

**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, 5 November 2013

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Outreach and Public Affairs

Local NewsSierra Leone Supports ICC & ICJ / *New Citizen*

Page 3

International News'Taylor Behind Bars in Britain Alongside Notorious Murderers, Others' / *AFP*

Pages 4-5

Sierra Leone Ruling Seen as Landmark for Justice / *Institute for War and Peace Reporting*

Pages 6-9

Sierra Leone Supports ICC & ICJ

By Chernor Ojuku Sesay

Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and Head of Mission to the European Union has said the country would continue to support both the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to curb perpetrators of wars and human rights abusers.

Ambassador Ibrahim Sorie made these remarks to both King Alexander Williams of The Netherlands and Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission whilst presenting the Letters of Recall of his predecessor and his Letters of Credence to both on Wednesday, October 30 and Monday, November 4 respectively.

The Sierra Leone envoy informed both that his country is a direct beneficiary of international justice through which the country was able to attain peace and those with the greatest responsibilities for those heinous crimes committed during the country's eleven-year old civil war brought to justice and now behind bars.

"The government and people of Sierra Leone are grateful to the government and people of The Netherlands for not only hosting these two important international courts, but for also accommodating thousands of Sierra Leoneans who fled the country during those dark days of our crisis", he told the King.

Ambassador Sorie informed both leaders of his country's progress so far in the areas of maintaining peace, stability, good governance, human rights, rule of law, women's empowerment, fight against graft, mining and agriculture, adding that there are positive prospects for Sierra Leone to become an oil producing country in the next two or

three years which he hoped will significantly improve the human capital of Sierra Leoneans.

He thanked President Barroso for the European Commission's indicative envelope of the 11th EDF package which has been increased to 370 million euros in the next seven years and further outlined some of the major contributions of the EU to the country including roads infrastructural development, agriculture, environment, health sector, decentralised service delivery programmes and support to the National Electoral Commission.

Both leaders extend fraternal greetings to the President, government and people of Sierra Leone, emphasising the need for the continent to remain supportive of the efforts of both the ICC and ICJ.

President Barroso added that the European Commission will continue to assist Sierra Leone in all areas including the fight against corruption, the efforts of which he commended the government adding that he looked forward to once again meeting President Koroma in April next year in Brussels.

In a related development, Ambassador Sorie on Tuesday, October 22 also presented his Letters of Credence to Grand Duke Henri of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg where he emphasised the shift in his country's diplomatic policies from the usual reception or cocktail style of diplomacy to economic diplomacy and reassured the Duke of the continued strengthening of bilateral ties between the two countries.

Meanwhile, in a rather solemn mood, the Head of Chancery at the Sierra Leone Embassy in Brussels, Haja



Ambassador Ibrahim Sorie presenting Letters of Recall to President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso

Fatmatta Binta Wurie has bid farewell to staff of the Embassy as her tour of duties come to an end. She left Brussels on Tuesday, November 5.

Agence France-Presse

Thursday, 7 November 2013

‘Taylor behind bars in Britain alongside notorious murderers, others’

IF the claims of the family of Liberia’s former warlord, Charles Taylor, are anything to be trusted, he is currently being held in one of Britain’s highest security prisons, alongside notorious murderers, terrorists, psychopaths and paedophiles.



The facility, HMP Frankland, near the northeastern English city of Durham, houses 800 of the most dangerous offenders in the prison system and is the jail where double child-murderer, Ian Huntley, had his throat slashed by inmates three years ago.

“He is being incarcerated in Frankland prison,” Taylor’s wife, Victoria Addison Taylor, told Agence France Presse (AFP)

Wednesday.

The revelation by Taylor’s wife was the first indication of the former president’s whereabouts.

“They took him to this prison where high (risk) criminals, terrorists and other common British criminals are kept and he is being classified as a high risk prisoner... He is going through humiliation and you cannot treat a former head of state that way,” she added.

It would be recalled that the 65-year-old former president in September lost his appeal over a catalogue of gruesome acts committed by the Sierra Leonean rebels he aided and abetted during that country’s 1991-2001 civil war – one of the most brutal in modern history.

He was transferred to an unnamed prison in Britain last month.

However, Frankland is the largest of five high-security prisons in England and Wales, where inmates included the two men jailed for the high-profile murder of British police officer, Sharon Beshenivsky.

The prison previously held Harold Shipman, one of the most prolific serial killers in recorded history, blamed for up to 250 murders, who hanged himself in HMP Wakefield in January 2004.

Huntley, 39, jailed for life for the 2002 murders of 10-year-old school friends – Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman – was rushed to hospital in 2010 after being found lying in a pool of blood at Frankland, his throat slashed with a makeshift knife.

In 2011, two prisoners disembowelled 23-year old Mitchell Harrison, who had been convicted for raping a 13-year old girl.

Also, triple killer, Kevan Thakrar, stabbed three prison guards several months earlier while British Al-Qaeda activist, Eesa Bharot, needed a skin graft after he was attacked with hot oil and boiling water by fellow inmates in 2007.

Taylor is likely to spend the rest of his life behind bars after the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) in The Hague upheld his 50-year sentence in September.

His landmark sentence on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity was the first handed down by an international court against a former head of state since the Nazi trials at Nuremberg in 1946.

The British government had offered in 2007 to house Taylor in a British jail if he was convicted, and to cover the costs of his imprisonment.

As Liberia's president from 1997 to 2003, Taylor was accused of supplying guns and ammunition to rebels in neighbouring Sierra Leone in a conflict notorious for its mutilations, drugged child soldiers and sex slaves.

He was found guilty of supporting the rebels during a civil war that claimed 120,000 lives between 1991 and 2002, in exchange for "blood diamonds" mined by slave labour.

Meanwhile, Taylor's wife said she was getting information on her husband's poor treatment from his British-based daughter from a previous marriage, Charlene Taylor, who has spoken to the former president once since he was moved to Frankland.

His current wife told AFP he was being subjected to daily strip searches, denied a blanket in his cell and believed there was a plot to have him killed.

The British government dismissed as "utter nonsense" claims made in October by a spokesman for the Taylor family that the ex-warlord was being treated badly in jail.

But the leader of his NPP party in Liberia this week threatened Britons living in the West African nation with reprisals over his treatment.

"If they try to make Taylor uncomfortable where he is, we can make Liberia very uncomfortable for some of their citizens through our traditional values," NPP Chairman, Cyril Allen, told journalists in the capital, Monrovia.

"They are roaming around our interiors, they are roaming around our country, and this government cannot protect them.

"You cannot take our traditional leader and treat him like a common British criminal. If they don't stop treating our (leader) in a manner that is unacceptable to us, we are going to fight back," he warned.

A British justice ministry spokesman said the department wouldn't confirm the locations of individual prisoners.

However, a government source told AFP: "He's a convicted prisoner and will be treated as a convicted prisoner. There's no special treatment accorded to him because of his former status."

Institute for War and Peace Reporting

Wednesday, 6 November 2013

Sierra Leone Ruling Seen as Landmark for Justice

Experts say handling of Charles Taylor case has far-reaching implications.

By Danielle Cohen Henriquez, Casper van Gemert - International Justice - ICC
ACR Issue 371,

The decision by appeals judges to uphold the war crimes conviction of former Liberian president Charles Taylor has been welcomed as a milestone for international justice, and one that might set a precedent for other courts.

Despite a ruling seen as a success, advocates of justice and people who suffered directly from the widespread atrocities committed in Sierra Leone's 11-year war say more still needs to be done to heal the wounds.

On September 26, judges confirmed the 50-year sentence handed to Taylor in May 2012 by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) for aiding and abetting five counts of war crimes and six counts of crimes against humanity during the civil war. He was convicted of crimes of terrorism, murder, mutilation, rape, sexual slavery, pillage, enslavement and the use of child soldiers between 1996 and 2002.

As Liberian leader, Taylor was found to have supported to the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Appeals judges agreed with the trial judgement which found that Taylor supplied the rebels with weapons and ammunition, military personnel, and sustained operational support. It was established that members of the two groups systematically killed, raped and mutilated tens of thousands of people, and recruited thousands of children to be used as soldiers, often forcing them to carry out killings.

Judges said that Taylor's actions amounted to "some of the most heinous and brutal crimes recorded in human history".

On October 15, he was transferred to a prison in Britain where he will serve his sentence.

The SCSL was established in 2002 after Sierra Leone's government asked the United Nations to help hold to account those responsible for atrocities committed during the war.

The court was run jointly by the government and the UN, and it prosecuted those responsible for grave breaches of both international humanitarian law and Sierra Leone's own legislation. It functioned in the capital Freetown, but a decision was taken to hold the Taylor trial in The Hague because of security concerns in west Africa.

The court has convicted 16 people to date, including RUF commander Issa Sesay, and Brima Bazzy Kamara of the AFRC. They were sentenced to 52 and 46 years in jail, respectively.

One of those indicted by the SCSL, Johnny Paul Koroma, has yet to be captured and tried. It is not clear whether he is still alive.

For victims, the Taylor ruling has provided some sense of justice.

Abu Fofanah was 17 when rebels broke into his house and shot his father dead before his eyes. Abu Fofanah was in the public gallery of the courtroom in The Hague on September 26 to see judges confirm Taylor's 50-year sentence.

"When his sentence was pronounced, this was a very emotional moment," he told IWPR. "Finally, after such hard times, someone who's directly responsible was put behind bars. And everyone in Sierra Leone agrees that a place behind bars is the only place for him."

Human rights groups, too, hailed Taylor's conviction.

Stephanie Barbour, head of Amnesty International's Centre for International Justice, told IWPR that the verdict was particularly significant as Taylor was the first ex-head of state convicted by an international court since the Nuremberg trials that followed the Second World War.

"It shows that no one is above the law," Barbour said. "The fact that his position of authority didn't provide him any immunity from being investigated, prosecuted and held accountable for these very serious crimes is a sign of how important the Special Court has been in the landscape of international criminal justice, and in developing a legacy of accountability for Sierra Leone."

But while the judgement was welcomed by supporters of international justice, some experts also point to the SCSL's limitations – it cannot try the many lower-level perpetrators, and it does not award compensation to victims.

As with most international courts, prosecutors at the Special Court targeted those in positions of leadership who they felt bore the greatest responsibility for the crimes concerned. While those who planned operations were brought to trial, those who actually carried out attacks on civilians were never prosecuted.

The 1999 Lomé Peace Accord signed by Sierra Leone's government and the RUF granted amnesty to all those who committed war crimes during the conflict. Only the SCSL had powers to overrule domestic amnesties, but it has not been able to prosecute more than a few perpetrators due to constraints of jurisdiction and restricted resources.

With the trials now over, the SCSL will be scaling down its staff in the coming months, and will focus on issues of witness protection, archives, and any reviews of sentences.

"Certainly, I think that there would have been great public support for many more cases," Barbour said. "But the Special Court could only bring in people who were bearing the greatest responsibility, and the prosecution adopted the strategy to look at the very top of leadership of the organisations in question. So to this day, many perpetrators of the crimes still enjoy impunity due to the amnesties granted under the Lomé Peace Accord."

According to Ibrahim Tommy, executive director of the Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law in Freetown, between 500 and 1,000 individuals still enjoy immunity from prosecution.

"Even if only 20 per cent of them would be held accountable for their crimes, it would really send a signal that this country is ready to move forward in justice and accountability," he said.

Barbour believes there would have been great public support for bringing many more cases at SCSL. In the absence of further prosecutions, she said, “Sierra Leone should consider repealing the amnesty law now, and prosecuting the very large number of lower-level and mid-level perpetrators who are still enjoying impunity for the war crimes and the crimes against humanity they committed.”

By contrast, the International Criminal Court in The Hague does have a reparations programme to accompany the judicial process.

Tommy said that while the verdict delivered against Taylor had been welcomed in Sierra Leone, an award of damages would have helped those affected by his crimes to rebuild their lives and move on from the conflict.

“Most people I’ve spoken to are glad to see justice done,” Tommy said. “As much as we’re happy to see Taylor being brought to justice, a lot more needs to be done to alleviate what’s happened during the war. Economic justice is needed. But most people are not optimistic that any meaningful help will be provided before they die. They see the verdict as purely judicial justice.”

Abu Fofanah shared Tommy’s concerns, arguing that compensation would have genuine practical meaning for the many who were injured in the war.

“We had expected that with the conviction of Charles Taylor, people would also receive some form of reparations,” he said. “People who’ve lost everything, people who’ve lost an arm or a foot, they can use reparations. But in my case, of course, that could never bring my father back. Because of Charles Taylor, I’ve lost half my youth.”

Despite these limitations, the Special Court still enjoys widespread support in Sierra Leone, which has been attributed to the court’s communication strategy and its success in making its work accessible to the general population.

This proved critical in not only bringing a sense of justice to victims of the civil war but also developing an understanding of who was behind the conflict and what exactly happened. According to Tommy, whose own organisation was set up in 2004 to inform the public about the work being done by the SCSL, outreach work also helped overcome early opposition to the justice process.

“Taylor was seen as a hero in the south of the country, so the court had to really explain itself,” he said. “But the court was in some ways very fortunate to have begun in the country where the crimes occurred. This was a very unique position, and it took full advantage of that in terms of outreach. Public information was provided through the use of radio stations. We would also have discussion sessions after each screening [of court proceedings]. Members of the public could thereby meet people involved in the court and ask them questions.”

Barbour believes that the SCSL should serve as a model for other international tribunals.

“If people don’t have the opportunity to see the proceedings, engage with judges, prosecutors and defence lawyers, and to hear them explain their work, then they’re unlikely to trust the outcome,” she said. “And that trust is very much dependent on understanding whether the process was fair in the first place. So outreach is absolutely critical. We often say that justice delayed is justice denied, but I believe that justice invisible is justice denied.”

Abu Fofanah said he regretted that fact that the men who killed his father will probably never be brought to justice. But he is hopeful that the impact of the Taylor case will stretch beyond Sierra Leone.

“I wish that the fighting that I have seen will never ever happen again in any country in the world,” he said. “I hope that all leaders, especially those in Africa, will look at the prison sentence of Taylor and see it as a lesson. You cannot do the things he did.”

Danielle Cohen Henriquez and Casper van Gemert attended a recent IWPR master class in journalism in The Hague.