

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Another prison break!

...big security blunder

By Ibrahim Tarawallie

Four prisoners have reportedly escaped from the country's maximum detention centre on Pademba Road in Freetown, where heads of state of the Mano River Union countries are currently discussing security.

Observers said the latest prison break, which came at a time when the public has persistently expressed concerns over the security of high profile criminals, including suspects of the US\$200 million cocaine bust, was tantamount to a major security blunder.

Officer in charge of the Pademba maximum prison, Elkanah James confirmed the escape of the prisoners to Concord Times, noting that they

were able to apprehend one of them whose name is Tamba Fengai.

He said they managed to escape after giving the officers on duty a severe beating, adding that, "they used the ventilation bars at the cell to make their way out."

"The officers on duty were overpowered by the prisoners," he said, adding that the names of the three prisoners who are presently on the run are Mohamed Kanneh, Abu Bakarr Kamara and Junior Karim.

It has become notorious for prisoners to escape from the maximum prison.

A resident in the area, Mohamed Kamara, told Concord Times that the continuous escape of prisoners at the

country's maximum security prison was a serious concern for people living around the area.

He said the government should try and put mechanisms in place to prevent such thing from occurring, adding that, "the country is no longer safe for Sierra Leoneans."

Public relations officer of prisons, Mohamed Jimmy, said the management is presently putting structures in place to put to rest the escape of prisoners.

He said the criminal investigations department (CID) is presently looking into the matter.

Minister of internal affairs, local government and rural development, Dauda Kamara

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Another prison break!

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told Concord Times that he was not aware of the escape of the prisoners.

"I did not have any idea about prisoners escape. The prison management is supposed to report to me when such a thing

happens," he said.

Chairman of the coalition of civil society, Charles Mambu said they were very concerned about the escape of prisoners, adding that it sends a bad image about the country.

"This is not the first time that prisoners are escaping from the Pademba Road maximum prison. The government should put mechanisms in place to stop this from happening," he said.

"Implement TRC Recommendations"

- Stakeholders Demand

The 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was yesterday commemorated with a symposium at State Hall of Parliament Building, Tower Hill in Freetown on the theme, "Human Rights, Successes and Challenges in Sierra Leone-1961 to the present.

Various dignitaries including the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Abdul Serry Kamal, Head of UNIPSIL's Human Rights and Rule of Law Section, Benedict Sannoh, representatives of the Sierra Leone Human Rights Commission, Joseph Stanley and civil society made statements at the well attended ceremony demanding government to speedily implement recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report.

Dilating on the topic, 'Sierra Leone in the International Human Rights Mirror' Benedict Sannoh called for the speedy implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report articulating that some of the causative factors of the ten-year civil war are still prevalent and observed that some people hold the view that some wars or rebellions are wake up calls with some positive aspects for governments to live up to their expectations.

He went on to underscore

that the Lome Peace Accord identified inadequacies in the Sierra Leone constitution and recommended the formulation of a new constitution underlining, "the most disgraceful period in Sierra Leone's history is from independence to the end of the war.... Furthermore, the state of the Pademba Road Prisons is awful."

He suggested that a regional human rights strategy for West Africa be discussed at the ECOWAS Summit in Freetown and revealed that Sierra Leone has signed several international agreements on human rights but that since 1975, the country has not sent reports to the international community for which the United Nations is now working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to address the anomaly. Benedict Sannoh also pointed out some of the successes attained by government such as the successful conduct of the general and Local Council Elections, the decentralization of state functions, the numerous Acts passed by Parliament, the review of archaic laws by the Law Reform Commission among others reiterating that the establishment of the Human Rights Commission is also a significant development.

According to Joseph

Stanley of the Human Rights Commission, plans are underway to open regional offices in Bo, Kenema and Makeni articulating that the day coincides with the Anti Corruption Day and emphasized that acts of corruption are also human rights abuses as they deprive the citizenry of their basic rights.

He added that the Commission is agitating to government for the repeal of the death penalty and called for parliament to be capacitated so as to enable it effectively perform its functions of formulating laws, ratifying human rights treaties, holding government accountable in addition to efficiently performing its oversight role.

Honourable Elizabeth Lavalie of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party, who is also Chairperson of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, highlighted some of the Acts passed by Parliament such as the Sierra Leone Citizenship, Registration of Customary Marriage, Anti Corruption, Child Rights and Procurement Act.

She further underscored the need for Parliament and the Committee, that are hampered to enhance their work, to be empowered to enable them effectively protect the rights of the citizenry lamenting that with thirty-two committees, Parliament only has two clerks. Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Abdul Serry Kamal, highlighted some of the gains made by government in the areas of gender mainstreaming, the establishment of the Family Support Unit in the Sierra Leone police, the Act for the Empowerment of Women, access to justice and the increased number of women in parliament and Local Councils. Highlights of the symposium, that was chaired by George Coleridge Taylor, Chairman of the National Commission for Democracy, were the rendition of a song by the Milton Margai School for the Blind and a question and answer session.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
9 December 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

Tension Brews at Ganta Border

(Daily Observer)

- There is tension mounting at Ganta border over the seizure of a Guinean truck that was carrying gasoline and scraps from Liberia to Guinea. The truck was impounded at the border recently by an officer of the Ministry of National Security when it was carrying over two drums of gasoline, some bags of bulgur wheat and scrap metals.
- Following the arrest, Guinean authorities on the other side of the border allegedly seized goods belonging to some Liberian business women who had gone shopping at a nearby market close to the Liberian border. Reports say the situation has left over 100 women stranded on both side of the border.

Tolbert's Top Security Officers Stood by while he was Assassinated, Aide Testifies

(The News, The Inquirer, Heritage, The Analyst)

- Former Deputy Minister of National Security, Wilfred Clarke said he and other top security officers stood outside the Executive Mansion as non-commissioned officers of the Armed Forces of Liberia assassinated President William R. Tolbert.
- Mr. Clarke said that at 12:00 AM on April 12, 1980 he received a telephone call from President Tolbert that he was under attack before he called then National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) director Patrick Minikon. He said that he and Minikon met in Congo Town before they drove to the Executive Mansion grounds where they remained as the coup unfolded.
- He was testifying Monday at the ongoing Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC) Public Hearings at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in Monrovia. Under the theme: "Understanding the Conflict Through its Principal Events and Actors," the ongoing hearings are addressing the root causes of the conflict, including its military and political dimensions.

Executive Mansion Wants Asset Freeze Bill Enacted into Law

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

- The Executive Mansion said it has forwarded to the Justice Ministry reports of corruption from the National Security Agency and the National Security Agency.
- Presidential Press Secretary, Cyrus Badio said the President is seeking the cooperation of the National Legislature in the passing of the asset freeze bill before it.
- Mr. Badio said the bill will help in the fight against corruption along with the prosecution of over 60 cases currently before the Justice Ministry.
- He maintained that the President professed "zero tolerance" against corruption remains firm despite numerous reports of corruption.

Media Group Launches PRS Reporting Project

(Heritage, The Informer, The Analyst, Daily Observer, The News)

- The Liberia Media Centre (LMC) with support from Trust Africa today launched a one-year project under the theme "Strengthened Media for Poverty Reduction and Democratic Governance" to, amongst other things, conduct media training on reporting corruption, the budget and the Poverty Reduction Strategy process.

- The three-day workshop is expected to target thirty local journalists. According to the Executive Director of the LMC, Lawrence Randall, the Centre together with other partners is developing a journalism training manual on the PRS to be released early next year.
- When completed the manual will serve as a reference guide for reporters and editors covering poverty related issues, and as a basis for comprehensively monitoring media reports on the PRS process in 2009, Randall said. The monitoring will focus on nine newspapers and five radio stations from January to September 2009.

(The Analyst)

'All Individuals Listed not Perpetrators' - TRC Clarifies...

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia clarifies that not all those listed in its publication of individuals needed to testify before the commission are perpetrators or alleged perpetrators.
- The commission hereby makes it clear that the list of individuals needed to testify is divided into three categories and not all persons listed in the publication are alleged perpetrators as is being misconstrued. The first category the commission said includes perpetrators or alleged perpetrators needed by the TRC to respond to various violations of human rights and international humanitarian law; the second category are alleged perpetrators who have been invited but refused to appear before the TRC.
- There are also persons of interest to the TRC Inquiry Process who are required to appear before the commission because of their unique experiences and knowledge of events of the past covering the period 1979 to 2003.

Radio Summary

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

Government Launches Report on Implementation of Convention on Rights of Child

- The Government of Liberia on Monday launched the country's combined report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified by Liberia in June 1993 to protect the rights of children in the country.
- Speaking to reporters, Gender and Development Minister, Vabah Gayflor said the CRC reporting is an opportunity for government to evaluate its obligation to Liberian children.

Classes Fail to Resume at Renowned Baptist-Owned Institution

- Authorities of the authorities of the Ricks Institute failed to resume classes Monday despite the Government's ultimatum for the school to be re-opened.
- The Principal of the school, Rev. Olu Menjay said the delay is due to the long distances the students had to travel to return to the campus.
- On Friday, the administration of the Baptist-run Ricks Institute in Brewerville outside Monrovia shut down the institution with immediate effect saying the environment was no longer suitable for learning.
- Rev. Manjay said it was unacceptable for a refuge colony to be built in the school's environment.
- The Ministry of Education however mandated that the school be reopened immediately and that the "disputed" construction be halted pending an investigation.
- There has been a long running land dispute in which the school is claiming over 1000 acres of land while the locals claimed they have 50 acres, twenty-eight of which they gave to the Liberia Refugees Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) to build a refugee colony.

President Sirleaf Lauds Liberian Farmers

- President Ellen Johnson has lauded Liberian farmers for complementing government's efforts to ensure that enough food is available on the Liberian market at an affordable rate.
- Speaking at this year's National Agricultural Fair held in Voinjama, Lofa County, President Sirleaf congratulated the winners of this year's awards for increased food production and other agricultural sectors.
- The President urged farmers throughout the country not to relent in their drive to increase food production in the country.

- At the National Agricultural Fair farmers were awarded prizes in various categories including best/most productive rice farmer, tuber producer, livestock farmer, farmers group, vegetable farmer, among others.
- The 2008 Best/Most Productive rice farmer was captured by the Chairman of the Traditional Council of Chiefs, Mr. Zanzan Karwor, while second place went to Nimba county superintendent, Mr. Robert Karme.

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

Foreign Minister Akerele Challenges Participants to Serve as Peacekeepers

- Foreign Minister, Olubanke King-Akerele has called on participants of a five-day training workshop in Development Diplomacy and International Civilian Peace-Keeping to serve as peacekeepers in their respective communities.
- According to a Foreign Ministry release, Minister King-Akerele spoke at the close of the five-day training workshop aimed at enhancing the skills and knowledge of the participants in international civilian peacekeeping.
- The workshop brought together participants from various Government ministries and agencies, as well as civil society organizations in the country and was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with King's College, London with support from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Star Radio *(News culled from website today at 8:30 am)*

Government Presses on to fight corruption as Executive Mansion calls for Enactment of Asset Freeze Bill

UNFPA Alarms over Increase in Maternal Mortality

- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said the current statistic of maternal and infant mortalities in Liberia is alarming.
- In an interview, an official of UNFPA, Mrs. Esther Lincoln said the demographic and health survey report revealed that out of every 10,000 pregnant women 994 of them die during child birth.
- She said the figure indicates an increase from 508 to 990 despite efforts being made to tackle it.
- She said mothers are dying in the country of maternal mortality and there is a need for government and its partners to address the situation.

The Analyst

Wednesday, 10 December 2008

“I Fought For The NPFL”: Sundaygar Dearboy:

A contradictory Michael Davies alias “Sundaygar Dearboy” has finally admitted to fighting for Charles Taylor’s defunct NPFL but denied accusations of atrocities.

The popular musician who was accused by several witnesses testifying before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia of gross human right violations including murder, rape, torture, arson and looting admitted commanding a band of rebels in the towns of Garduo and Deso in Grand Bassa County but said he was not knowledgeable of any rights abuses committed against civilians.

“Garduo Town was controlled by frontline fighters. I do not remember being there ordering fighters to rape, kill and burn houses. I was puzzled,” Mr. Davies said Thursday when he testified at the ongoing public hearings of the TRC at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in Monrovia.

He also denied encountering any of the witnesses that testified before the TRC when he served as a fighter of the NPFL.

Responding to a question from a commissioner, Mr. Davies confirmed carrying a gun and discharging it during his days with the NPFL contradicting previous statement that he was not assigned a weapon.

“I did not do any such things as alleged by my accusers. However, it is possible that those things could have happened but not with my involvement.”

However, expressing penitence for his role in the rebel movement, “Sundaygar Dearboy” said: “The past is what no one is in control of. No one is reading my mind except God. But I want to say if I hurt anyone during the war, I am sorry, very, very sorry from the depth of my heart. I am sorry for whatever role I played during the revolution.”

He said he did not involve himself in combat to commit war crimes. “I regret being a part of the NPFL. While it is true I was part of the revolution, I did not killed. I did not do those things I am accused of,” he said.

Under the theme: “Understanding the Conflict Through its Principal Events and Actors,” the ongoing hearings are addressing the root causes of the conflict, including its military and political dimensions.

The hearings are focused on events between 1979 and 2003 and the national and external actors that helped to shape those events.

The TRC was agreed upon in the August 2003 peace agreement and created by the TRC Act of 2005. The TRC was established to “promote national peace, security, unity and reconciliation,” and at the same time make it possible to hold perpetrators accountable for gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law that occurred in Liberia between January 1979 and October 2003.

International Institute for Justice and Development

Tuesday, 9 December 2008

Al-Bashir Indicted

By Lisa Pendleton



On July 14, 2008, Omar al-Bashir, the president of Sudan, was formally indicted by the International Crimes Court (ICC) on three counts of genocide, five counts of crimes against humanity and two counts of murder. The ICC stated that prosecutors demonstrated evidence that al-Bashir has carried out a planned genocide in Sudan [1].

The fact that this will be the ICC's first case of genocide since its establishment in 2002, and that al-Bashir is still a sitting president make this case particularly interesting in the history of international relations. This is also the strongest international reaction to the events in Darfur since the violence began in 2003. Since then, the genocide has claimed an estimated 300,000 lives and displaced around 2.5 million people [2].

Many are standing against this indictment, claiming that it may have a negative impact on the humanitarian efforts in the region. Bernard Membe, the president of Tanzania and chair of the African Union, has formally requested that the ICC halt the effort to arrest al-Bashir, until the "primary problems in Darfur and southern Sudan" can be untangled. UNAMID - the UN and AU joint peace keeping force - is currently withdrawing non-vital personnel due to concern for their safety amid possible rising violence. The organization vows to continue with operations in the area despite the displacement of personnel [3].

South Africa's president Thabo Mbeki has also publically rejected the bid for indictment. On September 15th, after overseeing the signing of power-sharing agreements in Zimbabwe, Mbeki met with President al-Bashir and issued a joint communiqué stating that the indictment "could seriously undermine the ongoing efforts aimed at facilitating the early resolution of the conflict in Darfur and the promotion of long-lasting peace and reconciliation in Sudan as a whole [4]."

China, a notorious supporter of the al-Bashir government, has also voiced reported concern over the allegation, claiming to believe also that the indictment could "damage the peace process." China has refrained from voting on most UN proposals that would take a hard-line against the violence in Sudan [5].

The government of Sudan also appealed to Rwanda for support, arguing that unlike the genocide in Rwanda (a state with three different major ethnic groups), Sudan is a country with 33 different major ethnic groups, some of which are backed by rich or powerful states, and that the government is simply trying to untangle this web of violence [6]. Rwanda is standing against the ICC indictment, claiming the reason to be that the ICC is inherently flawed as an organization and should not have jurisdiction over states. The Rwandan president and nine of his top officials have previously been indicted by the ICC for involvement in the assassination of former Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana [7].

Louis Moreno-Ocampo, the ICC prosecutor for Darfur, does not believe that the indictment will be the reason for continued violence in the area. He is avidly pushing for stronger international action, arguing that the violence is already on-going. Last week Moreno-Ocampo visited the UN Security Council, summarizing his actions within the ICC leading to the proposed indictment of al-Bashir. He also urged the Council to prepare for a ruling as ICC judges are likely to make a decision concerning whether or not

to proceed with the indictment soon [10].

Meanwhile, in Sudan, the president refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the ICC. Although Sudan has not ratified the Rome Statute, which would make it a member of the ICC, the court has referred to provisions in the Statute that allow it to deal with non-party countries that are decided to be a threat to international peace and security [11].

Sudan's government has previously refused to turn over other citizens for trial on separate counts of indictment. One of those accused is a government minister who not only remains in the Sudanese government, but is also in charge of humanitarian aid to Darfur. A representative of the Sudanese government has been quoted as saying, "We don't recognize whatever comes out of the ICC, to us it is non-existent [12]."

The IIJD strongly supports the indictment of President al-Bashir, and commends Louis Moreno-Ocampo for his dedication to international justice. There is no excuse for the lax international reaction thus far to the crisis in Sudan, and it is important that the international community take a stand against the violence that is still going on there. Governments must be held accountable for any infringements on the livelihood of their citizens and the ICC was established to enforce this. The suggestion that the indictment will further violence in the region is not acceptable – the violence has continued for far too long already and something serious must be done in order to end it immediately.

The African Union reaction to the indictment is troubling, and slightly reminiscent of the organization's passiveness in the wake of Mugabe's performance in Zimbabwe. The organization should be encouraged to take a stronger stance in the region in order to address the blatant violation of human rights. International organizations such as the African Union are critical to international cooperation, and the AU should be working with the ICC to ensure that the tragedy in Sudan is dealt with immediately and effectively. Protecting the indicted government is not going to be effective in ending the violence, and the AU needs to step up as a promoter of peace in the region - even if this means taking a hard-line against some African governments.

Commonwealth News and Information Service (London)

Monday, 8 December 2008

Africa: Law Bulletin Analyses Legal Ramifications of Child Soldier Recruitment

In 2002, children were fighting in thirty-seven of the world's fifty-five ongoing or recently concluded conflicts and they numbered around 300,000

One of the most significant rulings from the Special Court for Sierra Leone was on the recruitment of child soldiers.

The Court had to rule on a motion by the accused, Sam Hinga Norma (founder and leader of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) in Sierra Leone), who argued that the Court did not have jurisdiction to try him for recruiting child soldiers.

Norman's defence team argued that the crime was not part of customary international law. Moreover, his defence argued that even though certain international treaties, such as the Convention of the Rights of the Child, may have created an obligation on the part of States to refrain from recruiting child soldiers, these instruments did not criminalise such activity.

On its part, the prosecution argued that the crime of child recruitment was part of customary international law at the time of these offences. The Geneva Conventions established the protection of children under-15 as an undisputed norm of international humanitarian law.

The prosecution also argued that a number of States had made the practice illegal under their domestic law, and subsequent international conventions addressing child recruitment demonstrated the existence of a customary international norm prohibiting such recruitment.

In its significant decision, the Appeals Chamber of the Court accepted that there was a norm prohibiting recruitment of child soldiers. Moreover the Court held that this prohibition applied equally to state and non-state entities, such as rebel groups.

In 2002, children were fighting in thirty-seven of the world's fifty-five ongoing or recently concluded conflicts and they numbered around 300,000.

This case is analysed in detail by Dr Susan C. Breau, Reader in International Law at the School of Law, University of Surrey, in: 'The Contribution of the Special Court for Sierra Leone to the Development of International Humanitarian Law.' This article will appear in the Special Issue of the Commonwealth Law Bulletin on International Humanitarian Law and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement of December 2008.

In addition to this article, the Special Issue of the Commonwealth Law Bulletin (Vol. 34 No. 4), for which Sir Kenneth J Keith - from the International Court of Justice - has written the foreword, contains a broad spectrum of articles on modern International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including on the implementation of IHL obligations by small states; fact-finding commissions; international custom; and international disaster response laws, rules and principles, making this an key reference manual on IHL in the Commonwealth.

This Special Issue will be launched in Geneva at the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum on Wednesday, 21 January 2008 at 6pm. Those wishing to attend the event should contact the Legal Editor, Dr Aldo Zammit Borda, at: legaleditor@commonwealth.int.

Globe and Mail

Wednesday, 10 December 2008

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com>

At last, some teeth in human rights

When the General Assembly of the newly born United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec. 10, 1948, an emotional Eleanor Roosevelt predicted that the idea of inherent rights would "creep like a curious grapevine into the consciousness of peoples around the world."

Was she right? In principle. The Holocaust was the immediate inspiration for the document, the first of its kind, and millions have since been educated about these abuses. But without international commitment to take action to defend human rights when necessary, the seminal declaration remained largely theoretical.

In 2006, this disconnect was addressed (again, in theory) when the Security Council adopted the Canadian-inspired doctrine known as "responsibility to protect," which commits the world body to protect civilian populations from genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity - in other words, to enforce established international law. R2P, as it is known, was the offspring of the U.S.-led NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999, which had as its stated goal the rescue of Albanians from ethnic cleansing.

The successful Kosovo intervention remained controversial because it was organized outside the UN's aegis, and because non-military targets in Serbia came under fire. The possibility of future humanitarian interventions was further undermined after the new doctrine was spuriously associated with the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Human rights are always vulnerable to politics, a point that has been proved repeatedly since R2P's adoption.

Despite periodic steps in the right direction, the unfortunate reality since 1948 has been six decades of human-rights failures. In May, Amnesty International reported that people are still tortured or ill-treated in at least 81 countries. They face unfair trials in at least 54 countries; they cannot speak freely in at least 77.

The abomination of the Guantanamo Bay prison, where a democratic superpower has held people without charges, twisted international and national law in order to torture them, then tried to convict them in unfair military commissions incarnates this lawlessness and impunity.

But there is, fortuitously, another side to this disheartening ledger: the recent re-emergence of international law. Perhaps we should call it humanity's faint-hope clause.

Since the early 19th century, nations have simultaneously tried to temper war with law. The road has been bumpy, but beneath the surface, the legal framework remained intact.

It was enhanced at Nuremberg, where the victorious Allies chose trials over summary executions, and where the idea of individual responsibility for crimes against humanity was first codified. It deepened with the strengthening of the Geneva Conventions to protect civilians as well as prisoners of war. Law became the default choice again in the 1990s after sanctions and other tools of international diplomacy failed so spectacularly to stop civil wars. It was then that the UN created ad hoc courts to try the major perpetrators of atrocities in Bosnia and Rwanda. Soon there were international courts for the conflicts in Sierra Leone, East Timor and Cambodia.

Some of these tribunals have been more successful than others, but the idea of including prosecutions as a component of postconflict peacemaking has been gaining acceptance. The courts are creating important new law through their cases, including criminalizing sexual crimes against women when carried out as a weapon of war. They are mandated to confront the historical impunity of the powerful, as the International

Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia demonstrated when prosecutor Louise Arbour indicted Slobodan Milosevic. There were problems with his trial, but the fact that the dictator's life ended during a judicial process, not after an amnesty or a targeted assassination, was a triumph.

But nothing the world has seen can match the potential of the International Criminal Court, which will begin its first trial next month. Unlike the Nuremberg Tribunal or the ad hoc courts, the ICC is the world's first permanent independent tribunal, with a mandate to prosecute the core international crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and major war crimes. It is supported and administered by more than half the countries in the world, a court of last resort that will spring into action only if a presumed perpetrator's country of citizenship refuses to prosecute or is structurally unable to mount a fair trial.

Its profile is skyrocketing. Four trials are pending, 300 people are in its witness protection program and there have been 960 applications for victim participation. Investigations are taking place in six countries.

Spectacularly, the chief prosecutor has asked permission of the court's judges to issue an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on charges of genocide. Should this warrant proceed on the evidence, the International Criminal Court will effectively have taken up the failed mandate of the Security Council, which has proved incapable of coping with the Darfur crisis.

U.S. President George W. Bush's administration was once a fierce opponent of the ICC, but it has mellowed its opposition since 2005, and president-elect Barack Obama has signalled interest, without making a commitment. The future of Washington's involvement remains to be seen. Also unknown is whether the emerging link between human rights and the expectation of holding the world's worst perpetrators accountable will continue to hold. What one can state with certainty is that the rule of international law has made a comeback - and just in time. For without a serious attempt to enforce the global rules in an increasingly interconnected world, the prospect of peace looks dubious.

The ICC is not, and never will be, a panacea to the world's ills. All the same, we can hope that the seminal declaration, adopted so long ago with such high expectations, may finally have acquired some teeth.

Erna Paris is author of *The Sun Climbs Slow: Justice in the Age of Imperial America*.