

**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, 23 April 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Sierra Leone ex-child soldier wants guilty verdict in Taylor trial

As Sierra Leone and the rest of the world anxiously await the April 26 verdict of Charles Taylor's trial in The Hague, former child soldier and now UNICEF goodwill ambassador Ishmael Beah said a guilty verdict would be a great victory for peace and stability in West Africa. But Beah also adds that the true threat to peace is high youth unemployment.

"It will be a big blow to everyone in Sierra Leone and the rest of West Africa, if Charles Taylor is acquitted in The Hague," said Beah, author of the book 'A Long Way Gone; Memoirs of a Boy Soldier', at a public lecture at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

"I was opposed to the idea of trying Taylor outside of West Africa," he said. "I would have wanted to see it done in here because trying Taylor in The Hague is like a dissociative justice; it is too far away from the people affected."

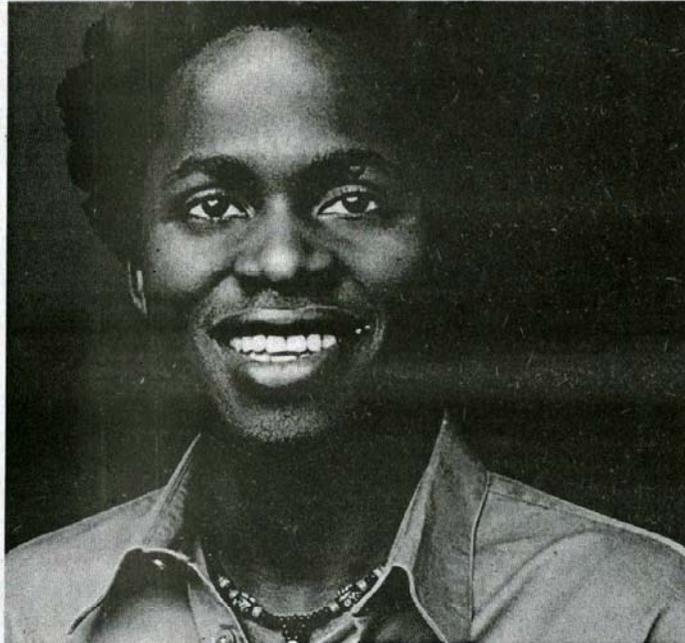
Beah added that most people are unaware of the ongoing trial. To have tried Taylor in West Africa would have given the true victims the opportunity to see justice served and it would have also served as a precedent to those people who want to use war as a means to gain power.

As one of West Africa's strongmen, it would have been good to have found Taylor guilty within the sub-region to have sent a message to all other powerful men who commit atrocities against their people – including recruiting child soldiers – and go with impunity.

Beah said as much as he feels Taylor is responsible for the atrocities committed in Sierra Leone's war, he also puts the blame on the then political structure of the country.

"If I had to give blame for why the war started in Sierra Leone, I will put it on the poor political structure at the time," he noted, adding that people who were in the country that experienced the war and find themselves now in authority or governance should learn from the mistakes of the past and work hard not to repeat the ugly things that provoked the war.

He said the RUF, West Side Boys among others were all byproducts of a rotten political system in the country and that gave rise to massive



Ishmael Beah, UN Goodwill Ambassador and author

corruption. He said the war began in Sierra Leone largely because there were already so many disgruntled youth in the country to be co-opted. He expressed hope that the government and other stakeholders will take care of

the youth by meaningfully engaging them so as to divert their minds from trouble.

In Sierra Leone youth is defined as persons between the ages of 15-35 and

in 2004, they accounted for 35 percent of the national population. However, in most other countries, youths become adults after age 24. Sierra Leone redefined "youth" to account for the 10 years of educational discontinuity brought on by the war. According to 2008 data from the Ministry of Labour, the nation's youth unemployment is 46 percent. A number that many have argued puts the nation's peace process at risk.

"One of my fears is the large number of unemployed young people roaming the streets; more so as the country moves towards the November 2012 polls," he said.

This concern was also reechoed by Dr. Alfred Jarrett, Head of the Sociology and Social Work Department of Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

"The rehabilitation and reintegration process of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone was an abysmal failure," said Dr. Jarrett.

Taylor is accused of crimes committed by rebels in Sierra Leone during the country's eleven years civil war. The war in Sierra Leone officially ended in January 2002, but throughout his trial, the former Liberian leader has maintained his innocence.

Credit: SWIT SALONE –
story by Mustapha Dumbuya

Genocide suspect Uwinkindi sent for Trial in Rwanda

The Tanzanian-based UN tribunal trying Rwandan genocide suspects has for the first time sent a suspect back to Rwanda for trial.

His legal team had said Jean-Bosco Uwinkindi would not get a fair trial in Rwanda, where he was once a pastor.

He is accused of ordering the killing of ethnic Tutsis after they sought refuge in his church.

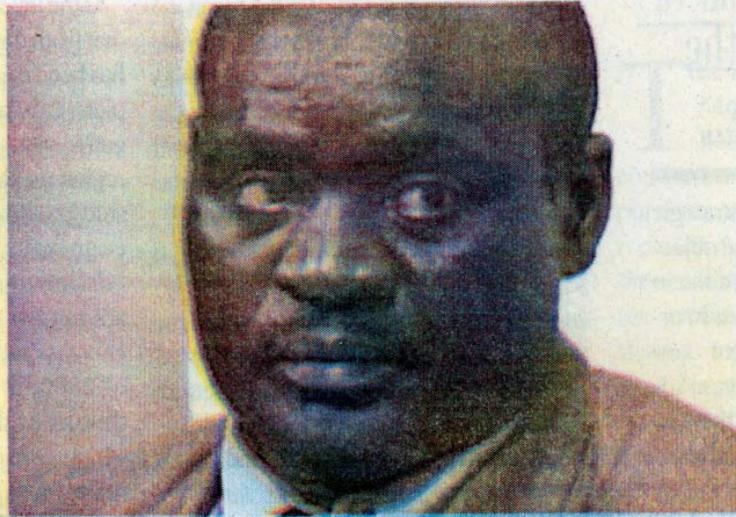
About 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed by Hutu militias in 100 days in the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

'Corpses near church'

The BBC's Prudent Nsenga in the Rwandan capital, Kigali, says Mr Uwinkindi was met at the airport by a delegation of Rwandan officials - including the country's prosecutor, who called his arrival a "landmark day for Rwandan justice".

On Tuesday, the former pastor lost his appeal against a transfer ruling by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

The ICTR - set up in Arusha



shortly after the 1994 genocide - is due to wind up its work by the end of 2014, by which time all cases should have been transferred to national jurisdictions.

Mr Uwinkindi is accused of being one of the main perpetrators of the genocide.

The prosecution alleges that in investigations after the genocide, some 2,000 corpses were found near the church in Kanzenze, just

outside Kigali, where he was pastor.

Mr Uwinkindi was indicted in 2001 and arrested last year when he entered Uganda from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Until his arrest by Ugandan police, Mr Uwinkindi was one of the ICTR's 11 most-wanted suspects.

He has denied the genocide charges.

Open Society Justice

Friday, 20 April 2012

Charles Taylor Trial Verdict due April 26

As the Special Court for Sierra Leone announces its verdict in the trial of Charles Taylor on Thursday, April 26, our Hague-based international court monitor Alpha Sesay will be tweeting live from the court (@sesayalpha). We have also produced a briefing for journalists and others, summarizing main events at the trial, which we have closely followed on our award-winning website www.charlestaylortrial.org. The Justice Initiative is also working with local human rights organizations in Sierra Leone and Liberia to bring independent reporting and analysis of Taylor trial judgment from The Hague to local communities.

Reuters

Sunday, 22 April 2012

Taylor verdict takes aim at Africa Big Man impunity

Thomas Escritt and Simon Akam Reuters

Begging outside a supermarket in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown, Tamba Ngaujah has little doubt who was behind the Revolutionary United Front rebels who, 20 years ago, gave him "short sleeves".

"They put my arms on the sticks, took machetes, and cut them ... They only thing I can tell you about Charles Taylor: I heard from the RUF who amputated my hands that they were supported by Charles Taylor," 46-year-old Ngaujah said.

On Thursday, a special court in The Hague will give its verdict on just what level of responsibility former Liberian President Taylor had in these war atrocities. Taylor himself denies any responsibility.

In an 11-year conflict which by 2002 left over 50,000 dead and become a byword for gratuitous violence, "short sleeves" was the macabre tag used to distinguish amputations like Ngaujah's at the elbow from less drastic "long sleeve" cuts at the wrist.

Prosecutors allege Taylor, from his base in neighboring Liberia, directed and armed the Sierra Leonian rebels and so bears responsibility on 11 counts including murder, mutilation, rape, enslavement, and recruitment of child soldiers.

Whether Taylor is found guilty or not, the verdict will be the first in a court of this kind against a former head of state on serious violations of international law.

Yugoslav ex-leader Slobodan Milosevic died in 2006 before the judgment was due in the Yugoslavia war crimes tribunal, also in The Hague

In 2009, Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir became the first sitting head of state to be indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has ordered his arrest on charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide related to the conflict in Darfur. Bashir rejects the charges.

"The Sierra Leone conflict was brutal, and Charles Taylor was seen as a 'Big Man' in the region," said Elise Keppler, senior counsel at Human Rights Watch of the slowly dwindling club of those ruling with impunity in Africa.

"Regardless of the verdict, this will send a clear signal that people implicated in the worst crimes will face justice no matter how important or powerful they are," she said.

'STRANGE TO US'

Since Taylor's indictment in 2003, the Special Court for Sierra Leone - a so-called "hybrid" court staffed by both international and Sierra Leonian personnel - has produced testimony ranging from the horrific to the titillating.

As prosecutors sought to link Taylor to the locally-mined "blood diamonds" which helped fuel the war, the court heard the bafflement of supermodel Naomi Campbell at the uncut diamonds - or "dirty little pebbles" in her words - delivered during the night to her hotel room after a 1997 charity dinner with Taylor.

It also featured victims of amputation who displayed remains of mutilated limbs, and graphic accounts of massacres, torture and cannibalism as the prosecution called 91 witnesses whose accounts are included in almost 50,000 pages of transcripts.

Typical is the description by one such witness of the mutilation and execution of his brother by rebels.

"They cut off all his 10 fingers," Patrick Sheriff said. "They put them in (a) cup, then they shot him."

Another witness described fighters betting on the sex of a pregnant woman's child. According to the prosecution: "The rebels shot the woman dead, opened her belly, took out the baby... The baby cried and then died."

For prosecutors, the challenge is to show a link between Taylor and such crimes. Much depends on the evidence of seven radio operators who allegedly kept him in touch with rebel groups. Taylor does not deny atrocities, but does deny any role.

"We did hear of certain actions that were going on in Sierra Leone that ... were a little strange to us, because these things were not happening in Liberia," he said at the trial.

MENACE TO STABILITY

Former Special Court of Sierra Leone lawyer Sareta Ashraph argued that even if a link between Taylor and RUF rebels is demonstrated, it would be harder to show he had a clear planning or command role in the late-1990s period covered by the court.

"It difficult to see the motivation for putting himself in charge of the RUF," said Ashraph, who is writing a history of the Sierra Leone war.

"He was already president of Liberia, was making money off them and would have realized the best the RUF were going to do is force the government into a stalemate."

Rebels and government signed a 1999 peace deal but fighting continued for nearly three years until the RUF was defeated with military help from ex-colonial power Britain and U.N. forces.

While Taylor, 64, was deemed enough of a menace to West Africa's stability that his trial was moved to The Hague after his March 2006 arrest during exile in Nigeria, his present-day influence is harder to define.

The region is still plagued by mercenaries like those who created havoc two decades ago. But militant Islamists such as Nigeria's Boko Haram or al Qaeda agents in the Sahel zone are now the bigger threat, alongside the growing narcotics trade.

Nonetheless, acquittal for Taylor would be an uncomfortable prospect for Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who became his arch-enemy after withdrawing support for him early in the Liberian civil war of the 1990s that brought him to power.

"I never speak about Charles Taylor," Johnson-Sirleaf told Reuters during her successful re-election campaign last year. Yet while he is abhorred by many of Liberians, Taylor remains a local hero and symbol of national pride for some.

"The best president I have seen in my time is Charles Ghankay Taylor. He is better than Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf," 40-year-old farmer Karhn Dayplay told Reuters.

"Taylor must come back here to rule this nation. We are waiting for him," said the resident of Karnplay, one of the Nimba County towns from which Taylor launched his 1989 rebellion to unseat the then President Samuel Doe.

OLD ENEMIES

A man used to giving orders, Taylor has wanted to be closely involved in shaping his defense, taking the witness stand for seven months with confident, forthright performances.

As he awaits the verdict, he has immersed himself in study of the Jewish faith to which he converted before arriving in The Hague. He has regular visits from a rabbi and does not receive his lawyers on the Sabbath.

His library - now put in storage - had occupied an entire room at the seaside detention facilities used by the tribunal and the International Criminal Court, where he is said to maintain cordial relations with old enemy Laurent Gbagbo, the former Ivory Coast leader transferred there last year to face charges of crimes against humanity.

His defense team reports that he is reading "Strategic Vision," the latest book by former U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, and that Taylor followed last year's upheavals in North Africa with avid interest.

He has benefited from the company of other African detainees including Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga Dyilo to go through legal briefs and cook home favorites together - one domestic option he may lack in the British maximum security prison due to house him if found guilty.

While some Africans see the long list of countrymen due to be tried in The Hague as evidence of bias in the international legal system, others see the Taylor verdict as one step towards breaking down the impunity many of its biggest criminals enjoy.

Liberia itself has made little progress in prosecuting those responsible for crimes in its war, while abuses committed by northern rebels who backed Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara in last year's conflict have yet to be fully investigated.

"This is part of a global process of increasing accountability for the worst crimes," said HRW's Keppler. "In the world of justice versus impunity, justice is still young."

(Additional reporting by Alphonso Toweh and Clair MacDougall in Liberia; Mark John and Richard Valdmanis in Dakar; Writing by Mark John and Thomas Escritt; Editing by Philippa Fletcher)

The New Dawn (Liberia)

Monday, 23 April 2012

Taylor's Family Confident of Thursday's verdict

The family members and friends of former Liberian President Charles Taylor say they are optimistic about the pending ruling in 6-year war crimes trial, just days before Judges of the United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone Special are due to hand down the verdict on April 26.-The West African Democracy Radio reports.

“The family and all of our supporters are confident that if it is about transparent justice and due process of law, if those processes/procedures are followed then Mr. Taylor will be a free man,” Taylor’s family spokesman Liberian Senator Sando Johnson told West Africa Democracy Radio (WADR) in an interview at the weekend.

Taylor, who has been on trial since April 3, 2006, is being charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for allegedly fuelling the war in neighboring Sierra Leone and supplying arms to the defunct Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in exchange for diamonds.

But the former Liberian leader has since denied all of the charges. Johnson, who is a nephew of the former Liberian leader, told WADR that a delegation of family members and friends of former Liberian President Charles Taylor are traveling to The Hague to witness the event.

“We are confident based on the manner in which the defense team headed by Courteney Griffiths demonstrated their talents,” Johnson said.

The Liberian Senator adding that Taylor’s wife has told the family after talking to him on the phone from his prison a few days ago, “that Mr. Taylor is in good health, Mr. Taylor is willing to accept the result and Mr. Taylor is not worried.”

Reuters

Monday, 23 April 2012

Charles Taylor verdict this week



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is seen at the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in Leidschendam, the Netherlands. Picture: Reuters/Vincent Jannink

Freetown - Begging outside a supermarket in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown, Tamba Ngaujah has little doubt who was behind the Revolutionary United Front rebels who, 20 years ago, gave him "short sleeves".

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The Observer

Sunday 22 April 2012

Scars of war fade as Sierra Leone awaits fate of dictator 'who fuelled violence'

A decade after the conflict ended, the war crimes trial of Charles Taylor is a sideshow in a country focused on peace

Until recently, the carcass of a military helicopter stood on a concrete apron at Cockerill Barracks in Freetown. The helicopter was a Hind, a Soviet gunship of the type that fought the mujahideen in 1980s Afghanistan, a machine whose twin bubble canopies are, in a smaller world, as archetypal an example of 20th-century design as the Anglepoise lamp.

The engines and rotors were gone, but inside the cockpits tickertape labels were still fastened to the instrument panels, glossing the Cyrillic rubrics into English for the benefit of the anglophone mercenaries who flew the machine during Sierra Leone's civil war. "Guns ... rocket burst," the tickertape read.

The Hind is gone now. The mechanics of its departure are uncertain. Servicemen at the barracks say the Israeli businessmen who cannibalised it for parts removed it. But the fact of its disappearance from Sierra Leone's military headquarters is significant. It is one of many examples of the relics of war fading away in the small west African state.

On Thursday, the verdict will be announced in The Hague in the trial of Charles Taylor. Though formerly president of Liberia, Taylor is accused of war crimes in neighbouring Sierra Leone. In the 1990s, the former British possession on the elbow of west Africa experienced one of Africa's most brutal civil wars. The 11-year conflict left 50,000 dead.

The UN-backed special court for Sierra Leone will probably convict Taylor, although the extent of his direct engagement in Sierra Leone is a matter for debate. In Sierra Leone, it is now also 10 years since the end of the civil war, a development that came about in large part due to the deployment of British troops. A decade on, peace has held, but the state of the nation is a complicated matter.

Ibrahim Ben Kargbo, Sierra Leone's minister of information, says his government is keenly awaiting the verdict in the Taylor trial. "Our position is very clear. Charles Taylor was one of the people who put in place the structures that led to civil war in this country," he said. "The worry here is that we really don't want a replica of another Charles Taylor in the west African sub-region, not in the near future."

Others have different views. In court, Taylor is accused of abetting and even directing the Revolutionary United Front during Sierra Leone's civil war, a rebel group that gained notoriety for extreme violence, in particular the amputation of the limbs of civilians.

After the war, the RUF metamorphosed from guerrilla group to political party, the RUFPP, which is today a rump unit in Sierra Leonean politics. However, the leader of the RUFPP, Eldred Collins, remains one of the last public links with the wartime grouping that Taylor is accused of aiding.

"The war in Sierra Leone was not Charles Taylor's war. The war in Sierra Leone was purely a Sierra Leonean war," Collins, dressed in a crisp pink shirt, said in his party's headquarters in eastern Freetown. "My personal perspective is that people should think twice about making the decision that the war in Sierra Leone was fuelled by Taylor."

More tempered than the views of Collins, who was formerly the spokesman of the RUF, are the opinions of the erstwhile rank and file of the war. Many ex-combatants now drive the motorbike taxis known in Sierra Leone as "okadas". Last Tuesday evening a group of okada riders gathered under a makeshift shelter on Spur Loop in western Freetown. "Charles Taylor, he's a person like me," said Mohamed Fofana, 38, a former member of Kamajor wartime civil defence militia, which fought against the RUF. "He was in-between, he good and he bad."

On the other side of the country from Freetown, Kono district in eastern Sierra Leone was the wartime source of Sierra Leone's notorious "blood diamonds". In the town of Koidu, small-time diamond dealer Abdul Karim Daboh resents Charles Taylor in particular for the disruption of his education. "For me, he's the one that destroyed our life," said the 37-year-old, carrying a few small gemstones in a scrap of folded paper. "At that particular time, he destroyed our future. We never attended school again. It was our last attendance."

The truth, though, is that, while the mention of Charles Taylor stirs strong emotions in some quarters, for many Sierra Leoneans the war and the trial are now in the past. People are concerned by the forthcoming presidential election and by the mechanics of staying alive in what remains one of the world's poorest countries. The fact that, unlike the earlier special court prosecutions, the Taylor trial has taken place in The Hague rather than Freetown has also distanced it from public consciousness.

"The war is finished. Everybody in Sierra Leone is doing their own business," said Harold Sesay, 50, who works as a quarantine officer at Lungi airport, which serves Freetown. "Charles Taylor business is not our business now. All that we are after is development. We want our country to develop."

After a fashion, the country is booming. The IMF predicts that the country will experience economic growth of 34.9% this year. The cause is iron ore, and two British companies are behind the development. London Mining is redeveloping an abandoned mine at Lunsar, while African Mineral's larger project focuses on a find at Tonkolili, which the company claims is the world's largest deposit of magnetite.

The iron ore projects will create at most a few tens of thousands of jobs – not enough to relieve the endemic unemployment in a country of six million. However, revenue from royalties and taxation could transform the fortunes of the Sierra Leonean state. At present, the budget of the entire country is little over a paltry \$500m (£310m).

Yet there is controversy attached to the iron ore bonanza, too. Neither London Mining nor African Minerals concession agreements conformed to a new mining act Sierra Leone introduced in 2009. London Mining's agreement has since been renegotiated. That of African Minerals has not.

Last week, too, a pay dispute at African Minerals escalated into rioting in the town of Bumbuna in central Sierra Leone. The incident was not the first example of tension between local people and mining companies. The disproportionate response by the police – who recently purchased \$4.5m of weaponry, including grenade launchers and heavy machine guns – shows that, while the war is receding into the past, human life is still not always highly valued in Sierra Leone.

On Thursday, after two days of rioting, the fibrous remains of burned tyres lay in the unpaved streets of Bumbuna, along with the remnants of improvised roadblocks. Local people showed spent ammunition casings – 9mm pistol shells and larger rifle rounds – to prove what had taken place, and reported indiscriminate shooting by the security forces. One woman was killed and at least six people were injured. On Thursday night, the injured were at the regional hospital in Makeni, an hour's drive from Bumbuna. There was no light in the wards; nurses said there was no fuel for the generator.

"African Minerals, I think they have to do something," said 26-year-old Sheku Daramy, who had taken a police bullet in the foot. "They should take care of their workers."

The Ecologist

Monday, 23 April 2012

Charles Taylor verdict could set precedent on conflict resources

The trial of the ex-Liberian President - accused of purchasing arms with funds from the illegal timber and diamond trade - could lead to a wave of prosecutions using the 'pillage' theory

The verdict in the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, due on the 26th April, could set a significant precedent in attempts to prosecute individuals or corporations that trade in conflict natural resources. Taylor is being tried on 11 counts, the last of which is pillage, or conflict-related theft, prohibited in international humanitarian law in the 1949 Geneva Convention.

Funds from the illegal trade in diamonds and timber, used to purchase arms, were crucial to fuelling the conflict in Liberia, which left 200,000 dead and 2 million displaced. Andie Lambe, campaign leader for Global Witness's international justice team, told the Ecologist: 'Pillage is the least well known and the least utilised aspect of international crimes used by prosecutors. While it's not a new tool, more people need to understand what it means. It's a very important avenue for redress but the first case to use it successfully will be significant.'

Ken Hurwitz, senior anti-corruption legal officer at the Open Society's Justice Initiative, said: 'Jurisprudence is quite volatile at the moment, there are lots of cases going in different directions. The question really boils down to "If I'm buying timber from [former Liberian President] Charles Taylor, and I am therefore giving him money that he uses to arm and equip troops to commit human rights violations, do I share his intent to commit those violations, or is my intent to make money, and does that make a difference?'"

Patrick Alley, of Global Witness, said that to date, efforts to hold corporations accountable have all but failed: 'Wars from Liberia, to Sierra Leone or Angola all had a natural resource element to them and the exploitation of natural resources helped perpetuate the conflicts. Companies were knowingly doing business in these areas and trading in these resources. Unless this is dealt with, these companies essentially have impunity. They make a profit then leave the country, and the communities have the job of paying for it and picking up the pieces,' he says.

Global Witness and other civil society groups pursued the French subsidiary of Danish timber giant DLH through the courts for buying timber from Liberian companies that supported Taylor's regime. They argued that DLH was guilty of 'recel', the French crime of profiting from goods obtained illegally. 'We had to try and search jurisdictions to see where a case could be brought. We ended up trying a Danish company in France, all of which is illustrative of the fact that it is not easy. It's an ongoing process and it's taken years. The bottom line is that there never was any prosecution. Now those companies are marketing themselves as super responsible, with FSC certification and the like. Yet, years ago, they were involved in this dirty trade,' said Alley.

According to the United Nations, at least 18 violent conflicts in the last two decades have been fuelled by the exploitation of natural resources including timber, diamonds, gold, minerals, oil, land and water. In 2001, the UN General Assembly declared that the 6th November would henceforth be the 'International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict'.

But if the environment has historically been the 'unpublicised victim of war', lawyers and activists are now focusing their attention on a new legal tool to curb the conflict resources trade by prosecuting the

corporations that are profiting from it. A major report, *Corporate War Crimes: Prosecuting the Pillage of Natural Resources*, by Professor James Stewart, launched at a conference on the same subject in the Hague last year, laid out a blueprint of jurisprudence to hold companies to account for their role in fuelling armed conflict.

Under the 'pillage theory', there is no requirement of intent to commit the violations that the resources allow to be committed, but rather, 'an intent to purchase commodities or other assets from somebody who you know doesn't have legal title to them and in the context of an armed conflict,' said Hurwitz. 'Although none of these cases are simple, we think this is a somewhat more direct and logical, and evidentially easier burden to satisfy on behalf of the prosecutor.'

As to why pillage theory itself was never really looked at before, Hurwitz says that in the context in which those situations initially arose, the post World War two cases were different enough from anything people were looking at contemporaneously. 'Nobody really looked but the jurisprudence wasn't really considered particularly on point to the situations human rights activist were focusing on. Then in the DRC [Democratic Republic of Congo] in particular, people were using the word pillage to refer to what was happening economically to the country but everyone was using it as a metaphor - nobody was using it as a technical legal term. Lawyers are sometimes very literal, so the thought was, well, what actually is the crime of pillage? So we looked and found this notion of receiving stolen goods as a type of pillage which seems to have common currency within the jurisprudence, certainly after the World War two period.'

While it is too early to gauge whether the 'pillage theory' will penetrate into mainstream prosecutorial culture, Hurwitz says the launch of the report last year led to discussions with a number of authorities in 'six or so' jurisdictions and he is aware of two or three places where the theory is being pursued actively. 'We are in an unfortunate situation with the global economy. Prosecutorial agencies are having budget cutbacks meaning there are disincentives for a prosecutor to pursue a new and risky approach to litigation taking on what are probably politically controversial and deep pocketed defendants.'

Even so, 'the UN peacekeeping missions in [Liberia and the DRC] cost of hundreds of millions,' according to Patrick Alley. 'If it had been impossible to launder those natural resources onto the market, it is hard to quantify how much but the impact would have been far less. I would argue that in a sense the international community is subsidising business operation in conflict zones.'

CNN

Monday, 23 April 2012

War crimes verdict expected for former Liberia leader

The first African ruler to appear before an international war crimes tribunal is expected to hear a verdict in his trial on Thursday.

Charles Taylor, who was president of Liberia from 1997 to 2003, is accused of arming rebels and fueling 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.

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.

Irish Times
Saturday, 21 April 2012

Next week you need to know about . . . the trial of Charles Taylor



SEVEN DAYS: While Uganda's Joseph Kony is generating all the African-warlord headlines these days, the protracted trial of the former president of Liberia Charles Taylor (pictured) for war crimes is due to close with a judgment to be announced next Thursday.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) was set up under the auspices of the UN in 2002 to prosecute those most responsible for the brutal violence suffered in the west African country during its bloody conflict. Taylor was indicted in 2003, when he was still president, for crimes including murder, rape, sexual slavery and recruiting child soldiers, and he was captured in Nigeria in 2006. The trial wasn't related to crimes he committed while leading the rebel group that unseated his predecessor.

The three-year trial has been held at The Hague in the Netherlands, and generated most publicity back in August 2010 when Naomi Campbell testified about receiving uncut diamonds from Taylor at a party in Nelson Mandela's house in 1997. At the time of the party, Taylor was accredited by the UN as a peacemaker; the prosecution alleges he used this position to influence the conflict for his own ends.

It has been 13 months since the final testimony and speeches, and if Taylor is convicted he faces a lengthy prison sentence, most likely in the UK.

Davin O'Dwyer

Swit Salone

Friday, April 20, 2012

http://www.switsalone.com/15427_sierra-leone-ex-child-soldier-wants-guilty-verdict-in-taylors-trial/

Sierra Leone ex-child soldier wants guilty verdict in Taylor trial

Mustapha Dumbuya



Ishmeal Beah, UN Goodwill Ambassador and Author

As Sierra Leone and the rest of the world anxiously await the April 26 verdict of Charles Taylor's trial in The Hague, former child soldier and now UNICEF goodwill ambassador Ishmeal Beah says a guilty verdict would be a great victory for peace and stability in West Africa. But Beah also adds that the true threat to peace is high youth unemployment.



Beah speaking at Fouray Bay College

“It will be a big blow to everyone in Sierra Leone and the rest of West Africa, if Charles Taylor is acquitted in the Hague,” said Beah, author of the book *A Long Way Gone; Memoirs of a Boy Soldier*, at a public lecture at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

“I was opposed to the idea of trying Taylor outside of West Africa,” he said.

“I would have wanted to see it done in here because trying Taylor in The Hague is like a dissociative justice, it is too far away from the people affected.”

Beah added that most people are unaware of the ongoing trial. To have tried Taylor in West Africa would have given the true victims the opportunity to see justice served and it would have also served as a precedent to those people who want to use war as a means to gain power.

As one of West Africa’s strongmen, it would have been a good to have found Taylor guilty within the sub region to have sent a message to all other powerful men who commit atrocities against their people – including recruiting child soldiers – and go with impunity.

Beah says that as much as he feels Taylor is responsible for the atrocities committed in the Sierra Leone’s war, he also puts the blame on the then political structure of the country.

“If I had to give blame for why the war started in Sierra Leone, I will put it on the poor political structure at the time”. He continued that people who were in the country that experienced the war and find themselves now in authority or governance should learn from the mistakes of the past and work hard not to repeat the ugly things that provoked the war.

He says the RUF, West Side Boys among others were all a by product of a rotten political system in the country and that gave rise to massive corruption. Beah said the war began in Sierra Leone largely because there were already so many disgruntled youth in the country to be co-opted. He says he hopes the government and other stakeholders will take care of the youth by meaningfully engaging them so as to divert their minds from trouble.

In Sierra Leone youth is defined as persons between the ages of 15-35 and in 2004, they accounted for 35 percent of the national population. However, in most other countries, youths become adults after age 24. Sierra Leone redefined “youth” to account for the 10 years of educational discontinuity brought on by the war. According to 2008 data from the Ministry of Labor, the nation’s youth unemployment is 46 percent. A number that many have argued puts the nation’s peace process at risk.

“One of my fears is the large number of unemployed young people roaming the streets. More so as the country moves towards the November 2012 polls,” he said.

This concern was also reechoed by Dr. Alfred Jarrett, Head of the Sociology and Social Work Department of Fourah Bay College University of Sierra Leone.

“The rehabilitation and reintegration process of former child soldiers in Sierra Leone was an abysmal failure” said Dr. Jarrett.

Taylor is accused of crimes committed by rebels in Sierra Leone during the country’s eleven years civil war. The war in Sierra Leone officially ended in January 2002, but throughout his trial, the former Liberian leader has maintained his innocence.

By Mustapha Dumbuya in Freetown