

**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 Press and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Friday, 11 January 2008

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

Friday, 11 January 2008

'Rebel hotel' in Liberian capital

A former aide to Liberian ex-leader Charles Taylor has told his trial that a guest house existed in the Liberian capital for Sierra Leonean rebels.

Ex-bodyguard Varmuyan Sherif told the court in The Hague the Monrovia guest house was near Mr Taylor's residence and several foreign embassies.

Mr Sherif says fighters crossed freely between Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Mr Taylor has pleaded not guilty to charges he was responsible for ordering the rebels' atrocities.

Mr Taylor, 59, is the first former African leader to face a criminal trial internationally.

Allies in combat

The BBC's Mark Doyle at The Hague says Mr Sherif is the first so-called insider witness to establish a link between the Liberian ex-president and Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels.

Mr Sherif told the court that Mr Taylor had set up the guest house specially for the use of the rebels.

"The RUF guest house, that building was specially prepared for them. Mr Taylor prepared the building for them," he said through an interpreter.

Mr Sherif also said RUF fighters crossed into Liberia from Sierra Leone to aid Mr Taylor's forces when they were attacked by Liberian rebels.

On Wednesday, Mr Sherif, once a bodyguard to Mr Taylor, told the court about a radio link between the former



Prosecutors say rebels lived yards from Charles Taylor's house

Liberian leader and RUF forces in Sierra Leone.

The defence is expected to cross-examine him very closely and may well try to undermine some of the testimony, our reporter says.

His evidence follows that of Sierra Leone churchman Alex Tamba Teh, who on Tuesday described a massacre of civilians by the rebels in April 1998.

The witness did not draw any link between the events he described and Mr Taylor.

The trial opened in June last year but proceedings were postponed after Mr Taylor fired his defence lawyer and boycotted the opening of the trial.

The ex-Liberian president is accused of responsibility for the actions of RUF rebels during the 1991-2001 civil war in Sierra Leone, which included unlawful killings, sexual slavery, use of child soldiers and looting.

Campaigners for international justice say the case is an enormously important step to ending international impunity.

Awoko

Friday, 11 January 2008

Taylor's bodyguard tells of how arms were transported

As he continues his testimony at the Special Court Varmuya Faih Sheriff, who was a bodyguard to the then President Charles Taylor, has revealed how arms and ammunition were transported by Taylor to Liberia.

Giving evidence in Liberian pidgin, the witness said Charles Taylor used a helicopter to transport loads of arms and ammunition to Liberia which were distributed to the commanders on the ground.

Dressed in an off-white coat and in a relaxed mood, Varmuya Sheriff said Taylor had control over the helicopter which used to fly into Lofa County, Koya, Vongama, and Zozor counties.

"And I also used to get my supplies of arms and ammunition from this helicopter. At one time I received 250 bags of AK47 rounds, 50 RPG bombs and other ammunition," he told the court.

The witness revealed further that,

"Taylor gave orders that the actual bags containing the arms should not be exposed as we were under arms embargo. So all commanders would come with a rice bag where their own ammunition would be put and these bags which sometimes had Chinese or Arabic writings on would be burnt later."

Because some of the roads were not motorable, the witness went on, the chief of staff would go to some communities around and asked the chief how many civilians he had. "The chiefs would be urged to call the civilians who would carry the ammunitions to our distinctions," the court was told.

About the links between the RUF and NPFL, the witness disclosed that one Benjamin Yeateh who was also a senior member of the NPFL gave instructions to Sam Bockarie to attack Guinea from Freetown and that that

attack was carried out.

The RUF, the witness narrated, also went to Liberia to assist Taylor's militia against the LURDS rebels.

Answering to questions from one of the prosecutors Brenda Holis, the witness said that he recognized some members of both the RUF and Taylor militia like Salami who was one of the RUF rebels that went to Liberia to assist in the fight

against the LURDS and that he was later appointed as senior bodyguard. He added that Eddie Kanneh was in charge of the RUF diamond manager and that he went with diamonds to Liberia.

As the trial reaches its fourth day, the prosecution has so far presented three witnesses.

Awoko

Friday, 11 January 2008

President Koroma receives amended 1991 Constitution

President Ernest Bai Koroma has received from the Law Reform Commission a report of the commission to review the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

Presenting the report yesterday at State House to the president and his vice, the commission's chairman Dr Peter L. Tucker explained how the commission went about its function.

He stated that the commission was formally launched on 27 January 2007 with 46 members of which two were nominated by the then president of Sierra Leone and the rest by 28 organizations and institutions.

Dr Tucker informed President Koroma and vice president Sam Sumana that the commission gave much time to and encouraged every member to speak on any topic.

He also said they held consultative meetings in Bo, Kenema, Makeni, and

Freetown coupled with consultative meetings with political parties.

The commission's chairman narrated that they received several written representations and comments from individuals and institutions abroad and at home to which extensive and intensive reviews were made, but could not take some of the recommendations as some were part of the law of the country.

Dr Tucker mentioned that they were not able to agree or implement the demand for at least 30% representation of women in parliament.

The report is in two parts. Part one gives an account of the methodology and sources utilized and analysis of the recommendations received while part two contains the 136 amendments of which only 15 are entrenched clauses needed to be approved in a

referendum before becoming law.

Receiving the report, President Koroma commended the effort of the commission in producing it and said from the membership of the commission every facet of the society was represented.

"What you have presented by way of explanation, the methods adopted, I believe that opportunities have been given to everybody in the country to participate in making a contribution in the review of the constitution", President Koroma said.

The president also went on to state that, "the 1991 Constitution that is now being reviewed had been in existence for a long time for which we have had enough time practicing it to see the weaknesses and also believe that lots of social, economic changes have taken place in the country, internationally that will demand a review as we have lots of

issues that have changed."

He assured the commission that, "we are happy that we now have this report, we will accept it as a government as we will look at it and I will assure you that it will go through a constitutional process that is required to effect the changes...what we are all interested in is to have a constitution that will be a guiding principle to take all of us forward as a nation".

To those whose recommendations were not considered, he told them, "I believe you have your MPs as the last resort as there is the lobby for which things can happen in parliament but for now we will accept the report and the presentation for the consideration of government".

Independent Observer
Friday, 11 January 2008

THE 55% REQUIREMENT

Section 42 (2) (e) of the current Constitution provides that “no person shall be elected President of Sierra Leone unless at the presidential election he has polled no less than fifty-five percent of the valid votes in his favour.”

No representation was made to us regarding this provision. However, as it became a major topic of discussion during the recent presidential elections, we decided to review it. We found that requirement was influenced by two major factors;

1. Ours is a unitary Constitution in which all executive power is vested in the President, unlike a federal Constitution where power is distributed among the states and the federal government. The person who wields so much power, it was felt, needs to have the confidence of more than half of the voters in order to enhance his authority and acceptance by the whole population.

2. Our elections are still heavily influenced by regional loyalties and there is a strong argument in favour of ensuring that no one or two regions could elect a President. Anyone, who is familiar with the politics of Sierra Leone, knows that such an election would stratify the regional and tribal divisions of Sierra Leone and render government of the whole country almost impossible. An alternative formula suggested in 1991 was that the candidate who wins a simple majority of the votes will be the winner, if he also polls at least 25% of the votes in his favour in the Western Area and in each of the three other regions.

We decided to retain the present 55% provision.

Independent Observer
Friday, 11 January 2008

Taylor's trial : A powerful message to African leaders

Written by Joseph Sherman COCORIOKO's Assistant Editor

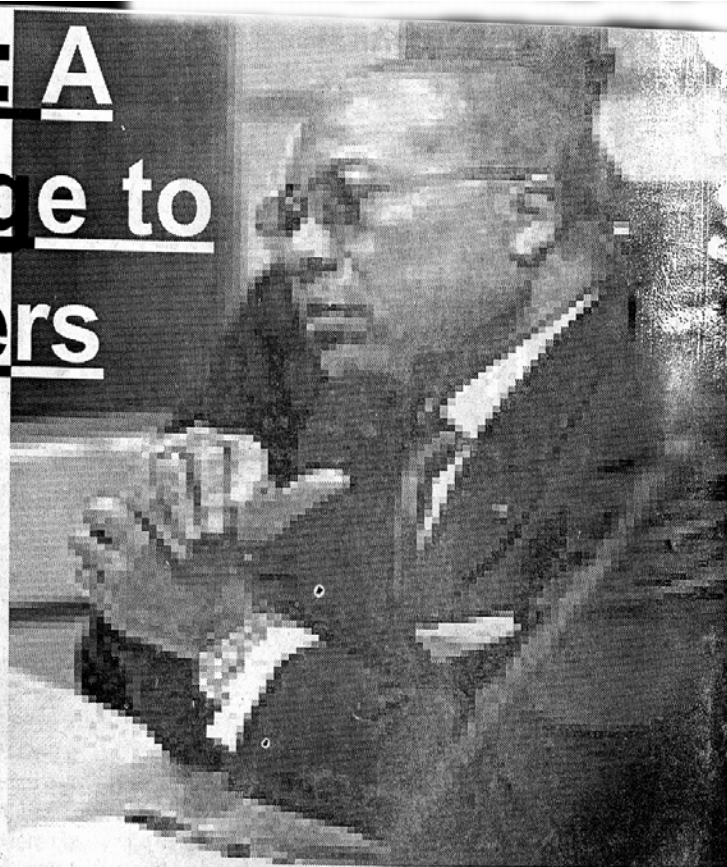
The trial of Charles Ghankay Taylor which begins on Monday January 7, at The Hague should send a powerful message to abusive political leaders in Africa and an important signal that impunity will not be allowed to stand and that the rule of law must prevail.

Although political and legal obstacles to the prosecution of government leaders for serious human rights abuses remain a strong force to contend with because governments are often constrained to take up cases outside their borders as was the case of the Sierra Leone government and Charles Taylor. It is crystal clear that most heads of state accused of serious human rights abuses use the traditional immunity from prosecution for acts committed in office. In some instances, the differences between national and international legal system and the absence of competent institutions can expose the irritating questions of jurisdiction and procedure.

Africa's stance to hold senior government officials and rebel leaders accountable for torture, murder, rape and other serious crimes against humanity is a step in the right direction. The trial of Charles Taylor who faces charges ranging from terrorism, rape and to mutilation and the use of child soldiers is the first time a former African head of state had been arrested and charged with human rights abuses committed while in office.

What African leaders should bear in mind is that justice belongs not to this class or that class, nor to a particular relationship between classes but to society functioning as a whole. Justice evolves through the progress of society and has its foundation on natural law of equal treatment. It is also important for justice to be seen and done to all officials of the most powerful countries who necessarily remain exempt from prosecution if international justice will become a more level playing field.

The key to fair treatment under the law and ending impunity is to work towards having each African state fully exercise its responsibility to ensure the rule of law is upheld. The efforts to end the cycle of violence by ensuring accountability for past crimes, states should work closely with affected populations and governments as possible if the foundation of democracy is to be sustained. Some African leaders may be prepared to accept the risk of injustice to others believing themselves to be immune from the risk of suffering injustice at the hands of their governments. Perhaps they might



reflect on Pastor Niemoller's lament in Hitler's Germany:

"... They came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came up for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up."

The African people deserve to be ruled by leaders who respect the rule of law. The courts and their processes are the only sure protection of individuals-and ultimately the only sure protection of a community- against illegal injustice. It would be naive to think that could be any adequate approach to international justice without constant awareness of the present state of knowledge concerning justice in the domestic context. Whatever happens, the days of injustice and impunity are numbered in Africa.

For di People
Friday, 11 January 2008

Taylor Aide Alleges Rebel Links

A FORMER senior bodyguard of Liberian ex-President Charles Taylor has told his trial of an alleged secret radio link with Sierra Leone rebels.

Varmuyan Sherif told the court in The Hague he discovered the link after being sent to make contact with Sierra Leone rebel commander Sam Bockarie. Correspondents say the defence is likely to challenge Mr Sherif's story.

Mr Taylor, 59, is charged with having command responsibility for the rebels' atrocities. He has pleaded not guilty.

He is the first African leader to face a criminal trial internationally.



Sam Bockarie was one of West Africa's most notorious warlords

Mr Bockarie - alias Mosquito - was also indicted by UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone for crimes committed during the 10-year civil war, but was killed in 2003.

Identity check

The BBC's Mark Doyle in The Hague says this was a big day for the prosecution, with the case against Mr Taylor getting under way in earnest.

Mr Sherif said he worked as one of Mr Taylor's senior bodyguards in charge of the presidential armed convoy and protection of his official residence.

He said he was sent to try to convince Mr Bockarie, a senior Revolutionary United Front (RUF), to visit Mr Taylor in the Liberian capital, Monrovia.

But the rebel was suspicious and decided to check his credentials.

The next day Mr Sherif was taken to a radio room where Mr Bockarie made contact with Mr Taylor's Monrovia mansion.

When he was satisfied that the message was genuine, Mr Bockarie was on his way to Monrovia within hours, the witness said.

Mr Sherif later discovered a special high-frequency radio on the fifth floor of Mr Taylor's mansion.

Correspondents say Mr Sherif is the first so-called insider witness to establish a link between the Liberian ex-president and Sierra Leone rebels.

His evidence follows that of Sierra Leone churchman Alex Tamba Teh, who on Tuesday described a massacre of civilians by the rebels in April 1998.

The witness did not draw any link between the events he described and Mr Taylor.

The trial opened in June last year but proceedings were postponed after Mr Taylor fired his defence lawyer and boycotted the opening of the trial.

The ex-Liberian president is accused of responsibility for the actions of RUF rebels during the 1991-2001 civil war in Sierra Leone, which included unlawful killings, sexual slavery, use of child soldiers and looting.

Concord Times
Friday, 11 January 2008

China, Taiwan implicated

*Umaru S Jah in
Germany*

Former deputy chief of staff in the Liberian army has implicated Taiwan and China in Liberia's arms deal while he testified against former Liberian President, Charles Taylor who is being prosecuted for human rights violations in The Hague.

Varmuyan Sherif also told the Special Court for Sierra Leone that Taylor was supplying those arms and ammunition and satellite phones to the Revolutionary United

Front rebels in Sierra Leone.

The army chief disclosed how consignments of ammunition were brought into Liberia including trucks for Taylor's Liberian Army.

The trucks he maintained, "Were from Taiwan while the ammunition boxes had Chinese and Arabic inscriptions on them."

Taylor felt bemused and suddenly left in admiration. Sherif further told the court that he was merely discharging Taylor's directives, which included

the supply of arms and ammunition to RUF fighters in Bomaru.

"My first assignment before the supply of arms was to fetch Sam Bockarie from Sierra Leone on behalf of Taylor. Then I was the Deputy Director of the Liberian Special Security Service of Mr. Taylor," he said and further revealed how Sam Bockarie followed him to see Taylor in Liberia with diamonds full in a mayonnaise jar in his possession.

"I saw the bottle when

we had a break at my home town of Vonjama. That was when Mosquito request that he wanted to shave his head and take bath," Sheriff explained and added, "We moved on to a town called Waisue, closer to Gbanga when Benjamin Yeateh, former assistant director for Taylor's intelligence in Liberia requested that I should hand Mosquito over to him."

The meeting between Taylor and former RUF strongman, according to Sherif, ended successfully.

"I later saw Mosquito returning back to Sierra Leone a happy man with a satellite phone and a huge amount of money in US Dollars," Sherif told the Court.

He later revealed how he handed over a pick-up truck loaded with arms and ammunition to

Mosquito on Taylor's request.

"That was when I was responsible for the disarmament of arms from former Liberian Ulimo K fighters in Vonjama, Lofa County. The last trip of the arms and ammunition I collected was loaded in a pick-up van. Taylor instructed me to take all the arms to Mosquito in Sierra Leone," he recalled.

Concord Times
Friday, 11 January 2008

No death penalty for coupists

By Abdul Karim Koroma

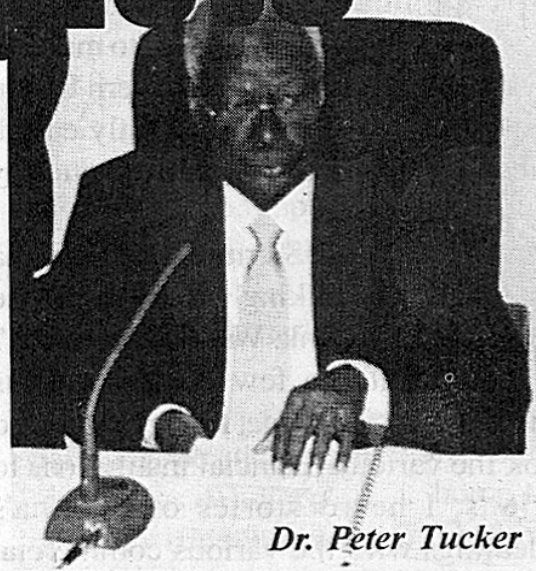
Chairman Constitutional Review Commission Thursday disclosed that his commission has proposed that death penalty should not be applicable to treason offenders but those found guilty of murder.

After presenting the report of the constitutional review commission to the president, Dr. Peter Tucker told journalists at State House that: "The death

penalty should be abolished in all cases of treason or other crimes of a political nature which does not directly cause the death of another person (s), and replaced by life imprisonment."

Making reference to

Contd. page 3



Dr. Peter Tucker

No death penalty for coupists

From page 1

Section 16(c) of the proposed amendment, he further stated that Parliament shall review the death penalty every two years with a view to abolishing it.

Dr. Tucker said during their nationwide consultations a lot of

people were agitating that capital punishment be removed from our law books.

Sierra Leone, he said, is a signatory to lots of human right treaties, adding that the international community wants the capital punishment repealed

globally.

"It is not good to force it down on the throats of our people," he said.

On the issue of elections, Dr. Tucker, said the 55% majority still remains for any presidential aspirant to win the polls.

BBC Online

Friday, 11 January 2008

Taylor faces the past in court

BBC World Affairs Correspondent Mark Doyle, who covered the wars in west Africa in the 1990s, reports from The Hague on the first days of the trial for war crimes of former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

Charles Taylor sits to the far right of the judges behind his defence lawyers.

During the first four days of the trial he did not say anything in public.

He entered his not guilty plea back in 2006 in the Sierra Leonean capital Freetown and now seemed content to let his lawyers do the talking.

But if he has not spoken, he has paid considerable attention to the proceedings.

The case was transferred from Freetown to The Hague in The Netherlands for security reasons, although it is still being conducted by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Mr Taylor has a well-earned reputation as a political escape artist.

Kiss

He has extracted himself from detention in various places, including the United States and Nigeria, and it was felt that a still-politically fragile Sierra Leone was not the place to hold such a high-profile trial.

On the first day, as he sat down for the morning session, he blew a kiss through the thick glass partition that separates the court from the public gallery.

The kiss was aimed at his daughter, who sat in the gallery as close as possible to her father.

But she was separated from him by the glass - and of course by the whole situation.

On the first day, dressed in a black suit with a gold coloured tie, gold watch and gold cufflinks, Mr Taylor was very composed, even smiling to himself on occasion.

But on the third day, when the prosecution called one of his former army commanders to testify against him, he was visibly more agitated.

He watched the witness closely and studied the photographic exhibits that were tendered with great care.



Mr Taylor appeared composed on the first day of the trial

TAYLOR TIMELINE

1989: Launches rebellion
 1991: RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone
 1995: Peace deal signed
 1997: Elected president
 1999: Liberia's Lurd rebels start insurrection to oust Taylor

He passed copious messages on green slips of notepaper over the shoulder of his lead defence counsel, British Queen's Counsel Courtenay Griffiths.

As a journalist, I would love to have seen what he wrote.

And as a journalist who met Mr Taylor on several occasions when he was president, part of me could not help feeling a bit sorry for him - despite the allegations of appalling misdeeds.

He used to be so powerful, so animated, and so eloquent.

Now he was in the dock, behind that glass, and we could all stare at him like an exhibit in a giant goldfish bowl.

The former Liberian leader is charged with 11 counts of Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes - including murder, rape, mutilation and terrorising the population.

It is not suggested that he did these things personally, but that he had a command role over the Sierra Leonean rebels of the Revolutionary United Front, RUF.

Blood diamonds

The RUF committed widespread atrocities in Sierra Leone throughout the 1990s. During the war I saw many of the victims of these atrocities.

These included the rebels' trademark "amputations" - the hacking off of limbs to sow terror among the population.

The first prosecution witness, Canadian "blood diamond" expert Ian Smilie, said the creation of an atmosphere of terror among civilians was in part deliberately designed to allow the RUF to mine diamonds in the rich gem fields in the east of Sierra Leone without a potentially troublesome population disturbing them.

The diamond testimony was important because it is alleged that Mr Taylor used smuggled Sierra Leonean diamonds to finance the rebels.

The defence tried to undermine Mr Smilie's testimony by submitting that he was not a real expert on diamonds.

But the prosecution dismissed this, saying that Mr Smilie was one of the world's top authorities on the subject of blood diamonds.

The next prosecution witness was a rural pastor, the Reverend Alex Tamba Teh. He attested to numerous atrocities allegedly committed by the RUF.

The Reverend Teh said he saw a rebel commander called "Rocky" commit the premeditated mass murder, by machine gun, of a large number of unnamed civilian men.

And he then described how a civilian boy was dismembered by the RUF - both hands and feet were chopped off after being placed on a log - and how the boy's torso tossed in a toilet pit.

The defence objected to the admission by the Court of this type of evidence.

Courtenay Griffiths QC told me during a break in proceedings that such evidence was playing to the heartstrings of the world and that it was unnecessary to make people live through these traumatic events again.

August 2003: Steps down, goes into exile in Nigeria
March 2006: Arrested, sent to Sierra Leone

Profile: Charles Taylor



One witness spoke about an alleged meeting with Sam Bockarie

"It's not contested that atrocities were committed", said Griffiths. "But this is not what this trial is about".

He said his client Mr Taylor was contesting the main charge that he backed the RUF - and that was what the prosecution should concentrate on.

'Mosquito' link

But the panel of judges - presided by Justice Julia Sebutinde from Uganda - admitted the atrocity evidence, saying they would consider its "weight" later.

The most substantial prosecution testimony in the first few days concerning the main charge - that Mr Taylor backed the rebels - came from one of the former Liberian leader's army commanders, Varmunyan Sheriff.

Mr Sheriff alleged, in considerable detail, that he was given a mission by Mr Taylor in 1998 to visit the then Sierra Leonean rebel field commander Sam Bockarie - better known in west Africa by his nom de guerre "Mosquito" - at his base in Buedu, eastern Sierra Leone.

His mission, he told the court, was to persuade Mosquito to come to the Liberian capital Monrovia for a meeting with Mr Taylor.

Mr Varmunyan, who says he rose to become chief of staff of the Liberian army, says that at first Mosquito did not appear to trust whether he was indeed an envoy of Mr Taylor.

So Mosquito led him to a radio room in the rebel bush headquarters where, according to Mr Varmunyan's testimony, Mosquito contacted the Executive Mansion - or presidential offices of Mr Taylor - in Monrovia.



The court was transferred from Freetown for security reasons

Mosquito satisfied himself that Mr Varmunyan was indeed Mr Taylor's envoy and within hours the two men were en route with an armed convoy by road and bush track heading for Monrovia.

The meeting between Mr Taylor and Mosquito subsequently took place, Mr Varmunyan alleged.

Atrocities

After that meeting, Mr Varmunyan said, Mosquito personally showed him a sum of US dollars and a satellite phone which Mr Taylor had given him "to complete his mission".

Mr Varmunyan said Mosquito did not say what that mission was.

But it is widely known that less than a year later the rebels attacked the Sierra Leone capital, committing widespread atrocities against civilians.

The war was only resolved a year or two after that, when British troops, acting broadly in liaison with a United Nations peacekeeping force, defeated the rebels.

In further allegations about Mr Taylor's links to the rebels Mr Varmunyan alleged that, on Mr Taylor's orders, he ran guns and ammunition to the RUF.

He also claimed that Mr Taylor set up a "Guest House" for the RUF near the former president's residence in Monrovia.

The defence then cross-examined Mr Varmunyan.

The questions and answers began to paint a picture that was wider and far more complex than the simpler one advanced by the prosecution of Mr Taylor's support for the RUF.

Courtenay Griffiths QC reminded the court that before Mr Varmunyan joined Mr Taylor's forces he had been a commander for a Liberian rebel group, known by its acronym ULIMO, which had been fighting Mr Taylor.

Mr Griffiths extracted from Mr Varmunyan that ULIMO had been armed and backed by the government of Sierra Leone.

The defence seemed to be working towards describing a scenario of proxy wars fought between Liberia and Sierra Leone through rebel groups.

But the defence - and prosecution - strategies will only become clear when the first few days of evidence days turn into weeks and months.

Blood, smoke and mirrors

The trial is expected to last at least a year.

The fourth day ended on a dramatic note.

Still cross examining Mr Varmunyan, Mr Griffiths appeared to become frustrated when the witness could not remember some details.

"My head is not a computer", Mr Varmunyan protested, saying he could not recall every detail of events which happened many years ago.

"You've said that before", said Mr Griffiths QC. "Were you coached to say that when confronted by a big bad defence attorney? Were you coached?"

Mr Varmunyan said he had not been "coached" - advised by the prosecution what to say.

Then the presiding judge, Justice Julia Sebutinde, noted that there was just five minutes to go before the scheduled end of the fourth day's court session.

She asked Mr Griffiths QC if he would like to stop now.

Mr Griffiths said he had just one area to cover and he thought he could cover it in five minutes; he would try.

Justice Sebutinde agreed that he should do so.

The British lawyer then suggested to Mr Varmunyan that he, the witness, had not been as senior a commander, or as close to Mr Taylor, as he had claimed.

CHARLES TAYLOR CHARGES

Acts of terrorism (WC)

Murder (CAH)

Violence to life, in particular murder (WC)

Rape (CAH)

Sexual slavery and violence (CAH)

Outrages upon personal dignity (WC)

Violence to life, in particular cruel treatment (WC)

Other inhumane acts (CAH)

Use of child soldiers (VIHL)

Enslavement (CAH)

Pillage (WC)

CAH: Crime against humanity

WC: War crime

VIHL: Violation of international humanitarian law

Taylor - the trial begins



Rebels carried out trademark amputations during the war

"That is not true", Mr Varmunyan replied angrily, as the atmosphere in the rather sterile modern courtroom became charged.

"Your Honour", said Mr Griffiths QC, addressing Justice Sebutinde. "Since we suggest that this man is lying", this area of questioning would now clearly take more than five minutes, so he would leave it there for the day.

We may never know, of course, if this dramatic end to the fourth day was planned by the defence.

But the incident raised the stakes.

And it would seem appropriate, in a way, if the court case against Mr Taylor was as dramatic as the events on the ground that it aims to describe.

The wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia were full of blood, smoke and mirrors.

The case against Charles Ghankay Taylor continues.

The Economist

Thursday, 10 January 2008

Charles Taylor in the dock

Bringing bigwigs to justice

Heads of state, past and present, are increasingly being brought to book for crimes committed while in office

WHEN Charles Taylor, then president of Liberia, was charged with 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other atrocities in June 2003, few thought he would be captured, let alone ever brought to justice. But this week, four and a half years after his indictment, his trial proper at last began in The Hague. Mr Taylor, now aged 59, is the first former African head of state to face an international war-crimes court.



Just a few years ago, such an event would have been almost inconceivable. However brutal or corrupt, Africa's leaders used to shield one another from justice for fear that their turn could come next. But the remarkable spread of international justice over the past decade has brought about an equally remarkable change in attitudes towards prosecuting former heads of state, not just in Africa but throughout the world. No fewer than ten former presidents and military dictators are facing legal proceedings for human-rights offences and/or corruption, some in international tribunals, others in their own domestic courts, a few in other countries' courts.

In Peru, ex-President Alberto Fujimori is on trial for human-rights violations and fraud. He has already been sentenced to six years in jail for abuse of power. In Cambodia, Khieu Samphan, president from 1976 to 1979, is in jail awaiting his turn before a new UN-backed tribunal set up to try Khmer Rouge leaders. And in Senegal, Hissène Habré, ex-president of Chad, is awaiting trial for crimes against humanity before a special court being set up in Dakar.

Meanwhile, General Suharto, Indonesia's former dictator, aged 86, has once again been rushed to hospital in the midst of legal proceedings for graft. Previous moves to prosecute him—he is alleged to have embezzled \$1.54 billion during his 32-year reign—have failed on grounds of ill health. But he may have cried wolf too often. Despite the general's reported “critical” condition, Indonesia's attorney-general vowed to press ahead regardless with civil proceedings against him.

Until recently, heads of state and government, past or present, were commonly seen as immune from prosecution for acts, however vile, performed as part of their official functions. But in a landmark decision in 1999 involving Augusto Pinochet, Chile's ex-dictator, Britain's law lords ruled that there could be no immunity for certain international crimes such as torture, and that Pinochet could therefore be extradited to Spain.

The fact that the octogenarian was never extradited, being allowed to return to Chile instead because of ill health, did not matter. A taboo had been broken. A previously hesitant Chile then brought its own charges against the ex-president. Although Pinochet died (in December 2006) before his trial began, the floodgates had been opened. Others now felt free to pursue their own tyrants.

In Latin America, home to many odious military regimes in the 1970s and 1980s, charges have been brought—mostly for crimes against humanity—against half a dozen former rulers. In Suriname, the trial is about to begin of ex-dictator Desi Bouterse, for his role in the summary execution of 15 political opponents in 1982. In Uruguay, another former ruler, Juan María Bordaberry, is about to be tried on charges relating to murders and “disappearances” in the 1970s.



Meanwhile, in Spain, María Estela Perón, who succeeded her husband as Argentina's president in 1974, is awaiting the outcome of two extradition requests from Argentina on charges relating to the killing of hundreds of left-wing militants by government-backed execution squads.

She hopes the Spanish courts will adopt the same position as Guatemala's Constitutional Court, which last month ruled against the extradition to Spain of Efraín Ríos Montt, a former Guatemalan dictator, on charges of genocide. Mexico's ex-president, Luis Echeverría, may also have been let off the hook after charges relating to the killing of student protesters, in 1968 and thereafter, were dismissed in July by a Mexican court for falling outside a statute of limitations. For most international crimes, there is no time limit.

Manuel Noriega, a former Panamanian despot, is likely to be less lucky. After completing a 17-year sentence in America for drug-smuggling in September, he began fighting an extradition request by France, where he has already been sentenced *in absentia* to ten years in prison for money-laundering. On January 9th a Florida judge rejected his appeal against extradition. He will now probably face a retrial.

Sometimes a country may, of course, be unwilling or unable to prosecute its own leaders. In such cases, an international tribunal, like the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is trying Charles Taylor (in a courtroom loaned from the International Criminal Court in The Hague), may step in. All five international tribunals set up over the past 15 years explicitly exclude immunity (or amnesty) for heads of state charged with war crimes or other atrocities. Mr Taylor is only the second serving head of state to be charged with war crimes after Slobodan Milosevic. Like Pinochet, the Serb tyrant escaped jail by death—in 2006.

If no competent international tribunal can be found, a country unconnected with the case may decide to bring a prosecution in its national courts under the principle of “universal jurisdiction”. This allows a country to try the perpetrator of a serious international crime even if neither he nor his victims are nationals and the crime has not been committed on its soil. At least eight European countries have adopted the principle. It was invoked by Britain in the Pinochet case, and also by Belgium to prosecute Mr Habré—until the African Union was shamed into asking Senegal, his country of exile, to try him instead.

Exile, once the choice of many a deposed tyrant, no longer seems so safe. When Mr Taylor was handed over in 2006 to Sierra Leone's Special Court by Nigeria, where he had taken refuge in 2003, Libya's president, Muammar Qaddafi, noted nervously that a precedent had been set. “This means that every head of state could meet a similar fate,” he said. Quite so.

Cocorioko

Friday, 11 January 2008

Hinga Norman family grateful to President Ernest Koroma

Some supporters of Chief Hinga Norman, the late Coordinator of the Civil Defence Force (CDF), have said that if President Ernest Bai Koroma was in power, Norman would have had a better treatment from the All People's Congress (APC) government during his run-in with the Special Court of Sierra Leone.

The supporters said that the Norman family is grateful to President Ernest Koroma for many acts of goodwill he has extended to the family since he came to power.

The supporters were responding to a public release by the Rev. Alfred SamForay, long-time defender of Chief Norman, who today refuted an article in the *DEMOCRAT* newspaper that the APC government had thrown the Norman family out of the ministerial quarters they had been occupying.



Here is the release from SamForay :

RESPONSE TO *DEMOCRAT* NEWSPAPER

To the Editor:

Please permit me space in your journal to respond to a recent report by the *Democrat* Newspaper regarding the eviction of the family of Late Sam Hinga Norman from the residence at No. 13 Spur Road , Freetown . In its report, the paper also alleges that Mr. Victor Foh, Secretary General of the All People's Congress (APC), carried with him thugs who removed roofing from the residence in question prior to forcefully removing Mrs. Norman from the house.

On behalf of the greater CDF families, I wish to categorically state that the Hinga Norman family and the families of Mr. Moinina Fofana and Dr. Alieu Kondewa both presently incarcerated, are collectively grateful for the kindness shown to them since the death of Chief Norman by the present government. The Hinga Norman family also acknowledges with gratitude the kindness extended to the late Chief by Mr. Victor Foh and then APC leader, Ernest Bai Koroma, through personal visits and telephone calls to Mr. Norman at the Detention Center.

The Kamajors and the CDF families are also very grateful for various donations in cash and kind offered to them by President Koroma and Mr. Foh in the past several months.

With respect to the alleged forceful eviction of Mrs. Mamie Norman, it is to be remembered that the house at No. 13 Spur Road, is a ministerial residence and government both SLPP and the present APC have been gracious enough to allow Mrs. Norman to live their without let or hindrance for the past five years even though Chief Norman was no longer a minister or deputy minister of State. It is also to be noted that government through Mr. Victor Foh gave Mrs. Norman several weeks of notice to vacate and that adequate considerations were given to Mrs. Norman to find alternate living accommodations.

I was told that I have to leave the quarters and I was aware that this was not my private family quarters, so I left, □ says Mrs. Norman. *I have made no statement of complaint about my treatment at the hands of Mr. Foh to any newspaper,* she says. Mrs. Norman also suggested that those who reported that she had been maltreated and roofs removed from the house by thugs directed by Mr. Foh to enforce her eviction should be asked to explain where they got that report from. But it was not from her. Presently, Mrs. Norman and her children are quietly residing at a private residence as the Norman family prepares to celebrate the one year anniversary of the death of Chief Norman in April.

On behalf of the Hinga Norman family at home and abroad, I thank you for your audience.
 Rev. Alfred SamForay,
 For the Hinga Norman Family

During a discussion of Samforay's rebuttal at LEONET-TAMU, Attorney Boss Farlay disbelieved sections of Rev. Samforay's explanation. In affirming that Samforay wrote the truth, Mr. Mohamed Tarawally wrote :

I want to come on the net today to thank you for all the support we received from you when Chief was alive. In the days when we were scrambling for fund you were one of our dependable supporters.

It is regrettable that you were not aware of the background story leading to this matter. We the friends and family of Chief have been very grateful to The Hon Earnest Koroma and Victor Foh for all their support to the Norman family. Since they came to Power there are a lot of things they have done, I can not elaborate here on the net. Based on what they have done, I can boldly say that the APC government would have never allowed Chief and the freedom fighters to face the special court, and if Chief was alive today Hon Earnest Koroma would have given the Chief a heroic welcome from Special Court to State House. Don't forget that Koroma visited Chief at the Special Court detention.
 Mohammed Tarawally

PHOTO : The Rev Alfred Samforay

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
10 January 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

Key Taylor Bodyguard Testifies Against Taylor at Special Court

(The Inquirer, The Informer, Heritage, Daily Observer, National Chronicle and The News)

- A former insider working for former Liberian President Charles Taylor's Special Security Services, on Wednesday, testified at the Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague, against the former Liberian leader.
- He stated that through secret cells, Mr. Taylor had ties with the RUF commander Sam Bockarie in Sierra Leone. More specifically, Mr. Varmuyan Sheriff told the Court that the Presidential Mansion in Monrovia had a special communication cell linked with the RUF.

Cholera Outbreaks in Grand Kru and Maryland Counties

(The News and National Chronicle)

- Addressing UNMIL regular press briefing on Wednesday, Liberia's Acting Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Moses Pewu, spoke of outbreaks of cholera in Grand Kru and Maryland Counties. Dr. Pewu said 163 cases of watery cholera were reported in both counties with at least two deaths being recorded so far. He however said the County Health Teams and with an international NGO, Merlin, were sensitizing the residents, through the use of health messages, on the causes and dangers of cholera and how to prevent it.

Three ECOBANK Employees Charged for fraud

(National Chronicle, The Informer and Daily Observer)

- Police in Monrovia on Wednesday charged three employees of the ECOBANK and forwarded them to court for prosecution for their alleged involvement in a US\$9,500 theft at the Sinkor Branch of the bank. Those arrested and charged were identified as Adam Johnson, Isaac Karngar and Michael Derrick.
- This is not the first time that employees at the bank have stolen money from customers' accounts. It can be recalled that in 2005, a group of employees secretly withdrew US\$307,000 from private accounts at the bank. In October last year, three persons including a former employee of the bank were sentenced to five years imprisonment each after being found guilty of stealing from the institution.

Government Gives L\$26M to boost Compulsory Primary Education

(National Chronicle, The Informer and Daily Observer)

- The Government of Liberia has given more than 26 million Liberian dollars in support of the Free and Compulsory Primary Education programme initiated by the administration. The money which was distributed among more than two thousand schools is intended for expenses associated with the daily running of the schools.

Radio Summary

Cholera Breaks out in South-eastern Counties

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Liberian Witness Says Taylor Had Links with Sierra Leonean Rebels

- At the ongoing trial in The Hague of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, the first Liberian witness, the former Deputy Director of the Special Security Service Varmuyan Sheriff testified that former President Taylor had direct links with the former Sierra Leonean rebels, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).
- The witness recalled that Taylor once sent him on a mission to RUF territory to bring to Liberia former RUF Commander Sam Bukarie who, upon his (Varmuyan) arrival to the RUF territory, used a two-way radio to call the Executive Mansion (the Liberian Presidency) to confirm whether Taylor had sent for him.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

President Reiterates Commitment to Lead Anti-HIV/AIDS Campaign

- An Executive Mansion statement said that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf reiterated her Government's commitment to mounting a vigorous and sustained campaign against HIV/AIDS pandemic adding that Liberia needs to break free of the disease if national renewal is to be achieved to the fullest. The Liberian leader highlighted the problem of rape which she said continues to remain prevalent in the society despite efforts by state-holders to curtail the disease.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Liberian Woman narrates how she was Gang-raped by Rebels

- Narrating her ordeal at the ongoing public hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) yesterday, Emelia Densia accused the defunct Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy rebels of gang-raping her, forcing her to drink her urine and gashing her body with a bayonet as a result of which doctors have said that she now developed cancer and could die anytime. Emelia stated that the incident occurred at Gbar near Bomi and Grand Cape Mount Counties.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Former Presidential Candidate Tubman Refutes Coup Plot Links

- Former Presidential Candidate Winston Tubman told a news conference yesterday that it was untrue that he was part of a plot to overthrow the Government and ascend as head of an interim government. He stressed that he has never been approached by those who wrote the email message on *FrontPage Africa*, a US-based online news group in relation to the plot. Cllr. Tubman called on President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to thoroughly probe into the alleged coup plot so that those innocent may be cleared and the guilty be punished.
- Regarding the ongoing TRC public hearings, Cllr. Tubman said that the process was flawed and that the TRC would not achieve its mandate by leading to genuine reconciliation in the Country in that many Liberians, who instigated, funded and even fought in the cruel conflict today hold high positions in the Country.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Voice of America

Friday, 11 January 2008

Liberia's Truth Commission Hears From Victims of Country's Civil War

By James Butty
Washington, D.C.

Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission this week began taking testimonies from people who say they or members of their families were victimized during Liberia's 14 year-old civil war. On day one of the public hearings this week, Liberia's sensational young musical star Sundagar Dearboy was implicated by two witnesses who told the commission that Dearboy as a commander in Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front rebel movement committed untold atrocities, including rape and murder in Grand Bassa County.

Jerome Verdier is chairman of the commission. From the Liberian capital, Monrovia, he told VOA that all accused persons would be given the opportunity to defend themselves before the commission.

"The mandate of the TRC is such that we are to delve into the root causes of the conflict, we are to identify victims, recognize and identify their experiences. We are to identify those who perpetrated the atrocities against victims, and make recommendations that will, in a lot of ways, contribute reconciliation, unity, and the avoidance of violence conflict in the future. Because of that, we are also charged with creating a forum where constructively victims and perpetrators can share their experiences. Having said, that whoever is named by a victim, including the prominent Liberian you've just mentioned, has equal opportunity to appear before the TRC and make their representation," he said.

Verdier responded to criticism that the TRC process is only after little people while those who committed the most heinous crimes during Liberia's civil war, like Prince Johnson the man blamed for killing President Samuel Doe is today a Senator from Nimba County. Verdier said no Liberian, whether as a victim or perpetrator who be spared.

"All Liberians, prominent Liberian politicians, activists who played roles during the conflict as heads of warring factions, politicians who have been involved in the political life of the country from 1979 until 2003, journalists who covered most part of the conflict, including national and foreign journalists, anybody who in the conviction of the TRC has information relevant to its work would be called before the commission to appear and share that information with the commission. So at this point, and as the president state, no one is exempt from the TRC process and that extends to our legislators," Verdier said.

He said a number of prominent Liberians, including former heads of warring factions during Liberia's civil war have asked the commission to appear before it to testify.

Verdier responded to criticism by former Liberian presidential candidate Winston Tubman that the TRC is wasting its time digging up the past when it has no prosecutorial powers to bring perpetrators to justice.

"The TRC is not about settling the personal vendetta or the ambitions of people for vendetta. It is not about parading perpetrators. What it is about is about healing and reconciliation and to restore the dignity of victims. That is why in the collective wisdom of the commission we determined and very consciously so that victims should be given the first preference, victims should be heard as a way of creating as much moral pressure on those who prosecuted the war to understand that indeed there are real victims," Verdier said.

He said the TRC would be making recommendations to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at the end of its work in terms of who should be pardoned and who should be prosecuted because the commission is not the implementer of whatever the outcome of the process would be.

The Analyst

Thursday, 11 January 2008

Woman With Multiple Scars Tells Her Story

For the second day running in the public hearing ritual before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), continuous finger-pointing against others considered as vile men have taken center stage.

On the first day of the process, Tuesday, January 8, 2008, a nouveau riche and top Liberian musician, Marcus Davis, alias Sundaygar Dearboy, was accused of ordering the raping of a 16-year old girl who reportedly died as a consequence of the fighters' rigorous exertions.

But yesterday, witnesses related their stories of woe, one after the other upon the truth pedestal before eagerly gazing commissioners and other concerned Liberians.

From the stories told, at most, none pricked the consciences of the quiet audience than the testimony of a woman, Amelia Demsea, who alleged that rebels of the Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) gashed her body several times for undisclosed reasons while she was captured by them before they finally letting her go.



J. Edwood Dennis reports from the TRC hearings.

Amelia Demsea, is roughly in her middle 40s, but despite the relative youthfulness that she should be enjoying, she carries multiple fiendish scars all over her body that she ascribes to gashes inflicted by the LURD forces. Amelia, who told the TRC that the sores have partially healed, also disclosed that the severe gashes culminated in what she calls “cancer”.

Wearing a red sweater over a mixed colorful cloth (lappa), Amelia though pale and sickly defied her troubling condition in the western provincial city of Tubmanburg, Bomi County, where she takes medical treatment, to proceed to the Monrovia's hearing center at the historic Centennial Pavilion on Ashmun Street in central Monrovia.

“I came to tell my story and am happy that I've been given the chance,” Amelia said. “As I stand before you here, I'm dying slowly,” Amelia said on Day Two of the hearings. Though she was visibly moved, her mood was contented that something would follow the presentation that had taken her from Tubmanburg to Monrovia.

But that something did not appear to be anything that she could readily say since the process does not seem to have room for providing direct redress as may be expected in a regular court proceeding. “My people, some people chose death; some people chose short sleeves or long sleeves, and other people chose smiles, but I was lucky to choose design,” Amelia narrated.

She then defined the various rebel terms as follows, ‘short sleeve’ as an option means the civilian is authorizing the rebels to cut off one limb from the elbow; ‘long sleeve’ means that the captive takes the painful choice for the rebels to cut off either a hand or foot from either the shoulder or thigh; ‘smile’ means to the captive agrees with the rebels that his lips both lower and upper lips be cut off to expose the teeth.

On the other hand, Amelia's preference for ‘design’ meant that the rebels were permitted to gash her with any sharp instrument like knife or cutlass all over her body for a number of times.

“So when I chose ‘design’ the [LURD] fighters used a kitchen knife to design my body by gashing my skin, cutting under the left and right sides of my breast, further chapping the skin of my back and other body parts,” Amelia said.

As Amelia went through her sad episode, a spate of quietude engulfed the hall, and even previously unmoved commissioners and general public now wore pensive looks with bleary eyes indicating the similarity of the human condition whenever in captivity.

Some onlookers at the process were unusually quiet; others held their mouths in bewildering disbelief. A young female was seen weeping while another shook her head in apparent anger.

“The rebels wrote the type of punishment on paper as to what they could do and they insisted that the papers be placed in a box. Everyone captured by the rebels had to pick one paper as if a lucky ticket. Anything you choose, whether that’s short sleeves or long sleeves, anything, is what they will do to you,” she further narrated.

It is apparent that Amelia Demsea’s crime is that she is of the Mano ethnic group of Nimba County. The LURD forces were mainly dominated by Krahns from Grand Gedeh County and the Mandingos, original foes of the Mano and Gio tribes of Nimba.

The feud between Krahns/Mandingos on the one hand, and Gios/Manos on the other came to a head during the war in 1990s.

The victim said that she is taking medical treatment in the same city that LURD, and then headed by Sekou Damate Conneh, used as its main base. The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is in control of Tubmanburg, Bomi and the entire country.

Amelia Demsea said she and a friend, only identified as Bindu traveled to Gbah, Bomi County in search of goods when they encountered rebels of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) in June 2003.

We were asked by the LURD fighters to call our names and tribes, so I called my name and tribe (Manor). The mention of my people or my tribe made the fighters angry so the extent that they beat me and my other friends,” she told the TRC.

She alleged that the fighters detained them for a night and the next morning, a LURD fighter she identified as Boimah, collected urine from others fighters and gave to them to drink. “We, obeyed and drank the urine,” she narrated.

As if drinking the urine was not enough, the sick looking woman and mother of seven boys, said the fighters prepared pieces of papers with diverse kinds of punishment and compelled them to choose any punishment of their choice.

“We accordingly began selecting punishment of our choice of papers without knowing the consequences thereof,” she noted.

Apparently to prove herself right, Amelia then took off her clothes to show the scars of her horrible experience. Some of the punishments inscribed on the papers included killing, cutting of hands designing skins of people among others.

Based on what she picked, she was butchered with bayonets by a fighter of LURD she identified as “Bad Blood”. She claimed to have seen “Bad Blood” at one point in time on Broad Street in 2007 loading cars. She said those who did harmful things to them were commanded by one Gen. Sheriff.

She narrated that she was rescued by an elderly man identified as Pa Willie in Tubmanburg, saying that she stayed with her rescuer for a while before returning to Monrovia. As a result of the gashing of her body, she said she is currently undergoing medical attention and that doctors have told that she was developing cancer.

She accordingly called on the government to assist her seven boys children because she was about to die due to the sores on her body. Also appearing for the TRC Public Hearings was Mohammed Oldman Teah who claimed that he was forced by fighters of United Liberation Movement (ULIMO-K) to eat two and the half cups of sand in the Lofa bridge area.

Mohammed Teah said that prior to the split of ULIMO; he left Tubmanburg with over L\$100.000 to buy goods, especially spare parts when he and a friend (Gabriel) who met on the way were arrested by a fighter he identified as “Ghana Boy”.

He said Ghanaboy was his regular customer but chose to arrest he and his friend for the money they were carrying. Mohammed further stated that while they were pleading for mercy, Ghanaboy was joined by other fighters thus making their plea meaningless.

Ghanaboy, he disclosed ordered them to eat sand and later put them into prison, but were released by another fighter. Mohammed noted that they traveled through the high forest for hours but his friend Gabriel did not make it. “I left his dead body in the forest and returned to Tubmanburg and then to Monrovia,” he added.

As a result of the experience suffered at the hands of the fighters including the eating of sand as well as beating, he said he is suffering from poor health. Others appearing before the TRC were Rev. Griannes and Marrie. They told their stories of pains and sorrows suffered in the hands of the NPFL forces during the heat of the 1990 war.

Meanwhile, TRC is calling on women organizations, humanitarian to come to the aid of Madam Amelia Demsea to enable her seek proper medical treatment, noting the case was crucial.

The Jurist

Thursday, 10 January 2008

Getting Away with Murder: Ghadaffi's West African Legacy

JURIST Contributing Editor David Crane of Syracuse University College of Law, former Chief Prosecutor for the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone, says that amidst the recent feting of Libyan leader Muamar Ghadaffi in European capitals, part and parcel of his larger political rehabilitation in the West, his regime's role in atrocities in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s must not be forgotten....



While President Muamar Ghadaffi waltzed around the capitals of Europe last month with cynical leaders eager to do business with this political oddity from Libya, it must not be forgotten that he laid waste two countries in West Africa in the 1990s. His direct participation in the conflicts within Liberia and Sierra Leone caused the murder, rape, maiming, and mutilation of over a million human beings and the internal displacement of several million more. His surrogates - in the guise of former President Charles Taylor of Liberia, President Blasé Compaore of Burkina Faso, the late Foday Sankoh of Sierra Leone along with a covey of gun runners diamond dealers, and financiers from all over the world - joined in a decades long joint criminal enterprise that remains a threat to peace in that back-water part of the world.

During the late 1980s, Ghadaffi trained hundreds of potential terrorist in various camps strewn about the Saharan sands of Libya. A virtual rogues gallery of those who bore the responsibility for the conflicts in West Africa are all alumni of those camps. During my initial investigations into the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated that stemmed from the ten-year civil war in Sierra Leone, we began to uncover direct evidence from independent witnesses that the true source of the suffering came from Ghadaffi. Using link analysis from these sources, all of whom did not know the other, the dots that we connected went through President Charles Taylor, somewhat President Blasé Compaore and his henchman Ibrahim Bah, directly to President Ghadaffi. All three of these individuals were graduates of those terror camps.

President Ghadaffi's plan was to place as many surrogates into West Africa so he could influence West Africa and use it for his own political purposes. He managed to do this in Burkina Faso, Liberia, tried to in Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast. The next country would have been Guinea. He was stopped when the international community created an international tribunal in Sierra Leone which not only investigated, indicted, and prosecuted those who bore the greatest responsibility for the tragedy of Sierra Leone, but exposed the joint criminal enterprise that was backed by Ghadaffi's oil dollars.

As we reviewed the evidence it became clear that President Charles Taylor was the most directly responsible for the horror of the Sierra Leone conflict, with both Presidents Compare and Ghadaffi a culpable secondary. For his direct involvement, I signed the indictment against President Charles Taylor for numerous counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in March 2003. He now sits on trial for those misdeeds before Trial Chamber Two of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Compare and Ghadaffi are both un-indicted co-conspirators so to speak. Their specific involvement in this sad history will most undoubtedly come out at Taylor's trial.

It is amazing how the smooth salve of oil and the bandage of petrol-dollars helps the West look the other way regarding what took place in West Africa in the 1990's with Ghadaffi's specific backing. The subtle support and buying off of many African leaders continues today by President Ghaddafi. The West, particularly Europe knows this. Ghadaffi's visit to France in December 2007, feted as a legitimate leader by the French, is just such an example. The bitter pill of human rights violations by this pariah goes down much easier with the promise of new commercial contracts.

Dialog and engagement with the world's tyrants, dictators, and warlords smacks of appeasement and is a source of continued of unrest, atrocity, and conflict. The beast of impunity must be faced down wherever it rears its ugly head. What took place in Europe last month augers poorly for the future.

David M. Crane is a professor at Syracuse University College of Law, and former founding Chief Prosecutor for the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (2002-2005).

BBC Online

Friday, 11 January 2008

Karadzic family passports seized

Bosnian police have confiscated the passports of four close relatives of wanted war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic, a former Bosnian Serb leader.

Mr Karadzic's wife, son, daughter and son-in-law had the items and other travel documents seized on the orders of Bosnia's top international envoy.

An interior ministry spokeswoman said it would prevent them leaving Bosnia.

Mr Karadzic, Bosnian Serb leader during the 1992-95 Bosnian conflict, is wanted on genocide charges in The Hague.

His wife Ljiljana Zelen Karadzic, son Aleksandar, daughter Sonja Karadzic Jovicevic and her husband Branislav Jovicevic are suspected of helping him evade capture.



Radovan Karadzic, pictured in 1995, has evaded capture for 11 years

Tribunal request

In a statement, Bosnia's international envoy Miroslav Lajcak said their passports had been seized "at the request of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and in close co-operation with relevant local law enforcement agencies".

Radovan Karadzic and Bosnian Serb wartime military commander Ratko Mladic have evaded capture for the past 11 years.

Although Mr Karadzic's family deny having any contact with him since 2002, international officials believe they have been in touch.

Nato and EU peacekeepers have regularly raided the homes of family members in the former Bosnian Serb stronghold of Pale, near the capital Sarajevo. The travel documents were handed over to police in Pale on Thursday.

The UN says Mr Karadzic's forces killed at least 7,500 Muslim men and boys from Srebrenica in July 1995 as part of a campaign to "terrorise and demoralise the Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat population".

He has also been indicted over the Bosnian Serbs' shelling of Sarajevo and other crimes during the war.