

**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:

Thursday, 9 August 2012

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

International News

MTN's Liberia Partner: Collusion Claims / <i>Fin24.com</i>	Pages 3-4
MTN Liberia Linked With Convicted Warlord, Charles Taylor / <i>Ventures Africa.com</i>	Page 5
MTN's Liberian Unit Caught up in Charles Taylor Link Claim / <i>Telegeography.com</i>	Page 6
Jewel Howard Taylor's Anti-gay Bill Could Reopen Old Wounds / <i>Liberian Dialogue</i>	Pages 7-8

Fin24.com

Sunday, 5 August 2012

<http://www.fin24.com/Opinion/Columnists/MTNs-Liberia-partner-faces-collusion-charges-20120805>

MTN's Liberia partner: Collusion claims

Cape Town - Telecommunications giant MTN is caught up in allegations that its joint venture partner in Liberia is a financial vehicle for convicted warlord Charles Taylor's wealth.

Benoni Urey, the chairperson of MTN's partner in Liberian telecommunications company Lonestar Cell MTN, is named in the UN as an accomplice of war criminal and former Liberian president Taylor.

Last week the UN Security Council announced the delisting of a number of former Taylor allies from its assets-freeze and travel-ban list.

The UN, however, did not take Urey's name off the list.

He is named in a report on Liberia compiled by a UN panel of experts, which looked into a range of human rights violations in the 14-year civil war, famed for the conscription of thousands of child soldiers, that -ravaged Liberia.

The men at the centre of this new Liberian saga are Emmanuel Shaw and Benoni Urey, shareholders and partners in PLC Investment Limited, a company that has a 40% stake in Lonestar Cell MTN.

The UN has withdrawn its travel ban and asset freeze on Shaw.

Lonestar Cell MTN told City Press that the travel bans had been in place for several years and these did not -affect MTN's relationship with these sanctioned individuals.

The statement said such bans did not affect Lonestar Cell MTN.

PLC owns 40% of Lonestar Cell MTN, while 60% of the company is held by MTN Group through its -Dubai-based subsidiary, Investcom.

According to the New York Times, PLC has been asked by the UN to submit its shareholding structure and open its books to the UN investigators on suspicion that the company is a financial lifeline for Taylor.

It is reported that PLC has continuously refused to provide the UN with the requested documents.

The UN panel of experts recently reported that Taylor's ownership of PLC could be 40% – and that in this way Taylor indirectly has a stake in Lonestar Cell MTN.

The company has been operating in Liberia for 10 years. It has 48% market share and is the leading -cellular phone network in Liberia.

Market penetration in the country stands at an estimated 45%, which means there is room for further growth for Lonestar Cell MTN.

Liberia is the second-lowest revenue contributor to MTN's balance sheet in the lucrative West African region, led by MTN Nigeria and MTN Ghana.

Urey and his political profile have been of concern to MTN Group Limited [JSE:MTN].

MTN's chief risk and governance executive, former South African -auditor-general Shauket Fakie, and Ahmad Farroukh, MTN's -vice-president for West, East and Central Africa wrote a letter of concern to him last year.

In the letter, dated November 16 2011, they wrote: "We would like to express our concern on recent developments which are causing fundamental reputational damage to Lonestar Communications Corporation, or Lonestar Company.

"All directors of Lonestar have a -fiduciary duty to act in the interests of the company (and accordingly not cause reputational damage to the company)."

The letter points to Urey's political involvement as the major concern.

It says that MTN recognises Urey's "right to freedom of political association . . . However, there are limitations to the manner in which that right can be exercised."

MTN denies media reports from Monrovia that the company is -involved in attempts to buy Urey out of the company.

MTN spokesperson Xolisa Vapi said: "To our knowledge, MTN is not under scrutiny concerning its partnership with Lonestar."

However, Vapi confirmed that Urey was chairman of Lonestar Cell MTN and that Shaw was a director of the Monrovia-based company.

Laurence Bropleh, head of communications at Lonestar in Monrovia, told City Press that the letter "has no current-day relevance".

Ventures Africa.com

Monday, 6 August 2012

<http://www.ventures-africa.com/2012/08/mtn-liberia-linked-with-convicted-warlord-charles-taylor/>

MTN Liberia Linked With Convicted Warlord, Charles Taylor

VENTURES AFRICA – Africa’s leading telecommunications provider, MTN Group is embroiled in a controversy surrounding its Liberian subsidiary, MTN Liberia (trading under the Lonestar Cell brand) as questions has been raised concerning convicted Liberian warlord Charles Taylor interests in the telecommunications company.

According to unconfirmed newspaper report from City Press, MTN Liberia’s chairperson Benoni Urey has been named by the United Nations (UN) as an accomplice of the former Liberian president and war criminal Talyor.

Urey, an MTN Liberia official, has long been connected to Taylor, and allegations has been made that MTN Liberia might be a financial vehicle for convicted warlord.

A report by TeleGeography indicate that the UN Security Council had delisted a number of former Taylor associates from its assets-freeze and travel-ban list last week, but did not strike off Urey’s name from the list.

Furthermore, the UN has withdrawn its travel ban and asset freeze on Emmanuel Shaw, Urey’s shareholder and partner in PLC Investment Limited which owns a 40 percent stake in MTN Liberia, but not for Urey.

According to the spokesperson for the company, the bans have been in place for several years and do not materially affect the carrier, City Press reported.

PLC Investment has been asked to submit its shareholding structure and open up its books to UN investigators amid suspicions that MTN Liberia, 60 percent owned by MTN Group’s Dubai-based subsidiary, Investcom, is in some way providing financial support to Taylor.

This gives credence to claims by UN officials that the war criminal may own 40 percent of PLC, giving him an indirect link to Lonestar Cell, Liberia’s leading mobile operator by subscribers.

However, MTN has denied media reports from Monrovia that the company is -involved in attempts to buy Urey out of the company; according to MTN spokesperson Xolisa Vapi, “MTN is not under scrutiny concerning its partnership with Lonestar.”

Vapi also confirmed that Urey was chairman of Lonestar Cell MTN and that Shaw was a director of the Monrovia-based company.

Telegeography.com

Monday, 6 August 2012

<http://www.telegeography.com/products/commsupdate/articles/2012/08/06/mtns-liberian-unit-caught-up-in-charles-taylor-link-claim/>

MTN's Liberian unit caught up in Charles Taylor link claim

South Africa-based regional mobile operator MTN Group's Liberian subsidiary, MTN Liberia (trading under the Lonestar Cell brand), has become embroiled in allegations that it may be a financial vehicle for convicted warlord Charles Taylor. An unconfirmed newspaper report from City Press writes that MTN Liberia's chairperson Benoni Urey has been named by the United Nations (UN) as an accomplice of the former Liberian president and war criminal Talyor. Last week the UN Security Council delisted a number of former Taylor associates from its so-called 'assets-freeze' and 'travel-ban list', but did not strike off Urey's name from the list. The MTN Liberia official's name remains in a UN-compiled report into human rights violations in the 14-year civil war.

The UN has withdrawn its travel ban and asset freeze on Emmanuel Shaw, Urey's shareholder and partner in PLC Investment Limited which owns a 40% stake in MTN Liberia, but crucially, not for Urey. A spokesperson for the cellco told City Press that the bans have been in place for several years and do not materially affect the carrier. The remaining 60% of MTN Liberia is owned by MTN Group through its Dubai-based subsidiary, Investcom. It is understood that PLC Investment has been asked to submit its shareholder structure and open up its books to UN investigators amid suspicions that MTN Liberia is in some way providing financial support to Taylor. UN officials believe the war criminal may own 40% of PLC, giving him an indirect link to Lonestar Cell, Liberia's leading mobile operator by subscribers.

Liberian Dialogue

Wednesday, 8 August 2012

<http://theliberiandialogue.org/2012/08/08/jewel-howard-taylors-anti-gay-bill-could-reopen-old-wounds/>

Jewel Howard Taylor's anti-gay bill could reopen old wounds

By Tewroh-Wehtoe Sungbeh

The lady who once stood by her man in reticence as he carried out one of the most vicious campaigns of human rights abuse in the history of both Liberia and Sierra Leone, is now in the forefront of carrying out her own vicious crusade against gay rights in Liberia.

Jewel Howard Taylor's campaign to criminalize gay marriage got a boost in the Liberian senate recently, when that body did just that by amending the constitution to prohibit marriage between gay couples.



The Liberian people experienced these same violations of their rights years ago when Charles Taylor, who was then married to Jewel, did not only imposed his violent brand of leadership on them; but also held them hostage until they elected him president.

As a witness to the most despicable and fatal decisions ever made in the history of Liberia during her husband's stint as both a rebel leader and President of Liberia, Jewel Howard Taylor had a chance in her new life to change the tone of the national debate from being divisive to embracing and unifying the Liberian people.

She did not. Instead, she picked a socially and culturally polarizing issue that surely divided Liberians along ethnic and religious lines.

Responding to the overwhelming support her bill got from her colleagues, Ms. Taylor added, "My bill seeks to ensure that people of the same sex under our law should not be allowed to get married. During a previous debate on the same issue, the Senator reportedly suggested making homosexuality a first-degree felony punishable up to a 10-year prison sentence.

It is so true that this issue is not a popular one in Liberia. President Sirleaf, keenly aware of its unpopularity played it skillfully to score points, even as it undermines her credibility as a Nobel laureate who jointly won her peace prize for fighting non-violently for women's rights, and also for participating in peace-building work.

President Sirleaf danced her way around the issue gingerly, was profoundly vague in her public statement, did not show leadership, but added: "We like ourselves the way we are. We've got certain traditional values in our society we would like to preserve."

However, when pressure began to pour in from Liberia's international friends regarding her government's position about this sensitive issue, the Liberian leader promised through her spokesman that she would veto the bill if it made it to her desk.

Sadly, the president did not veto the bill, and this is happening at a time when Liberians are returning home to uncertainty in a crumbling nation far from embracing all Liberians as human beings. This is also happening at a time when insensitivity, intolerance and the obvious lack of law and order is threatening to destroy the fragile peace the Liberian people has ever enjoyed since the coming of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

For Jewel Howard Taylor, the idea of Liberians living happily in peace and prosperity in their own country is not a concern in this extremely fragile post-war era, but a time to legislate how those Liberians should live their lives, and with whom they share their precious time.

As an elected official, the former wife of Charles believes it is her business to legislate morality in a dysfunctional nation fraught with underdevelopment, abject poverty, rampant corruption, and an ineffective legislative branch of government of which she's a vocal and visible member.

As First Lady of Liberia, however, Jewel Howard Taylor did not make her name as a supporter and spokesperson of charitable causes that make a difference in the lives of Liberians. She did not spearhead a national campaign (as she is now doing against gay rights) to support life and death causes such as mental health projects, back to school campaigns, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, AIDS, hunger, etc, etc.

She did not even define her ceremonial role as First Lady in terms of being a conscience of a broken people during a time of anxiety and uncertainty, but looked the other way and tacked along opportunistically as an unprincipled partner who conveniently kept a bogus marriage with a criminal alive, even as innocent Liberians painfully beg the Taylor clan to spare their lives.

With Charles put away for the rest of his life in a European jail (where he rightfully belong) for human rights violations, Jewel, not wanting to be left out of the political limelight cleverly ran for the Liberian Senate representing the people of Bong County.

That political move made Jewel Howard Taylor a proud member of the spineless Liberian legislative branch of government, and catapulted her into the national spotlight at a time when another female, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, became a trailblazing political leader in that troubled country.

It is one thing to be an ambitious former wife of a warlord-turned president, whose loyalty and devotion to her spouse kept her mum on burning national issues during her years in the Executive Mansion, and another to be a member of the Liberian Senate.

Perhaps Jewel Howard Taylor has forgotten that there is a sense of responsibility that comes with being a member of the Liberian senate. Being respectful, sensitive, and tolerant of individual differences and views, and contributing to the national debate in both a balanced and compassionate way, are key elements of being a responsible leader.

With a deadly civil war still etched in the minds of Liberians, and the massive reasons why a war was fought in the first place are staring at us daily are enough reasons to stay clear of those divisive social issues that could create tension, and does not put food on the tables of Liberians.

Instead of legislating homosexuality, Jewel Howard Taylor and her colleagues should concentrate on creating jobs, and ought to pass a bill that grants dual citizenship to Liberians living abroad.

Those Senators and Representatives should work on changing the current term limits of their own members of the House of Representatives and Senate from what it is now to a sensible term limit, pass a bill that makes the National Elections Commission independent and neutral, make the imperial presidency accountable to the Liberian people, pass a sensible bill that coordinates commercial transportation in the greater Monrovia area, and then replace Amos Sawyer's recent decentralization report with a sensible one that genuinely empowers Superintendents, who shouldn't be macromanaged by the President of Liberia and the Minister of Internal Affairs.

Jewel Howard Taylor's anti-gay bill is a bad bill. It is an irresponsible bill that could reopen old wounds and threatens Liberia's peace, and distinction as a warm and friendly place to travel.