

**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:

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Awoko

Thursday, 13 March 2008

CDF appeals submission commences

By Betty Milton

The Appeal cases of members of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) commenced yesterday with the prosecution giving their oral submission on their nine grounds of appeals.

Submitting on behalf of the prosecution, the deputy prosecutor Christopher Starker said their first ground of appeal dealt with the acquittal of the two accused, Moinina Fofanah and Aliou Kondewa, from the act of murder and other inhuman act as crimes against humanity as the Trial Chamber failed to enter conviction for these crimes.

He added that failure to enter conviction for these crimes was fruitless and that failure to enter conviction was an error on the Trial Chamber that had to

be corrected by the Appeals Chamber.

Although, according to Christopher Starker, the accused fought to restore democracy, he said this should not stand as an armed forces seeking to restore democracy was the same as an armed force fighting against democracy.

The prosecution further appealed on grounds three when the Trial Chamber failed to find superior responsibility and responsibility for planning, ordering, instigating aiding and abetting and preparation or execution of certain acts in Kenema

District. The prosecution, Christopher Starker went on, had enough evidence that the CDF was an organized armed group that was engaged in widespread atrocities.

On the issue of Moinina Fofanah, Mr Starker disclosed that the accused was one of the three holy trinity of the CDF and was aware of the recruitment of child soldier and was present during the registration of children under the CDF, as it was the fifth ground of appeal which acquitted the accused for the enlisting of children into armed forces or their active use in hostilities.

Fofanah, he went on, was present at the passing out ceremony where Chief Norman said the adult did

pretty well as the children.

Mr Starker said Fofanah provided tactical assistance at Base Zero, and that he also provided the commander with logistics for the fight in Tongo and Bo.

About the third accused, Aliou Kondewa, the prosecution submitted that he aided and abetted the use of child soldiers as he performed the initiation.

He stressed that during the January 1998 passing

out parade, Kondewa addressed the initiates and that he was the one who gave his blessings to the fighters as no one would have gone to fight without Kondewa's blessing.

The act of terrorism, the prosecution said, was a war crime and not crimes against humanity and there should not be proof of widespread atrocities.

Senior Attorney Joseph Kamara, in his submission for the prosecution on the third, fourth and seventh grounds of

appeals stated that the Trial Chamber failure to find the two responsible for planning, aiding and abetting and the Chamber failed to systematical analyse the evidence placed by the prosecution and that they failed to take the case as a whole.

The evidence, he went on, for Koribondo was the same for Kenema and Tongo. The defence for the two appellants will be submitting their own grounds of appeal today.

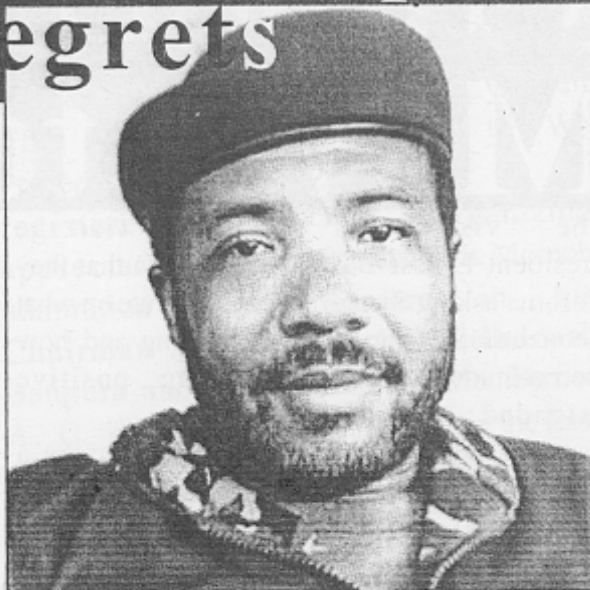
We Yone

Thursday, 13 March 2008

Rebel Leader Express No Regrets

FORMER rebel in the Sierra Leone war has said that he does not regret it the least killing babies and disemboweling women. He was testifying at the war crimes trial of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

The rebel, whose name was ZIGZAG in the battlefield, admitted to killing women, children, old men, and said he had



personally slit open women's bellies. He had absolutely no remorse and said he didn't regret "an inch" what he had done. The one-time Liberian President is accused of supporting rebels of

the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who waged an 11-year war against successive governments in Sierra Leone and killed over 500,000 people and maimed hundreds more.

[We Yone is the official newspaper of the All People's Congress.]

Exclusive

Thursday, 13 March 2008

"Taylor's Threats Forced Prince Johnson to Execute Doe" -

**Former Commander Reveals*



The trial of former Liberia President continues at The Hague amid lots of revelations.

Joseph Mazah a former NPSL fighter who was nick-named Zig-Zag said he was in Gbanga when Prince Johnson captured former President Doe.

Prince Johnson, he said, communicated to them that he was coming over to celebrate with them. This statement, he said, took a different twist as Charles Taylor became doubtful and worried and later ordered the execution of Prince Johnson.

He went on to disclose that Taylor dispatched a crack squad on a quick mission to execute Prince who had planned to get over at Gbanga.

He further stated that

Continued page 2

"Taylor's Threats Forced Prince Johnson to Execute Doe" -

From front page

four cars loaded with Johnson's fighters were heading for Gbanga came under intense attack by Taylor's men.

He said a co-commander called Ben told them that they had instructions from Taylor that they should execute all of them with knives.

Majority of Johnson's fighters were killed in the attack, while few others escaped and later reported to their chief (Johnson) who wasted no time in killing Samuel Doe, the next day.

Exclusive

Thursday, 13 March 2008

"Moinina & Kondewa Planned, Supported Killings," - Prosecution

By Musa Sesay

The prosecution team in the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court in unequivocal terms has maintained that the Civil Defence Force (CDF) Convicts, Moinina Fofanah and Alieu Kondema, dabbled in a systematic attack based on their planning process.

A member of the team, Mr Kamara, stated that
Continued page 2



"Moinina & Kondewa Planned, Supported Killings," - Prosecution

From front page

speeches by the two individuals during the war substantial influenced and were very much instrumental on the atrocities committed by the Kamajors.

"The two were part and parcel of the planning, preparation and execution of innocent women and children", Kamara stated.

He recalled by his evidence of different meetings by the Kamajors at Base Zero which was a meeting point for the CDF. At the different meetings, the prosecution noted that

Kondewa was a respected priest who was adored by his subordinates for his mystic powers. The evidence indicated that Kondewa, at one point in time, told his Kamajors that "a rebel is always a rebel and the days of surrender are over, kill all the rebels and their allies".

On the level of participation, the prosecution quoted Moinina Fofanah as saying "the time has come for us to implement what we have learnt to attack the juntas and anyone who fails to carry the command must not return to the

base."

The prosecution also mentioned Chief Hinga Norman instructing them to kill, destroy Kombondo but to spare schools, Mosques, Churches and Court Barrays during an attack in 1998.

The same was also the case for Tongo. It will be recalled that presiding Judge, Justice Benjamin Mutanga Itoe, slammed the two CDF six and seven years' sentences, after finding them guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Equity
Thursday, 13 March 2008

Charles Taylor escapes



Brima Acha, Police Boss

BY MOHAMED KAI

A notorious criminal and former fighter of the defunct National Provisional Liberation Front (NPFL) of Liberia who allegedly fought alongside the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone is reported to have recently escaped after one of his allies was gunned down by a police officer.

Police sources say he is reported to have escaped to Liberia and is still on the run while the Kissy Mess Mess Police have vowed to pursue him wherever he goes.

Emmanuel Kroma aka Charles Gangay Taylor and Charles Tomah are reported to have raped a 13 year old girl to death at Kuntorloh in the Eastern part of Freetown before Kroma escaped after

Toma was gunned down.

Sources at Kuntorloh states that on Sunday, March 2 this year these two men broke into the home of Mr. Turay and stole huge household items valued over ten million Leones.

These sources further reveal that after carting away the booty, the two hoodlums again returned to Mr. Turay's house

for some remaining items they had stolen and parked at the back of the house.

Whilst they were on the spree in the house, a neighbour detected the unusual movement and laid in wait for them.

During the period of their escape, a police officer shot dead Charles Tomah while Emmanuel Kroma aka Charles Taylor narrowly escaped.

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Charles Taylor escapes

FROM PAGE 1

Residents in the neighbourhood while searching the house found the thirteen year old girl dead in one of the rooms with blood profusely oozing out from her vagina.

On the following morning the remains of Charles Tomah were brought to the Kissy Police Station for identification.

Police sources state that some of the items that were stolen were found in

the residence of some hoodlums at Kuntorloh and police officers are presently pursuing Gangay Taylor.

Since Taylor's escape, the police have constantly raided various criminal dens around the Kissy Shell Company and 'Forl Coop' areas where they continue to arrest commercial sex workers and other known criminals for possible information about the fugitive Charles Gangay Taylor.

Awareness Times
Thursday, 13 March 2008

Former UNAMSIL Boss hails Issa Sesay

Erstwhile Force Commander of UN Mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL, Gen. Daniel Ishmael Opande is said to have described former RUF strong man and Special Court's war crimes indictee, Issa Sesay as pioneer of the peace process in Sierra Leone. Gen. Opande submitted that Sesay have political acumen but was rather moderate and trustworthy. He is said to have added that Sesay was determined to cooperate fully with the peace process in Sierra Leone.

Associated Press

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Terror Tactics Described at Taylor Trial

By ARTHUR MAX

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands (AP) — During West Africa's civil wars, Charles Taylor encouraged his fighters to "play with human blood" to create fear among his enemies, a former militia commander testified Wednesday at Taylor's war crimes trial.

Joseph Marzah described militia checkpoints meant to terrify the population, with human heads mounted on sticks and human intestines used as rope to barricade roads.

He said Taylor ordered him to kill civilians, telling him after one march into Bong County in Liberia that anyone there must be collaborating with the enemy.

"We executed everybody — babies, women, old men. There were so many executions. I can't remember them all," Marzah told the court.

Prosecutors described Marzah as one of their key witnesses, testifying with inside knowledge of the former Liberian president's operations in Liberia and neighboring Sierra Leone, where he is accused of responsibility for the widespread murder, rape and amputations committed by soldiers loyal to him.

Taylor, 59, is accused of trading so-called "blood diamonds" mined in Sierra Leone and smuggled through Liberia to finance the civil war, and of orchestrating the violence from his presidential palace in Liberia's capital, Monrovia.

The first former African head of state to face an international tribunal, Taylor has pleaded not guilty to 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He is being tried by the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, which has been hearing the case in The Hague, Netherlands.

His trial began last year but was halted for six months after a chaotic first day on which he fired his legal team. The case resumed in January, when prosecutors began call the first of dozens of witnesses expected to testify.

Marzah, who described himself as Taylor's chief of operations and commander of the Death Squad that specialized in executions, said he smuggled both arms and diamonds for Taylor.

Weapons were flown in to Sierra Leone on what he described as a Russian cargo plane brought by a "white guy with a big stomach" who was a friend of Taylor's. He did not mention the man's name.

Marzah said forces of Taylor's National Patriotic Liberian Front were told on several occasions to show no mercy to civilians.

"He made us understand that you have to play with human blood so enemy forces would be afraid of you," Marzah said.

At times Marzah became frustrated and angry when questioned too closely about the timing of events, saying he had been with Taylor "from beginning to end," and had done too much to recall the dates of each event.

Marzah said he was instructed to assassinate a militia leader, Issa Sesay, because he was about to sign a peace agreement, but Sesay evaded Marzah's ambush.

He described intercepting a four-vehicle convoy that was believed to be carrying Liberia's then-President Samuel Doe, but Doe was not there. The commander of the group called Taylor for instructions.

Taylor "said to execute them with knives," Marzah testified. "There were about 72 of them, and we executed them with knives the same day."

Doe was killed in September 1990, which Marzah said was shortly after the abortive ambush.

Associated Press

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Witness describes terror tactics by Charles Taylor's forces during civil wars

AMSTERDAM, Netherlands: Charles Taylor celebrated his rise to power in Liberia with a ceremony involving a human sacrifice, burying a pregnant woman alive in sand, one of his former military commanders testified Wednesday.

Joseph "Zigzag" Marzah described the ceremony and acknowledged committing hundreds of other murders with his own hands under Taylor's orders, during a day of grim testimony at Taylor's war crimes trial in The Hague.

"We executed everybody — babies, women, old men. There were so many executions. I can't remember them all," Marzah told the court.

Among the victims were Taylor's opponents and former allies who he thought had betrayed him, Marzah said. One was a guerrilla commander known as Superman who Taylor ordered executed and his severed hand brought to him as proof of his death.

The killers ceremonially ate Superman's heart, and afterwards were given US\$200 each which they were told came from Taylor for "cigarette money."

Asked under cross-examination if he had any "pangs of conscience," Marzah replied "yes," but said he had no difficulty carrying out his orders. "I was a servant to my chief, Charles Taylor," he said.

He was adamant that Taylor had specifically ordered him to chop off hands, and paid a monetary reward for the killing of babies. He recalled receiving an order from Taylor to cut open a woman close to giving birth because the unborn child "is an enemy."

Under prompting from defense counsel Courtenay Griffith, Marzah said, "It's not difficult to kill a baby. Sometimes you just knock them on the head, sometimes you throw them in a pit, sometimes you throw them in the river and they are dead. Then you give the report to Charles Taylor."

Prosecutors described Marzah as one of their key witnesses, testifying with inside knowledge of the former Liberian president's operations in Liberia and neighboring Sierra Leone, where he is accused of responsibility for the widespread murder, rape and amputations committed by soldiers loyal to him.

The first former African head of state to face an international tribunal, Taylor, 59, has pleaded not guilty to 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He is being tried by the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone,

His trial began last year but was halted for six months after a chaotic first day on which he fired his legal team. The case resumed in January, when prosecutors began to call the first of dozens of witnesses expected to testify.

Describing the ceremony on the beach behind White Flower, Taylor's executive mansion in Monrovia, Marzah said a woman was placed standing up in a pit between two oil drums, then covered over with sand. Then a white sheep was killed on the spot.

"It was a sacrifice," Marzah said. Taylor "was the first person to put sand in his hand and put it in the hole."

Marzah said the event happened in 1995, although Taylor did not come to power until he won an election in 1997. At other times, Marzah repeatedly became frustrated and angry when questioned too closely about the timing of events, saying he had been with Taylor "from beginning to end," and had done too much to recall the dates of each event.

Marzah said Taylor encouraged his fighters to "play with human blood" to create fear among his enemies. He described militia checkpoints meant to terrify the population.

After setting up roadblocks, "we used human intestines. We put heads on sticks for people to be afraid. When the person is executed, the stomach is split and you use the intestine as a rope." Sometimes the soldiers tied two together to stretch as much as 10 meters (30 feet) across the road, he told the court.

Marzah said he saw Taylor pass through such checkpoints at least eight times.

Marzah, who described himself as Taylor's chief of operations and commander of the Death Squad, which specialized in executions, said forces of Taylor's National Patriotic Liberian Front were told on several occasions to show no mercy to civilians.

"He made us understand that you have to play with human blood so enemy forces would be afraid of you," he said.

Marzah said he smuggled both arms and diamonds for Taylor. He drew a sketch of one stone the size of a passport and partly shaped like a head.

Weapons were flown in to Sierra Leone on what he described as a Russian cargo plane brought by a "white guy with a big stomach" who was a friend of Taylor's. He did not mention the man's name.

Cocorioko website

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Witness in Taylor's trial says he does not regret killing children and disembowelling women

A FORMER rebel in the Sierra Leone war has said that he does not regret it the least killing babies and disembowelling women. He was testifying at the war crimes trial of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, at the International Criminal Court in the Hague.

The rebel, whose name was ZIGZAG in the battlefield, admitted to killing women ,children, old men, and said he had personally slit open women's bellies. He had absolutely no remorse and said he didn't regret "an inch" what he had done.

The one-time Liberian President is accused of supporting rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who waged an 11-year war against successive governments in Sierra Leone and killed over 500,000 people and maimed hundreds more.

Reuters

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Court told of brutal tactics incited by Taylor

By Alexandra Hudson

THE HAGUE, March 12 (Reuters) - A witness calling himself Charles Taylor's death squad commander told a court on Wednesday he killed men, women and babies on the former Liberian leader's orders and supplied arms to rebels in Sierra Leone.

Taylor, once one of Africa's most feared warlords, faces charges of rape, murder, mutilation and recruitment of child soldiers at the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, set up to try those most responsible for the 1991-2002 conflict. More than 250,000 people died in intertwined wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Prosecutors say Taylor, then president of Liberia, wanted to plunder neighbouring Sierra Leone's diamonds and destabilise its government by controlling and arming rebels. In harrowing testimony, Joseph "ZigZag" Marzah, a Liberian who joined rebels loyal to Taylor and rose through the ranks to become a trusted aide, told of an ingrained culture of brutality among Taylor's henchmen.

Former rebel leaders who fell out of favour with Taylor met horrific ends. Marzah told how he and others dismembered the body of one notorious leader, "Superman", and took his severed hand to Taylor who gave them "cigarette money" as a reward.

They then cooked and ate "Superman's" liver.

Marzah said he had earlier served with the Taylor-backed National Patriotic Front of Liberia rebels and had made road checkpoints out of human intestines with severed heads mounted on sticks.

Asked whether Taylor ever saw such checkpoints, he said: "He was aware. He made us understand that you have to play with human blood so that enemies would be afraid."

Marzah is the 20th witness for the prosecution since Taylor's trial began in earnest at the start of January.

Marzah also told of killing civilians viewed as loyal to rival rebel groups and said he had murdered women with pen knives and drowned and bludgeoned babies without conscience, doing so for Taylor.

"I regret nothing," the 49-year-old said.

ARMS RUNNING

Marzah also said he took weapons, some stored at Taylor's presidential mansion, to Sierra Leone on up to 40 occasions and returned to Liberia with diamonds which he handed to Taylor.

One diamond was five centimetres (2 inches) long.

"When we took it along, Charles Taylor was impressed. He even gave us some money. We took enough ammunition back to Sierra Leone," said Marzah.

More than 250,000 people died in intertwined wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, thousands had their limbs hacked off by drug-crazed rebels, many of them children. Taylor, now 60, went into exile in Nigeria after

he was overthrown in 2003 and was handed to the court after international pressure was put on the Nigerian authorities.

His trial was moved to The Hague because of fears it could reignite instability if held in Sierra Leone.

He has pleaded not guilty to all charges. (editing by Tim Pearce)

BBC World Service Trust

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

By Joseph Cheeseman, at The Hague

The Prosecution at the Special Court for Sierra Leone has dramatically changed the order of two of its witnesses. The testimony of witness Isaac Mongor has been suspended to give way to another Liberian witness, a Former Senior Commander of the NPFL and the RUF. Joseph Cheeseman reports.

CHEESEMAN: The new Liberian witness on the stand is Joseph Marzah, popularly known in NPFL and RUF circles as Zigzag Marzah.

Defence lead lawyer, QC Courtney Griffiths, who had been engaged with another trial in London, has been recalled to cross examine the prosecution most senior Liberian witness, Zigzag Marzah. The Prosecution said Marzah should have testified before Isaac Mongor, but Defence lead lawyer, Courtney Griffiths designated by the by defence to cross examine the witness was not available. Prosecution says Isaac Mongor will return to the witness stand after Marzah ends his testimony.

Before Zigzag Marzah took the stand, Chamber II of the Special Court for Sierra Leone denied a Prosecution motion requesting limitations on the direct and cross-examination of witness Zigzag Marzah.

The Prosecution, in its application, called on the Court to make it mandatory for witness Marzah to be examined by the Prosecution for one day. The Prosecution also requested that the Defence be given one and half days to cross examine the witness. Miss Brenda Hollis who made the application for the Prosecution, said they had limited time to provide security protection for Marzah's family.

The Defence team of Charles Taylor objected to placing any limitation on the direct or cross-examination of any witness. Defence lawyer, QC Courtney Griffiths said it would be a breach of his professional duty to his client if he accepted any limitation on the testimony of a witness.

Following legal arguments by the two parties, the bench of the Court said limiting the testimony of a witness is not in the interest of justice.

PRESIDING JUDGE JUSTICE TERESA DOHERTY: The Accused has not heard the evidence of the prospective witness, and we consider that, and hold that, in this particular application it is not in the interest of justice to limit cross-examination in the way the Prosecution has applied for.

CHEESEMAN: The Prosecution insider witness said he was a member of Charles Taylor's Death Squad. When asked about some of the executions he carried out on Taylor's order, Marzah recalled how Charles Taylor ordered the flogging of former Liberian Vice President Enoch Dogolea. Marzah believes the flogging led to the death of the Vice President.

MARZAH: Dogolea, he was the vice president to Charles Taylor. It came to a time, he began to advocate for Charles Taylor to go (to) America and negotiate with the American government. I heard from Benjamin Yeaten, the Chief Security to Charles Taylor, he said that the man, he's trying to connive. For that reason Charles Taylor gave instruction for him to be dealt with. So he took Enoch Dogolea in the banana bush in front of Benjamin Yeaten's home. He was beaten with young banana tree almost to the point of death. They kept him in Ben's home. After he left we heard that he was sick and he remained in

[unclear] and died from the beating. I saw him and I took part in the beating by Charles Taylor's instructions.

CHEESEMAN: Charles Taylor's indictment does not include what happened in Liberia during his administration.

Zigzag Marzah told the Court that he personally took several pieces of diamonds from Sierra Leone to Charles Taylor in Liberia. He described the largest piece of diamond given to Mr. Taylor by him and others as the size of a passport photo. Zigzag Marzah was given a sheet of paper by the court to draw or indicate the size of the diamond.

MARZAH: Bockarie and myself took this diamond from Sierra Leone to Taylor. In my presence he hand-delivered it. And after he hand-delivered it, he offered an envelope to every one of us.

CHEESEMAN: The Former NPFL and RUF battle front commander testified he transported several arms and ammunition from the Roberts International Airport to Charles Taylor's White Flower residence. Marzah told the court he took trucks filled with arms and ammunition to Sierra Leone for the RUF.

MARZAH: We spent two days; the following night we picked up from Monrovia with the two yellow trucks and the pickup brought the jeep. So after we carried the first trip, I think I spent two or three weeks in Sierra Leone. I began to come back with the yellow truck with the pickup and the jeep. I started hauling them overnight. After the first trip I think I made about four or five trips before I could finish with those items.

CHEESEMAN: Zigzag Marzah has ended his direct examination and he's now in the hands of the Defence. Zigzag Marzah is the fourth Liberian to testify against Charles Taylor.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Taylor's trial: defense wins limitation motion

Written by Wellington Geevon Smith

The defence team of former President Charles Taylor has objected to placing any limitation on the direct or cross examination of any witness.

Lead defence lawyer, Courtney Griffiths said it would be a breach of his professional duty to his client if he accepted any limitation on the testimony of a witness.

Following legal arguments by both the prosecution and defence, the Special Court said limiting the testimony of a witness is not in the interest of justice.

The argument ensued when a former senior commander of the defunct National Patriotic Front of Liberia took the stand to testify against the detained former Liberian President.

The new Liberian witness on the stand is Joseph Marzah, popularly known in NPFL and RUF circles as Zigzag Marzah.

Marzah told the Special Court he was a member of Taylor's death squad and revealed he took part in several executions.

When asked about some of the executions he carried out on Taylor's order, Marzah recalled he was part of the flogging of former Vice President, Enoch Dogolea.

Marzah believes the flogging led to the death of the Vice President.

The defense team maintained Taylor's indictment does not include what happened in Liberia during his administration.

Agence France-Presse

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Taylor trial hears of arms-for-diamonds exchanges

The Hague, The Netherlands

A former comrade-in-arms of Charles Taylor on Wednesday told judges at the former Liberian president's war-crimes trial that Taylor ordered him to take arms to Sierra Leone rebels and exchange them for diamonds.

Joseph Marzah, also known by his nom de guerre Zigzag, told the court that in the early 1990s he went to Sierra Leone about 40 times with transports carrying AK-47 assault rifles and rockets.

"Sometimes, we got ammunition from White Flower [Taylor's presidential residence] or a Russian plane ... By Charles Taylor's directive, I sometimes would take some straight to Sierra Leone," Marzah (49) said.

According to the prosecution of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Taylor controlled rebel Revolutionary United Front forces who went on a rampage of killing, mutilation and rape funded by blood diamonds during the 1991 to 2001 civil war.

About 120 000 people were killed in the conflict, with rebels mutilating thousands more, cutting off arms, legs, ears or noses.

At the time of the charges in the indictment, Marzah was a fighter in Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia.

Asked by prosecutor Nicholas Koumjian if he ever saw diamonds, Marzah was firm.

"Many times. I escorted diamonds to Charles Taylor. He himself can tell you that if he tells the truth," he said.

He told the court he had personally escorted about 10 to 15 trips where diamonds were taken to Taylor.

He recalled one diamond in particular, which was about 5cm in diameter.

"At that time, we called [it] 'father'. When [we] took it along, Charles Taylor was impressed," Marzah said.

Taylor, the first former African head of state to appear before an international tribunal, faces 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. -- AFP

Agence France-Presse

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Former Liberian fighter describes rebel atrocities

THE HAGUE (AFP) — A former rebel from Liberia described the atrocities that he and other fighters carried out under the command of Charles Taylor, at the Liberian ex-president's war crimes trial Wednesday.

Joseph Marzah told judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone how he personally had killed more than a hundred people during his time with Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) -- including babies.

"It's not hard," said Marzah. "You hit them against the wall, throw them in a pit, or in the river, and they are dead. And then you give the report to Charles Taylor."

Marzah said he had been part of a special unit that Taylor had set up called "No Baby on Target", adding: "He said we should execute any baby we saw. After we did that, he gave us money."

Fighters had also used knives to cut open pregnant women, he added.

The special court is pursuing Taylor on 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone, all of which he denies.

Taylor, 59, is accused of arming, training and controlling the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone in exchange for still-unknown amounts of diamonds.

Around 120,000 people were killed in the conflict, and thousands more were raped and mutilated with rebels cutting off arms, legs, ears or noses.

At the time covered by the charges in the indictment, Marzah was a fighter in Taylor's rebel group in Liberia which controlled a large part of the country before Taylor was elected president in 1997 and went by the nom-de-guerre Zigzag.

Marzah told the court how he also crossed the border and took part in the bloody attacks of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels on villages in eastern Sierra Leone, and how he joined their ranks while still taking orders from Taylor.

Marzah talked at length about how both Taylor's men in Liberia and in neighbouring Sierra Leone terrorised civilians.

During the war in Liberia they would mount ambushes on civilians, said Marzah.

"At the checkpoint we used human intestines and sometimes put heads on sticks to scare people," he said. And the same thing went on in Sierra Leone, he added.

Both Sierra Leone's RUF rebels and the Liberian fighters of the NPFL operated under Taylor's command, he said.

There was no RUF as such, he said. "From Freetown to Liberia there was one organisation, all answering to Taylor."

Taylor was in constant touch with the RUF leaders by satellite telephone and radio links, said Marzah.

Some of those leaders frequently visited the Liberian capital Monrovia to deliver diamonds, receive their orders and pick up weapons.

Prosecutors accused Taylor of having amassed a 600-million-dollar (385-million-euro) fortune.

Marzah told the court Taylor ordered him to take arms to Sierra Leone rebels and exchange them for diamonds.

In the early 1990s he went to Sierra Leone some 40 times with transports carrying AK-47 assault rifles and rockets.

"Sometimes, we got ammunition from White Flower (Taylor's presidential residence) or a Russian plane," said Marzah, 49.

"By Charles Taylor's directive, I sometimes would take some straight to Sierra Leone," he added.

Asked by prosecutor Nicholas Koumjian if he ever saw diamonds, Marzah replied: "Many times. I escorted diamonds to Charles Taylor. He himself can tell you that if he tells the truth," he said.

He told the court he had personally brought some 10 to 15 consignments of diamonds to Taylor.

He recalled one diamond in particular that was around five centimetres (two inches) in diameter.

"At that time, we called (it) father'. When he took it along, Charles Taylor was impressed," Marzah said.

Taylor's trial before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone was moved from Freetown to The Hague because there were fears his presence there could destabilize the region.

Voice of America

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Militia Commander Testifies at War Crimes Trial of Liberia's Taylor

By VOA News

12 March 2008

A man who described himself as a death squad commander loyal to Liberia's former President Charles Taylor described grisly terror tactics during testimony Wednesday at Taylor's war crimes trial in the Hague.

Joseph Marzah, also known as "Zigzag" told the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone that Taylor encouraged his fighters to, in Marzah's words, "play with human blood." He said Taylor ordered rebels to kill men, women and babies.

Marzah said death squad fighters terrorized the local population by displaying body parts, including human heads, at roadblocks. He also said he smuggled weapons and diamonds for Taylor.



Charles Taylor in the courtroom, 07 Jan 2008

The former president is accused of orchestrating atrocities during the civil war in Sierra Leone, including rape, murder and the conscription of child soldiers. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

The 59-year-old Taylor is the first former African head of state to appear before an international war crimes tribunal.

The trial was moved from Sierra Leone to The Hague to reduce the chances of sparking unrest in the west African state or in neighboring Liberia.

Some information for this report was provided by AP and Reuters.

BBC

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Rwanda genocide priest given life A Roman Catholic priest has had his sentence increased to life imprisonment for his part in Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

Athanase Seromba had appealed against a 15-year sentence over the deaths of hundreds of Tutsis who had sought refuge in his church.

But the United Nations-backed tribunal decided he was even more closely involved than previously thought.

Father Seromba was the first Catholic priest to face genocide charges at the court, sitting in Arusha in Tanzania.

He had denied charges that he organised the massacre of 1,500 Tutsis at the church in Nyange in the west of Rwanda.

Prosecutors said that after he ordered the church to be demolished by bulldozers, he sent in militiamen to kill any survivors with machetes and guns.

All those inside the building are said to have died.

The appeal judges ruled that his responsibility went beyond helping and encouraging the killings, which is the basis on which he was originally sentenced in December 2006.

Some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered in the 1994 killings.



Many Rwandan Catholics believe the Church let them down in 1994

Guardian

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Uganda defies war crimes court over indictments

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- **Chris McGreal**, Africa correspondent
 - guardian.co.uk,
 - Wednesday March 12 2008
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The leader of the Lord's Resistance Army, Joseph Kony. Photograph: Stuart Price/AP

Uganda's president, Yoweri Museveni, is headed for a confrontation with the international criminal court over its first war crimes indictment after saying he will not send leaders of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to the Hague for trial.

Museveni said Joseph Kony, the LRA leader, and his commanders would be brought before traditional courts in Uganda, which emphasise apologies and compensation over punishment, as part of a peace deal to end a 22-year rebellion. The conflict was marked by the abduction of children for use as combatants, mass rape of women and the murder of civilians. LRA rebels also mutilated people by cutting off their lips and tongues.

The Ugandan president said local trials were the wish of the victims and traditional leaders in the areas hit by the civil war.

"What we have agreed with our people is that they should face traditional justice, which is more compensatory than a retributive system," Museveni said on a visit to London.

"That is what we have agreed at the request of the local community. They have been mainly tormenting people in one area, and it is that community which asked us to use traditional justice".

But critics have accused Museveni of misusing the international criminal court (ICC) indictments as a bargaining tool to pressure Kony into a peace settlement. The court issued arrest warrants in 2005 against Kony and four of his commanders, two of whom are now believed to be dead, after Museveni appealed for the ICC to investigate the rebels crimes.

Under international law, the Ugandan government is obliged to send the accused men for trial at The Hague. But the issue has opened a rift between African governments, which believe trials should be subordinated to local peace deals and reconciliation, and countries such as Britain, which back the ICC as establishing international justice.

Museveni told journalists his government had the right to pull Kony out of the clutches of the ICC because it had requested the court to investigate in the first place.

But Richard Goldstone, the former chief prosecutor for the Bosnia and Rwanda international tribunals, which laid the ground for the ICC, has said that if Museveni gets his way it would be "fatally damaging to the credibility of the international court".

"I just don't accept that Museveni has any right to use the international criminal court like this," he told the Guardian last year.

"If you have a system of international justice, you've got to follow through on it. If in some cases that's going to make peace negotiations difficult, that may be the price that has to be paid.

"The international community must keep a firm line and say: are we going to have a better world because of the international court or not?"

Last week, the ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, refused to meet representatives of the LRA, saying the indictments still stand.

There is also controversy at the international tribunal judging war crimes in Sierra Leone over a decision by judges to give diminished sentences, of six and eight years in prison, to two men for murdering and mutilating civilians because they were fighting to restore an elected government to power.

Prosecutors today began presenting their appeal for higher sentences for Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), who were convicted of "barbaric" and "brutal" crimes, "on a large scale". These included the "gruesome murder" of women said to have "had sticks inserted and forced into their genitals until they came out of their mouths".

The court, in handing down lesser sentences, said the CDF was "a fighting force that was mobilised and was implicated in the conflict in Sierra Leone to support a legitimate cause which ... was to restore the democratically elected government."

The appeals hearing will consider whether political motivations can be used as mitigation in sentencing. Human Rights Watch said the issue was of "major significance to the enforcement of international humanitarian law".

"All parties to armed conflict must abide by the same rules and must be subject to the same punishment when those rules are violated regardless of political motives or ultimate victory in waging war," it warned.

"To find less worthy of punishment atrocities against civilians committed while in pursuit of the alleged "right" cause sets a dangerous precedent which risks undermining the accountability and potential deterrent role of prosecutions and thereby diminishing civilian protection."

Xinhua

Monday, 11 March 2008

UN chief names top official for Lebanon tribunal

UNITED NATIONS, March 11 (Xinhua) -- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon named Robin Vincent of Britain as the registrar of the tribunal being set up to try those responsible for political killings in Lebanon, particularly the 2005 attack that killed former prime minister Rafiq Hariri.

In a statement released by his spokesperson, Ban announced this appointment which "reflects the steady progress being accomplished in establishing the Special Tribunal for Lebanon."

According to the spokesperson, Vincent, a veteran of numerous international court proceedings, will start his duties on the Special Tribunal for Lebanon at a date yet to be determined.

The Security Council set up the International Independent Investigation Commission (IIIC) in April 2005 after an earlier UN mission found that Lebanon's own inquiry into the Hariri assassination was seriously flawed and that Syria was primarily responsible for the political tensions that preceded the attack.

Hariri died in a massive car bombing in Beirut in February 2005 that also took the lives of 22 others.

From 2002 to 2005, Vincent served as Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). Since then, he has served as the temporary Deputy Registrar of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and has advised on the establishment of other international tribunals, including the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

Guardian

Wednesday, 12 March 2008

Briton to serve on Hariri tribunal

Ian Black, middle east editor

Ban Ki-moon, the UN secretary general, has appointed a senior British legal expert as registrar for the special tribunal set up to try suspects in the murder of the former Lebanese prime minister, Rafiq al-Hariri.

Robin Vincent, a veteran of international criminal proceedings, served as registrar of the UN's Sierra Leone war crimes tribunal and as deputy registrar of the tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The news reflects steady progress towards the establishment of the Lebanon tribunal, which is to be based in The Hague and will have to deal with an explosive issue at the centre of Middle Eastern tensions.

The security council set up the commission investigating the case after an earlier UN mission found that Lebanon's own inquiry was flawed and that Syria was primarily responsible for the political tensions that preceded the attack. Hariri died in a car bombing in Beirut in February 2005 that also took the lives of 22 others.

The protests that erupted after the killing - known as the Cedar Revolution - forced Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon after nearly 30 years. Since then 20 other Lebanese critics of Syria have been murdered, though no one has been charged in any of the cases.

Syria and its allies opposed the tribunal as interference in the internal affairs of Lebanon. The Beirut government says it wants to discover the truth and put an end to the culture of impunity surrounding political violence in a bitterly divided country where the conflicts of powerful neighbours are often played out.