

**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:

Thursday, 11 February 2010

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

Thursday, 11 February 2010

Kimolima Hotel in 2009

Taylor's trial may end this year

The acting prosecutor for the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone said he was confident that Charles Taylor's trial would wrap up by year's end with war crimes charges against Liberia's ex-leader sustained.

"We hope to see this case completed by the

end of the year. We are quite sure about the credibility of our evidence," Joseph Kamara, the court's deputy prosecutor said. "We have 11 counts against him. We are quite hopeful they will all be sustained."

Taylor, one of Africa's most feared warlords, faces 11 charges of war

crimes and crimes against humanity before the Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting in The Hague.

He is specifically accused of sponsoring and aiding rebel groups who perpetrated murder, sexual slavery, mutilation and conscription of

Contd. page 5

Taylor's trial may end this year

From page 4

child soldiers in Sierra Leone's 1991-2001 civil war in exchange for a share in the lucrative diamond trade. He denies the charges.

"The quality of evidence (against Taylor) is strong. It's cohesive, coherent and consistent and our expectations are that we will succeed," Kamara said.

Defense lawyers, however, have argued that the prosecution is focusing mainly on Taylor's alleged activities in Liberia while the trial, which began in earnest in January 2008 in The Hague, is about his alleged role in Sierra Leone's civil war.

Kamara said the defense team asked that the trial be adjourned for one week to give it extra time to review documents and prepare for a re-examination of the defendant. The proceedings



in The Hague are to resume next Monday.

Taylor took the stand in his own defense last July and completed his evidence in November.

Kamara said it was normal for a trial of this magnitude to last that long given the large number of witnesses and the

exhaustive investigative process involved.

Taylor is seen as the single most powerful figure behind a series of civil wars in Liberia and neighboring Sierra Leone between 1989 and 2003, which left around 400,000 people dead.

Awareness Times

Thursday, 11 February 2010

JSDP Launches Local Courts Projects in Moyamba

In collaboration with the Justice Ministry and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Local Government and Rural Development, the Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP) will be launching the Moyamba Local Courts in Moyamba on Monday 15th February 2010. The JSDP, in line with the Justice Sector Reform Strategy and Investment Plan 2008-2010 aims to improve on the services of Local Courts in Moyamba District in compliance with international human rights standards, which in turn would result in improved satisfaction levels with the local courts and Paramount and Local Chiefs.

Although justice provided through the local court may be accessible to poor people, there are major concerns over its quality, particularly in relation to women, and children. There is also evidence of chiefs acting outside their jurisdiction, imprisoning women unlawfully in their homes, forcible eviction from their homes and land upon the death or divorce of their husband, threats to their liberty and security, levying of arbitrary charges such as witchcraft against women, a

culture of impunity for violence against women. These culminate into violation of human rights. The local courts are also plagued with lack of systematic accountability and transparency with regard to budget, revenues and expenditure, leading to alleged

mismanagement and corrupt practices and lack of transparency in recruiting. The Local Courts Project in Moyamba District is aimed at addressing these problems through a number of activities, including a review of the restated customary law in Moyamba,

information campaigns in relation to the restated customary law, sensitization campaigns for Paramount Chiefs and local court functionaries in relation to Gender and Child Rights Act and new local courts act.

The Vancouver Sun

Tuesday, 9 February 2010

War-crimes trial's verdict for Taylor further delayed

A verdict in the long war-crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor is not now expected until the end of this year, although the defence is cutting back on witnesses, a prosecutor said on Monday. Taylor, 62, denies all 11 charges of instigating murder, rape, mutilation, sexual slavery and conscription of child soldiers during intertwined wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in which more than 250,000 people were killed.

His trial by the UN-backed court for Sierra Leone in The Hague officially opened in June 2007 but was almost immediately adjourned after Taylor boycotted proceedings and fired his legal team. It began in earnest in January 2008. Acting prosecutor Joseph Kamara of Sierra Leone said he was "optimistic that by the end of this year we should see a closure to this case." Any appeal could take three to four more months, he added.

The original prosecutor, American Stephen Rapp, said a year ago he expected a verdict early this year, a target that was later put back until mid-2010.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 10 February 2010

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

International Clips on Liberia

UN Envoy lauds Nigeria for enhancing women's role in peacekeeping missions

MONROVIA, Liberia, February 10, 2010/African Press Organization (APO)/ — The head of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Ellen Margrethe Løj, has applauded the commitment of Nigeria to involve more women in peacekeeping, saying it is an "important contribution to ensure better results on the ground, in fulfillment of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women and security." She made the remarks at a colorful ceremony in Liberia's central city of Gbarnga at which she decorated 120 members of the Nigerian Formed Police Unit (FPU) with United Nations Peacekeeping Medals for their dedicated service to UNMIL. "The participation of women in FPUs enhances our overall access to vulnerable populations, and sends a message to Liberians that women officers can have any position and play any role in a police organization," Ms. Løj noted. She expressed the hope that the participation of more Nigerian women in the UN's work in Liberia would motivate Liberian women to join the security sector and thereby rebuild the trust of ordinary Liberians in law enforcement agencies.

International Clips on West Africa **Cote D'Ivoire**

FEATURE-Ivory Coast rebels, gov't in no rush to end crisis

BOUAKE, Ivory Coast, Feb 10 (Reuters) - Screeching up on a Kawasaki Ninja motorbike and revving its engine with a wrist bedecked in gold bracelets, Ivorian rebel commander Issiaka Ouattara feels no shame about the wealth he's amassed from war. "We are human and we have to eat, we have to live," The New Forces deputy commander told Reuters in his back garden, taking a seat in front of his brand new Porsche Cayenne. "Look at my soldiers here. If they don't eat, do you think you would be safe here? They would turn to robbery," he said. Years of political turmoil have been lucrative for the leaders of Ivory Coast's rebellion since civil war in 2002-3 split the world's top cocoa growing nation in two.

Security beefed up in Cote d'Ivoire ex-rebel stronghold after flame

ABIDJAN, Feb. 10 (Xinhua) -- Security has been beefed up in Cote d'Ivoire's central town of Bouake, stronghold of ex-rebel New Forces (FN), following Tuesday's protest in which local government offices were torched, sources on the ground told Xinhua.

Security measures are also tightened in the central-west town of Divo, the central town of Katiola and the western town of Man, where protests were also staged by supporters of the FN against the removal of certain names from the voter list. The FN blamed the fire on supporters of the presidential camp, which forced the election commission to take the suspected names off the voter list on suspicion of their nationality. Troops and police are deployed around the local court of Bouake, where complaints over the voter list are expected to be heard on Saturday. Instead of two stand-by brigades as usual, the elements of the Integrated Command Center (CCI) with their handguns are keeping watch, some in uniform and others in civilian clothes. The CCI is a joint security organ of the government and the ex-rebel movement.

Local Media – Newspaper

President Sirleaf Risks Impeachment...Senator Taylor Draws up Bill

(The Analyst and Liberian Journal)

- Bong County Senator Jewel Howard Taylor says she is drawing up an impeachment bill against President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Senator Taylor said the impeachment bill relates to the alleged violations of several provisions of the Liberian Constitution by President Sirleaf.
- She said the impeachment bill deals with the pronouncement by President Sirleaf for heads of government Ministries and Agencies to employ two UP Partisans.
- Senator Taylor said the Pronouncement completely violates the constitution which provides that all Liberian citizens shall have equal employment for work and employment regardless of sex, creed, religious or political affiliation.
- Senator Taylor said the pronouncement by President Sirleaf amounts to an impeachable offense.
- Meanwhile, Sinoe County Senator Mobutu Nyepan has described as worrisome calls by President Sirleaf for two UP Partisans to be employed in every Government ministry and agency and urged her to reverse the directive.

President Sirleaf Declares Armed Forces Day as National Holiday

(The Inquirer, National Chronicle, Daly Observer, The Analyst and The Informer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has by proclamation declared Thursday February 11 Armed Forces Day and it is to be observed as a national holiday.
- A Foreign Ministry release the President also instructs that special attention and honour be given to veterans of the Army and Navy.
- The Proclamation is in recognition of the supreme sacrifices made by the country's great heroes and heroines for the preservation of the nation's heritage.
- Meanwhile, speaking at a symposium in Monrovia yesterday, the Minister of National Defense, Brownie Samukai said the Ministry will ensure that individuals that are joining the Coast Guard would be committed to their duty and that their cooperation would also be in partnership with all security agencies of Government.
- The symposium was held under the theme "Safeguarding Liberia's Territorial Waters: Mission, Challenges and Opportunities for the Liberian Coastguard".

CENTAL Condemns Job Preference For UP

(Public Agenda, New Democrat and The Inquirer)

- A local rights group, the Centre for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL) says it is dismay and dissatisfied over statement made by the President of Liberia during the convention of the Unity Party (UP) in Gbarnga.
- CENTAL believes that the statement that Ministers should employ UP partisans is counter productive to the reform of the civil service and sets a bad precedence in a bid to strengthen democracy and institutionalize fairness and transparency in government. CENTAL is alarmed that the President has indicated.
- The group said President's directive would proceed to institutionalize patronage which is a form of corruption.
- Meanwhile, the Civil Service Agency (CSA) and the Civil Servants Association has given divergent opinions on the President's order.
- While the CSA welcomes the move by the President, the Civil Servants Association insists that the directive was tantamount to politicizing the civil service.

UN Envoy lauds Nigeria for Enhancing Women's Role in Peacekeeping Missions

(The Informer and The Analyst)

- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Liberia, Ellen Margrethe Løj, has applauded the commitment of Nigeria to involve more women in peacekeeping, saying it is an important contribution to ensure better results on the ground.
- She made the remarks when she decorated 120 members of the Nigerian Formed Police Unit (FPU) with United Nations Peacekeeping Medals for their dedicated service to UNMIL.
- Commenting on the recent establishment of two units of an all-female FPU in Nigeria, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) said the steps taken by Nigeria would ensure effective participation of women in peacekeeping.

Strike At Guthrie Again ...Tappers Abandon Work

(The Inquirer)

- Hundreds of aggrieved tappers at the former Guthrie Rubber Plantation, which is now under the management of Sime Darby, a Malaysian company have staged a protest action abandoning work at the plantation.
- According to correspondents in the area, the aggrieved workers' action is in demand of severance benefit they claimed is owed them by the plantation's management.
- The tappers, many of whom are from Grand Cape Mount, Bomi and Lofa counties, stormed the head offices of the plantation and held several of the senior staff, hostage for several hours.
- The tappers said their action was an attempt to draw the attention of the management of the plantation to their plight for the management to see the need to settle their severance pay.
- Soldiers of the United Nations Mission in the county backed by officers of the Liberia National Police (LNP) later moved and put the situation under control.

'We Cannot Prosecute Warlords'-Human Rights Commissioners-Designate Tell Senate

(The News and Daily Observer)

- The question regarding which agency of government will implement the TRC recommendations surfaced Tuesday when nominees for the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) categorically distanced themselves from that responsibility.
- Appearing before the senate yesterday for another round of vetting, the nominees stated that the Act creating the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) does not empower the commission to prosecute individuals and institutions linked to war crimes as recommended by the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).
- They told the senate that the legislation that created the INHRC in 2005 clearly mandated the Commission to investigate issues of human rights violations and not to implement TRC recommendations.

UNHCR Relocates Ex-Sierra Leone Refugees

(The News)

- The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR-Liberia on Tuesday relocated some former Sierra Leonean refugees from the Samukai Camp in the Caldwell suburb to modern housing units erected in Blamasee Township in Brewerville.
- The UNHCR is currently constructing 150 housing units over 20.3 acres of land at the Blamasee Integration Settlement Camp for former Sierra Leonean refugees.
- According to UNHCR Associate Protection Officer, Attorney David Mulbah although partially completed, the camp is hosting 163 Sierra Leonean families.

LIPA Announces National Civil Service Training

(Liberian Journal and The News)

- The Liberia Institute for Public Administration (LIPA) has announced the formulation of a national civil service training and development policy.
- The Director-General of LIPA, Mr. Harold Monger said the policy is intended to set out the processes that civil service organizations should follow in making training decisions.

- Mr. Monger said the policy is based on five key principles including improving capacity to build capacity and greater focus on organizational development priorities among others.
- He said all line ministries and other civil service employers have the responsibility to budget for the development of the capacity of their staff.

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

President Sirleaf Risks Impeachment...Senator Taylor Draws Up Bill

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Human Rights Nominees Raise Legal Issue At Senate...Call For Amendment Of Act

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Tomorrow Is Armed Forces Day

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Senator Nyepan Says President Sirleaf's Pronouncement Is Worrisome

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Liberty Party Sees Collapse Of Good Governance In Liberia

- The opposition Liberty Party has described as a move from "failed policy to collapse of good governance", the President's order for Unity Party (UP) partisans to be employed in government.
- The Party's national chairman Israel Akinsanya said the order is against the laws which guarantee equal job opportunity for all Liberians.
- Mr. Akinsanya observed the order is an attempt to transform the public service into what he called a club of political party and assured it would be resisted.
- He believes there are principled-minded ministers including Kofi Woods and Tiawon Gongloe who will not implement the order.
- Meanwhile, former Transport Minister Dr. Vamba Kanneh says recent directive by President Ellen Johnson for UP partisans to be employed completely undermines the Civil Service Agency (CSA).
- He said the CSA should be freed of political interference and open to all for employment.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

UNHCR Launches One Million Dollar Appeal For Refugees

- The UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR-Liberia has launched a humanitarian appeal for more than one million dollars to complete the local integration of former Sierra Leonean refugees.
- The National Protection Assistant of UNHCR-Liberia, Mr. David Mulbah said the local integration process has been ongoing smoothly but lack of funding has posed grim challenges.
- Mr. Mulbah said funding is required to process the remaining ex-refugees, complete naturalization formalities and finish the construction of housing units.
- The UNHCR Liberia Country Representative Ibrahima Coly said by March this year, funding would have to be mobilized to complete the local integration process.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

LIPA Announces National Civil Service Training

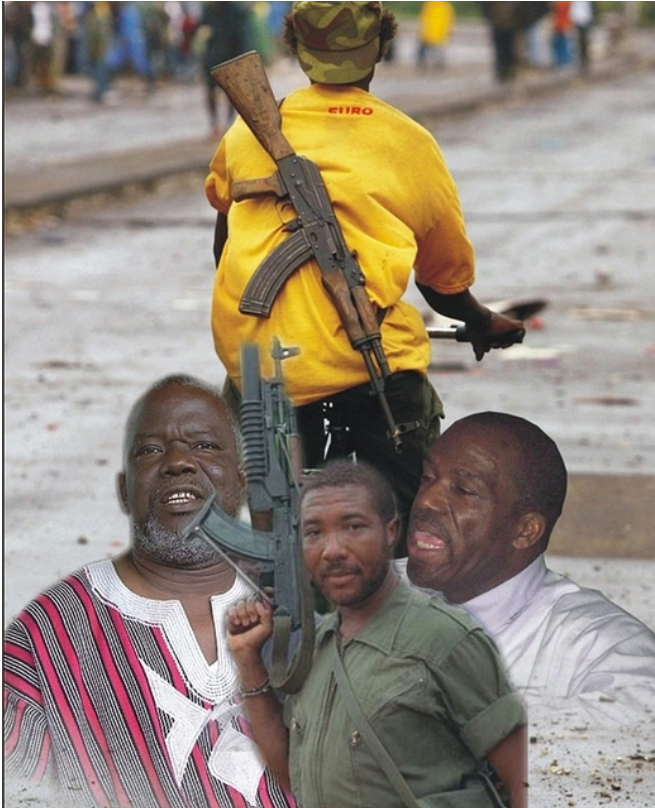
(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Liberian Observer

Wednesday, 10 February 2010

'We Cannot Prosecute Warlords'-Human Rights Commissioners Tell Senate

By: Stephen Binda



Warlords: Prince Johnson, Charles Taylor and George Boley

MONROVIA – The question regarding which agency of government will implement the TRC recommendations surfaced Tuesday when President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's nominees for the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) categorically distanced themselves from that responsibility.

Appearing before the senate yesterday for another round of vetting, the nominees categorically stated that the Act creating the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) does not empower them (if confirmed) to prosecute individuals and institutions linked to war crimes as recommended by the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

They told the senate that the legislation that created the INHRC in 2005 clearly mandated the Commission to investigate issues of human rights violations and not to implement TRC recommendations.

The president's nominees were cited by the Senate plenary to give reasons, if any, why they should be confirmed to serve as commissioners of the INHRC.

Those being re-vetted are Cllr. M. Bedor-Wla Freeman, Chairman; Esther Seaton-Cee, Joseph Cornomia, Anthony Boakai, Losene Bility, Clinton Layweh and George Dayrell. Their confirmation was placed on hold following reports that senators had doubted their individual professional eligibility and credibility.

At Tuesday's hearing, each of the nominees was quizzed as to whether, if confirmed, they will implement the TRC recommendations, which proposes prosecution of individuals linked to war crimes. Each of the nominees answered in the negative.

They each said that if confirmed, they would have no legal power to implement the recommendations of TRC except otherwise instructed by the lawmaking body.

Article Three 'A' of the Act that established the INHRC says it "shall inquire or investigate suo motu (on its own) or on a complaint of violation of human rights or abetment thereof or negligence in the prevention of such violation by the state, any of its functionaries, or public servant, or any other related person."

The Article Three 'B' further empowers the INHRC "to exercise powers to handle such complaints, investigate human rights violations and conduct hearings consistent with due process of law."

At yesterday's hearing, Senators also raised issues of party affiliation, clean human rights records, work experience and educational competence with each of the INHRC nominees.

Sen. Prince Y. Johnson, a former warlord who is among those recommended for prosecution on war crimes charges, expressed concerns over what he called a gender imbalance relative to the membership of the INHRC, taking into consideration United Nations Resolution 1325, which calls for the equal representation and participation of women in all major issues.

Johnson raised the question as to why only one female had been nominated to serve on the commission.

He also said the Act that established the INHRC took into consideration the issue of counties and regions, but said it was amazing that two persons on the commission come from the same county or region, which he said is a breach of the very law that brought the commission into existence.

But the commissioners-designate told the lawmakers that they were prepared with the requisite education and work experience to steer the affairs of the INHCR.

Meanwhile, other senators, including Sen. John Ballout of Maryland County thanked the nominees for appearing before them in the full view of some members of the Public to defend themselves against certain issues raised about their competence and work experience.

In his mind, Ballout said, he believed that the doubts of other senators, including his, had been cleared, although many senators apparently left the chambers with the conviction that some of the nominees could not properly do the job.

It can be recalled that last week, the senate ordered the re-vetting of the President's nominees to the Human Rights Commission, citing lapses in their credentials.

New Democrat (Monrovia)

Friday, 5 February 2010

Liberia: TRC Smashed

Editorial

Almost immediately after the President, in her State of the Nation Address, tied the implementation of report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to the Constitution, a group of ex-warlords rushed to the court and filed a petition to declare the report and its recommendations unconstitutional.

It is not yet clear when the Civil Law Court will hear their petition and rule on it, but the ruling will be pregnant with political and therefore security implications. If their petition, filed on behalf of those affected by it, is granted, it would mean the end of the TRC reprieve for all those indicted in the report. If it is rejected, many of those now vying for public offices may have cause to worry.

All those listed in the report for punishment in various forms, including war crimes trials and sanction from public office for 30 years, have declared their right to contest the elections, clearly signalling that the report is now in the dustbin.

And it is. The Senate has acted against it, throwing it out until the president can report to it. . In her speech, the President left some of the recommendations she previously endorsed, such as the 'Palava Hut' approach that could have redeemed some of those accused, hanging. She said she and the Legislature must find means to raise resources for its implementation. With barely 2 years to election, implementing it is almost impossible. All these factors and many more provide clear evidence that the TRC report, which cost so much money and time, has been executed.

Both the UN and the US have said the implementation of the TRC report is a matter for Liberians, indicating there will be no international pressure to for or against the report. This is clear when US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, commenting on President Sirleaf's decision to contest, declared: "I was delighted to hear that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said she will stand for re-election," a statement that some have labeled as an endorsement.

Mrs. Clinton praised Sirleaf for her role in combating gender violence, and the creation of special programs for the protection of women and children affected by violence during 14 years of brutal civil wars.

Added to this, Senator Prince Johnson son, listed for war crimes as one of the "most notorious" in the TRC report, has ignored it and declared his candidacy for the presidency. There are reports that many more, listed for economic crimes and other war crimes.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Wednesday, 10 February 2010

Abu Garda escapes ICC trial

The ICC declined to confirm charges against Sudanese rebel leader Bahar Idriss Abu Garda on Monday, citing a lack of evidence. Abu Garda was accused of directing an attack that killed a dozen African Union peacekeepers in Sudan's strife-torn Darfur region in 2007. Prosecutors say they will appeal the decision.

By Thijs Bouwknegt

The court's pre-trial chamber refused to move the case forward to trial, saying it "was not satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to establish substantial grounds to believe that Bahar Idriss Abu Garda could be held criminally responsible either as a direct or as an indirect co-perpetrator for the commission of the crimes."



The judges noted that Monday's decision does not preclude the prosecution from requesting the confirmation of the charges against Abu Garda at a later date, "if such request is supported by additional evidence."

Haskanita attack

Abu Garda commands the United Resistance Front, a splinter group of the rebel Justice and Equality Movement. He was the first person to appear voluntarily before the court in The Hague in response to a summons

last May and was allowed to return to Darfur after his initial appearance.

Prosecutors sought to charge him with three war crimes: murder, attacks against a peacekeeping mission and pillaging. They charged that the crimes were committed when 1,000 rebels attacked the African Union's Haskanita camp in South Darfur state on 29 September 2007.

The attack killed 12 peacekeepers serving with the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and wounded eight others. Most of the soldiers were "executed" - shot at close range - prosecutors said.

Rule of law

Abu Garda has always denied being part of the attack and went to The Hague because he "believe[s] in the rule of law." However, "I do not believe that I rightfully belong here," he told ICC judges last year.

Karim Khan, defence lawyer for Abu Garda, welcomed the decision. "The judges have done exactly what they should have done. Abu Garda has confidence in their independence and impartiality." During pre-trial hearings last year Khan said Abu Garda "did not order the attack on Haskanita. He did not encourage it [...], he did not participate in it. Rather than condoning or encouraging it, he went on record and roundly condemned it."

"Fair trial"

The Coalition for the ICC - a civil society network advocating for a fair, effective and independent ICC - also applauded the ruling, saying: "The decision [...] shows that the ICC judges abide by strictest standards of fair trial including high respect for the presumption of innocence and serious examination of the evidence before them."

The AMIS mission was the predecessor to the joint UN-AU peacekeeping mission which is tasked with quelling the violence in Darfur. To date an estimated 300,000 people have died and another 3 million displaced as a result of fighting that began in 2003 between government forces and allied Arab militiamen, known as the Janjaweed.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Wednesday, 10 February 2010

Demjanjuk on trial - 'simply there' but not there

By Rob Fransman



Berlin, Germany

Holocaust survivor Rob Fransman has been attending the war crimes trial of former Ukrainian and alleged Nazi henchman Ivan

Demjanjuk, or 'Ivan the Bedridden' as Mr Fransman calls him in his blog.

Over recent weeks Mr Fransman, a Dutch national, has spent a lot of time travelling between the Netherlands and Munich, Germany, to take part in the legal proceedings. His mood has been swinging from anger and annoyance to highly emotional. He couldn't care less about the eventual sentence, just as long as Demjanjuk is found guilty.

Faking it

At the start of each session, the 89-year-old accused is stretchered into the court due to his 'ill health'. However, Mr Fransman is convinced Ivan Demjanjuk is faking it - he just lies there without moving a muscle and never reacts to what is being said in court.

Mr Fransman says that during the sessions Ivan Demjanjuk pretends to be severely ill, but afterwards his condition improves considerably. He will talk to his lawyer and reportedly takes walks in the hospital where he is being held.

"He [Demjanjuk] made some noises the first time, but that was also the last time: 'Oy, Oy, Oy'. These are the only words I have ever heard him say. Apparently that's an expression of the pain he was experiencing. On that first day, he sat up on his chair, and that was also the only time I have seen him sitting up. He's lain motionless on his stretcher on every single occasion since. He's just an object. It makes no difference whether he is there or not. German law stipulates he should be present, but with the exception of his doctors and nurses, nobody pays any attention to him. He is simply there."

Accomplice to murder of 30,000

Ivan Demjanjuk stands accused of being a guard at Sobibor concentration camp during World War II. He was allegedly an accomplice to the murders of about 30,000 Dutch Jews.

Rob Fransman, whose parents were killed in Sobibor in 1944, is one of 20 Dutch 'co-prosecutors' in the Demjanjuk trial. German law allows interested parties to join in certain judicial procedures in this way and, in this case, any person whose relatives were killed in Sobibor is allowed to register as a co-prosecutor.

Rob Fransman describes the shock he felt when the names of his parents were read out in court:

"Quite unexpectedly, the judge read out the names of the murdered relatives of the co-prosecutors. We hadn't expected that would happen. So, when I heard the names of my parents, that was really emotional. Suddenly, I heard the names Rachel Fransman van Lochem and Isaac Fransman being read out in a very dignified manner by a German judge in a German court. It was the most emotional moment of the entire trial so far."

Victims and murderers

Mr Fransman realised that his parents were never officially named as victims of World War II. They disappeared in the gas chambers of Sobibor and were never given a final resting place. He was just five years old when the war ended, but he is convinced Mr Demjanjuk was a guard at Sobibor. He says there is plenty of evidence and Mr Demjanjuk's lawyers are not even denying it anymore. Those same lawyers, however, argue that it cannot be proved that the accused actually killed people in Sobibor. To Mr Fransman that's just nonsense.

"There were only two kinds of people in Sobibor: victims and murderers. It was a killing factory and everybody was taking part. There were no cooks, gardeners or stable hands. There were people doing these jobs, but they were freed from all other duties when a transport [of human beings, ed.] needed to be killed and they had to take part. They wouldn't have had enough people otherwise. So everybody took part, if you were there you were either a killer or being killed."

Life sentence

Mr Demjanjuk's lawyers have repeatedly pointed out that in earlier trials concentration camp guards received far lighter sentences than the life sentence that their client could face now. To Mr Fransman the length of the sentence is not all that important, just as long as Ivan Demjanjuk is convicted.

"Ivan Demjanjuk has the bad luck of being a symbol. The case has become a matter of prestige to the German authorities, so he will probably be convicted. It will make no difference to the man. I hope he will be convicted, but the sentence does not interest me at all."

The case is expected to last until early May. The court should present its ruling a few weeks later.