

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



**PRESS CLIPPINGS**

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**as at:**

**Monday, 8 April 2013**

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## The Liberian Dialogue

Sunday, 7 April 2013

<http://theliberiandialogue.org/2013/04/07/blahs-painful-political-legacy/>

### Blah's painful political legacy

By Tewroh-Wehtoe Sungbeh

I am not a fan of Charles Taylor. And like most Liberians who care about justice, I want Taylor to remain in the European prison he currently resides for the remaining of his pitiful life.

Moses Zeh Blah, 65, who passed away April 1, from heart attack worked for Charles Taylor, in their delusional quest to liberate Liberia from tyranny and corruption, etc.

In the spirit of camaraderie, the duo and their like-minded armed colleagues brainwashed, exploited and massacred innocent Liberians, hijacked the country and forcefully introduced to the Liberian people their brand of governance awash in mediocrity, corruption, blind loyalty and cowardice.

As Vice President and later President for a forgettable two-month period, Blah was known simply as the reticent and appointed accidental President who completed Taylor's term, in an unprecedented 2003 UN-backed transitional arrangement that also gave way to the interim Gyude Bryant.

Even though Blah was Taylor's revolutionary colleague who stood with him in the jungles of Liberia and in foreign countries when both men planned the killings of innocent Liberians and the destruction of Liberia, Blah was not Taylor's first choice for vice president.

With an abnormally obsessive preoccupation with Nimba County, Taylor first choice for vice president was Enoch Dokolea, another son of Nimba County, who took the bait and served Taylor with unquestioned loyalty during part of the Liberian civil war, and until his death in 2000. Enoch Dogolea was rumored to have been poisoned by Taylor.

During his three-year stint as Vice President in the Taylor administration, Blah had ample opportunity to make history as the one who boldly fought to reform the nation's pension plan for retired presidents and other civil servants.

Because most Liberian civil servants are forgotten once they leave the system, Blah's reform gesture would have made an impact by helping those who truly needed it most – poor and disabled Liberians.

Blah's reform plan would have also provided pension, affordable and accessible healthcare and housing to people like Moses Zeh Blah, who also looked up to receiving government's pension until his last days on this Earth.

Sadly, Blah looked the other way.

Blah, however, made his position clear during a legislative debate regarding a request from Charles Taylor that he (Taylor) be paid an annual pension of \$25,000.

During the national debate in Liberia that reverberated in Diaspora Liberian communities across the Atlantic, Blah was quoted as saying that he receives a monthly financial stipend from President Sirleaf.



“She is paying me \$2,000 a month,” Blah reportedly said.

At a time when some Liberians (including this writer) are advocating radical reform in the centralized system of government that gives imperial powers to the President of Liberia, Blah’s shallow comments did not help the issue.

Blah’s comments, however, were selfish and ignorant, and proved that the Liberian nation and people are in trouble; to have a leader like this man who care less about the future of his people, and zero vision for his country.

Moses Zeh Blah is gone, and was fortunate to have received a monthly pension from the President of Liberia. What becomes of those other retired Liberian civil servants who lacked the political clout and connections to have a President provide them a monthly stipend?

Do we continue this corrupt ancient path that allows Sirleaf and future Liberian Presidents to continually and single handedly provide private funds to selective Liberians, or do we advocate a Civil Service Pension Board that sets the rules that governs the issuance of pensions to retired Liberians?

I prefer the appointment of an independent and neutral Civil Service Board.

Liberians cannot continue to allow Ellen Johnson Sirleaf or any President to manipulate the pension system, the National Elections Commission (NEC), and other institutions in the country.

Just recently, Sirleaf reportedly appointed new members of the National Elections Commission. Where is neutrality and independence?

As the 2014 mid term election approaches, is it fair for a President who have vested political interests in the election appoint election officials that oversees it?

The current political system in Liberia that gives sweeping power to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and future Liberian Presidents, is not nation building. It is about maintaining the status quo.

Again Liberians, nation building is not only about building infrastructure. Nation building is also about changing attitudes, and reforming and building lasting institutions.

Moses Zeh Blah had the opportunity to make a difference, but left behind a painful legacy of reticence and political opportunism.

## Chronogram

Saturday, 6 April 2013

<http://www.chronogram.com/DailyDose/archives/2013/04/06/a-qanda-with-us-war-crimes-ambassador-david-scheffer>

### A Q&A with US War Crimes Ambassador David Scheffer



David Scheffer, the first-ever war crimes ambassador for the US, will speak about "The Challenges of International Justice" on Monday, April 8, at Vassar College's Sanders Classroom Building, Spitzer Auditorium. Currently serving as the UN Secretary-General's Special Expert on United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials, Scheffer's past work in the Balkans and Rwanda contributed to the creation of the International Criminal Court in 2002. In anticipation of the talk, which will explore his recent war crimes work in Cambodia and his 2012 memoir *All the Missing Souls: A Personal History of the War Crimes Tribunals*, Chronogram presents a Q&A with Scheffer on the topic of international justice.

Chronogram: What is the biggest challenge to international justice currently?

David Scheffer: The biggest challenge to international justice currently is political will, particularly the will of governments to enforce international arrest warrants against indicted fugitives roaming free on their territory and to provide the necessary financing to ensure the full operations of the international and hybrid war crimes tribunals. These are sometimes very tough decisions for governments to make because it can mean putting international justice goals ahead of national priorities, but if justice is the objective then political will is essential to meet it.

CM: There seems to be a problem with ending conflicts effectively and expeditiously and bringing justice afterwards. What can be done to improve this process?

DS: Ending conflicts is a highly complex diplomatic and often military endeavor. It is not the task of international justice literally to end conflicts and we should not burden war crimes tribunals with that responsibility. Achieving justice in the aftermath of conflict is a necessary goal in the modern era and that is why we have witnessed the creation of so many war crimes tribunals, some of them created in the middle of the conflicts and continuing long thereafter. The creation of the permanent International Criminal Court, which began to operate in 2002, was a major step to improving the process by ensuring the existence of a highly professional war crimes tribunal even at the beginning of conflicts so that all are on notice of their potential liability for commission of atrocity crimes. But again, it is folly to thrust the burden of ending conflicts or even deterring them on the backs of the tribunals. Their job is to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of atrocity crimes and bring them to justice, and that is an enormous challenge in and of itself.

CM: What has been learned through the war crimes trials in Rwanda, Yugoslavia, and Cambodia? What can be done better by the international community moving forward?

DS: This is a huge question that thousands of books and law review articles seek to address, so I won't even try to begin here. All I can say is that the end of leadership impunity for atrocity crimes draws nearer thanks to the work of the **war crimes tribunals for the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and**

**Cambodia and the permanent International Criminal Court.** We have learned that the cooperation of governments remains essential for the successful work of the tribunals, that sufficient funding must be available to cover the cost of international justice, that the public must exercise patience in waiting for the investigation, prosecution, and judgment phases of each defendant's case because it does take much longer under international criminal law to achieve ultimate justice, and that the outreach of each tribunal with the public (including victims and perpetrators) is essential for the educational and healing process to begin. The international community needs to do better at funding the tribunals, supporting their investigative work and arrest strategies with full cooperation, and using diplomatic pressure to press reluctant governments to act in the interests of justice rather than their narrow national interests alone.

CM: Which aspect do you think has proven more important after conflicts: peace and reconciliation commissions that offer immunity in return for full disclosure of past crimes, or trials of officials previously involved in atrocities?

DS: This is not necessarily a choice anymore. It was 20 years ago when the a peace and reconciliation commission approach was employed in South Africa. But during the last two decades the creation of the permanent International Criminal Court, with 121 states parties (including South Africa), and the long usage of other war crimes tribunals have changed the landscape. The international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, and serious war crimes cannot be bargained way anymore; political, military, and even business leaders stand accountable for their actions under international law now, and nations have accepted that reality in their ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Nonetheless, there remains the opportunity to explore peace and reconciliation commissions for mid-level and low-level perpetrators of atrocity crimes, namely those individuals who would not be subject to investigation and prosecution anyway by the war crimes tribunals. Even there, though, nations are increasingly building into their criminal codes the enforcement of criminal law for the commission of atrocity crimes. It may remain the possibility that full disclosure of past crimes might enable mid-level and low-life perpetrators to avoid enforcement of such domestic criminal law, but that depends on the particular country at stake and its criminal code.

## Leadership (Nigeria)

Sunday, 7 April 2013

[http://leadership.ng/nga/articles/51623/2013/04/07/granting\\_amnesty\\_ghosts.html](http://leadership.ng/nga/articles/51623/2013/04/07/granting_amnesty_ghosts.html)

### Granting Amnesty To 'Ghosts'?



*As Mr President mulls amnesty for Boko Haram whom he tagged; 'ghosts', EDEGBE ODEMWINGIE goes down memory lane to take a look at the inception of their activities and the new developments so far.*

Internationally accepted encyclopedia, Wikipedia defines amnesty as: "A pardon extended by the government to a group or class of persons, usually for a political offence." So, do Nigerian Islamists waging a deadly insurgency in the country's north fall under the category of what is known as a "political offence"? What are the identities of these Islamist militants? These are posers Nigerians will be left to ponder in the coming days, weeks and months.

An amnesty may be extended when the authority decides that bringing citizens into compliance with a law is more important than punishing them for past offences. 'Amnesty after a war helps end a conflict', analysts posit.

#### Controversy

Amnesty can, at times, raise questions of justice. An example was the Ugandan government's offer not to prosecute alleged war criminal, Joseph Kony, with the hope to avoid further blood shed. David Smock, Senior Vice President, Centers of Innovation, and Director, Religion and Peacemaking Centre noted, "The downside of it is the impunity that it implies; that people can commit atrocities and say that they will only stop if they are given amnesty..."

Controversies are also raised about amnesties granted to alleged perpetrators of the most serious crimes of international law (or crimes of the Jus Cogens which include genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and aggression). Courts have rejected amnesties for such crimes, such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and **the Special Court for Sierra Leone**. But scholars have suggested that there should be room for amnesties which are imperative necessities to achieving peace accompanied by effective truth and reconciliation, Wikipedia noted.

#### A New Amnesty In The Offing

Monitored reports indicated Thursday that President Goodluck Jonathan may have resolved to declare amnesty for the Boko Haram sect - members whom he tagged 'ghosts'.

This was the outcome of a meeting between him and the leadership of the Northern Elders Forum (NEF) at the presidential villa, Abuja.

Jonathan also used the occasion to deny ever ruling out amnesty for the sect. Information minister, Labarn Maku said on the sidelines of the meeting that the president has never said 'no' to the issue of amnesty, adding that, "What the president is saying is that, just like in the case of Niger Delta, some structures and processes have to be in place before the amnesty option is fully explored".

The minister further explained that the insurgents need to come forward and be identified before the dialogue that would lead to the amnesty programme is put in place.

Spiritual leaders from the North, including the Sultan of Sokoto, Alhaji Sa'ad Abubakar III had appealed to the president to consider granting amnesty to the deadly group even as his position was supported by the Arch Bishop of Abuja, Cardinal John Onaiyekan during the Easter celebration. Also, key political officers namely: the Senate President, David Mark and the Speaker, House of Representatives, Aminu Waziri Tambuwal have continually called for dialogue with the Islamic extremists.

The president had however kept mum over the matter since his meeting with elders of Borno and Yobe States in a town hall meeting with them during his two days working visit to the epicenters of the Boko Haram.

The president may have deemed it necessary to pour out his mind before the NEF in order to let them understand his earlier position that members of the insurgents must present themselves before him to enable him know who they are as he was not ready to grant amnesty to ghosts.

His earlier stand in March this year during the two days visit had elicited a lot of mixed reactions with most prominent citizens from the northern region accusing him of insensitivity to the plight of people from that part of the region who have suffered untold hardship due to the gory and gruesome activities of the sect.

As it is now, the president is expected to set up an amnesty commission to fine-tune details of clemency to the sect members.

### **A Niger Delta Precedent**

An amnesty deal by the Nigerian government for militants in the Niger Delta aimed at reducing unrest in the oil-rich region came into effect 2009. The rebels handed in weapons for cash and pardon as a 60-day offer by government came into effect.

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua had offered an unconditional pardon and cash payments to rebels who agreed to lay down their arms and assemble at screening centres within the stipulated period. The government targeted up to 10,000 militants whose attacks in the six Niger Delta states cost the country a third of its oil production. Sabotage, oil siphoning rackets and kidnappings by criminal gangs and militants who say they are fighting to gain the local people a greater share of the country's oil wealth hit Nigeria's economy hard that year.

The government had responded with a two-pronged strategy. In May the military launched a major ground, air and sea offensive to flush militants out of their camps in the Niger Delta. President Yar'Adua then announced the amnesty deal, and freed Henry Okah, a suspected leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (Mend), the most active militant group in recent years.

On Monday, January 21, 2013, a South African court convicted Okah of 13 charges of terrorism, including bombings that killed 12 people in Abuja on October 1, 2010.

He was arrested in Johannesburg a day after two car bombs exploded during the 50th anniversary of Nigeria's independence.

Following Okah's sentencing, the proscribed MEND, Wednesday, threatened to resume its suspended hostilities with the federal government, saying it will commence on Friday with sustained attacks codenamed "Hurricane Exodus."

According to government officials, militants who surrendered their arms continued to receive about £255 monthly allowance in cash as well as food allowances during the rehabilitation period.

The amnesty programme for Niger Delta militants, according to Kingsley Kuku, the Special Assistant to the President on Amnesty is billed to come to an end in 2015.

### **A Sustained Islamist Onslaught**

Nigeria is stepping up efforts at checkmating the threat posed by Boko Haram and its offshoot, Ansaru responsible for deadly wave of bombings across the country's north.

Boko Haram led by Abubakar Shekau has been blamed for scores of bombings and shootings that have rocked the country's north. Several reports say over 1,500 people have been killed since 2009.

While Boko Haram aims to destabilise the government of Goodluck Jonathan by undermining his ability to guarantee the security of Africa's most populous nation, Ansaru appears determined to drag foreign governments into an otherwise domestic conflict by kidnapping and killing foreign nationals working in the country.

Formed in January 2012, Ansaru is also known in its full Arabic name as Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan, meaning: "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa". French journal *Jeune Afrique-L'Intelligent* says, Ansaru is led by the little-known Abu Ussamata al-Ansary. The group has claimed responsibility for several kidnappings and reported killings of foreign nationals. There have also been local targets.

Ansaru says it is fighting to create an Islamic state. The militant Islamist group proved to be a formidable threat during its short existence. Although it was formed since January 2012 but rose to prominence six months later through the release of a video in which it vowed to attack Westerners in defence of Muslims worldwide.

Analysts are of the opinion that Ansaru has a wider regional agenda. The UK government listed it as a "terrorist group" linked to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

"To some, the sect headed by Ansary is seen as one that will complement the struggle by the Boko Haram sect under Imam Abubakar Shekau but to many, it is an indication that all is not well with the leadership of the Boko Haram sect and that there has been internal conflict regarding its ideology and understanding of Islam," wrote Tukur Mamu, Nigerian based journalist in one of the tabloids last year.

### **Boko Haram Attacks – Timeline**

2009 was the year that this militant group began its onslaught on Nigeria. The chronicle of its onslaught is as below:

**July 2009** - Hundreds die in Maiduguri, in North-Eastern Borno state when members set several churches, a police station and a prison on fire.

The police were among the victims of the attacks by motorcycle-riding gunmen who carried out the onslaught. The uprising was eventually crushed by a police and military assault with hundreds dead and the sect's headquarters and mosque left in ruins.

Boko Haram's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was captured by the army and passed to the police for interrogation. He allegedly died in custody.

**September 2010** - The group frees 721 prisoners, including 105 suspected sect members, from a Bauchi jail in northern Nigeria. The violence coincides with the run up to the presidential elections.

**December 2010** - Boko Haram regrouped under a new leader, Abubakar Shekau, and bombed Jos, in central Nigeria, killing 80 people. It also claimed responsibility for a New Year's Eve attack on Abuja barracks. These incidents mark the beginning of bombing spree as it targeted its critics both civilians and military.

**June 2011** - Police headquarters was bombed in Abuja, killing six people. The United Nations headquarters in Abuja was also targeted just two months later, destroying the first. Eighteen people were killed and dozens injured.

**November 2011** - The motorcade of the Borno state governor, Kashim Shettima, came under bomb attack in Maiduguri as he returned from a trip abroad. Within the same period, about 150 people died in co-ordinated bombing and shooting on police facilities in Damaturu and Potiskum in Yobe state. Two suicide bombers blew themselves up outside military headquarters in Maiduguri in what was described as a botched attack.

**December 2011** - Multiple bomb attacks on Christmas Day that killed several worshippers at St Theresa's Catholic Church in Madalla, near the nation's capital. A second explosion shortly afterwards hit a church in the central city of Jos, where a police officer was killed by gunfire. Three attacks in northern Yobe State killed four people. Two further attacks hit the town of Damaturu, and a third struck Gadaka, another town in the state.

**January 2012** - Another bombing killed 180 people in Kano, the deadliest attack to date.

June 2012 - The corporate office of ThisDay Newspaper was bombed. Later in the month, more than 100 people died in attacks on three churches in Kaduna, a major city in Northern Nigeria.

**September 2012** - The group attacked telecommunications masts belonging to telephone companies operating in the north even as the army announced that it killed at least 35 suspected members of Boko Haram.

### **Ansaru Attacks - Timeline**

Ansaru claimed responsibility for a prison break at the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) headquarters in Abuja in November 2012, and in January 2013 attacked a convoy of Nigerian troops on their way to participate in the conflict against Jihadist groups in Northern Mali.

The group has carried out a number of kidnappings in Nigeria, including the May 2012 abductions of a Briton and an Italian from Kebbi State, the December 2012 kidnapping of a French engineer in Katsina State and the February 2013 kidnapping of seven foreigners from a construction site in Bauchi State. The group executed the hostages taken in both May 2012 and February 2013 following what was said to be failed rescue attempts by the British and Nigerian governments - an allegation the UK denied.

Meanwhile, it remains unclear about the group responsible for the recent killing of three North Korean doctors, in Yobe state. The deaths came shortly after unidentified gunmen killed nine women administering polio vaccines in Kano.