

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



The beach at Lungi

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Thursday, 1 February 2007

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

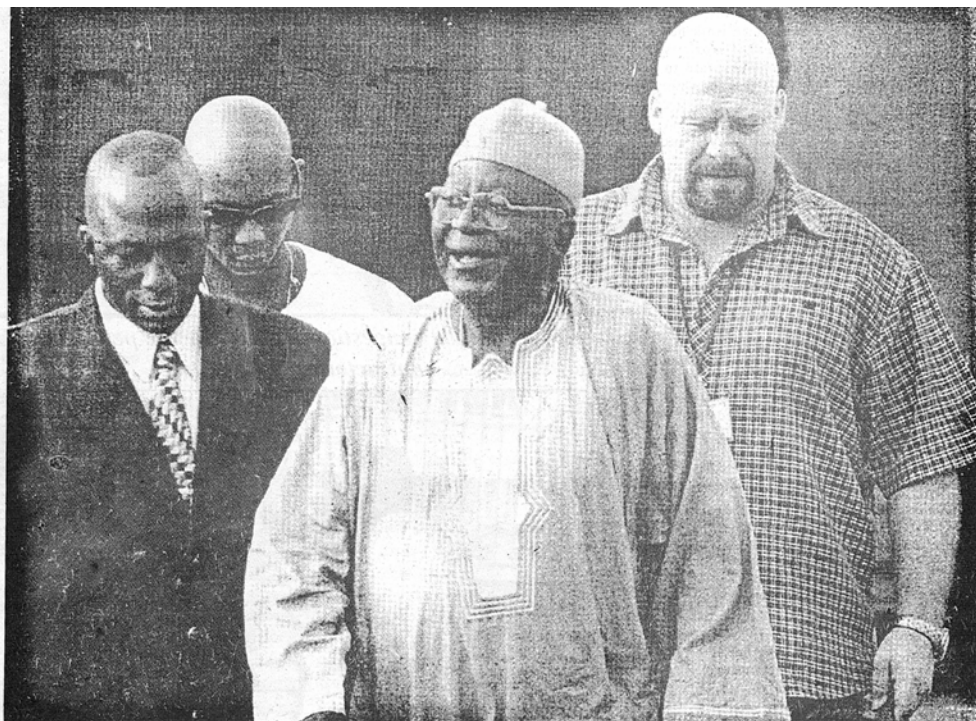
SLPP Hates Peace / <i>The African Champion</i>	Page 3
Norman Speaks / <i>The Exclusive</i>	Pages 4-5
Special Court Indictees Join Forces / <i>Standard Times</i>	Page 6
SLPMB Meets Registrar of Special Court / <i>The Exclusive</i>	Page 7
Lawyers Reject Government Proposal to Amend Act / <i>Concord Times</i>	Pages 8-9
Big Blow to The Judiciary... / <i>The Spark</i>	Page 10
Its Unjustified and Unnecessary – AG Told / <i>Awoko</i>	Page 11
When the Police Swallow Their Lies / <i>Awoko</i>	Page 12
Feeding the Public With Lies / <i>The News</i>	Page 13

International News

Liberia's Ex-President Taylor Trial Begins June / <i>Angola Press</i>	Page 14
Court trying Charles Taylor has Raised Half of Funds / <i>Associated Press</i>	Page 15
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 16-18
Trial of Former Chad Leader Hissene Habre to Be Delayed 3 Years / <i>Voice of America</i>	Page 19
Guinea Suspends Export of Foodstuffs / <i>The Patriotic Vanguard</i>	Page 20
Former African Presidents' Trials Mark Milestones / <i>Mail and Guardian Online</i>	Pages 21-22

The African Champion

Thursday, 1 February 2007



Chief Hinga Norman and Issa Sesay recently led by Special Court officers to the heliport for Senegal

SLPP HATES PEACE

A press release from the erstwhile commander in chief of the Civil Defense Forces, Chief Sam Hinga Norman and the other eight indictees of the Special Court for Sierra Leone now in detention have accused the ruling Government of bearing the greatest responsibility for the current problems in the country - "That we know that the only dividing force that bears the greatest responsibility for the current problems in our country, Sierra Leone, is the Government of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP)" they stated.

The press release dated Thursday, 11th January 2007 signed by Sam Hinga Norman, Moinina Fofana, and Alieu Musa Kondewa for the CDF, Issa Hassan Sesay, Augustine Gbow, and Morris Kallon for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu for the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) stated inter alia that, "We are fully aware of the current political dispensation and trends in the affairs of our beloved country, Sierra Leone." They went on to state that, "We



SLPP leader Solomon Berewa

have each been held in confinement and pain for the past several years by the Special Court for Sierra Leone regardless of our efforts to bring peace, unity, stability and security to our country, Sierra Leone, whilst those who we believe bear greatest responsibility for the events of the civil war in our country, are either dead or still out there with you." Heralding their submission on a high patriotic note, the indictees go on to state that, "Because we love our country; because we love peace, unity and stability for our country; because we believe in the development of our country and the welfare of our people; and above all,

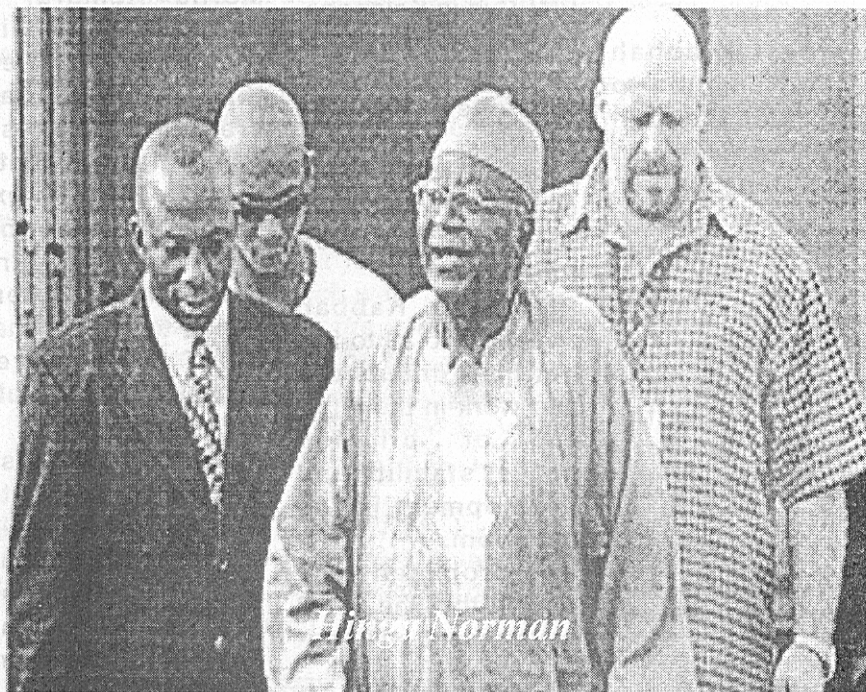
because we believe that the present SLPP Government does not stand for peace, reconciliation, unity, stability and the development of our country and our people, we hereby unite and state as follows: That we have put all our individual differences aside to support a single Political Party of our choice in the forthcoming elections." In this regard, they state clearly, "That like us, we urge our supporters, sympathizers, friends, relations and well-wishers to support the People's Democratic Movement for Change (PMDC), which is the only Political Party we jointly and individually believe in to save our country, Sierra Leone, and bring peace, reconciliation, unity, love and stability to our nation." On that high note, while requesting the PMDC to accept their membership, the release went on to state, "We urge the PMDC Party to spread this message far and wide within Sierra Leone and beyond to the international community, our friends, well-wishers, sympathizers, relations and supporters."

The Exclusive
Thursday, 1 February 2007

Norman Speaks

The present hot and deadly battle between the SLPP and PMDC over which of the two rival parties enjoy the allegiance of Special Court indictee and former Deputy Defence Minister and coordinator of the 'kamajor'

Contd. page 2



Norman Speaks!

From front page

militia, chief Sam Hinga Norman, has forced the Chief to break his silence.

'LET THEM LEAVE ME ALONE'

The Exclusive met close family members of Chief Norman and asked them where the detained chief stands in this brutal battle for his allegiance for the two parties.

A family member told our reporter that Chief Norman has asked them to; "tell the SLPP and PMDC to leave me alone ... is it now that they know my importance," Chief Norman was quoted as having said.

SA. LEONEANS CONFUSED!

The electorate are confused about the double speak coming from the SLPP

and the PMDC. The SLPP had long put out a press statement announcing that Chief Norman has officially declared for VP Berewa and the SLPP.

Then yesterday, the PMDC put out a press statement in its mouthpiece 'Positive Change' announcing that Chief Sam Hinga Norman, Moinina Fofana, Allieu Musa Kondewa (civil defence force CDF); Issa Hassan Sesay, Augsutine Gbao, Morris Kallon (RUF); Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara and Santigie Bobor Kanu (AFRC) have declared for the PMDC. (The press statement was signed by the above mentioned persons).

Reason for confusion

This is the reason for

all the confusion because the public out there do not quite know who is telling the truth -SLPP or PMDC, as to which of the two Chief Hinga Norman; belongs.

NORMAN SUPPORT FOR SLPP

Besides, a couple of months ago, Chief Norman put out a spectacular statement which was widely publicized; calling on all his former CDF militia, his numerous supporters, sympathizers relatives and friends and his entire family at home and abroad not to go over to any other party; that they should remain in the SLPP as the SLPP is the only party that can take this country forward. So, the people want to know where the truth lies!

2007 Presidential & Parliamentary Race

SPECIAL COURT INDICTEES JOIN FORCES?

It has been widely reported that all nine current indictees of the Special Court in Sierra Leone have issued a press statement and signed a document linking them, as it were, inextricably to the newly formed political party PMDC (Peoples Movement for Democratic Change). This group of indictees comprises the Civil Defence Force (CDF) commonly called Kamajors; the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC).

These persons are alleged to bear the greatest responsibility for the rebel war in Sierra Leone.

What an irony! What a feat of revelation, that the most important persons alleged to have spear-headed mayhem in this country have all come together now to live in one camp from where they could be capable of exploding yet another dynamite.

The interim leader lost his attempt to grab the leadership of the SLPP at Bintumani in 1995 and immediately left the SLPP to join the NUP with a view to head it. He subsequently returned to

the SLPP and became a minister, but could not see eye to eye with the President who was also leader of the party, and resigned. A few months before the SLPP national convention the interim leader of PMDC again opted for the leadership of the SLPP.

But alas! Once again he failed by a large margin, 291 voters against to 34 vote in his favour.

Yet again, the interim leader left the SLPP and formed a new political party- Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC). The nation has yet to know what PMDC wants to change- lets have it now, clean and clear.

But this nation must not forget to note that as minister with the SLPP government then, he created, maintained and implemented policies formulated and agreed by the SLPP government- collective responsibility. The change he appears to advocate is a change from that he helped to create or

establish.

With Chief Hinga Norman of erstwhile fame also desirous, as it was rumoured then, to lead the SLPP while the government was in exile in Guinea, now incarcerated in a Special Court residence for indictees, as a consequent of the 11 year rebel war, and Chief Hinga Norman joining hands with his adversaries, the RUF and Armed Forces Revolutionary is likely to create anxiety in society gradually for what might foment trouble in Sierra Leone once again.

From these new developments it is becoming clear that lessons learnt as a result of the war have not gone down well into the bowels of future inheritance.

The PMDC determination seemingly, through the views of certain parts of the country (Sierra Leone) should be taken seriously

The Exclusive
Thursday, 1 February 2007

Guest Writer

On Thursday 7 December 2006, Mohamed Suma and Allieu Vandi Koroma, Programme Director and Monitor in charge of high profile cases respectively of the Sierra Leone Court Monitoring Programme (SLCMP) caught up with the Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Mr. Lovemore S. Munlo, at his Jomo Kenyatta Road office in Freetown.

During their conversation, salient issues regarding update on the trial process, the transfer of Charles Taylor to The Hague, increasing Sierra Leonean access to the trial process, the legacy of the Court especially to the people of Sierra Leone, what happens next after the mandate of the Court and challenges encountered so far in the management and administration of the Court were discussed.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) was set up by an Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations by virtue of Security Council Resolution 1315 of 14 August 2000. It was mandated to prosecute persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996, including those leaders who, in committing such crimes, have threatened the establishment of and implementation of the peace process in Sierra Leone.

The Registrar is responsible for the overall administration and management of the court. It provides support services to the Trial Chambers. The Office of the prosecutor and the Defence Office serve as the official channel of communication for the court. This article therefore recounts mainly what the Registrar said to the SLCMP staff.

Update on the Trial Process

Giving an update on the trials, Mr. Munlo said that there were 9 accused persons on trial in Freetown namely: Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF); Sam Hinga Norman, Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF); and Alex Tamba Brima, Santigie Borbor Khanu and Ibrahim Bazy Kamara of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). He said that the CDF and AFRC trials were nearing completion stage; witnesses have been heard, evidences tendered and closing arguments presented by

SLPMB Meet Registrar Of Special Court

both and prosecution and Defence Counsel. He said: "we've moved very far; what remains now is judgment." According to him, when the judges come back in January after the recess, they would be writing the judgments. He also presumed that verdicts would be delivered by mid 2007. He said he had already gone entered an agreement with Senegal for the treatment of the detainees when the need arises.

Transfer of Charles Taylor to The Hague

On the issue of the transfer of Charles Taylor to The Hague, Netherlands, Mr. Munlo said that the circumstances surrounding Charles Taylor's arrest would be carefully looked into considering the capricious situation in the country and the sub region, especially when people have been caught taking pictures of the Court's infrastructure. It was advised by professional security personnel that Taylor should be tried elsewhere. According to the professional security personnel, there is the tendency for supporters of Charles Taylor to try and disrupt the trial process thereby causing instability which might have far reaching effects. Consequently he added, the United Nations Security Council made a resolution for the transfer of Charles Taylor to The Hague, a decision which cannot be reversed. He said that Sierra Leoneans should not bury their heads in the sand and become oblivious of the harsh realities. He therefore implored all Sierra Leoneans to look at the issue of Taylor's transfer in the interest of peace and regional stability rather than in the interest of politics.

Increase Access to the Taylor Trial

On the issue of increased access to the trial process, Mr. Munlo said that prior to Mr. Taylor's transfer to the Special Court, court officials and the Outreach coordinator visited Liberia in July 2004 and held meetings with members of the Legislature, the Transitional Government, civil society and Sierra Leonean refugees. After Mr. Taylor's arrest and transfer to the Special Court, two low profile consultation visits with Liberian civil society

Contd. page 5

SLPMB Meet Registrar Of Special Court

From page 7

officials were made by members of the Outreach section of the SCSL. Liberian civil society groups, as part of an experience sharing meeting between Sierra Leonean Civil Society, officials of the Court and Liberians, also visited the Special Court in October and an outcome document was derived recommending joint outreach strategy for the sub region.

An Outreach Secretariat has been set up in Liberia by 23 civil society groups, including Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia, Liberia, NGO Network, Liberia Muslim Council, etc.

Technical and financial support has been provided by SCSL for implementation of outreach programme, including Radio talk-shows, meetings with civil society, television shows, and screening of trial clips. Equipment has been procured to assist them in their work.

He said that following meetings with the Vice President, the Minister of Justice, and other Liberian Government Ministers who were fully supportive of their work; an official launching was to take place on 7 Dec. 2006 in Monrovia presided over by an EU representative whilst the key-note address was to be given by Liberia's Minister of Justice.

Concord Times
Thursday, 1 February 2007

Salone News

By Michael Bockarie

Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA) has frowned at government's intention to amend Section 24 of the Legal Practitioners Act 2000 paving the way for unqualified person to prepare and draw up

Lawyers reject govt proposal to amend Act

Memorandum and Articles of Association of Companies, a press statement form SLBA

states Wednesday. The Bar Association said that they were notified by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice,

Fredrick Carew in a letter dated 18 January 2007 and at a general meeting convened on Monday 29 January 2007, the proposed amendment was rejected in its entirety.

stated, adding that the Legal Practitioners Act 2000 now sought to be amended is an act dealing with the 'admission,' enrolment, practice and discipline of legal practitioners.

necessitated the said proposed amendment have not been divulged or canvassed to the Association or to be the public for that matter; nor have any findings, reports, recommendations of any research communicated to the Association," the statement disclosed, adding that members of the Bar Association are seeking to act in the best interest of the country and its development.

The release stated that any attempt to amend the Act would have included their inputs, comments, contributions, views and concerns.

I'm not interested in lawyers' strike

...Attorney General

By Regina Pratt

Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Fredrick Carew told Concord Times Wednesday through his Confidential Secretary that he is not interested in the proposed strike action by the Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA).

This statement was made at the AG's Law Officers Department office at Lamina Sankoh Street, Freetown

The lawyers are protesting against government's intention to amend Section 24 of the Legal Practitioners Act 2000

that would permit unqualified persons to prepare and draw up Memorandum and Articles of Association of Companies.

"AG said he is not interested in the matter," she relayed the message.

Eku Roberts, President of SLBA said the action would start today (Thursday) and it would last for two days, adding this is not the first time lawyers are taking such an action.

"This is for the benefit of all legal practioners," Roberts said.

He appealed to all their clients to be patient with them.

Eddie Turay, a legal practioner said he whole heartedly support the stance taken by the association, and adds, "it is wrong, as they cannot debased the legal profession."

Turay said the AG would not expect a lawyer to go and approve a site plan for a land. "I totally opposed the amendment document that Carew is preparing", he said.

A client, John Conteh said his was shocked to hear that lawyers would be going on a strike action.

"It was in consideration of the nature of the instruments, the serious legal implications that would emerge in the event of litigation and the need to protect the interest of the public that preparation of Memorandum and Articles of Association was reserved to be prepared by only qualified persons," the release

The association, the release stated, seriously regretted the fact that meeting and discussions leading to the proposed amendment were held between government and donors including the World Bank and the Department for International Development (DfID).

"The reasons and arguments that

The Spark
Thursday, 1 February 2007

Big blow to the Judiciary...

Strike Action Today!

By Santigie Kamara

As the long-drawn battle continues unabated between the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Fred Carew and members of the Sierra Leone Bar Association (SLBA) over the amendment of the Legal Practitioners Act of 2002, reports monitored by this press clearly indicate that lawyers have unanimously resolved to commence

a sit-down strike action today. In an exclusive interview with this press, the President of the Sierra Leone Bar Association, Mr. Eku Roberts maintained that the strike came about as a

result of an instruction given by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

Continued page 7

Strike Action Today!

From front page

ter of Justice Mr. Fred Carew to amend the Legal Practitioners Act which he said has something to do with the Memorandum and Articles of Association for companies.

Mr. Eku Roberts argued that such documents should only be signed by lawyers and that the proposed amendments should not be open to non-legally qualified people.

He expressed his disappointment over such an amendment especially when members of the Sierra Leone Bar Association workers were completely excluded from such amendment.

The President of the Bar Association also stated that the procedure of the any amendment must have the case to show members of the general public and lawyers whom he said are to primarily approve.

'There is no need for such amendment because the govern-

ment has not made out a case or produced any evidence to show that such an amendment is necessary' he added and pointed out that other professions have provisions restricting the preparation of certain instruments to qualified people.

Mr. Eku Roberts argued that if the government has any good reason for such an amendment they should have forwarded it to members of the Bar Association so that they too would make their inputs.

He however expressed his dismay over such amendment and noted that they have unanimously rejected the proposed amendment as they were not consulted.

The President of the Bar Association maintained that they have communicated their views and decisions to the Attorney General in writing as they have decided to suspend their representatives in the various commissions and bodies countrywide.

Awoko

Thursday, 1 February 2007

It's Unjustified & Unnecessary – AG told

By Samuel John

The Sierra Leone Bar Association which will embark on stay-away action from the Law Courts today has told the Attorney General in no uncertain terms that the proposed amendment to the Legal Practitioners Act 2000 is unjustified and unnecessary.

The association's scribe, Ms Glenna Thompson, emphasised that, "the association resents the fact that its members were never informed or involved in the deliberations leading to the decision to amend the said Act."

She maintained further that, "the association seriously regretted the fact that meetings and discussions leading to the proposed amendment were held by and between the government and 'donors'

(i.e. DFID, World Bank etc) but that the association was never invited or informed."

The Sierra Leone Bar Association, it was learnt yesterday, has written to the Attorney General and Minister of Justice expressing concern that "the sponsors of the said amendment have not made the case or arguments necessitating the same. The reasons and arguments have not been proffered to us or to the public for the matter; nor have any findings, reports, recommendations of any research been communicated to us."

The letter signed by the President, Eku Roberts, and his Vice Yada Williams, further opined that, "this we find seriously disturbing, especially so in the context of the fact that it was only a few days ago that the Legal Practitioners Act was enacted."

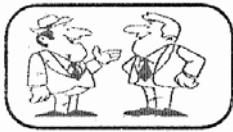
The legal luminaries are of the opinion that "we find no justification for the suggestion that the present situation, (Section 24 of the Act) has any effect on the speed and ease of registration of a company in Sierra Leone, nor is it a barrier to investment in this country."

Commenting further, the letter stated that as titular head of their association, "until we hear from you indicating that the proposed amendment is suspended until proper and sufficient consultations are held with the association..." and as Sierra Leoneans we are all seeking to act in the best interest of Sierra Leone and its development.

A similar letter was sent to the Chief Justice Dr. Ade Renner Thomas notifying him and the bench about their stay away from the courts for two days.

Awoko

Thursday, 1 February 2007



Awoko Tok Tok

When The Police Swallow Their Lies

When this medium on Saturday afternoon met and interviewed Abu Bakarr Sillah, the driver who was allegedly burnt with petrol by some members of the Sierra Leone Police Force's night patrol team in the early hours of Saturday 27th January 2007 in Freetown, we knew at once that he was not a truth-economist.

But when we tried to balance our story by asking the police's side, we realized that this "Our Force For Good" was still buffeted with its tricks of old. Looking us in the eyes, the Assistant Inspector General of Police, Tamba Gbekie, told us that, "tear gas is what my officers released...if there was any gunshot I am unable to determine where it came from, according to briefings from my officers teargas is what was released."

What made the whole incident (in which after the driver had been dosed with petrol which later led citizens confronting the police resulting into shots being fired and some people injured) interesting was when on Tuesday the Inspector General of Police, Brima Acha Kamara, accepted that indeed his men fired shots on that day. And to buttress that, another Assistant Inspector General of Police, Morie Lengor, confirmed that, "yes indeed two shots were fired and we accept and acknowledge that the gunshots came from the police personnel and not from civilians because the spent ammunition shells came from police weapons."

That is it. Members of the police hierarchy releasing the truth about last Saturday's episode in piecemeal. We wonder whether this admission is not a whitewashed version of what actually happened. Or whether "Our Force For Good" is not transforming itself into one for good lies?

First the police swore by every holy book on earth that its members were not involved in a Hollywood gangster-like operation on that day, and that it were the civilians who might have fired—should we say— Christmas firecrackers in the air?

Now that the police have swallowed their original lies about what happened last Saturday, we only hope they would be able to cough out the whole truth as we wait the outcome of their usual "the investigation is in progress."

The News

Thursday, 1 February 2007

MOTUBA'S CORNER



Feeding the public with lies

Police Headquarters yesterday put out a press release on the Cole farm incident that occurred over the week end. According to that release, the police alleged that on Saturday 27th January 2007, they got a call from a concerned citizen at Cole farm regarding illicit dealing in petrol.

According to them, considering the recent spate of fire incidents, they responded promptly to the call. The release went on to state that indeed someone was found in possession of a five-gallon rubber containing petrol and alleged that the person refused to handover the container to the police. The police also stated that the man who was in possession of the petrol sparked a lighter that caught the fire and so on.

In the first place is petrol an illegal commodity that should not be handled by anyone. According to them they got a call from someone telling them that petrol is illegally sold at Cole farm. The release is full of lies that the public will never believe the police.

In that statement the police denied setting ablaze a driver or shooting any body at the scene. If Motuba may ask did Sillah(Driver) set himself ablaze?

The release is really full of inconsistencies. Did the police read different newspapers this week? Did any of the papers write something contrary to what really happened? Did the police see the picture of Sillah on the front page in one of the newspapers before putting up the weak press release? Did the police want to say what AWOKO did by interviewing the victim was fake? Prosperity will judge the police if they refused to tell the public the true story.

Again the police deceived the public by saying no shots were fired. Did the police read The New Citizens on Monday where Sama explained how she sustained a gun shot wound?

The head of police also confirmed to the press that only two shots were fired. How did Sama sustain the wound during that time? Motuba wants to inform the public that the so-called press release is full of consistencies.

Angola Press

Thursday, 1 February 2007

Liberia's ex-president Taylor trial begins June

New York, UN, 02/01 - The trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor is billed to commence early June, the lead prosecutor of the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone has said.

Prosecutor Stephen Rapp told UN reporters in New York Tuesday that "Taylor, who is indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity will be put on trial beginning from June 4 at The Hague".

"The trial represents the vindication of the principle that no person, no matter what their position, is above the law," Rapp said.

He said that the trial will be conducted under "a fair, just and equitable process," adding that "it will be transparent to the people of the world and particularly to the people of Sierra Leone."

To ensure transparency, he said that the BBC World Service Trust will send two Liberian and two Sierra Leonean journalists to The Hague for the duration of the trial so that they could report back to their home countries the proceedings.

Taylor was indicted in March 2003 by the Court on 11 counts pertaining to his involvement in the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone.

He is accused of breaching international humanitarian law, including grave offences, such as murder, rape, sexual slavery, acts of terror and conscription of children into an armed force.

According to Rapp, "Taylor's trial will last approximately 12 to 18 months, which is considerably shorter than other UN-backed trials of people indicted for war crimes".

The trial of Slobodan Milosevic conducted by the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) spanned four years before his death, last year.

The prosecutor also stated that Taylor's prosecution team will "present the most concise case possible", drawing on evidence from crime scenes as well as testimony already presented in other tribunals.

He also acknowledged that there are several challenges, including the logistics of having witnesses travel over 10,000 kilometres roundtrip to testify at The Hague, but assured that their safety and security is "fully guaranteed".

Unlike two other UN-backed war crimes tribunals, the ICTY and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which are funded by mandatory dues paid by UN member states, the Special Court for Sierra Leone runs entirely on voluntary contributions.

Rapp therefore expressed confidence that the Court will raise the 33- million-dollar needed to operate this year.

"It will a model of international justice serving not just the legal principles that are so important, but also the people of the region," he noted.

The Special Court was established on 16 January 2002 by an agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the UN and is mandated to try "those who bear greatest responsibility" for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the country after 30 November 1996.

Associated Press

Wednesday, 31 January 2007

Court trying Charles Taylor has raised half of funds

Paul Burkhardt | New York, United States

Half the money needed this year for the court trying former Liberian President Charles Taylor on war-crimes charges has been raised, the prosecutor in the case said on Tuesday.

Taylor is charged with overseeing a campaign of terror, murder, mutilation, rape and enslavement in neighbouring Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war. The trial is expected to start on June 4 in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is trying Taylor and other alleged human right violators in the civil war, has raised about half of its \$33-million budget for 2007, Rapp said.

In the Taylor case, there is enough money to "take us through the opening statement of the trial," Rapp said, adding that he was confident the rest of the money would come through.

Taylor has pleaded innocent to 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity linked to the killing and mistreatment of thousands of people in Sierra Leone. He faces a life sentence if convicted.

The charges stem from Taylor's alleged arming and training of rebels in Sierra Leone during the later years of their insurgency.

The Sierra Leone requested that the case be moved to The Hague for fear the former warlord's trial could provoke unrest in West Africa.

Taylor was flown to The Netherlands in June and is being held in a cell block operated by the International Criminal Court.

Rapp said met in New York with diplomats from Britain and The Netherlands, which have helped fund the court in the past, and other countries. He did not give details on the meetings, but said he was optimistic the court would raise enough money.

"We're confident that we can, as we continue the effort, obtain the resources needed to do this trial and to make it a model of international justice," Rapp said.

Last year, the United States provided \$13-million for the court. Rapp said he met last week with members of the US Congress and the State Department, but was not sure if the United States would provide similar funding this year.

US officials did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

Expenses include transporting witnesses to The Hague, security, translations and hearings in Sierra Leone, Rapp said. They could vary depending on the number of witnesses needed, but are expected to decrease after the first year, he said.

Last week, Taylor's lawyers told the court they needed more time to prepare his defence. Rapp said he expected the trial to begin June 4 as planned.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 31 January 2007

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

China-Liberia ties moves forward steadily

MONROVIA, Jan 31, 2007 (Xinhua via COMTEX) --Chinese President Hu Jintao will pay a state visit to Liberia beginning Feb. 1, which is to be the first visit by a Chinese president since the two countries reestablished diplomatic relations in October 2003. The visit, which comes at a time when China-Liberia relationship grows steadily, will usher in a new stage of bilateral cooperation. Relations between the two countries can date back to 1971 when Liberia supported the resumption of China's membership to the United Nations.

BBC Last Updated: Wednesday, 31 January 2007, 11:36 GMT

Liberia gets all-female peacekeeping force

By Will Ross

A unit of United Nations peacekeepers with a difference has arrived for work in Liberia - they are all women. More than 100 female peacekeepers from India are there to work as an armed police unit to help stabilise Liberia which, after years of war, is trying to rebuild its own police force from scratch. Stepping off the chartered plane in immaculate blue uniforms and berets, the 103 women were immediately on parade and probably bewildered by the media frenzy.

AP 01/30/2007 23:48:13

Court trying ex-Liberian leader Charles Taylor has raised half of needed funds, prosecutor says

By PAUL BURKHARDT

UNITED NATIONS_ Half the money needed this year for the court trying former Liberian President Charles Taylor on war crimes charges has been raised, the prosecutor in the case said Tuesday. Taylor is charged with overseeing a campaign of terror, murder, mutilation, rape and enslavement in neighboring Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war.

International Clips on West Africa

UN needs 43.5m euros for 'vulnerable' in Ivory Coast

ABIDJAN, Jan 31, 2007 (AFP) - UN aid organizations working in Ivory Coast appealed Wednesday for 43.5 million euros (56.2 million dollars) to help four million "vulnerable people" in the conflict-divided country. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the funds were needed to get food, drinking water and health care to "vulnerable people who have been identified and targeted" in the west African country.

Local Media – Newspaper

UNMIL Says Female Indian Peacekeepers will Boost Peace and Security

(The Analyst, The News, The Informer, The Inquirer, Public Agenda, Heritage and Daily Observer)

- Speaking at a ceremony to welcome more than 100 female Indian Police Officers yesterday, the United Nations Mission in Liberia Police Commissioner, Col. Mohammed Al-Hassan said that the arrival of the Indians would boost efforts to maintain peace and security in Liberia.
- He emphasized that the officers represented practical examples of a well-trained and dedicated female Formed Police Unit that would consolidate the peace through its work to quell public disturbances, help to train, structure and build the capacity of the Liberia National Police.

Governance Reform Commission Holds Law Reform Sessions

(The Analyst, Heritage, Public Agenda and Daily Observer)

- Correspondents said that the Governance Reform Commission yesterday commenced judicial and legal reform working sessions in Monrovia in compliance with a "Concept Paper" on Reforming Liberia's Legal and Judicial System meant to enhance the rule of law.
- The Concept Paper calls for a comprehensive overview of the Country's judicial and legal system and the rule of law; problems and challenges and ongoing efforts by the Government and international partners to strengthen the justice system.

Politicians Disagree with President's Speaking at Controversial Venue

(The Inquirer, The Informer, The Analyst and The News)

- In a statement issued yesterday, the Liberty Party, Liberia Action Party and National Patriotic Party said that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf defied the rule of law when she delivered her annual message at the Unity Conference Center (UCC) where the majority members of the National Legislature are illegally convening
- The parties contended that the Supreme Court had ruled against the majority members' action to remove Mr. Edwin Snowe as Speaker of the House of Representatives during their sitting at the UCC, yet the President selected to deliver her annual message there as an utter disregard for the rule of law.

Lawmakers Reinstate House Speaker

(The Analyst, The Inquirer, The Informer, The News, Heritage, New Democrat)

- The majority bloc of members of the House of Representatives convening at the Unity Conference Center yesterday reinstated Mr. Edwin Snowe as Speaker of the House of Representatives in compliance with a verdict of the Supreme Court which had ruled that he be reinstated. Subsequently, the "bloc" invited Mr. Snowe to the UCC to resume duty as House Speaker, but rejected Speaker Snowe's call on them to move to the Centennial Pavilion to carry on with legislative functions.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 9:45 am)*

All-Female Indian Police Unit Joins UNMIL

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Political Parties Condemn President Sirleaf Address to a Divided House

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Speaker Snowe Rejects "Majority" Lawmakers Invitation

- In an interview, House Speaker Edwin Snowe declared that he would not preside over any session of the Representatives sitting at the Unity Conference Center in Virginia as doing so would be illegal and defiance to the ruling of the Supreme Court.

- However, the majority bloc of the Lawmakers yesterday adopted a resolution to accept the ruling of the Supreme Court, and called on Speaker Snowe to begin to preside over proceedings at the Unity Conference Centre.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Justice Ministry Detects Flaws in the Judicial System

- Speaking at a forum to discuss a concept paper on reforming Liberia's judicial and legal system, Justice Minister Frances Johnson-Morris acknowledged that the judicial system was flawed and hoped the forum would outline strategic points to expose the weaknesses in the system so that the rule of law is respected. For her part, Associate Justice Gladys Johnson promised to work with organizations that are interested in helping to reform the judiciary.

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 8:35 am)*

Government Announces Plans to Resolve Crisis at Rubber Plantation

- Agriculture Minister, Dr. Christopher Toe yesterday announced that the Government was taking steps to resolve the conflict between employees and management of the Sinoe Rubber Company in Greenville, Sinoe County.
- Dr. Toe, among other steps, named the establishment of a contact group, comprising the Agriculture Ministry, UNMIL and the National Commission on Disarmament Demobilization Rehabilitation and Resettlement to hear all complaints while a technical committee would periodically visit the plantation to assess its status and needs.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Weah Karpeh at karpeh@un.org.

Voice of America

Wednesday, 31 January 2007

Trial of Former Chad Leader Hissene Habre to Be Delayed 3 Years

By Kari Barber
Dakar

Senegalese authorities have announced that the trial of former Chadian leader Hissene Habre on charges of crimes against humanity will not take place for at least three years. Foreign Affairs Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio said Tuesday the extra time is needed to organize the judicial process. Kari Barber reports from our West and Central Africa bureau in Dakar that prosecutors say the delay is unnecessary.

Lawyers for the alleged victims say further delays are unfair to those who are prepared to testify against him.

Habre is to be tried on accusations that the Chadian government, under his leadership, was responsible for thousands of politically motivated tortures and killings in the 1980s.

Reed Brody, a prosecutor on behalf of Habre's accusers, says lengthy legal work is not necessary because the case has already been prepared by Belgium after initial efforts to try Habre in Senegal stalled in 2000.



Hissene Habre (file photo)

"There is no reason for Senegal to start from scratch," he said. "I think it would really be a slap in the face for the victims, especially those who worked hard and provided their testimony to the Belgian team when they went to Chad to say 'OK, we are throwing all that out and start again.' That does not really take into account their rights."

But Brody says it will be the judges in the case, not Minister Gadio, who will make the decision about when the trial should begin.

Gadio says the time frame is necessary to ensure the rights of Habre and the victims are respected.

Abdou Rahmane Gueye says he was wrongfully jailed in deplorable conditions for six months by the Habre regime. He says now he is fighting, with other accusers, for a speedy trial.

Gueye says he and other alleged victims are tired of waiting. He says he is afraid that as more time passes, more accusers will die before they have the opportunity to testify.

Senegal, where Habre has lived in exile since his overthrow in 1990, agreed at an African Union summit last year to try him. The Senegalese government has had to pass new torture legislation and appeal for foreign funding to be able to hold the trial.

The Patriotic Vanguard

Thursday, 1 February 2007

Guinea suspends export of foodstuffs

The Guinean government has decided to ban "any export and re-export of farm produce which are part of the people's staple food" for 12 months.

This measure disclosed Monday following an inter-ministerial order jointly signed by ministers Jean Paul Sarr of Agriculture, animal husbandry and water Resources and forestry, Ibrahima Sory Touré of fisheries and aquaculture, and Kazaliou Baldé of trade and small and medium-sized enterprises.

"Cereals, tubers, oil-producing plants, forest products (citrus fruits, wood, beam), diaries (cattle, pigs, fisheries, and oil products" are all concerned by the measure, the official document stated.

"This ban is aimed at meeting needs on the domestic market and covers the period running from January to December 2007", the order indicated.

Through this move, the Guinean government intends to stem the increasing inflation noticed on the aforementioned foodstuffs and products. It is also part of the measures contained in the agreements clinched by the trade unions, the government and Guinean employers following the strike that crippled the country for 18 days.



Mail and Guardian Online

Wednesday, 31 January 2007

Former African presidents' trials mark milestones

Michael Fleshman

The world took a giant step towards eliminating impunity for human rights abuses when the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened its first official hearing, in November, in a case against a Congolese militia leader.

The ICC is the world's first permanent international criminal court, with the authority to try and convict individuals for serious human rights violations wherever they occur. Africa is on the new court's docket, with investigations under way into alleged abuses by members of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda and combatants in the Darfur region of western Sudan.

Africa's own efforts to hold senior government officials and rebel leaders accountable for torture, murder, rape and other serious crimes against humanity also marked new milestones last year.

In March, Nigerian authorities arrested former Liberian president Charles Taylor and transferred him to the authority of a special court in Sierra Leone. He faces charges including terrorism, rape, murder and the use of child soldiers, stemming from war crimes committed there by rebels said to have been equipped, supported and controlled by him during that country's civil war. It was the first time a former African head of state had been arrested and charged with human rights abuses committed in office.

Months later, Senegal announced plans to try former Chadian President Hissène Habré for the torture and murder of suspected political opponents during his eight years in power. Habré was overthrown in 1990 and fled into exile in Senegal, where until now he has successfully evaded prosecution.

In November, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade announced the formation of a commission to prepare for the trial, which will require changes in some domestic laws, as well as international technical assistance and financing.

These moves have been hailed as the beginning of a new era of accountability and a blow against impunity for official misconduct around the world. Then United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan declared that "the capture and trial of Mr Taylor will send a powerful message to the region and beyond that impunity will not be allowed to stand and that the rule of law must prevail".

Obstacles

But obstacles to the prosecution of government leaders for serious human rights violations remain formidable. Governments are often loath to take up cases outside their borders, particularly when the accused are heads of state traditionally immune from prosecution for acts committed in office.

In some instances, guarantees of immunity are demanded by combatants in exchange for laying down their arms. In others, differences between national and international legal systems and the absence of competent institutions pose vexing questions of jurisdiction and procedure.

The long effort to bring Habré to trial began within months of his overthrow and flight to Senegal in 1990, with the creation of the Association des victimes des crimes et de la répression politiques au Tchad (AVCRP), a group of nearly 800 victims of rights abuses. In 1992, a Chadian government commission of inquiry found Habré responsible for the deaths of 40 000 or more people and recommended that he be tried. The government declined to take up the case amid fears of violence from Habré's supporters and concerns about meeting international standards for a fair trial.

In 2000, the AVCRP went to court in Senegal, but the case was dismissed by Senegal's highest appeals court, which ruled that Habré could not be charged in Senegal for crimes committed in another country. The AVCRP then went to court in Belgium, where it was possible to try individuals for heinous human rights offences wherever they were committed.

In September 2005, Belgium issued an international arrest warrant for Habré and requested his extradition from Senegal. Again the Senegalese courts demurred, with the country's appeals court ruling that it lacked the authority to carry out the Belgian request.

Amid indications that Belgium would take Senegal to the International Court of Justice over the case, President Abdoulaye Wade referred it to the African Union at the end of 2005. The AU finally mandated Senegal to "prosecute and ensure that Hissène Habré is tried, on behalf of Africa, by a competent Senegalese court with guarantees for a fair trial".

Skepticism

After years of delays, however, Habré's alleged victims are skeptical. "If the AU is firm in its decision to fight impunity, that is laudable," AVCRP founder and vice-president Suleymane Guengueng told Africa Renewal in November. But "nothing has been done up to today ... I don't think their decision will materialise ... We victims feel it is their intention to keep us waiting so long that we die without seeing justice. It is very sad."

The slow turning of the wheels of international justice isn't the only problem facing abuse victims, noted Richard Dicker, director of the international justice programme for Human Rights Watch.

Part of the challenge for the future, he said, is to ensure that the evolving system of international justice is not seen as an instrument of northern power -- with only the leaders of poor, weak countries held to account in the courts of the mighty.

He acknowledged that there can sometimes be a tension, "but not an opposition", between the need for criminal accountability and the political imperatives of peacemaking. "It's a serious misstep to trade away justice in the hope of reaching a peace settlement," he cautioned. "For peace to be durable there must be justice for the most serious offences."

Despite the challenges ahead, he concluded, in Habré "we finally have the prospect for an African domestic court to put on trial a former head of state accused of the most serious crimes that can be committed under international law. If that happens, it will be a significant breakthrough. The implications are very exciting."