

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Thursday, 12 September 2013

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Salone Times

Thursday, 12 September 2013

Taylor's Appeals Judgement Ready Sept. 26

Freetown, Sept. (SLENA)- A recent press release issued out by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) Outreach and Public Affairs office in Freetown has disclosed that judges of the Special Court's Appeals Chamber will deliver their appeal judgment in the trial of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor on Thursday 26th September in the Hague.

Sierra Leoneans would recall that on 26th April 2012, the Judges of Trial Chamber Two (2) found Mr. Taylor guilty on all counts of 11-count indictment. The Judges declared unanimously that he had participated in the planning of crimes, and of aiding and abetting crimes committed by rebel forces in Sierra Leone.

On 30th May 2012, the Trial Chamber sentenced him to a term of 50 years imprisonment.

The press statement also disclosed that the Defence appealed against the judgement and sentence on 42 grounds, arguing that the Trial Chamber had made systematic errors in the evaluation of evidence and in the application of law sufficiently serious to "reverse all findings of guilt entered against him" and to vacate the judgement. The Defence also argued that the 50 year sentence was "manifestly unreasonable".

The Release further stated that the Prosecution



had also appealed on (4) grounds, arguing that Mr. Taylor should have been found individually criminally responsible for ordering and instigating crimes committed by rebels in Sierra Leone.

The Prosecution also asked the Appeals Chamber to reverse the Trial Chamber's finding that crimes committed in certain areas of the Five Districts fell outside the scope of the indictment, and argued that the 50 year sentence was not "reflective of the inherent gravity of the totality of his criminal conduct and overall culpability" and should be increased to 80 years.

Charles Taylor was tried on an 11 count indictment, alleging (as violations of Article Three (3) common to The Geneva Conventions and of additional Protocol Two (2) acts of terrorism, murder, outrages upon personal dignity, cruel treatment and pillage (as crime against humanity) murder, rape, sexual slavery, other inhumane acts and enslavement, (as other serious violation of international humanitarian law) the conscription, enlistment or use of child soldiers.

BP/SLENA

The New Dawn (Monrovia)

Wednesday, 11 September 2013

Liberia: German Scholar Publishes Book On Liberia

A German scholar, Dr. Felix Gerdes, has written a book on Liberia's transition from war to peace titled, "Civil War and State Formation: The Political Economy of War and Peace in Liberia."

The book, published by the University of Chicago Press in the United States, comes as Liberia has just celebrated ten years of relatively peace and stability. Dr. Gerdes presents results of several years of research on Liberia's political development during and after 14 years of civil war.

The publication investigates the dynamics of the civil crisis and trends of the past ten years, while questioning some widely held ideas, including the First Civil War (1898-1996).

The German scholar challenged the idea that former President Charles Taylor became the most powerful warlord in Liberia merely because of ruthlessness and immense gains from natural resource exports.

According to him, Taylor's profits were often overestimated by observers yet the convicted ex-President was more widely popular than many would like to admit.

"The willingness of Liberians to support and follow him (Taylor) accounted for much of his strength. Taylor's popularity cannot be well understood by examining his deeds but by what he represented. And to many Liberians; Charles Taylor did not so much represent the greed and brutality of war, but the aspiration for a better future", the author told The NewDawn recently via email.

On Taylor's fall, the book dismisses the idea that it was first of all caused by outside forces, although his bad relations with important regional rulers were an important element.

"More importantly, however, Taylor failed to overcome old enmities and his regime eroded internally as too few indeed experienced the better future they had expected; new rivalries developed and disillusionment grew", the book narrated.

On recent elections here, Dr. Gerdes maintained that the elections of 2005 and 2011 were truly won by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, noting that her first elections victory was due to having built a better network of supporters from important segments of society.

He observed that Madam Sirleaf's campaign process integrated rebels and former government elites, but was strongly rooted in the civilian Liberian society, making it remarkably inclusive, integrative and capable of attracting votes.

Commenting on Liberia's post-transition regime; the German Fellow said that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf faced enormous challenges when she took over saying, "The question was not so much which policies to pursue but finding the capacities that would allow the government to actually govern.

There was no structure through which to exercise authority. The civil service lay in ruins and elites were guarding their personal vested interests first of all. However, elite resistance against reform is strong and corruption deeply engrained in Liberia's political order, limiting powers of the president and progress of

reform." Dr. Gerdes however says the country might face a better future and prospects are not too bad, adding that Liberia is nowadays a far cry from the strict barriers between "Congo" and "Country" that were still in force in the 1970s, much less divided than in the 1980s, and the violence that characterized the 1990s is now hardly imaginable.

According to him, while life is still tough for most Liberians, they are much freer than they were historically, and have more opportunities to organize politically, express their opinion, and put pressure on their leaders to put them on the right tract.

N.J. Congressman's bill creating Syrian war crimes tribunals gains bipartisan support



By Christopher Robbins/NJ.com



Legislation calling for a non-military response to Syria's use of chemical weapon sponsored by Rep. Chris Smith (R-4th) has been introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives with bipartisan support. Provided by Chris Smith

WASHINGTON— A New Jersey Congressman’s proposal to address the ongoing Syrian chemical weapons crisis is gaining traction in the U.S. House of Representatives

A bipartisan group of congressmen has introduced legislation authored by Rep. Chris Smith (R-4th) calling for the establishment of a war crimes tribunal to investigate and prosecute “war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, whether committed by officials of the Government of Syria, or members or other groups involved in civil war in Syria.”

“There is a non-lethal way to help ensure that Bashar al-Assad and other perpetrators of atrocities in Syria are held to account—not someday far in the future—but beginning now,” Smith said in a Tuesday evening press release. “A Syrian War Crimes Tribunal is an effective alternative to missiles and bombs that carry huge risks of killing or maiming innocent civilians and exacerbating the conflict—all while putting American service members at risk.”

Eight Republicans have teamed with two Democrats to co-sponsor the bill.

The resolution, H.Con.Res. 51, urges the President to “use our voice and vote” at the U.N. to create the Syrian War Crimes Tribunal. Smith referenced past war crimes tribunals including courts in Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda that have made a difference. He noted that all three were established after hostilities ended but said waiting would be a mistake.

“A new sense of urgency and commitment requires initiating investigations and prosecutions now in order to send a clear message to genociders—and all those just following orders—that such barbaric behavior has dire personal consequences,” Smith said.

As President Barack Obama argued that force is needed to deter the future use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere in a televised address, Smith said the need for action does not equate to the need for force.

“Each day, the Obama team grows shriller suggesting that not using military force constitutes doing nothing,” Smith said. “It’s a false choice that ignores the fact that wielding powerful weapons against

Syria is fraught with potentially disastrous consequences not just inside the war-torn country but throughout the region.”

Smith has also questioned whether an American military strike in Syria will aid religious extremists embedded amongst the revolution’s opposition forces.

“In the President’s rush to bomb, no one knows for sure whether U.S. strikes will mitigate or exacerbate the violence,” Smith said. “With the rebels’ ranks swelling with Al-Qaeda extremists, does military action by the United States help or hinder any future transition to humane and responsible governance in a free Syria?”

Smith also addressed skeptics, arguing that a tribunal is less likely to face a veto from Russia or China in the U.N. Security Council than military strikes, opening the door for an international response.

“With a herculean diplomatic push by the United States and other interested nations, past success in creating war crimes courts can indeed be prologue,” Smith said. “Notwithstanding Russia’s solidarity with Serbia during the war in the Balkans, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia now in its 20th year, passed unanimously. Ditto for the special court in Sierra Leone in 2002. The Rwanda tribunal was created in 1994 with China choosing to abstain rather than veto.”

Smith joins a chorus of conservative and liberal leaders pressuring the White House to consider alternative responses to a missile strike in Syria.

“It’s time to switch gears, Mr. President,” Smith said. “Fight to establish the Syria war crimes court and hold both Assad and the rebels who commit egregious crimes to account.”

Smith, a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, announced that he will vote against authorizing President Obama’s plans for military strikes in Syria. At a Capitol Hill hearing last week, Smith questioned Secretary of State John Kerry about the Administration’s record on human rights, especially and including in Syria.

Amnesty International
 Wednesday, 11 September 2013

Kenya: Cooperate fully with International Criminal Court trials

The Kenyan authorities must cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court (ICC) to ensure justice is done for the victims of the 2007-8 post-election violence, Amnesty International said today ahead of the opening in The Hague of the trial of Deputy President William Ruto and broadcaster Joshua arap Sang.

“The start of the ICC trial is an important opportunity to end impunity for the serious crimes committed in 2007/2008. Kenya must cooperate fully with the ICC and support its work to ensure a fair and effective process for the defendants, victims and witnesses, and for the Kenyan people,” said Netsanet Belay, Amnesty International’s Africa programme director.

“Six years after post-election violence rocked the country, it is high time to prioritize the pursuit of justice for the hundreds and thousands of people who lost their lives or homes.”

In 2009, the ICC Prosecutor stepped in to investigate crimes committed during the post-election violence, when the Court established that Kenya had failed to show it was taking adequate measures to investigate and prosecute the crimes which killed more than 1,000 people and displaced 600,000.



Kenyan Vice President William Ruto is due to face the International Criminal Court tomorrow.

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 LIESHOUT/AFP/Getty
 Images

Although the Kenyan authorities have stated that they will cooperate with the ICC, they have also made determined attempts before the United Nations Security Council, the African Union and most recently Kenya’s Parliament to undermine and derail the ICC’s work to pursue justice for these crimes.

“The government’s recent efforts to politicize the ICC trials are deplorable, and must not be allowed to affect the commencement and future proceedings of this landmark trial,” said Netsanet Belay.

“The authorities should focus their energy on ensuring justice, truth and reparation for the victims of many other crimes that the ICC is not able to deal with.”

Deputy-President William Ruto and broadcaster Joshua arap Sang are accused of crimes against humanity including murder, forcible population transfer, and persecution.

They are appearing voluntarily before the ICC on summons, and must continue to cooperate fully with the

proceedings, including attending the hearings as instructed. Failure to attend hearings could lead to the Court issuing arrest warrants which would require their surrender and possible detention in The Hague.

Risks relating to witnesses, including intimidation and interference with obtaining their testimony, have emerged as a significant challenge to the ICC's proceedings in Kenya. This situation has already led to some witnesses withdrawing from the ICC's cases.

In the last three months, four witnesses have withdrawn their cooperation from the trials – some citing security concerns.

“It is an extremely difficult environment for witnesses and victims who want to engage with the ICC's process. Any reports of witness interference or intimidation should be duly investigated by the ICC Prosecutor to determine whether they amount to offences against the administration of justice in the ICC Statute,” said Netsanet Belay.

“The ICC has a responsibility to protect victims and witnesses and Kenya has an obligation to cooperate fully with its protection efforts and any investigations it conducts into interference or intimidation.”

The Daily Star

Tuesday, 10 September 2013

STL trial judge resigns

By Kareem Shaheen

BEIRUT: The head of the trial chamber at the tribunal prosecuting the alleged killers of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri resigned Tuesday, the court said in a statement.

Judge Robert Roth's resignation is the latest high-profile departure from the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which is preparing to try in absentia four Hezbollah members accused of carrying out the 14 February 2005 attack that killed Hariri and 22 others.



*Trial Chamber President Judge Robert Roth.
(The Daily Star/STL, HO)*

Roth was elected in 2011 as the presiding judge of the trial chamber.

The court's registrar, Herman von Hebel, stepped down in March after being appointed to the International Criminal Court.

The resignation sheds doubts on whether the STL will be able to meet its schedule for the start of the trial in January. The court can appoint one of two alternate judges to the chamber, including Judge Walid Akoum who is from Lebanon.

The STL said the resignation would not impact trial preparation.

"The resignation of Judge Roth does not impede the preparations that are currently under way for a fair and expeditious trial," the court said in statement. "The Special Tribunal for Lebanon has mechanisms in place to ensure that its mandate is met, including the possibility of assigning an Alternate Judge in the event of a resignation."

The Daily Star

Thursday, 12 September 2013

STL defense criticizes state over cooperation

BEIRUT: The lawyers of a Hezbollah commander accused of involvement in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri criticized the Lebanese government Wednesday for its failure to cooperate as they prepare for trial in January.

At a hearing, the pretrial judge at the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, Daniel Fransen, said he had sent a letter to the president of the Lebanese Court of Cassation asking for cooperation after defense counsel repeatedly expressed frustration over Lebanon's collaboration with the court.

Lawyers for Mustafa Badreddine said there was an "absence of cooperation from the Lebanese authorities." Badreddine, along with three other Hezbollah members, will be tried in absentia early next year in The Hague.

Lawyers for Hussein Oneissi, another one of the accused, said that most of the Hariri case file compiled by the Lebanese authorities, which comprises the "core" of the prosecution's case, had yet to be translated from Arabic.

Read more: <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2013/Sep-12/230962-stl-defense-criticizes-state-over-cooperation.ashx#ixzz2efYnjIz7>

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