

**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.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

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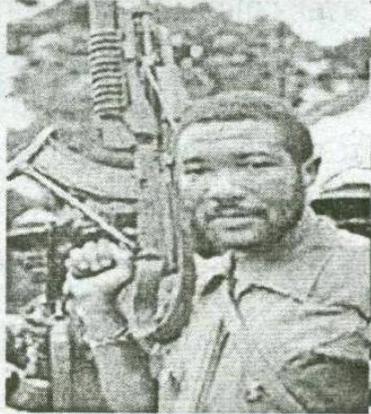
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Charles Taylor Met A Stumbling Block

As Court Denies Request To Reopen Case

Charles Taylor, former Liberian and war faction leader, met another stumbling block on Friday when the International court of Justice in The Hague denied a request to reopen his defence case.

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Charles Taylor met a stumbling block today as Court denies request to reopen Case

Taylor who currently awaits verdict in a trial for war crimes allegedly committed in Sierra Leone. Few weeks ago, his defense attorney had asked the Special Court for Sierra Leone to reopen the case in order to admit parts of a 2011 UN report on Liberia.

The report is said to focus on the activities of Liberian mercenaries who crossed into Ivory Coast during the 2011 Ivorian conflict. The importance of this report was to prove that Liberian fighters can participate in the wars of neighboring countries without heeding higher commands. Taylor is accused of planning, instigating and ordering war crimes committed in Sierra Leone during his time as president of Liberia. A verdict in the trial is expected before May.



Charles Taylor

The Analyst (Liberia)

Monday, 13 February 2012

Liberia: War Maker Or Peace Maker?

AllAfrica aggregates reports from Africa's news media. This is an article from the Liberian press. It is not a report by AllAfrica.

Despite political overtures being made by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, evidenced by co-opting a number of opposition people in her camp, there are just some critics, and cynics, who just are not letting the President cool off from venomous censures. Former TRC Chairman Jerome Verdier, whose final report indicts the President as a financier of the civil war and banned her from political activities for 30 years, continues to fan the flames of dissent and hate against the President. In his recent communication dubbed "A Letter to the People of Liberia from Cllr. Jerome J Verdier, Sr.", the chairman of the defunct TRC provided reasons he believes the last elections which Sirleaf won cannot be deemed constitutional and raise a longstanding question of the President's true political color: whether she is a warmonger or a peacemaker. The Analyst reports.

Introducing crux of his "Letter to the people of Liberia" referenced, "Know Your Head of State- a War Maker or Peace Maker", Verdier provided what appears to be a dialectics between the definitions of "President" and "Head of State", noting that he deliberately chose to use the term "Head of State" instead of the coveted title "President", as the constitutional term "President" is reserved for people who are elected constitutionally rather than by fiat or extra-constitutional means.

According to the Liberian legal practitioner, there are a number of reasons why the outcome of the recent 2011 polls cannot be deemed "constitutional." Amongst the reasons, she said: "Qualifying constitutional provisions pertaining to the presidential elections were abrogated, and the will of the majority thereby overturned in a referendum conducted by the power that be and that the electoral governing body that managed the presidential poll and announced election results was illegally constituted with a hand-picked chairperson who failed to receive confirmation by the Liberian Senate, as required by the Constitution.

Verdier further said the very formation of the electoral governing body was unconstitutional, illegal, and illegitimate, thus rendering its proceedings and results unconstitutional—results that were procured by fiat, fear, violence and the innocent killing of unarmed civilians exercising their constitutional rights to free expression, adding, "The Constitution provides for a two-party contest in the November runoff."

Verdier said what resulted in the recent election was a one-party contest in which reportedly less than 40% of the electorate participated. "Thus, not only is the sitting government unconstitutional, but it is also illegitimate without the mandate of the people to govern. It is not a majority government. It is a government imposed by a Head of State.

He said the nation has in authority is not a "President" that governs by the free consent of the people within the confines of the law and constitutional provisions but a "Head of State" who assumes power and controls the government through corruptive and unconstitutional means.

"The end result of the recent presidential election is reminiscent of the 1985 Elections in which extra-constitutional measures were adopted and rules and laws violated to ensure that former Head of State Samuel K. Doe was placed in power at all cost," Verdier further said. "November 2011, like October

1985, was declared "free and fair" in the face of glaring violations of the tenets of democratic elections intended to be held free of intimidation and fair in all its processes."

He said because of the aforementioned reasons, "The constitutionality is absent, legality undermined, and legitimacy lacking".

"An illegitimate entity at the helm of power will always be consumed with paranoia, and thus, fight to maintain its existence despite attending consequences already foretold by history," he said, quizzically saying, "The Head of State Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's peacemaking credentials to date are unknown."

He further stated: "What is well known is that earlier in her career, she was a ranking cabinet member of the Tolbert Government (along with Florence Chenoweth, Lusinee Donzo, Estrada Bernard, Kate Bryant) who was spared public execution following the following the bloody military takeover by the Doe regime."

Verdier asserted the Sirleaf's alleged "peace mission" in the aftermath of the gory military coup was, perhaps, to lead the "goodwill delegation" of the coup makers dispatched to the United States to justify the military-induced blood bath in exchange for her appointment to the coveted position of Minister of Finance."

When Doe, as a young coup leader, instead appointed his kinsman Perry Zulu as Minister of Finance, Verdier revealed that Madam Sirleaf called Doe "idiot", left the government, adorned the opposition girdle and the rest became history- "Nimba Raid (1983); Thomas Quiwonkpa (1985); Charles Taylor (1990).

"The Head of State Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf publically claimed 'Charles Taylor fooled me' when in reality, she fooled the entire world, including the Nobel Peace Committee, into believing that she supported Charles Taylor 'initially' with a paltry financial contribution of US\$10,000," he said.

Verdier asks: "The question then lingers—when did the Head of State stop supporting Charles Taylor? I don't know! Look around and tell me whether the linkages with Charles Taylor are broken or well visible. Look deeper, open your eyes and ask the question: when did she stop supporting Charles Taylor and start working for peace? It is widely rumored that she fell out with Taylor (just as she did with Doe) over her position in a bloody enterprise. According to sources, after Doe died, she told Charles Taylor that it was time for him to surrender the NPFL political authority to her, the successor and political leader who would inevitably become President. Taylor rejected the directive and retorted that the leader of the 'revolution must be on the ground, on the front line, in the battlefields."

Verdier recalled that at Taylor's trial, he (Taylor) described Head of State Johnson-Sirleaf as a, member, mother and international coordinator of the NPFL between 1986 and 1994. Tom Woeweyu, Taylor's then spokesperson and Defense Minister, describes her as the main mastermind and financier of "the revolution".

By June 1990, Verdier further narrated, the atrocities of Taylor's NPFL gained notoriety. Thousands of Liberians-women, men, children, girls, boys, the elderly and foreign residents, died in Liberia and 300,000 were estimated to have fled the Country. During this same period, while Charles Taylor was planning a final assault on the Executive Mansion (is it still the seat of authority in Liberia?), the government forces of the AFL were plotting to kill over 400 innocent civilians in the St. Peter's Lutheran Church as "rebel infiltrators". Head of State Johnson-Sirleaf was doing her part by lobbying the U.S. Congress for greater support to Charles Taylor. She presumably solicited "humanitarian" aid or maybe another US\$10,000.00 for her then ongoing peace mission in Liberia.

Confident of U.S. Government support, Verdier said Sirleaf issued the infamous "fatwa" to the ground troops in July 1990 to tear the Executive Mansion down and rid it of beleaguered Samuel Doe, hundreds of his supporters and thousands of refuge seekers, while promising it would be rebuilt in the proverbial three days.

"In June 1990, Head of State Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf testified at a U.S. congressional hearing on 'US Policy and the Crisis in Liberia'" he said, Sirleaf stated:

"Today, economic resources have been plundered and misused by public officials whose greed and conspicuous consumption are unparalleled in the nation's history. Citizens and country alike have been reduced to begging for survival while substantial wealth accumulates in the hands of a privileged few... Unemployment, spiraling cost of living, the lack of medical facilities, inadequately equipped schools, little means of transportation and depleted national capital stock are common conditions which they face. Even their culture and traditional ways of life are being threatened by wanton environmental degradation."

Concluding the Letter, Verdier said: "Almighty God, we, your people give you humble and unmeasured thanks for your goodness and love to Liberia; deliverance from war; and all the blessings of this life. We bless you Lord for our creation, heritage and inheritance; your unfailing love and grace; and your wisdom and reverence to use our endowed natural resources wisely according to your instructions and the Constitution of Liberia that no one may suffer from our abuse of them."

"May generations unborn continue to praise you for your bounty," Verdier lamented. "May your grace guide the minds of those who are eligible to vote during national and local elections, that we may receive honest, faithful and patriotic servants--not mere rulers-- who will care for your people and dispel all darkness by restoring the light you intended to shine through the length and breadth of Liberia so that **THIS GLORIOUS LAND OF LIBERTY WILL LONG BE OURS UNDER YOUR COMMAND, EVERLASTING FATHER AND LORD. ALL OF THIS WE ASK IN THE MIGHTY NAME OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, AMEN AND AMEN**"

Tagged: Conflict, Liberia, West Africa

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Reuters

Tuesday, 14 February 2012

Lebanon tribunal to add new indictment

By Reuters

Lebanon's prime minister said on Monday he expected a new indictment to be issued this month by the international tribunal investigating political attacks in the country, including the killing of statesman Rafik al-Hariri.

Daniel Bellemare, prosecutor at the UN-backed tribunal investigating Hariri's assassination on Feb. 14, 2005, has issued an indictment against four fugitive Hezbollah suspects.

He is due to step down as prosecutor at the end of February.

"The general prosecutor Bellemare told me during his final visit to Lebanon that before he leaves he will issue a kind of update to the indictments," Najib Mikati told Lebanon's LBC television in an interview.

The powerful Shi'ite guerrilla movement Hezbollah has denied any role in the attack and says the suspects will never be handed over to the court which it says is politically motivated.

The tribunal said two weeks ago the suspects would be tried in absentia.

The UN-backed Special Tribunal for Lebanon investigating Hariri's killing has also announced it would look into three other attacks. A source close to the tribunal said the court would likely issue an indictment by the end of February.

"Yes, we are awaiting some kind of update to the indictments, which will have something to do with the ministers Elias al-Murr and Marwan Hamadeh and (politician) George Hawi," Mikati said.

In August, the STL said it would pursue investigations into three bomb attacks it believes are connected to the blast that killed Hariri in 2005. It ordered Lebanese authorities to hand over information about the attacks and assassinations attempts on Hamadeh, Murr and Hawi.

Hamadeh is a former telecoms minister who survived an assassination attempt in 2004. Murr, a former deputy prime minister and defence minister, was wounded in a 2005 bombing.

Hawi was killed in Beirut by a bomb in his car in 2005. The former Communist Party chief was a critic of neighbouring Syria, which maintained a 29-year military presence in Lebanon and is still accused by opponents of meddling in the country.

Hirondelle News Agency

Monday, 13 February 2012

Prosecution supports survivors request over "inadequate" sentences

The prosecution has supported the application by two leading victims' rights groups, who are asking the Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) to hear them, saying certain sentences imposed by the trial court are "grossly inadequate".

"The prosecutor supports the request by Ibuka and Survivors Fund for leave to submit a brief as amicus curiae (in the case of ex-Rwandan military leaders, including two generals) in connection with the prosecutor's sentencing appeals," reads part of response obtained by Hirondelle News Agency on Monday.

Rwandan survivors' group Ibuka and British NGO Survivors' Fund want to be heard in the appeals case for former army Chief of staff Augustin Bizimungu and that of the Gendarmerie Augustin Ndindiliyimana, who were sentenced by trial court on May 17, 2011.

"Notwithstanding the oral testimony of some victims who testified as witnesses, the prosecutor agrees that the victims' collective voice, as such, was lacking during both the trial process and in the sentencing part of the judgment," the prosecution submitted.

According to the response, victims were in a unique position to assist Chambers in the determination of appropriate sentences, particularly given the nature of crimes committed such as genocide and crimes against humanity, which resulted in mass killings and suffering of helpless Tutsi civilians in 1994

The Trial Chamber convicted the two generals of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, whereas ex-Commander of the Reconnaissance Battalion, Major Francois-Xavier Nzuwonemeye and member of the unit, Captain Innocent Sagahutu, were found guilty of crime against humanity and war crimes.

Bizimungu was sentenced to 30 years in jail, while Ndindiliyimana was sentenced to time served and instantly released. Nzuwonemeye and Sagahutu received 20 years custodian punishment each.

In their application, Ibuka and Survivors' Fund stated that the sentences imposed by the Trial Chamber do not further the primary sentencing goals of deterrence and retribution, tolerate impunity among those responsible for committing the gravest crimes, and demean the dignity of victims and survivors.

As representatives of Rwandan genocide victims, they seek only to have a voice so that the Tribunal could fashion sentences that better reflect its mission of preventing impunity and its commitment of doing justice to the victims' memory.

The two groups said an Appeals Court decision which "drastically" reduced sentences on Colonel Theoneste Bagosora and Lieutenant Colonel Anatole Nsengiyumva from life imprisonment to 35 and 15 years, respectively, forced them to file the application in question.

FK/GF

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STL Protocol Expected to be Renewed without Lebanon's Remarks

By Naharnet Newsdesk



The Special Tribunal for Lebanon cooperation protocol is expected to pass automatically without any local fuss on the issue amid the cabinet's impasse, according to newspapers published on Monday.

The Lebanese authorities will not submit any comments on U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon's decision to extend the mandate of the court probing the assassination of ex-PM Rafik Hariri, sources told As Safir newspaper.

The daily reported that Speaker Nabih Berri informed Prime Minister Najib Miqati about Hezbollah and AMAL's objection on the current cooperation protocol with the tribunal.

The Presidency and the Foreign Ministry received six days ago a letter from Ban inquiring authorities if Lebanon had any comments on the renewal of the STL protocol.

The U.N. Secretary General is willing to renew the court's mandate for further three years.

Lebanon's mandate with the U.N. as concerns the STL expires at the end of February. Under the protocol establishing the STL, the mandate may be renewed without Lebanese approval if the court has not completed its work.

On February 1, Miqati decided to suspend the Cabinet sessions, which was seen as a solution to avert a quarrel among its members over the renewal of the STL's protocol, but the premier denied the issue.