

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Monday, November 01, 2004

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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At Special Court ... **"Charles Taylor arrested me 7 times " Hassan Bility**

By Tamba Borbor · witness code number: reason he stated was for the
 Hassan Bility, a renowned TF1-355, Mr. Bility writing and publishing of an
 Liberian journalist, has recalled sometime after editorial captioned: "who is
 disclosed to the Special August in 1997 while the Judas of ECOWAS." I
 Court that he was arrested working at his newspaper was first arrested and taken
 eight times by former office in Monrovia, when to the Executive Mansion to
 Liberian President – six men armed with AK47 meet Taylor, the witness
 Charles Taylor. Testifying rifles entered his office explained; adding that
 at the Special Court under and arrested him. The *Contd. Page 2*

Monday November 01, 2004

AWOKO NEWSPAPER

Page 2

Charles Taylor arrested me 7 times

From Front Page

former President Charles Taylor warned that if he did not stop meddling in the affairs of his government, he (Taylor) would make sure that would not happen again. Mr. Hassan Bility continuing his evidence-in-chief at the trials chambers of the Special Court disclosed that sometime after August 1997 to 24th June 2004, former President Taylor ordered his arrest for the seventh and final time. "On June 24th 2002, I was officially exiled as a condition of my release," Hassan Bility noted, that

he was also arrested on January 22nd 1998 for writing and publishing a two part editorial captioned: "STOP" which he said touched on the clash between Forces of President Taylor and that of ECOMOG deployed in Liberia. "as Taylor was swept by the tidal wave of the people's quest for peace, I wrote that Taylor should not be making war but peace," he stated. Special Court witness- Hassan Bility confirmed seeing General Issa Sesay of (RUF) standing trial in the Court in Monrovia sometime in 1998 together with deceased

RUF General Sam Bockarie alias Mosquito. Their purpose of visiting Liberia he said, was to obtain arms and ammunition supplied by President Taylor to personnel of the RUF. During cross-examination by Defence Counsel for Augustine Gbao, John Cammegh, it was put to Mr. Bility that he had been less than honest in the course of his evidence and he was only testifying to pin down the RUF regarding the charges against them. That is

not true. What I said is the truth and it represents what I saw and encountered concerning RUF and the government of Liberia's interactions with them in respect to arms shipment. "The witness maintained; however he refused to

answer questions asked by John Cammegh regarding his being interviewed or contacted by the United States Security Agencies. This he noted would compromise his person in a way. Trial Chamber presiding Judge- Benjamin Itoe thanked

the witness Hassan Bility for being of services to the Court, by sharing his experience and informed him that although he could not confirmed that they are through with him, the witness would again be contacted if needed through the usual channels.

HWP

Monday, November 1st 2004

LEBANESE WAS MIDDLE-MAN FOR RUF/AFRC

-SPECIAL COURT WITNESS REVEALS

By Mohamed Mansaray

A Prosecution witness in the on-going trial of RUF indictees of the Special Court, Hassan Bility (a Liberian journalist) has named a Lebanese man, one Mr. Mohamed of Middle East origin as the liaison officer between the then AFRC/RUF government in Freetown between 1997 and 1998 and some unknown people.

Led in evidence by a prosecution lawyer Christopher Santora, at Court Room No. 1, New England in Freetown over the weekend, the witness identified Mr. Mohamed as a rich diamond merchant whom he came to know during one of the visits of Senior RUF Commanders in his compound in Monrovia where he was residing with former NPFL fighters during that period.

Describing himself as former press officer for the European Union (EU) an Editor of various national Newspapers in Liberia including the National News Agency, Mr. Bility testified that

he was introduced to the Lebanese man in the compound by Charles Taylor's Commander, CO. Kennedy (K1). "I shook hands with the Lebanese man", the witness said.

Mr. Bility quoted Commander Kennedy as disclosing to him in November 1998 about Charles Taylor's plan to unseat the Kabbah-led government in Freetown during that period. He further quoted the commander as telling him that Mr. Taylor was going to provide all the logistics and necessary support to achieve the change of government in Freetown. "With support from Mr. Taylor (Papay), there will be a new government in Sierra Leone very soon," the witness further quoted Kennedy as disclosing.

Mr. Bility informed the court that he saw some Liberians

See back page

Liberian Journalist at Special Court

in military uniforms carrying arms in Sierra Leone when he visited the country for 14 days after the military coup d'etat on May 25, 1997.

He told the court that he also saw senior RUF commanders in his Monrovia compound on several occasions including Sam Mosquito Bockarie and Issa Sesay during that period and were given military assistance by Mr. Taylor. The witness named Musa Sesay, former NPFL commander and one of Taylor's strong men as the man who used to escort the RUF commanders with arms in the compound where Mr. Sam (Benjamin- Yeaten's driver) was also resident. "I was the only civilian among them in the compound and the rest were members of the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) and other security agencies," he said.

Mr. Bility testified that in one of the visits, Issa Sesay asked Commander Sam to escort them with an unspecified number of cars from Monrovia to Lofa County on Sierra Leone-Liberia border. "During that visit, Issa Sesay also spoke with Mr. Taylor's artillery commander John Doe," he said.

Mr. Bility informed the court that he was tortured and detained on several occasions by Taylor's forces for articles he wrote about his regime and one of which was titled: "Who is the Judas of ECOWAS" in which he criticised Mr. Taylor for supporting the RUF in their war in Sierra Leone. He testified that he also criticised Mr. Taylor in that article for undermining the effort by the ECOWAS Committee of five meeting in Abuja during that period intended to seek solution to the conflict in Sierra Leone. "I was arrested by eight gun men from the SOD following the publication and defined SOD as "Sons of the Devil". "Taylor later held a meeting with me near the German Embassy in Monrovia where he informed me that he wanted to appoint me Assistant Minister of Information but I refused the offer", the witness said. The witness testified openly and he spoke in English.

Mr. Bility was also cross-examined by defence lawyers. The three indictees, Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao (who is not attending sessions at the moment) are charged with individual criminal responsibility for various war crimes offences committed by RUF rebels against civilians during the war in Sierra Leone. The trials continue.

THE INDEPENDENT

NO. 122

Monday November 1, 2004

Price: Le 500

I saw Issa Sesay, Maskita drinking in Taylor's compound

—Liberian journalist

By Abu Whyte Fofanah 076-666-

A Liberian journalist, Hassan Bility editor of the National News Agency and Chief Editor of the Liberia Journalists Union has re-

vealed that former Battle Field Commanders of the Revolutionary United Front Issa Sesay and Sam Mosquito Bockarie

use to visit Charles Taylor, during his reign in Liberia.

Testifying at the Special Court in Freetown, October 28 2004, he recalled his first arrest for an article he wrote titled: Who was Judas of ECO

Hassan Bility said he was pointing out features of Charles Ghankay Taylor in the article.

The witness revealed that he was pretending to be a great supporter of ECOWAS whilst

he was undermining it. Following the publication, eight gunmen from the Liberian security (SOD officers) arrested him.

According to the journalist, Liberian security agents are "Sons of the devil."

"I was arrested



Taylor: dangerous
seven times as a result of the publication, I generally reported on the war in Sierra Leone because of the involvement of Liberian security personnel",
contd page 2

Issa, Maskita in Taylor's compound

From front page

the witness stated. The witness According to stated that he was Hassan Bility, his living with the residence was Anti-Terrorist four miles to Unit, a special security force in Charles Taylor's compound in the Liberia. "I was driven to Benjamin Yaten, said he first set Taylor's death eyes on some squad commander when I RUF fighters like was arrested. After I was released, Issa Sesay and I went to the University of Ibadan in Nigeria where I the compound at gained a Bsc. in about 8:00pm." journalism".

STANDARD TIMES

2004

Le500

FROM HIS CELL...

Norman blasts Kamajor Commander

BY
UNISSA
BANGURA



David Crane...
Prosecutor

The Special Court indictee and former minister in the SLPP government, Chief Samuel Hinga Norman has, in a two page letter, frowned at the hypocrisy of Alhaji Daramy Rogers, a senior Kamajor and Liaison Officer in the Southern Region.

The letter dated 13th October 2004 stated among other things how Chief Norman is surprised at Daramy Rogers for not paying them a visit since he (Norman) and

his colleagues were arrested and detained.

The letter further expressed dissatisfaction at the way and manner in which Alhaji Rogers made himself available to the Special Court as an agent of the Special Court Prosecutor, citing a particular date in September this year.

The letter also questions President Tejan Kabbah's wisdom in calling on the United Nations to indict Kamajohs for defending

their motherland.

The aggrieved indictee, in his letter also reminded Alhaji Daramy Rogers to know that he is the chairman of the Appointment and Promotion Committee of the Kamajors, CDF and also a member of Base Zero War Committee, who has the right to recommend the positioning of commanders in the field.

The Chief also cited dissatisfaction on the letter over steps taken by Alhaji Daramy Rogers, saying

that for Alhaji Rogers to give evidence against his person was most unfortunate, because both of them are working for same goal; to defend their motherland.

The letter also urged Alhaji Daramy Rogers to be in readiness as one of witness of the CDF defence team, and has also been consider suitable to testify on matters relating to his activities while serving as junior minister in the one

CONTINUED BACK PAGE

Norman blasts Kamajor commander

FROM PAGE 1

party system of government that brought in the rebel war.

Copies of the letter were sent to H.E. Alhaji, Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah as

President and National Coordinator of the CDF, Hon. R.E.S. Lagao as Chairman National Coordinator of the CDF, the Special Court and the standby counsel for Sam Hinga Norman.

Guest Writer

By Kingsley Lington

(First published in July 2000)

I have been spending quite a slice of my money buying Canadian newspapers so much that my study is now a forest of dailies. What do I look for in these newspapers?

Who cares about Canada's coming elections? Not me. Sociologists have what they call culture shock. That was what I experienced here. The politicians who are jostling all over the place have no business talking about poverty as would President Kabbah who has rightly referred to the war against poverty as being on the same pedestal as that against RUF. The politicians here do not even talk about other basic needs like telephone or water or electricity. When they sit down to drink black coffee - I drank that stuff and my nervous system broke down - they talk about gay rights or abortion or domestic violence.

Just last week, a church in the United States joined gay couples in holy matrimony - for better or for worse.

And I just felt it was crazy and absolutely stupid. We may be weary with war but in Africa we have values. Yes, there could be a few gay couples in Freetown but then they know how they're looked at and they know they have to do their thing in the dark. With women with colours of the rainbow and shapes as sizzling as Monica Lewinsky's and beauty as sparkling as Diana's, who would want to be a gay in Sierra Leone? Whereas in Canada it is an offence to smoke in their trains or public places, it is legal for gays to assault the public eye by kissing and caressing in the public. Somehow, when you raise eyebrows people just immediately know this is not your terrain.

So, I have devised a way of looking at them from a right eye angle.

I expected the Canadian press to pick up the issue of blood diamonds and make

some noise of it. The BBC website has been providing me with details of the embargo on blood diamonds. Not any newspaper or television station here.

However, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation had Sierra Leone's Lans Giberie on TV last Thursday to explain this diamond stuff. It was for three minutes and Lans used all of the time stripping Charles Taylor of his dignity if there is any left. He lambasted the Malian government for insisting that Liberia should not be mentioned in the resolution.

I was piqued when I heard that Mali led by a respected President Konaré would play that card. Mali may simply have re-echoed the feelings of France.

The Malian UN rep said Ecowas was still investigating Taylor's involvement.

What a stupid thing to say. Who in the international community is unaware of Taylor's dealings with the RUF rebels? Even Taylor himself has confessed being the RUF's godfather. How come Mali is now more catholic than Pope John

Pampering Charles Taylor

Paul? And Ambassador Oluyeni Adeniji. He too said to mention Liberia and Taylor would not help effort to snatch the UN men in the jaws of the rebels. The whole world has played the fool. You think Taylor is stupid? The bearded former rebel acclaimed for his inconsistency and mercurial features knows what to do: keep the UN men and make himself relevant. Or, better still, pretend to be releasing them piecemeal. The man who is sending reinforcements to Sierra

Leone cannot be said not to know what to do.

Adeniji's position at the UN was alarming and disappointing. To humanize a monster just not to get him angry is to postpone doomsday.

Except for the Mike Doyle's latest report on Taylor's complicity, the demigods that populate the UN house in New York would be having a rethink about Liberia. It should not be the duty of the Special Rep to represent Taylor in the world's court.

Of course Adeniji would

Pre-ident Clinton especially during the Lewinsky saga, when she stressed that the world must not allow hoodlums to ravage and pillage Sierra Leone. I felt she had her tongue in cheek. America may claim to have given the largest support to Sierra Leone but then we ask how much compared to what she can actually give and what was given to Bosnia. Reagan bombed Benghazi and killed Ghaddafi's adopted child because the Libyan leader was accused of sponsoring terrorism. But even verbal

attack has been spared Taylor of Liberia for being a terrorist himself.

President Kabbah must prepare for the OAU summit in Lome, Togo like a man.

International politics is about winning friends. Before the last Ecowas summit in Abuja, Taylor went round some West African states campaigning for Sankoh to be spared the hangman's noose. He visited Mali (Mali again!) of course Burkina Faso and Senegal where old man Abdulaye Wade vomited the nonsense that Nigeria should be expelled from Ecowas. Wade obviously found a willing accomplice in Taylor.

Our President should get around now, or at least send his envoys, to go lobby other leaders. He can contact Thabo Mbeki of South Africa on the telephone; he can link up with Mandela. If he doesn't have his telephone number, Obasanjo can help him out; he can contact the young man in Algeria and the statesman in Egypt. He must mobilize international support against the regime in Liberia. He should not be afraid to mention before the august body in Lome that Taylor is the root of Sierra Leone's problems. If the OAU is split on account of Taylor, I will volunteer to follow Kabbah to the battlefield blindfolded. But if he goes to hold Taylor's feet, to beg him, to pamper him, I will be the first to betray him before the cockcrows the third time.

The OAU is holding in Lome, Togo, next week, in the same venue in which the Sierra Leone Peace accord was signed almost exactly one year ago. President Kabbah must let his colleagues know it's been one year of pain and anguish.

Say this, Kabbah, to Taylor: you are a murderer of innocent souls. Then come home to get my big, big pat on the back.

Kingsley Lington is now Public Information Officer with the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

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What a stupid thing to say. Who in the international community is unaware of Taylor's dealings with the RUF rebels? Even Taylor himself has confessed being the RUF's godfather. How come Mali is now more catholic than Pope John Paul? And Ambassador Oluyeni Adeniji.

The OSWALD HANCILES Column

BETRAYAL!

"Special Court indictee, Chief Samuel Hinga Norman, has in a letter to one time APC minister and top CDF operative, Alhaji Daramy Rogers, made astounding revelations regarding his indictment by the UN-backed court....The Letter (to said Rogers) is reproduced below unedited..... 'I am surprised that since my (our) arrest and detention (Chief Samuel Hinga Norman, Moinina Fofana, and Allieu Kondowa, all being Mendes and of the Kamajor wing alone), you, a very senior member of the CDF-Kamahor, have not found it necessary to pay us a single day's visit up to date....though I am aware of the fact that you are paying constant visits to the detention centre as agent of the (Prosecutor?).... Indeed, it pleased the Government of the SLPP under President Ahmad Tejan Kabba who wrote to the United Nations to have us....indicted for DEFENDING the MENDES and also assisting the ECOMOG/SLAF and UNAMSIL to RESTORE the Constitution and REINSTATE him, the President, to power, declaring us the MENDES specifically as CANNIBALS, MURDERERS, RAPISTS and WAR CRIMINALS of despicable characters considering that you, others and I always ate together from the Tray Dish at Base Zero....During the WAR, you were, and you still are, the Chairman of the Appointments and Promotions Committee and a member of the BASE ZERO WAR COUNCIL.....You Alhaji Rogers should not be a paid Agent for the Prosecution'"

-"BETRAYAL! Hinga Norman Writes From Jail": DEMOCRAT, October 29, 2004

Words have life. Words have power. Words never die. Words grow, like the smallest of seeds, words grow into the mightiest of trees - sprouting more seeds.... Like the words above. Thought-provoking words. Agonising words. Words of shame poured on the white-haired head of seventy year old plus Alhaji Daramy Rogers. I don't know for now the symbolic essence of this act for other ethnic groups as written by the Mende man Chief Norman: "you, others and I always ate together from the same Tray Dish at Base Zero"; but for the Mende....Aha!!! Today, too many Sierra Leoneans with deep traditional roots

betray poignant traditional bonds and take refuge in the white man's modernity. There are other frighteningly explosive words in Chief Norman's letter above.

It is "only" the Civil Defence Force (CDF) leaders who are MENDES and KAMAJORS - Samuel Hinga Norma, Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondowa - who have been indicted by the Special Court. The CDF comprised of not only Mende-speaking Kamajors; but the CDF had Temne-speaking Gbethis, Kono-originated Donsos, Koranko-Yulanka-speaking Tamaborrohs. Ah yes, the CDF leaders of the other ethnic groups could not be trapped in the Special Court's "those who bear greatest responsibility" for atrocities in our nasty civil war (!) Do not miss the import of Chief Norman's words that Kamajors/Mendes are being 'propaganda-rized' today as "cannibals, murderers, rapists"... Quiet? You!! And You!!!

When the RUF rebels and AFRC 'sobels' entered central Freetown on January 6, 1999, they burnt my family house in Sojaton about 11.00 a.m. My entire family moved to a house of one of our relatives on McDonald Street. After about ten day of living in constant fear with the unpredictable and drug-induced rebels-sobels, one morning... Kamajors entered our house, and ordered everybody out. We trooped out to a crowded street. Apparently, similar orders had been given to other houses on the street. The Kamajors herded us to the roundabout in front of St. John Anglican church, where the crowd of about a hundred persons were ordered to sit on the ground. Since, we knew that the rebels-sobels would sometimes dress up like Kamajors, we were all fearful. But we relaxed when we saw an ECOMOG tank; and soldiers in military fatigues speaking with Nigerian accent. As we sat on the ground, one of my Mende-speaking cousins, Salaam Bangura (by the way Olu Gordon, my paternal grandmother was a Mende, from the Bonthe mainland; and my mother is Mende), pinched me, and whispered to me. He had seen through the heavy disguise of talismans on the face of one of the Kamajors...someone he recognized. Salaam could not control himself. He jumped up, shouting, "Makanani!!". The Kamajor swirled around. He rec-

ognized Salaam. He rushed towards Salaam, and they embraced each other, dancing around. Another Kamajor raced towards them, and as he got close, Salaam recognized him, too, yelling, "Kamor Jusu!!" - and the dance of joy was repeated....The ECOMOG officer leading the troops barked an order, and the Kamajors moved into place.... In front of the ECOMOG tank: in front of the ECOMOG troops. That was the way it was in most places while Freetown was being retaken by the 'good guys' - Kamajors with their prowess for bullet-proof invincibility, leading the Nigerian-led ECOMOG troops.

The Kamajors were (are!!) war heroes. Liberators!! The Kamajors saved their kith and kin from rebels-sobels who committed atrocities defied human imagination. How can we extol the valour of the Kamajors and indict the "leaders of the Kamajors"? So, it appears rational to besmirch the heroics of the Kamajors together with the Kamajor leadership. The case against Hinga Norman transcends mere war crimes trial. It is the continuation of the attempt by the white man (and the black men who have lost their black soul) to disparage all what is black. Again: there certainly were aberrations of horrors committed by the Kamajors. Are we blind to the horrors of the Americans in Iraq; the horrific acts of Americans in yesterday's wars in Vietnam, World War II? Why do we continue with this injustice of a trial of Kamajor War heroes by the Special Court? No. I shouldn't ask that question. I know the answer. The 'white gods' have decided that the trial goes on. So, mere black mortals are terrified to even stretch their black minds to begin to think of the rank injustice of the 'gods'?

In last month's NEW AFRICAN magazine, there is an article there with the title, **"Truth Pressed To The Ground Shall Rise Again!!"**. It is based on the reality that people of Mende stock went to the Americas, extended their civilization there, hundreds of years before the white man Christopher Columbus was said to have 'discovered' America. The truth about our civil war, no matter how much it is pressed down, would rise up again!!! Be patient, Chief Norman, exercise the 'Nelson Mandela pa-



Nigeria Has Power to Prosecute Charles Taylor -- Fagbohunlu

Vanguard (Lagos)

INTERVIEW

October 29, 2004

Posted to the web October 29, 2004

By Innocent Anaba

Babatunde Fagbohunlu, is a Lagos based legal practitioner. In this interview he spoke on the legal battle instituted by some Nigerians who suffered in the hands of the Liberia government under Mr Charles Taylor. These Nigerians are in court, seeking to compel the Federal Government to bring Taylor to trial. Excerpts:

You used to be very active in human rights struggle some years ago but all of a sudden it appears that you disappeared from the human rights community and you are now in full time legal practice.

I didn't quite disappear from the human rights initiative. Human rights is a matter of interest and passion. Right from the very beginning of my career, I have been a legal practitioner who works in a general practice firm. Right from Kaduna where I worked in a firm, Festus Ogunkoye & Co till when I worked with Olisa Agbakoba & Associates. Olisa Agbakoba is well known as one of the pioneers of organisational initiative for human rights in Nigeria based on his leadership of the Civil Liberty Organisation.

And so it's probably sometimes different to draw a distinction between his firm, Olisa Agbakoba and Associates where I worked first, for some years of my career and the organisation that he was president for about a while, that is the Civil Liberty Organisation. The truth of the matter, is that I worked as a lawyer in Olisa Agbakoba firm and I was essentially mostly a commercial lawyer. It was a general practice firm which meant that we had quite a range of activities, both commercial as well as human rights. From there I joined the firm of Aluko and Oyeboode which is basically a commercial law firm and presently I am a partner in that firm. All the while, I continue to take keen interest in human rights from a purely litigation point of view. My interest in human rights is that of a litigator really. I endeavour to advance my interest in human rights through what I considered to be my case as a litigator.

How has your background as a human rights activist impacted on your work presently in the firm?

I think that there is a bit of divide between the two. I don't believe that there is a connection. If there were connection at all, it is in the fact that right now I also coordinate the pro bono programme of the firm, Aluko and Oyeboode. Let me just give a bit of explanation on that. Pro bono programme is something which I think is basically essential in Nigeria among Nigerian law firms.

And what it means is that a law firm, notwithstanding, its inclination, whether it's a commercial firm, a public interest firm, Law firms should contribute to the society in the sense of giving a bit of their time to helping those who cannot afford legal services to get such services. In that sense therefore, if there is any connection at all between my interest in human rights and my position right now as a partner in the law firm of Aluko & Oyeboode, it is in the sense that it put me in a good position to be able to coordinate that aspect of our practice.

It is on record that you are currently leading a team of lawyers that have been retained by the Open Society Justice Initiative to initiate a legal action against the Federal Government over the asylum granted to Charles Taylor in Nigeria. Can you tell us the issues in that suit and how far you have gone.

I think it is too early to talk about success yet because as you well know, the case itself is yet to be prepared on its merit. But first of all, in terms of the issues, we are in court representing two individuals, David Adiele and Emmanuel Egbuna who were Nigeria businessmen in the Kissy area of Freetown Sierra Leone at the time that the Revolution United Front invaded Sierra Leone. They were unfortunate victims of the event that occurred at that time. Both of them suffered severe trauma. The severe trauma of being mutilated and in fact, amputated. They witnessed their loved ones undergo several experiences. In some instances, in actual fact, Emmanuel Egbuna witnessed his brother died. They became aware of the fact that there is an indictment that has been issued against Charles Taylor by the United Nations Backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. The indictment specifically accuses Mr Taylor of responsibility for the events that occurred in Sierra Leone.

The indictment itself has not been tried. However, I do know that the Special Court for Sierra Leone operates on the basis that the indictment will not be allowed to get to the stage where this present one has gotten to unless a judge of the special court is satisfied that there are enough materials to create prima facie presumption that the indictee was in fact responsible for the act of which he's been accused of. This is what exist in the status setting up most International Criminal Tribunals. You will find it in the status setting up the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the one for Yugoslavia. You find it in the status setting up the International Criminal Court for Sierra Leone particularly in its roles for procedure and evidence.

The other issues of course that is involved in this case is that Nigeria is a party to the United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees. Nigeria, in fact, domesticated that convention when it enacted the National Commission for Refugees Act. The United Nations Convention for Refugees itself as you would be able to determine from its name, is a convention that was entered into by a number of nations in the world to protect refugees. But in doing so, the countries that entered into that convention also emphasised that the whole institution of refugee status as political asylum was not to be used for the purpose of harbouring people from international justice particularly people who are suspected of having been responsible for what are referred to as international war crimes or crimes against humanity.

Because those countries believe that the whole credibility of the system of the refugees status and political asylum would be thrown into question if it were to be used for the purpose of shielding persons suspected to have been involved in crime against humanity from international justice. And Nigeria is a party to that convention, like I said Nigeria has in fact, domesticated that convention by implementing its provision in the National Commission for Refugees. In actual fact, the convention itself is being reproduced as a schedule to international commission for Refugees Act itself. The question therefore that arises in this case which the court is being called upon to determine is whether the Commission for Refugees considered the International Obligations of Nigeria under that convention, as well as the legal requirements of that status, the International Commission for Refugees Act before it made the decision to grant political asylum or refugee status to Mr. Charles Taylor. That's the central issue that the court is being called upon to determine.

Beyond your brief as counsel to David Adiele and Emmanuel Egbuna in the matter, are you in any way motivated by any other interest as it relate to the asylum granted to Mr Charles Taylor by the Federal Government.

If there is any other interest at all that I have it is that of a lawyer who is interested in ensuring that the rule of law is maintained and upheld at all times. My primary involvement is that of a lawyer who have been instructed by an NGO on behalf of the victims. I believe every other Nigerian and every other citizen in this country is interested or has an interest in ensuring that the rule of law is upheld. I've had it said that the decision in question, the decision that it is being challenged in court is a political decision and therefore for that reason it is not something that the court has any business with. I completely disagree with that position,

it is not a position that has been canvassed in court, let me make that clear now.

That position so far has not been canvassed in court, but I've had it mentioned outside of course the context of the litigation itself. I've had that mentioned to the extent that if this forms the basis of the government's decision to continue to maintain Mr. Taylor's Asylum, I think it's a very terrible position. Because the whole essence of the rule of law is that political power itself must be exercised within the constraints of legal requirement, that's the whole essence of the rule of law. I think it is not right to say that a particular decision is a political decision particularly if such decision is one that is governed by statutes. The rule of law states that whether it is political or not, it must be exercised in accordance with the dictates of the statutes and that is exactly the question that the court is being called upon to determine in this case. Has it in fact, been exercised in accordance with requirements of the Act that enabled the decision made in the first place. One of these we would see at the end of the case.

Another concern that has been expressed on the matter is the choice of Federal High Court when there are regional courts like the ECOWAS court and the African Courts on Human and Peoples'. It has been suggested that any of these regional courts would have given the case a better focus?

I tend to agree that you could probably have better focus. There certainly would be a better focus on the human rights aspect of this dispute had it been ventilated in a regional or sub-regional human rights body. However, there are quite a number of practical constraints. First of all, the African Commission on Human Rights is not a court of human rights as you well know, the process for establishing a court of human rights is just evolving. However, it basically operates on the basis of persuasion and political pressure. Secondly in any event also, you would find that the status of the African commission requires that to a large extent people coming should have explored domestic procedure before approaching the African commission. That also add another limitation because it is important to try and see whether you could get some remedy within the domestic frame work.

Although I know also that if there are good reasons why the domestic remedies can't be explored, the African commission would entertain a petition. However, we thought that there is a good chance of getting remedy within the domestic courts and that is why we basically thought it was necessary to approach the domestic courts first.

Another issue that came up basically from non-lawyers was the issue of jurisdiction as far as Charles Taylor is involved. People have asked if Charles Taylor could be subject to the laws of Nigeria when the atrocities that gave rise to the suit happened outside Nigeria though involving Nigerians. Again people have suggested that since an International court is now trying the matter there is no need to continue with the matter in Nigeria.

First of all, I think the most important thing or distinction to draw here is that this present action before the Federal High Court is not one that is intended to put Charles Taylor on trial. Charles Taylor is not on trial before the Nigeria Court. He has been named as a party to the action because he is affected.

But really, what is on trial is the decision making process that resulted in the asylum being granted to him. That decision making process was taken by either the National Commission for Refugees or by the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria or by both of them. Which ever of them took that decision is a matter that would probably become clearer as the case itself progresses. But, whatever the case maybe, it was taken by an authority in Nigeria and that is what is in the Federal High Court of Nigeria's jurisdiction. Because it is not Charles Taylor himself that resulted to the asylum that is on trial.

In any event however, it is also important to realise that the whole frame work of the refugees status system and the political asylum is centered around principle of universal jurisdiction. In other words, it is an essential feature of the United Nations Convention on the status of refugees which again like I said has been domesticated in Nigeria that which ever country is harbouring a person who has been indicted or who is suspected to have committed war crimes has the jurisdiction to try him for those acts irrespective of where

the acts in question occurred. So if the Federal Government of Nigeria is ready today to prosecute Charles Taylor for the atrocities that occurred either in Sierra Leon or Liberia, the Federal Government would have the jurisdiction to do so in Nigerian courts based upon the principles of universal jurisdiction that would be found in the Geneva Convention Act.

On the case itself, it was in the news a few days ago that the Cross River State Governor Donald Duke has denied seeing the court processes. He said that he has never been served any process of court. How have you handled this matter?

There were two issues actually that I understand Mr. Duke referred to. The first was the fact that when the processes were obtained from the court, they had to be sent from our office in Lagos by courier service. It was during that period that we had the very severe floods that occurred in Lagos and that kind of created a physical problem. Eventually, we were able to get the DHL courier to send the documents to him and he eventually got the documents. Other issue that arose was his questioning the necessity for the court making an order that Mr. Charles Taylor should be served through his office. Based on the event that subsequently occurred in court, it appears that his position was based on a misconception first of all as to the nature of the order and a misconception as to the implication of immunity granted under the constitution.

Because as you probably aware the Cross River State government filed an application in court to discharge the order directing that Charles Taylor be served through the office of the governor. And it became clear from the arguments they were going to make in court that first of all they thought that the effect of the order was to make governor Duke himself a party in the action. That in fact was not the case as the judge himself pointed out very clearly to the solicitor-General of Cross River State when he came to argue the application. The second misconception arose from the first misconception because having thought that the effect of the order was to make Governor Duke a party in the action they then fell into the second error of thinking that was a violation of the immunity provision in the Constitution. While there is no doubt at all that the constitution provides immunity for the governors when he is sued in his personal capacity, it is entirely inapplicable in the context of this case because not only has he not been sued in his capacity, but he has not been sued at all. There was quite a lot of misconception there.

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CLEAR THE AIR ABOUT THAT ALLEGED HINGA NORMAN LETTER FROM JAIL

No true and patriotic Sierra Leonean will feel a sense of ease after reading the letter allegedly written by War Crimes indictee Chief Hinga Norman. The letter which has been carried on the front page of COCORIOKO makes explosive allegations that are inimical to peace in our beloved country.



Our investigations discovered that the letter indeed is now public record in official government files and the Special Court is said to be aware of the existence of this letter. The document was infact sent to us by a political insider within the ruling SLPP and it came in ADOBE file , with signatures and C.C copies to relevant authorities in Sierra Leone. We tried to copy and paste it in vain because that operation does not work with an ADOBE document. We plan to scan the letter and reprooduce it in the original form received. .What makes the authenticity of this letter likely possible is that two days after we published it, there has been no rebuttal of its explosive contents or denial about its' alleged origins from the Civil Defence Force (CDF) , the ruling SLPP and the Special Court.

We think that the CDF owe the nation an explanation about the authenticity of this letter . Is it a ruse by some mischievious persons bent on creating tribal chaos in Sierra Leone ? Is a fake letter from enemies of the indicted Chief meant to tarnish his character and bring to disrepute all the gallant efforts of the CDF ? For the letter to allege that the CDF were fighting for the Mendes is a grotesque misrepresentation of the truth. Sierra Leoneans know better and the truth is that the CDF fought alongside ECOMOG and the UN Peace Keeping Force to neutralise the wicked and satanic RUF rebels from overrrunning the country and seizing power illegally. This is the truth, unless ofcourse some ill-disposed persons are trying to ignite tribal war in Sierra Leone.

The SLPP government is thrust with the responsibility of defending the lives and properties of the Sierra Leonean people and foreigners in our midst .It is astounding that the government is treating national security with such levity. What efforts have the government's many spin doctors made to clarify to the Sierra Leonean people that the allegations in the letter are false and disruptive of peace and stability ? . The late Dr.Siaka Stevens may have had his faults but he was very prompt in refutting these dangerous allegations. Pa Shaki never allowed potentially dangerous sentiments to take roots in the country.

President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah (Pictured above) has said on countless times that the treaty that established the Special Court was between his government and the United Nations and that he (Kabbah) did not have personal stakes in the treaty. The President even averred that he too could be indicted by the Special Court .The question that would exercise any reasonable mind is "Why would Kabbah seek to persecute any tribe at this time when he is marking time to retire from power ? " Sierra Leoneans have no record of tribalistic tendencies in their President. Kabbah may have his faults but he is not tribalistic. He has been inclusive in his appointments of ministers and public officials. He has not only been warmly received by Sierra Leoneans across the broad spectrum of all the tribes in Sierra Leone but he himself has tried acidiously to reach across tribal and ethnic barriers.

All told, that alleged letter is bad for everyone in Sierra Leone and the sooner the CDF, SLPP and Special Court come clean about its authenticity, the better for Sierra Leone.

'Threat' to girl in police sex case

By Martin Daly, Gavin Simpson

Freetown, Sierra Leone

November 1, 2004

Sierra Leone's Justice Minister and Attorney-General claims the family of the alleged victim in the sex abuse case against Victoria Police Superintendent Peter Halloran threatened to kill the girl unless she changed her original story.

F. M. Carew, who is the driving force behind the decision to prosecute, said police had put the 13-year-old girl into protective custody because they feared what her family might do to her. Mr Carew defended the detention in police cells of 10 members of the girl's family, saying that they were forcing her to say the sex never happened. "They were detained because of allegations of investigating police officers that they were threatening the girl. . . they were threatening to kill her," Mr Carew said.

However, Mr Carew confirmed that he spoke to the family and the girl, and that the girl had replied "no" when he asked if her family had threatened to kill her.

Mr Carew said the family was determined to make the girl change her story because her brother, Sheka Fofanah, had been charged with procuring her for sex, and another relative, Abdul Fofanah, had been charged with perverting the course of justice because he wrote a letter on behalf of the family apologising to Halloran.

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But the police, Justice Department officials and the minister have been condemned for allegedly interfering in the case by threatening the girl and her family to make statements that Halloran had sex with the girl.

Halloran, 56, faces three charges in the High Court relating to sex with an underage girl in a house he shared with two Australians and a Canadian.

Halloran strenuously denies the allegations. The conduct of investigating police, the slow progress of the trial, and the fact the case is being continued by the prosecution after the girl said from the witness box that she had been coerced to make up the sex abuse stories, have raised concerns about due process.

Mr Carew said Halloran would receive "the fairest of trials".

The girl allegedly made a statement giving details of sex with Halloran in his bedroom. The family and the girl say the claims of sex are not true, and the girl had agreed to make the allegations after being offered inducements. The family say they have been threatened with imprisonment and violence from police and prosecutors if they do not say Halloran had committed the crime.

The trial continues this week.

How officer of the law ended up in the dock

By Martin Daly, Gavin Simpson

Freetown, Sierra Leone

October 31, 2004

Peter Halloran arrives at the courthouse in Freetown in August.

Photo: AFP

Friday, June 4, should have been a routine day for Peter Halloran. He was a respected senior police officer of 40 years, working for a war crimes court pursuing those who had orchestrated crimes against humanity in the country's civil war.

That afternoon Halloran, Investigations Commander for the Special Court of Sierra Leone, was summoned to the office of his boss, Chief of Investigations Allan White. Halloran, a court inquiry later found, was about to be "ambushed". He did not know that the day before, a 13-year-old schoolgirl from a poor local family had given a graphic statement to a Sierra Leone police officer, alleging Halloran had had sex with her twice. In court the girl would retract the allegations, claiming she had been told to make them by Mandy Cordwell, a former Tasmanian police officer and housemate of Halloran's, in exchange for a variety of inducements.

Halloran vehemently denies any sexual contact with the girl. At one point he broke down before a board of inquiry set up by the Special Court.

The Halloran saga and the treatment of the alleged victim, who has been dragged before inquiries and police interrogators, has been going on for months. It has fuelled speculation that there is a political element to the prosecution and that the state is determined to send Halloran to the notorious Pademba Road Prison in Freetown on the three charges relating to sex with an under-aged girl.

If there was a good cop, bad cop scenario at the Special Court, then the bad cop could be said to be Allan White, an American. Within minutes of telling Halloran that Friday that he was under investigation, White presented a series of allegations and suggested they virtually sealed Halloran's fate. But the proof White alluded to did not exist.

White repeatedly told Halloran there was support for the claim the girl had been seen with him in his room. If true, this would have sunk Halloran because of his assertions that, far from having sex with the girl in a house occupied by three other police officers, he had never been in his bedroom with the girl at all. Not even Cordwell, an experienced and respected investigator, who took the girl and her allegations to Sierra Leone's police, has linked Halloran to the girl in this way.

I'm absolutely flabbergasted with the allegation."

Peter Halloran

Halloran protested his innocence to an interviewing team that included the Special Court's Chief of Security, Bob Parnell, who died this week of a heart attack, and Alberto Fabbri, legal adviser to the Office of the Prosecutor.

"I'm absolutely flabbergasted with the allegation," Halloran said. "I'm not sure one does have words."

But White did not let go. He repeated the assertions that he said had implicated Halloran, telling him "there are some indications that there may be some validity as to what happened in this instance".

"I would like you to think about this," White continued, "Because you just have to understand how serious this is. There are two also very credible colleagues of yours who claim they saw her in your room. I mean, they didn't just make this up.

"I'm not implying they saw you in bed with her, but they have seen her in your room, independent of one another, they corroborate that. They have no reason to lie that I know of."

Halloran responded to these allegations: "Absolutely impossible."

White continued, talking about clothing with indications of semen on it. "I just wanted to let you know that there are signs that the circumstances occurred," White said. "If there were any bodily fluids from you that were found on her clothes, how would you explain that?"

"I would say absolutely impossible," said Halloran.

On the evidence so far, it appears White may have misunderstood what he had been told about Halloran being seen with the girl or, as has been suggested, someone lied to him about the evidence.

Whatever the case, White was wrong on crucial points. Later, a Special Court inquiry adjudged that Halloran had been "confronted with accusations that demonstrate hasty conclusions were being reached". It also questioned White's legal and procedural right to hold the interview and take action against Halloran, such as suspending him without pay and banning him from court premises.

Eleven days after Halloran was stood down, he faced a second round of questioning. This one led to the finding that there was no credible evidence to support the sex allegations. But the board of inquiry found there appeared to have been an element of impropriety on Halloran's part and that he may have touched the girl's breast.

It also ruled Halloran had been dealt with in a prejudicial manner, and that the procedures used against him were "unacceptable, in particular before an institution of international criminal justice governed by the most stringent of international human rights standards". The first failure, according to the inquiry, related to the way Cordwell pursued the issue, taking the girl on false pretences and without a guardian to a Sierra Leone policewoman who was attached to the Special Court to be interviewed.

"The Board is concerned if this is typical of the way investigations for trials are conducted," it stated. "(Cordwell's) behaviour does not demonstrate a concern for the child's welfare."

The chairwoman of the inquiry, Nina Jorgensen, then wrote a confidential inter-office memo to the Registrar of the Special Court, Robin Vincent, telling him that "based on the evidence put forward and the procedural defects" of the inquiry involving Cordwell and White, no further disciplinary action should be taken against Halloran, and that he "should be afforded the opportunity to resign".

Vincent decided to immediately lift Halloran's suspension but that he should not return to work until the inquiry's full report was available. Halloran went back to work. But Sierra

Leone police and the Justice Department decided to press charges, despite later assertions by the girl and her family that the abuse claims had been made up under pressure.

Halloran was arrested and the Special Court went into damage control. Staff, who are divided on the case, were threatened with sanctions if they spoke about it to the media.

Abe Haddad, then a Victoria Police officer working for the Special Court, went on leave in Melbourne and spoke with The Age about the case. He was suspended for two months.

In recent days, staff at the high-security court complex have been warned again not to talk to the media, as the widespread allegations that the Halloran case lacks transparency gains support from the Federal Government.

Last week, Australia's high commissioner to Ghana, Jon Richardson, flew to Freetown for high-level talks with Sierra Leone officials, telling them of Canberra's concerns about the conduct of the trial.

BBC Last Updated: Sunday, 31 October, 2004, 11:13 GMT

Last day of Liberia disarmament

The UN is due to end its disarmament programme in Liberia on Sunday.

Officials say that more than 70,000 fighters have laid down their weapons, nearly double initial estimates. At least 15% were child soldiers.

Most observers say the programme has been fairly successful despite a bad start on Friday, when around seven people died in a riot.

The uncertain situation has also forced the UN to postpone repatriation of refugees from neighbouring Guinea.



The disarmament programme appears to have been a success

A spokeswoman said the refugee agency had hoped to get the repatriation process under way on Saturday, but it had a policy of not returning people to unsafe environments.

She said the repatriation exercise would be started as soon as it became safe to do so.

'Hooligans'

On Saturday Liberia's interim leader Gyude Bryant prolonged a curfew imposed after the riots for another night.

It is not clear what sparked the violence, which began on Thursday evening in the commercial suburb of Paynesville and spread across the capital to other districts including the port area.

Several churches and a mosque were burned down.

Mr Bryant said hooligans were to blame, but there are reports that former fighters were involved.



The violence is a reminder of how volatile Liberia remains

The BBC's David Chazan says many are angry at a lack of work and training, but the UN is trying to help solve the problem by putting thousands of child fighters into school.

But the violence was a reminder of how volatile Liberia remains, our correspondent says, and raises questions about the thoroughness of disarmament in a country still awash with guns.

The unrest was one of the most serious outbreaks of violence in Liberia since former President Charles Taylor went into exile in August last year as part of a peace deal to end 14 years of civil war.

Mr Bryant heads a transitional power-sharing government set up to organise elections.

There are some 15,000 UN peacekeepers in Liberia. They are due to finish disarming the estimated 40,000 former militiamen by the end of October.

MONROVIA BURNS AGAIN

....As ghosts from civil war haunt divided country

Monday November 1, 2004

Thick , black smokes wafted into the sky from burning buildings, churches and mosques as Liberia's troubled capital, Monrovia , was on fire once again, this time from religious rioting. Though the latest conflict in war-ravaged Liberia has taken on a religious look, it is ghosts of the country's destructive war at work again. COCORIOKO 's investigations unearthed these facts:

The culture of violence is deeply embedded in Liberian society today and the only means that people have of addressing issues is by resorting to bloodshed. The danger signs started flashing last month when the national team, The Lone Star, were thrashed 3-0 at home in the World Cup Qualifying series. To everybody's surprise, the result ignited violence as angry mobs took to the streets looting and attacking the homes of the Coach, Kadala Koroma, and some of the players. Lone Star players abroad have threatened not to come to Liberia anymore to play for the team and the coach has since resigned.

At first, they said if former President Charles Taylor left, the country would return to normal. But despite the presence of UN Peace Keeping Forces and the disarmament process in progress, normalcy has not completely returned to Liberia , more than a year after President Taylor's dramatic departure. And now the conflict has taken a more dangerous diversion , with religious chaos known for breeding societal disintegration, more clashes and casualties.

Actually, religion is only being used as a facade for Liberia's latest chaos. The conflict is now between the Madingoes, migrants from neighbouring Guinea and muslims, and supporters of one of Liberia's former rebel groups the Liberians United For Reconciliation And Democracy (LURD) on one side and remnants of the other rival rebels forces and Charles Taylor's soldiers on the other.

The Madingoes had became one of the flashpoints of the Liberian instability since members of the tribe were accused of acting as spies and providing subtle support for the then beseiged government of the late President Samuel K.Doe , at the onset of the Liberian war when Charles Taylor invaded the country in 1989 to overthrow the dictator. Thousands of Madingoes were targeted and killed by Taylor's NPFL Forces during his odyssey from the interior into the capital . After the assassination of President Doe in 1990, Madingoes then aligned themselves with the Krahns, members of Doe's tribe who were also massacred on a large scale , to form ULIMO in Sierra Leone from where they launched a counterattack against Taylor in 1991 . They however later split into ULIMO-Krahns and ULIMO-Madingoes due to internal dissension.

After the end of the first civil war in 1993 , both groups went underground but ULIMO-M re-emerged in Guinea as LURD to fight Taylor again when the civil war resumed in 1996. Though they succeeded in causing the demise of Taylor, the Mandingoes never succeeded in warming their way into the hearts of the local Liberian people. Tensions had continued to simmer between them and this reached boiling point at Paynesville on Friday when some Mandingoes and local Liberians quarrelled and fought over a piece of land. Incensed members of disbanded rival rebel groups joined the conflict and started a fierce religious war, which saw muslims burning churches and homes of christians while the latter burnt down mosques and homes of muslims.

Fighting abated briefly on Saturday when a curfew was imposed by the Interim Government led by Chairman Gyude Bryant but flared again yesterday as rival fighters confronted each other with knives, swords and sticks .If not contained, the fighting has the potential of spreading into the equally volatile hinterland , where anti-Madingo sentiments are rife.

HOW MANY THANKSGIVING DAYS WERE THERE IN 1939?

TurkishPress.com

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Weather
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Doubts remain as UN wraps up voluntary disarmament in Liberia

AFP: 10/29/2004

MONROVIA (AFP) - The United Nations on Sunday wraps up the voluntary phase of its campaign to disarm fighters from Liberia's civil war, having enrolled more than 85,000 people from three warring factions and collecting some 26,000 weapons and millions of rounds of ammunition.

But it remains to be seen just how effective the multimillion-dollar effort will be owing to the discrepancy between the number of weapons collected and the volume of fighters, backed by complaints from ex-combattants who have yet to receive their promised benefits.

The October 31 deadline does not mean that disarmament will come to an abrupt halt in Liberia, struggling to right itself after 14 years of back-to-back civil war, UN disarmament coordinator Clive Jachnik told AFP.

"It is the cutoff date for the DDRR program, after which time we will continue mop-up operations in remote locations with mobile disarmament units," he said.

"Before the 31st, people have the opportunity to be screened and are eligible for the benefits offered under the program. After the 31st they will not get that chance."

At the center of the UN effort to restore peace and stability to the west African state, and bearing an initial price tag of 50 million dollars, the campaign got off to a disastrous launch in December last year.

At least 12 people were killed in several days of riots in the capital Monrovia as thousands of fighters flooded a lone cantonment site that was badly understaffed by the newly-arrived UN peacekeeping mission (UNMIL).

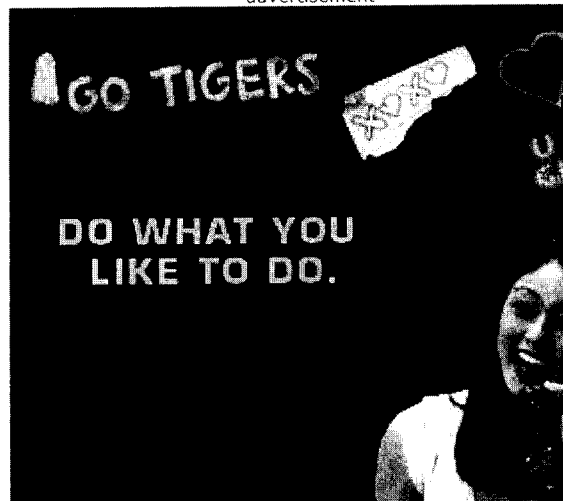
Five months later, the program was resumed in April in the north-central town of Gbarnga, the stronghold of the main rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

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It was LURD's uprising against president Charles Taylor in 1999 that sparked the second civil war, declared over in August last year with a peace pact and powersharing agreement.

Since April, the campaign has expanded to eight sites nationwide, including areas along the porous and volatile borders with Guinea to the north and Ivory Coast to the east, both of which are potential flashpoints for a resumption of conflict in violence-prone west Africa.

The final site, in the far southeastern town of Harper, only opened in early October and has been one of the least successful operations.

UNMIL deputy force commander Major General Joseph Owonibi said in mid-October that the number of weapons handed in was lower than expected, complaining that commanders of the rebel Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) troops were not cooperating.

Rumors are rife along the forested border Liberia shares with Ivory Coast that fighters are stashing arms caches in anticipation of a reprise of conflict on either side.

Harper is not alone in registering a discrepancy between the number of ex-combattants and weapons -- the problem has plagued disarmament nationwide and was to be expected, according to Jachnik.

"In areas where there are porous borders it is normal for people to hide weapons, and to try and enroll without weapons," he said.

But when compared to statements reiterated by UN special envoy Jacques Klein that in Liberia there were three weapons for every fighter, such reassurances are jarring.

For the former fighters themselves, the failure of the DDRR program to make good on promises of training, schooling and a full, 300-dollar stipend seems to legitimize their reasons to hold back their weapons.

"Do you think that we are just going to hand over everything, after what happened the last time?" asked Prince Walloh, a MODEL fighter in the eastern town of Zwedru, referring to the botched disarmament effort in 1997 and 1998 that was considered a catalyst of the 1999 LURD uprising.

"No way. We know better this time. If they do not fulfill their promises, we will regroup and fight again."

10/29/2004 - 19:24 GMT - AFP



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One Killed in Rioting in Liberia Capital

Sun Oct 31, 2004 09:47 AM ET

By Alphonso Toweh

MONROVIA (Reuters) - One person was killed on Sunday when mobs of youths rioted on the streets of the Liberian capital, carrying out apparent revenge attacks for killings during religious sectarian violence on Friday, witnesses said.

U.N. peacekeeping troops fired warning shots and used armored vehicles to seal off an area of the Paynesville suburb where gangs of Christian and Muslim youths armed with sticks and knives fought running battles in the streets.

Witnesses said some of the Muslim youths were carrying AK-47 rifles. Sporadic shots could be heard as residents fled, raising their hands above their heads as they ran to show they were unarmed.

One man was carried away from the fray bleeding from a wound in his neck. The cause of the clashes was not immediately clear.

Religious strife has been relatively uncommon in Liberia, where battle lines during almost 14 years of civil war have traditionally been drawn along loose ethnic or regional lines.

The riots happened on the Oct. 31 cut-off-date for a U.N. disarmament program for tens of thousands of former fighters from two rebel groups and loyalist militias which started in earnest in April.

At least seven people were killed in similar clashes on Friday in the coastal capital of the West African country of roughly three million people.

The rioting youths emerged in defiance of a curfew imposed after the rioting on Friday, when mosques and churches were burned before U.N. troops deployed to restore order.

On Sunday, witnesses said Ghanaian and Nigerian peacekeepers arrested about 40 men, forcing them to lie on the ground after searching a house and finding weapons inside.

The troops form part of a 15,000-strong peacekeeping contingent, the world's largest, sent to oversee a peace deal signed last year to end the civil war.

The U.N. mission said on Sept. 15 it had disarmed 76,560 Liberian ex-combatants, a number which has increased since then. However, some rebels said last month there was little chance all their weapons would be handed in by Sunday's deadline.

Liberia is struggling to emerge from a conflict which has crippled the economy, creating an explosive mix of hundreds of thousands of jobless youths and relatively easy access to guns.

About 20 percent of Liberia's population is Muslim, 40 percent Christian and 40 percent follow animist beliefs.




(Additional reporting by Emmanuel Braun)

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Liberia seizes weapons, arrests rebel leader as UN arms deadline reached

AFP: 10/31/2004

MONROVIA (AFP) - UN peacekeepers arrested a dissident rebel leader and seized weapons in a clampdown on the Liberian capital on the last day of a campaign to disarm fighters in the west African state.

General Philip Kamara of the main rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and one other still-unidentified LURD member were arrested at Kamara's home in Monrovia's Paynesville district, UN military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Brendan Geraghty confirmed.

Two AK-47 rifles were seized, UN mission spokesman James Boynton added.

Ghanaian peacekeepers told AFP in Paynesville that some 80 LURD fighters had been detained along with other weapons.

The seized weapons looked to be among those used in riots on Thursday and Friday, which spread from the densely populated district across Monrovia, stirring fears of a resumption of the conflict that has battered Liberia for nearly 14 years.

An AFP correspondent saw the bodies of six people killed in the two days of violence that also left dozens of injured with burns, cuts and bullet wounds. Churches, religious schools and mosques were torched, and looting was rampant.

The houses of two LURD political leaders, key members of the national transitional government, were also razed.

The unrest in Monrovia, coupled with ethnic tensions pitting mostly Muslim Mandingos -- from whom LURD drew its strength -- against other mainly Christian ethnicities, showed that the capital remains well-armed despite a massive UN disarmament operation, which ended its voluntary phase on Sunday.

Some 93,000 people from three warring factions

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including LURD enrolled in the program that carried an initial 50 million dollar price tag, according to the latest UNMIL figures.

Only 26,000 weapons were collected at the eight disarmament sites nationwide, including three in LURD territory, even as reports abounded that sizeable caches were being hidden or sneaked out over Liberia's porous borders with northern neighbor Guinea and Ivory Coast to the east for future use.

Six west African heads of state are due here Wednesday to mark the official disbanding of the armies of former president Charles Taylor and the rebel movements who took arms against them in a 1999 civil war that was declared over in August of last year.

But after an appeal from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan for regional leaders to re-engage in the Liberian peace process, it is likely that talks with chairman Gyude Bryant will focus on the recent unrest.

Sunday marks the closure of the four remaining disarmament camps -- in Zwedru, Harper, Ganta and Voinjama -- and an end to an incentive package of 300 dollars and a promise of vocational training or schooling.

Mopping-up operations will continue at mobile sites that have traveled to remote areas such as Greenville and Barclayville in Sinoe and Grand Kru counties respectively.

"This is just the end of the voluntary phase; it does not mean we are finished," said Clive Jachnik, the UN disarmament coordinator. "Now we move to encouragement and then to enforcement."

Such reassurances could ring hollow for the 1.5 million people crammed into Monrovia and confined to their homes under an emergency curfew since Friday afternoon to rein in what Bryant called the work of "hooligans and vandals".

The curfew continued Sunday as gunshots popped in the streets of downtown.

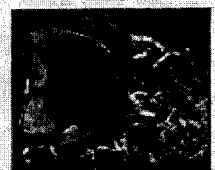
The riots flared from an apparent land dispute into a popular indictment of life in Monrovia, which like much of the rest of the country, Africa's oldest independent republic, is without running water and electricity.

Roads are impassable and despite Liberia's lush forest and fertile land, not enough people are able to tend crops to feed the population. Unemployment is as high as 80 percent.

Prices of staples such as rice and fuel have skyrocketed, while money pledged by international development partners has been slow to arrive amid

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worry about government corruption and Liberia's real potential for stability in the run-up to elections in October 2005.

10/31/2004 - 16:40 GMT - AFP



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Daily Times - Site Edition

Monday, November 01, 2004

The strange story of Aafia Siddiqui

By Khalid Hasan

WASHINGTON: Aafia Siddiqui, the highly-qualified 29-year old Pakistani cognitive neuroscientist wanted by the FBI for her alleged membership of Al Qaeda, once flew from Quetta to Monrovia, Liberia's capital, on a gem-smuggling assignment.

According to a detailed profile published by a Boston magazine, until the FBI called her a terrorist, she was living a "normal" life in Boston with her children and her doctor husband. In reality, the article by Katherine Ozment says, she was a "high-profile Al Qaeda operative". She often travelled to Monrovia on her secret missions and would be driven to Hotel Boulevard, where other Al Qaeda figures had stayed, and "taken good care of until the deal was done". The man who would drive her from the airport to the hotel, a 60-minute drive, would later become the chief informant in a United Nations-led investigation. He described her as a quiet woman who wore a traditional headscarf and kept mostly to herself. She spent the week holed up in her room, making trips into town for small errands.

On one of her trips to Monrovia in June 2001, she left as quietly as she had entered, but with a large parcel containing gems from Africa's illegal diamond trade. They would be used as a convenient, hard-to-trace way of funding Al Qaeda's global terror operations. She was not seen again in Monrovia, but earlier this year, one of the men who had seen her in Liberia noticed a photograph of her and recognised the person. At a news conference in May this year, US Attorney General John Ashcroft and FBI Director Robert Mueller announced that the FBI was looking for seven people with suspected ties to Al Qaeda. MIT graduate and former Boston resident Aafia Siddiqui was the only woman on the list. After her photos appeared on television, the informant picked up the phone and dialled investigators at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is examining Africa's illegal diamond trade. The informant was convinced that the woman in the photographs was the woman who had come to Liberia.

Her family denies she was ever in Liberia, with her family's attorney, Elaine Whitfield insisting, "Aafia Siddiqui was here in June 2001. And I can prove it." If she can prove Siddiqui wasn't in Liberia that week, she'll damage one of the most puzzling cases of alleged terrorism to emerge from 9/11. The claim that Siddiqui was involved in diamond trading is another in a series of sometimes surprising, sometimes vague accusations by government officials. In Siddiqui's case, the allegations have been further clouded by the often inaccurate, even hyperbolic descriptions of her by the media, says the article.

"To those who knew her, Aafia Siddiqui was a kind, quiet woman living the normal life of a Pakistani expat in Boston. To the FBI, which displayed her photograph at that press conference in May, she was a suspected terrorist with ties to a chief mastermind of 9/11 - and the knowledge, skills, and intention to continue Al Qaeda's terror war in the United States and abroad. Could one woman embody such diametrically opposed identities? Who is the real Aafia Siddiqui? And where has she gone?" the writer asks.

Born in Karachi on March 2, 1972, Aafia was one of three children of Mohammad Siddiqui, a doctor trained in England, and Ismet, a homemaker. Mohammed, Aafia's brother, is an architect living in Houston with his wife, a paediatrician, and their children. Fowzia, Aafia's sister, is a Harvard-trained neurologist who was working at Sinai Hospital in Baltimore until she decided to go back to Pakistan. Aafia was a graduate of MIT. She moved to Texas in 1990 to be near her brother and had good enough grades after spending a year at the University of Houston to transfer to MIT. Siddiqui's fellow students say she was a quiet, studious woman who was devout in her religious beliefs but not a fundamentalist. She often wore a headscarf but didn't cover her face.

While at MIT Siddiqui apparently joined an association for Muslim students. She wrote three guides for members who wanted to teach others about Islam. On the group's website, Siddiqui explained how to run a daw'ah table, an informational booth used at school events to educate people about, and persuade them to convert to, Islam. Other references, however, reveal a passion for Islam that could be called hardline. In one of her pamphlets she wrote, "May Allah give this strength and sincerity to us so that our humble effort continues, and expands until America becomes a Muslim land."

Her husband Amjad Khan turns out to have been more fundamentalist in his religious beliefs than her and wanted to return to Pakistan to raise the children in an "Islamic" way while Aafia wanted to stay in America. According to Hasan Abbas, now a visiting scholar at Harvard Law School and the author of the recently published 'Pakistan's Drift into Extremism', remembers the story of the couple's marital troubles differently. He was told she was more extreme in her views than her husband. Siddiqui ordered the Quran and other Islamic books to be distributed to prisons and on school campuses. Boxes of them would arrive at the local mosque, and she would come pick them up. Siddiqui's missionary work stemmed from her belief that it was her duty to bolster the Muslim community around her. "She was always very frustrated here that Muslims were not addressing the needs of their community," says a woman who was a student of Siddiqui's. "She said we needed to be doing more to help our people and that we needed to address the needs of the community." She says Siddiqui wanted her husband to use his medical skills to help the less fortunate.

In July 2001, two Saudi nationals, Abdullah Al Reshood and Hatem Al Dhahri, took over Khan and Siddiqui's lease when the couple decided to move. During that time, Al Reshood received a \$20,000 wire transfer from the Saudi government. The money, a Saudi official later explained, was sent by the Saudi government to Al Reshood to pay for medical treatment for his wife. Siddiqui and her husband were by now being watched by the FBI for having used a debit card to buy night-vision goggles, body armour, and military manuals from American websites, and for donating to charities the FBI watches closely.

When questioned, Khan told authorities he had purchased the military items for big-game hunting in Pakistan, saying goggles and armour weren't available there. Siddiqui, who was questioned only incidentally, was quickly released. Shortly after that, citing the difficulty of living as Muslims in the United States after 9/11, the couple returned to Pakistan. They stayed in Pakistan for a short time, then returned to the United States. They remained here until 2002, then moved back to Pakistan. The tension between the couple had continued to grow and finally reached breaking point in August 2002. Siddiqui was eight months pregnant with their third child, and she and Khan were now estranged. She and the children stayed at her mother's house, while Khan lived elsewhere in Karachi.

One day, Khan came over to Aafia's parents' house bearing a letter explaining that he was going to divorce Siddiqui. He started reading the letter, and a heated argument began between Khan and Siddiqui's parents. The fight was too much for Siddiqui's father who had a heart attack and died. Within weeks, Siddiqui gave birth to a son. Siddiqui stayed at her mother's house for the rest of the year, returning to the United States without her children around December 2002 to look for a job in the Baltimore area, where her sister had begun working at Sinai Hospital. The real purpose of her trip, the FBI suspects, was to open a post office box for Majid Khan, a purported Al Qaeda operative who allegedly had plans to blow up gas stations and fuel tanks in the Baltimore-Washington area. Siddiqui's family contends that her trip to Baltimore was for the sole purpose of finding a job, and that if she did open a post office box it was for the replies she hoped to get.

According to the article, "Months later, the FBI would make its most devastating claim against Siddiqui. It was still dark on the morning of March 1, 2003, when Pakistani authorities arrested Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, a known September 11 mastermind, at a Karachi safe house. The arrest made news around the world. It also presaged the extraordinary vanishing act of Aafia Siddiqui and her three small children." It seems Khalid Sheikh Mohammed gave up Aafia's name as being a major Al Qaeda operative." However, one of her defenders says Siddiqui's identity was likely stolen. "Aafia was, I think, probably a pretty naive and trusting person and my guess is it would be pretty easy for somebody who wanted to steal an identity to just steal it." About a month after his capture in the spring of 2003, she disappeared. The last her mother remembers, Siddiqui was piling herself and her children, then seven, five, and six months old, into a taxi headed to the railway station, the first step of what she said was her planned trip to visit an uncle in Islamabad. Her mother said goodbye to her daughter and grandchildren - and hasn't seen them since.

"What happened to Aafia Siddiqui and her children that day is anyone's guess. Siddiqui's mother, Ismet, claims that a few days after Siddiqui's disappearance, a man on a motorcycle arrived at her house in a leather suit and helmet and told her Aafia was being held and that she should keep quiet if she ever wanted to see her daughter and grandchildren again. A report in the Pakistani Urdu press said that Siddiqui and her kids had been seen being picked up by Pakistani authorities and taken into custody. Even a spokesman for Pakistan's Interior Ministry and two unnamed US officials confirmed this in the press. Several days later, however, Pakistani and American officials mysteriously backtracked, saying it was unlikely that Siddiqui was in custody. Ismet, hysterical, decided to board a plane to the United States in an attempt to find her daughter. When official-looking men greeted her at JFK Airport in New York, she thought they were there to help her find her daughter," according to the article. Siddiqui's sister Fowzia picked up Ismet and took her back to Baltimore. There was a knock at the door. It was the FBI serving a subpoena for Ismet Siddiqui to come to Boston to testify before a grand jury. In the days after Ismet was served the subpoena, she, Fowzia, and her son Mohammed all spoke at length with agents from the FBI and US Attorney's Office. Aafia Siddiqui had been missing for more than a year when the FBI put her photographs on its website. It was May 26, and Ashcroft and Mueller told the press that Siddiqui was an Al Qaeda facilitator.

According to the article, the "rumour among well-informed Pakistanis" is that she is dead. If Siddiqui was captured, why would she be killed? Generally, terrorism suspects are captured and paraded before the press to show that the government is doing its job. The fact that Siddiqui has been missing so long does not bode well for her reappearance. And the children? "One thing is clear so far," Muzamal Suherwardy says. "Where she is, her children are there with her."

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Genocide: A crime against humanity

Millions have died in unchecked crimes around the world

MICHAEL LAWSON, CP


2004-11-01 02:47:07

Several thousand people died Sept. 11, 2001, in terrorist attacks on the United States that instantly became global news. Shocking as it was, that day of horror pales in comparison to what was then -- and is now -- occurring regularly, occasionally beyond the scope of the media's eye. It's something that has come to be known as genocide.




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
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(545)



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(676)



YOUR High School
(820)

Since the beginnings of recorded history, entire peoples have been wiped into oblivion in a concerted effort at ethnic, religious or political cleansing. Millions upon millions have perished in the 20th century alone. Yet the international community has often been slow to react -- sometimes not reacting at all -- and the atrocities persist.

Just as the Sept. 11 attacks gave rise to a new and now globally recognized term, 9/11, the term genocide is relatively recent, formulated by a Polish expert in international law, Raphael Lemkin, in 1944 during the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany. Derived from Greek and Latin roots, the word means the eradication of a race. The United Nations has since expanded the definition to include the destruction of any national, ethnic, racial or religious group.

The most extreme example in modern times, if only in terms of sheer numbers,

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was the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were gassed, shot, worked to death as slave labourers or subjected to inhumane surgical and other so-called medical experimentation, often fatal. Tens of thousands of Roma -- or Gypsies -- as well as homosexuals and other "undesirables" were also victimized.

Most recently and still ongoing is the carnage in Darfur, the westernmost region of the African country Sudan. An estimated one million blacks have been uprooted from their land, whole masses raped and massacred, their villages razed and their crops and livestock plundered. As many as 200,000 have sought refuge in neighbouring Chad, itself pressed for resources; many more Sudanese face death by starvation or disease.

The Darfur crisis did not develop overnight. In a country impoverished and drought-stricken, Arab herdsmen from the north moved into the western region to reap what they could from the meagre natural resources of Darfur -- water and scrubby grasslands. In the face of uprisings from the desperate locals, mounted Arab militias known as Janjaweed moved in to conduct a campaign of slaughter and forced relocation, the latter a virtual death sentence for many.

Humanitarian groups such as Medecins sans frontieres (Doctors Without Borders), the United Nations children's organization UNICEF and some western governments have said the Sudanese government supports the Janjaweed. The government denies it. The Bush administration in Washington has, as of last month, declared the Darfur situation a genocide.

Again in recent memory is the politically charged genocide in Rwanda, also in Africa, in which opposing Hutu and minority Tutsi peoples clashed at the cost of an estimated 500,000 lives, with many more displaced. Most of those killed were Tutsis. The year was 1994; the initial carnage occurred over mere months and then continued. It wasn't until 1996 that a Canadian-led international force moved in to try to stem the bloody unrest.

This August, in a small-scale mirror image of the Rwandan infamy, 200 Tutsi men, women and children were shot or hacked to death in a UN refugee camp in neighbouring Burundi. Hutu rebels justified the action as a weeding-out of the opposing Burundi army and Congolese militia.

The grim reality of genocide has been most apparent since the advent of modern media technology, which brings the horrors of the Third World into western homes nightly. World leaders tune in to the same thing. So why does it continue?

Politics and semantics are two factors. When the United Nations was formed with scores of countries in 1945 after the horrors of the Second World War, the multinational grouping combined diverse mind-sets in the quest for peace, security and international co-operation. The UN did adopt a covenant on genocide, but the term itself became a focus of debate. Should, for instance, the extermination of a political group be counted as genocide? Some UN members argued against it.

Then there was the matter of sovereignty. One state's right to govern within its borders became -- and remains -- an issue. As recently as August, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, on the question of military intervention into the Darfur crisis, said: "This is not a simple military solution. This is a matter for the Sudanese government to handle."

Political solutions take time, but time is a luxury the victims of mass oppression can't afford.

EXAMPLES OF GENOCIDE FROM THE LAST 100 YEARS

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School (753)



Marie Anne
Secondary (1121)



YOUR High
School (820)

The stain on humanity that has come to be known as genocide has a long history. Here are a few events from the last 100 years that have been labelled genocides:

Ottoman Empire (1915)

More than one million Christian Armenians were forced from their homes into the Syrian desert by the Muslim government of the then-Ottoman empire, along the way to face slaughter and starvation. Decades later, Third Reich dictator Adolf Hitler is said to have been inspired by the events. He was quoted as saying: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

Russian Revolution (1917-21)

Amid political upheaval that saw the fall of the czarist regime and the rise of communism, organized mobs waged pogroms against Jewish communities at the cost of more than 60,000 lives.

Stalinist Soviet Union (1931-33)

Under the banner of communism, lands and crops of prosperous Ukrainian farmers were seized. Up to 10 million in Ukraine were driven out to starve to death.

Nazi Germany (1939-45)

Hitler's "Final Solution" in the quest for a pure Aryan nation accounted for the deaths of six million Jews and tens of thousands of other "undesirables." Many were gassed and then incinerated in death camp furnaces.

Cambodia (1975-79)

The Khmer Rouge Communist party was responsible for the deaths of more than 1.5 million Cambodians through execution, slave labour and starvation. The country recently agreed to a UN-supported plan to bring surviving leaders to trial.

Bosnia (1992-95)

Attempts by Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to gain independence from Yugoslavia brought the wrath of the Serbian government, leading to widespread exterminations. About 18,000 victims have been found in mass graves. Former Serb president Slobodan Milosevic is before an international war-crimes tribunal on charges including genocide. Other military aides have been indicted.

Rwanda (1994)

About 500,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered by Hutu extremists in political strife. More Tutsis were massacred this summer in a UN refugee camp in neighbouring Burundi.

Sudan (current)

An estimated 300,000 people will die by year's end as residents of western Darfur region are forced from their lands. Many have been slaughtered; many more face starvation and disease. The Arab-led central government has been blamed for supporting the genocide.