

**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:

Friday, 10 August 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Red Cross Society Briefs Parliament

The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) and the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) yesterday, in dual slide presentations, briefed Parliamentarians about the essence of repealing the 1962 Act of Parliament which brought the SLRCS into being.

By Sheku Lamin Turay



Members of the High Table during the Briefings

The briefing, which took place during a pre-legislative briefings in Committee Room 1 in the House of Parliament, also reported on the domestication of International Humanitarian Law within the laws of Sierra Leone to meet international best practices.

According to the ICRC's Head of Delegation, the repeal of the 1962 Act of Parliament was championed by the minister of social welfare, gender and children's affairs who was present during the briefings to make way for the new bill, which is in tandem with international standards relating to the laws of armed conflict.

The group noted that the domestication of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and its Additional Protocols into the laws of Sierra Leone was the brain-child of the National Committee on IHL to meet internationally acclaimed standards.

ICRC's Communications Coordinator defined IHL as a branch of public international law which regulates relations between and among States such as restricting the methods of warfare,

protection of civilians among others.

Secretary General of SLRCS, Emmanuel Tommy, recalled Henry Dunant's role in the formation of the Red Cross Society, 1859 Solferino's incidence to 1863, and described it as an auxiliary public body in the country, which assists in armed conflict, other situations of violence, and during periods of national disasters.

He said the enactment of the new bill will further re-enforce the SLRCS as the only national body that is independent and assists public authorities in humanitarian field, and encouraged Members during legislation to take into consideration tax exemption for SLRCS, and to create a government subvention/budget line for their operations, which is heavily donor dependent.

Chairman of the Pre-legislative briefings, Ibrahim Bundu, a member of SLRCS Port Loko Branch, underscored the essence of the discourse, which according to him has put Members on a better footing to contribute to the debates when the bill will be piloted in Parliament for enactment into law.

UN chief urges sanctions on Mali rebels

Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary-general, has called for sanctions against fighters who have taken over northern Mali.

The UN chief asked the Security Council on Wednesday to consider financial and travel sanctions against rebels and fighters linked to radical Islamist groups, including several who are allied with al-Qaeda.

Ban said that the 15-member council should "give serious consideration to the imposition of targeted travel and financial sanctions against individuals or groups in Mali engaged in terrorist, religious extremist or criminal activities".

He also termed the destruction of historically significant shrines in Timbuktu by Ansar Dine, an al-Qaeda-linked group, a "callous" act.

A March 22 military coup in the West African country set off a chain of events which led to Tuareg rebels and Ansar Dine taking over most of northern Mali.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) refused to recognise the new coup leader and forced him to cede power to a transitional government.

It has now proposed sending an intervention force to Mali to help the transitional government, and has asked for UN backing.

The UN chief told the meeting that Djibril Bassole, Burkina Faso's foreign minister and an ECOWAS mediator, met with leaders of Ansar Dine in Mali on Tuesday "and requested that they cut ties to terrorist movements before any peace talk could begin".

He added that "no meaningful

dialogue has commenced between the government of Mali and any of the groups in the north".

Ban also warned of a growing humanitarian crisis in Mali, where the UN says that over 250,000 people have fled and 174,000 have been internally displaced since the coup.

An ECOWAS envoy, meanwhile, said that northern Mali was in danger of becoming a safe haven for "terrorist groups" unless the international community intervened.

"The objective of the terrorist groups and transnational organised criminals is clear: It is to create a safe haven and a coordinating centre in the north of Mali for continental terrorist networks," Salamatu Hussaini Suleiman, ECOWAS commissioner for political affairs, told the UNSC meeting in New York. Suleiman named al-Qaeda in the

Islamic Maghreb (AQMI), the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), the Nigerian radical group Boko Haram and the Somali extremist group al-Shabab as being among those seeking a base in northern Mali.

"If that objective is realised no country in Africa or outside the continent will be safe," Suleiman warned the Security Council.

"We are running out of time in Mali. Every day that we dither and postpone concrete action offers the terrorists and criminal networks yet another opportunity to consolidate, another opportunity to commit atrocious war crimes," she said, renewing calls for UN backing for an intervention force.

The Security Council has said it is ready to approve an African force in Mali but first the Mali government must say it wants the force.

African Arguments

Thursday, 9 August 2012

Analysis

Burkina Faso: Compaoré's Continuing Will to Power

By Michael Keating and Coulibaly Nadoun,

One of the remarkable facts of history that re-emerged during the trial of Charles Taylor was the key role that Burkinabé President Blaise Compaoré played in the bloody wars of Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 1990s.

When Taylor first landed in Burkina Faso, prior to his invasion of Liberia in 1989, Compaoré was a disgruntled army officer seeking to oust from power his one-time friend turned bitter rival, the populist President Thomas Sankara.

Although unproven, some rumours suggest that it was a member of Taylor's own clique who killed Sankara in order to bring Compaoré to the presidency and gain his support for the upcoming campaign in Liberia. It has also been suggested that it was Compaoré who introduced Taylor to the late Libyan leader Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, from whom Taylor received weapons and logistical support in exchange for future profits from the expected plundering of Liberia's diamond and timber trade.

Furthermore, according to Richard Moncrieff then of the International Crisis Group (now the FCO), "Burkina Faso is landlocked and poor so he [Compaoré] had an eye for making money...by diamonds and so on." The match with Taylor and his associates was, by all accounts, a win-win for everyone involved, except the millions who suffered the decade of violence that followed.

In power for almost twenty-five years, Compaoré at 61 is an old man of African politics. Re-elected several times in contests that were barely legitimate and hardly transparent, it is possible that he will retire from politics when his current term ends in 2015. His political supporters are however encouraging him to stay on through a revision of the term-limit statutes of the Burkinabé constitution. Looking elsewhere around the world where such statute fidgetings have taken place it is likely that many Burkinabé who feel Beau Blaise (as he is known) has been in power long enough will take to the streets in protest if he announces he wants to stay on. It's anyone's call how the army will react.

Despite criticism of his electoral tactics, there are certain facts about Burkina Faso that are hard to dispute. Namely, it is peaceful and developing faster than some of its neighbours (Mali and Niger, for example). However, as recently as 2011 the country was rocked by student protests and a near mutiny by the army. The culprit being a mixture of corruption, high prices and a political culture of impunity - all familiar motivators of civil unrest in developing countries.

Since the riots, the government has taken steps to undermine discontent by raising wages of civil servants and subsidizing food prices for the population at large. In an effort to hedge his bets on the future, Compaoré also pushed through legislation granting amnesty from prosecution for all former heads of state. Although actions like these raise eyebrows in foreign capitals, there is also no doubt that Compaoré's personal involvement in resolving the Ivorian crisis, and his attempts at mediation in Mali, are much appreciated.

In some sense, the sheer length of his term in office has conferred legitimacy on Compaoré, even though a critical evaluation of his actions might suggest otherwise. The poverty needle for the majority of citizens has not budged over the decades of his rule. Many critical social institutions, most importantly the

universities, are languishing for lack of government support. Foreign investors outside the natural resource sector are few and far between. Educated young people are looking to emigrate abroad.

Nevertheless, the feeling one gets in Ouagadougou is different from neighbouring capitals. The roads are wide and well maintained and even have a special lane for scooters, which makes driving reasonable and less like an anarchic video game. The media seems to be diverse, robust and relatively free, although it is unlikely that severe criticism of Compaoré would be tolerated.

The question is whether these social benefits are sufficient to keep Burkina Faso stable should Compaoré go, and perhaps more importantly, should he stay. His handling of the chaos of 2011 suggests a deft touch when it comes to satisfying all of the country's political and social constituencies. However, with a measure of social peace at hand, several local observers note that real political reform has regressed in recent months making further disturbances very likely. Local political opponents suggest that Blaise's plunge into international diplomacy is simply a tactic to divert attention away from domestic problems. He is assisted in this campaign to win international approval by his wife Chantal, who has taken a laudable role in the fight against female genital mutilation (FGM).

To call Blaise Compaoré a benign dictator seems a fair description, even if he claims legitimacy through contested elections. Because Burkina Faso has generally lacked geopolitical significance, foreign powers - especially former colonial master France - have turned a blind eye on the country's democratic deficits. The murder of Thomas Sankara and the ultra-violence of the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia are a distant memory as the region faces new challenges in the form of radical Islam, climate change, endemic poverty and potential famine.

If Compaoré manages to retain power after 2015, if he becomes a key player in cementing the peace in Cote d'Ivoire and engineering one in Mali and if he fosters further development in Burkina Faso then he may never need to invoke his amnesty clause in the constitution. He will certainly never achieve the stature of a Mandela, but he can make a positive mark on the history of West Africa in the 21st Century. If, however, the energy of the Arab spring heads south and leaders like Compaoré are forced to yield to the legitimate democratic aspirations of the people then, like Mubarak, Assad and his old friend Qhadafi he may find himself on the wrong end of a very demanding stick.

Why leaders feel they must retain power beyond what their constitution calls for is one of the perennial issues in politics. We can chalk it up to narcissism, to the need to maintain patronage networks, to a fear of prosecution, or simply to the will to power - perhaps the most potent stimulant of all.

Burkina Faso has much to be proud of as a society, but it also has a long way to go in providing a decent life for the majority of its citizens. President Compaoré still has time in his political life to lead by example and provide a blueprint for development for the region. Whether his past demons and his desire to dominate the limelight will let him is another matter.

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