

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



A chimp at the Tacaguma chimp reserve. Photo by Ray Cardinal

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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**Statement by Stephen Rapp, Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press Briefing, Freetown, Sierra Leone
1 September 2009**

I am very pleased to be with you today. This is a very significant period in the history of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. This week, starting on Wednesday, the Appeals Chamber will hear final oral arguments on the appeal of the trial judgement that convicted three leaders of the Revolutionary United Front. At the same time, in The Hague, the Defence phase of the trial of Charles Taylor continues, with the direct examination of the Accused nearing completion.

This week's appeals hearing will mark the last time that attorneys for the Prosecution and Defence will make arguments in the RUF case. When the Judges of the Appeals Chamber pronounce their final ruling several weeks from now, all judicial proceedings in Freetown will be complete.

At this hearing the Prosecution will present its arguments for rejecting the 96 grounds of appeal that have been filed by the three RUF Accused, Sesay, Kallon, and Gbao, against the Trial Chamber's judgments of conviction entered in February 2009 and the sentences of imprisonment pronounced in April 2009. The Prosecution will also be pursuing three grounds of appeal asking for additional determinations of criminal responsibility.

In the trial of Charles Taylor, the Defense phase of the case began on 13 July, with the Accused himself beginning in own testimony the following day, and continuing that testimony for the last seven weeks.

The Prosecution is pleased that the trial process has reached the stage where Charles Taylor has the opportunity to respond to the charges against him. I must note that I am not able to comment on the specifics of his testimony, as the evaluation of his testimony is a matter for the judges.

Of course, the Accused is presenting a story that is very different from the evidence offered by the Prosecution. We called over 90 witnesses who appeared in person before the Court and testified about the grave crimes committed against tens of thousands of innocent victims in Sierra Leone and provided the linkage evidence showing Taylor's responsibility for the commission of these atrocities.

We have been waiting patiently while the Accused gives his own contrary version of events, and denies all the charges against him. We are looking forward to questioning him on cross-examination in the coming weeks. When our turn comes to ask the questions, we will confront Charles Taylor with the full weight of our case.

Let me talk for a moment about my own participation in this process. It has been my greatest honour to serve as the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone for nearly three years.

During my tenure I have overseen the prosecution of all the trials before the Special Court, where we secured convictions of the leaders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, the Civil Defense Forces, and – at trial level – the RUF, for atrocities committed during the civil war. I am particularly proud to have been part of judicial proceedings that resulted in the first convictions in history for the recruitment and use of child soldiers as a war crime, the first convictions for attacks on peace-keepers as a violation of international humanitarian law, and the first convictions for sexual slavery and forced marriage as crimes against humanity. I am also pleased to have seen through the presentation of the Prosecution's case against Charles Taylor, the start of defense evidence, and our preparations to meet the defense case.

In July, I was nominated by President Barack Obama to be United States Ambassador at Large for War Crimes Issues. The nomination has now been confirmed by the US Senate, and I have given notice to the UN Secretary General that I will resign as Special Court Prosecutor on September 7. I will then immediately take up the new post, which is based in the US State Department in Washington in the office of Secretary Hillary Clinton.

For almost a decade, I have been working to bring justice to the victims of the most serious crimes committed by humankind, first at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and then at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. In this new position, I will continue that work on behalf of the US Government to assist countries in achieving accountability after the widespread commission of violations of international humanitarian law, and by doing so help prevent the recurrence of these atrocities.

As I leave the representation of the prosecution in the Charles Taylor trial in the capable hands of my colleagues, I would like to express my gratitude to the people of Sierra Leone. Since my very first days here, I have always been struck by the courage, the tolerance, and the good will of Sierra Leoneans, who suffered so terribly during the civil war, and who are working each day to re-build their communities and their country.

Let me also pay special tribute to the victims who came and testified at trial against those responsible for wounding their bodies and killing their loved ones. We in the Prosecution have always said that we fight for justice in their name, but they are the ones who have truly made justice possible. When historians write about the Special Court and the contribution it made to this turning point in regional history, they will say that victims of the worst crimes imaginable were not afraid to tell the world what happened to the people of Sierra Leone, and to hold those responsible to account.

President Koroma has spoken of his wish that this Special Court will leave for posterity a “magnificent and imposing legacy.” As Prosecutor, it is my hope that as part of this legacy the Special Court has increased the respect for the rule of law by all individuals, no matter how powerful, and thus contributed to lasting peace and security for the people of Sierra Leone.

Thank you.

* * *

More information on the trial of leaders of the RUF and of Charles Taylor can be found on the website of the Special Court for Sierra Leone at www.sc-sl.org, or on the website of the independent trial monitor www.charlestaylortrial.org.

Produced by the Office of the Prosecutor
Email: SCSL-Prosecutor-Press@un.org

Awoko

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

Civil Society bids farewell to Prosecutor Rapp

By Betty Milton

Members of the Civil Society for Sierra Leone and the Interactive Forum (SCIF) and the Outreach Section of the Special Court yesterday bade farewell to the outgoing Prosecutor of the Special Court Stephen Rapp during a ceremony which took place at the court yard.

The Outreach Coordinator Patrick Fatoma said that the parting came at a very

mentally ill wounded

mentally ill retired Republic of
and several others wounded

Defense Sources had gone to
le words against the Defense

ice that when they assembled
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explained that in 2006, the
I should leave the army. "We
s Wounded In Action (WIA)
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ater came and told us that the

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nd mentally ill. "We accepted
fine with 90 days given to us

r when the 90 days expired,
March, we were told to only
es not have money. We told



A gift presented to Prosecutor Stephen Rapp

crucial time when decisions on the RUF sentences is about to be delivered and they had wanted him to stay till the end. Stating that because of the great work of Mr Rapp he has been recommended for higher height.

On behalf of the children Hawanatu Dumbuya a JSS 3 Pupil of the Annie Walsh Memorial School said that they the children are vulnerable and that they were the ones who suffered greatly during the war in the country.

She further highlighted the role of the Special Court and the prosecutor as they are charged with the responsibility of bringing to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for the crimes committed in the country during the rebel war.

Paramount chief Joseph Kavura Kongoma of Fakunya Chiefdom Moyamba District said that children are the treasure which the war wanted to wipe away and that if these children were wiped away then the entire nation will have been wiped away.

He said that the people of Sierra Leone are very appreciative of the work of the prosecutor

Jeremy Waiser on behalf of the office of the prosecutor said that Stephen Rapp is not only a brilliant leader but a nice person who is determined to make things happen in everything he does. He read a line from the Deputy prosecutor Joseph Kamara who was absent saying that the confidence reposed in them who were left to run the court

will not be misplaced.

One of the criminal investigators revealed that it was under Mr Rapps tenure in office that all of them from the Sierra Leone Police force were fortunate to receive training from the international Institute for criminal investigation in the Hague

Binta Mansaray said that the outreach activities are what make the court meaningful and that the prosecutor has contributed immensely to the work of the outreach section. She pointed out that Mr Rapp was not only a good man to his staff but also to Sierra Leoneans as it was through his recommendation that we now have a Sierra Leonean as deputy Prosecutor.

The President of the Special Court Justice Renata

Continued on Page 6

Civil Society bids farewell to Prosecutor Rapp

From Page 2

Winter pointed out that Mr Rapp had assisted her in getting money for the court and left him with the parting words of endurance, perseverance and patience.

In response Stephen Rapp said that the remarks by the girl has rendered him speechless and that they will make sure that the crimes committed in the country will never happen again.

He said that they have been able to put together the evidence and to convince the people to testify as they want to prove their case beyond reasonable doubt.

This court he said has been a success as the court now has the first conviction on the conscription of child soldiers which is the first in the history of international justice.

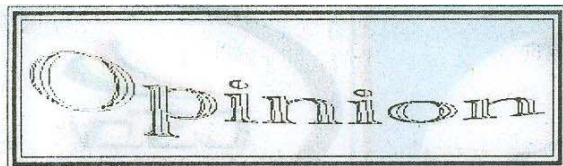
Mr Rapp pledged that they will ensure that the court has the resources till the end of the trial as they want the rule of law to be respected and justice given to the victims.

Statements were also made by the office of the defence and also from Witness and Victims Support Unit. Mr Rapp joined the Special Court in December 2006.

Concord Times

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

Justice in Sierra Leone: Apathy is Folly



The RUF case will end almost unnoticed, but indifference to prosecutions like this amounts to complicity in the worst crimes
 By Paul Kingsley Clark - guardian.co.uk

Next week, in a now quiet corner of West Africa, the special court for Sierra Leone will be in session for its final three days in Freetown: the appeal of the five-year long RUF (Revolutionary United Front) case.

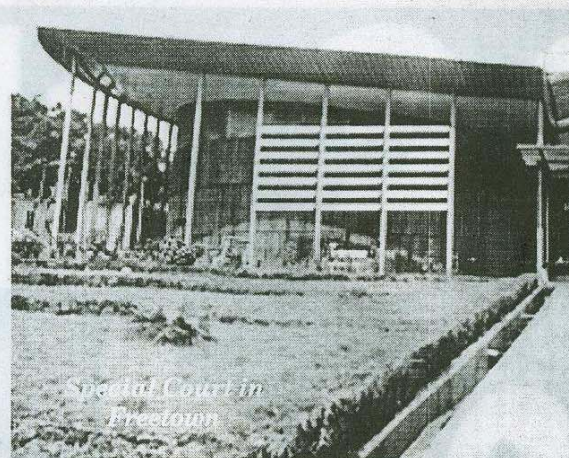
The special court is one of a generation of tribunals prosecuting crimes against humanity and war crimes in the name of the international community. Those addressing the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Cambodia are also among them, as is the international criminal court. Like the idea of an internationally shared morality that they espouse, they are a curiously modern phenomenon. In fact, these institutions are peculiar to the last 15 years or so, notwithstanding the relatively brief post-second world war efforts. And yet, like their predecessors in Nuremberg and Tokyo, they have quickly captured the imagination as lone bringers of justice in an international wilderness of brutality - until the latter half of the last century, no more than a utopian dream.

As the last of the special court's cases to take place in Freetown, the closing of proceedings in the RUF case should be a key event for Sierra Leone and indeed, the world. The special court is the only international court to have considered child soldiers. The RUF trial also covered, among other things, sexual violence, extermination and enslavement. More generally, the success of international intervention in Sierra Leone is, perhaps, even more interesting from a UK perspective, given the activities of the crusading Tony Blair.

But if the existence of war crime tribunals captures the imagination, the individual trials tend to engender apathy in equal measure. Like many such prosecutions, the RUF case will pass almost unnoticed internationally.

Is this because the harm caused is simply beyond comprehension? Doubtful: this has never been a reason for popular attention to shy away. Or perhaps it is because trials like those at the special court are just too far away? Maybe so,

Justice in Sierra Le



but my conversations with Sierra Leoneans also indicated a profound indifference towards the court.

The lack of attention is certainly not for want of reasons for concern. While the diminution of due process in UK courts is subject to close scrutiny - not least at this newspaper - strong allegations of bribing witnesses against the international prosecutor in Sierra Leone fell on deaf ears. They provoked only one response in the world's press and were dismissed without substantive examination by the court. The experiences of defence lawyers teem with further examples.

More likely, the apathy is down to an assumption that the cases are a foregone conclusion - an idea that dogs international justice. At Nuremberg, this was due to the clear "victors' justice" aspect of proceedings. Nowadays, a number of factors contribute: horrific events and the concomitant desire to punish, vastly expensive tribunals and a tiny number of persons successfully arrested. "How could you possibly defend these people?" my friends and



family frequently ask. "No smoke without fire ..." Given that the vast majority of international trials end in convictions, we rest assured that all is well. We are getting the outcome we desire: the enemies of us all are, indeed, being punished. Why bother about procedural technicalities?

One need look only briefly at the facts of the RUF case to discern the nuances that extinguish the "no smoke without fire" theory once and for all. While undoubtedly involved in numerous atrocious acts during the Sierra Leonean conflict, the RUF also protected vast numbers of civilians. It is common ground between prosecution and defence that the RUF provided education and healthcare to significant parts of the population. The principal defendant, Issa Sesay, had a large and widely acknowledged role in bringing peace to the country. In finally deciding whether to lay the blame for countless atrocities upon three men, none of whom were the most powerful in the RUF, the appeals chamber has an unenviable task indeed.

But regardless of the facts of a particular case, seeing the bigger problem with our indifference about international prosecutions is deeply unsettling. It is this indifference, I think, that could make us complicit, not in eradicating the evil of international crimes, but in entrenching it.

We must look beyond, for a moment, the outcome of these crimes: death, depredation and horror. In fact, the very thing that distinguishes crimes against humanity, genocide, etc. is that they are, in the view of the perpetrators, acts in service of a utopia - acts done in order to be rid of enemies. This reveals an unexpected, and shocking, link between our indifference about fairness in international justice and the atrocities that it seeks to punish. Of course, no one would suggest that the harm caused by degradation of procedure in an international court is even remotely comparable to the devastation wreaked by the atrocities they consider. Nevertheless, the importance of the way we go about achieving our aims could not be clearer. Cases set precedents - and can change them. The world should be watching Sierra Leone. Let's hope, at least, that it opens its eyes.

Editor's Note: Paul Kingsley Clark is International Bar Association fellow at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and was a member of a defence team at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The Spark

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

Taylor Dismisses UN Report on Sierra Leone

For the past week, Mr. Taylor has been responding to allegations made against him in a 2000 United Nations Expert

Panel Report that he was involved in fueling the conflict in Sierra Leone through diamond and arms trade with Sierra

Leonean rebel forces. The UN report reinforces prosecution allegations against Mr. Taylor that he supported the rebels in

Sierra Leone through the supply of arms and ammunition in return for diamonds. Mr. Taylor dismissed the report as "disgraceful" and full of "disinformation," as he refuted all its allegations against him. Mr. Taylor said that the report made recommendations that not only hurt him, but punished Liberia. This, Mr. Taylor told



Taylor, beware!

Continued page 7

ECOWAS Foreign Ministers Optimistic

From front page

Special Court for Sierra Leone judges this week, was a "travesty of justice" and was at the heart of the whole case against him.

"This report actually is at the heart of this case and because of the way this report is written, together with the level of disinformation in it, it puts us in a bad position because it talks about diamonds, arms and training bases in Liberia. This is the basis of the case that has not been subject to legal scrutiny," Mr. Taylor said.

The report, which Mr Taylor dismissed as biased against him in his testimony this week, alleged that Mr. Taylor received diamonds from two key rebel commanders in Sierra Leone: Ibrahim Ba, a Senegalese rebel commander who worked with Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, and Johnny Paul Koroma, leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), a group of soldiers who overthrew the government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in May 1997. The AFRC joined forces with the RUF rebels but they were forcefully removed from power by West African peacekeepers in February 1998. Mr. Taylor denied receiving diamonds from any of these individuals.

"I never had a business relationship with Ibrahim Ba. I have never collaborated with Ba for any sale of diamonds. There has never been a business relationship with Ba. None whatsoever. There are no documents to prove this. I don't recall any evidence that mentioned diamonds taken from Johnny Paul Koroma," Mr. Taylor said. The report also accused Mr. Taylor of having representatives in Kono and Tongo Fields in Sierra Leone, where the RUF rebels mined diamonds. Mr. Taylor denied having any representative in any of these places. "I don't know who they are talking about but I never had any representative anywhere," Mr. Taylor told the judges.

According to the report, "this trade [diamond trade with the RUF] cannot be conducted without high level government involvement." Denying his government's involvement in the diamond trade with RUF rebels, Mr. Taylor told the court that "the nature of the diamond trade then and now did not require any government involvement. This is the case not only in Liberia. Tourists buy diamonds," he said.

Mr. Taylor referenced that even though the United States has a fence separating its border with Mexico, that has not stopped drug cartels from transporting drugs into the United States: "Why do they expect Liberia to detect little stones coming to the country? It is insulting," he said.

In describing the report, Mr. Taylor said that he raised alarms when he found out who was appointed as the reporting expert. When Ian Smillie—who in a prior report had accused Mr. Taylor of involvement in diamond-for-arms trade in Sierra Leone—was named an expert, Mr. Taylor wrote a letter to the UN Secretary General questioning Mr. Smillie's appointment. These concerns, Mr. Taylor said, were ignored by the UN and Mr. Smillie remained on the panel.

Mr. Smillie has already testified as an Expert Witness for the Special Court for Sierra Leone's prosecution against Mr. Taylor.

"I had concerns about people who had made allegations against Liberia being on the panel. You have already prejudiced the report by doing that," Mr. Taylor said.

Mr. Taylor accused Great Britain and the United States of manipulating the findings of the report by putting pressure on Mr. Smillie, who was their own nominee on the panel.

"Britain and America are bringing the pressure. We know that the pressure is coming on Smillie because of the interest," Mr. Taylor said. "I am confronted with these people who have already made those allegations even before the panel report is out."

It was no surprise therefore, Mr. Taylor said, that when the report came out, he was accused of active involvement in the provision of financial and military support to the rebels in return for diamonds. Mr. Taylor said that while these allegations were made against him, Britain and the United States failed to provide any "tangible evidence" of his involvement in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Taylor's defense counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, also this week read portions of the book "Intervention in Africa" written by former United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen. In this book, a whole chapter is dedicated to the conflict in Liberia from the late 1980s to the 1990s. Mr. Cohen states in the book that the United States government, through its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), provided support to Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group. In his response, Mr. Taylor confirmed that his NPFL indeed received assistance from the United States.

"We were given some very high power technical radios by the embassy [United States], by the CIA at the time, that we used for rapid communications, that we could call almost any where in the world and get to anybody that we wanted to get to on the ground," Mr. Taylor said.

He explained that the assistance from the United States government was given to the NPFL as a deal to protect United States facilities in Liberia.

Mr. Taylor told the judges that in after the release of the UN Expert Report on Sierra Leone in 2000, accusing him of providing support to the RUF rebels, the United Kingdom, through its ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, proposed sanctions against Liberia at the UN Security Council. As a condition to lift the sanctions against Liberia, Ambassador Greenstock said that Liberia "needed to take urgent steps to stop support for the RUF and the trafficking of diamonds and arms to and from Sierra Leone."

Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) leaders, Mr. Taylor said, asked for a delay of the sanctions "so Liberia could take steps to address the concerns in the report in two months."

Despite this plea from ECOWAS leaders, the UN Security Council went ahead and voted for sanctions against Liberia. "Sometimes, regional response does not matter. When one of these big countries want to do something, they will do it."

As a condition to lift sanctions, Mr. Taylor said that the UN asked him to address the following concerns:

1. Expel all RUF members from Liberia
2. Stop all military and financial support for the RUF
3. Stop the importation of diamonds

from Sierra Leone

4. Freeze all RUF assets in Liberia
5. Ground all Liberian aircraft

To address these issues, Mr. Taylor said that he gave a 72-hour ultimatum to all RUF personnel to leave Liberia. Mr. Taylor said that even RUF commander Sam Bockarie, who had relocated to Liberia with the approval of the international community, had to leave for the Ivory Coast with a handful of his followers. The bulk of the followers that Sam Bockarie took with him to Liberia when he left Sierra Leone in 1999 had to stay in Liberia because they had now become Liberian citizens and were part of Mr. Taylor's Anti Terrorist Unit (ATU). He said he therefore saw no need to ask them out of the country. Mr. Taylor said that Sam Bockarie had become a "center of allegations and was bringing harm to the Liberian republic" and so he had no option but to ask him to get out of the country.

On the other conditions raised by the UN, including stopping all support for the RUF, Mr. Taylor said there was no need to respond, as he had not been providing any support for the RUF. He said that he took steps to stop the importation of diamonds from Sierra Leone and even asked for international support to monitor the Sierra Leone-Liberia border but he did not receive any such support. Mr. Taylor also said he took steps to check if RUF members had any assets in Liberia which needed to be frozen but he found none. Mr. Taylor said he further grounded all aircraft that was registered in Liberia.

Mr. Taylor also told the judges this week that the United States, under the presidency of George H. Bush issued an executive order on May 22 2001 which declared that Liberia posed an "unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign interest of the United States." Responding to a question as to what US interest Liberia could have posed a threat to, Mr Taylor said that "we did not know what US interest in the region was. We were as stunned and could not understand. We believed they had economic and military interest in West Africa."

Mr. Taylor said that he took the US executive order to mean a call for "regime change and a declaration of war against Liberia."

He said he saw all of these as unfair steps taken against him and the people of Liberia. "This whole thing is couched that Liberia is sitting on a time bomb. Everything could be raised to act against Liberia," he said.

Mr. Taylor is responding to allegations that he had control over RUF rebels in Sierra Leone and that in return for diamonds, he provided arms and ammunition for the rebels which they used to cause mayhem on the people of Sierra Leone. He is presently testifying as a witness in his own defense.

CharlesTaylorTrail.org (The Hague)

Monday, 31 August 2009

Liberia: Arms Could Flow Through Liberia Without Taylor's Consent, He Says

Alpha Sesay

Significant shipments of weapons, intended for use by rebels in Sierra Leone's 11-year civil conflict, could have been transported through Liberia without Charles Taylor's knowledge, the accused former Liberian president told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today at his trial in The Hague.

"It is possible that significant amounts of arms could come into Liberia without my consent. With the level of corruption in the country, it is possible. I don't run the airports or the roads," he told the judges.

Mr. Taylor was responding to allegations that he transported arms and ammunition from Libya and Burkina Faso for onward transfer to Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations.

In his testimony today, Mr. Taylor explained that when these allegations against him were made, he took steps to make sure that no such arms were transported through Liberia. His accusers, he said, had no evidence to prove these allegations.

"They could not show us what was coming in. We were as diligent as we could be. If they had the evidence, they could have confronted us with it," Mr. Taylor said. "If anyone thinks that anything coming into Liberia is with the knowledge of Taylor, then I am already guilty."

Mr. Taylor explained that even in the United States where "you have the best security network," the terrorists who launched the September 11, 2001 attacks were able to enter the country and wreak havoc without being detected by the United States intelligence.

"When it comes to these small countries therefore, lots of things could happen," he said.

Mr. Taylor said that when his government was attacked by the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels in 1998, he asked the United Nations to lift its arms embargo on Liberia. When the UN refused, his government ordered loads of arms and ammunition to defend the country. Afterwards, he informed the UN of the list of arms that they had bought and the purpose for which they would be used.

Reinforcing his point that arms could have been transported through Liberia without his consent, Mr. Taylor said that the arms and ammunition that were bought by the Liberian government to fight against LURD rebels were transported through European countries without the consent of their respective governments.

"We imported arms from Europe, these European countries were bound by Chapter VII of the UN Charter. They[arms] stopped in these countries but the governments did not know and they got to Liberia," Mr Taylor said. "If you have a little bit of money, and you want to move weapons, I don't care what resolution is passed, you will move weapons including through the best of the countries you can imagine and use some of their own companies to do it."

Mr. Taylor said that the same thing could have happened in Liberia when individuals or groups could have transported arms into the country and transferred the arms to rebel forces in Sierra Leone. All this, Mr. Taylor said, could have happened without his knowledge or consent.

"So the fact is that something can come into Roberts International Airport [Liberia's main airport], the president in Monrovia doing what he's got to do, if sufficient contacts are made at that airport, those things would come into the airport, if its weapons, of course. With sufficient money, you can bribe the officials and the weapons can be brought in at a time, it can happen anywhere," he said.

Mr. Taylor also told the judges that at the relevant times that he is accused of transporting arms and ammunition to rebel forces in Sierra Leone, the main roads linking Liberia to Sierra Leone were occupied by other rebel groups who were fighting against his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).

"When we look at the period of occupation as from 1991 up to my election in 1997, ULIMO had control of the very position. LURD attacked in 1998 and up to 2001, they made significant gains," Mr. Taylor said. "As of August 2001 to 2002, LURD is occupying the very position that ULIMO occupied earlier. They know the strategic nature of occupying this area."

Mr. Taylor is accused of providing support for RUF rebels in Sierra Leone through the supply of arms and ammunition in return for diamonds. Several witnesses have testified to the transfer of arms and ammunition from Liberia to Sierra Leone with Mr. Taylor's knowledge and participation. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations.

Mr. Taylor's testimony continues tomorrow.

BBC World Service Trust

Monday, 31 August 2009

NEWS ITEM

31/08/09

In The Hague, Charles Taylor testified that arms could have entered Liberia without his knowledge. A former Liberian Special Security Service officer in Mr. Taylor's government testified last year that he and Mr. Taylor were cannibals. But in his testimonies on Monday, Mr. Taylor disowned Mr Joseph Zigzag Marzah. Adolphus Williams has more.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Taylor told the court on Monday that it was possible for arms to have entered Liberia undetected by his government.

He said the terrorists who launched the 9/11 attack on the Twin Towers beat the modernised intelligence network of America.

The former Liberian leader said it's really impossible for a president to know everything that happens in his country.

TAYLOR: You have a little bit of money and you want to move weapons. I don't care what resolution is passed, you will move weapons including through the best of the countries that you can imagine, and use some of their own companies to do it. So the fact that something can come into Roberts International Airport, the president in Monrovia [indistinct] he's got to do. If sufficient contacts are made at that airport, those things will come into the airport. If it's weapons, of course. With sufficient money you can bribe the officials, okay, and the weapons can be brought in at a time, especially that you do not have any delay at night or something. It can happen anywhere.

WILLIAMS: Last year, prosecution witness, former Special Security Service (SSS) officer, Zigzag Marzah said he and Mr. Taylor were members of a human-eating society.

Zigzag Marzah had said he was a close bodyguard to Taylor, but his name was not on the SSS list presented by Mr. Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths in court on Monday.

Courtenay Griffiths asked Mr. Taylor why Marzah's name was not on the list of SSS officers.

TAYLOR: Zigzag Marzah was an orderly, from my understanding, to Benjamin Yeatan. Zigzag Marzah said he doesn't read, he doesn't write, he's just an orderly. He would not be listed as any serious officer in the [indistinct] that would go on assignment, no. He worked as an orderly.

GRIFFITHS: Mr. Taylor, did you ever come in contact with that man?

TAYLOR: I never came in contact with Zigzag Marzah at all.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Taylor said his government granted amnesty to supporters of the rebel group, Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in 2001.

He said the amnesty was intended to end the LURD's incursion. He added, the current Liberian President was one of those granted amnesty.

TAYLOR: Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, as she sits now as president, had been a part of every guerrilla movement – the NPFL, which we put together, she was a part of LURD, in fact she went to the conference in Accra wanting to head the transitional government, so this clemency was to those backers of these organizations: Kromah and Sirleaf.

AW/BBC WST, The Hague

John Kollie

Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor said arms could have entered Liberia without his knowledge. A Former Liberian Special Security Service, SSS, Officer in Charles Taylor's government testified in 2008 that he and the Former Liberian President were cannibals. But in his testimonies on Monday, Mr. Taylor disowned Mr Joseph Zigzag Marzah. Mr. Taylor has accused the current Liberian President, Ellen Jonhson-Sirleaf again. John Kollie transcribes reports for the BBC World Service Trust...

Mr. Taylor told the court on Monday that it was possible for arms to have entered Liberia without being detected by his government. He said the terrorists who launched the 9/11 in the United States beat the sophisticated intelligence network of that country.

The Former Liberian Leader said it's not possible for the President of a country to know everything that happens in that country.

Testifying for the Prosecution last year, Former SSS Officer, Zigzag Marzah said he and Mr. Taylor were members of a human eating society. Mr. Marzah said he was a close bodyguard to Former President Taylor, but his name was not on the SSS list presented in court on Monday.

Defence Lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths asked Mr. Taylor why Mr. Marzah's name was absent from the list of SSS Officers. Mr. Taylor has again accused current Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of dissident activities.

Mr. Taylor said his government granted clemency to supporters of the rebel group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, LURD in 2001. He told the court the clemency was intended to end the LURD incursion.

Mr. Taylor alleged in his testimonies that President Johnson-Sirleaf was one of those granted amnesty. Mr. Taylor said Former War-Lord Ahaji Kromah used American facilities like the Voice of America and the Washington Post Newspaper to castigate his government.

The Los Angeles Times

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

In Sierra Leone, a 'women's project, for women'

The Austrian judge presiding over war crimes trials tries to help some of the many women abused in the long civil war by arranging for sewing classes, so they can earn a living, and some pride.

Reporting from Freetown, Sierra Leone - They gather every day in a tiny former dry goods shop on a residential street here in this West African capital, and to the neighbors they are what they seem: seven women in front of sewing machines learning to make brightly colored dresses, dashikis and slippers. But the women share a secret.

"It's a very long story," said one of them [REDACTED], a tired look on her face. "I don't like to remember most of the things that happened to me."

Among the many victims of Sierra Leone's brutal, decade-long civil war are the "bush wives," the girls and women who were kidnapped, raped and forced to "marry" combatants and bear their children. Even now, seven years after the war ended, they remain ostracized by their families.

The daily sewing class, a few blocks from the international tribunal that has tried and convicted the worst of the war criminals, is one woman's effort to help some of those victims learn a skill -- and, perhaps, win back a scrap of their self-respect.

The "small skills tailoring institute" was launched 15 months ago by Renate Winter, an Austrian judge who presides over the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and it is both unofficial and deeply personal. Winter raised money for the project primarily from friends and former colleagues -- women in Austria's justice and foreign affairs ministries, including the minister of justice. It is, Winter said, "a women's project for women."

Thousands of former men and boy fighters have been disarmed and re-integrated into Sierra Leone society since the war ended in 2002. But many of the tens of thousands of women affected by the war have not been as fortunate.

One reason is cultural -- in Sierra Leone, as in many parts of Africa, families and clans are reluctant to welcome back women who were forced to marry war combatants. And families are especially reluctant to embrace the children of those unions.

"The worst of all the victims in this war, like in Rwanda, were the women," said Winter, 64, a specialist in juvenile and women's justice who joined the court in 2002 after U.N. assignments in Rwanda and Kosovo.

In 2004, the U.N.-backed court in Sierra Leone added "forced marriage" to rape and sexual slavery as offenses prosecutable as crimes against humanity. It was the first court in the world to single out forced marriage as a criminal charge; three defendants have been convicted of the charge. Their appeals are pending.

A short walk from the heavily guarded court complex, on a rare tranquil block in this gridlocked capital of 2.5 million, these women damaged by war sit on wooden benches, chatting with one another. A few work the pedals on Chinese sewing machines. Some are hand-stitching shirts, dresses and slippers. Everything is hand-designed and made to measure.

The tailoring institute had just six women in the first six-month class and has seven in the class now ending. Winter has kept it small on purpose, "so it's not interesting to anyone who might come along and demand a bribe," she said. "That happens quite a lot with these projects."

When the women graduate from the program, their clothing is displayed and sold in a show at the Special Court. The women are given those proceeds, a sewing machine and \$100 in seed money and sent back home to start their own businesses.

The women who graduated from the first class say they long for the sewing bee atmosphere and would like to work together again. But they don't yet have enough money to rent a sewing room. For now, they work in their homes, hoping that business will pick up around the holidays, when Sierra Leoneans return from abroad and stock up on traditional African clothing.

On a recent day, the students, ranging in age from 21 to 55, showed an easy camaraderie. Much of the discussion focused on a rumor sweeping Freetown that the government was introducing a new electricity source and everyone would need to turn off major appliances at 3 p.m. "It doesn't really matter that much to me," Christiana John said dryly. "I don't have power in my house."

The women enjoyed teasing their instructor, Morlai Kalokoh, 40, a tailor. He took it all with a genial smile. In the afternoon, the group turned its attention to Kalokoh's radio, which he tuned to the BBC's "Focus on Africa."

What they don't talk about is the past. Each woman's privacy is strictly respected. "We don't ask each other about why we are here," said John, 55, who has a youthful face framed by long braided hair.

But in private, outside the room, she recalled the war in detail.

The day was Jan. 8, 1999, and [REDACTED] was at home in the town of Kissy with her four children, ages 7 to 25, and other relatives. About 10 soldiers stormed her house and held them for two days, raping the women and threatening to chop off the children's arms. "They took us as their slaves and forced us to be their wives," she said.

Over the next six months, she tried to escape but was recaptured, beaten and stabbed. She was fortunate that she didn't become pregnant, she says. "If I had, I would have committed suicide."

Finally, she managed to escape and hid in the countryside for a week before hitching a ride to Freetown. Asked what happened to her husband, she laughs ruefully. "I heard he died in battle," she said.

Only a few of her closest friends in Freetown know about her past, and she has never returned to her hometown. "If most people knew, they would not have anything to do with me," she said. But she has another reason too: "I'm ashamed of myself."

[REDACTED] sees the class as a way to break away from that past, "to stop thinking about my status" and to have a career -- to open a tailor shop, perhaps with some of her classmates. "I've been starving for too long," she said. "And this is food for my life."

The civil war began in 1991, when young men expelled by the military regime returned to battle for control of the nation and its diamond riches. Tens of thousands died, and the Revolutionary United Front rebels were known for their brutality, which included amputating limbs and forcing children to kill their parents.

One of John's younger classmates is [REDACTED], 27. She was 14 when the rebels arrived in her village, in the diamond-mining region of Kono. Her mother was taken away; she hasn't heard from her since.

"And they killed my father in front of me," she said. "They shot him and he fell. Then they took a knife and cut him."

As Bangura spoke, tears streamed down her face. "After that, I had no one." She was forced into marriage but managed to escape a year later. She won't return to the village because the memories are too painful. Now she lives with her uncle in Freetown. "He's the only family I have," she said.

Winter and her legal administrator, Josephine Buck, a Sierra Leone native from Jacksonville, Fla., who returned in 2007, select the program's participants with help from the Special Court's victim and witness office. Though the court has no authority to compensate victims, judges say that sometimes being acknowledged as a victim is an important first step in the reconciliation. process.

"If a victim can come and say, 'This is my story,' that is very important, especially for the women, who are always blamed for everything that has happened to them," Winter said. "This court has given them a voice. And we tell them that what has happened to them is not their fault."

A new group of war victims will begin learning to make garments in September. But that will be the last class because the Special Court is scheduled to end its Freetown work in a few months, when the final appeals are decided, and both Winter and Buck will be leaving the country. (The trial of former Liberian strongman Charles Taylor will continue for several more years in The Hague.)

For that last class, Winter and Buck plan to select six people. Three of them will be men, a recognition that many were maimed or traumatized by the marauding fighters.

"Justice Winter was a bit apprehensive to include men at first," Buck said. "But believe me, this will work. Many men in Sierra Leone are tailors. And until the war came, men and women were used to working together. They will be fine."

scott.kraft@latimes.com

TAYLOR GIVES UP



Former President Charles Taylor

For almost a decade, the international community has seen Charles Taylor's role as one which fueled Sierra Leone's civil conflict through gunrunning and drug smuggling, the former Liberian leader told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges on Thursday, August 27. Taylor said "Nothing he did could change this impression and Liberia suffered because of it."

"They had made up their minds, it really did not matter whatever I did," Taylor told the judges in response to international community allegations against him that he provided support to Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels who waged an 11-year war in Sierra Leone.

Taylor has been responding to a 2000 United Nations (UN) Expert Panel

Report which alleges that he fueled the conflict in Sierra Leone through an arms-for-diamond trade with the RUF rebels.

He said when the UN Expert Panel Report came out in 2000, accusing him of providing support to the RUF rebels, the United Kingdom, through its Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, proposed sanctions against Liberia at the UN Security Council.

Taylor said "As a condition to lift the sanctions against Liberia, Ambassador Greenstock said that Liberia "needed to take urgent steps to stop support for the RUF and the trafficking of diamonds and arms to and from Sierra Leone."

He said ECOWAS leaders requested a delay of the sanctions "so Liberia could take steps to address the concerns in the

Please turn to Page 6

TAYLOR GIVES

report in two months."

The Liberian leader said despite the plea from ECOWAS leaders, the UN Security Council went ahead and voted for sanctions against Liberia.

"Sometimes, regional response does not matter. When one of these big countries wants to do something, they will do it," Taylor said.

He said similar fate befell him when he became President of Liberia in 1997. Prior to his election as President, the UN had imposed an arms embargo on Liberia. After his election as President, Taylor said ECOWAS lifted the arms embargo on Liberia and requested the UN Security Council to do the same. The Security Council, Taylor said refused the request from ECOWAS.

In 2001, Taylor said he made another plea for the lifting of the arms embargo when he wrote a letter to the UN giving them the "list of weapons we wanted for

The Monitor

Monday, 31 August 2009

International Community: Mind Made Up

By Alpha Sesay

For almost a decade, the international community has seen Charles Taylor's role as one which fueled Sierra Leone's civil conflict through gun running and drug smuggling, he lamented to Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today. Nothing he did could change this impression and Liberia suffered because of it, Mr. Taylor said.

"They had made up their minds, it really did not matter whatever I did," Mr. Taylor told the judges today when responding to international community allegations against him that he provided support to Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels who waged an 11 years war in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Taylor has been responding to a 2000 United Nations (UN) Expert Panel Report which alleges that he was fueling the conflict in Sierra Leone through an arms-for-diamond trade with the RUF rebels.

Mr. Taylor told the judges that when the UN Expert Panel Report

came out in 2000, accusing him of providing support to the RUF rebels, the United Kingdom, through its ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, proposed sanctions against Liberia at the UN Security Council. As a condition to lift the sanctions against Liberia, Ambassador Greenstock said that Liberia "needed to take urgent steps to stop support for the RUF and the trafficking of diamonds and arms to and from Sierra Leone."

ECOWAS leaders, Mr. Taylor said, asked for a delay of the sanctions "so Liberia could take steps to address the concerns in the report in two months."

Despite this plea from ECOWAS leaders, the UN Security Council went ahead and voted for sanctions against Liberia. "Sometimes, regional response does not matter. When one of these big countries want to do something, they will do it."

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See Story on Page 6

International Community

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UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 31 August 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberian Diaspora in Atlanta Debates Truth Commission's Final Report

Source: Voice of America: August 31, 2009

Exactly two months after the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) released its final report it seems Liberians at home and in the Diaspora are still confused about many aspects of the report. For example, some want to know who has the responsibility to implement the report's recommendations – the Liberian government or the legislature? The Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia over the weekend hosted members of the Liberian Diaspora in Atlanta to discuss the findings and implications of the TRC's final report. The Truth Commission was established at the end of Liberia's civil war to foster national reconciliation but at the same address the question of impunity. Among the findings of its final report, the TRC recommends the prosecution of all warring faction leaders and their associates for committing notorious war crimes. The commission also recommends that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and 51 other individuals be banned for 30 years from holding public offices for their roles in financing the war.

Mutiny - Army Confirms 27 Soldiers' Conviction

Abuja, Aug 31, 2009 (This Day/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- The 27 soldiers of the 15th Nigerian Battalion that served in the United Nations Mission in Liberia earlier sentenced to life jail terms by a Military Court Martial, yesterday had their sentences commuted to seven years jail terms. They were court-martialed for demonstrating on the streets of Akure, Ondo State, in July last year over unpaid allowances. Giving the update on the matter at a joint press conference, Director of Army Public Relations, Brig-Gen. Chris Olukolade, and Director Army Legal Services, Brig-Gen. Abdulkadir Abubakar, said the sentence of life imprisonment given to the convicted soldiers was commuted to seven years imprisonment and that the convicts were expected to have been moved into prison immediately.

Liberian MPs mull tricky war crimes advice

MONROVIA (AFP) - Six years after the civil war, Liberian MPs have decided to mull slowly a Truth and Reconciliation Commission call for the president to resign over her role and for eight ex-warlords to be prosecuted. "We asked the president not to act on the report while we are in recess. Wait until we get back to work" in January, Wesseh Blamoh, head of the House of Representatives peace and reconciliation committee, told journalists Friday. "As representatives of the people we have decided that the people get involved because positively or negatively the people will be affected. So we want to get the people's opinion on this report. Every member of the parliament will use the recess to consult his or her people," Blamoh said. Liberia's leaders have been at pains to dissipate tensions that have risen since June when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) issued its final report on 24 years of violence in the West African nation. "Reactions to the publication of the report have created fear, bitterness, and suspicion," said Amos Sawyer, a university professor who became in 1990 Liberia's first interim president.

International Clips on West Africa

Sierra Leone: Schools in crisis as thousands of teachers go unpaid

Freetown (Sierra Leone) — Government's refusal to pay the salaries of thousands teachers, while looking to recruit thousands more, has plunged the schooling system into crisis.

With the new academic year poised to start next week, government and the national teachers' union are still odds about payment for almost 3,000 teachers who have not received their salaries for over a year. Government refuses to pay the teachers because they were not approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports while the teachers' union says the teachers have performed their duties in schools where they were desperately needed and deserve to be paid. "We cannot pay these teachers because they were not approved by the ministry," says Minkailu Bah, the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports. He adds: "Our system is such that a teacher only gets paid when his or her name is on the voucher, meaning that he or she must have been approved by the ministry."

Cote d'Ivoire reaffirms Nov. 29 election date

ABIDJAN, Aug 31, 2009 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- The Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) of Cote d'Ivoire has reaffirmed the holding of the much talked presidential elections on Nov. 29, 2009. "The slight technical readjustment on the publication date of provisional election lists will not have any repercussion on the Nov. 29 date," according to a communique released by the CEI on Monday. Initially announced for Aug. 24, the publication of the provisional election list was put forward with many fearing the lack of centers to handle data on identification and election census. "All the coordination centers are open today and the analysis has been achieved in more than half of the centers," the communique said. In total, 70 centers were set to open to help analyze the data. The country has postponed the polls several times since 2005.

Rights group warns of intimidation over Guinea polls

Source: AFP World News / English Date: August 31, 2009

DAKAR, Aug 31, 2009 (AFP) - Human Rights Watch has called on the Guinea junta to respect the rights of opposition demonstrators and stop intimidating opponents ahead of upcoming presidential elections.

The call follows clashes between police and demonstrators at a rally on Thursday calling for the junta leader not to stand in January's polls. Hundreds of people took part in a similar protest outside the US embassy in Conakry on Sunday. HRW said opposition politicians and at least one human rights activist who have criticized the presumed candidacy of coup leader Captain Moussa Dadis Camara have been threatened in recent days. "The coup leaders keep saying they are breaking with the past, but the use of threats and intimidation against opponents look disturbingly familiar," said HRW's Corinne Dufka.

Local Media – Newspaper

NASSCORP Management Reports disappearance of US\$9,000

(The Informer The News, The Inquirer, Liberian Express, The Monitor, Daily Observer)

- The National Social Security and Welfare Corporation (NASSCORP) said it has been discovered that an amount of over US\$9,000 plus an additional L\$25,000 has been withdrawn under fraudulent means from the account of some beneficiaries of entity.
- According to the Director General of the Corporation, Mr. Francis Carbah, the alleged act was discovered two weeks ago when the suspects withdrew the money from the corporation's account.

- Director Carbah recalled that sometime last year, NASSCORP introduced the Direct Bank Payment Service under which, beneficiaries of the corporation with the help of NASSCORP establish accounts at the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI).
- Director Carbah said the new scheme has added dignity to the Corporation's activities until two weeks ago when the latest fraud was discovered.

"No Live Bullet Used", Defense Ministry Clarifies Soldier's Death

(The News, The Inquirer, Daily Observer, The Analyst)

- The Ministry of National Defense has maintained that live bullet was never used on the soldier who was killed Tuesday during a training exercise at the Camp Wah Training camp.
- Defense Minister Brownie Samukai told a news conference Friday the military does not use life bullets during training exercises.
- Although Minister Samukai declined to provide details on the type of bullet used on late Private Welleh Swen, he described the incident as unfortunate.
- The Defense Ministry Boss said the ministry has agreed to a demand by the family for an autopsy to be performed on his body.
- He indicated the training of soldiers is associated with risk and as such the killing of Private Swen in training might not be the last accident to occur.

Rangers Confiscate Weapons from Sapo Natational Park

(The Informer, Daily Observer)

- At least two shotguns and 18 pieces of mining equipment have been seized from the Sapo National Park in Sinoe County.
- According to the Acting Managing Director of Forestry Development Authority (FDA), Kederick F. Johnson, the items were confiscated last Friday. The latest discovery is the second in less than a year.
- It can be recalled that in March this year at least 340 rifles were seized from illegal occupants of the park and handed over to the Liberia National Police (LNP).

Technical Committee Exposes Flaws, Lapses in LPRC-ZAKHEM Contract

(Heritage, The News, Plain Truth, Public Agenda, The Independent)

- The Independent Technical Committee constituted by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to review the US\$24.8 million contract signed between the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company (LPRC) and Zakhem International Construction LTD for the rehabilitation of the LPRC's storage terminal has submitted its report to the President pointing out flaws and violations in the contract.
- In its findings, the Committee revealed that the contract has placed the Government in a difficult position.
- The leaked report said to ignore the lapses in the contract and go-ahead with its implementation will support negative practices that are a violation of laws and public policy.
- The report on the other hand said to cancel the contract will affected Government's contractual image.

MTA and Workers Sign MOU

(The Informer, The Monitor, Heritage, The Inquirer)

- The Monrovia Transit Authority (MTA) has signed a memorandum of understanding with workers of the entity.
- The MOU was signed following a strike action by aggrieved workers over the weekend.
- According to the workers, the strike was in demand of salary increment, overtime and the right to unionize among others.
- The MOU which was reached through the intervention of the Labour Ministry stressed that the issue of rights remain non-negotiable.

PUL Accuses Government of Deception

(The Analyst)

- The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) said it has information that the Ministry of Justice has begun lobbying the National Legislature to withdraw key information bills for its input.
- It is not clear if the ministry wants to interject in the bill but the PUL said whatever the ministry's intention would lead to a delay in the passage of the bills or to their demise.
- The three key bills - the "Freedom of Information Act", the "Independent Broadcast Regulator" and "the Bill to Transform to a Public Service Broadcaster" - were submitted to the National Legislature in April last year for enactment into law.

Canadian Company Donates Drugs to Bassa and Margibi Counties

(The Analyst, The Inquirer)

- A Canadian Company, Gold Star Resource Corporation and its subsidiary, the International Resource Strategies Liberia Energy Inc. (IRSLE), over the weekend donated huge consignment of drugs to the people of Grand Bassa and Margibi Counties.
- The Canadian companies are presently operating in the two counties for oil and gas reconnaissance.
- The management says the gesture is part of its social and corporate responsibilities towards the counties' reconstruction drives.
- The communities that benefited from the gesture include Bokay Town, Owens Grooves both in Grand Bassa County as well as Charlesville in Marshall City, Margibi County.

Local Media – Star Radio (*culled from website today at 09:00 am*)

Former Information Minister Concern over Delay in Passage of Press Union Bills

- Former Information Minister, Lamini Waritay has launched fresh efforts to ensure the passage of the Press Union of Liberia acts currently before the National Legislature.
- Mr. Waritay said he was concerned about the continuous delay in the passage of the Freedom of Information Act, the Independent Broadcast Regulator and the Public Broadcast Service bill and appeal to the lawmakers that they do not get stuck anymore.
- Professor Waritay said the bills were critical to strengthening democracy.
- At the same time, the PUL said it could impose a media blackout against the Legislature if the body continues to ignore the passage of the union's bills currently before it.
- Press Union of Liberia President, Peter Quaqua said the union has reached a dead-end in advocating for the bills.
- The bills have been stalled at the Legislature for more than a year without substantive action.

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky F.M., Truth F.M. and ELBC)

MTA and Workers Sign MOU

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky F.M., Truth F.M. and ELBC)

Radio Veritas (*Monitored today at 9:45 am*)

Executive Mansion Announces New Protocol for Appointment with President Sirleaf

- Regulations covering procedures in scheduling events for President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has been released in Monrovia.
- The measure amongst other requirements calls for the submission of invitation cards or letters 30 days prior to the event in which the President is being invited.
- The 30-day period is to allow the Office of the President ample time to respond to the invitation.
- An Executive Mansion release said a written letter of consent from the President's Office is required in order to announce her participation or include her name in a programme in keeping with the regulation.

Aljazeera

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

Finland opens Rwanda genocide trial

A Rwandan former pastor has gone on trial in Finland charged with genocide over the massacre of 5,000 Tutsis in his home country in 1994.

Francois Bazaramba, a Hutu, is accused of planning and carrying out the killings. Many of the dead were women and children.

He is also accused of murdering 15 people.

The 58-year-old, who will face a life sentence if found guilty, has denied all the charges.



Francois Bazaramba, a former pastor, could face life in prison if found guilty

Kimmo Nuotio, a professor of criminal law at the University of Helsinki, said on Tuesday: "This is something for which there was no alternative.

'Important responsibility'

The Nordic countries have been promoting the development of an international criminal order, that there should be an end to impunity.

"This is significant. It's important that Finland has taken this responsibility."

The trial, in the Porvoo District court, will be moved to Kigali, the Rwandan capital, after two weeks in order to hear from witnesses.

The case, which is expected to last until the end of the year, comes as work carried out by the Tanzania-based International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) draws to a close.

The court, set up in 1997 to try the masterminds of the massacres, had until last year to complete all trials, and has until 2010 to hear all appeals.

Around 800,000 people died in a just a few months in Rwanda in 1994 when the majority Hutus began the slaughter of rival Tutsis and anyone who supported or helped them.

Reuters

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

Congo ministers attacked in Bemba trial "warning"

By International Justice Desk



kinshasa,
Congo
(Kinshasa)

Gunmen opened fire on the homes of two Congolese ministers in an attack aimed at scaring them off testifying against ex-rebel Jean-Pierre Bemba in his war crimes trial.

Bemba backers dismissed the allegation as an attempt to discredit him before his trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and prevent him from returning to Congolese politics should he be acquitted.

"Testify and you will die"

The assailants fired shots at the residences of Jose Endundo, Democratic Republic of Congo's environment minister, and Foreign Minister Alexis Thambwe-Mwamba on Sunday. No one was hurt and their houses were only slightly damaged.

"They fired on the entrance gate and they left an envelope with a bullet and a message that read "Testify against Bemba and you will die".

"The same thing happened to minister Thambwe-Mwamba," Endundo told Reuters on Monday.

The two ministers were members of Bemba's Congo Liberation Movement (MLC) that fought against Kabila's government during Congo's 1998-2003 war. They then served as MLC ministers in a 2003-2006 transitional government before joining a government of President Joseph Kabila's allies.

Neither minister has been called as a witness against Bemba but both were senior MLC members.

Release

Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, who was arrested in Belgium in 2008, faces charges that his rebels waged a campaign of torture, rape and murder in neighbouring Central African Republic in 2002 and 2003.

Bemba has denied all the charges against him and, earlier this month, the ICC ordered his conditional release pending his trial. The court's prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo has appealed against the decision.

The MLC, currently the largest opposition group in parliament, said the attacks were part of a plot to derail Bemba's release rather than efforts to intimidate the ministers.

"This is a crude set-up organised by the enemies of democracy, who fear a return of the leader of the opposition to the Congolese political scene," Thomas Luhaka, the MLC's acting secretary-general, told Reuters.

Luhaka said he suspected members of Kabila's coalition government of staging the attacks.

Bemba lost a run-off election to Kabila in 2006 polls meant to draw a line under decades of dictatorship and a 1998-2003 war. He fled into exile following three days of fighting between remnants of his rebel movement and government soldiers in 2007.

(Reuters)

Reuters

Tuesday, 1 September 2009

Hague court delays trial of Congolese warlords

The International Criminal Court has postponed the trial of two accused Congolese warlords for two months, saying a variety of procedural and technical matters necessitated the delay.

The ICC said in a statement late Monday night the trials of Germain Katanga and Mathieu Ngudjolo will now start in The Hague on Nov. 24, instead of Sept. 24 as planned.

The court had set the September date in late March.

Alleged militia leaders Katanga and Ngudjolo are accused of attacking civilians, using child soldiers and being responsible for rape committed by subordinates in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The suspects are accused of directing an attack in 2003 on the village of Bogoro in the northeastern Congolese district of Ituri, an area long torn by conflict over its rich natural resources including gold, diamonds and oil.

Prosecutors have said there is evidence that more than 200 children, women, old people and civilian men were killed and women were sexually enslaved in camps and repeatedly raped.

Among reasons for the delay to the trial, the ICC cited pending agreements on issues related to evidence and a motion from Katanga to declare his arrest unlawful.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Thursday, 27 August 2009

Rights group seeks UN tribunal for East Timor abuses



Jakarta, Indonesia

By Thijs Bouwknecht

The United Nations Security Council should set up an international criminal tribunal to investigate abuses in East Timor both under Indonesian rule and

in the vote for independence, a rights group said on Thursday.

On 30 August 1999, the Timorese people voted overwhelmingly in favour of independence. At least 1,200 people died in the lead-up to the polls and its aftermath, which were marred by crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations.

The country was the theatre of killings, enforced disappearances, rapes and arbitrary arrests at the hands of pro-Indonesian militias backed by the Indonesian military.

Culture of impunity

But East Timor, which was invaded by Indonesia in 1975, will not be able to shake off a culture of impunity unless those guilty of human rights abuses are punished, watchdog Amnesty International said in a report.

The human rights watchdog has called on the UN to set up an international criminal tribunal to deal with the gravest atrocities surrounding the country's independence referendum and in the previous 24 years of Indonesian occupation.

"In 1999, anti-independence militias, supported by the Indonesian military, killed more than a thousand Timorese in front of the world, but there has not been proper accountability for these atrocities," said Donna Guest, Amnesty International's Asia-Pacific deputy director, in a statement.

"Reminder"

The establishment of an international criminal tribunal is very unlikely. "At least at this time," says Galuh Wandita, Senior Associate at the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ).

Wandita says that there have been many attempts to do justice to Timor's victims and that the debates are still ongoing. She says Amnesty's appeal is a more a "reminder to the international community that justice has not been done yet."

The East Timor government opposes the establishment of an international tribunal, saying it would rather forget the past and focus on its economic ties with Jakarta. The Indonesian government is also reluctant to cooperate with an East Timor tribunal.

Truth and Justice

East Timor has tried to deal with the atrocities and set up a truth and reconciliation commission in 2002. The report 'Chega' was released in 2005 but the Timorese government has yet to decide on the implementation of its recommendations.

The tiny country has opted for a conciliatory rather than a confrontational approach towards its much larger neighbour since independence.

The Timorese and Indonesian governments set up a joint truth commission, the Truth and Friendship Commission, in 2005. But this joint commission did not provide for prosecutions of perpetrators.

Justice Initiatives

Among the justice initiatives put in place since 1999 are the ad hoc Human Rights Court established by Indonesia and the UN Special Panels in Timor- Leste. However, prosecutions did not lead convictions.

But all 18 defendants originally tried by the ad hoc Human Rights Court have been acquitted in proceedings criticized as being fundamentally flawed.

In East Timor, only one person convicted by the UN Special Panels is still serving a prison sentence.

In addition, Indonesia's former armed forces chief, Wiranto, was indicted by the UN Serious Crimes Unit for crimes against humanity committed by troops under his command in East Timor. But he never faced court, and has been free to pursue a political career, running as a vice presidential candidate in Indonesia's recent elections.

(Photo: Amnesty International)

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Current International Prosecutors Report To Law Dialogs At Chautauqua

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Norman Farrell, left, deputy prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, speaks during a session at the International Humanitarian Law Dialogs at Chautauqua Institution on Monday. Listening at right is Joseph Kamara, deputy prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

P-J photo by Dave Emke

CHAUTAUQUA - War crimes prosecutors of the past and present gathered along with other experts in the field for the first day of the International Humanitarian Law Dialogs at Chautauqua Institution on Monday.

Four current prosecutors spoke in a panel discussion at the institution's Fletcher Music Hall in a session designed to keep Dialogs participants up to date on the latest in international war crimes trials.

Speakers on the panel included Norman Farrell, deputy prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia; Joseph Kamara, deputy prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone; Alphonse Van, deputy prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; and Fatou Bensouda, deputy prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. Moderating the talk was Leila Nadya Sadat, director of the Whitney R. Harris World Law Institute.

"They certainly have some of the most interesting and some of the most difficult and uniquely challenging jobs in the world," Mrs. Sadat said when introducing the speakers.

While the speakers each discussed their own specific trials and cases, a common theme throughout Monday's session was rape and other crimes against women and children. Farrell, speaking first about trials including that of Radovan Karadzic, said that such cases can be difficult to compile when the victims have never had direct contact with the accused.

"On the one hand, you're required to investigate and build a case against the most senior person involved in the crimes," Farrell said. "But you have to do it in the context that the victims that come forward to testify may not even know of or have heard of the person against whom they are testifying."

Other challenges were faced in Rwanda, Van said, which was the first International Criminal Tribunal to pursue rape as a crime against humanity. Not only were victims afraid or otherwise unwilling to come forward, but there was no precedent for the court to follow. However, Van said, the Office of the Prosecutor in Rwanda knew the importance of setting an example of those who perpetrated such heinous acts.

"Unfortunately, we are closing down our tribunal," he said. "But we think that the tribunals in the future, starting with the ICC, will focus on investigating and prosecuting sexual violence."

Speaking of the war crimes committed in Sierra Leone during the nation's Civil War, Kamala discussed investigation of forcing children to be soldiers, rape and genocide. He said that the Special Court's duties in the nation went above trying cases to reaching out to the nation and helping it rebuild.

"The role of the Special Court is very outstanding when it comes to the protection of rights of the child and the protection of rights of the woman," Kamala said. "We're not only prosecutors looking at securing convictions, but we're also participating in the healing process."

Greg Peterson, chairman of the Robert H. Jackson Center, said that having active war crimes prosecutors come to the Dialogs to share their work is part of what makes the event special and historic.

"These are the folks that are in the trenches," said Greg Peterson, chairman of the Robert H. Jackson Center. "It's just a thrill for us to have them come here."

Other events at Chautauqua Institution on Monday included an address from U.N. High Commissioner Navi Pillay; a roundtable dialogue with the prosecutors; and lectures from speakers including Gayle Smith, special assistant to the president, and Judge Patricia Ward, who presided at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The third International Humanitarian Law Dialogs continues today at Chautauqua Institution with, among other events, a presentation on women in international criminal law; a roundtable dialogue with current female trial attorneys; and the issuance of the Third Chautauqua Declaration. All sessions are free and open to the public.