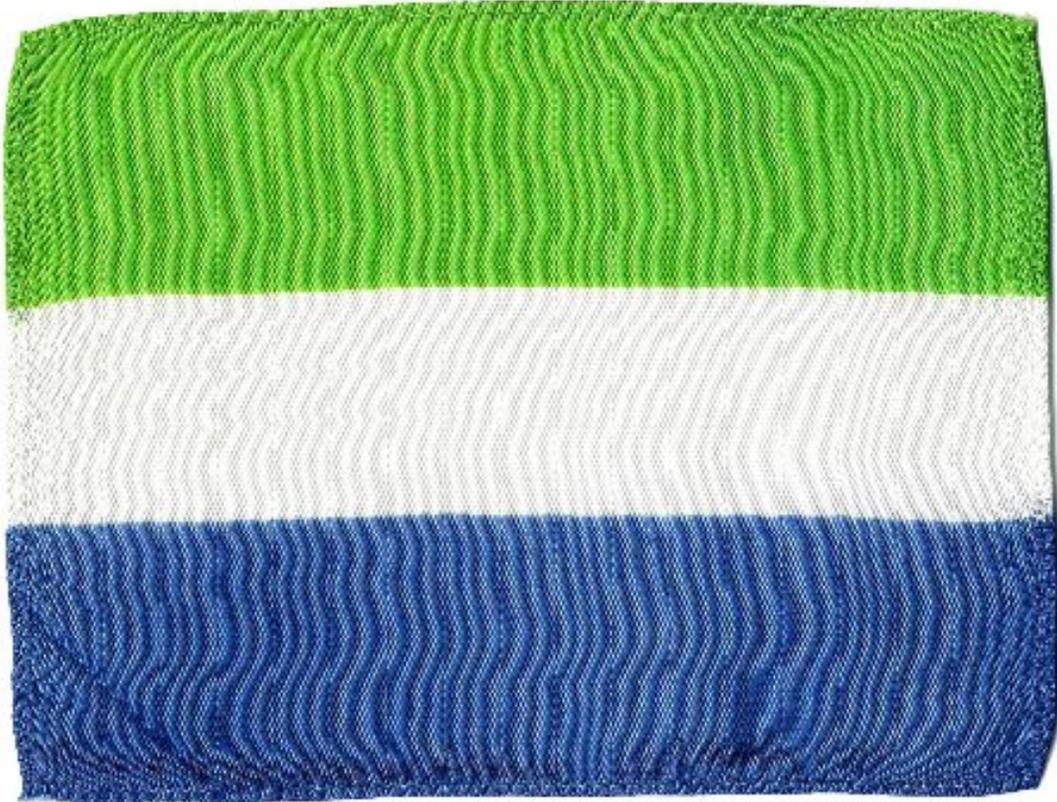


**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



The Sierra Leone flag which was carried to the moon aboard Apollo 15 in 1971
by Command Module Pilot Alfred Worden.

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, 16 November 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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The New Dawn (Liberia)

Thursday, 15 November 2012

Taylor's Verdict is Next September



Judges at the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone say, they have set September 2013 as a timeline to hand down their verdict in the Taylor's appeal trial.

"The judges envision that the appeal judgment will come next September, not October or November," the Special Court's Chief of Outreach and Public Affairs Mr. Peter C. Andersen said in an email to this paper's editor in reaction to an article attributed to Taylor's new lead Defense Counsel, Morris A. Anyah last Friday, November 9.

"While timelines have been known to change to reflect what is going on in the courtroom, at this point we have not been informed of any and this is the official word from the judges," Andersen said.

He said the judges set the Taylor appeal timeline at their plenary last May 30, and it has not changed, adding that oral arguments on the appeals submissions, if they are deemed necessary, will be in December, and they have been so scheduled for a long time.

Taylor was found guilty of all 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, with the modes of liability (the degree of his involvement) being planning (arguably the more serious of the two) and of aiding and abetting.

The prosecution had argued that he should be found guilty on the more serious modes of command responsibility and/or engaging in a joint criminal enterprise. But Taylor now 65, has insisted on his innocence.

Lawyers representing ex-President Charles Taylor say they identified 45 legal errors, but according to Mr. Andersen, they (Taylor's lawyers) have since dropped three, remaining 42.

Deutsche Welle

Thursday, 15 November 2012

Wounds of war heal slowly in Sierra Leone



Sierra Leone goes to the polls on November 17 and is making a recovery ten years after the civil war. But former child soldiers still suffer from trauma and their surviving victims are still waiting for compensation.

With his hands Mahmoud Sesay (not his real name) can accomplish quite a lot. He is changing the tires of the white van, which stands outside the workshop. He can also change the oil and check the engine.

But he has also used his hands for far less innocuous tasks, such as cutting off a man's head with a machete.

Mahmoud Sesay is one of some ten thousand former child soldiers in Sierra Leone. Somehow it is difficult to equate the child soldier with the young man in blue overalls, now in his early 20s, standing next to fellow trainee auto mechanics at the MADAM garage. MADAM, a local NGO in the Makeni township in the north of the country, trains young men and women to become auto mechanics and cooks. The German relief organization Brot für die Welt (Bread for the world) supports the program. But Mahmoud Sesay does not like to talk about his past in front of his colleagues. We leave the workshop.



Many young people in Sierra Leone do not have the opportunity to do job training.

Killing their own families

"I was living with my aunt in Tonkolili district, "recalls Mahmoud Sesay. Rebels abducted them from the village, they gave the boys drugs and forced them to join them. Shortly afterwards, he took the rebels back to his village. His uncle and several other relatives were taken prisoner. "My commander ordered me to kill the prisoners. I couldn't do it. So he took a knife, held it to the back my of neck and cut into the skin," says Mahmoud. "I was sad because my uncle, my brothers and family were among the prisoners. My commander yelled at me and threatened to kill me if I didn't carry out his orders. I shot them with my rifle, while weeping bitterly"

Almost 10,000 children were abducted by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and sent into battle during the 1991-2002 civil war. The RUF had the backing of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor. With RUF assistance, Taylor wanted to take control of Sierra Leone's diamond mines. An international tribunal recently sentenced Taylor o life imprisonment. RUF leader Foday Sankoh, a former army officer, died of a stroke in 1993. But Mahmoud Sesay and thousands of other former child soldiers are still left grappling with the trauma of war.



Former Liberian president Taylor was sentenced to 50 years for helping rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone

No hope of reconciliation

But Mahmoud Sesay is faring better than most. He heard about the MADAM training program and applied for an apprenticeship. "If anyone asked me to join a rebel group now, I would say no. I have now learnt that I can make it in life anywhere," he says, smiling for the first time.

Many former soldiers have not had any sort of training or further education. They work as taxi drivers or do casual labor. Others go begging for a living.

This marginalization of so many ex-combatants in Sierra Leonean society remains an unresolved problem ten years after the war. In 2004, the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission called for a nationwide dialogue. Taking a cue from the end of apartheid in South Africa, perpetrators and victims were to have entered into dialogue. But this never happened. For ex-combatants like Mahmoud Sesay, it means he has been forced into the role of an outsider. To this day, he does not dare to return to his village - for fear of retribution. His father doesn't want to have anything to do with him. By chance the two in Makeni after the war. "He had nothing to eat and I brought him food. He refused my gift and told me that I am no longer his son," Sesay said, fighting back tears.

Daily struggle for victims

The former victims of child soldiers live just around the corner, a few hundred meters from the MADAM workshop, at the 'amputee camp'. Government and aid agencies built such houses throughout the country after the war so that Sierra Leone's 27,000 amputees have somewhere to live. The neighborhood stands out because the one-storey houses are all painted bright yellow. Children play between the huts, the heat has driven the older residents to the porches and under the trees

In a small town like Makeni, you can meet ex-combatants and the wounded every day. "I know that there are former rebels everywhere in Sierra Leone. But I do not know if they are the ones who did this to me. I leave it to God to defend me," says Adama Koroma. She runs a small shop in the camp. Not thinking of revenge, even if no former RUF fighters ever stood trial. "One must also forgive."



Victims like Adama Koroma still have no compensation.

Empty promises instead of compensation

For 14 years Adama Koroma has been living without her left forearm. Rebels attacked her village one night and chopped it off. With the bleeding stump she dragged herself three miles to the nearest road. "There I met a patrol of Nigerian soldiers who brought me to Freetown." Only in the capital, could doctors treat her arm. Nearly 27,000 people lost their hands or limbs during the war. There is lack of sympathy for the victims of the war. In 2004, two years after the war, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended compensation for war veterans. The program would have cost only ten million euros. However, the government authority responsible lacked the money.

Yet during the election campaign the two major parties have focusing on war veterans' issues. The APC ruling party has pledged to pay them monthly pensions if they are returned to power. Adama Koroma does not believe such promises. She runs a small shop where she sells rice, bananas and other vegetables. She has learnt to live without her left forearm. If a customer wants to buy some rice, she holds the empty container with her right hand and skillfully pushes the rice into it with the stump of her left arm.

Education: the best means to prevent war

There is one thought that keeps her going. "I want my children and the young people in this country to get a good education. That's the best way of preventing them from starting another war."

Associate Press

Wednesday, 14 November 2012

As international court gets busier, prosecutor pleads with nations not to cut its budget

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor warned Wednesday that cutting her office's funding would hurt its efficiency, as the court's governing body began hammering out the 2013 budget for the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal.

Fatou Bensouda's warning comes as the 10-year-old court is getting busier by the year, but also at a time that governments which fund it are slashing their own budgets due to economic crises.

Community banks say they may be pushed out of residential mortgage market if new rules are put in place.

The 121-nation Assembly of States Parties should not "be blinded by short-term apparent savings that result in long term losses and greater inefficiencies," Bensouda insisted.

The assembly, made up of the court's member states, is being asked to approve a total 2013 budget of just over €18 million (\$150 million), a rise of nearly 9 percent over the 2012 amount. Its meeting lasts into next week and negotiations on the budget are expected to be tough.

Bensouda's prosecution office wants €28.7 million (\$36.4 million), an increase of 3.4 percent from this year.

Prosecutors are currently investigating and pursuing war crimes cases in nations including Congo, Sudan, Libya, Uganda, Ivory Coast and Kenya and have preliminary investigations underway in countries including Afghanistan and Colombia.

Bensouda also urged the court's member states to do more to arrest indicted suspects, among them Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, the notorious Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony, and a rebel Congolese general accused of widespread atrocities.

Bensouda said that "the promise of ending impunity" will remain a dream unless the court's member states do more "to ensure the arrest and surrender of suspects is made a priority of the political agenda of all States Parties."

Al-Bashir, whose country is not a member of the court, has travelled extensively since he was indicted by the court first in 2009 and again in 2010 for crimes including genocide and extermination in Sudan's Darfur region,

The assembly's president, Tiina Intelmann, said on the eve of the meeting that member states would discuss cooperation not only on arresting suspects but also freezing and confiscating their assets.

The meeting, which ends Nov. 22, also will elect a new deputy prosecutor from a short list of three candidates from Canada, Australia and Finland.

The New Republic (Liberia)

Wednesday, 14 November 2012

Liberia Warned - Implement TRC's Report and Recommendation Now to Ensure Peace

The government of Liberia is once again being called to attention and put on notice to ensure the implementation of the recommendations of the report of the disbanded Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) submitted about three years ago but are yet to be accorded any concrete and enviable consideration.

Instead of adhering to the outcome of the TRC work which spanned over four to five years and witnessed the commitment of enormous resources, both in human, material and financial capitals, Liberian officials, especially those indicted for various incompatible actions are only bent on brandishing bigotry, defiance and threats.

But with the seeming tickling of time and considering the importance of the TRC report to the sustenance of peace and real security, an advocacy organization has once again raised the red flag, urging the government of one-time rights and social advocate, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to rethink their show of indifference and give the recommendations the attention so deserved.

The Coalition of Liberian civil society organizations which comprises of the National Civil Society Council of Liberia (NCSCCL) and the Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG), said it was very essential and high time that the recommendations are executed to the fullest.

In the view of group apart from the importance of the TRC report to the reform process Liberia yearns for, it would ensure and assure peace amongst Liberians.

Chairman of the Transitional Justice Working Group, James Yarsiah who spoke on behalf of the organization called on the government to do what could be seen as unusual by apologizing to Liberians for not being able to provide the needed protection.

"We in the council want the government to apologize that there was a war and we were unable to protect you rather left you vulnerable to the mercy of warring factions and war-lords," he said but the fact is that it was not under the aegis of this government that Liberia went to war.

Besides calls for the unconditional implementations of the TRC report of which reconciliation is topical, he said there was for government to begin memorial projects for counties where people were massacred as a way of memorializing the dead ones.

The establishment of the TRC was agreed in 2003 by various political parties and warring faction leaders during the Peace Accord in Accra, Ghana with the aim of detailing some historical accounts of the war, how and why it came into being, what roles warring factions and individual Liberians played.

More besides, it was seen as a way of helping to deal with some of the mistrusts, misconception and innuendos that characterized the pre and post war era, which were seen as hotspots for the brewing of conflict.

Liberians opted for the establishment of the South-Africa style truth and reconciliation commission as opposed to the establishment of a war crime court to prosecute the perpetrators of the war.

The TRC ended its work over three years ago with a number of recommendations including the lustration of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for thirty years in political activities as well as the prosecution of individuals accused of bearing the greatest responsibilities of war crimes and crimes against.

All heads of warring factions and some of their lead frontline commanders are held accountable for some of the worse crimes committed during the course of war.

Since the release of the report, the Government or president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who per the Act that created the commission should take the lead in the implementation of recommendations, has been and continues to demonstrate a spirit of reluctance to doing what is requested of her.

Though the government is seen as not demonstrated excellent and sizable amount of efforts to address the report, the organization has lavished praises on it (government) for having in place a road map for peace, but warned that the implementation aspect of the TRC must stop there.

The Chairperson of NCSCL Madam Frances Greaves said, "All over the word, the implementation of TRC recommendation is the responsibility of governments."

According to her, the civil society council will continue to play such advocacy role until government sees reason to collaborate states actors to break the cycle of impunity and violence in the country.

The Council also expressed concern over what it calls recent confusion, tension, and infighting among government officials at various branches.

Madam Greaves said, "We are raising a red flag over these issues least we delay or forget, we could be over taken by uncertainty that could plunge us into another phase of war."

She observed that the passage of a law and to implement the TRC and recommendations, and enforcement should remain a priority of the law makers and the executives respectively.

"Failure by government to live up to the TRC's report, will amount to a major lapse", Madam Greaves said.

As part of the reconciliation process, the council will this week dedicate Liberia's first National Memorial Project in Samah Kpolokpala Town in Bong County.

The civil society council therefore recommended to government that to provide a simplified version of the road map for peace, in order to increase public awareness and include stakeholders in permanent citizens, chiefs and civil society organizations.

"That the work plan and timeline of the programs of the roadmap be detailed to ensure independent monitoring and evaluated by CSOs and other interest parties.

That memory and demoralization are cardinal parts that help in the process of reconciliation; demoralization moves on from one generation to another reminding all that the ugly and bitter past must not be repeated; among others," the group recommended.

Bloomberg News

Friday, 16 November 2012

UN Court Frees Croatian War Generals as Nation Cheers

A United Nations court overturned the sentences of two Croatian generals convicted of atrocities against Serbs in 1995 setting them free as thousands of Croatian war veterans cheered across the country.



*General Ante Gotovina was originally given 24 years in jail.
Photographer: Ed Oudenaarden/AFP/Getty Images*

General Ante Gotovina and General Mladen Markac should be released immediately after the Hague-based International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia ruled in favor of their appeal, Theodor Meron, the president of the five-member judicial panel, said today. The two were convicted in April 2011 of the murder and persecution of Serbs in the 1995 Operation Storm, which ended the war following Croatia's 1991 independence from Yugoslavia. Gotovina was originally given 24 years in jail and Markac 18 years.

"A huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders," Croatian Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic told reporters in Zagreb after the verdict. "This has gone on for 17 years, and two innocent people can go home. But that doesn't mean the war wasn't bloody and Croatia will do its part to achieve justice."

The case closed as the former Yugoslav republic prepares to join the European Union in July and struggles to recover after three years of recession and economic stagnation. Croatia cooperated with the extradition of the generals to The Hague and supported their defense teams in claiming the generals couldn't prevent the troops from committing crimes.

Thousands Celebrate

Croats gathered in main squares across the Adriatic Sea nation. The government was sending a plane to bring the two generals back home, Croatian TV reported.

In Operation Storm, the Croatian army reclaimed swaths of land held by rebel Serbs, who since 1991 opposed Croatia's drive to break away from the former Yugoslavia. While most Serbs fled the approaching Croat forces, murders and looting were reported after the Croatian army took over.

The UN court ruled today that there was no excessive shelling of four towns by the Croats and that the mass departure of Serbs couldn't be described as a "deportation."

Thousands of Serbs in recent years have returned as their reintegration was a key element for Croatia to conclude EU membership talks.

For many Croats, the generals symbolize the country's independence and the beginning of the operation is celebrated as a public holiday called Victory Day.

"I didn't expect this verdict, and I'm very happy," the grinning Tomislav Petercec, 40, said in downtown Zagreb among a throng of revelers. "But crimes were committed and the authorities should find and punish the culprits."

In its 2011 verdict, the court said that Gotovina was part of a “joint criminal enterprise,” along with former President Franjo Tudjman, Defense Minister Gojko Susak and Army Chief of Staff Janko Bobetko, all three of whom are now dead.

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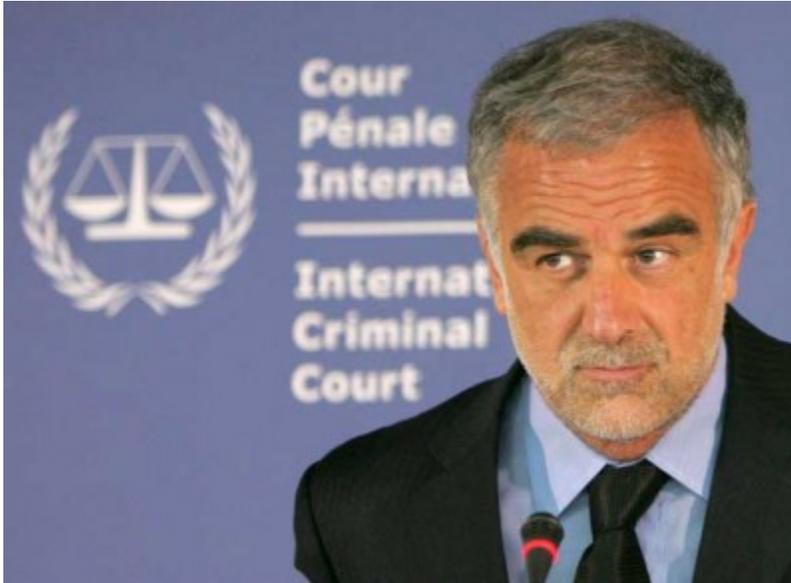
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Global Research

Wednesday, 14 November 2012

Former ICC Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo, Front Man For The Empire

By Ken Stone



Luis-Moreno-Ocampo

On November 9, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) conducted an interview with Luis Moreno-Ocampo, former chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Court (ICC).¹ During the interview, Ocampo called for the ICC to prepare an indictment against President Bashar Al-Assad of Syria and for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to issue a warrant for his arrest. The warrant, he added, should be enforced by sending NATO troops, including Canadian forces,

to Syria or “bombing to arrest him.”

Ocampo explained that, because Assad is commander-in-chief of the Syrian armed forces and since there have been civilian casualties resulting from military actions on the part of the Syrian government, there would be a strong case against Assad, though he neglected in the interview to outline what the charges against Assad might be. (Is it a criminal offence under ICC rules to use your army to repel a foreign aggression?) Ocampo didn't mention the role of foreign powers, such as the USA, Canada, Britain, France, Turkey, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, or indeed the collection of 70 countries in the so-called “Friends of Syria” formation, meddling in the internal affairs of Syria with the illegal purpose of regime change. He also failed to note the glaring war crimes against civilians and the terrorist bombings committed by the foreign-backed mercenaries inside Syria, whose crimes have been repeatedly recorded in graphic detail by international news networks, broadcast on Youtube, and have even been condemned on at least one occasion by the United Nations Security Council.

Noting that, due to feelings on the part of Russia, China, and South Africa of being tricked by the West over the “no-fly zone” for Libya (which quickly morphed into a bombing campaign for regime change there), Ocampo distanced himself from the idea of a full-scale invasion of Syria, citing the lack of a consensus within the international community.

This is not the first time that Mr. Ocampo has played the role of front man for the US empire. In fact, in every instance during the last nine years when the ICC, under his leadership, became involved with political leaders, the leaders indicted were always African and at odds with the foreign policy goals of the USA. Among them were Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan, Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, and his son, Saif. It should be noted that the USA has not accepted the jurisdiction of the the court over its citizens. In other words, the ICC is a one-way street along which the racist and neo-colonial goals of US foreign policy are driven in Africa, but the crimes of racism and neo-colonialism go unpunished.

During his nine years in office, however, Ocampo was not very successful as a prosecutor. Twenty-nine Africans were indicted but only one was convicted and not on the original charges contained in the indictment.² Ocampo was also ridiculous for announcing that he was taking his lead from US Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, and launching an investigation into the outrageous slander that the Gaddafi government of Libya was distributing Viagra to soldiers loyal to the state in order to promote mass rapes of women civilians.³

The ICC fits into a new international legal pattern of special tribunals (often paid for directly by the USA) for certain global trouble spots such as the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone, in which the leaders of countries targeted by the USA and NATO for regime change are prosecuted, following the military aggression that removes them from power. In his nine years in office, Ocampo ignored the war crimes of George W. Bush, Colin Powell, and Tony Blair in fomenting an invasion in Iraq; the misdeeds of David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy in promoting an attack on Libya; and the extra-legal assassination drone attacks personally unleashed by Barak Obama against innocent civilians in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan. In fact, not one western leader has ever been indicted for the wars or occupations in the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Rwanda, Somalia, Libya, or Palestine. In a few words, the ICC and the regime of special international tribunals represents the imperial victor's justice.

But why did the CBC choose to interview Ocampo about Syria? To any fan of hockey, the national game of Canada, the answer is obvious. In professional hockey, from which the CBC makes piles of money, the job of the referee is to watch for infractions of rules by players. Players who break the rules are singled out for punishment, their offences announced over the public address system, and they are consigned to the penalty box for various intervals of time, up to and including the remainder of the game. During that interval, the player is out of play. Similarly, in the world of international politics, when players like Syrian President Assad get out of line, in terms of the needs of the US empire, a referee (such as Ocampo) is needed to single them out for public exorciation (echoed by mainstream media outlets such as the CBC) and, if possible, to put them out of play, or by making them international pariahs. President Al-Bashir of Sudan, for example, cannot leave his own country because there is a warrant out from Ocampo for his arrest.

Ocampo actually said in the interview that he favoured a NATO operation in Syria modelled on the recent military intervention in Libya because NATO forces involved in the Libyan operation were able to provide support from a safe distance while local "rebel" fighters carried out the regime change on the ground. Very neat, in theory, according to Ocampo but not true in practice. Actually, many warring NATO countries had special forces on the ground in Libya, organizing and leading the Libyan "rebels" to victory. Today, Libya is a failed state with warring factions vying for control. However, the Libyan oil concessions have been returned to their original owners (pre-Gaddafi): trans-national corporations. The new "government" of Libya has reneged on all contracts and loans previously signed with Russian and Chinese firms.

Ocampo was in Toronto at the Canadian Forces College for a joint session of Canadian Pugwash and the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace.⁴ They might have chosen a better keynote speaker than Ocampo, a serial front man for the empire.

Ken Stone is a veteran anti-war activist and Treasurer of the Hamilton Coalition to Stop The War.