

**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:

Friday, 12 March 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Premier News
Friday, 12 March 2010

Foreigners prevented Taylor From Liberating Liberia

Foreigners interfered in Taylor's revolution and prevented the former president from liberating his people.

A witness in Taylor's defense made this statement at the Special Court for Sierra Leone judges yesterday.

"The Liberian revolution failed because foreign hands interfered to disturb the revolution and prevent President Taylor from liberating the country," witness DCT 125, who finished his direct-examination told the court.

The witness, who has been testifying with protective measures, has given most of his testimony in closed/private sessions and on occasions when his testimony has been heard in open court, he has testified using voice and facial distortion mechanisms.

When court resumed, the witness was absent.

Mr. Taylor's lead defense counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, informed the judges that the witness was ill and so could not appear in court.

After being given medical treatment by a doctor who said he was fit and able to continue testifying, the judges ordered that the witness be brought to court and take the witness stand.

As he concluded his testimony, the witness told the judges that the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeeping force was not neutral in the Liberian conflict.

He said the peacekeepers were more sympathetic to the other Liberian warring factions at the expense of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group. During cross-examination by

prosecutor Nicholas Koumjian, the witness told the court that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Sierra Leonean rebel group which Taylor is accused of providing support for, is not a terrorist organization as alleged by prosecutors.

Presiding Judge of the Trial Chamber, Justice Julia Sebutinde, asked the witness to give his definition of terrorist organization.

"It is an organization that is bent on the destruction of life and property without any meaning and purpose, to disturb the peace within the human being," the witness said.

Mr. Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law including crimes of rape, terrorizing the civilian population, murder, conscription and use of child soldiers, looting and pillage of civilian property committed in the territory of Sierra Leone from 1996 to 2002. Prosecutors have alleged that while Mr. Taylor was not present in Sierra Leone, he exercised superior authority over RUF rebels and provided military and financial support to the rebels during Sierra Leone's 11 years conflict. Three RUF commanders have already been found guilty and convicted by Special Court for Sierra Leone judges for similar crimes with which Mr. Taylor is charged.

Before the end of today's proceedings, Mr. Koumjian requested that the cross-



examination of the witness be suspended and that prosecutors be given more time to prepare for the cross-examination of the witness.

Mr. Koumjian explained that defense lawyers for Taylor had failed to disclose the witness's personal information to prosecutors within the 21 day period required. The prosecution request was granted and so the witness's cross-examination was suspended.

A new defense witness will commence his or her testimony today.

Culled from charles taylors trial.com

The Spectator

Friday, 12 March 2010

Foreign Countries Prevented Charles Taylor from Liberating Liberia

Foreign countries interfered in Charles Taylor's revolution in Liberia and prevented the former president from liberating his people, a witness in Mr. Taylor's defense told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today.

"The Liberian revolution failed because foreign hands interfered in the Liberian revolution to disturb the revolution and prevent His Excellency President Taylor from liberating the country," witness DCT 125, who finished his direct-examination today, told the court. The witness, who has been testifying with protective measures, has given most of his testimony in closed/private sessions and on occasions when his testimony has been heard in open court, he has testified using voice and facial distortion mechanisms. When court resumed this morning, the witness was absent. Mr. Taylor's lead defense counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, informed the judges that the witness was ill and so could not appear in court. After being given medical treatment by a doctor who said he was fit and able to continue testifying, the judges ordered that the witness be brought to court and take the witness stand.

As he concluded his testimony today, the witness told the judges that Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeeping force was not neutral in the Liberian conflict. He said that the peacekeepers were more sympathetic towards the other Liberian warring factions at the expense of Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group.

During cross-examination by prosecutor Nicholas Koumjian, the witness told the court that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Sierra Leonean rebel group which Mr. Taylor is accused of providing support for, is not a terrorist organization as alleged by prosecutors. Presiding Judge of the Trial Chamber, Justice Julia Sebutinde, asked the witness to give his definition of terrorist organization.

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charged.

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explained that defense lawyers for Mr. Taylor had failed to disclose the witness's personal information to prosecutors within the 21 day period required. The prosecution request was granted and so the witness's cross-examination was suspended.

Taylor Trial Delayed

The war crimes trial of Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor suffered a two and half hour delay on Wednesday. When the Judges arrived in court at 9:30 for the continuation of the trial the Defence Witness testifying under anonymity was absent. The trial later resumed with the Defence Witness accusing the West African Peacekeeping Force, ECOMOG of being biased.

Defence Lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths told the court Wednesday morning that their witness had fallen sick. On the order of the court, the witness was treated by a doctor who later declared him fit to continue his testimonies.

The Defence Witness resumed his testimonies by telling the court that the West African Peacekeep-



ing force, ECOMOG was not neutral in the Liberian Civil War. He said ECOMOG was sympathetic towards warring factions opposed to Taylor's NPFL.

Defence Lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths asked the witness about why the Liberian Revolution failed. In this translation of the distorted voice of the witness, **The Liberian revolution failed because foreign hands interfered in the Liberian revolution and prevent his Excellency president Tay-**

lor liberating the country.

The witness cross-examination started immediately after Defence Lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths concluded the direct examination. Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor is accused of supporting the Sierra Leonean Rebel Group, RUF which terrorized the civilian population. But the Defence Witness told Prosecution Lawyer, Nicholas Kumjian that the RUF was not a terrorist organization. Presiding Judge Julia

Cont Page 2

Taylor Trial Delayed

From front page

Setutinde asked the witness about his definition of terrorism. In response the witness said **It is an organisation that is bent on the destruction of life and property, without any meaning and purpose to disturb the peace within human being.**

Meanwhile, based on a request by the Prosecution, the cross-examination of the current Defence witness has been suspended.

The Prosecution said it needed more time to adequately prepare for the cross-examination which it has already started. The Prosecution argued that the Defence failed to provide the personal information of the witness within the twenty-one days set by the court for the disclosure of witness information.

The Judges granted the Prosecution request for more time so a new Defence Witness is expected to take the stand on Thursday.

Charlestaylortrial.org

Thursday, 11 March 2010

Foday Sankoh Wanted To Free Sierra Leoneans from The Misery Of Politicians, A Sierra Leonean Defense Witness Says

By Alpha Sesay

Sierra Leone's top rebel leader waged a war on the West African country in 1991 to free the people from the misery of the country's politicians, a Sierra Leonean witness testifying for Charles Taylor told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today in The Hague.

The witness, testifying in open session but with partial protective measures, told the judges that Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader, Foday Sankoh, started agitating for multi-party democracy in Sierra Leone in the 1980s. Defense counsel for Mr. Taylor, Terry Munyard, told the judges that the witness was using protective measures because he is afraid of facing reprisals in Sierra Leone after testifying for Mr. Taylor. In his testimony today, the witness exonerated Mr. Taylor from involvement in the formation of the RUF. The RUF, he said, was not created in Liberia.

As he led the witness in direct-examination, Mr. Munyard sought to know what had motivated RUF leader Mr. Sankoh to wage a rebel war on his own country.

"What did you understand his purpose in bringing war to Sierra Leone to be?" Mr. Munyard asked the witness.

"What I understood was that he had launched the war in Kailahun and the war was coming to free the Sierra Leoneans from the misery of these politicians," the witness responded.

The witness explained that he, together with RUF leader Mr. Sankoh, was a member of an underground group called "The Study Group," which existed in Sierra Leone in the 1980s with an aim of advocating to change "the profoundly corrupt system which characterized governance in Sierra Leone." When Mr. Sankoh waged war on Sierra Leone in 1991, the witness said he joined the RUF in 1992 and eventually became the rebel group's "Civilian Coordinator."

Today's direct-examination of the witness was the shortest that Mr. Taylor's trial has had since it started in January 2008. After almost three hours of direct examination, prosecutor Nicholas Koumjian started cross-examining the witness, and sought to know the birthplace of the RUF.

"Where was the RUF formed? You said it was formed when you heard Sankoh on the radio in January 1991," Mr. Koumjian said.

"No idea," the witness responded.

"Sir, you know it was in Liberia, don't you?" Mr. Koumjian asked further.

Laughing, the witness insisted that "I said no idea. I've never been to Liberia. I only went to Liberia for the peace process, period."

Mr. Koumjian asked the witness whether his response was because he was afraid of implicating Mr. Taylor "who created the RUF in Liberia."

The witness insisted that he was not afraid of anything.

The witness also refuted prosecution evidence that diamonds mined by the RUF were taken to Liberia and handed over to Mr. Taylor. He made specific reference to a 21 carat diamond which prosecution evidence suggested was taken to Mr. Taylor in Liberia. According to the witness, he was present when the diamond was discovered by the RUF and when it was handed to Mr. Sankoh. Mr. Sankoh, the witness said, received the diamond one week before his Freetown residence was attacked on May 8, 2000. The witness said that he was part of the team that escaped with Mr. Sankoh that day, but they were unable to take the diamond with them as they had to flee without any belongings. The diamond, he said, stayed at Mr. Sankoh's house in Freetown and was never taken out of Sierra Leone.

The cross-examination of the witness continues tomorrow.

By John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

A Sierra Leonean has taken the witness stand in defence of Charles Taylor, the man who is on trial for allegedly supporting rebels in Sierra Leone. The witness is testifying in open court with partial protective measures; his name and personal data are not disclosed. He said Former RUF Leader, Foday Sankoh started agitating for multi-party democracy in 1980. John Kollie has this transcription from the Hague trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor...

To further conceal his identity, the witness is testifying with a hat stretching from the top of his head to his eyes. According to Defence Lawyer, Terry Munyard the witness wants these protective measures because he is afraid of reprisal when he returns to Sierra Leone.

The witness told the court that he and Former RUF Leader, Foday Sankoh were members of an underground movement called the Study Group in 1980. He said the Study Group agitated for change of what he called the profoundly corrupt system which characterized governance in Sierra Leone.

The witness also said he later joined the RUF in 1992, and took up a position of Civilian Coordinator.

The Sierra Leonean Defence Witness direct examination was the shortest the court has ever seen since Mr. Taylor's trial commenced.

Defence Lawyer, Terry Munyard questioned the witness for about three hours and ended the direct examination. Prosecution Lawyer, Nicholas Kumjian started the cross-examination of the witness by asking him about the birth place of the RUF.

The trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor continues in the Hague.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Thursday, 11 March 2010

Special Court suspends cross-examination of defense witness

By Matthias Daffah

The cross-examination of the current defense witness in the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor has been suspended.

The suspension of the cross-examination of Mr. Taylor's second witness was based on a request by the Prosecution.

The Prosecution said it needed more time to adequately prepare for the cross-examination, which it has already started.

The Prosecution argued the defense failed to provide the personal information of the witness within the twenty-one days set by the court.

The Judges granted the Prosecution request for more time setting the stage for a new defense witness to take the stand Thursday.

Defense Lawyer Courtenay Griffiths told the court Wednesday their witness had fallen sick.

However, on the order of the court, the witness was treated by a doctor who later declared him fit to continue his testimonies.

In his testimony, the defense Witness told the court the West African Peacekeeping force, ECOMOG was not neutral in the Liberian Civil War.

He said ECOMOG was sympathetic towards warring factions opposed to Taylor's NPFL.


United Nations Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary
11 March 2010**

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

International Clips on Liberia

Anxious time for Liberians in US

http://www.projo.com/news/content/Liberian_refugee_status_03-11-10_UDHO1EJ_v5.37d409d.html

WASHINGTON — Rhode Island lawmakers expressed optimism Wednesday that Liberians in the state will win another year's extension of their immigration status before it expires at the end of this month. Members of the state's congressional delegation also pledged to a group of about 100 Liberians from around the country that they will continue to seek a more elusive prize, legislation that could put legal immigrants from the war-torn West African nation on track toward American citizenship. "This year is a difficult one, but we're not going to stop, we're not going to give up" on efforts to enact a comprehensive immigration reform bill that would contain a special provision to give Liberians a permanent home in the U.S., Sen. Jack Reed told the group at a gathering on Capitol Hill. But the far likelier scenario this year — as it has been for most of the two decades since civil war drove Liberians to take refuge in the U.S. — is the temporary extension of a program that permits them to remain legally in this country, Reed said in an interview.

Adoptive brother of Liberian girl sentenced for Oklahoma rape

<http://newsok.com/adoptive-brother-of-liberian-girl-sentenced-for-rape/article/3445531#ixzz0htdBHJqp>

FAIRVIEW — Ashton Tyler confessed to sexually assaulting his adopted Liberian sister but cast most of the blame for his actions on the 9-year-old girl, according to court records. Major County District Judge Ray Dean Linder on Wednesday sentenced Tyler, 20, to two years in prison and eight years probation for the assault. As part of the sentence, Tyler is required to complete a treatment program for sex offenders, register as a sex offender and pay a \$2,000 fine. The rape occurred when Tyler was 15. His victim was one of five Liberian-born sisters adopted by his parents in 2005. Tyler pleaded no contest to felony rape by instrumentation and allowed a judge to choose his sentence, rather than a jury. Tyler told investigators he carried the girl into his bedroom and assaulted her in his bed, according to a presentence investigative report given to the court. He claimed he was sexually naive and the victim made sexual advances toward him on more than one occasion. Assistant District Attorney Westline Ritter said she found it disturbing that Tyler never took responsibility for his actions and blamed the victim. Tyler's parents, Ardee Verlon Tyler, 51, and Penny Sue Tyler, 46, were convicted in February of felony child abuse for abusing the same girl. Both received 10-year suspended prison sentences, although Penny Tyler is required to serve 60 days in the county jail. She is scheduled to be released March 22, and was not in the courtroom alongside her son.

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea

Guinea CBG union says suspends strike action

CONAKRY, March 11 (Reuters) - The main union at Guinea's CBG, the world's top bauxite miner, suspended its strike on Thursday ahead of negotiations on grievances due next week. A strike call was launched on Wednesday over work conditions but a CBG source said it was only partially followed and production was unaffected. "We decided to suspend the strike ahead of negotiations which should start on Tuesday," Oumar Ly, secretary-general of CBG's main union told Reuters by telephone, saying the strike was followed at CBG's Sangaredi mine but not at the Kamsar mine. CBG is a joint venture between Alcoa (AA.N) and Rio Tinto (RIO.L) (RIO.AX) and is expected to produce more than 13 million tonnes of bauxite this year, or 80 percent of Guinea's total output. The West African nation is the world's top supplier of the aluminium ore.

Sierra Leone

Yumkella's mission to West Africa to focus on agribusiness, agro-industries and investment promotion

(VIENNA, 12 March 2009) UNIDO Director-General Kandeh K. Yumkella will commence his mission to Sierra Leone which will take him, from 12 to 16 March 2010. In Freetown, the Director-General will have bilateral meetings with the Government to follow-up on the Trade and Investment Forum, which took place, under the auspices of H.E. President Koroma, on 18 November 2009 in London. There, Yumkella brokered many important discussions, which also involved Rt. Hon. Tony Blair and other high-level leaders. "Sierra Leone needs to continue its recovery process", said Yumkella, "therefore trade and investment promotion are of utmost importance to bring back growth and prosperity". The UNIDO Director-General will also discuss follow-up measures to the GEF projects in the energy field that the Organization is implementing for the country. Finally, Yumkella will inaugurate the Koindu Community Production Centre in the eastern part of the country, at the border with Guinea and Liberia. "Koindu is one of townships that suffered most from the civil war", said the Director-General.

Local Media – Newspaper

Vice President Boakai Launches Land Commission Today

(The Monitor)

- Vice President Joseph Boakai has officially launched the Land Commission.
- Today's launching of the Commission has set it in full working gear as it relates to its activities to the public, according to Commissioner Suzanna Vaye, chairperson on media and awareness of the Commission.
- The Land Commission is one of several commissions that grew out of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) as one of the surest ways of resolving the several land disputes and enhancing the country's peace process.

Senate Seeks Solution To Threshold Bill

(The Monitor, Heritage)

- The Senate has announced a negotiation aimed at finding a final solution to the controversial population Threshold Bill.
- The Senate said the negotiation is also intended to build consensus to ensure out of court settlement of the writ of prohibition filed against the Legislature and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.
- The prohibition writ was issued by Associate Justice Kabineh Jan'eh based on a complaint filed by a group of lawmakers.
- The concerned lawmakers complained the Legislature and President Sirleaf over what they considered the illegal procedure in passing the vetoed Threshold Bill.
- However, Senate Pro-tempore Cletus Wortorson said discussions are underway to resolve whatever differences emerged over the threshold bill.

Government Prepares To Deport Illegal Aliens

(The Monitor, National Chronicle, Heritage, New Democrat)

- Justice Minister Christiana Tah says Government is prepared to deport all illegal aliens from the country.
- Minister Tah said it was unhealthy for people to enter the country illegally and take away resources while Liberians live in abject poverty.
- The Justice Minister speaking in Fishtown, River Gee County during the dedication of the Immigration Bureau sub-office in the county said government will not rest until immigration offices are built throughout Liberia to protect the country against illegal aliens.
- She however, clarified the immigration offices are not meant to discourage aliens but to get rid of illegal people.

UNICEF Donates To Liberia's Cash Transfer Pilot Project

(Heritage)

- The United Nations Children's Fund – Liberia (UNICEF) has donated a vehicle to the Government of Liberia Social Cash Transfer Pilot Scheme.
- According to a press release, the presentation was made to the Gender Ministry by UNICEF Representative to Liberia, Ms. Isabel Crowley.
- Ms. Crowley urged the project team in the field to use the vehicle with safety to ensure the success of the project.
- In response, Deputy Gender Minister for Planning and Administration, Rufus Kaine thanked UNICEF for the donation.
- The cash Transfer Programme is aimed at providing regular money payments to the most vulnerable families without any adult who can work.

Curfew Relaxed In Voinjama

(National Chronicle)

- Reports say government has relaxed the dusk to dawn curfew imposed on Voinjama, Lofa County following the violent incident in the area on February 26 which left four persons dead and properties destroyed.
- The curfew which was relaxed Tuesday will now start from ten in the evening to six in the morning.
- The reports quote Lofa Superintendent Galakpai Kortimai as saying the reduction in the curfew hours was due to improved security in Voinjama and would be lifted finally when total calm returns to Voinjama.
- Superintendent Kortimai disclosed eleven persons have so far been arrested while others have been sent to court.

Youth Coalition Wants House-to-House Search In Lofa

(National Chronicle)

- The Coalition of Political Party Youth has called for a comprehensive house-to-house search in the five districts of Lofa County.
- The Chairman of the group, Mr. Daniel Fassah said the exercise was necessary to ensure that Lofa County is gun-free.
- Mr. Fassah said the search must be carried out by Liberian security forces backed by the United Nations Mission in Liberia.
- He said in order to guarantee the effectiveness of the exercise; whistleblowers must be encouraged to participate in the process by exposing hidden weapons.
- The Youth Coalition Chairman also called on the authorities to place a temporary ban on the use of single-barrel guns for hunting purposes until after six months.

Tipoteh To contest 2011 Elections

(The Inquirer, The Informer, The News, The Analyst)

- Opposition politician, Dr. Togba-Nah Tipoteh, has announced that he is offering himself to the poor people as their presidential candidate for the 2011 General and Presidential Elections.
- Dr. Tipoteh in a nationwide broadcast observed that the rich people already have their presidential candidate in incumbent President, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

- Unlike Mrs. Sirleaf, the Liberian politician said he does not want to be a formidable candidate because the government like past governments is formidable but not credible.
- Dr. Tipoteh declared that he wants to be a credible candidate to provide leadership in putting poor people first to become united to get power in the 2011 Elections to be poor no more.

UL, Italian Government Sign US\$4.5 Million Agreement

(The Informer, The Inquirer, Daily Observer)

- The University of Liberia (UL) has signed US\$4.5 million agreement with the Government of Italy.
- Under the agreement, the Italian government would clear the A. M. Dogliotti College of Medicine of all existing old structures and construct new ones.
- Those facilities to be constructed on the campus include residential quarters for faculty and staff members as well as laboratories.
- At the signing ceremony on the main campus of the UL, the president of the University, Dr. Emmet A. Dennis, thanked the government of Italy for the gesture.
- He said it was a milestone contribution by Italy in the post-war reconstruction process of Liberia.

LNP, Commerce Investors Arrest Several Persons In Rotten Rice Scam

(The Informer, The Monitor, National Chronicle)

- The Liberia National Police (LNP) in collaboration with a team of Commerce Ministry inspectors has arrested several people in the Duport Road community with a consignment of rotten rice.
- The commerce inspectors discovered the rotten rice in the Paynesville area and alerted the Police.
- The inspectors discovered the rice while it was being re-bagged for sale on the local market.
- About 433 bags of rotten rice were being re-bagged when the inspectors discovered the scam, the Commerce Ministry said.

In Connection With PSU Officer's Murder, Four Suspects Charged, Others On The Run

(National Chronicle, Heritage)

- The Liberia National Police (LNP) has charged four suspects with murder for their alleged role in the burning to death of a senior Police Support Unit (PSU) officer, Amos Tutu on February 27, 2010 in Monrovia.
- The four suspects charged with murder include Aaron Lackey, Paul Andrews and the other two only identified as Kwame and Wleh.
- According to a police charge sheet, defendant Lackey was arrested in Gbarnga, Bong County while the others were arrested in Monrovia.
- Several persons also suspected of being behind the death of the PSU officer are said to be on the run, but the police are vigorously pursuing them.

Liberians Observed Decoration Day

(The Informer, The Inquirer, Daily Observer, The Monitor, The News, In Profile Daily, Heritage, New Democrat)

- The Decoration Day exercises yesterday gave many tombstones and graves a much-needed facelift, albeit with whitewash and, in some cases, with a small quantity of alcoholic beverages and/or libation.
- Prayers were also offered for the dead.
- But the exercise at the Palm Grove Cemetery was met with reek and disgust as some of the graves had become places of convenience for some unknown persons.
- The second Wednesday of March each year is set aside by an Act of the National Legislature passed on October 24, 1916, as Decoration Day in remembrance of relatives, loved ones and

friends through church services, prayers, tributes and decoration of cemeteries in honor of the dead.

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 09:00 am)*

Senate Seeks Solution To Threshold Bill

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

Associate Justice Resigns Chairmanship On Judicial Institute's Board of Governors

- Associate Justice Kabineh Jan'eh has resigned from the chairmanship of the Board of Governors of the James A. A. Pierre Judicial Institute.
- A letter of resignation bearing his signature says Justice Jan'eh resigned February 19, 2010.
- In the letter, Justice Jan'eh said he resigned because Chief Justice Johnnie Lewis has over the last three weeks baffled every effort aimed at making the judicial institute functional.
- He also accused the Chief Justice of continuously undermining judicial reform in Liberia.
- The Associate Justice described the judicial institute as a vehicle for reform in Liberia's judiciary.

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LNP, Commerce Investors Arrest Several Persons In Rotten Rice Scam

African-American To Invest In Mining Sector

- The Federation of Miners Association of Liberia has announced that a major investor has agreed to invest in the mining sector this year.
- The President of the Federation of Miners, said King Joseph Dubois, an African-American is expected to invest millions of dollars.
- Mr. Thomas Cassell said the African-American investor is expected to help with housing facilities for local miners.

Curfew Relaxed In Voinjama

Youth Coalition Wants House-to-House Search In Lofa

Truth FM *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

BIN Seeks Extradition With Guinea For Fleeing Men In The Voinjama Violence

- The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) says it is currently working with Guinean authorities to have several men extradited to face justice in Liberia.
- The men according to the BIN fled into Guinea after allegedly committing atrocities recently in Voinjama, Lofa County.
- BIN Commissioner, Chris Massaquoi said his office was closely collaborating with his Guinean counterparts to have the fleeing suspects brought back to Liberia to face justice.

Solomon Times
Thursday, 11 March 2010

More Victims Ready to Testify in Next Hearings

The first public hearing by the Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) concluded yesterday, with 19 witnesses giving sometimes wrenching personal testimony on their experiences during five years of civil conflict known as the "tension".

Witness testimonies revealed the breadth of their anguishing experiences. Among them were Mrs. Pretty Rose Proctor from Choiseul Island who lost her husband, her brother and her niece in the tensions; Benedict Maisura, whose father was brutally attacked and tortured by militants; and Maria Odilia from Guadalcanal, who was attacked by militants because she married a man from Malaita.

Throughout the two-day hearing, there were consistent calls for perpetrators to have the courage to come forward to tell their story. "We will definitely invite them to testify," said Father Samuel Ata, chair of the TRC. "It is very important, because the perpetrators do also need healing."

Father Ata said he has already received several requests from additional witnesses volunteering to testify at future public hearings. Seven more public hearings will be held by the TRC in 2010, with the next hearing on the island of Malaita in April.

The Minister for National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, Mr. Sam Iduri, expressed delight at the progress achieved during the hearing. "The level of public support and interest has far surpassed the ministry's expectations," he said. "We are very pleased with the achievements of the TRC thus far."

The TRC is an independent body formed to look into the root causes of the tensions, and to promote reconciliation. It comprises three national and two international commissioners. Its primary function is to promote national unity and reconciliation. The commissioners are: Fr. Sam Ata of Solomon Islands (Chair); Ms. Sofia Macher of Peru (Deputy Chair); Mr. George Kejoa of Solomon Islands; Mrs. Carolyn Laore of Solomon Islands; and Ratu Joni Madraiwiwi of Fiji. It began work on 15 January 2010, after being launched the previous year by former Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

"The Solomon Islands TRC provides an ideal forum, at which the first steps towards national healing can be taken", said Knut Ostby, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative. "It is very positive that there is so much early support for these efforts".

Financial and technical support for the TRC has been provided by a number of contributors, including the Governments of Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand; the European Commission; the International Centre for Transitional Justice; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; and the United Nations Development Programme.

Agence France Presse

Thursday, 11 March 2010

Myanmar abuse may be crimes against humanity: UN expert

GENEVA — Human rights violations in Myanmar may amount to crimes against humanity and could warrant a UN inquiry, a UN expert said in a report to be examined next Monday at the Human Rights Council.

"According to consistent reports, the possibility exists that some of these human rights violations may entail categories of crimes against humanity or war crimes under the terms of the statute of the International Criminal Court," said Tomas Quintana in his report to the council.

Quintana, who visited the South-east Asian country in February, pointed out that the "mere existence of this possibility" requires the Myanmar government to investigate the allegations.

However, the ruling junta has failed to remedy abuses such as the recruitment of child soldiers, the discrimination against the Muslim minority in the northern Rakhine state and the deprivation of the population's basic rights to food, shelter, health and education.

"Given this lack of accountability, UN institutions may consider the possibility to establish a commission of inquiry with a specific fact finding mandate to address the question of international crimes," he said.

Quintana noted that "systematic violation of human rights" for years in the country continues without any intervention from the junta.

He charged that the violations "are the result of a state policy that originate from decisions by authorities in the executive, military and judiciary at all levels."

The expert, who completed his report before new election laws were unveiled this week by the junta, also renewed a call for the Myanmar government to release more than 2,100 political prisoners, as well as pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi ahead of this year's elections.

Rights groups such as the United States Campaign for Burma -- a coalition of Myanmar activists in exile and human rights campaigners -- hailed Quintana's report.

"This is the first time in the nearly 20 years of UN involvement in my country that an UN official made a credible, meaningful and important recommendation to help transform the situation in Burma," said Aung Din, who is executive director of the US Campaign for Burma.

"I hope the UN Security Council and other UN institutions will act accordingly to set up a commission of inquiry, suggested by the Special Rapporteur without further delay. This is the time for action," added Aung.

Myanmar's "severe human rights abuses" -- including deaths in custody, rape and torture -- were also highlighted in a separate report released Thursday by the US State Department.

The State Department's annual report said that Buddhist monks were subjected to particularly "cruel treatment," including beatings, due to the role the clergy played in 2007 pro-democracy protests crushed by the junta.

It also reported severe repression of ethnic minorities including the forced displacement of villagers to make way for development and migration by Burmese.

The report quoted a refugee group as documenting more than 4,000 cases of rape, forced labor and other abuses against the Karen minority in the past several years across 190 villages.

Child soldiers were also a major problem, with the military forcibly enlisting children as young as 14, the report said.