

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



The Registrar at yesterday's outreach event at the Ministry of Defence, Tower Hill.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Wednesday, 28 September 2011

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

Tuesday, 27 September 2011

Sierra Leone celebrates International Peace Day

Sierra Leone celebrated International Peace Day yesterday, September 21 at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, New England, Freetown.

The Chairman of the occasion, Mr. Sheku Mansaray, who is the National Coordinator for Peace Service in Sierra Leone, said the day offers peace builders the space to reflect on their achievements and challenges.

He said Civil Peace Service partners in Sierra Leone and Liberia pledged 12 months ago on this day to work towards eliminating all threats to peace in all its forms and make peace work in the Mano River Region.

He also said that their current challenges border on the Liberian elections in the next 20 days and Sierra Leone 12 months from now.

This is in addition to daily threats of jobless young people, rising food prices, high rural urban migration, over crowded cities that cause persistent poverty.

Building peace in the foregoing environment can best be described as "herculean", Mr. Mansaray said.

Mr. Mansaray spoke about the three recent violent incidences in the country: one at the National Stadium in Freetown on September 3, another in Koidu City in the Eastern region on August 26 and the most recent one in Bo, Southern Region on the 9th of September.

He said their theme therefore this year is set to remind all about their pledge to keep Sierra Leone and the sub region peaceful by sustaining the culture of positive peace even as "we aspire for a new Sierra Leone 50 years forward".

Presentations were made to winners who participated in the drawing and painting competition, and the person that topped the 6th category, Bunting .S. Kamara, thanked the organization for organizing such a wonderful program and congratulated his colleagues for their wonderful presentation of art work.

He called on Sierra Leoneans to give peace a chance. Drama presentations and live performance by Freetown Players, the Artists for Peace, Sierra Leone comedians, Alpha Omega group, all of their presentations gave peace messages, while peace messages were given by different people from all walks of life.

By Hawanatu Rahman Cole

Human Rights Watch

Tuesday, 27 September 2011

Guinea: 2 Years On, Stadium Massacre Unpunished

Lack of Accountability Impedes Reconciliation

(Johannesburg, September 28, 2011) – No one has been held to account two years after Guinean security forces gunned down unarmed protesters at an opposition rally in Conakry, the capital, Human Rights Watch said today. The Guinean government needs to do more to ensure justice for victims of the massacre on September 28, 2009, Human Rights Watch said.

The killings occurred as tens of thousands of protesters gathered peacefully at the main stadium in the capital to protest the continued military rule of Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara, then the country's leader. Members of the Presidential Guard, gendarmes, anti-riot police, and militia in civilian clothes opened fire on the crowds in the packed stadium and on people struggling to escape. At least 150 people were killed, and more than 100 women at the rally suffered brutal sexual violence at the hands of the security forces.

“The stadium massacre was shocking, and yet two years later no one has been held to account,” said Daniel Bekele, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “The Guinean government should learn from the country's recurring cycles of violence that stability will not last if justice is swept under the rug.”

Human Rights Watch and the United Nations-led International Commission of Inquiry concluded that the killings, rapes, and other abuses by the security forces on September 28 and the days that followed were part of a widespread and systematic attack, and as such, very likely constituted crimes against humanity.

In October 2009, the International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor confirmed that the situation in Guinea was under analysis, and that his office was determining whether to initiate a formal investigation. The ICC may open an investigation for the most serious crimes if member countries are unable or unwilling to do so. Later the same month, the government of Guinea committed to investigate and bring those responsible for the attacks to justice.

Three judges were named to an investigative panel in early 2010, and some progress has been made. In May 2010, the ICC reported that the investigating judges had interviewed 200 people. The following month, two people were reported detained for their alleged involvement in the crimes. Since then, a third person has been charged with crimes related to the September 2009 killings and rapes.

On January 19, 2011, Interpol issued a Red Notice for Aboubacar Sidiki Diakité, the head of the Presidential Guard, or red beret troops, at the time of the massacre, who has been directly implicated in the crimes.

Human Rights Watch was also encouraged by recent improvements in working conditions for the investigative judges, who were moved to new premises and assigned gendarmes for protection in September 2011. During a mission to Conakry in May, Human Rights Watch had expressed concern about what appeared to be inadequate security for the judges working on the case and had urged national authorities to address this problem.

However, there has been scant information regarding the status of the investigation in the last several months and no indication of government efforts to locate the more than 100 bodies believed to have been disposed of secretly by the security forces, Human Rights Watch said. In addition, the military hierarchy

has failed to put on administrative leave, pending investigation, soldiers and officers known to have taken part in the September 2009 violence.

“The countless people whose lives were scarred by the massacre are still waiting for justice,” Bekele said. “It’s hard to imagine that there can be any real healing without it.”

Human Rights Watch is also concerned that President Alpha Condé has appointed two people to government positions who, based on Human Rights Watch investigations, are implicated in the September 2009 violence: Lt. Col. Claude Pivi as minister of presidential security, and Lt. Col. Moussa Tiégboro Camara as director of the National Agency against Drugs, Organized Crime, and Terrorism.

In addition, Human Rights Watch has identified several key challenges to ensuring that domestic investigations and prosecutions are conducted fairly, impartially, and effectively. These include the absence of a witness protection program, inadequate material resources for the judiciary, and antiquated penal codes. To ensure meaningful justice for the serious international crimes committed in 2009, the Guinean authorities should promptly and credibly address these issues, Human Rights Watch said.

The ICC prosecutor's office is monitoring the proceedings in Guinea. Although it has commended both the technical ability of the investigating judges and their demonstrated independence, it urged the government to increase accountability efforts and reiterated the ICC's responsibility to take action if the government fails to do so promptly and adequately.

It has been reported that Condé recently declared that September 28 would be a day of “national reconciliation.” However, the Guinean government has refused victims’ groups a permit for an event intended to mark the second anniversary of the massacre. In a letter to victims’ groups dated September 22, authorities cited the need to preserve peace and national unity in the current socio-political context as the reasons for refusing the request.

“Declaring September 28 a day of reconciliation does not free Guinean authorities from their responsibility to prosecute those responsible for killings, rape, and other serious abuses committed that day,” Bekele said. “Refusing victims the chance to assemble peacefully is at odds with the authorities’ expressed commitment to accountability.”

UN wants special legal process for child soldiers



Großansicht des Bildes mit der Bildunterschrift: Child soldiers need to be held accountable, but their recruitment was also a crime

A UN study examines to what extent children who commit crimes during armed conflicts should be held accountable and how those traumatized in wars can seek justice.

Millions of children are victims of armed conflict. Many are killed, maimed, raped and psychologically traumatized for their whole lives. Many children are recruited to fight for governments and rebel groups. They are forced to commit atrocities and are often prosecuted for these crimes.

A United Nations study, called "Children and Justice During and in the Aftermath of Armed Conflict," examines how children caught in wars can seek justice for the grave violations they have suffered. The other big question, also analyzed in the study, is the extent to which children who commit international crimes during conflict should be held accountable for their actions.

Waiting to die



Bildunterschrift: Großansicht des Bildes mit der Bildunterschrift: Hearing cannon firing every night traumatized many children Among a group of experts who recently convened in Geneva to discuss these issues, was the Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Emina Keco-Isakovic, who said she is still haunted by memories from the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which broke out in

1992, because she remembers how anxious her son was. The siege of the capital, Sarajevo, lasted nearly four years. Almost 10,000 people were killed, including 1,500 children.

Every night, Keco-Isakovic recalls, when the cannon firing would start over the city, her 10-year-old son asked her whether he would die that night. "And every night I answered 'no, no, you shall not die,' and I touched him and held him while he was falling asleep." Emina Keco-Isakovic is convinced that all children from besieged Sarajevo still suffer from trauma in the form of waiting to die.

While the UN study says children should be permitted to seek reparations for violation of their rights, the children of Sarajevo have never received justice commensurate with the crimes committed against them.

"When you kill a European in a car accident, you get 10 years in prison," says Keco-Isakovic. "When you kill thousands of people in Balkans, Asia, Africa, you are in

prison for five or six years." Many war criminals, she criticizes, are released prematurely simply because of their good behavior and age.

Give them back their rights



Bildunterschrift: Großansicht des Bildes mit der Bildunterschrift: Child soldiers need to be recognized as victims - not perpetrators - of crimes

Among the participants at the meeting in Geneva was Messeh Kamara, a child during Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war. He lost his parents, learned to survive and eventually became a child activist for children's rights. At age 24, he's studying to become an international human rights lawyer. His goal is to give the millions of children a voice

whose voices would otherwise go unheard. "They are out there suffering from conflict," he says.

Children who lived through this brutal war need to see those who created this havoc brought to justice, Kamara is convinced. He himself was 11 when he was thrown into a conflict he did not cause to happen. "But I suffered the most. So justice and accountability to us is very important."

Those who were children when they were traumatized need to be given back their rights, Kamara believes. "They stole our rights from us. When they steal something from someone it is most important that you return what they stole."

Kamara regards the trials of suspected war criminals at the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor at the International Criminal Court in The Hague as very important. According to him, they are giving the children and young adults in Sierra Leone a sense of hope that justice will be done.

Victims, not perpetrators



Bildunterschrift: Großansicht des Bildes mit der Bildunterschrift: Child soldiers have to accustom themselves to civilian life

While children undeniably are victims of war, the UN study notes some children also are involved in committing crimes. The United Nations estimates that hundreds of thousands of children are recruited around the world every year. It reports about

10,000 child soldiers were demobilized last year, for instance in Sudan, by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army.

UNICEF Senior Advisor for Child Protection in Emergencies, Pernille Ironside, says children who commit crimes should be held accountable, but that there is also a growing consensus these children should be viewed primarily as victims and not as perpetrators.

There is a need for an accountability mechanism, she says, but children should not be prosecuted as the primary approach to seeking accountability for any violations that they may have committed solely on the basis of their membership with a group.

"We need to bear in mind that their association from the beginning is actually in itself a crime," Ironside stresses. The Rome Statute, which established the International Criminal Court in 1998, defines the recruitment and use of children under the age of 15 in hostilities as a war crime.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict and lead author of the study, says children who are abducted and forced to commit atrocities by their military commanders should not be prosecuted and judged in the same manner as adults.

Prosecution last resort



Bildunterschrift: Großansicht des Bildes mit der Bildunterschrift: There need to be alternatives to prosecution for child soldiers Rather, a so-called 'diversion' process should kick in, meaning that children are diverted away from the judicial and prosecutorial system into some alternative mechanism. "This can be either a truth and reconciliation commission, truth-telling, restorative justice

or some kind of rehabilitation process," Coomaraswamy stresses and adds that prosecuting them must absolutely be the last resort.

According to the UN study, states are increasingly arresting and detaining children associated with armed groups on the grounds they are a threat to national security or because they have participated in hostility. It contends children held in administrative detention during armed conflict are particularly vulnerable.

Few are granted access to lawyers or are given reasons why they are being detained. The study argues states should not use administrative detention for children under 15 and detention conditions should comply with international standards and judicial guarantees. It also says the United Nations should be allowed to monitor child detention centers.

Author: Lisa Schlein (nh)
Editor: Sarah Steffen

Human Rights Watch

Wednesday, 21 September 2011

Côte d'Ivoire: Second Deadly Attack Near Liberian Border

UN Missions Should Further Increase Presence in Advance of Elections

(Washington, DC, September 21, 2011) – Armed men who supported former Côte d'Ivoire President Laurent Gbagbo waged the second deadly attack in two months near the Liberian border, killing at least 23 men, women, and children in small villages, Human Rights Watch said today.

Human Rights Watch called on the United Nations mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) to reinforce its troops in the historically tense region, which the mission has committed to do, and to increase patrols along secondary roads to enhance security for residents.

“These armed groups appear determined to wreak havoc on a population that has already suffered greatly from Côte d'Ivoire’s deadly post-election crisis,” said Daniel Bekele, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “UN peacekeeping missions in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia need to assist state authorities in preventing more bloodshed.”

The latest attack took place on September 15, 2011, in the villages of Zriglo and Nigré, around 25 kilometers south of the Ivoirian town of Taï. Human Rights Watch was not able to interview direct witnesses, but residents of Taï, as well as Ivorian and international media outlets, said that attackers caught villagers by surprise in the middle of the night. Reuters reported that at least 23 people were killed. The Ivorian Defense Ministry told Reuters that 19 West African immigrants and two Republican Forces soldiers were among the victims.

A Human Rights Watch researcher was in Taï on September 12 and 13 and documented a similar raid that occurred in the area on July 18, 2011, in which at least eight people were killed. Based on victim interviews from the July attack and Ivorian and international media reports of the September 15 raid, the perpetrators in both incidents appear to be Ivoirian youth who served as pro-Gbagbo militiamen during the country’s six-month post-election conflict. The victims of the raids all came from the “non-native” groups – West African immigrants and Ivorian ethnic groups traditionally from other parts of the country – that tended to support the current president, Alassane Ouattara.

Survivors of the July 18 attack told Human Rights Watch that dozens of armed young men emerged from the dense forest at around 1 a.m. They attacked several small camps near the village of Ponan where families live while working on their rubber tree plantations. Several witnesses said they recognized attackers as youth from a local ethnic group that heavily supported Gbagbo during the election. When armed forces loyal to Ouattara took control of the area in early April, these youth fled across the border to Liberia, from where they now appear to be targeting villages.

One witness described attackers sticking a gun barrel in the mouth of a man whom they’d trapped; they then shot him. A Burkinabé man living in the area was found with his throat slit. Victims included children and women, including the wife of a man interviewed by Human Rights Watch:

It was 1 a.m. We were all asleep and they took us by surprise. I heard shooting and screams and we ran out to try to get to the bush. Some of [the attackers] had Kalashes [Kalashnikov rifles], some had hunting rifles. They were so many. As we were running, they shot my wife from behind. She was killed.... When we came back to the village several days later, our houses had been pillaged. They took all that I had.

Victims of the July attack told Human Rights Watch that in the months after the contested 2010 presidential run-off, pro-Gbagbo militiamen repeatedly threatened to kill them should Ouattara take power. Several residents said that land issues were also a likely motivation in these attacks. Tension between “native” and “non-native” groups over land has long marked the western and southwestern regions of the country and has led to inter-communal violence on several occasions, Human Rights Watch said.

In September 13 interviews with Human Rights Watch, victims of the July raid said they still had not returned to their homes or to work on their rubber tree plantations. They said they frequently heard gunshots in the forest, including just several days before Human Rights Watch interviewed them. One victim from the first attack said ominously, “We’re hearing echoes that there will be another attack soon.”

Residents said that soon after the July attack, the UN peacekeeping mission in Côte d’Ivoire placed a battalion in Taï. The UN’s considerable reinforcement of the country’s west was a much-needed and important move, Human Rights Watch said. A Human Rights Watch researcher saw UN peacekeepers moving regularly along the main road between Taï and Guiglo, a town to the north. Residents said that the peacekeepers’ activity was noticeably less prominent, however, along the southern road toward Tabou – where the secondary, dirt roads are in far worse condition. The September attack occurred in this area south of Taï.

On September 10, President Ouattara oversaw a mini-summit of the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) to discuss security issues along the Liberian-Ivorian border, which has long been marked by the cross-border flow of mercenaries, militia groups, and small arms. The leaders called on ECOWAS to cooperate with the UN to ensure security for Liberia’s October 11 presidential elections. Côte d’Ivoire has announced its legislative elections will be held in mid-December, more than one year after the presidential run-off that sparked a conflict marked by grave human rights abuses by both sides.

The border area is notoriously difficult to monitor, because of its length and the thick vegetation that marks the region. In an important move, both the UN and the Ivorian government have said that they will deploy additional forces to the area in the aftermath of the September 15 attack, Human Rights Watch said. Human Rights Watch called on the UN missions to increase patrols along secondary roads near the border and to ensure consistent communication between area commanders from the peacekeeping forces in Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia. Human Rights Watch also called for the UN mission in Côte d’Ivoire to secure the authorization to fly helicopter missions at night and to conduct cross-border missions, in order to further discourage raids.

Human Rights Watch called on the Ivorian government to ensure that its armed forces follow human rights obligations – and refrain from engaging in torture and extrajudicial killings as was common during the conflict – as they apprehend attackers and reestablish security. Several Taï residents told Human Rights Watch that, after the July 18 attack, the Republican Forces detained a local pro-Gbagbo village leader and fired between his legs during questioning on the attack. Human Rights Watch was separately told that at least 40 Dozos – traditional hunters from northern Côte d’Ivoire who were implicated by human rights organizations in extrajudicial killings against pro-Gbagbo groups during the conflict – created a camp in the region, further heightening concerns of vigilante justice.

“Côte d’Ivoire’s armed forces must ensure that those who commit attacks, whatever their political affiliation, face their victims before a court of law, not be subject to the summary executions that too often marked the Ivorian crisis,” Bekele said.

Soros Blog

Monday, 26 September 2011

<http://blog.soros.org/2011/09/all-change-at-the-icc-time-to-focus-on-merit-not-connections/>

All Change at the ICC: Time to Focus on Merit, Not Connections

By James A. Goldston

Over the next several months, the International Criminal Court will undergo its most significant leadership transition since coming into existence in 2002.

This December, the court's governing body—the Assembly of States Parties—will select a new prosecutor (Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the first prosecutor, must step down in 2012 after a nine-year term of office) and six new judges (out of a total of 18). Early next year, elections will be held among the judges for the court's next president and two vice presidents. In 2013, the judges will also select a new registrar, the court's chief administrator. These changes happen as the ICC is completing its first trials. Together, they offer a major challenge and a significant opportunity for this still-young institution to deliver on its promise of ending impunity for grave crimes.

Unfortunately, the same governments that elect these officials regularly treat the court as a political football—embracing it when it suits their interests, bargaining it away for other aims when it doesn't. Though the UN Security Council has referred crises like Darfur and Libya to the court when it needed to appear tough, it has then failed to support, or even downplayed, the ICC when its actions—like the indictment of a head of state—are seen at odds with changing political goals. This lack of commitment towards the ICC weakens it. Nowhere is this more evident than in the selection of its senior officers.

Many capable and committed persons have staffed international courts over the years. And yet, it is no secret that there have been glaring exceptions. Judges with little or no trial experience—including at least one who lacked a law degree—have allowed proceedings to drag on, devoted unnecessary time to frivolous arguments, made legally unfounded rulings, and let some defendants misuse the courtroom as a platform for political speeches. On occasion, judges have fallen asleep during proceedings, and even, in one notorious case at an international tribunal addressing crimes in Rwanda, were seen laughing during testimony by a rape victim.

Such lapses not only impair the integrity of the trial in question. They also diminish public trust in these institutions, and in the overarching struggle for the rule of law.

Prior contests for judicial office at international courts have been marred by political horse trading among sponsoring states. The ICC selection process was supposed to mark an improvement—with stricter qualifications for office, more transparency, and emphasis on merit over connections. But the experience so far has been mixed.

The elections this December offer a chance to do better. Perhaps no choice is more important than that of prosecutor, the public face of the court. The leading

candidate, many believe, is the current deputy prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, a respected former attorney general from The Gambia. This June, Bensouda received the formal endorsement of the African Union. If in the end Bensouda is chosen, she and the ICC will be stronger if her election is seen to be founded upon her genuine strengths—prosecutorial experience; sound judgment; a commitment to, and skill at, engaging both victims and the wider public in the court's work—rather than a pay-off to any state or group of states.

The next prosecutor and new judges will inherit a full docket of complex cases, outstanding arrest warrants for leaders from Sudan's Bashir to Libya's Qaddafi, and pressure from financially strapped governments to do more with less. Perhaps most challenging, the court must overcome perceptions that Africa has been singled out for scrutiny while abuses by Western leaders get a free pass. Only by adhering to the highest standards of professional conduct may court officials win sufficient legitimacy over time to persuade the major powers presently outside the current ICC system—including China, India, Russia and the US—to join.

In these circumstances, the importance of choosing only the most competent candidates cannot be overstated. The court's mission, and the hopes that victims place in it, are too important to be subjected to cynical back room deals.

Between now and December, when the Assembly of States Parties convenes in New York, diplomats will be tested. Governments must put aside their parochial interests for the larger aim of building an institution to serve all humanity.