

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Daily Guide (Ghana)

Saturday, 3 December 2011

Amputees' Life. After Sierra Leone's 11 years Civil War

Since the end of the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002), life continues to be very tough for Sierra Leoneans, particularly war victims.



Despite various international supports to boost the living conditions of Sierra Leoneans, the result is still not encouraging.

From the time peace was declared in 2002, leading to the holding of elections, the country has been graded as one of the poorest in the world, hugely depending on international aid for survival, whilst reconstruction has become one of the serious challenges in the country.

Over 50,000 people died as a result of the war, with thousands of people having their hands and legs chopped off and many more people displaced. Much of the country's infrastructure is in shambles, whilst over two million people are displaced, seeking refuge in neighbouring countries, mainly in Guinea <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guinea> , which is home to more than 600,000 Sierra Leonean refugees <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Infrastructure> .
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refugees>

On 23 March 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), with support from the special forces of Charles Taylor's http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Taylor_%28Liberia%29 National Patriotic Front of Liberia http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Patriotic_Front_of_Liberia (NPFL), intervened in Sierra Leone in an attempt to overthrow Joseph Momoh ['s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolutionary_United_Front) government.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Momoh

Although there is peace across the entire country currently, most of the war victims- orphans, widows, amputees and raped survivors and family members of war victims in Freetown- still cannot live as normal human beings as they are traumatised.

Apart from the serious economic hardships facing amputees and most war victims in Sierra Leone, the amputees are still discriminated against, and most of them cannot even get on a vehicle.

However, some of the amputees do not rely on handouts as they have a profession in football, from which they are making a living. The Sierra Leonean team was part of the recent amputees' football tournament hosted by Ghana and won by Liberia.

The Black Challenge, as the Ghana amputee team is known, won the silver medal in the Cup of African Nations for Amputee Football (CANAF) championship.

Ghana, winners of the inaugural edition in Sierra Leone, will join reigning champions, Liberia, for the World Cup slated for California, US early next year.

Nigeria and Sierra Leone, who battled it out in the third place game, will engage in a play-off and the winner will join Ghana and Liberia for the California tourney.

The president of the War Victims in Sierra Leone, Edward Conteh, in an interview with Daily Guide in Freetown on Thursday, November 24, 2011, lamented that amputees in Sierra Leone are being discriminated against in everything.

<http://www.dailyguideghana.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/amputee.jpg> 'The challenge we face is that nobody seems to have time for us, not even government. People in Sierra Leone feel or believe that having time for amputees would only waste their time or make life more uncomfortable for them in their current harsh conditions.

'Although we were full of hope when the 11-year conflict ended in 2002, the situation is still worse. Our major challenges are discrimination, not making public buildings disability friendly, getting access to education and health, and gaining employment.'

Presidential Intervention

Sierra Leonean President Ernest Bai Koroma , who was sworn in on 17 September 2007, shortly after being declared the winner of a tense run-off election over then incumbent

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incumbent_vice_president

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vice_President_of_Sierra_Leone , Solomon Berewa

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Bai_Koroma of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), has been making several attempts to put the economy into shape but there is little improvement as was witnessed by http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon_Berewa Daily Guide .

The people of Sierra Leone, as part of efforts to put things in order, told Daily Guide that they have formed a steering committee to ensure a successful conference to commemorate the country's on-going 50th independence anniversary.

The main duty of the steering committee, which consists of civil society, political parties, faith-based organizations and statutory institutions, among others, is to discuss the conference's progress, report and provide guidance and direction to tackle emerging challenging issues facing Sierra Leone as a country.

President Koroma is the chairman of the committee towards the conference dubbed 'Development And Transformation'.

At the second steering committee meeting on Wednesday, November 23, 2011, at the State House in Freetown, which Daily Guide was in attendance, President Koroma urged his countrymen to take control of their destiny by fully taking part in the discussions of the conference.

According to him, the conference is to map out ways for the development of the country and said Sierra Leoneans should use the past experience as an experiment for the next 50 years to come. President Koroma noted that the conference is aimed at mapping out ways for the development of the country.

President Koroma reiterated that the country can use the 50 years' experience to learn not to go back to where they came from as any such mistake can worsen the plight of the citizens, stressing that the conference should be used to unify the people.

Amputees' Reactions To The Conference

However, most amputees interviewed by the paper in Freetown are of the view that there is no need for the formation of the committee as the stakeholders are already aware of the challenges in the country.

They lamented that all promises that had previously been made by the president had not been fulfilled, adding, 'Nothing good could come out from this conference.'

Mr. Conteh bemoaned the plight of amputees in Sierra Leone, saying, 'I'm just from the provinces and I had been going round the city to find out what is happening to my colleagues. It is really heartrending. Most war victims, as I am speaking, are still suffering from bullet wounds and I can emphatically say that the current president is not even aware of it as he does not talk about.'

President Koroma has given an assurance that government will release some funds for health officers to go to the aid of some of the war victims and provide medicines to others.

According to Mr. Conteh, the war victims have been promised free health but nothing positive seem to have come out of it.

'My feelings are for the young boys who were amputated by the rebels at that time. Unfortunately, most of the victims were from the rural areas and farming was their only occupation. Since they were not business people, aid given to them are not enough and therefore depend on others.

'Our children are not in schools as a result of high cost of living and my fear is that these children will become future burden,' he said.

Victims' Testimonies

Mr. Conteh, who is one of the few amputees in the country fortunate enough to have a job and a high education level, narrating his ordeal he went through, said at age 58, in Freetown, he was amputated by rebel soldiers who, in the course of their shooting spree, arrested him and cut off one of his hands.

'I am of the view that no matter the cost, the leaders should try to support the children of amputees and provide the victims and their children with free education and health services. These children, if care is not taken, could in the future become fresh rebels, if their condition of living becomes unbearable'.

Mohamed Terawali from Waterloo in Freetown, Tamba Ngaujah, is one of the amputees of the war who had both of his hands cut off by rebel soldiers.

Narrating his ordeal to Daily Guide , he said, 'I was approached by the rebel soldiers in Freetown who asked me to join them to go on shooting spree. I was so afraid so I told them I cannot kill. The soldiers got furious and told me that if I do not want to use my hands, then they have to cut them off for me.'

Terawali, in tears, said the soldiers placed both of his hands on a wood and chopped them off.

'Most people, when they see us, say we are lazy and we want to just hang around the streets begging. But who is going to employ us, considering our state? Currently, it is really difficult for amputees to get a bus driver to pick us as they are of the view that we do not have money and even if we have, we will waste their time.'

“They just drive by us because they say we are useless 'cut men' with no money to pay them,” said Maxwell Kornah, who was shot by rebels and had to have his leg amputated 10years ago.

NGOs' Support

According to the International Organization for Migration, which is providing technical assistance and expert advice to the government in implementing the reparations programme, 21,000 people in 2009 received micro-grants, and out of the number, 235 female victims of sexual violence received fistula surgery or other medical treatment, some 50 victims had surgery or other treatment for life-threatening injuries and symbolic reparations ceremonies took place in more than 40 communities.

A sign of the disinterest is that no one can say how many amputees are in the West African country.

Estimates from the government and non-governmental organizations put the figure between 1,500 and 3,500.

Under the agreement that ended the war, and resolutions from the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission

<http://www.seattlepi.com/?controllerName=search&action=search&channel=national&search=1&inlineLink=1&query=%22Truth+and+Reconciliation+Commission%22> , the government promised amputees free education, medical care and transport on public buses.

Currently, many war victims in Sierra Leone whom the paper met in Freetown seem to be losing patience and have accused the government of making empty promises.

Since the war ended in 2002, Peter Anderson, spokesperson for Sierra Leone Special Court, in an interview with Daily Guide in Sierra Leone, said ex-fighters have been receiving training and cash for disarming.

However, the people most mutilated by both sides in 11-year war have to make their living by begging in the capital city of Freetown, he added.

After the war, thousands of amputees housed at a camp in the western part of Freetown, dubbed the Amputee Camp, were relocated to their home districts.

But only 400 of them, the paper was told, have so far benefited from a shelter scheme organized by the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Human Rights Watch

Monday, December 5, 2011

Press Release

ICC: Laurent Gbagbo's First Appearance

(Brussels, December 5, 2011) – Laurent Gbagbo, the former president of Côte d'Ivoire, will appear at the International Criminal Court (ICC) on December 5, 2011, on charges of crimes against humanity committed in Côte d'Ivoire during its post-election violence. Gbagbo is the highest-level suspect to appear at the court. He faces four counts of crimes against humanity: murder, rape and other sexual violence, persecution, and other inhumane acts.

Human Rights Watch conducted six field missions to Côte d'Ivoire to document crimes committed between the outset of the crisis in November 2010, and the conclusion of fighting in May 2011. Based on that research, Gbagbo was one of 13 military and civilian leaders that Human Rights Watch found appeared to be implicated in war crimes or crimes against humanity.

In particular:

Media controlled by the Gbagbo government, including Radio Télévision Ivoirienne, routinely incited hatred and violence against groups supporting Alassane Ouattara, who defeated Gbagbo in the November 2010 presidential election. The incitement led to killings, rapes and other grave abuses. Among those who used inciting speech were Gbagbo's youth minister, Charles Blé Goudé, and the government spokesman, Ahoua Don Mello.

Gbagbo formalized the government's relationship with the Young Patriots militias through his appointment of Blé Goudé, the group's longtime leader, to the youth minister position. The pro-Gbagbo militias, including the Young Patriots, committed widespread killings and other abuses along political, ethnic, and religious lines.

Gbagbo was the commander-in-chief of elite security forces that engaged in indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas, killing scores of people. Elite security force units and allied militia groups likewise consistently suppressed demonstrations by pro-Ouattara supporters with lethal force, leaving scores dead and many more injured.

Pro-Gbagbo forces in western Côte d'Ivoire, including hired Liberian mercenaries, committed several massacres against northern Ivoirians and West African immigrants.

Gbagbo neither denounced nor took steps to prevent or investigate the crimes despite clear evidence that they were committed by his military and militia supporters.

Gbagbo's appearance on December 5 is an opportunity for the ICC judges to confirm that he has been informed of the charges against him and that his rights have been respected. Human Rights Watch stressed the importance of a fair trial, including the presumption of innocence unless proven guilty.

In addition, the judges are expected to set a date for the next step in the process, the confirmation of charges, when the judges will determine if the office of the prosecutor has adequate evidence for the charges in the arrest warrant to be confirmed.

BBC

Monday, 5 December 2011

Ivory Coast's Laurent Gbagbo to appear at ICC in Hague

Former president of Ivory Coast Laurent Gbagbo is to make his first appearance before the International Criminal Court at The Hague.

He faces four charges of crimes against humanity, including murder and rape, in the wake of Ivory Coast's disputed presidential elections a year ago.

Some 3,000 were killed in violence that followed Mr Gbagbo's refusal to accept defeat in the November 2010 polls.

Mr Gbagbo is the first former head of state to be brought before the ICC.

He is expected to hear the charges against him when he makes his first brief appearance in the court.

His transfer from Ivory Coast - where he had been under house arrest since April - to The Hague last week sparked anger from his supporters who described it as a "political kidnapping".

The 66-year-old is currently being held in an ICC detention centre.

'More to come'

Mr Gbagbo's arrest follows an ICC investigation into the four months of conflict that began in Ivory Coast when he refused to hand power to his long-time rival Alassane Ouattara, who was declared winner of the election.

The charges relate to events between 16 December 2010 and 12 April 2011, the ICC said.

Mr Gbagbo is accused of being an "indirect co-perpetrator" in attacks that were "widespread and systematic... committed over an extended time period, over large geographic areas, and following a similar general pattern".

Louis Moreno-Ocampo, chief prosecutor at the ICC, says there is evidence of widespread and systematic attacks against civilians.

But troops loyal to Mr Ouattara are also suspected of carrying out abuses, and human rights groups have urged an investigation into crimes allegedly committed by other parties.

Mr Moreno-Ocampo said Mr Gbagbo is only the first to be brought to account and "there is more to come".

The ICC was set up in 2002 to prosecute and bring to justice those responsible for the worst crimes - genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes - committed anywhere in the world.

Gbagbo: Key dates

- 1971: Jailed for "subversive teaching"
- 1982: Exile in Paris after union activism
- 1988: Returns to Ivory Coast
- 1990: Defeated in elections
- 1992: Jailed after student protests
- 2000: Declared winner of disputed elections
- 2002: Failed coup divides Ivory Coast
- 2007: Agrees power-sharing government with former rebels
- 2010: Elections held five years later. Refuses to go after UN says he lost
- 2011: Forced from power

It is currently hearing six other cases, all relating to crimes committed in Africa, including that of Jean-Pierre Bemba, former vice-president of DR Congo, whose trial began in November 2010.

It has issued an arrest warrant for Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir, who is accused of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is currently on trial in The Hague by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, set up jointly by the UN and Sierra Leonean government

Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was on trial by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) - an ad hoc UN court - at the time of his death in 2006.

BBC Online

Monday, 5 December 2011

Nuon Chea: Khmer Rouge 'were not bad people'



Nuon Chea said he was a patriot and that killings were to be blamed on the Vietnamese.

Pol Pot's deputy has told a court the Khmer Rouge were not "bad people", blaming deaths of Cambodians under the Maoist regime on neighbouring Vietnam.

Nuon Chea made the comments at his genocide trial at a UN-backed court in Phnom Penh.

It is the first time he has faced questioning over his role in the regime's four-year rule, which left as many as two million Cambodians dead.

His trial began last month - only the second at the court.

Nuon Chea is being tried alongside Khieu Samphan, the Khmer Rouge's former head of state, and Ieng Sary, its former foreign minister.

All three deny the charges.

"I don't want the next generations to misunderstand the history," Nuon Chea told the court.

Who were the Khmer Rouge?

- Maoist regime that ruled Cambodia from 1975-79
- Led by Saloth Sar, better known as Pol Pot
- Abolished religion, schools and currency in effort to create agrarian utopia
- Up to two million people thought to have died of starvation, overwork or by execution
- Defeated in Vietnamese invasion in 1979
- Pol Pot fled and remained free until 1997 - he died a year later

"I don't want them to misunderstand that the Khmer Rouge are bad people, are criminals. Nothing is true about that."

The 85-year-old said he had devoted himself to serving his country, and said killings under the regime were carried out by rogue elements and the Vietnamese.

"These war crimes and crimes against humanity were not committed by the Cambodian people," he said. "It was the Vietnamese who killed Cambodians."

He also told the court he originally became involved with the resistance movement that went on to become the Khmer Rouge because he was disgusted by the way the French colonial authorities and rich landowners treated Cambodians like slaves.

The case against the three men has been split into a number of smaller trials, because of fears that the elderly defendants could die before proceedings are completed.

The first mini-case focuses on the forced movement of urban populations into the countryside, where many city-dwellers died from starvation and overwork, and associated crimes against humanity.

Khieu Samphan is also due to address the court but Ieng Sary has refused to testify.

His wife, former Khmer Rouge social affairs minister Ieng Thirith, had been due to stand trial with the trio but has been ruled unfit because of mental health issues.

The UN-backed court's first case was the trial of Duch, the former Khmer Rouge prison chief who oversaw the torture and execution of thousands of inmates at Tuol Sleng prison.

He was convicted of crimes against humanity last year.