

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



Boys fishing on wrecked ferry

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:

Friday, 1 June 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Charles Taylor: Liberian Ex-President Goes on Trial

Landmark Step in Bringing Justice for Human Rights Violations

Special Court for Sierra Leone said yesterday it shall be screening live on Monday the trial of Charles Taylor and invitation is being extended to those wishing to attend. The trial starts at 8.30 am.

Below is a press statement on the trial...

(The Hague, May 31, 2007) – The trial beginning June 4 of former Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes committed during Sierra Leone's 11-year brutal armed conflict sends a strong signal that no one is above the law, Human Rights Watch said today. Taylor's trial by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone will provide an important chance for victims to see justice done.

Taylor, who was president of Liberia from 1997 to 2003, is being tried on 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international law committed during Sierra Leone's conflict. The alleged crimes include murdering and mutilating civilians, using women and girls as sex slaves, and abducting both adults and children and making them perform forced labor or become fighters. Taylor is charged on the basis of his alleged role as a major backer of the Sierra Leone rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and close association with a second warring faction, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). In addition, Taylor allegedly was responsible for Liberian forces fighting in support of the Sierra Leonean rebels. Liberian forces under Taylor's command are implicated in human rights abuses in other West African states, including Liberia, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, although these are not at issue in this trial.

"The trial of a former president associated with human rights abuses across West Africa represents a break from the past," said Elise Keppler, counsel with Human Rights Watch's International Justice Program. "All too often, there has been no justice for victims of serious human rights violations. Taylor's trial puts would-be perpetrators on notice."

Taylor is the first African head of state to be indicted on serious crimes under international law by an internationalized criminal court. The Special Court is a national-international court composed of Sierra Leonean and international judges and staff.

Drawing on the experience of the trial of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, Human Rights Watch said that conducting trials of former leaders involves significant challenges. These challenges include ensuring the trial is scrupulously fair, including the presumption of innocence, while managing sensitive and high-profile proceedings effectively. They also include giving appropriate focus to evidence of chain of command while providing evidence on crime scenes.

"We have seen that trials of former presidents are difficult business," said Keppler. "The Special Court's judges must guarantee Charles Taylor a fair trial, and also conduct proceedings efficiently."

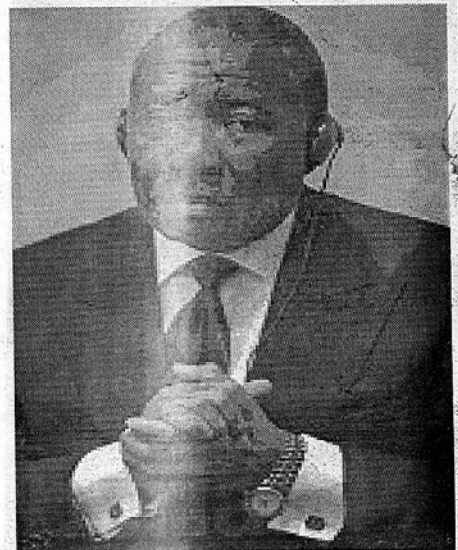
The Special Court is based in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. The court relocated Taylor's trial to The Hague last June, however, due to its concerns over stability in West Africa if his trial were held in Sierra Leone. The International Criminal Court has lent its facilities for the Special Court to hold the trial.

The relocation of Taylor's trial to The Hague creates challenges in making the proceedings accessible to the communities that have been most affected by the crimes committed. Accessibility is important to ensure resonance with these communities, Human Rights Watch said.

"People in West Africa need to know what's happening in Taylor's trial," said Keppler. "We welcome the Special Court's plans to make the proceedings accessible through radio, video, and monitoring by local journalists and civil society." Because it is funded primarily through voluntary contributions

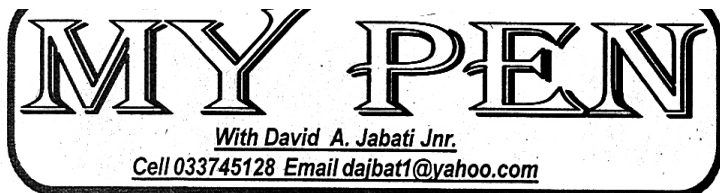
from UN member states, the Special Court has faced constant financial shortfalls and still needs funding to cover anticipated costs associated with Taylor's trial. Funding is also needed to complete three trials of eight other defendants currently taking place in Freetown. Other critical activities, such as long-term witness protection, will require further funds.

"The Special Court will need funding to complete its important work in bringing justice for crimes committed during Sierra Leone's conflict," said Keppler. "Key supporters like the US, the UK and the Netherlands should ensure that the court has enough resources."



The Exclusive
Friday, 1 June 2007

The War Against Small Arms



Small arms and light weapons have become spreading virus all over the world and have easily traversed and continue to traverse political and economic boundaries. In the process, it has caused untold damages to vulnerable population particularly to those who are economically depressed and countries that are politically unstable and prone to conflict every now and then.

Small arms and light weapons are used in vast majority of deaths by violence taking 1,000 lives each day. According to research, some 500, 000 people die every year as a result of wounds caused by small arms in conflict, crime and other forms of violence.

It is also estimated that over 500 million military-style small arms are circulated worldwide, (One for every twelfth person in the world). This sounds scaring.

As for civilian-type handguns and rifles in circulation, the figure is unbelievable. There are hundreds of millions of those in circulation worldwide. Research has it that the US alone has 190-250 million firearms in circulation. Can you beat that?

The campaign against the proliferation of small arms has long begun. In a bid to join the rest of the world in the campaign against small arms and light weapons, the Sierra Leone Network of Small Arms (SLANSA) was formed in 2001.

SLANSA is made up of religious and secular civil society organizations. Since its inception, it has made lots of significant headway towards this laudable campaign.

On the 27th March 2007, SLANSA in collaboration with the West Africa Network of Small Arms (WANSA) held a two-day workshop on campaigning and lobbying for a proposed Arms Trade Treaty (ATT).

"In post conflict Sierra Leone, we do realize that very few citizens are informed and sensitized to understand the relationship between the easy availability of small arms and the escalation of armed violence. We have therefore embarked on, information, education and awareness building programmes to sensitize the Sierra Leonean society to join in the struggle to control the misuse of small arms and light weapons, while at the same time appeal to government, the UN and development partners to make resources available to civil society to address programmes on information, education and communication, small arms survey and intensify arms for development in post conflict areas." SLANSA Coordinator, Florella Hazeley stated at the workshop.

From the look of things, there are indications that the Sierra Leone Parliament will welcome the idea of having the ATT as an instrument that will help solve the problem we are currently facing with the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

"The Sierra Leone Parliament notes the efforts of the civil society of West Africa and indeed Sierra Leone through the Sierra Leone Action Network on Small Arms (SLANSA) in lobbying their Government through ECOWAS to transform the ECOWAS Moratorium into a legally binding Convention. At this point I take this opportunity to assure this gathering that the members of parliament have been following closely the transformation of the moratorium and will endorse its ratification soonest..." the Speaker of Parliament, Edmond Cowan said in his keynote address at the workshop. The Speaker went on to add: *"On the issue of transfer controls, we support the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) which is broad based and inclusive sub-regional, regional and international process."*

It could be recalled that Sierra Leone was part of the 15 ECOWAS member states that signed the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, Their Ammunition and other related Materials on 14th June 2006. In December 2006 also, 153 out of 192 states voted to start work on an Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). Added to that, more than one million people around the world have signed up to the Million Faces petition all in a bid to put pressure on governments to start a process to establish the ATT.

Where do we stand as a nation in this human rights campaign?

As the campaign against small arms continues, the People's Consultation on the ATT is the next phase in the campaign of which SLANSA is fully involved.

It is worth noting that since 2003, the Control Arms campaign has been calling for a global, legally binding Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). The primary aim of treaty is to prevent international arms transfers as long as the weapons are likely to be used to commit atrocities.

The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, is asking all governments to submit their views on the contents of the treaty. Many deprived and vulnerable people all over the world are urging their governments to promote an effective treaty that will protect them from arm violence.

We therefore call on our local organization –SLANSA, engaged in this campaign to be fully involved in the People Consultation on the ATT if we are to see any headway in this all important campaign.

We also urge our government to welcome the ATT and to start work on the ATT and at the same time state their views on the feasibility, scope and parameters of the ATT as urged by the UN Secretary General.

The fact that we are just coming from war is enough for our government

The War Against Small Arms *Where Do We Stand?*

to welcome any proposal that has to do with the control of arms. The facts that our disarmament process was successful does not in anyway mean we don't have illegal small arms still in homes. As a matter of fact, the process did not focus on small arms as that of military arms like AK 47, SMG, Rocket launchers and the like.

When we talk about small arms, we are talking about small guns like, pistols, Magnum-Revolvers and the like. Most often people have argued that sticks, knives and cutlasses should also be classed under small arms because they are also used in violence. But these are not small arms in the strict sense of the word by internationally accepted standards as there is no way we can afford to go without those in our everyday lives.

Just like we got rid of military arms so also we should endeavor to get rid of small arms if we are to ensure a totally arms free state even as we are fighting to consolidate our hard won peace.

We look up to SLANSA.

PEEP!

Friday, 1 June 2007

Reign Of Terror... Trail Of Blood (news from the Sierra Leone web 1997)

31 May 1997: Two military transport planes from Ghana and Guinea landed in Freetown Friday night, carrying troops along with rocket-propelled grenade launchers, bombs, automatic rifles, and tanks.

Guinea reportedly also sent three battalions of troops to Sierra Leone where they will join ECOMOG forces. "They left Guinea by road and will link up with Nigerian troops already in Sierra Leone," a senior officer said. Military sources said the Guinean troops could number up to 1,500, joining 3,000 Nigerians already in the country. Nigeria continued as well to land more soldiers and military hardware in Sierra Leone throughout the day Saturday.

A Nigerian Air Force plane brought fresh troops and armoured personnel carriers to Hastings Airport, near a Nigerian military base. Nigerian Alpha fighter jets flew over Freetown Saturday, intensifying the pressure on the AFRC.

It was earlier reported that the arrival of Ghanaian troops being sent to Freetown via Monrovia had been delayed by logistical problems, and they were expected to arrive in the country late Saturday or Sunday. The Ghanaians will secure the airports at Lungi and Hastings, freeing Nigerian troops for military action.

AFRC leaders said Saturday that they had sent representatives to talk to the Nigerians and other ECOWAS members. The coup leaders also announced over SLBS (*state radio*) that the government will resume paying salaries to soldiers.

evacuation

The French navy ship *Jean Moulin* evacuated about 250

foreigners Saturday who were left behind in previous evacuation efforts by the Americans and British. Nigerian soldiers guarded the bridge leading to the Mammy Yoko Hotel where the operation took place. About 100 of the evacuees were British nationals.

Another 130 British citizens left the country Saturday after diplomatic efforts were made on their behalf, and 31 others arrived in Conakry, Guinea aboard an American aircraft.

The evacuees leave behind a capital city that is tense, but reported to be relatively quiet. Roadblocks have been erected all over the city, but with most of the petrol stations closed or burned down, there are few vehicles on the roads apart from those having been commandeered by soldiers.

strikes

Stores and business have not reopened, and civil servants have ignored the AFRC's orders to return to work. The Red Cross has reportedly suspended operations, and conditions are worsening as supplies of food, drinking water, kerosene, and firewood dwindle. Prices of essential goods are skyrocketing. The cost of a pint of kerosene Saturday was reported to be five times its price before the coup.

The AFRC released a statement read over SLBC (*state radio*) on Friday night saying that negotiations are underway to avert an attack by ECOMOG forces.

"The AFRC wishes the public to know that while it is aware of a possible threat to public security by likely invasion of Freetown by foreign troops tomorrow, negotiations are going on with them," the statement said.

"The public therefore has no reason to be unduly alarmed and people are advised to continue their normal day-to-day activities."

Karefa-Smart's operation

Tensions rose in Freetown Friday after UNPP leader John Karefa-Smart revealed that the military had intercepted a message saying ECOMOG was planning an attack for Saturday morning under the code name "WILD CHASE."

Since Friday, SLBS has carried a series of statements by Revolutionary United Front leaders. "We are advising the Nigerians and all foreign forces to stop bringing war materials to threaten the peace for our people," said a statement by RUF official James Coleman.

Another statement from RUF spokesman David Collins (*sic*), said the RUF had brought 5,000 fighters into Freetown in support of the "revolution." An RUF colonel said Friday that Foday Sankoh had ordered him to support the Army if the Nigerians should intervene. "We are ready to comply. We are now for peace and nothing should erode this," he said.

A Nigerian newspaper, the *Daily Times*, reported Saturday that the United States government through its Charge d' Affairs in Freetown is backing any action taken by Nigeria to restore the civilian government in Sierra Leone.

However, U.S. State Department spokesman John Dinger said Friday that the U.S. opposes a violent solution. "There has been enough violence in Sierra Leone. We hope democracy is quickly restored there by diplomatic means and through international pressure," he said.

The Patriotic Vanguard
Friday 1 June 2007

The Patriotic Vanguard Makes Media History

By Gibril Koroma -

Teddy Foday Musa, our correspondent in Holland (also known as the Netherlands) was the only journalist representing a Sierra Leonean news organ at a press conference at The Hague, Thursday May 31.



"The Patriotic Vanguard has made history, I am the only Sierra Leonean journalist here apart from Moriba, a Special Court press officer", Teddy enthusiastically told editor Gibril Koroma on the line from the Hague where former Liberian president Charles Taylor will soon go on trial. He added the the Liberian media were conspicuously absent making him very visible among the group of largely Western journalists assembled to listen to Special Court prosecutor Stephen Rapp.

"Almost everybody is asking for my business card, asking me questions about Liberia and Sierra Leone," Teddy said.

The following information on the Special Court and the Charles Taylor trial was released at the press briefing among other documents:

Background on the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL)

The SCSL was established by an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone as an independent international criminal tribunal. The SCSL is the only international tribunal to sit in the country where the crimes under its jurisdiction took place. The mandate of the SCSL is to prosecute "persons who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in the territory of Sierra Leone since 30 November, 1996".

The first trial began in June 2004. There are currently 4 trials at the Special Court, including the trial of Charles Taylor in The Hague. All judicial activity is expected to be completed by December 2009.

A Management Committee was established to assist the UN Secretary-General in obtaining adequate funding for the Court, approving the budget, and advises on policy directions and on all non-judicial functions of the Court. The Committee is chaired by Canada, and its members include the United Nations, Sierra Leone, Canada, Nigeria, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Unlike other international criminal tribunals, the SCSL is funded by voluntary contributions from interested states.

The SCSL currently employs over 300 staff, of which over 50 percent are Sierra Leonean nationals.

The Charles Taylor Trial

On 29 March 2006, former Liberian President Charles Taylor was transferred into the custody of the SCSL. On 3 April 2006, Taylor made his initial appearance where he was formally arraigned on an 11-count indictment and pleaded “not guilty” to all counts. On 20 June 2006, Charles Taylor was transferred from Sierra Leone to The Netherlands, following the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1688 (2006), which noted “that at present the trial of former President Taylor cannot be conducted within the sub-region due to the security implications if he is held in Freetown at the Special Court”. The trial of Charles Taylor will be held at the premises of the International Criminal Court but remains under the exclusive jurisdiction of the SCSL.

All operations in The Hague are supported from Freetown and all costs associated with the Taylor trial will be borne exclusively by the SCSL. The start date of the trial is 4 June 2007.

The trial is expected to last until December 2008, with a judgement by mid 2009 and an appeal judgement by the end of 2009.

The Accessibility of the Charles Taylor Trial

The SCSL is conducting extensive outreach activities in order to ensure that the Taylor trial in The Hague is accessible to the people of Sierra Leone and the West African region. Activities include:

- Facilitating Local Media Coverage of the Charles Taylor Trial is conducted by the SCSL.
- The SCSL is coordinating with the BBC World Service Trust and Search for Common Ground to facilitate the presence of Sierra Leonean and Liberian journalists in The Hague to report on the Taylor trial. Information on the Taylor trial will be broadcast throughout Sierra Leone and Liberia in collaboration with the Outreach Section of the Special Court.
- Work is underway to expand outreach activities of the Court to Liberia and Guinea.
- SCSL facilitates the presence of civil society representatives at the Taylor trial.
- Transmission of the Proceedings from The Hague to Freetown via Video Link and with summaries distributed throughout Sierra Leone and Liberia via DVD media.
- There are plans to make the trial also accessible to the francophone West African region through translation of summaries of the proceedings.

Progress of Trials in Freetown

Three trials are currently underway in Freetown before the two Trial Chambers. The trial of the three accused in the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) was concluded on 28 November 2006. The judgment will be issued in June or July 2007.

The trial of the three accused in the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was concluded on 7 December 2006. The judgment will be issued on 20 June 2007. The trial of the three accused in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) is currently in the defence stage. It is estimated that trial proceedings will be completed by the end of 2007 with trial judgment during the first half of 2008. Appeals are expected to last for about 6 months each, with the last being completed by the end of 2008.

Outreach and Legacy of the Special Court for Sierra Leone

The Special Court is running a very ambitious outreach programme that includes town hall meetings, radio programmes, video screenings of trials and various training programmes that targets and promotes the participation of all Sierra Leoneans in all aspects of its work. The SCSL seeks to leave a lasting legacy in Sierra Leone and the West African region in terms of jurisprudence, expertise and physical facilities. Additionally, the SCSL seeks to yield concrete benefits to the national judicial system.

The SCSL has identified a number of outreach and legacy oriented projects and is seeking to fund them through grants from private foundations.

Budget and Funding for Court Operations

The Special Court is funded by voluntary contributions from the international community.

According to the completion budget, that covers the operations of the Court from 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2009, SCSL needs 89 million to conclude its operations (36 million for 2007; 33 million for 2008; and 20 million for 2009).

The SCSL currently available funding will be exhausted by November 2007.

Photo: The Patriotic Vanguard's Teddy Foday Musa, right, and Peter Andersen, the Special Court's Chief of Public Affairs.

Washington Times

Friday, 1 June 2007

Justice for Sierra Leone?

TODAY'S COLUMNIST

By Clare da Silva

On June 4, the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor will begin in The Hague. Mr. Taylor faces 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law for his role in the decade-long civil war that engulfed Sierra Leone. This trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, along with those of nine others from the three main factions involved in the war, is part of the international community's efforts to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for the atrocities committed.

While many see the Special Court and the trial of Charles Taylor as a triumph for international justice, what, if anything, does this mean for justice in Sierra Leone? The president of Sierra Leone, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, has stated on numerous occasions that justice is a prerequisite to ensuring peace in Sierra Leone. He requested the creation of the Special Court on this basis. But surely this cannot be limited to justice as meted out by the Special Court. Ensuring peace must mean creating a fair, humane and accessible justice system for all Sierra Leoneans, not just the 10 individuals tried before the Special Court. As the Taylor trial begins and Mr. Kabbah's term in office comes to an end, it is worth looking at what his government has done to ensure justice in Sierra Leone. Beyond the trial of Mr. Taylor, is Sierra Leone well on its way toward a peaceful future or a few steps away from a new conflict?

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), created in 2002, found that one of the root causes of the war was an absolute failure of governance, and that the government was largely irrelevant to the Sierra Leonean people. Disturbingly, the TRC detected no sense of urgency among government officials to address the immense challenges facing the country, including those within the justice sector. This is a deeply troubling revelation and a damning indictment against a government that has consistently espoused the need for justice to ensure lasting peace in Sierra Leone.

When the Special Court began operating in Freetown in 2003, half a kilometer away in the Pademba Road maximum security prison, hundreds of ex-combatants waited for their trials to begin in connection with war-related incidents. Their detention and subsequent trials in 2005 were characterized by gross judicial abuses, detention without charges, a lack of defense counsel, the taking of statements under severe duress and physical abuse that resulted in a number of deaths. These lower ranking former rebels, some former child soldiers, faced the death penalty as an outcome of a trial with few, if any, judicial guarantees. Meanwhile, those considered "most responsible" were being tried at the Special Court, an international court where millions of dollars have been invested for prosecution, defense and the proper functioning of trials with no possibility of a death sentence. The disparities were alarming in 2003 and remain the same today.

The international community has invested millions of dollars toward improving the justice sector. But without the leadership and commitment of the Kabbah government, change is exceedingly slow. Appeals cannot be heard because there is no paper to type out the trial record. It can take months, even years to locate a case file as there is no discernible system of record keeping. Court and prison officials appear to be motivated by bribes and little else. In Pademba Road prison, it is not uncommon to find people serving four- to five-year prison terms because they cannot pay the alternative \$150 fine. This is not justice. This is criminalizing poverty.

Perhaps one of the most striking examples of the empty legacy of Mr. Kabbah within the justice sector is that in Sierra Leone one can get the death penalty simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Take the case of nine former members of the Sierra Leone army. In December 2004, the High Court convicted them of treason and sentenced them to death. A number of those convicted were guilty only of being present at the barracks where the alleged treason attempt was made. The death sentence was imposed two months after the TRC report recommended immediate abolition of the death penalty. The government ignored these recommendations, though Mr. Kabbah has apparently given reassurances that the death penalty will not be used. That is little comfort for these men, living their lives in cells just steps away from the door that will lead them to their death, waiting for an appeal that the court seems to have no interest in hearing.

This week the prosecutor will open his case against Mr. Taylor, a massive step forward toward justice in Sierra Leone. In August, Mr. Kabbah's term in office finishes. Some might say that his presidency has left behind many lasting legacies. But ensuring justice for all Sierra Leoneans will certainly not be one of them. And sadly, this does not bode well for the future of Sierra Leone.

Clare da Silva is a Canadian lawyer working in the field of international law.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 31 May 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

Special Court for Sierra Leone warns it could run out of money

BRUSSELS, May 31, 2007 (AFP) - Officials of the cash-strapped Special Court for Sierra Leone urged the EU on Thursday to provide more funds, just days before the war crimes trial of Liberia's ex-president Charles Taylor opens. Court officials said that The Hague-based court currently had enough funding to operate until around October, but stressed that Taylor's trial could last 18 months. Herman von Hebel, acting registrar for the court, said it needed 89 million dollars (66 million euros) to operate until the end of 2009, including 36 million dollars for 2007.

Blair in African peacekeeper call on farewell trip

By Phil Hazlewood

LUNGI, Sierra Leone, May 30, 2007 (AFP) - British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Wednesday called for greater international support to bolster the African Union peacekeeping force on the second leg of a farewell tour of the continent. After talks here with the presidents of Sierra Leone and Liberia, Blair and his two African counterparts said the United Nations should be allowed to bankroll operations of the cash-strapped AU peacekeeping force.

International Clips on West Africa

Ivorian police turn focus on neglected drug problem

By Ange Aboa

ABIDJAN, May 31 (Reuters) - Smashing their way inside squalid drug dens with batons and guns, police in war-divided Ivory Coast are turning their focus on burgeoning substance abuse which has spread fast amid five years of political crisis. Nearly 200 suspected drug abusers were arrested this week by a similar number of police in a dawn swoop on the seven main "smoking rooms" in the economic capital Abidjan.

Local Media – Newspaper

Armed Robber Gunned Down in the Paynesville Suburb

(Heritage, The Informer, Daily Observer, New Democrat, and The Inquirer and The News)

- The Liberia National Police backed by United Nations Police on Tuesday gunned down a suspected armed robber in the Harmon field community in Paynesville. *The Informer* reports that following this success, Police Inspector General Munnah Sieh on Wednesday announced the launch of another security measure code-named "Operation Calm Down Fear" aimed at curbing armed robberies in Monrovia and surrounding communities.

Liberian Leader Holds Talks with Outgoing British PM

(Daily Observer, The Inquirer and Heritage)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and outgoing British Prime Minister, Tony Blair have held talks on the outskirts of the Sierra Leonean capital, Freetown, with the Liberian leader appealing to Great Britain to continue its support toward the country's reconstruction efforts.

- In response, Mr. Blair said he was impressed with the level of progress taking place in Liberia, and assured the President he would do whatever he could to help Liberia move forward.

U.S. Congressional Delegation due to Arrive in Liberia today

(The News and The Inquirer)

- A U.S. Congressional delegation, according to a United States Embassy press release, is due to arrive in Liberia today for a three-day visit to inaugurate a partnership between the United States House of Representatives and the Liberian Legislature.

Captain Blames Government and UNMIL for “Stolen Ship”

(The Inquirer)

- [sic:] The Captain of MV Tahoma Reefer, the first ship which was allegedly stolen from the Freeport of Monrovia said that his company is holding the Government and the United Nations Mission in Liberia responsible for the stolen ship.
- Captain Volodymyr Shteinberh said with the millions of dollars the international community is pumping into UNMIL’s operation, it is surprising that they could not use their sophistication to stop the “pirates” who took the ship away.

UN Envoy Nudges Women’s Involvement in Peace

(The News)

- Speaking in Monrovia Wednesday at the opening of a two-day Annual General Assembly of the Women Non-Governmental organizations Secretariat of Liberia, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. Alan Doss peace would be illusive in the country without the full of Liberian women. He said unless Liberian women are placed in the center of peace building, the country would fail in its drive to achieving peace.

UNMIL Assessment Team due Soon

(New Democrat)

- A United Nations Assessment team from New York is due in Liberia June to work with the United Nations Mission in Liberia, the Government, the International Contact Group and other key partners on the future of the UN Mission in Liberia.

Government Welcomes Liberty Party’s Criticism

(New Democrat)

- The Liberian Government said that it welcomed criticisms on the draft national budget and other national issues by the Liberty Party.
- Information Minister Laurence Bropleh said that the Standard Bearer of the Party, Counsellor Charles Brumskine means well, and his criticisms would be taken into consideration.

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

Missing Ship Captain Blames UNMIL for Negligence

(Also reported on ELBC and Star Radio)

President Solicits British Support on Debt Relieve

(Also reported on ELBC and Star Radio)

United States Congressional Delegation Visits Liberia

(Also reported on ELBC and Star Radio)

Government Reinstates Banned Controversial Newspaper

- The Minister of Information Laurence Bropleh told a news conference yesterday that the Ministry of Information has lifted the ban it imposed on *The Independent* newspaper when it published an obscene photo of former Minister of State for Presidential Affairs Willis Knuckles.

- The Minister noted that it wasn't the Government's wish to ban the paper but it did so in line with the new Penal Law of Liberia. He cautioned the media to see themselves as partners in national development.
(Also reported on ELBC and Star Radio)

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

Friday, 1 June 2007

Africa's Judiciary Said to be Corrupt

By James Butty
Washington, D.C.

Transparency International, the global civil society organization that is leading the fight against corruption, says most Africans believe the judicial systems in their countries is corrupt. In its recent survey of eight African countries, the group says one in five people it polled said they paid a bribe in their interaction with the judicial system. Transparency says of the eight countries polled, Niger, Nigeria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe were the most affected.

Casey Kelso is Transparency International's regional director for Africa and the Middle East. He told VOA why people said they paid bribes to the judicial systems in their countries.

“There are two major reasons that corruption takes place in the judicial system across Africa. One is the lack of resources that provide room for corruption and often denies access to justice for the poor. The other major reason that we found was political influence. So across the continent of Africa, we found that from Zimbabwe to Algeria, Zambia, Niger, there was political influence over the selection of judges, there was political interference in the decisions such as in Zimbabwe to remove judges that were perceived as being ruling against the ruling party or the party of the day,” he said.

Kelso admitted that political influence over the judiciary was not unique to Africa. But he said Africa was unique because of the level of violence against judges.

“Certainly one of the things we found is that political influence is across the world. In the United States, the current controversy of the ruling party there where the Republicans selectively getting rid of some federal prosecutors because they are perceived to be too liberal in the interest or the ideology of the ruling party there in the United States. So it’s not an African problem per se, but the situation that really did seem to be different in Africa was the level of violent intimidation and outright threat against judges,” Kelso said.

From Nigeria to Uganda, judges have recently handed down major rulings against the ruling parties in those countries. Kelso said the judiciary in Africa has made some progress.

“Yes, certainly I would say Transparency International views both the positive elements as well as some of the negative elements. In Nigeria, the judicial reform has made the people believe in the Nigerian system of justice. In Ghana, several reform initiatives, including the fast track initiative and a judicial council review of judges’ behaviour actually seems to have succeeded in reducing some corruption,” he said.

Kelso said Transparency International has been working to improve the African judicial systems.

“I think there’s a couple of different steps in terms of how we see judicial reform stepping forward. One of the things that Transparency has been doing is to try to monitor how people have interacted with the judiciary. I think also there’s an awareness raising that needs to be done as well. One of our initiatives in Madagascar, for example, helped put out in both French as well as the Madagascan language, brochures that tell people exactly how to deal with court procedures, how to file a court case and that you don’t need to file with a bribe for a court official,” Kelso said.

He also said part of the judicial reform being promoted by Transparency International is to make sure that judicial salaries reflect the performances and professional development of court officials who he said are often underpaid.

UNHCHR

Thursday, 31 June 2007

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for human rights in Cambodia, Mr. Yash Ghai, concludes his third official visit to Cambodia

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for human rights in Cambodia, Yash Ghai, issued the following statement today:

Phnom Penh 31 May 2007 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for human rights in Cambodia, Yash Ghai, conducted his third official visit to Cambodia from 29 to 31 May 2007. The main objective of the visit was for the Special Representative to get feedback on his latest report to the United Nations Human Rights Council and to update himself on the human rights situation in the country. In this regard, he very much appreciated the opportunity to meet and discuss with H.E. Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng during his visit. However, he regrets that none of the other senior government officials he had hoped to meet were available to see him. While in Phnom Penh, Mr. Ghai had fruitful discussions with representatives of civil society, political parties, the National Election Commission, United Nations agencies and the diplomatic community.

The Special Representative welcomes the imminent adoption of the Code of Penal Procedure, after many years of preparation. He hopes that the Code will overcome many of the problems that have dogged the Cambodian justice system and the Government will give priority to its implementation.

Impunity for human rights violations continues to pose a threat to the rule of law in Cambodia. The Special Representative again expresses deep regret over the decision by the Appeal Court on 12 April 2007 to uphold, despite strong exculpatory evidence, the conviction of Born Samnang and Sok Sam Ouen, who in 2005 were sentenced by the Phnom Penh Municipal Court, following fundamentally flawed proceedings, to 20 years imprisonment for the murder of trade union leader Chea Vichea in January 2004. The upholding of these sentences is a grave injustice and the Special Representative reiterates his calls for a thorough, impartial and credible investigation into the murder of Chea Vichea, and for the prosecution of those responsible. He also supports the appeals for a Royal Pardon for Born Samnang and Sok Sam Ouen.

The Special Representative notes with alarm the continuation of attacks and intimidation against members of the workers' movement in the course of the last year. Serious restrictions have been placed, illegally, on their right to assemble and carry out their responsibilities. He is appalled at the assassination of trade union leader Hy Vuthy on 24 February 2007. There must be no impunity for the murderer this time.

While welcoming Cambodia's economic growth, he warns that human rights and equity must not be sacrificed in the pursuit of growth. He will shortly release a report presenting a human rights perspective on economic land concessions. The report shows that economic land concessions, as presently granted, have compromised and destroyed the livelihoods of rural communities in favour of the enrichment of a few connected to the political establishment. He is deeply concerned about the continuing alienation of indigenous land through 'land grabbing', illegal or coercive sales, and the grant of concessions, including mining licenses.

The Special Representative looks forward to the speedy adoption of the Internal Rules for the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), and welcomes the agreement reached on the question of international defence counsel. He wishes to emphasize the importance

of independent international monitoring of the trials and the responsibility of any monitor to bring matters of concern to public attention. In the interest of maintaining the integrity of the trial process, he endorses the calls for a thorough and transparent investigation of the allegations regarding irregular hiring practices at the ECCC.

The Special Representative is pleased to note that the commune council elections on 1 April were conducted in an atmosphere marked by less violence, threats and confrontation than in previous elections. He welcomes the assurance of the National Election Commission that the reasons for the drop in voter turn out will be investigated and every effort will be made to ensure that all those who wish to vote in next year's general elections will have full opportunity to register and cast their votes, and that political parties will be able to conduct their campaigns fairly and freely.