

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



Historical postcard.

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, 1 August 2013

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

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The Canadian Press

Monday, 29 July 2013

On This Day in History

A look at what happened on previous July 29ths

-SNIP-

In 2003, Foday Sankoh, who led a bloody rebel movement in Sierra Leone that killed 75,000 people over 10 years, died in United Nations custody. He was charged with crimes against humanity, rape and sexual slavery.

-SNIP-

The Daily Beast
Wednesday, 31 July 2013

When Liberian Child Soldiers Grow Up

A generation of girls fought in Liberia's brutal wars. What they tell their own children about the past will inform the country's future

By Clair MacDougall

Mary Goll is asleep in a white plastic chair. Around her, in the modest bar by the sea that she owns, the sandy ground is flecked with cigarette butts and shiny cracker wrappers glinting in the dull morning light. Plastic bags that once held white rice have been stitched up to cover parts of the shambolic structure, made from odd corrugated zinc plates and bits of chicken wire. Farther up the beach a cluster of canoes lie face-down by the water as if asleep. Mary's bar—known as Ma Mary's—resembles a makeshift vessel that, carrying a motley crew and cargo, has crashed onto the shoreline and is slowly falling apart.

The morning light sharpens the contours of the bar. Mary, now awake, languidly gets up from her chair. She is dressed in a loose white tank top that accentuates her broad shoulders and thick arms. A yellow piece of fabric with blue stars is wrapped around her waist. Her short hair is braided in cornrows.

Liberia's complex civil war became known around the world for its atrocities, often involving children and teenagers as both perpetrators and victims.

A bare-chested young man comes into the bar, orders a shot of *gana gana*, a bitter cane juice known as "African whisky," swallows it without saying a word, then resumes his walk toward Cape Montserrado, where the first black immigrants from America landed in 1822, the vanguard of a settlement that eventually became the Republic of Liberia, its capital, Monrovia, named after U.S. President James Monroe.



Liberia's complex civil war became known around the world for its atrocities, often involving children and teenagers as both perpetrators and victims.

This desolate stretch of land, where echoes of Liberia's past still play out, is known as Poto Corner in the local Liberian-English vernacular, meaning a place for those without use. It is situated within Monrovia's largest slum, West Point, on a peninsula home to migrants, fishermen, crack addicts, street

kids, and many Liberians who, like Mary, fought and were displaced by the successive and complex civil wars that ravaged the country during most of the 1990s, pitting Charles Taylor and his militia, known as

the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, against the repressive government of Samuel Doe. Taylor eventually gained control of most of the country and, following Doe's execution and a subsequent peace deal, became president in 1997. Two years later, though, the country slid back into civil war. The fighting lasted another four years.

Mary was 13 when she joined up on the side of the pro-Taylor government militias, and her scars tell the story of a girl who saw close combat. A bullet grazed her right knee during a fierce battle in northeastern Liberia near the border with Guinea. Puckered skin between her shoulders bears witness to a bullet that came dangerously close to her spine. And then there are the self-made markings of war: crude, roughly drawn tattoos that serve as totemic reminders of her deeds. An octopus spreads its tentacles across her lower back; another covers her right knee. The octopus is a "wicked animal," Mary says, and "I was wicked."

For three years, Mary fought in a civil war that became known around the world for its atrocities, often involving children and teenagers as both perpetrators and victims. Mary commanded about 30 boys and girls, women and men, attaining the status of women's artillery commander before being captured and forced to fight on the rebel side. She was 16 when the war ended.

When a Comprehensive Peace Agreement finally brought an end to the fighting in August 2003, she disarmed—but peace did not follow. Like many of her generation, Mary has been unable to quiet the battles that still rage in her mind.

Neighboring Sierra Leone went through its own civil war when forces supported by Taylor sought to overthrow the government in 1991. That war ended in 2002. Last year a U.N.-backed tribunal for Sierra Leone sentenced Taylor to 50 years in prison for murder, rape, sexual slavery, the use of child soldiers, and other war crimes. The court is expected to make a ruling on his appeal in September.

A separate war-crimes trial has not taken place in Liberia, where Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has governed since 2006. Johnson Sirleaf has received international acclaim as the first elected female African head of state, but she was also an early supporter of Taylor during the civil war, and her government has proven disappointing to those who had hoped for a meaningful healing process. A 2009 report from the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) included Johnson Sirleaf among those who should be barred from holding office for 30 years on account of her association with Taylor. But she refused to step down. Instead she apologized to the Liberian people for having been "fooled" by Taylor early on.

The country's reconciliation process was further damaged in the fall, when the Nobel Peace Prize-winning activist Leymah Gbowee resigned as head of the separate Reconciliation Initiative after sharply criticizing Johnson Sirleaf for nepotism and her failure to address present-day issues such as corruption. In a statement, Gbowee referred to "differences in opinion on the pathway for national healing and reconciliation" as her reason for stepping down. (Beast Books, *The Daily Beast's* imprint, published Gbowee's memoir, *Mighty Be Our Powers*, in 2011.)

This June the government launched a new road map that lays out an 18-year plan for reconciliation. But to date, only one of the many recommendations of the 2009 TRC report has been implemented, and though almost 10 years have passed since the end of the fighting that left more than a quarter of a million people dead, Liberia has yet to fully reckon with its history.

When I go to see Gbowee at a farm just outside Monrovia, where she is hosting a camp for disadvantaged youth, she says that if the country is to move forward, Liberians must not only focus on the injustices of

the past but also look to the present. “We can’t talk reconciliation from 1990 if we don’t look at some of the issues of social justice now,” she argues. “If you look around Monrovia, we have a very angry population. How do we start to address some of these things that are making people angry before we start to address some of the issues of the war? How do we address these issues simultaneously?”

One of the most famous fighters in Liberia's civil war was a woman known as Black Diamond. Raped by forces loyal to Charles Taylor, who was later convicted of war crimes, she joined the other side.

A big part of the challenge is that many Liberians are former child soldiers. More than 38,000 children are estimated to have taken part in the war as fighters, porters, ammunition carriers, cooks, and sex slaves. What they saw and did—and what was done to them—is an unredeemable reality. But the future is still open. In fact, this is a crucial moment: Liberia’s generation of child soldiers is now coming of age. And how they deal with their history is going to have major consequences for their country.



Mary tells me her story in a fragmented fashion over the course of several weeks, but ultimately weaves a narrative of overcoming: she chose to be a fighter, she disarmed, and now her life has turned around.

Tim Hetherington/Magnum

One of the most famous fighters in Liberia's civil war was a woman known as Black Diamond. Raped by forces loyal to Charles Taylor, who was later convicted of war crimes, she joined the other side.

Yet her actions tell a different story. Like many former child soldiers, she is trapped between the past and the future, still unwilling or unable to let go of her wartime identity as a fighter, which, if nothing else, offered a sense of purpose and direction. She has a boyfriend and two children but

has never married. The war taught her independence. “I’m the man for the family,” she says. “I’m the man because I fought.”

While she surrendered her arms years ago, Mary still has the swagger of a commander fiercely guarding her corner of the world. Homeless, crack-smoking teenagers and men known as gronna boys hang out near the bar, and Mary sometimes orders them to settle things “the gronna way”—to dole out beatings to customers who don’t behave.

On this morning, a tall middle-aged man with bloodshot eyes walks in. Scrunching his face in pain, he asks for gana gana on credit. He has been here before. “Move your stink self from here,” she yells in her Liberian-English, chin cocked out. The man walks away before she can push him out. “You have to have sharp mouth because the people, they love fighting [and are] quick to take weapon,” she says. “You have to be careful.”

Mary runs her bar with a 10-year-old girl whom she refers to as “the manager.” Tiny with a dark, pretty, wide face, the girl works at the bar day and night, throwing shots of liquor into grubby tumblers. She also does most of the household chores and cares for Mary’s 1-year-old daughter, Desire.

Mary says she adopted the young girl when she found her toward the end of the war—a baby, abandoned in an empty house. She calls the girl her daughter and claims to care for her, but one night, when the girl breaks a bottle of whisky while handling the wires to turn on the lights in the bar, Mary beats her to the ground and kicks her in the stomach as customers sit in silence, continuing to drink. “That little girl thinks she knows everything!” she yells. When I ask her about her violent outburst later, she defends herself, saying she was only trying to teach her a lesson and that she feared the girl would electrocute herself by fumbling with the wires.

Today many of the women who went to war are shunned and live in slums, scraping by for survival, often by prostituting themselves for a few dollars.

But violence is clearly visceral, Mary’s first response. At one point, walking through a market, she attacks a man, believing he has called her a beggar. Over and over again, she smashes his head with a motorbike helmet while threatening to cut him up and drag him out to her beach where they can settle it “the gronna way.” After bystanders break up the fight, Mary calls the police and, greasing the palm of a policeman with 100 Liberian dollars, gets the man locked up. “He can’t fight, he can only scratch,” she says later. When I ask her why she got into the fight in the first place, she says that because of her past serving as a commander in the war she is “his superior.” “People like that, during the war, they stay hiding,” she says.



In the aftermath of the wars, the government and Western aid agencies created programs to help former child soldiers reenter society, but many have been unable to build normal lives—especially the girls and women whose soldier past is seen by Liberian society as more of a transgression.

Today many of the women who went to war are shunned and live in slums, scraping by for survival, often by prostituting themselves for a few dollars.

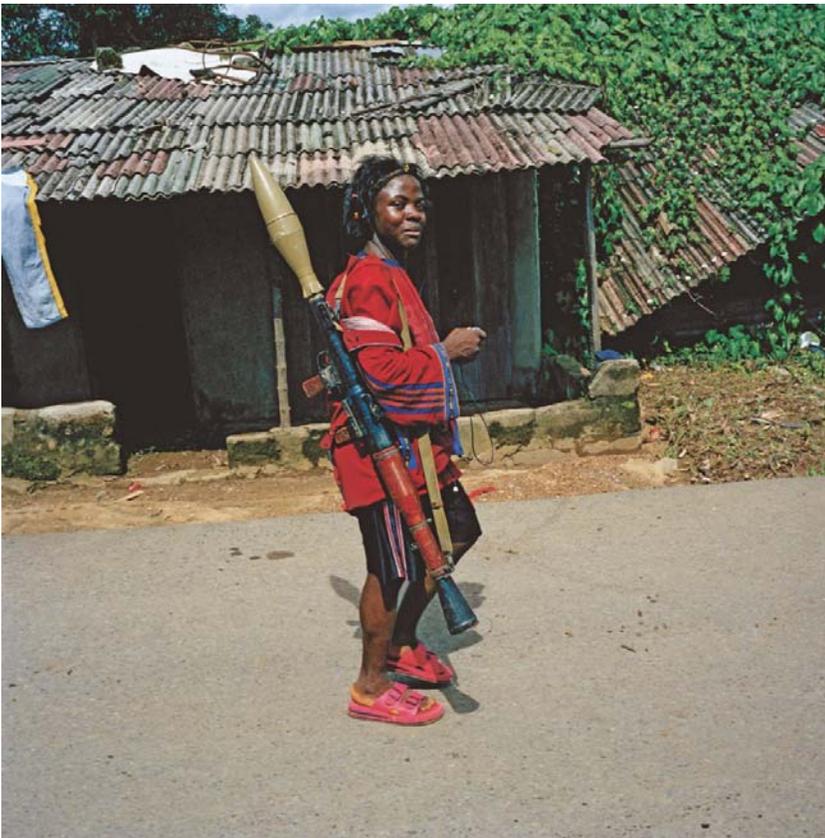
While many male commanders negotiated government positions after the war, female combatants were largely excluded from the process. Today many of the women who went to war are shunned and live in slums, scraping by for survival, often by prostituting themselves for a

few dollars. Leena Kotilainen from the University of Turku in Finland, who is conducting a study on the reintegration of former girl soldiers, found that almost half of those she interviewed were involved in prostitution, most of them in ghettos throughout Monrovia. “Some of them are so destitute and disempowered that they don’t believe they are human beings anymore,” she says.

Former female combatants find it more difficult to get married, have families, and reintegrate back into society because they are seen as unfeminine, tainted, and depraved, says Irma Specht, an anthropologist who has studied the issue since the end of the war. “Girls who [fought] alongside boys in the bush are not regarded as decent. They have crossed the line of femininity, the norms in society on how women should behave. They are generally not regarded as potential candidates for marriage, and most employers are reluctant to hire them,” says Specht. As a result, “they live in ghettos and hide their past.”

Mary will half-brag about her own cruelty and then, moments later, appear tormented by the horror of what she did. Her sense of guilt isn’t fully formed; it appears only partially realized.

The third in a family of seven, Mary was just 2 years old when Taylor’s militia set off the first civil war. Born in the rural town of White Plains just outside Monrovia, Mary was a child of conflict: she knew how to drop to the ground during crossfire and how to wait out violence in the surrounding scrub. Her mother, Patricia, sold grilled fish and ran a small video club to make ends meet. She had split from Mary’s father, Amos, because of “girlfriend business,” as Patricia puts it, and 9-year-old Mary was sent to live with her father and his new wife to ease the financial burden on her.



Mary says her stepmother abused her and took her out of school to sell chicken on the streets. She was also made to do most household chores, fetching water and pressing clothes with a coal iron before school. When she was disobedient, she says, her father and stepmother would tie her elbows together and rub hot pepper in her eyes, leaving her in the sun to suffer.

Former female combatants find it more difficult to get married, have families, and reintegrate back into society because they are seen as unfeminine, tainted, and depraved.

“Mary from her birth has been a bad kind of li’l girl,” her father tells me one day at a bodega near his home. He is ashamed of his daughter, he says, and wants her to reform. She should leave

her beach bar, sew herself some nice dresses, and come with him to church, he says. (When asked about her father, Mary simply says he is “useless” and “insincere”—a sentiment echoed by her sister.)

Effectively orphaned, Mary went to stay with her grandmother in a quaint little housing community of brightly colored worker cottages just outside Monrovia. But to Mary, who had grown accustomed to fending for herself and who supported herself by sometimes turning tricks, her grandmother’s way was too strict.

At 13, Mary became pregnant. The father was a handsome man she had watched play basketball in the moldy concrete ruins of the local community center. He was 25 and not prepared to be a father. (Today he lives in Boston and has some contact with her family, though Mary refuses to speak to him.)

Mary named her newborn Courage to help her find courage in God, but her mother took the baby girl away two weeks after she was born. Mary says she didn't mind. She knew she was too young for "baby business." And she had other plans.

In 2000 Mary's mother decided that she and her children would escape the war by going to Ghana. But Mary was having none of it—and hid until they departed. Having just given birth to her daughter and seen her taken away, she wanted to escape her family. "I thought it better I go to the bush and fight," she says. She also joined for "advantage," she says, for protection and benefits. She had observed the power the soldiers enjoyed—and how they abused it, beating the men and harassing the women. She wanted their power, their air of being inviolate and untouchable.

As a younger child, Mary had seen a tall, strong-looking woman in fatigues standing outside the training barracks in downtown Monrovia, and her air of strength, control, and discipline left an indelible impression. She began to imagine herself a soldier in a national army or volunteering to become a U.S. Marine, marching along in a neat uniform.

One afternoon, she set off to meet Larry Mulvey, a local commander who was headquartered in a house on Somalia Drive, a dusty road lined with sad-looking palm trees. When the small girl, dressed in a yellow tank top and a short black skirt, told him she wanted to join the government Army, he readily agreed. Without saying goodbye to her grandmother, she left a week later on the back of a green pickup truck. She was taken to Camp Jackson in Naama, where she was taught basic target training and how to handle firearms. Discipline was a problem, though, and Mulvey named her "Disgruntled" because she was rude and wouldn't take orders.

During her first foray to the front lines, she served under the command of another woman, nicknamed Tina Girl, who eventually became her friend. At first, the crackle of gunfire and pounding of rocket-propelled grenades made Mary tremble, but she says her fears subsided as she watched Tina Girl fight. "She was brave," she says, "and I was [following in] her footsteps." (After the war, Tina Girl died of an overdose in a derelict cemetery in downtown Monrovia where many former combatants slept in old graves.)

For three years—her most formative teenage years—she fought in a war so brutal it almost defies belief. One study of the mental-health effects of the intertwined wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone found that atrocities included "intentional hacking off of limbs, carving the initials of rebel factions into victims' skin, slaughtering pregnant women to bet on the gender of the unborn child, and use of young girls as human sacrifices. Numerous people have reported that they were forced to cut, cook, eat, and serve human flesh and internal organs, including those of their own parents and infants. Countless numbers of children and teenagers were forced to watch the torture, rape, and brutal murders of their parents and siblings. In many cases, family members—including children—were forced to rape, murder, and mutilate each other. During these acts, victims were forbidden to show any emotion, or, in many cases, were commanded to laugh. In some instances, people who shed tears in response to these atrocities were punished by being permanently blinded." Violence against women was so endemic during the civil war that some surveys suggest that between 60 percent and 90 percent of Liberia's girls and women were raped.

In a study on child soldiers in neighboring Sierra Leone, Theresa Betancourt, an associate professor at the Harvard School of Public Health, found that girl soldiers, while often also victims themselves of sexual abuse, were as likely as the boys to have been involved in the injury and killing of others. But Betancourt found that the psychological toll was greater on girls, who had significantly higher levels of depression and anxiety than boys did.

Yet little attention has been paid to the experience of these girls. As Rosana Schaack, who heads one of the few programs aimed at former female child soldiers, puts it, after the war “when you said child soldiers, everybody looked at the boys.”



Mary recalls that she would cut off ears and fingers of those her unit captured. She and her soldiers even skinned a prisoner. But it is not these atrocities that appear to keep her awake at night. What troubles her is the recollection of an order she gave her soldiers to gang-rape a woman who had been caught, seemingly spying on their position.

Mary can't quite explain why this is worse than flaying someone, but she identified with the woman. And perhaps her prisoner's helplessness reminded Mary of her own.

Glenna Gordon

Mary, a former child soldier and a mother of two, recalls that she would cut off ears and fingers of those her unit captured. She and her soldiers even skinned a prisoner.

One day, in 2003, her unit came under heavy fire from LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy) rebels and began to retreat but was caught in an ambush. Three girls were killed when they tried to fight their way out. Along with two men, Mary surrendered. For days, they were beaten, humiliated, and jailed. Eventually they were forced to join the rebels.

For several months, Mary fought for the other side—a fact that doesn't seem to trouble her much today. Identification with any political cause was never the point. And when the rebels advanced on Monrovia for a final push, she recounts a celebratory mood. “The looting was too much, so the enjoyment was sweet,” she says. In the final days of the war, during the last battle for the capital, she managed to escape and run home to West Point.

After handing over her AK-47 and her RPG launcher during a disarmament drive, Mary returned to what she had known before the war: life on the streets, drugs, and prostitution.

When Schaack, a soft-spoken Liberian social worker with the evangelical humanitarian group Samaritan's Purse, approached her in late 2003, just months after the ceasefire, Mary told her: "Move from here that shit. The whole day you passing around and lying to people." But after a while, Schaack managed to persuade Mary and eight other girls to live for nine months at a Christian mission where they received counseling as well as courses in pastry making and tie dying.

The stay at the mission helped Mary kick her habit of smoking marijuana, and these days she doesn't hustle for money. "I've moved my life forward," she says. Schaack believes it's an upward trajectory that will continue if Mary can just leave West Point. She has faith in the young woman and has nicknamed her "Bright Future."

But Mary is less certain of her prospects. She says the bar is an anchor—it earns her about \$45 a month, a princely sum in the slum—and she feels safe here, among her own people. "When I around them, no one can do nothing to me," she says. "So for me to leave from this area would be too hard."

And while Mary speaks about Schaack with affection, she says neither aid groups nor the government has done much for her or the other women who fought alongside her. "You looking at yourself, the years that you have been in the bush as a woman, taking risk," she says. "They made a fool out of us, and today nothing will become of us."

Mary's daughter Courage is graduating from elementary school. At 13, she is the same age her mother was when she got pregnant, left her family, and went into the bush to fight. Patricia, Mary's mother, returned from Ghana in 2008. Today, Mary lives with her younger daughter Desire, though her mother won't allow Mary's oldest daughter Courage to live with Mary in West Point. "I don't feel it is a good place for children to grow up," Patricia tells me as we sit under a tree outside her home in Barnesville. "Even the little girl that is there, I want to take her ... That place is too full of former combatants ... That is why I took Courage, and I can't give her back to her."

In Liberia, graduations are big, noisy affairs, with food, alcohol, and dancing—an important ritual because school so often in the past was interrupted by fighting—and Mary has been saving for months for the occasion. "I want for her to be proud of me," she says. "I don't want to be like my father."

On the evening of her graduation, Courage is strutting around in a bobbed wig and a backless pink-and-blue-striped halter top, short denim skirt, and shiny black shoes. Children dance while adults, reclining in their plastic chairs, chat and enjoy their drinks.

Though she has paid for the party, Mary is not there. She is having her own party a few miles away at Ma Mary's. She doesn't want her gronna friends embarrassing her daughter with their bad manners, smoking, and cursing.

Having retreated to Ma Mary's, where she feels safe, she surveys the remains of the party: the food is gone, and the bar is almost dry. A lone fluorescent lightbulb shines starkly, defining the silhouettes in the bar. Mary notices a jumble of empty bottles on the table and starts to curse. It is her daughter's graduation, and she has only a bottle of Club beer to toast with. She throws her head back for a swill. The music is still playing as night falls on Poto Corner.

Clair MacDougall is a journalist who reports on West Africa and is currently based in Monrovia, Liberia.
@ClairMacD

Africa Renewal

Monday, 22 July 2013

Africa: Uprooting the Causes of Conflicts

By Kingsley Ighobor

Analysis

On 11 July 2011, when South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and his 8.3 million compatriots celebrated the new country's first independence, he was careful to remind everyone of the harsh realities on the horizon.

"All the indices of human welfare put us at the bottom of all humanity," he said, adding: "All citizens of this nation must therefore fully dedicate their energies and resources to the construction of a vibrant economy." Not surprisingly, President Kiir's note of caution was easily drowned in a sea of high expectations and hopes for a peaceful, democratic and prosperous nation.

No quick fixes

Two years later, South Sudanese people realize that there are no shortcuts to building a nation. Peace is still elusive as fighting continues on many fronts, corruption is creeping into public offices and unemployment is still high. Even with abundant oil and a fertile land, the pace of development is slow, albeit steady. Barely a month after independence, the Lou Nuer and Murle people in the Jonglei and Warrap states in the eastern part of South Sudan fought over cattle, leaving about 600 people dead. Already an estimated 2.5 million people have lost their lives over the two decades of war between Sudan and South Sudan, according to Human Rights Watch, a New York-based advocacy group. Yet both countries still squabble over oil proceeds. South Sudan shut down oil production in January 2012, accusing Sudan of confiscating oil flowing through its pipelines and of overcharging on handling fees. Since oil accounts for 80% of South Sudan's gross domestic product (GDP), that move virtually cut off its economy's arteries. The frosty relationship between the two countries, caused largely by disputes over oil, threatens "the very foundation on which South Sudan's future will be built," says The Telegraph, a British newspaper. Following the oil shutdown, South Sudan's economy contracted by 11% by the end of 2012, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

No doubt the South Sudanese government must rebuild its financial, social and security institutions from the ground up, while also keeping an eye on reconciling the feuding ethnic groups and tackling corruption. In May 2012, angered by the alleged looting of a staggering \$4 billion from state coffers, President Kiir warned government officials, "We fought for freedom, justice and equality, yet once we got to power, we forgot what we fought for and began to enrich ourselves at the expense of the people." Nonetheless, the socioeconomic and security conditions in South Sudan are now better than they were at independence. There is the \$718 million multi-donor trust fund in addition to a \$130 million loan from the World Bank's International Development Association that have helped build 87 hospitals and clinics and 336 primary classrooms, among other things. "Over 108 women's groups have been provided with funds for economic activities like tailoring, food processing and running retail stores," says Mary Jervas Yak, South Sudan's deputy minister for finance.

Peacekeeping to peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is the last but most critical stage in a conflict resolution process, according to a 1992 United Nations Secretary-General's report titled Agenda for Peace, Preventive Diplomacy and Peacemaking. That process begins when preventive diplomacy fails and peacemaking is needed to get warring factions to agree to a negotiated settlement. This leads to peacekeeping, which includes disarming combatants and monitoring how the peace agreement is implemented. The last stage involves peacebuilding activities, which build and support institutions intended to solidify peace, states the UN report. Given the high expectations and many challenges in post-conflict countries, the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding can be difficult, notes Michael von der Schulenburg. He is one of the UN mission chiefs whose successful management of peacebuilding operations in Sierra Leone

following the end of a brutal conflict in 2002 is hailed as a shining example. In that country, the UN peacebuilding assistance programme supported the integration into society of some 45,000 former combatants, collected remnants of small arms through a community-based programme and strengthened the capacity of the government and civil society. The programme also provided assistance with holding elections in 2007 and 2012. In a nutshell, adds Mr. von der Schulenburg, "Peacebuilding is access to water, to education, to basic health care--access to opportunities" (see *Africa Renewal*, August 2011). Although Sierra Leone still grapples with youth unemployment, corruption and other governance issues, economic growth is currently a massive 17%, according to the IMF, and agricultural production is on an upswing, notes the World Bank.

The Sierra Leonean model

To a large extent, neighbouring Liberia has followed the Sierra Leonean peacebuilding model. But Sierra Leone had to deal with only 45,000 ex-combatants, while Liberia has more than 100,000. Providing sustainable jobs to the ex-combatants has been more difficult in Liberia than it was in Sierra Leone, as Liberian former fighters appear to be more restive. In 2010, for example, the UN mission in Liberia announced that about 2,000 mostly jobless Liberian fighters had moved over to western Côte d'Ivoire to fight alongside anti-government forces in that country.

The UN is convinced that reconciliation is an important part of post-conflict peacebuilding. Sierra Leone's reconciliation efforts were based on "peace with justice," which, as part of the healing process, encouraged the formation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Here people could voluntarily reveal wrongdoings they had committed during the war and seek forgiveness. The TRC was bolstered by a UN-supported Special Court to try those who had committed serious crimes. Key figures such as Foday Sankoh, the leader of the rebel Revolutionary United Front, and Hinga Norman, who led a pro-government militia, were indicted but the two died in custody during trials.

Liberia took a different approach and its reconciliation efforts have stumbled a few times. Despite agitation by some citizens, the country saw no need for a special court. In 2005, however, it set up a TRC, which in 2009 submitted a report in which it blacklisted current president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and 49 others, saying they were to be "specifically barred from holding public offices; elected or appointed for a period of 30 years." The Supreme Court declared that recommendation unconstitutional. Liberia's reconciliation challenge

After acrimonious elections in October 2011, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf appointed fellow Nobel laureate Leyman Gbowee to lead reconciliation efforts. Ms. Gbowee resigned after less than a year in office, claiming the president wasn't serious enough about reconciliation. George Opong Weah, a former soccer star who has lost two presidential elections to Johnson-Sirleaf, succeeded Ms. Gbowee. Since his appointment, Mr. Weah has been relatively quiet, many say.

Even with these challenges, at a 7.5% growth rate, the Liberian economy is scoring impressive gains. The UN has a huge peace operation in the country, training up to 4,000 police personnel, supporting the judicial system and extending government's presence to far-flung towns and villages. And recently, for the first time in decades, a contingent of Liberian soldiers joined the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, a fellow West African country now mired in conflict.

Peacebuilding is necessary to "reduce a country's risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict," says Charles Dambach, the former chief executive officer of Alliance for Peacebuilding, a Washington DC-based organization that promotes peacebuilding. He agrees that "the ultimate objective of peacebuilding is to reduce and eliminate the frequency and severity of violent conflicts."

Jobs problems in Côte d'Ivoire

Similar peacebuilding projects are also under way in many other African countries, such as Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Guinea-Bissau, all aimed at dealing with the root causes of conflict. Adama Bamba, coordinator of Côte d'Ivoire's Emergency Youth Employment and Skills Development Project, says that jobless youths were the most active group in his country during the war. Up to 60% of those between the ages of 14 and 35 have no jobs, according to Côte d'Ivoire's National Institute of Statistics. Despite this, the country is still the world's largest cocoa producer.

With help from the World Bank, Côte d'Ivoire is now moving aggressively to create jobs. For example, it has enlisted the private sector to train more than 3,000 youths, many of whom are employed by these companies. In 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced that Côte d'Ivoire was eligible to receive money from the global body's Peacebuilding Fund, which was set up in 2006 to support countries emerging from conflict. The fund doled out \$18 million to assist Côte d'Ivoire in land reforms, security and activities designed to extend state authority to areas where it had ceased to exist. The litmus test

The Great Lakes region--made up of Burundi, the DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda--presents a litmus test on peacebuilding. Last May, both Mr. Ban and Jim Yong Kim, the World Bank president, visited the region. Earlier, Mr. Ban had been in Mozambique, where he had touted the country's development efforts. "Mozambique, Rwanda and Uganda have all shown that it is possible to recover from conflict and progress towards the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals]," he said while in Mozambique. "It is now time for the DRC to follow their example."

The DRC's development indicators are not stellar, which is why both Mr. Ban and Mr. Kim want changes immediately. Up to 70% of its people live on less than \$1.25 per day. Among other woes facing the country, are a crumbling infrastructure and 2.4 million severely malnourished children. Burundi's struggles

Since 2003, when the UN stepped up its peacekeeping mission in Burundi, the guns have mostly fallen silent. However, 10 years later, Burundi is still one of the world's poorest countries, ranking 178 out of 186 in the 2013 UN Development Programme's human development index, which rates countries based on life expectancy, education and incomes. Burundi's peacebuilding efforts haven't quite been on the same level as those of Liberia and Sierra Leone. But this landlocked country has stabilised politically, while increased investments in agriculture--particularly coffee, its mainstay--are expected to improve living conditions.

Already, massive road projects have created thousands of jobs and life expectancy has risen from 43 years in 2000 to 50 years in 2011, says the World Bank. While Burundi will likely not meet the MDG targets, it has moved in the right direction by reforming state institutions and providing social services for its people, notes the bank.

Overall, post-conflict African countries are trying hard to deliver peace dividends--jobs, peace, freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Mr. Ban's assessment is upbeat: "Throughout Africa, we see growth. Economies are growing. Freedom and good governance are growing. Confidence is growing." With peacebuilding, Africa may have found the right formula for rooting out conflicts. The challenge is to make it last.

The Daily Star

Thursday, 1 August 2013

STL defense wants trial date delayed

By Kareem Shaheen

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Aug-01/225848-stl-defense-wants-trial-date-delayed.ashx#ixzz2ain7Mktd>

(The Daily Star :: Lebanon News :: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb>)

BEIRUT: Defense lawyers for the men accused of carrying out the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri said they would not be ready for trial in early December, raising the prospect that the start of proceedings could slip into next year.

They said the Special Tribunal for Lebanon must not bow to political pressure in setting a new tentative date for the start of the trial.

The defense filing comes as a decision on the new trial date for those responsible for the Feb. 14, 2005, attack is expected imminently, possibly as early as this week, according to an informed source who spoke to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.



In a filing last week to the pretrial judge, Daniel Fransen, defense lawyers said that “any decision taken regarding a tentative start date for trial must be made independent of and without regard to external and political pressure.”

File - An exterior view of the building that will house the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, in Leidschendam, Netherlands, Tuesday Feb. 24, 2009. (AP Photo/ Bas Czerwinski)

“Primary consideration must be given to the rights of the accused, particularly in an in absentia trial,” they added.

“The defense strenuously objects to these rights being abrogated in the name of political pressure or agendas,” the lawyers said.

The STL declined to comment on when the new trial date might be issued, but said it would announce it when Judge Fransen makes the decision.

Four members of Hezbollah were indicted by the STL in connection with the bombing in Beirut that claimed the lives of 23 people including Hariri.

The massive attack was followed by a wave of political assassinations and bombings.

Hezbollah has refused to hand over Mustafa Badreddine, Salim Ayyash, Hussein Oneissi and Assad Sabra for prosecution in The Hague.

The tribunal is preparing to try them in their absence.

The trial was initially scheduled to begin in March of this year, but Fransen agreed to postpone the date after a request by the defense, which cited incomplete disclosure of evidence by the prosecution.

No new date has been set. The proposed date of the start of December had not been publicly disclosed.

If trial is to begin this year, a new date must be set in the next three weeks. The tribunal's rules require the pretrial judge to set a new trial date at least four months in advance, and the STL enters a judicial recess at the end of December.

However, the defense's strongly worded filing raises the possibility that trial could slip into 2014.

The source said that after setting the new date, Fransen would have to submit the full case file to the STL's Trial Chamber.

The start of trial would include opening statements about the case.

Any new date would be subject to revision, for example if the prosecutor submits indictments in the so-called "connected cases."

In addition to the Hariri assassination, the STL has jurisdiction over attempts on the lives of Chouf MP Marwan Hamade, former Minister Elias Murr, and the killing of former Lebanese Communist Party leader George Hawi.

"Any date set now would be arbitrary and artificial, and prejudicial to the rights of the accused," the defense said in its submission to Fransen.

The STL is likely to face pressure from donors and supporters looking for progress in the court's work. A trial in 2014 would occur nine years after the Hariri assassination.

Defense lawyers lay the blame largely on uncertainty surrounding the prosecution's case and the enormity of the task of analyzing telecommunications data, as well as the dithering by the prosecution in handing over evidence, concluding that "both the tribunal and the defense have been held hostage."

These reasons "render impractical the proposed new tentative start date of early December 2013," the defense lawyers concluded.

The defense argued in March that it is premature to set a new trial date. The prosecution said it would be ready in the last quarter of 2013.

The lawyers say they will need more time to analyze telecommunications evidence gathered by the prosecution, and said there was still lingering uncertainty over key elements of the case, including whether evidence related to the “connected cases” can be brought to trial.

“The ultimate result is that the case “as it stands today” does not allow for the defense to know precisely what case it will face at trial,” defense counsel said.

The uncertainty in the case is compounded by repeated revisions to the list of evidence to be included in trial. The prosecution has amended its evidence list five times, bringing the total number of exhibits it proposed to bring to trial up to 15,000, which is 1,500 more than it proposed in November last year, the defense noted.

They also complained that the “enormous” amount of evidence handed over by the prosecution requires a substantial amount of time to be analyzed.

The defense also said that its investigations were hampered by the “continuing non-cooperation” of the Lebanese authorities.

Lebanon has failed to provide substantial amounts of information and material that is highly relevant for trial preparation, the defense said.

Capital FM

Tuesday, 30 July 2013

Kenya: Bensouda Wants Ruto At All ICC Trial Sessions

The International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor has now appealed the decision by judges excusing Deputy President William Ruto from attending part of the trial sessions set to start on September 10.

In the appeal, Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda argued that the judges had applied the Rome Statute selectively by allowing Ruto to skip some of the trial sessions.

"The majority's "exceptional circumstances" test is therefore inconsistent with the Statute. The majority's test violates the principle of equal treatment under the law, as expressed in Article 27(1) of the Statute. Furthermore, the majority's test violates the bedrock legal principle that all persons are to be treated equally under the law," Bensouda explained.

In her application she asked the Appeals Chamber to overturn the decision by the Trial Chamber to ensure Ruto is present in The Hague during the entire trial session.

She explained that Ruto should not be allowed to skip sessions of his trial on basis that he is the Deputy President of Kenya who has to attend to State duties.

Apart from contravening Article 63(1), which requires the accused to be present during a trial, she argues the decision also accorded Ruto special treatment because of the position he occupies in government.

"It appears that the majority would not have afforded Ruto the same "indulgence" if he did not hold such high office. The importance of Ruto's political office to the majority's reasoning is evident on the face of the decision, which references his status no fewer than 29 times," she asserted.

Bensouda argued that the decision of the Trial Chamber fell out of the provisions of the Rome Statute that makes it mandatory for accused persons to be present during their trial.

"Such a general exception to the rule requiring the accused's presence at trial finds no support in this Court's legal framework. The drafters adopted only one exception to the rule, which is inapplicable here, and left trial judges with no "discretion" to create additional broad exceptions of the type advanced in the Decision," she explained.

According to her the judges used their own 'reasoning' - which is outside the court's provisions - in allowing Ruto to attend some sessions.

"The decision improperly relies on external sources of law rather than this court's statutory provisions that resolve the issue. The majority erred by relying on external sources of law in support of its decision to disregard the unequivocal requirements of this court's statute."

The prosecutor in her appeal further said the decision of the Trial Chamber will affect the integrity of the court since it failed to follow the existing legal framework followed when considering the presence of accused persons during the trial stage.

She expressed concerns that other government officers accused of crimes against humanity can easily take advantage of the decision on Ruto's presence in court to also seek to be allowed to skip sessions of their trials.

In her view, the decision has set a wrong precedent that is likely to see the court face bigger challenges in future when dealing with persons charged with State duties.

"Even assuming that the majority's test had a basis in the law of this court, it is still the wrong standard because it invites a flood of excusal applications from accused who do not wish to attend trial. Almost every accused will be able to present a reason why he or she "has important functions of an extraordinary dimension to perform" and should be excused from attending the trial," she explained.

"While Ruto's position as Kenya's Deputy President may 'make this case different from the average case' seen so far at the court, it is foreseeable that many future accused will put forward a compelling argument as to why they too should be excused from attending the trial," she goes on.

Citing the case of Congolese leader Jean-Pierre Bemba, the prosecutor explained that he was absent during his trial only for 'less than a handful of hours' hence allowing Ruto to skip sessions of the trial was out of the ordinary in the history of the Hague- based court.

"Bemba was permitted to be absent for a total of three court sessions, plus one where he was absent from the courtroom for a matter of minutes. In total, Bemba has been absent for less than a handful of hours in a trial that is approaching its third anniversary. This is a far cry from the near-blanket waiver the decision grants to Ruto," she explained.

The Trial Chamber on June 18 ruled that Ruto would be allowed to skip sessions of his trial and outlines sessions that he will be required to be present in court among them during the opening and closing sessions where parties and participants and victims will present their views.

They explained the excusal would allow his prayer to attend to his state duties.

Hirondelle News Agency (Lausanne)

Tuesday, 30 July 2013

Rwanda: Weekly Summary - ICTR Completes Detainee Transfers

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) this week transferred a second detainee to Rwanda for trial. The Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT) said meanwhile that investigations in the two ICTR cases transferred to France could be completed by the beginning of 2015.

ICTR:

ICTR completes detainee transfers: The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) on Wednesday handed former militia leader Bernard Munyagishari to the Rwandan authorities, marking the end of its transfers to national jurisdictions. The Court has now transferred a total of two accused to the Rwandan judicial authorities, while two cases are also awaiting trial in France. In addition, the ICTR has transferred to Rwanda the files of six other accused who are still at large. The Rwandan Ambassador to France welcomed these transfers to his country, saying it signalled international recognition of the Rwandan judicial system. He called on France to extradite all the Rwandan genocide suspects living on its territory to Kigali.

MICT:

Status of cases transferred to France: The Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (MICT) said in two evaluation reports published this week that investigations in the two ICTR cases transferred to France could be completed by the beginning of 2015. The cases of Father Wenceslas Munyeshyaka, former priest at the Sainte Famille church in Kigali, and former prefect of Gikongoro Laurent Bucyibaruta were transferred to France in 2007. The two men are currently living in France under judicial supervision. According to the MICT reports, judicial investigations in the Munyeshyaka case could be completed by the end of 2014 and in the Bucyibaruta case at the beginning of 2015.

MALI:

Presidential candidates urged to pledge support to ICC: The Malian Human Rights Association (AMDH) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) urged candidates in this Sunday's Malian presidential elections to pledge their support to the ICC's investigations in their country. The two organizations called on the 27 candidates to commit to "promoting and guaranteeing independent and impartial investigations into violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, notably by cooperating with the regional and international bodies charged with fighting impunity such as the International Criminal Court".