

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



For more photos of today's Outreach at the Bishop Johnson Memorial School, see 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:

Wednesday, 29 February 2012

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

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Awoko

Wednesday, 29 February 2012

Kenyan judge sworn in as Special Court alternate judge



The Special Court of Sierra Leone yesterday administered the oath of office to Kenyan born Justice Philip Waki as an Alternate Judge of the Appeals Chamber.

Welcoming guests at ceremony which was held in the Trial Chamber, Registrar Binta Mansaray disclosed that “in December 2006, an Independent Expert recommended that the Court appoint an Alternate Judge for the Taylor trial and an Alternate Judge for the Appeals Chamber.”

She said that the expert, the late Judge Antonio Cassese, pointed out that the Taylor trial would be of “central importance to the success of the Special Court,” as it is very important for it to “run smoothly and not falter.”

The Special Court Registrar maintained that the Expert suggested further that the Court appoints a “distinguished African jurist”.

“Today I am proud to say that, Justice Philip Waki in whose honor we are gathered here today represents the distinguished African jurist the Late Justice Cassese had envisioned.”

Giving a background of the team the judge will be joining Registrar Binta Mansaray said the Appeals Chamber which “will be remembered both in history and in precedent for breaking new grounds in international jurisprudence.”

She recalled that it was this Appeal Chamber “which first decided appeals relating to the conscription, enlistment and use of child soldiers; forced marriage as a crime against humanity; and attacks directed against UN peacekeepers as a war crime.”

Binta Mansaray said that the appointment of Justice Waki “is a sign that the Special Court has yet again taken a step closer to completing our mandate but there is still work to do.”

Hoping that the judgment in the Taylor trial will be delivered in the coming weeks she said “the Appeals Chamber will hear any appeal which may arise out of the Taylor trial.”

President of the Court Jon Kamanda in welcoming the Alternate Judge said a lot has been said about the judge with regards to his qualification and this has made him fit into the “distinguished Chamber.”

He said that the Chamber comprises of different people and from different nationality and the Chamber is supported by a formidable legal team adding that they hope to benefit from his “distinguished and academic wealth.”

Justice Philip Waki took the oath of office to serve “without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.” He promised to serve “as judge of the Special Court of Sierra Leone honestly, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously.”

Justice Philip Waki has been a judge of the Kenyan Court of Appeal since 2003, and from 1995 to 2003 served as a Judge of the High Court of Kenya. In 2008, he was named to head the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence in Kenya, also known as the “Waki Commission,” which looked into the political violence committed during Kenya’s 2007 elections.

By Betty Milton

Kenyan Judge Takes Oath as Special Court Alternate Judge

According to reports, the Special Court of Sierra Leone has on Monday 27th February 2012 administered the oath of office to Kenyan born Justice Philip Waki as an Alternate Judge of the Appeals Chamber. The ceremony was held in the Trial Chamber. The oath was administered by the Registrar, Madam Binta Mansaray in the presence of the President of the court, Hon. Jon Kamanda and other dignitaries.

2,400 PRISONERS NATIONWIDE

Prisons authorities in Sierra Leone have revealed that there are 2,400 prisoners currently at different prison facilities nationwide, of which 900 are convicted prisoners whilst the 1,400 are still in remand awaiting judgments.

This was disclosed by Sampha Bilo, the acting Director of the Sierra Leone Prison Service, at a dialogue forum on justice and security held at the British Council, Tower Hill, in Freetown. The dialogue aimed at upgrading its operational activities in line with international best standards.

The New Dawn (Liberia)

Wednesday, February 29, 2012

Taylor Mourns in Prison

Othello B. Garblah



Ex-President Charles Taylor is said to be mourning in his detention cell in The Hague, over the loss of his cousin Vivien Cooke, who passed off here on Monday at the St. Joseph Catholic Hospital, an aide to Taylor told this paper Tuesday.

The aide who communicates with Taylor regularly, on condition of anonymity told this paper that what hurts the former president most is that he (Taylor) said he could not be out to give his cousin a decent and befitting burial.

"I cried yesterday," the aide quoted Taylor as telling him. "And I am not out there to give my brother (cousin) a befitting burial," the aide added saying that Taylor sounded mournful.

Vivien Cooke, nearly 70, was Deputy Managing Director for Operations at the National Port Authority or NPA during the Taylor's Administration.

The late Cooke, who grew up with Taylor among other cousins including Bob Taylor, Emmett Taylor and Joe Tate, is survived by about 40 children and had been without job since the end of the Taylor's regime. His life had been increasingly declining.

"I didn't know that he was going to die," the aide quoted the grieve-stricken Taylor to have said.

The aide said Taylor had informed him that the last time he spoke with his cousin was about three weeks ago, just before his telephone line was disconnected.

"His line was down for about two weeks and he could not talk to his brother (cousin)," the aide said.

But Special Court Chief of Outreach and Public Affairs, Peter Andersen told this paper via telephone Tuesday that he could not confirm or deny the restrictions on ex-president Taylor's telephone line but that he was just not aware.

“Taylor said he has tried to contact family members concerning his brother’s death, and has tried to contact his daughter Zoe, who currently lives in Arthington, outside Monrovia,” the aide said.

Meanwhile, the aide added that Taylor, now a Jewish convert sounds more religious than ever.

“Taylor told me that there is no sin bigger than the other-all sins are equal,” the aide said.

Quoting Taylor the aide said: “He said if the eye sees more in a direction, turn it away, if the ears hear too much turn away...”

“What Taylor explains to me was that if the eye sees in the wrong direction; turn it away, if the ear hears wrong things turn away and if the feet walk the wrong direction move away.”

Xinhua

Tuesday, 28 February 2012

Judge Appointed As Appeals Judge At UN Court

By Njoroge Kaburo

Kenyan judge Phillip Waki has been appointed by the UN -backed court set up to try suspects indicted for war crimes in Sierra Leone.

A news release from the UN said Waki, a prominent Kenyan jurist, was sworn in on Monday as an alternate judge of the Special Court's Appeals Chamber of Kenya to serve as an alternate judge in its appeals chamber, in anticipation of any appeal that may follow the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor. "Waki made his solemn declaration before Registrar Binta Mansaray at a special ceremony held in the Special Court's courthouse in Freetown. Special Court President Justice Jon Kamanda then gave the closing address," said the release received in Nairobi on Tuesday.

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by Sierra Leone's Government and the UN in 2002. It is mandated to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after Nov.30, 1996. The trial of Taylor is continuing in a chamber of the court sitting in The Hague in the Netherlands for security reasons.

Justice Waki was appointed jointly by the United Nations and the government of Sierra Leone. He became a judge of the Kenya Court of Appeal in 2003, after having served as a Judge of the High Court of Kenya for nine years. Prior to 1995, he was in private law practice in Kenya since being called to the Bar in 1975. Justice Waki has worked actively for reform within the Kenyan judiciary.

In 2008 he was named to head the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence in Kenya, also called the "Waki Commission", to look into the political violence committed during Kenya's 2007 elections. In 2008 the International Commission of Jurists (Kenya) presented Justice Waki with the "Jurist of the Year" Award.

Xinhua

The Guardian

Tuesday, 28 February 2012

Wronged women of Liberia reluctant to revisit human rights abuses

Having already testified to a government commission, victims of sexual violence eschew new process based on traditional justice



A boy in front of a sign illustrating the reasons behind the creation of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Photograph: Rebecca Blackwell/AP

The women sat on plastic chairs arranged in a circle, some breast feeding, others with small children at their feet. This is their centre in Ganta, the dusty, vibrant commercial capital of Nimba county in north-east Liberia.

"Most of the women here were raped [during the war]," says Yarih Geebah, the speaker for Ganta Concerned Women. "But if you don't have money, nothing happens. [For] we, the poor people, we who don't know book ... justice don't prevail."

Liberia went through a 14-year civil war in which people were forced to perform the most debased and cruel acts imaginable. Initial findings from a United Nations Development Programme/World Vision survey in 2004 estimated 40% of the country's women were subjected to sexual violence, although other estimates suggest the figure is higher.

One woman from the group spoke of how she was taken as a "rebel wife" and raped repeatedly. Eight years later, the boy she was "married to" – now a man, and also the father of her daughter – sells petrol in Ganta. She sees him every day.

In August 2003, when the Accra peace accord was signed, it was decided the best chance for Liberia to get some form of justice was through a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), as had been set up in countries such as South Africa and Rwanda. The commission's mandate was to document and investigate human rights abuses committed between January 1979 and October 2003 and then make recommendations to the Liberian government.

Geebah and many of her group testified in front of the TRC when it toured the country between 2007 and 2008. They were encouraged to speak of the trauma and horrors they endured, and also to name their perpetrators. Many who testified complain that they have seen no benefits from the process. No court cases, no reparations, no counselling and no justice. They also worry it has put them at risk. "We're in danger now," said Geebah. "We named those people who did the bad things."

No one has been tried for any crimes committed in Liberia. Former president Charles Taylor is currently awaiting a verdict after being tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity at the Hague, but the offences in question were committed in neighbouring Sierra Leone, not Liberia.

In June 2009, the TRC released its final report. Its findings were marred by controversy, mainly because of two recommendations: first, that a war crimes tribunal should be established; second, that President Johnson Sirleaf should be banned from political office for 30 years because of her ties to former warring factions. To date, the TRC report lies dormant.

However, the first annual message of Sirleaf's second term was dominated by words like reconciliation, unity and healing. "To claim the future, we must reflect and heal the past," she said. Sirleaf even went so far as to add: "We will advance the truth and reconciliation process by implementing all practical recommendations." Presumably, she wasn't referring to the recommendation about her exclusion from political office.

Sirleaf also spoke about the national palava hut programme, which was one of the TRC's recommendations. Palava huts form a big part of Liberia's traditional justice system; people from the community gather inside an open-walled hut, discuss the crime and then together decide on the punishment.

In November, the president told a room of international reporters that the palava hut programme would start in the new year and, since she was among those named by the TRC, she would be the first person to appear.

Sirleaf said the government had allocated funds for the programme and named fellow Nobel peace laureate Leymah Gbowee as the person to spearhead it. She likened the plans to the Gacaca courts in Rwanda; people will be brought together, face the truth, and then seek forgiveness. Eminent members of the community will be there to witness the process, and those who still don't feel satisfied can pursue their case in court.

But for some of the women in Ganta, the idea of revisiting the past does not amount to reconciliation. "We don't want to explain it to anyone again," said Geebah. "We don't want the memory to come back." The things they need are jobs, education for their children, food on the table, and homes to live in – not another truth-seeking exercise. And they are not convinced they will get justice in a palava hut.

It is unclear how the palava hut process is actually going to work. Thomas Bureh, a commissioner for the independent human rights commission of Liberia, the organisation in charge of implementing the programme, said only people accused of minor crimes should appear. However, when asked to define a minor crime, he couldn't provide an answer.

Moreover, there appears to be confusion about the names of those who should appear. The TRC drew up two lists: one featuring names of people who should face prosecution under international law, and a second containing names of people who should appear in the palava huts. However, some names appear on both lists.

According to Bureh, the programme needs more money. He said the allocated \$300,000 was barely enough to train the 15 people needed in each of the 73 electoral districts, let alone build the palava huts for the communities that do not already have them.

So far, not one palava hut programme has started. Some of the women of Ganta remain unconvinced that the scheme is what their country needs. "Let bygones be bygones," many of them say. Geebah, the speaker of the group, goes further: "If those people come back, I will just close my mouth and cry."

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