

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS 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:

Friday 3 to Friday 10 January 2003

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

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PEEP!

Friday, 3 January 2003

ANALYSIS

THE YEAR OF THE SPECIAL COURT

2003 is definitely going to be the Year of the Special Court. The Court's proceedings are likely to provoke immense public and media interest during the weeks and months to come.

We need, first of all, to bear in mind the international dimensions of the story. Sierra Leone's Special Court is only the third international tribunal set-up after the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the Bosnian War Crimes hearings in The Hague. But *our* Special Court differs from both of them in several important respects. This is the first international tribunal to try offences against humanitarian law and actually to be *based* in the country where the atrocities were committed. The tribunal judging those involved in the Rwandan Genocide of 1994 is located in Arusha, Tanzania while Yugoslavian war criminals are being tried in Netherlands, at the Hague.

Apart from this, the Special Court has extremely wide powers to arrest suspects, subpoena documents and seize assets which are probably unmatched by either of the two other war crimes tribunals.

The Special Court is also quite independent of both its 'parents'; the U.N Security Council and the Government of Sierra Leone. Thus, in many ways, the Special Court for Sierra Leone marks a step forward



prosecutor David Crane: determined

in the exercise of international humanitarian law. So it is bound to raise considerable interest amongst scholars of international human rights law and media around the world.

For us here in Sierra Leone our interest will be less academic. All of us in this country were touched, in one way or another, by brutalities of the ten year conflict.

But a debate has long raged between those who want the perpetrators punished and those who argue that the "price we have to pay for peace" is not stirring up animosities of the past.

The unfortunate thing is that, for too long, the Government of Sierra Leone was on the

latter side of the argument. President Kabbah used the words that the amnesty clause of the 1999 Lome Accord was a "bitter pill" we had to "swallow to achieve peace at that time." But the cohabitation with the RUF failed woefully in May 2002. Gradually the government has come to accept the minority argument that creating a culture of impunity simply emboldens the aggressors to continue on a path of mayhem, destruction and aggrandisement.

In any case the Special Court will not be bound by the Sierra Leone government's shifts of political opinion.

Article 13 of the 2002 *Special Court (Ratification) Act* specifically points out that "offences prosecuted before the Special Court are not prosecuted in the name of the Republic of Sierra Leone."

There are nine major categories of offences the Special Court can prosecute "persons who committed crimes against the civilian population": (1) murder (2) extermination (3) enslavement (4) deportation (5) imprisonment (6) torture (7) rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy and any other form of sexual violence (8) persecution on political, racial, ethnic or religious grounds and (9) other inhumane acts. Luckily the Special Court will only try those who bear "greatest responsibility" for those



Sankoh: will certainly face indictment

crimes - otherwise its cells would be bursting at the seams. Most of the armed factions involved in our bitter war definitely did commit these crimes on a regular basis. The RUF in particular were proud of their policy of forced recruitment of "manpower"; abducted civilians forced to carry rebel ammunition and logistics. "Sexual slavery, forced pregnancy and all forms of sexual violence" were all RUF hall marks. But the RUF were not the only offenders. The Special Court is likely to indict those with "greatest responsibility" for the murderous, genocidal assault on Freetown in January 1999. The bulk of those who carried out those atrocities were mutinous sol-

cont. page 5

year of the Special Court... from page 3

diers. They and the officers who commanded them, heve, in most cases, been reabsorbed into the military. It is hard to see how people like Gabriel Mani and S.O Williams not answering to charges of "mass murder and extermination" for their role as commanders of the 1999 attack.

The Civil Defence Forces were not the innocents which the ruling SLPP tries to paint them either.

The systematic slaughter of non-Mende peoples in Kenema following the overthrow of the AFRC in 1998 was certainly "persecution on political, racial and ethnic grounds" and stories of summary executions (and subsequent cannibalism) by the dreaded kamajors are legion.

Special Court Prosecutor David Crane has made it clear. In his nationwide tours, that he considers it his duty to try *anyone* who exercised command responsibilities over forces that committed atrocities *or* through acts of omission, allowed such atrocities to happen. It is difficult to see how chief Sam Hinga Norman will be able to argue himself out of a Special Court indictment for CDF violations of the Laws of War.

One thing that seems to have been completely overlooked by the Sierra Leonean public is that the Special Court will be able to *compensate* victims of atrocities.

Article 45 of the *Special Court Act* provides that "Any person who has been a victim of a crime within the jurisdiction of the Special Court... may claim compensation in accordance with the Criminal Procedure Act (1965) if the Special Court has found a person guilty of that crime".

The Special Court has the power to seize assets acquired by those who committed crimes against the people. Article 22 (11) of its mandate expressly directs that any such proceeds or assets will be sold and the money donated to the War Victims Fund.

This is a fact which, if publicised more widely, would definitely lead to greater public involvement in the Court's proceedings. (TO BE CONTINUED)

ANALYSIS

THE YEAR OF THE SPECIAL COURT (2)

"I solemnly declare that I will perform my duties and exercise my powers as a Judge of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, established to prosecute those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law... since 30 November 1996, honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously".

The eight judges have been sworn in and President of the court, Geoffrey Robertson has been appointed. Prosecutor David Crane is said to have almost finished collecting evidence he'll need for the trial. The temporary courtroom and cells are nearing completion.

We do not know when formal indictments will come; but 2003 will certainly be the Year Of The Special Court; when those most responsible for the bloody atrocities of the rebel war will face justice.

Many Sierra Leoneans still don't know very much about how the Special Court will operate. This is intended to be a short primer for public information. Although we have relied heavily on the Special Court's working documents (*Rules of Procedure, Special Court Act 2002 etc*) in preparing it, any errors it may contain are entirely the responsibility of the author. This is not an official guide to workings of the Court.

THE JUDGES

There are eight judges. Six of them are non-Sierra Leoneans (*British, Canadian etc*). Two are Sierra Leoneans (*Justice Bankole Thompson and Gelaga-King*).

Three judges will sit on the Trial panel due to hear indictments. The other five judges will either serve on the Appeals chamber and/or serve as designated justices at pre-trial hearings.

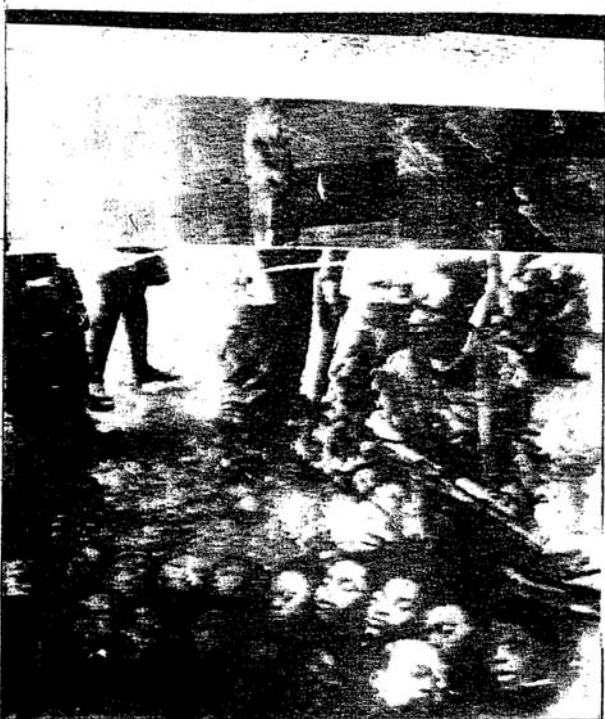
According to Rule 17(A) *"all judges are equal in exercise of their judicial functions, regardless of dates of election, appointment, age or period of service"* (*Special Court: Rules Of Procedure And Evidence*).

Any judge who has *"a personal interest.. or any association which might affect his impartiality"* (*Rule 15A: Special Court: Rules And Procedures*) is obliged to withdraw from any case.

An indicted person may also apply to President of the Special Court for a judge to be disqualified if he/she feels their impartiality is in question.

PROSECUTION AND INDICTMENTS

Article 3 of the *Special Court Statute*, the legislation which embodies terms of the earlier agreement between the U.N Security Council and the government of Sierra Leone into the laws of this country, specifically states that *"the Prosecutor and Deputy Prosecutor shall be independent in performance of functions and shall*



those most responsible for crimes like these will definitely face Special Court

not accept or seek instruction from any government or any source".

The prosecution will be seeking to indict only those who bear "greatest responsibility" for violations of international humanitarian law (*e.g Geneva Convention 1949 and 1977 protocol*) and specific Crimes against Humanity.

Articles 3 and 4 of the *Special Court statute* spell these out in some detail:

"violence to life, health, physical or mental well-being, murder.. torture, mutilation" "taking of hostages, acts of terrorism, pillage, carrying out executions without.. previous judgement pronounced by a regularly constituted court" are all offences against the *Geneva Conventions for Protection of War Victims* (1949).

So too is *"rape, enforced, prostitution, and any form of indecent assault"*. (*a point we shall re-visit later*).

The Special Court will also prosecute persons who have committed crimes under Sierra Leonean law..

These include offences relating to abuse of girls under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act 1926* specifically: *"abusing a girl under 13.. and abduction of a girl for immoral purposes"*. Crimes of arson under the *Malicious Damage Act 1961* such as *"setting fire to dwelling houses, public buildings or any other buildings"* will also be prosecuted by the Court.

The sting in the tail, however, is *Article 4* of Court statutes which detail *"other serious violations of international humanitarian law"*.

There are three categories in this section which basically cover anything the Geneva Conventions or Sierra Leonean law omits. The first of these is *"intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population.. or against individual civilians not taking part, in hostilities"* (*Article 4a*). This effectively outlaws the use of violence against unarmed civilians and innocent citizens.

The second is *"intentionally directing attacks against personnel.. evolved in a humanitarian.. or peacekeeping mission in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations"* (*Article 4b*) - which makes it a crime to kill or kidnap UNAMSIL personnel

The Special Court will also prosecute people who have *"(conscripted) or (enlisted) children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups... using them to participate actively in hostilities"*.

It is difficult to see, given these provisions, how any of those with "greatest responsibility" from any of the three main factions (*CDF/government, RUF, SLA-Westside Boys*) can go free for their activities since November 30, 1996 from which the Court's mandate begins... (*TO BE CONTINUED*)

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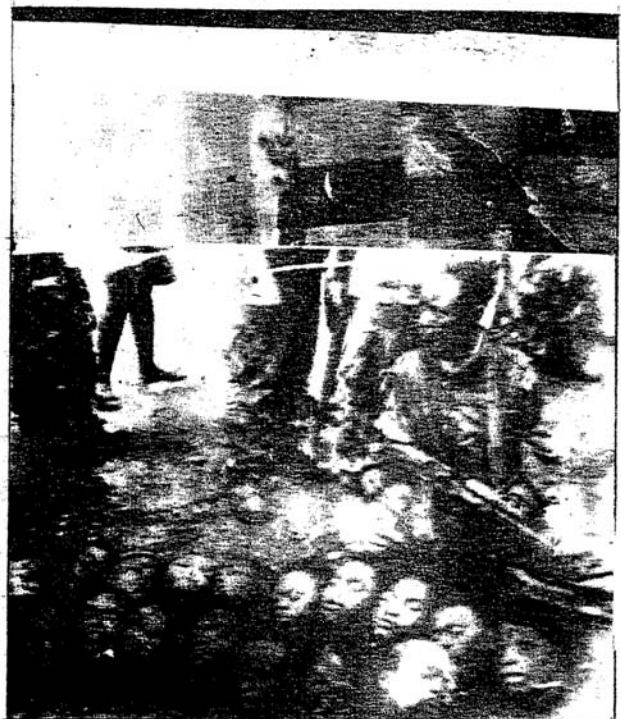
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Salone Times
Friday, 3 January 2002

SALONE TIMES
The Newspaper You Can Trust
Friday January 3, 2003 FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE Le500

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2002 IN FOCUS

It was the first year after the outbreak of peace. Sierra Leoneans faced an uphill task trying to rebuild after a decade of barbarism. But if the task seemed daunting, the country appeared even more determined to face it. Citizens cast their ballots in peace for the first time in decades; the Special Court and the TRC heralded a new era of justice and peace for the country; and development projects sprung up on the ruins and ashes of war. Yes, there was the inevitable down side to all this. The justice system was widely seen as being in a shambles; there were cries of corruption across the land; and the economy barely got by with donor support. In this SPECIAL ISSUE, SALONE TIMES focuses on the key players and events of the year that brought hope.



NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE: The setting up of the Special Court (whose judges are shown in photo) marked a significant turning point in the global fight against impunity

Special Court For Sierra Leone Who is Justice George Gelaga King

Justice George Gelaga King was sworn in as one of five Appeals court judge of the Special Court for Sierra Leone on December 2, 2002. Born in Sierra Leone, he has been President of the Court of Appeal in both The Gambia and Sierra Leone. From 1981 to 1982 he had a special appointment as a judge of the Supreme Court in The Gambia. He was also nominated to be a Supreme Court judge in Sierra Leone. Justice Gelaga King started his career as a teacher. After attending the Prince of Wales Secondary School from 1946 to 1951, he taught mathematics and biology at Government Secondary School, and then chemistry at the Sierra Leone Grammar School in Freetown. He then left Sierra Leone to study in England where he obtained a Bachelor of Law degree with honours in 1960. He became a Barrister at Law from Gray's Inn, London in 1962 and then a member of the Sierra Leone Bar Association in 1964.

Justice Gelaga King had a private legal practice in Sierra Leone from 1964 to 1974 dealing mainly with cases related to civil law. He then became Sierra Leone's Ambassador to France, Spain, Portugal and Switzerland, residing in Paris. From 1974 to 1978 he was Sierra Leone's Permanent Representative to UNESCO, from 1978 and 1980 he was Sierra Leone's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Justice Gelaga King taught law at Sierra Leone's Law School from 1990 to 1997 and was a member of the Board of Directors of the Law School in 1990. He is Chairman of both the Sierra Leone Law Journal and Gambian National Council for Law Reporting. From 1993 to 2000 he was a member of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission and a member of the Sierra Leone Council of Legal Education. He is also a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. Justice Gelaga King is married with three children. His hobbies fishing, hunting, reading wine-making and gardening.

BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE SPECIAL COURT

How it was established:

On 12 June 2000, Sierra Leone president Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, wrote a letter to United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, asking the international Community to try those responsible for crimes committed during the country's violent conflict. President Kabbah said that he believes the crimes were so grave as to be of concern to all persons in the world.

After considering the letter, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1315 on 14 August 2000 requesting the UN Secretary General to start negotiations to create the special court.

On 16 January 2002, an agreement establishing the Court was signed by the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations.

What kind of Court is it?

The Special Court is an international body that is independent of any government or organization. Its staff include both Sierra Leoneans and internationals.

Who will be prosecuted?

The Court will try 'those who bear the greatest responsibility' for crimes committed in Sierra Leone during the country's violent conflict after 30th November 1996, when the Sierra Leone government and the Revolutionary United Front signed the Abidjan Peace Agreement.

What type of Crimes?

The Court will try serious violations of humanitarian law or 'war crimes' such as atrocities committed by armed groups against civilians. It will also try 'crimes

against humanity', including widespread or systematic murders, rapes, forced prostitution, torture, amputations, enslavement, forced conscription or enlisting of children. Certain crimes under Sierra Leonean law may also be tried relating to sexual violence against children and malicious damage of homes and other buildings. The Court will not try all those who committed such crimes, only those who bear 'greatest responsibility' for them having occurred.

What type of Punishment?

Those found guilty may be sentenced to terms of imprisonment or could have their assets seized if found to have been acquired unlawfully. The Court cannot impose the death penalty.

STRUCTURE OF THE SPECIAL COURT

The Prosecutor

The process begins with the Prosecutor of the Special Court and his team investigating crimes and those individuals suspected of committing them. Once sufficient evidence is found, the prosecutor submits indictments for the judges' approval. The Prosecutor David Crane, was appointed by the UN Secretary General. The Deputy Prosecutor, Desmond de Silva, was appointed by the Government of Sierra Leone.

The Judges

The Judges of the Special Court hold a trial to determine whether those indicted are guilty or innocent. The indicted are always presumed innocent until proven guilty. The Court has a total of eight judges: Three are Trial judges, two of Whom

are appointed by the UN and one by the Government of Sierra Leone. The five other judges are Appeals judges, three appointed by the UN and two by the Government of Sierra Leone. The president of the Court is elected from among the judges.

The Defence

Those individuals detained, arrested or indicted have the right to be represented by a defence lawyer. If they cannot afford one, the Special Court will assign one to them. The Court must ensure that the accused have a fair and public trial.

The Registry

The Registry is responsible for the overall administration and management of the Court including the Court's detention facility. It must ensure that the rights of the accused are respected and that witnesses are protected. The head of the Registry is Robin Vincent. He was appointed by the UN Secretary General.

THE PREMISES OF THE SPECIAL COURT

The premises of the special Court are under construction in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown. The Office of the Prosecutor and the Registry began operating in August 2002 in temporary premises in the city. By the end of year they are set to move into prefabricated offices on the permanent site. A detention centre and the court house where trials are to take place will be completed by May 2003.

OUTLOOK Establishment of International Criminal Court

The Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court (ICC) came into effect officially on July 1, 2002, signifying the birth of the first permanent international criminal justice organization in human history. Although it still takes some time before the court goes into official operation, the coming into effect of the Statute signifies a solid step toward the lofty ideal long cherished by manrealizing judicial justice and safeguarding lasting peace in the world.

The history of human civilization is a history of war. The numerous wars have made people's desire for peace ever stronger. Since the modern times, international politics and international law take the prevention of war and safeguard of peace as the main objectives. World War I was regarded as "a war that ends all wars" for its cruelty. But the beautiful prediction was shattered to smithereens by the ensuing Second World War. While reconstructing their homes, people have also built a collective security system with the United Nations at the core. The international law restricts the right of a country to wage wars and, apart from collective security actions and self-defense, ban the use of arms or the threat with the use of arms. At the same time, the international community is seeking a way of punishing and deterring individuals who have committed crime of war by establishing an international criminal system, in the hope of preventing wars and all crimes associated with wars indirectly. The 1991 Versailles Statute continued the provisions on the establishment of a criminal tribunal. But the provisions failed to take effect. After World War II, the Nuremberg and the Far-East International Military Tribunals set the pace of trying international war criminals. The UN Security Council setup an International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in 1993 and an International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in 1994. Though temporary in nature and it is for the purpose of trying crimes in a given area and during a given period of time, they laid a solid foundation for the establishment of a permanent

ICC. Suggestions on establishing an ICC failed to realize due to the limitations of international political situation during the League of Nations period. After the founding of the United Nations, it carried over the task. The 1947 UN General Assembly demanded the International Law Commission to draft a law on the punishment of crimes that violate peace and security of humanity and a Statute on ICC. In 1950, the UN General Assembly set up a special committee to draft a convention on the establishment of an ICC. But the international political situation during the cold war period reduced these efforts to nil. Responding to a 1989 initiative by the government of Trinidad and Tobago for an international criminal court on drug trafficking, the United Nations General Assembly commissioned a draft statute for an ICC. In 1990, the report submitted by the International Law Commission to the UN General Assembly won a positive response although it was not confined to drug problems. The International Law Commission started drafting a comprehensive Statute on the establishment of ICC without definite authorization and finished the draft in 1994. In 1995, the UN General Assembly set up a special commission for the establishment of ICC and in the following year set up a preparatory commission for ICC to scrutinize the draft Statute and on this basis decided five weeks of strenuous efforts, the Rome Diplomatic Conference adopted the Statute by voting on July 17, 1998. The drafting and adoption of the Statute, seemingly without intention, reflected

the detente of the international situation and convergence of political wills after the cold war. This also testifies to the inevitable trend of governing the international community by law. The ICC established by the Statute is an international organ of justice independent of any country or international organization, crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court. The Court will hear cases according to the provisions of the Statute, other treaties applicable or the principles and rules of the international law and the principle of common law. The Court can exercise jurisdiction over countries only when they are the places where crimes are committed or they are defendant countries that are parties to the Statute or are willing to accept the jurisdiction of the Court. The Court cannot accept cases subject to the hearing by

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but it will establish cooperative relations with the UN by signing an agreement. The court is a criminal court but not human rights court. Its jurisdiction is confined to the most serious crimes against humanity such as genocide, crime of war, crime against humanity and crimes against the basic human rights and the punishment of the crimes will inevitably play a positive role in protecting human rights. The court has 18 judges and will be composed of the presidency, an appeals division, a trial division and a pretrial division, an office of the prosecutor and a registry. According to the provisions of the Statute, the Prosecutor may initiate investigations proprio motu at the requests by signatory parties to the Statute or the UN Security Council or on the basis of information on

related countries, unless the Court deems that the state court is unable or unwilling to hear the cases. The recourse to crimes committed within the jurisdiction of the Court is not limited to time. Several problems were fiercely disputed during the formulation of the Statute. The first is the supplementary principle. Most countries stressed that state judicial system should bear the main responsibility for prosecuting and hearing cases of international crimes within the jurisdiction of the ICC. The ICC should only serve as a supplement. This

The court has 18 judges and will be composed of the presidency, an appeals division, a trial division and a pretrial division, an office of the prosecutor and a registry.

is reflected in the preamble and Article 1 of the Statute. But Article 17 of the Statute provides that the ICC may judge whether or not the state is unwilling or unable genuinely to carry out the investigation or prosecution and decide on whether or not to accept the cases. This, in practice, may cause disorder, because the Court lacks the objective standards as to whether or not a state court is willing or not and that could easily lead to abuse of power, making the Court leading over state courts, thus damaging the judicial sovereignty of a country. Second, the Court is likely to exercise jurisdiction over people of a country that is not a party to the Statute. It is the basic principle of the Statute that, without the consent of the third party, the Statute shall not create rights and obligations for the third country. However, Article 12 of the Statute provides that a State where crimes are committed is a Party to this Statute or has accepted the jurisdiction of the Court. This is likely to make countries that are not parties to the Statute subject to the jurisdiction of the Court. And in exercising jurisdiction over countries that are not parties to the Statute, the Court also has the right to determine whether or not the national courts are unable genuinely or unwilling to carry out investigation and prosecution and decide whether or not to accept the cases. This has in fact created obligations for non-signatory parties and will affect the jurisdiction over related cases of non-signatory parties. The third is the role of the Prosecutor. Article 15 of the Statute provides that the Prosecutor may initiate investigation procedures

proprio motu on the basis of information obtained. But such information may come from a country, an international organization, a non-governmental organization, individuals or media. The personal concept of values and judgement of the Prosecutor have a deciding role to play. As the crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court are all the gravest international crimes and many are likely to involve state leaders, the decision by the Prosecutor would have tremendous impact. In order to prevent the abuse of power, the Statute must have provisions checking the power of the Prosecutor. But the current language of the Statute fails to do so. Another problem at issue is the definition of aggression. The Statute incorporates aggression into the jurisdiction of the Court. But, there is no commonly acceptable definition about aggression. As the legal maxim goes that "a crime is not a crime if there is no clear definition by law", the Court, for the time being, is unable to exercise jurisdiction over the crime of aggression. As the UN Charter provides that the Security Council has the right to judge whether an act is aggression or not, the Court should wait for the UN Security Council to make the judgement before exercising its jurisdiction, even if there is the definition of aggression. If the UN Security Council cannot take the decision (such as in the case in which a member vetoes), whether or not the Court can exercise its jurisdiction would become a question. Just as representatives of some countries pointed out, the essence of the problem lies in whether or not a permanent UN Security Council member should be exempt from the crime of aggression. This is not only a simple legal problem but a sharp political one, too.

To Be Continued
Called From Human Rights China

Toronto Star

Monday, 10 February 2003

Toronto Star

SundayMonday, February 10, 2003

Canadian heroes seek justice for decade of abuse
MICHELE LANDSBERG

No doubt you've seen pictures of the amputees who are survivors of Sierra Leone's 10-year "diamond war." It's a shivery horror to look at these helplessly maimed people, children and adults, whose limbs were brutally chopped off by rampaging rebels who sought to control the country's rich diamond trade. The International Red Cross estimates there are about 1,000 of these survivors. Thousands more, of course, died from their untended wounds.

What you haven't seen is the deep and lasting trauma to an estimated 50,000 to 64,000 little girls, teenagers and women who were savagely gang-raped, sexually tortured and enslaved during that degenerate decade.

No, I'm not set to ruin your Sunday with a tale of unmitigated horror, though sadly, there's more than enough of that to go around. The gleam of light for Canadians in this story is the patient work of "repairing the world" undertaken by some of our compatriots.

One of them is Louise Taylor, now working in Sierra Leone as a gender crimes investigator for the office of the special prosecutor. A few months from now, a special court and a truth and reconciliation commission will be up and running, side by side, in Sierra Leone. Taylor is one of those who ensured the rampant war crime of rape would be recognized and prosecuted in the court, instead of being granted amnesty under the truth and reconciliation process.

The world is on the verge of war again. Canada may take part. This week, I'd like to think of the Canadians, many of them women, who have worked for the past two years to bring some measure of sanity and order to a far corner of the world, using the tools of compassion and justice rather than death-dealing weapons.

I spoke to law students Mora Johnson and Kathryn Howarth, who are part of an eight-person team from the University of Toronto. They are helping the office of the special prosecutor in Sierra Leone by researching the jurisprudence on rape as a war crime from the Rwanda and Yugoslavia tribunals.

It's long, painstaking work, poring through legal judgments, but these young women are tackling it with a kind of grave enthusiasm. They acknowledged that some of the material is agonizing to read.

"But it's also incredibly exciting to play a part in bringing the rule of law to a place that had been lawless," Johnson said.

Among the Canadians involved is Valerie Oosterveld, a legal officer at the Department of Foreign Affairs, who has worked doggedly for several years with the United Nations "management committee" in New York (chaired by a Canadian) in the multi-nation effort to set up the special court.

Five other Canadians, including deputy chief of investigations Gilbert Morissette, are currently working at the court.

My interest was first sparked when I read a 75-page report by Taylor, the gender crimes investigator, and published by Human Rights Watch last month. The title is "We'll kill you if you cry:" Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict. (You can find it at <http://www.hrw.org>) It briskly documents the history of the war and contains terrible testimony in the victims' own words.

Girls were gang-raped in front of their families, beaten, abducted and enslaved for months. Babies were ripped from their mothers' arms and murdered; pregnant women were disembowelled.

Just one example will give you a feeling for the insensate viciousness of those war years: A young woman who had given birth two weeks earlier went to find her husband in the bush. She was captured by the rebels and raped by 20 or 30 men (they lined up) over several weeks.

They shoved a pistol in her vagina when she tried to resist. Because they threatened to murder her baby girl if she cried, the mother desperately breastfed her during the attacks. The woman managed to escape when her uterus prolapsed and the men left her to die. She and the baby survived.

Systematic, widespread use of rape as a military strategy can happen in a culture where a woman's highest worth is her virginity. She is valued not as a human, but as her father's or husband's unsullied and market-worthy property.

In the words of Taylor's report, "The humiliation, pain and fear inflicted by the perpetrators serve to dominate and degrade not only the individual victim but also her community."

Revealingly, discrimination against women in matters of adoption, marriage, divorce, burial, and inheritance is specifically permitted in Sierra Leone's constitution. Marriages are usually arranged without the female's consent, and 90 per cent of women in Sierra Leone have been genitally mutilated.

Maternal mortality is among the highest in the world. The status of women in that country is so low, the poverty so great and the history of the country so chaotic, it was not until 1999 that the first rape case was successfully prosecuted, according to a report on war-related sexual violence in Sierra Leone by Physicians for Human Rights.

So there, in a paragraph, is the primary cause of the mass rape in Sierra Leone. The boys grow up into men who know they can own, beat and violate women with impunity. (In the war, boys raped women old enough to be their grandmothers).

In one survey, 67 per cent of Sierra Leone urban women reported they had been beaten by husbands or boyfriends; half had been raped by their partners. Still worse, the women commonly accept that their husbands have the right to beat them and force them sexually.

In working so valiantly and patiently to reveal these war crimes to the world, and to bring those most responsible to account for themselves before the special court, Canadians are helping to expose and erode such corrosive belief systems.

To me, these international workers are the true heroes — heroes of peace, rebuilding, human equality and of the long, hard search for justice.

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