

**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

as at:

Monday, 5 March 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Awoko

Monday, 5 March 2012

Awoko Reporters Bag Three Awards

-SNIP-



[Note: Betty Milton has reported on the Special Court since its inception. At Friday's Independent Media Commission's National Media Awards ceremony she won for best human rights reporting and was named female journalist of the year for 2011.]

THE HAGUE, ICC AND SUDANESE PRESIDENT

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its Sudanese member organization, the African Center for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS) welcome the issuance by the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I on 1 March 2012 of an arrest warrant against Abdel-Rahim Mohamed Hussein, current Sudanese Defense Minister.

ICC judges decided that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Mr. Hussein is responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes, including crimes of sexual violence, allegedly committed in Darfur when he was Sudanese Minister of the Interior and the President's Special representative for Darfur. Our organizations welcome the inclusion of the crime of rape, recognized as

crime against humanity and war crime, in the charges against Mr. Hussein confirming, along with its inclusion in three other pending arrest warrants against Sudanese officials, the gravity and systematicity of these crimes committed in Darfur.

This arrest warrant - the fourth to be issued by the ICC for crimes committed in Darfur - arises while the human rights and humanitarian situation in this region remains source of serious concerns.

Reports indicate the pursuit of indiscriminate aerial bombardments and other kinds of attacks against civilians, whereas there is a continuing stalemate in the political peace process.

More, this decision comes out while a violent

COMMENTARY

conflict opposing the Sudanese armed forces (SAF) to the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement - North (SPLM-N) is ongoing in the regions of South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Since they erupted in June 2011, fighting in these regions have resulted in significant loss of life and the perpetration of serious human rights violations including summary and extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances or acts of torture.

FIDH and ACJPS recall with dismay that Omar al Bashir, President of Sudan and Ahmed Haroun, governor of South Kordofan - who are also facing arrest warrants from the ICC for international crimes committed in Darfur - have, together with Abdel-Rahim Mohamed Hussein, supported and encouraged the SAF's military actions in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. "The role played by those three men in the ongoing violent attacks in South Kordofan and Blue Nile is reminiscent of their role in the Darfur conflict.

This is an unbearable example of the threat to peace and security which can emanate from the failure to address accountability. I have declared Osman Hummeida, ACJPS Executive Director. "In this context, execution of the outstanding arrests warrants is critical for the sake of both justice and peace in our country," he added.

"Sudan has lacked any will to cooperate with the ICC and States Parties to the Rome Statute did not demonstrate a strong enough commitment to cooperate with the Court on the situation in Sudan that was referred by the UN Security Council", said Sidiki Kaba, FIDH Honorary President. "We recall all States of their obligations to fully cooperate with the ICC, in particular in relation to the pending execution of all the Darfur linked arrest warrants for charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide", he added.

CNN

Friday, 2 March 2012

Court to issue verdict in Charles Taylor trial next month

By Faith Karimi



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor pictured on February 8, 2011 during his trial at the U.N. Special Court for Sierra Leone.

An international tribunal will issue a verdict in the war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor next month, the United Nations said.

Taylor, who led Liberia from 1997 to 2003, was the first African ruler to appear before an international war crimes tribunal.

Prosecutors allege he armed rebels and fueled a bloody civil war that led to widespread murder, rape and mutilation in Liberia and neighboring Sierra Leone.

He has pleaded not guilty to charges including five counts of crimes against humanity and five counts of war crimes. The U.N.-backed war crimes court said it will issue its ruling April 26.

Taylor has been on trial since 2007 at the special court for Sierra Leone in The Hague, Netherlands. United Nations officials and the Sierra Leone government jointly set up the tribunal to try those who played the biggest role in the atrocities.

In 2010, the United States said the trial faced a financial crisis and pledged to expedite a \$4.5 million grant to the court. At the time, Washington urged the international community to donate to the court before its financial resources ran out.

Closing arguments occurred last year.

During the trial, the judges heard testimony from more than 100 people, including Taylor and supermodel Naomi Campbell

Campbell testified that Taylor gave her "dirty-looking" uncut diamonds as a gift during a dinner in South Africa. Prosecutors were hoping her testimony would tie him to so-called blood diamonds used to fund rebels during the war.

CNN

Thursday, 1 March 2012

Charles Taylor Liberia war crimes verdict date set

Charles Taylor departing Liberia (August 2003) Charles Taylor's war crimes trial at The Hague began in 2007

The verdict in the war crimes trial of Liberia's ex-President Charles Taylor will be delivered on 26 April, the UN-backed court trying him has said.

Mr Taylor is accused of fuelling Sierra Leone's civil war in the 1990s by arming rebels.



He denies 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

It is the first international trial of an African former head of state, and Mr Taylor could spend the rest of his life in prison if found guilty.

His trial, at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, relates to his alleged role in the brutal civil war in Liberia's neighbour, where he is accused of backing rebels responsible for widespread atrocities.

The court hearings in The Hague included a testimony by supermodel Naomi Campbell about a gift of diamonds she had received. Mr Taylor is accused of trading in so-called "blood diamonds" to fund the rebels.

Mr Taylor denies all wrongdoing, describing the allegations against him as politically motivated.

If convicted, Mr Taylor would serve a prison sentence in the UK.

Leadership

Thursday, 1 March 2012

http://leadership.ng/nga/articles/17876/2012/03/01/un_war_crimes_court_rules_taylor_april_26.html

UN War Crimes Court Rules on Taylor on April 26



The UN war crimes court trying Charles Taylor for atrocities in Sierra Leone said on Thursday it would deliver a verdict on April 26.

The announcement came nearly five years after the former Liberian president went on trial in the Netherlands.

Taylor, the first African leader to go before an international tribunal, faced 11 counts of

murder, rape, conscripting child soldiers and sexual slavery covering atrocities during the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s that killed more than 250,000 people.

Prosecutors at the Special Court for Sierra Leone accused Taylor, 63, of running a "blood diamond" trade, using profits from the sale of precious stones to buy weapons and enrich himself.

The court hearings, which included testimony from supermodel Naomi Campbell about a gift of diamonds from Taylor, were delayed by the former leader's refusal to cooperate and efforts to fight its jurisdiction.

He denied all the allegations of wrongdoing.

Taylor was first indicted in 2003, along with 12 other suspects and the outcome of his case will be closely watched for legal milestones in the emerging system of international justice.

Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic died during his trial before the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal.

Prosecutors called 91 witnesses to support their charges that child soldiers under Taylor's command were sent to battle drugged with amphetamines and marijuana.

The verdict against Taylor could set legal precedents in the area of child soldiers.

The tribunal, which has no death penalty, was established by Sierra Leone and the UN to punish those responsible for serious human rights abuses in the African nation since 1996.

It has issued 13 indictments and completed cases against eight suspects, who received sentences of up to 51 years in prison. (Reuter/NAN)

The New Times (Rwanda)

Saturday, 3 March 2012

Taylor Ruling Set for April

The international court that was set up to try suspects indicted for war crimes in Sierra Leone announced that the judgment in the trial of the former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, will be delivered on April 26.

Taylor is on trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) on 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including pillage, slavery for forced marriage purposes, collective punishment and the recruitment and use of child soldiers

The charges relate to his alleged support for two rebel groups in Sierra Leone - the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and the Revolutionary United Front.

The decision by the SCSL comes just days after the International Criminal Court announced that it render its ruling in the case against DRC politician Thomas Lubanga Dyilo on March 14, 2012. This will be its first verdict since it was established in 2001.

Closing arguments in the Taylor trial, which opened in June 2007 in The Hague, the Netherlands, took place in February and March 2011. During the course of the trial, the Court heard from over 100 witnesses, including suspect, who testified in his defence.

Special Court Registrar Binta Mansaray said that with this judgment, the Court is set to reach another "critical milestone," given that this is the last trial stemming from Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war, and that it will be the last major trial to be held at the Court.

The SCSL was set up jointly by the Sierra Leonean Government and the UN in 2002.

It is mandated to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and national law committed on Sierra Leonean territory since the end of November 1996.

Although the SCSL is headquartered in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, Taylor's trial took place in a chamber of the Court sitting in The Hague for security reasons.

United Press International

Friday, 2 March 2012

Charles Taylor verdict expected by April

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, March 5 (UPI) -- A judgment in the war crimes trial for former Liberian President Charles Taylor is expected by the end of April, a U.N.-backed special court announced.

Taylor is facing 11 war crimes charges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone for allegedly funding conflict in Sierra Leone with so-called blood diamonds and for the alleged conscription of child soldiers.

Special Court Registrar Binta Mansaray said the Taylor verdict would be a "critical milestone" as the last trial related to civil war in Sierra Leone.

She added there were more than 50,000 pages of witness testimony and more than 1,500 exhibits presented as evidence in a case that opened in 2007.

Taylor is the first African leader to appear before the international war crimes tribunal. He's pleaded not guilty to the war crimes charges.

The New Dawn (Liberia)

Friday, 2 March 2012

Taylor's Verdict Due April 26

Othello B. Garblah



The much anticipated verdict of ex-president Charles Taylor is scheduled for April 26 next month; the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone announced Thursday.

Mr. Taylor accused of arming Sierra Leonean rebels, faces 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. But he had since denied all charges.

The announcement of the verdict date follows the appointment of Justice Philip Nyamu Waki, a prominent Kenyan jurist, as an alternate judge of the Court's Appeals Chamber.

Justice Waki was sworn in on Monday, February 27. Taylor is the first former African Head of State to be tried by an international court. If convicted, he could face a maximum life sentence.

The Special Court said Thursday that the Judgment will be delivered at 11:00 a.m. in a courtroom belonging to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in The Hague, where the Taylor trial has been taking place.

The trial opened on 4 June 2007 in The Hague. It was adjourned immediately after the Prosecution's opening statement when Mr. Taylor dismissed his Defence team and requested new representation. Witness testimony commenced on 7 January 2008, and ended on 12 November 2010. Closing arguments took place in February and March 2011.

The Court heard live testimony from 94 prosecution witnesses, and received written statements from four additional witnesses. The Defence presented 21 witnesses, with Mr. Taylor testifying in his defence.

At a meeting this week with members of Sierra Leonean civil society, Special Court Registrar Binta Mansaray said that although delivery of the judgment had taken nearly a year, this was due largely to the complexity of the case.

She noted that, amongst other matters, the Judges had to read through more than 50,000 pages of witness testimony, and to examine the 1,520 exhibits which had been tendered in evidence. She said the time-frame was consistent with similar high-profile cases at other international tribunals.

Ms. Mansaray said that with this judgment the Special Court is set to reach another critical milestone, given that this is the last trial stemming from Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war, and that it will be the last major trial to be held at the Court.

At the Special Court, as in other international tribunals, both the Prosecution and the Defence have the right to appeal. If Mr. Taylor is acquitted on all charges, the appeals process will begin immediately. If he is found guilty on any of the 11 counts, the Trial Chamber will schedule sentencing proceedings.

Efforts to contact lawyers representing Taylor failed Thursday as the London number of his lead Counsel Courtenay Griffiths rang endlessly.

The New Dawn (Liberia)

Friday, 2 March 2012

Will War Criminals Ever Be Prosecuted?

By Paul Y. Harry

The Issues Desk wishes to look at some people's inability – or, rather, unwillingness – to bring to justice those who committed war crimes and crimes against humanitarian during the civil conflict. There are people who will do everything in their power to see Liberians settle down with blanket amnesty, blanket reconciliation and a continuation of the culture of impunity.

As I have written and debated over the years, it is in the collective interest of Liberia and its people for those who are suspected of violating humanitarian law to be prosecuted. If it can happen in the Ivory Coast, it can also happen here. If it can take place in Sierra Leone, it can also happen here. If Rwandans have gone through it, we, too, can go through it. Gross violators of human rights must be prosecuted.

But why shouldn't they be prosecuted? Why? Too many people were killed for no good reasons. Our mothers and sisters and wives were raped. Pregnant women were disemboweled as the resolution of a can-you-tell-what's-the-sex-of-the-baby-in-that-woman's-stomach dispute among a group of fighters. Villages and towns were set on fire at will. Churches and mosques were set ablaze by marauding "freedom fighters." Sacred traditional places were desecrated. Hundreds of villagers were forced in attics and suffocated with burning pepper from below. Some had their family members killed right before their eyes and told to look, but not cry. Different groups of Liberians and non-Liberians were massacred in various places and ways.

Indeed, there is a need to prosecute those responsible for the atrocious acts mentioned above, and those who reason that because the war years have come and gone, the stories that characterized those years should also be gone and those who committed those acts should be let go are making an egregious mistake. Sweeping grave human rights violations under the carpet does not help.

Personal stories and other pieces of information available

A Review of Massacres (1990 – 2003)

2. On 30 May 1990, armed men entered the compound of the United Nations on the Old Road and killed scores of unarmed civilians. Many people believe that AFL soldiers carried out that massacre, others don't. Why shouldn't we hear the true story?

3. In July 1990, scores of our kinsmen of the Mandingo ethnic group were massacred in Bakedu, Lofa County. It is said that the fighters of Charles Taylor's rebel group killed these kinsmen.

In July of 1990, armed men entered the compound of the St. Peter Lutheran Church on 14th Street and massacred more than 600 of our compatriots. It is generally believed that some members of the AFL and the SATU carried out that massacre. Most people have a general picture of what happened, but not detailed information. Is it wrong for us to call for the prosecution of those planning greater responsibility in all this?

5. On 6 June 1993, armed men entered Carter Camp in Harbel and massacred more than 600 women, children and defenseless people. The Amos Waco Committee set up to investigate the massacre, blamed

members of the AFL. However, many people believe Charles Taylor's rebels carried out the massacre. Should those responsible not be investigated?

6. In December of 1994, about 48 (some say 60) civilians, mainly women and children, were massacred on the Duport Road, a massacre also referred to as the Cowfield Massacre. Wait a minute! So, we should never hear the true story?

7. On 9 April 1995, more than 70 civilians were massacred in Yosi, a village near Buchanan. The victims were mainly women and children. Oh, so we should never get to know the truth of what really happened?

8. In March of 1995, scores of our compatriots were massacred in Meekor Town in Grand Cape Mount County. Why shouldn't we hear the true story?

9. On September 28, 1996, scores of civilians were brutally massacred in Sinje, Grand Cape Mount County, by unknown gunmen. Some of those who survived were taken to Monrovia for treatment; among them was an eight-month-old baby whose right foot had been cut off. Oh, wait a minute! So, the stories are not worth telling?

10. According to reports, more than 100 civilians were killed in Zarway Town, Cape Mount County, on 23 May 2002. Shouldn't we get to know what really happened?

11. Information has it that in February of 2003, about fifteen civilians were killed in Jorjorma Town, along the Monrovia-Tubmanburg Highway. Why shouldn't we hear the truth, my people?

12. According to reports, more than 360 local people were massacred in three towns in River Gee, in April of 2003. Among those killed were babies, children, pregnant women and prominent figures from those towns. Many believed pro-Taylor militia fighters carried it out. Don't we have the right to know what really went on? Oh, so, we should not investigate?

13. In August of 2003, it was reported that a massacre was carried out in Bahn, Nimba County. Some reports say 100 people were killed, others say 1000 were killed. It is believed that the killing was done by rebels from the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (Model). Are the proponents of the just-forgive-and-reconcile argument telling us that we should never hear the true story?

14. Different massacres and summary executions were carried out in different parts of Liberia, and in different ways. The list goes on and on. Massacres were carried out in Cheesemanburg, Sukroma, Yeala, Fassama, Nyekebozo, Gizeboiga, etc., etc. I believe we do not have full information on all, neither do we know about some. That's why we must give the survivors, the witnesses, etc., the chance to tell their stories freely and openly. We must look for them and give them the opportunity to narrate the stories. This could be the beginning of a genuine reconciliation and forgiveness.

For more information on some of the massacres, summary executions and brutal killings that were carried out in Liberia, as well as the identities of some of those who are responsible for these ugly acts, check <http://www.nextliberia.com/major.html>.

Most of us are aware that it is impossible for all of the stories to be heard, because of one reason or another. But this does not mean that those that are possible to be told should be forbidden. I know that Liberians are forgiving people, but they must be given the chance to know or hear what they have to forgive. Besides, as we all strive for forgiveness and reconciliation, those who did wrong to others in the past should be remorseful for their actions. They should sincerely confess and ask for forgiveness. If they take pride in their ugly deeds, openly boast about it, or arrogantly deny what is known to be true, those who have been wronged will find it hard, if not impossible, to forgive the wrong-doers. This is another point to consider.

Even Biblical reconciliation and forgiveness call for admission and confession of wrong. I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Here we see that confession precedes forgiveness. We see a similar picture about the prodigal son in Luke 15. The Bible tells us in verses 17-24 that when he (the prodigal son) realizes his wrongdoing, he repents, goes back to his father, apologizes and asks for forgiveness. His father forgives his past and accepts him back into the family. Again, we notice that confession or admission of the wrong precedes forgiveness and reconciliation.

Let the stories of the heinous acts committed in Liberia, against Liberians and non-Liberians, be told. Let them be told in central Liberia. Let the stories be told in northern Liberia. Let them be told in eastern Liberia. Let the narrations be heard in western Liberia. Not only that. Let the accounts be heard in the southern part. Let the Bassa, Dei, Krahn, Kpelle, Kru and Grebo people narrate their experiences. Let the Lorma, Kissi, Mandingo, and the Gbandi people tell their stories. Let's give the Mano, Gio, Gola, and Vai people the opportunity to continue the narrations.

Permit the accounts to be heard from Maryland to Grand Cape Mount and from the mountains of Nimba and Lofa to the shores of the North Atlantic Ocean. Simply put, let the stories be told, for when we allow the stories to be told, when we permit them to be told sincerely and remorsefully, we open the door for true reconciliation and forgiveness. Not only that. When we let the stories be told candidly and sorrowfully, we can easily formulate strategies and policies to prevent their recurrence. **LET THE STORIES BE TOLD.**

To conclude this article, I will leave you with the words of Aldous Huxley, a British writer (1894-1963): "Experience is not what happens to you; it is what you do with what happens to you."

Human Rights Watch

Monday, 5 March 2012

Press Release

Côte d'Ivoire: Lethal Crime Wave, Security Vacuum

Protect Bouaké Residents, Disarm Former Combatants

(Nairobi, March 5, 2012) – The Ivorian government should urgently address the rising violent crime in and around the central town of Bouaké, the country's second largest city, Human Rights Watch said today. The government should take urgent steps to disarm the former combatants widely believed to be implicated in the attacks and adequately equip the police and gendarmes to protect the population and investigate violent crimes, Human Rights Watch said.

Since early December 2011, at least 22 people have been murdered in central Côte d'Ivoire during attacks on passengers travelling on motorbikes or in commercial vehicles. Victims and witnesses from Bouaké interviewed by Human Rights Watch described 15 such attacks during which at least 13 men were shot and killed and five women raped. Bouaké residents said the road banditry occurs daily and is part of a striking rise in violent crime that has crippled daily life. Residents said police and gendarmes have neither protected them from, nor properly investigated, the violent attacks.

“The Ivorian people have suffered countless horrors,” said Corinne Dufka, senior West Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch. “The government needs to show it intends to end this violence by disarming former combatants and ensuring that police and gendarmes are equipped to protect Ivorians and stem the rampant criminality around Bouaké.”

Victims said that attackers armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles work in groups of two to eight, blocking roads with wood or cars, and then systematically robbing people in passing vehicles. Witnesses said that passengers who glanced at the attackers' faces, tried to flee, or failed to give them money had been killed. Several women interviewed by Human Rights Watch described being stripped as the bandits looked for cash, then raped. One woman was raped in front of other passengers after her father was gunned down in front of her, while another woman described being forced into the surrounding vegetation and raped by two men.

The victims who spoke to Human Rights Watch, all of whom had lived in Bouaké for years, universally believed the attackers were associated with the Republican Forces. The term “Republican Forces” now signifies the official Ivorian military, but is also commonly used to describe tens of thousands more youth who took up arms in 2011 to remove former President Laurent Gbagbo from power after he refused to recognize President Alassane Ouattara's electoral victory and unleashed a torrent of abuse against Ouattara supporters.

Bouaké is the former capital of the Forces Nouvelles (New Forces) armed group that effectively controlled the northern half of the country beginning in September 2002 and constituted the bulk of the Republican Forces during the post-election period.

In linking the attackers to the Republican Forces, victims cited the type of weapons the attackers used, the fact that some wore military pants or boots, and the quasi-military nature of the attacks. The victims also referred to the ubiquity of the Republican Forces and former New Forces combatants in Bouaké, and the attackers' apparent lack of fear that the Republican Forces troops who exert effective control within Bouaké would stop them.

The Ivorian government has commendably acknowledged the problem of road banditry and violent crime, and publicly made a commitment to address the issue, Human Rights Watch said. Representatives from Ivorian civil society and the United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) likewise told Human Rights Watch that since the December 2011 killing of five people by Republican Forces soldiers in the town of Vavoua, the government has taken a few meaningful steps to address problems of indiscipline within the Republican Forces. These include creating a military police unit, which has arrested some soldiers engaged in crime, and improvements in unifying the formerly belligerent armed forces into a military with some chain of command.

People in Bouaké made clear, however, that their security situation has progressively worsened. One Bouaké resident told Human Rights Watch on February 23, 2012, that the previous two weeks had been the worst so far, with violent robberies every day throughout the town. She said that at least five people had been killed during that period and that attacks had occurred on Western Union and key businesses, prompting a strike by traders and storekeepers.

The right to security is protected under article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and article 6 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, both ratified by Côte d'Ivoire. These provisions require authorities to take reasonable steps to protect everyone in Côte d'Ivoire from violence by anyone else, when the authorities are aware that certain individuals or groups are at specific risk.

Victims told Human Rights Watch that when they reported to the police or gendarmerie incidents of road banditry, often including murder or rape, the authorities responded that they are unarmed and ill-equipped to tackle the problem, and they failed to investigate the reports. Several people involved in inter-city transport in Bouaké said that the security vacuum is being filled in part by members of the regular Republican Forces, whom they now pay for protection.

Human Rights Watch called on the government to quickly provide sufficient material support for the police and gendarmes to undertake basic security functions. The government should also ensure that the military defers to and respects the primacy of the police and gendarmes who are responsible for protecting the population and bringing those responsible to book, Human Rights Watch said.

In addition to empowering the security forces, a successful disarmament, demobilization, and reinsertion program (known as DDR) for the tens of thousands of men who took up arms during the post-election crisis is essential to tackle the worrying rise in violent criminality, Human Rights Watch said. Some important progress has been made in disarming men who took up arms during the post-election crisis, Human Rights Watch said. And UN officials said that the Ouattara government's current efforts were a significant improvement from three failed disarmament programs during Gbagbo's presidency. The disarmament of certain high-risk armed groups in Abidjan and the western part of the country – the majority formerly associated with Gbagbo's side – has indeed begun, with close involvement from the UN.

However, several UN officials said that certain influential members of the government with close ties to the Republican Forces appeared to be "stalling," or "slow-moving," in disarming the forces that swept it to power. An estimated 40,000 "volunteers," according to media reports citing diplomats, fought with the Republican Forces.

UN officials told Human Rights Watch that UN-monitored disarmament of these former combatants has yet to start, as the government says it is yet to arrive at decisions regarding military reform and has not finished registering and profiling all of these former combatants. As one UN official said, the UN could not assist disarmament of the Republican Forces "until the government tells us who to disarm."

UN officials blamed part of the problem on the proliferation of state institutions implicated in DDR – 17 involved currently in some capacity – and called for a centralized, national program with the authority to organize and move the process forward. One UN expert on the subject said, “The process needs to be integrated and coherent from the moment a person is disarmed until reinsertion, with transparent access [for the UN] to the list that shows the ex-combatants’ progress, using unique biometric DDR [identification] cards.... This needs to be Côte d’Ivoire’s last DDR program, so it must be rigorous.”

Human Rights Watch called on the Ivorian government to ensure that the UN operations in the country and other international actors can monitor the DDR process from the identification and registration of former combatants through disarmament and reinsertion programs.

“The proliferation of arms and widespread recruitment by both sides during the post-election conflict has created a dire security vacuum in parts of the country,” Dufka said. “The Ivorian government urgently needs to disarm former combatants and hold to account those engaged in criminal activity.”