thomas Lubanga, Germain Katanga and Mathew Ngudjolo Chui. An ICC arrest warrant has also been for Bosco Ntaganda, a former senior member of Laurent Nkunda’s National Congress for People’s Defence (CNDP).

The case against former DRC vice-president, Jean-Pierre Bemba, relates to events in Central African Republic in 2002-2003. In Uganda, the government of Yoweri Museveni has also referred the case against the Joseph Kony of the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) to ICC.

Credible national trials are necessary to ensure accountability if the continent is keen on avoiding the ICC trials. Former Ethiopian president, Mengistu Haile Mariam, is still holed up in Zimbabwe despite warrants for his arrest.

Kenya has suffered election-related violence in 1992, 1997 and 2007 but it is the first time the perpetrators are being called to account.

The Registrar of the East African Court of Justice (EACJ), Dr John Ruhangisa, has also lamented that many people in the region have very little knowledge of the court.

“Another issue is the reluctance to surrender sovereignty and jurisdiction by the EAC Partner States,” he told journalists recently from the five Partner States of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi.