

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



Rev. Father Charles Campbell officiating at today's memorial service
for the late Hon. Justice Raja Fernando

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:

Thursday, 11 December 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Parliament Approves First Female Chief Justice



Chief Justice Umu Tejan Jalloh

**By Dr. Sylvia Blyden and
Aruna Turay**

The Parliamentary Committee on Appointment and the Public Service in the House of Parliament has on Wednesday 10th December 2008 officially approved the nominee of His Excellency President Ernest Bai Koroma for the position of Chief Justice of Sierra Leone, making Honourable Chief Justice Umu Hawa Tejan Jalloh the second woman to hold that position in Africa.

Moving the motion, the acting chairman of Committee on Appointments, Hon. S.B.B Dumbuya informed that between the 18th November and 3rd December 2008, they have inter-

viewed a total of twelve (12) presidential nominees for various appointments including Chief Justice, Supreme Court Judge, Appeal Court Judge and Board Chairman and members of State Enterprises/Agencies. He said the committee maintained strict consistency to its established procedures, questioning the nominees on their educational backgrounds, track records in public office, declared assets, tax obligations and their vision for a successful and nationally productive tenure of office.

He said appointments so far made in the judicial sector include that of Hon. Justice Umu Hawa Tejan Jalloh as Chief Justice of the Superior Court of Judicature, Justice Patrick O Hamilton as Supreme Court Judge, Justice Nicholas Brown-Marke as Appeals Court Judge and Justice Emmanuel Eku Roberts as Appeals Court Judge. Other appointments were also made from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Sierra Leone Housing Corporation, among others.

The chairman cited that in an interview with Hon. Justice Umu Hawa Tejan Jalloh on the 3rd December 2008, the committee was able to learn that she joined the Law Officers' Department as state counsel in 1975, and rose through the ranks to the topmost position of Acting Chief Justice in January 2008.

Responding to probing questions, the

nominee disclosed that while in the acting capacity, she was confronted with a number of challenges, paramount among which she said was the shortage of staff. She attributed the problem to the poor conditions of service, though she hastened to say had seen some improvement of late. "But young lawyers often prefer to go into private practice than serve the state judiciary," she said.

Hon. Justice Umu Hawa Tejan Jalloh also cited the issue of backlog cases at the magistrate courts, which she said can soon be taken care of as they are building more courts to take Justice to the people for example at Masiaka, Waterloo, Mile 91 in the provinces, and Pademba Road, Cline Town and Lumley in Freetown.

In her interview, the Honourable also informed that these courts should have many magistrates to deal with as many cases as possible, while promising to continue working hard to address the issue of juveniles sharing cells with hard core criminals, to which she said the approve school has been renovated and refurbished to take care of juveniles.

According to Hon. Dumbuya, the nominee promised to work to the best of her ability to make a difference. He said Hon. Tejan Jalloh has been his senior since school days and he would always continue to bow to her. "Even if she was not a Chief Justice, I would still

continue to admire and respect her" he ended.

For his part, the Honourable Paramount Chief representing Moyamba expressed heartfelt thanks to the parents of Chief Justice Jalloh for enrolling her at the Harford School for Girls, where she puts up an exceptional performance in her academic pursuit.

The Speaker of Parliament, Justice Abel Nathaniel Stronge congratulated the Chief Justice and gave credit to her parents, especially her late mother who was formerly the National Fullah Women Association President for 26 years. Her father, the speaker continued, was a former deputy mayor of Freetown. "He was also a regent chief fullah chief, who contributed immensely to national development," Justice Stronge maintained. The Speaker pointed out that Justice Tejan Jalloh is the real fruit of a chieftain seed, as demonstrated in her gradual elevation to become the country's first female Chief Justice. "This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad for this achievement," he ended. He admonished her to be mindful as the public is closely watching her.

Her approval was applauded by all the various political party representatives. Notable presence of both SLPP and APC female candidates was felt in jubilation for the success of Hon Humu Hawa Tejan Jalloh.

Awoko

Thursday, 11 December 2008

As Mano River Union Leaders Meet, Chairlady Says Yenga Not on Agenda

By Kelvin Lewis

The Chairlady of the Mano River Union (MRU) Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has said at the post summit press conference that Yenga was not on the agenda of the summit.

She was answering questions from journalists who pointed out that Yenga was perhaps their greatest security threat, and wanted to know what was discussed.

The Liberian leader answered "No Yenga was not on our agenda but I am pleased to note that this is a matter that Sierra Leone and Guinea have been discussing and are finding a proper solution to that."

Pressed further she said "Yenga is an on going process, dialogue is going on at appropriate levels, solutions are being formed, and we think there has been positive and successful progress that has been made in resolving this matter".

Questioned whether the issue of the elections for Ivory Coast which has been postponed again was discussed, again the Liberian President said "No that was not on our agenda we were only being informed and as I said if there is any way we can support the policies and action of our brother President Bagbo and the government of Ivory Coast in that regard we will but that's not a matter for the Mano River Union that's a domestic matter a decision will be made domestically and politically by the authorities of Ivory Coast."

Pressed further she said "With Ivory Coast ... they have made a lot of progress they are formulating new timetables they have the support of external partners including the United Nations. We in the Mano River Union just monitor it and we just be a partner to them playing a role that they see fit. As of now the Union as the Union at the summit did not have a specific role because no specific role was called for we merely are satisfied with the progress that has made on both of those counts."

Earlier President Ernest Bai Koroma in welcoming the Heads of State to the extraordinary summit of the Mano River Union called for a change of the traditional system of financing the organization.

The President said it has become clear over the years that the funding system of the organization is "most unreliable" given the background of the meager resources of the member

countries and through external donor contributions which are unreliable and inadequate.

President Koroma suggested a more in-depth review of the report of the meeting of the forum for Alternative Financing and recommended its adoption and submission to ECOWAS

The President said that common solutions must be found on critical issues like "HIV/AIDs, interstate crimes and drug trafficking that cut across our common borders and continue to pose a threat to our peace and stability."

President Koroma admonished his colleague leaders "not to forget that the consolidation of peace and maintenance of security and stability should be the cornerstone of all our grand plans," adding "Let us strive to stay conflict free and make a conscious effort to discourage the fomenting of discord in all its forms."

In his remarks to the Heads of States the Special

Representative of the United Nations Secretary General to West Africa Ambassador Said Djinnit noted that "the sub region faces many challenges some recurrent some new."

He stated that he was "especially concerned about drug trafficking which threatens to undermine state institutions and democratic processes." The MRU he suggested "can play an indispensable role in responding to this and other ills by sharing information and coordinating interventions."

Questioned about what was discussed on the issue of drug trafficking, the Liberian president said "We need first to understand the nature of the problem or the extent in which it is becoming a problem for us in the sub region. We know only of incidences where there have been ships that have been intercepted on the sea, where governments have been able to discover the movement of drugs within the country but headed

Continued on Page 7

Afternoon Session: Cross-Examination of Witness Dauda Fornie (DAF) Continues

Court resumed and defence counsel Terry Munyard continued the cross-examination of former RUF signal commander Dauda Fornie, aka DAF.

Counsel continued his line of cross-examination, soliciting irregularities in the witness's oral testimony and his written statements made to prosecution investigators.

Bockarie's Trip to Birkin Faso, via Liberia

The witness was asked about the people that went to Burkina Faso. He maintained that they were Bockarie, Eddie Kanneh and SYB Rogers (Pa. Rogers). Counsel asked the witness why he failed to mention all three names when he made statements to prosecution in May 2006. The witness responded that he couldn't have remembered everybody while making his statements at that time. Defence counsel suggested to the witness that he did not travel with the delegation that went to Liberia. The witness insisted that he travelled with them. Counsel asked the witness again why he had left Pa Rogers's name out as part of the delegation when he made his first interview. The witness said he mentioned the name in other interviews.

Counsel referenced the witness's statement where he said that the materials brought from Burkina Faso were loaded in three trucks. He said they met the trucks in Monrovia and he learnt from another guy that the trucks were loaded at Roberts International Airport (RIA). Counsel asked the witness who the other guy was and the witness said he was somebody among the delegation. He added that Bockarie also told him the same thing. Counsel referenced the witness's statement that he learnt this from Bockarie and not another guy. Counsel asked the witness to state what the correct version of events was and the witness said that he heard about the trucks being loaded at RIA from the other guy and Bockarie. He said that it is not easy for him to recall every event line by line. Counsel referenced another of the witness's statements where he failed to mention Pa Rogers as part of the delegation that went to Burkina Faso. The witness responded that he probably skipped Pa Rogers's name because he was dead at the time he made the statement. Counsel told the witness that Bockarie was also dead but he did not forget to mention his name. In response, the witness said that all his statements revolved around Bockarie and so he could not have forgotten his name. Counsel also told the witness that Jungle was dead when he made the statement but he still mentioned his name. The witness then said that at the time he made the statement, he did not know that Jungle was dead. Counsel told the witness that on four occasions when he was interviewed, he failed to mention Pa Rogers's name as part of the trip to Burkina Faso. Counsel asked the witness whether he was part of the trip at all. The witness said that he was. Counsel told the witness that many witnesses have spoken about Pa Rogers being part of this trip and the witness picked that up from those witnesses. In response, the witness said he did not hear that from any previous witness.

Counsel told the witness that when speaking about the trucks in which the materials were loaded, he only said that there were two trucks, not three. The witness said that he had said there were three trucks in one of his statements.

Orders from Sam Bockarie

Defence counsel asked the witness about orders he said that came from Bockarie. Counsel asked the witness whether he heard Bockarie speak with Yeaten on the phone. The witness insisted that he heard the two men speak. He said he was standing by Bockarie when he answered Yeaten's call and asked if that was '50' (Yeaten's code). While he did not hear the response from the other side of the phone, he knew it was Yeaten based on how the conversations went. Counsel asked the witness whether he heard Bockarie giving orders to Gullit to chop off the arms of civilians during the January 1999 invasion of Freetown. The witness said he heard the order and that Bockarie even said so on the BBC. Counsel asked the witness why he had failed to mention that in his 28 interviews with prosecution investigators. The witness responded that he remembers mentioning it to them in one of his interviews. Counsel told the witness that this is a new twist that has only come out in his evidence and the witness said that if he recalled the incident while in court, then he had to mention it in court but he insisted

that he had said so before. Counsel referenced the witness's evidence about Issa Sesay's interview with the BBC during the January 1999 invasion of Freetown. In his testimony, the witness said that Bockarie was well pleased with the interview. He responded that they should tell the government to release Sankoh from prison. Counsel then referenced the witness's statement that Bockarie was neither positive, nor negative. The witness said that he did say Bockarie was well pleased. Counsel suggested to the witness that he was lying.

Peace Talks in Lome, Togo

Counsel asked the witness how come he got appointed to go to Togo as radio operator. The witness said he was appointed and instructed to go. Counsel referenced witness's statement that the senior radio operators were not ready to go that was why he opted to go. The witness responded that this was not the only reason. He said that it is true his two bosses, Kabba and Sellaay were unwilling to go to Lome.

Johnny Paul Koroma

Counsel asked the witness about Johnny Paul's whereabouts during the Lome Peace Accord. The witness said that Johnny Paul was in a village called kangama. He said that while Johnny Paul did not go to Lome, he sent his own representatives there. Counsel asked the witness whether he knew that Johnny Paul was held in Sierra Leone beyond his will. The witness agreed that Bockarie stopped Johnny Paul from travelling out of Sierra Leone. The witness agreed with counsel that after the Lome Accord, Taylor organized a meeting for Sankoh and Taylor in Monrovia but he said he didnt know at whose request Taylor organized the said meeting. He said that after the meeting, they all travelled to Freetown but can't say whether Sankoh and Johnny Paul travelled together in the same convoy. He also said he cannot recall whetther other people like the former US ambassador to Liberia was on the convoy. Counsel asked the witness whether he knew how Bockarie was offered safe haven in Liberia after he resinged from the RUF but the witness said no.

Issa Sesay as Interim Leader of the RUF

The witness agreed with counsel that when Issa Sesay became leader of the RUF after Sankoh's arrest, he did so at the request of ECOWAS leaders. He said, however, that if Taylor had not instructed Issa to take the leadership, he wouldnt have taken it. He said that even for the release of UN peacekeepers held hostage by the RUF, Issa had to take orders from Taylor. Counsel asked the witness whether he knew that Issa told the ECOWAS leaders that he had to consult other RUF commanders before taking the leadership. The witness responded that he even knew more than that. There was no time to explain further as it was time to adjourn for the day.

United Nations Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 10 December 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

President Sirleaf Vows Not to Rescind Decision on Dismissed AFL Soldiers

(The Analyst)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf says she will not reverse the decision to dismiss the 16 former Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) soldiers recently discharged.
- Speaking Tuesday when she met with the soldiers at their request, the President said government is committed to building an army with a new image thereby breaking away from the image of brutality and excessive force which previously characterized the armed forces.
- Speaking to reporters, the former soldiers said they were victims of jealousy and spite from some of their colleagues and superiors.

Police Arrest Seven Armed Robbers

(Liberian Journal, The News, The Inquirer, Heritage, National Chronicle)

- The Liberia National Police (LNP) has captured and displayed several alleged notorious armed robbers in and around the provincial city of Kakata, Margibi County, after breaking through a police checkpoint.
- The Police Inspector General Beatrice Munah Sieh-Browne said with the assistance of citizens the Police pursued and captured six males and a female while the alleged ring leader only identified as "Screw-face" is at large. Inspector Sieh-Browne said "Screw-face" escaped with a bag containing a huge sum of money allegedly stolen from residents. According to reports, he was among 200 prisoners who recently broke jail at the Monrovia Central Prison.

Deputy Auditor General Claims Attack by Junior Minister

(New Democrat, The News, The Inquirer, Heritage, Daily Observer, Public Agenda, The Analyst)

- The Deputy Auditor General at the General Auditing Commission (GAC), Mr. Winsely S. Nanka has accused the Assistant Minister for Administration at the Ministry of Public Works, Mr. Cleon Gerbeh of assaulting him.
- In a release, the GAC said Mr. Nanka and the supreme auditors had gone to the Public Works Ministry to do a comparative analysis and verification of a US\$693, 595.00 bid reportedly won by Consolidated Group Inc, operator of DSTV in Liberia, when he was manhandled by the junior minister.
- Assistant Minister Gerbeh was not readily available to respond to the allegation.

Criminal Court Demands living bodies of Deportees

(The Inquirer, Heritage)

- The Heritage newspaper reports that Criminal Court "A" at the Temple of Justice has ordered the Liberian Government to produce the living bodies of 22 Liberians who were deported from the United States recently.
- The court's action was a result of a writ of Habeas Corpus filed before it by the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) for what it called the illegal detention of the 22 Liberians. Speaking to reporters, the Director of the JPC, Cllr. Augustine Toe said the deportees were detained and deported to Liberia on Wednesday, 3rd December and were taken to the Liberia

National Police and interrogated for about two hours without being afforded the opportunity to their legal counsels, a system he said is totally contrary to chapter two, section 2.2 of page 309 of the criminal procedure laws of Liberia.

Seaboard Back With US\$30M Investment

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer)

- Seaboard Corporation, former owner and operator of the National Milling (Flour Mill) in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, has returned to the country with an investment proposal of over US\$30 to US\$40 million.
- Seaboard Corporation, a publicly traded American International Food and transportation company once owned and operated the National Milling in Buchanan, commonly referred to as Flour Mill in Grand Bassa County from 1971 to 1989 when the National Milling was sold and the company left Liberia.
- In an interview following the end of a technical meeting held between representatives of the Liberian government and officials of Seaboard Corporation at the offices of the National Investment Commission (NIC) Tuesday, the Vice President for Government Affairs of Seaboard Corporation, Mr. Ralph L. Moss said a proposal of US\$30 to US\$40 million investment has been submitted to the Government of Liberia by his company.

Radio Summary

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

President Sirleaf maintains Decision regarding Dismissed Soldiers

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

Classes Resume at Renowned Baptist-Owned Institution

- The Principal of the Baptist-run Ricks Institute in Brewerville outside Monrovia, Rev. Olu Menjay has announced the re-opening of the school.
- Rev. Menjay said the decision to re-open the school was taken in compliance with a Presidential mandate calling for the resumption of classes.
- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on Saturday instructed the Ricks authorities to re-open the school as the students were losing instructional time.
- On Friday, the administration of the school shut down the institution saying the environment was no longer suitable for learning as a refugee colony was being built in the campus environment.
- 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, 28 of which they gave to the Liberia Refugees Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) to build a refugee colony.

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

Government Auditor Reports Assault

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

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

Bong County Superintendent Partially Cleared of Financial Malpractices

- The Internal Affairs Ministry has partially cleared Bong County Superintendent, Rennie Jackson of financial malpractices in the county.
- Speaking at a news conference, Minister Ambullai Johnson said the Superintendent did not convert any funds provided to the county by Mittal Steel.
- He said the US\$500,000 provided the county for development purposes was deposited in the county's account saying that he had a bank statement which indicates that the money was deposited there.
- He clarified that the Superintendent's suspension did not stem from the county development funds but rather the awarding of a contract to a local construction company.

Khmer Rouge Genocide Tribunal Stumbles as French Defense Lawyer Demands New Translation

Claire Duffett

Skulls from a mass grave of Khmer Rouge victims in Choeung Ek, near Phnom Penh, Cambodia
The proceedings of Cambodia's United Nations-backed genocide tribunal briefly descended into chaos last week, as defense lawyers for Khieu Samphan, former Cambodian head-of-state under the Khmer Rouge, argued the case must halt until all documents are translated into French.

A tumultuous press conference on Dec. 4, marked by the trademark antics of Samphan's French defense attorney, Jacques Vergès, preceded a more productive hearing on Dec. 5 that paved the way for the first of five regime leaders detained by the tribunal to go to trial. Accusations of corruption, disagreement among prosecutors and overspending have all helped delay the trials. According to a timeline created in 2006, all five trials should already be completed. Now, they are expected to continue through 2010.

At the press conference, Khmer Rouge victims bemoaned the slow and disjointed progress of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, the tribunal's official name. "We don't want a trial by media," complained Australian prosecutor William Smith, from underneath a canopy of sound booms. Chaos, however, is exactly what Jacques Vergès appears to want.

The French lawyer, nicknamed "devil's advocate," gained notoriety for representing a slew of infamous clients, including Nazi leader Klaus Barbie and terrorist Ramirez "Carlos the Jackal" Sanchez. In his one-man play currently at the Theatre de Madeleine in Paris, Vergès describes his strategy as "defense de rupture," characterized by interrupting trials by any means necessary.

At last Thursday's hearing, Vergès employed this approach by demanding that his client, Khieu, be released because most of the documents are not translated into French. In addition to English and Cambodia's mother tongue, Khmer, French is one of the court's three working languages.

Vergès filed his complaint in July and, last week, he and his Cambodian co-counsel Sa Sovan came before a panel of pre-trial judges inside the glassed-in courtroom outside Phnom Penh. Cambodia and the U.N. created this hybrid court, composed of domestic and international lawyers and judges, in 2001 to try Khmer Rouge leaders for international war crimes and crimes against humanity. During its reign from 1975 through 1979, the regime emptied cities and forced citizens to toil in fields. In an attempt to produce huge sums of rice and create an agricultural peasant Utopia, the party executed tens of thousands of people deemed disloyal, educated or simply lazy. Hundreds of thousands more died from overwork or starvation.

In addition to Khieu, detainees include the Khmer Rouge's former prison chief, its social action minister, its foreign minister and the second-in-command to party leader Pol Pot, who died 10 years ago.

Vergès says his client didn't know about the group's murderous tactics. During his presentation last Thursday, Vergès pounded his fists, pointed his finger and spoke at a pace that left his translator breathless.

Little of the French lawyer's discourse resembled traditional legal arguments. He quoted French King Louis XIV, recited his career highlights and suggested the court appeal to the U.N. to replace its former secretary-general, Kofi Annan, who supposedly agreed with Vergès that all documents should be

translated. Hundreds of Cambodians, Westerners and saffron-robed monks listened in on headsets from behind the glass partition. Some sat silently, while others chuckled when Vergès made statements such as, "I laugh in the face of your threats." Still others moaned in disapproval.

When deputy international prosecutor William Smith presented oral arguments, he preemptively apologized for his performance's comparative lack of flair. Smith, who spent 11 years as a prosecutor at The Hague before joining the ECCC, then explained that international tribunal precedent requires that all court documents be in the mother tongue and one other language, not two. The ECCC printed all documents in Khmer and either English or French. Translating the pages into all three languages is unnecessary, he argued. He criticized Vergès and Sa for prolonging their clients' detention with a "meritless action." The judges said they would decide on the issue at an unspecified later date.

At a press conference after the hearing, Vergès and Sa appeared to revel in the press attention, ratcheting up their indignation over the untranslated documents and challenging Smith to an impromptu debate rather than cede the floor to him. Suth Ny, a petite, 51-year-old Cambodian woman in the crowd, shouted at the men to step down. Sa yelled back and rushed toward the woman, pointing his finger at her and telling her that he, too, lost family under the Khmer Rouge. Defense coordinator Richard Rogers blocked Sa's advance and tribunal employees then escorted the attorneys from the room. A small smile could be seen on the corners of Vergès' mouth amidst the chaos.

Organizers then gave victims a chance to speak, aided by an English translator. "You are performing a circus," scolded a middle-aged man named Ly Monysak. He and several other victims implored the court to replace Khieu Samphan's attorneys.

The next day, a quieter proceeding in the same courtroom determined a far more significant issue. The court denied prosecutors' request to use a legal theory, called Joint Criminal Enterprise (JCE), against torture prison chief Kaing Guek Eav, alias "Duch," but agreed to add domestic murder and torture charges to his indictment. JCE could have made Duch liable for all 15,000 deaths at his prison, simply for having participated in its operation. Instead, prosecutors must prove his direct involvement with every murder. If allowed to proceed, JCE would also have helped link evidence against Duch to the other defendants.

The court's case is strongest against Duch, who left behind a trail of execution orders. The born-again Christian is also the only defendant to admit guilt. Duch, indicted in August, might now go to trial by March 2009.

After the back-to-back hearings, the court grappled with several more hurdles early this week. On Sunday, a U.N. delegation, led by Assistant Secretary General for legal affairs Peter Taksoe-Jensen, arrived in Cambodia to help the court address corruption allegations filed against lawyers and judges by several administrative staff. On Tuesday, prosecutors issued a "statement of disagreement" over whether the court should seek to try additional defendants. Lead Cambodian prosecutor Chea Leang opposes further investigations while lead international prosecutor, Canadian Robert Petit who has worked for U.N.-backed tribunals in Rwanda and Sierra Leone, supports them.

Before indictments against the remaining four detainees -- and possibly others -- can proceed, the court must investigate the corruption charges, mediate the co-prosecutors' dispute, and sort through hundreds of remaining pre-trial legal questions and appeals. Reining in Jacques Vergès is another big hurdle.

"I am not leaving this position," Vergès shouted during last Thursday's hearing. "I will come at it again and again."

Claire Duffett, a former assistant editor at *The American Lawyer*, is a freelance journalist based in Cambodia.

UN News Centre

Wednesday, 10 December 2008

International Court seeks more information on arrest warrants for Darfur rebels



The pre-trial chamber of the International Criminal Court (ICC) today has asked prosecutors to submit additional information regarding their request for arrest warrants for three rebel commanders for their role in last year's deadly attack against peacekeepers in the war-ravaged Sudanese region of Darfur.

Some 1,000 rebels attacked the Haskanita camp in South Darfur state on 29 September 2007, killing 12 peacekeepers serving with the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) – a predecessor to the joint UN-AU peacekeeping mission, known as UNAMID– and wounding eight others.

Last month, ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo presented evidence against the unnamed three commanders, who “planned, led their troops and directed the attack... and completely destroyed AMIS facilities and property, directly affecting aid and security for millions of people of Darfur who are in need of protection.”

The Prosecution said that there are reasonable grounds to believe the three commanders bear criminal responsibility for three counts of war crimes for murder, intentionally directing attacks against personnel and objects involved in a peacekeeping mission and pillaging.

Some 300,000 people are estimated to have been killed across Darfur, an impoverished and arid region of western Sudan, as a result of direct combat, disease or malnutrition since 2003. Another 2.7 million people have been displaced because of fighting among rebels, Government forces and the allied Janjaweed militia.

This is the third case arising from the situation in Darfur, which was referred to The Hague-based Court by the Security Council in 2005.

The pre-trial chamber issued arrest warrants in May 2007 for Ahmad Harun, former Sudanese Minister of State for the Interior and now the Minister of State for Humanitarian Affairs, and Ali Kushayb, a Janjaweed leader.

The ICC is also examining the Prosecutor's application filed in July for an arrest warrant against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for alleged war crimes, including genocide, in Darfur.

Last month, Mr. Ocampo told the Security Council that it must take concerted action to enforce any warrant against Mr. al-Bashir.

“Genocide continues. Rapes in and around the [internally displaced persons'] camps continue. Humanitarian assistance is still hindered. More than 5,000 displaced persons die each month,” ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo said, adding that the international community cannot conceal the President's crimes.

The Times

Thursday, 11 December 2008

After the terror, a new life for the child soldiers

For 14 years they endured rape, torture, murder and war. Now young Liberians are finding new jobs with the charity Pump Aid, bringing water and sanitation to their stricken nation Luke Leitch

Varni the driver's shoulders are set rigid: we left Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, 90 minutes ago at 7am, and Cynthia has been firing orders at him from the front passenger seat ever since. She recognises a curve in the red dust road as Lower Johnsonville: "This is the place, here. Stop here." The Toyota clunks to a halt, Cynthia opens the door and Varni leans back in relief.

She is only yards from home now, her first time back since 1996, but Cynthia Brown delays her return for one more moment to dust down her jeans and angle her fake Dolce & Gabbana cloche hat just so. Then she leads us forward into the low Liberian bush.

In a clearing is a small mud house with washing on the line and a protective rooster on alert. A woman, Georgia, walks out and sees Cynthia. They shriek and embrace. Then comes Georgia's husband, King, and niece, Hannah.

"They were my neighbours," says Cynthia. "Their house still stands but mine was not a real house, something like thatch, and it has been gone for many years." After a while she walks onward, past some trees and up a gentle slope to where that house once was. She gestures at the ground and pushes the hat down in front of her eyes.

Cynthia is a young woman on the verge of a new life. Her written application was compelling, she shone in her interview and scored 100 per cent in the technical exam - effectively obliging the British charity Pump Aid to earmark her as an outstanding candidate to become one of its first Liberian employees. After more training in Malawi, Cynthia will be part of the Pump Aid vanguard here, bringing reliable water pumps and clean, disease-free latrines to one of the most deprived, dangerous and deserving nations in the world. Unemployment is estimated at 85 per cent in Liberia, so this job, should all go well, will give her priceless security, the chance to build a stable home and enough to afford school for her 18-month-old daughter Davidetta.

Before any of this, though, she must go home.

Six months ago, when Pump Aid began training Cynthia and her 84 fellow students, they were living in Buduburum, a squalid refugee camp in Ghana. Tens of thousands of Liberians found sanctuary there during the on-off 14-year civil war instigated by Charles Taylor, the country's former leader. Yet many of them were not only victims of this savage war - they were participants, too.

The charity was introduced to its students by Mediators Beyond Borders, an organisation working to give practical skills (such as those taught by Pump Aid) and - through counselling and anger-management techniques - to re-equip psychologically some of those most damaged by Taylor's grotesque war: the child soldiers.

Cynthia, 23, and Benjamin Elliot, 25, are the first two former child soldiers trained by Pump Aid in Buduburum to return. They are here for only a few days, to help the charity's founder Ian Thorpe assess the need for clean water in Liberia. They will also assess Liberia itself, so that when they go back to Ghana they can report to their fellow students.

“They are all are extremely nervous about coming home,” says Thorpe. “Life there is very hard, but at least it is a life they know. They have harrowing stories to tell of their time in Liberia. They don't know what to expect when they return.”

Cynthia was 11 when she left Lower Johnsonville. A group of Taylor's soldiers came to the district. Some people, including her parents, were lined up on the left side: these they killed. Others, including Cynthia, were lined up on the right: these they took.

Remembering, Cynthia says: “They used to say ‘it is better to kill it before it grow’, meaning that it is better to use us while we are small - yeah? - than to let us get big.”

Initially, says Cynthia: “I was just there to eat, sleep and do what they say. When I was caught I was used as a sex slave. That was my only protection. I had no option.” She and those like her were popular, she says, because it was the soldiers' belief that by raping they would be empowered by juju (spirit magic) to fight bravely at the front.

One day she was given her own gun, an AK47. “I didn't know what to do but the commander said, ‘If you can't do anything, somebody will just have to kill you’. When I started it was heavy, you know? I was small. You just had to do the best you can.”

Cynthia did the best she could. Still issuing commands to poor Varni, she took us on a journey through her soldiering past. In Monrovia we visited the E.J. Roye Memorial Building, which overlooks the main bridge into town over the Mesurado River. Treading though the upper stories of the rocket-blasted wreck, we saw spent cartridge cases lying in green fungal ooze on the floor. Cynthia was posted to defend the bridge at a checkpoint below, while from this spot Taylor's snipers covered the approach.

In Barnesville she led us to a crossroads where, she said, during the war five American Roman Catholic nuns were raped and murdered. And she took us to the Holy Mothers School, named after the nuns, where hundreds of children, too young to remember any of this, sang lustily into the muggy, dry-season morning.

After a while Cynthia started to talk more freely about what she had been through: about the cocaine and marijuana they were dosed with; how “they wanted to make you brave, so they would say ‘here are five persons; do this’. And you did not recognise yourself”. She spoke of mass tribal executions and long, complicated juju rituals in the bush.

Sometimes, remembering, Cynthia sounded almost proud, as when describing how she would be sent to spy behind enemy lines by masquerading as a lost girl in search of her family. “I was on a mission. And after my people have taken over, then others would get to know: oh, this girl, she is one of these people.”

Benjamin Elliott was one of “these people”, too. In 1989, when he was 6, soldiers of Taylor's NPFL came to his house on 24th street, Monrovia, to beat up his father Richard in retribution for an anti-Taylor demonstration that he had led. Benjamin's mother tried to protect him, was stabbed, and died. The soldiers left but threatened to return. Richard fled with Benjamin, his two brothers and two sisters. After a few days they were separated; the sisters were taken at a checkpoint by a commander who did not even acknowledge their father's presence. Days later Richard, still ill from his beating, died of a heart attack, leaving Benjamin with his two older brothers, Trainer and Clue. Benjamin became hungry and began to cry for food. The brothers told him to hide and went to find him some: Benjamin never saw them again. After two years running wild, Benjamin was caught at a checkpoint and press-ganged into Taylor's Small Boys Unit (SBU). “What encouraged them to take me was that I had a good body. I was growing more than my age,” he says. SBU was used for special operations to disgrace people, Benjamin says: “You could be as old as 50 but I could slap you in the face and say, ‘Take off your trousers. Give me your shoes. Give me what you have’.”

When he was 10, after taking part in a successful push to recapture the city of Gbarnga, Benjamin was moved to a higher-ranked unit called Wild Geese, then later an “executive squad” called Marine 1. He says that Taylor used to keep his blood diamonds in mayonnaise jars and that he spoke with the voice of command: “He was like a father, like a god to the soldiers. Sometimes when he was speaking to you, you would cry. He would say great things to you, yeah - he have warriors in his mouth. You would feel pity for him. You are influenced to go and sacrifice your life.”

Benjamin's war stories are similar to Cynthia's. He still remembers his call-signs and suffers from flashbacks. And like Cynthia (who left Liberia in 2003, aged 16, on a gunboat after her best friend was killed), Benjamin eventually got out. He fled the country in 1997, aged 14, by convincing a friendly truck driver to give him a lift to Ivory Coast, from where he made his way to Ghana and Buduburum camp.

Benjamin left his home eight years before Cynthia left hers. We return with him one afternoon to 24th street and wander the densely packed neighbourhood asking after any Elliotts.

For a long time, nothing. Benjamin can barely remember the area - and all the houses have changed, anyway, we are told. Someone says “speak to Mariah - she will help”. It is a bad joke: Mariah is a madwoman, so Benjamin hands her some money and walks on. Dusk falls, the noise of petrol generators now drowns out the mosquitoes and we step carefully across the channels of dirty water that snake between piles of rubbish and the houses. A young couple called Alphonso and Tracey, both locals, determine to help us - and eventually they find a man with a lead. “He says there used to be someone here when the war stopped, but he couldn't get a life here so he moved to Buchanan,” says Benjamin, brightly. The story is that this man, this Elliott, runs a pharmacy in Buchanan, a town three hours away by road.

Back in Varni's car, Benjamin slaps his palms together: “Oh my Lord! I have hope!” Three days later, in Buchanan, we have no luck in the Lucky Pharmacy - no luck, in fact, in any pharmacy - but Benjamin does eventually find some Elliotts: Alfred and Martha. They recognise the name of his grandfather Jeremiah, and promise to introduce him to other Elliotts when he comes back to Buchanan. So now Benjamin can return to Ghana, and then Malawi, for Pump Aid training, hopeful that there is a future and a family somewhere for him here in Liberia. “God be with you,” says Alfred as we leave.

Cynthia has no family here - that she knows. But back in Buduburum, in the care of her friend, waits baby Davidetta.

Cynthia is still standing silently at the site of her childhood home in Lower Johnsonville when Moses, a local builder and leader of the local “vigilante” - security - group comes over to greet us. “War was war,” he says as we walk to meet Samuel Seedee, the local chairman. “Some people got begrudgement, but people need to do something and go forward.”

In another clearing we wait, then Mr Seedee, a venerable gent wearing a baseball cap, comes over with his wife Musu. He was the first person to settle in Lower Johnsonville more than 20 years ago. A group of ten or so sit on benches while Cynthia tells them that she was taken by the war and ended up in Ghana. She explains who we - Ian Thorpe of Pump Aid and the men from The Times - are. Then she explains the Elephant Pump and the Elephant Toilet, the two Pump Aid designs that she has been taught to build and maintain. Everyone pays tribute to Cynthia for coming home. There are 2,000-plus people, no toilets and only one water pump in Lower Johnsonville. As Mr Seedee puts it, they are “wholely and solely” behind her.

“I used to sit here with my parents,” Cynthia says. “This used to be all bush, but I see they carry on development and I am impressed by the road. Now I see that it is OK, I think I am glad to work here with my people.”

When she arrived in Ghana four years ago, Cynthia drank a lot, smoked a lot and was depressed: “It came to a point that I said, ‘Life is useless. Why would I be living? So many men have known me. So many men have used me’.” Now, though, she has her daughter, her training and - in Lower Johnsonville - somewhere that could be their home.

“I think I have put all that behind me,” she says. “I am living for the future. When she (Davidetta) grows, I want to tell her that story. I just have to tell her the whole story, and she is going to be the judge.”

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West Africa: Mano River Union Extraordinary Summit Gets Underway in Freetown

Monrovia — An extraordinary session of Heads of State and Government of the Mano River Union (MRU) opened Wednesday in the Sierra Leonean capital, Freetown, with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf saying the Summit provides an opportunity to examine progress that has been made in member countries of the Union.

The President said the MRU Summit will address, among other issues, agriculture, the global food crisis, security and global financial crisis. The leaders, the President said, are discussing measures to collectively confront challenges within these sectors.

The Liberian leader and delegation arrived in Freetown Wednesday and were met on arrival by her Sierra Leonean counterpart, President Ernest Bai Koroma, who headed an array of Government officials, members of the diplomatic corps and traditional leaders as well as cultural troops and other groups to receive the Liberian leader and delegation.

An Executive Mansion dispatch from Freetown says President Johnson Sirleaf held side discussions with members of Liberia's expatriate community in Freetown, assuring them that Liberia is prepared to receive whoever will return. She thanked members of the Liberian Diaspora for being law-abiding citizens, and encouraged those who wished to remain in the country to contribute to Sierra Leone's reconstruction.

Meanwhile, in his welcoming remarks at the opening session of the MRU Summit, Sierra Leonean President Koroma, lauded progress made in increasing food production and ensuring food security in the sub-region. President Koroma, expressing concerns of the challenges facing the sub-region, urged member countries to redouble their efforts in meeting the challenges. He spoke of the effects of HIV/AIDS, interstate crimes and drug trafficking. Regular, adequate and reliable financing, President Koroma said, is critical to fully placing the Union on track and accelerating the revitalization process.

The Summit has now gone into a closed door session for deliberation by the Heads of State. The Mano River Union was established in 1973 with member states (Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone) agreeing to regional integration. Cote d'Ivoire joined the MRU in 2008.

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf joins Guinean Prime Minister, Dr. Ahmed Tejan Swaray; Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo. The Liberian delegation includes Foreign Minister Olubanke King-Akerele; Justice Minister Philip A. Z. Banks; Planning & Economic Affairs Minister, Amara Konneh; and Liberian Ambassador to the United Nations, Conmany Wesseh, among others.