

**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:

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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The Exclusive
Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Taylor Testifies Today

From front page

Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia, was indicated on 7 March 2003 on 17 counts (later amended to 11 counts. Taylor faces an 11 count indictment for crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 Common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Yesterday, the Taylor trial reopened in The Hague where he was transferred in 2006. Taylor, who was president of Liberia from 1997 to 2003, is expected to be the first defense witness today

He was turned over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone on 29 March 2006. On 3 April 2003 he made his initial appearance in Freetown, where he pleaded not guilty to all charges.

The charges are primarily for his alleged role as a major backer of the Sierra Leone rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and his alleged association with a second warring faction, the Armed Forces Revolu-

tionary Council (AFRC). The RUF in particular was notorious for its atrocities, including cutting off the limbs of civilians.

. An overview of the Taylor trial

7 March 2003

The Trial Chamber confirms the indictment of Charles Taylor, signed by the Prosecutor on 3 March, and orders it to remain under seal.

4 June 2003

Charles Taylor steps down as President of Liberia.

4 December 2003

Interpol issues a "Red Notice" (international arrest warrant) for Charles Taylor.

31 May 2004

The Appeals Chamber dismisses a motion brought on behalf of Charles Taylor which challenged his indictment on the grounds of sovereign immunity and extraterritoriality.

29 March 2006

Charles Taylor is turned over to the Special Court.

3 April 2006

Charles Taylor makes his initial appearance at the Special Court in Freetown. He pleads not guilty to all charges.

16 June 2006

UN Security Council Res. 1688 clears the way for Taylor to be tried in The Hague, saying that his presence in the sub-region was "an impediment to stability and a threat to the peace".

30 June 2006

Charles Taylor is transferred to The Hague.

4 June 2007

The Prosecutor makes his opening statement in The Hague. Charles Taylor dismisses his legal team. The trial is adjourned until he can retain and brief new counsel.

7 January 2008

Prosecution witness testimony begins.

30 January 2009

Prosecution witness testimony ends. In all, 91 witnesses testified, including 52 crime base witnesses, 31 insider (linkage) witnesses, four expert witnesses, and four witnesses of fact.

27 February 2009

The Prosecution formally rest its case.

4 May 2009

The Trial Chamber dismisses in its entirety a Motion for Judgment of Acquittal brought by the Defence.

Awoko

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Charles Taylor takes the witness stand today

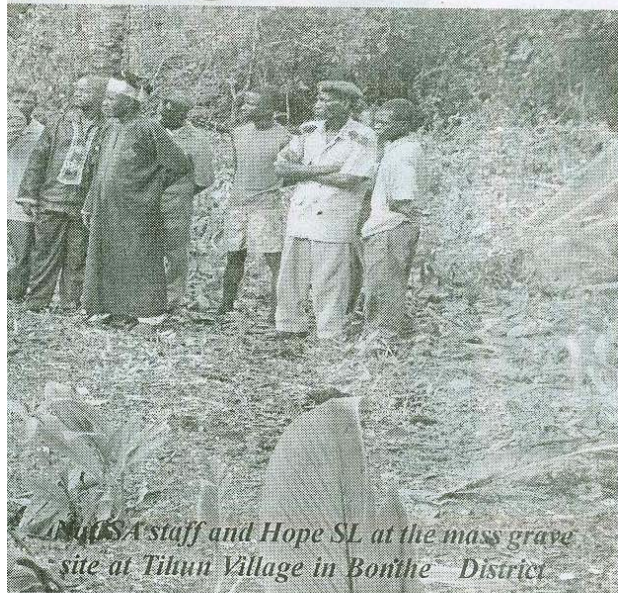
By Betty Milton and Judy Vue

Former president of Liberia and special court indictee Charles Taylor will today take the witness stand at the Special Court trial in The Hague, The Netherlands as the defence team opens its case.

The Prosecution closed its case on February 2009 after presenting 91 witnesses.

Charles Taylor is charged on 11 counts indictment which

Discovered in the



compassion of Chiefdom Authorities, Religious Heads, Council Administration Paramount Chiefs, Members of Parliament, youths women's groups, the Police and the Media.

Paramount Chief of Mattru Alie Badara Sheriff, Chairman of Bonthe District Council Moses Probyn and the Mayor of Bonthe Gilbert Caulker expressed gratitude to the Government through NaCSA and Hope Sierra Leone for remembering those that were severely affected by the war.

Continued on 7

include acts of terrorism, unlawful killings, sexual violence, physical violence, use of child soldiers, abduction and forced labour. Charles Taylor has pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

Defence counsel Courtenay Griffiths told the trial Chamber that when Charles Taylor takes the witness stand today there will be certain issues he will talk about; how he got to Libya and how he came in contact with different groups from all over Africa.

Adding that Taylor will also tell the court how he came in contact with the Sierra Leonean group in Libya who were called the Pan African Revolutionary Movement and not the RUF and that this group was headed by one Allieu Kabbah a relative of the former president of Sierra Leone Tejan Kabbah.

The defence counsel added that the accused will also explain the relationship between himself and the former president of Sierra Leone the late Major-General J.S. Momoh.

He said that the indictment is unclear and that the former prosecutor David Crane had not concentrated on his job as a lawyer but as a politician and that if he had paid attention on his job they would not have been humiliating a humble man.

He said the defense was not denying that atrocities happened in Sierra Leone. Instead, he said that in the following weeks the defense would show that Taylor was too busy running Liberia to involve himself in Sierra Leone's conflict.

He added that Taylor will also be telling the court in his testimony about the hypocrisy of the International Community and the role they played during his arrest.

The defence counsel stated that Charles Taylor will seek to explain the corruption of the prosecution on how they go about getting evidence from witnesses.

He said that "Child soldiers is not a Charles Taylor invention," Griffith said, referring to the forced recruitment of young boys into the rebel group the Revolutionary United Front, who later joined forces with the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, the former Sierra Leonean army that staged a coup in 1997. He said that the rebels were a rogue group of "bandits, thieves, murderers and rapists" that did not need to rely on Taylor for support.

Taylor is also expected to bluntly declare that his trial is political and how the court failed to indict President Kabbah since he was the Minister of defence and why Kabbah was spared and Taylor was not.

Speaking about the indictment Mr. Griffiths said there was

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Charles Taylor takes the witness stand today

From Page 2

lot of inconsistency in the indictment as in the first which was signed by David Crane.

The prosecutor stated that Taylor participated in the Joint Criminal Enterprises so as to gain access to the country's mineral resources and that in the amended indictment, signed by Desmond De Silva, the Joint Criminal Enterprises was no way to be found in the indictment.

He added that before the start of the trial, in April the issue of diamond emerged, followed by the role Taylor played in the overthrow of the Kabbah government by the AFRC.

Mr Griffiths asked what the real indictment was. He said the charges are all based on diamonds, political control overthrow and terrorism, "what is it?" he asked.

Total News

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Charles Taylor on Trial for Murder, rape, slavery, pillage and conscripting children

A terrifying image has come to symbolise the dark heart of Africa: glazed-eyed, ten-year-old boys in football shirts with grenade launchers on their shoulders, ready to kill their elders on command.

The child soldier, confused cannon fodder in the scramble for diamonds, power and territory, has become a central figure in the prosecution of Charles Taylor, the former Liberian President, as he faces a war crimes tribunal in The Hague.

Courtenay Griffiths, a British QC, laid out the defence of the former head of state, setting him up as the peace-maker and peace-broker of West

Africa with not a drop of blood on his hands.

“Child soldiers were not a Charles Taylor invention,” said Mr Griffiths, opening what will be several weeks of testimony aimed at rescuing his client's place in history.

Sitting behind his QC Mr Taylor, wearing tinted glasses, stroked the sleeves of his expensive suit; today he will break his silence and try to distance himself from the atrocities that occurred during the savage 11-year civil and ethnic war in Sierra Leone, across the border from Liberia.



For more than five of those years, between 1997 and 2003, Mr Taylor was Liberia's President and, according to the chief prosecutor Stephen Rapp, made common cause with the Revolutionary United Front rebels of Sierra Leone with a view to plundering the country's diamonds.

The charge sheet, presented to the Special Court set up as a joint institution by the Government of Sierra Leone and the UN accuses Mr Taylor of terrorism, murder, rape, sexual slavery, pillage and conscripting children under the age of 15. Mr Taylor swears that he is innocent and Mr Griffiths emphasised that the burden of proof is with the prosecution to establish that he was ordering the atrocities, and that there was a chain of communication and command.

Witnesses for the prosecution, multiple rape victims and amputees have been testifying in The Hague deemed more secure than Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone to the sheer magnitude of the violence.

Human intestines were stretched out like rope at checkpoints, heads were stuck on stakes like totem poles.

Joseph “Zig Zag” Marzah, a key witness, claimed that he personally delivered diamonds to Mr Taylor in exchange for weapons that were then sent to Sierra Leone. Mr Marzah said in testimony last year that he was part of a select unit organised by Mr Taylor. In one incident, Mr Marzah said, Mr Taylor's unit had cut open the wombs of pregnant women and killed the babies.

Under cross-examination Mr Marzah said he and Mr Taylor were part of a secret religious society and that Mr Taylor had himself eaten human hearts on several occasions.

The defence team will be calling about 240 witnesses in an attempt to discredit those Liberians and Sierra Leoneans who have claimed to link Mr Taylor with the bloodshed.

“We have never questioned the fact that atrocities

took place,” said Mr Griffiths.

The key point, he said, was how much credibility could be attached to the low-level rebels who allegedly reported back to Mr Taylor and transmitted his orders.

“What Mr Taylor says is: how could I have been micromanaging the crisis in Sierra Leone when I was running a country besieged on many sides?”

Mr Rapp, however, told reporters that the vicious turmoil in the neighbouring state was indeed being run by remote control.

“He had reason to fear his diamonds could be pilfered,” said Mr Rapp. “He had to have his eyes and ears on the ground.”

It was not necessary for a conviction, said the prosecutor, to prove that there was a direct order to rape, murder and pillage though there was witness testimony to that effect.

It would be sufficient to show that Mr Taylor knew what was going on, that he accepted the use of criminal methods to reach his goals.

If Mr Taylor is found guilty he will be the first African head of state to be brought to book for war crimes.

Mr Taylor takes to the stand today determined to show that if things were sometimes bad, they were not done with his approval.

The prosecution says it is a matter of record that he set up the “Small Boys' Unit” made up of children under 11 and that one of his election slogans in his presidential campaign was: “He killed my Ma, he killed my Pa, but I will vote for him.” That is one promise that could come back to haunt him.

Standard Times

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

NACSA Holds Symbolic Reparation in Matru Jong

FEATURE

BYSANTIGIE KAMARA

The National Commission for Social Action is continuing with its reparation programme in the length and breadth of Sierra Leone.

Apparently, the programme at Matru-Jong, in the Bonthe District took place on the 10th to the 11th of July 2009 at the Court Barray with a host of participants from the nine Chiefdoms in the Bonthe district.

The one day programme was chaired by the Chairman of Bonthe District Council, Mr. Moses Probyn who informed the gathering about the purpose of the occasion. Mr. Probyn emphasized on the role played by NACSA in ensuring that the dignities of the victims are restored. He further stated that the purpose of the occasion was to remember those who have lost their lives during the rebel war.

The Chairman of Bonthe District Council said that similar programmes have been held in other parts of the country, and assured the inhabitants of Matru-Jong that those who suffered during the rebel war will be compensated.

Mr. Probyn said that the symbolic reparation was specifically prepared for those who have lost their lives during the rebel war. "Since their death no ceremony was made for them", he noted and that the role played by NACSA cannot be over emphasized.

Hon. P. C. Badura Sheriff II of Matru-Jong Chiefdom said that the reparation process is in two folds. P. C. Badura revealed that it was specifically designed to re-bury those that have lost their lives could not be accounted for because they did not know where they died. He expressed his profound appreciation to NaCSA and the Government of Sierra Leone in ensuring that those who lost their lives during the rebel war are given a befitting burial.

Mr. John Bangura, the Executive Director of Hope-Sierra Leone, a partnership organization with NaSCA on the reparation programmes, performed the "Silent Reflection / Setting the scene" ceremony at the Court Barray.

A solemn procession was made at the Jong River by the inhabitants of Matru-Jong. At the banks of the river, prayers and lighting of candles took place together with the pouring of libations.

A war victim, Sheku Kamara gave a living testimony and called on his colleagues to forgive and reconcile with the perpetrators.

The Mayor of the Bonthe Municipal Council, Mr. Gilbert Caulker gave the brief history and effects of the rebel war on Bonthe District.

The Local Unit Commander of Bonthe District Mr. Samuel Vandi delivered a speech about the role of the SLP in peace consolidation.

The programme Manager Reparations dilated extensively on the need and significance of reparations. Mr. Bangura informed the gathering that the purpose of reparation is to restore dignity to those who were affected severely during the war. The Programme Manager of Reparations further stated that reparation is significant because it brings peace, dignity and promotes traditional values amongst individuals.

He informed the gathering that five categories of people were severely affected during the rebel war and that NaCSA together with its partners will ensure that they be the district beneficiaries. The Programme Manager of Reparations said that the amputees, those abducted and used as child labours and sex slaves were amongst the categories.

Finally, he made mentioned of the war widows and noted that the Government of Sierra Leone has done extremely well in that regard.

On the issue of benefits, Mr.

Bangura revealed that the Amputees will benefit from skills training, health facilities, their dependants and one of their wives to be supported with some amounts of money for petty trading and that five of their children be educated from primary school to SSS3 level.

He stated that war wounded be similarly supported and the only difference is direct support to the victims and dependants while the severely sexually violated will have fistula surgery support, micro grant and training.

The Programme Manager of

Reparations told the gathering that NaCSA is working with Civil Society, district councils, traditional leaders and the line ministries so that the reparations programme will be successful.

Following the programme at the court barray on the first day, a cross section of the Journalists, traditional leaders, officials of NaCSA and Hope-Sierra Leone visited mass graves in Tihun, Sogbini Chiefdom and a memorial vigil ceremony climaxed the occasion.

On the second day of the

programme, the Mayor of Bonth Municipality Council Mr. Gilbert Caulker chaired the occasion.

Chief Alusine Kortu, the PC of Sogbini Chiefdom, gave the welcome address. In his address, the Senior Director of Programme NaCSA, Dr. William Konteh on behalf of the Commissioner of NaCSA said that it was an indication of the inhabitants commitment in the Matru-Jong regarding reparations.

Dr. Konteh outlined the role of NaCSA since its inception in 1996 and dilated extensively on the arrears of development.

He informed the gathering that NaCSA has undertaken the reintegration and reconstruction process throughout the country and they were now embarking on the reparation programme.

The Deputy Commissioner of NaCSA Mr. Charles Rogers spoke about the purpose of the occasion and noted that the symbolic reparation was as a result of social justice.

He called on the inhabitants of the Matru-Jong chiefdom to be grateful to the APC government of President Ernest Bai Koroma and assured them about NaCSA's commitment towards returning the lost dignity of the inhabitants of Matru-Jong.

The Deputy Commissioner of NaCSA called on the inhabitants of Matru-Jong to forgive the perpetrators.

BBC World Service Trust

Monday, 13 July 2009

Defence Opens Case for Taylor

The Defence has opened in the landmark war crimes trial of the former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, in The Hague. The defendant's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, described the prosecution as "ill-conceived and revenge-seeking" and said the aim had been to humiliate and humble his client. He said Mr Taylor, who will take the stand tomorrow (Tues) would prove to the world that his involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict was legitimate and not criminal as suggested by the Prosecution. Joseph Cheeseman reports.

CHEESEMAN: In a speech lasting nearly two hours, Courtenay Griffiths, told the Special Court for Sierra Leone that the United States and other Western countries planned the prosecution to humiliate Charles Taylor. And he alleged that the Prosecution indictment was shown to the US, before it was unveiled publicly.

GRIFFITHS: It must be noted that the United States was given a copy of the Taylor indictment two months before it was unsealed in June 2003. It was personally given to Walter Kansteiner, then the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa at a breakfast meeting in April 2003 with the US Ambassador, Peter Chaves at his home in Freetown.

CHEESEMAN: Mr Griffiths asked why the first African head of state to be put on trial at an international tribunal was a black man, an arrest which had echoes of slavery and imperialism.

GRIFFITHS: He was handed over by the Nigerians to the Liberians and from thence to the Special Court for Sierra Leone on the 29th of March 2006. It does sound calculated, doesn't it? And three months later, like an illegal immigrant, refugee or worse – and for those of an historical mind in reverse – he was taken in chains from the shores of Africa and taken to Holland, thousands of miles away, the country of one of the colonizers of the black race for centuries, a historically familiar journey for some.

CHEESEMAN: Mr Griffiths said that, during his testimony, which is expected to last several weeks, Mr. Taylor would deny giving any support to the Sierra Leone rebels, the RUF and the AFRC. And he would rebut one of the main counts in the Prosecution indictment, that he supported the recruitment of child soldiers by the rebel groups.

GRIFFITHS: Child soldiers were not a Charles Taylor invention. Let me repeat: Child soldiers were not a Charles Taylor invention. The RUF did not need to look to him and his NPFL for a role model.

CHEESEMAN: Mr Griffiths said it would have been impossible for Charles Taylor to have micro-managed crimes perpetrated in Sierra Leone while he had his own country, Liberia, to run.

It was a politically motivated prosecution, said the lawyer. And he questioned why other figures, who had played important roles in the Sierra Leonean conflict, had not been indicted.

GRIFFITHS: Mr. Taylor will bluntly declare that his trial is political, and he will point, among other things, to the failure to indict former President Tejan Kabbah despite his role as defence minister in the Sierra Leonean government throughout the formation and deployment of the CDF even though he must, the same President Kabbah, on any objective analysis of the phrase, persons bearing the greatest responsibility, he must have been a more appropriate candidate for indictment than Hinga Norman – the Deputy, remember, Defence Minister. So we ask, why was Kabbah spared, and not Taylor? Why?

CHEESEMAN: He said when Mr Taylor takes the stand, he would explain how he rescued the Liberian people from the late President Samuel Doe and his kinsman Charles Julu who had committed atrocities. Courtenay Griffiths told the Special Court for Sierra Leone, as for Mr. Taylor's involvement in the Sierra Leone civil war after 1996, it was at the invitation of the ECOWAS Committee of Five and not motivated by a desire for diamonds or territorial gain.

BBC World Service Trust

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Report from The Hague

CHEESEMAN: The former Liberian President, Charles Taylor has taken the oath at the start of his testimony in The Hague. Smartly dressed in dark suit and grey tie and wearing sun glasses, Mr Taylor denied prosecution allegations that he was everything from a rapist to a terrorist.

TAYLOR: It is quite incredible that such descriptions of me would come about...very, very very unfortunate that the prosecution, because of disinformation, misinformation, lies, rumours, would associate me with such titles or descriptions. I am none of those, have never been and will never be whether they think so or not. I am a father of 14 children, grandchildren, with love for humanity, have fought all my life to do what I thought was right in the interests of justice and fair play. I resent that characterization of me. It is false; it is malicious.

CHEESEMAN: In a direct examination led by lead Defence lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, Mr. Taylor was asked why he invaded Liberia on the eve of Christmas in 1989.

TAYLOR: Following years of turmoil that I would say goes back to as far as 1955 or before, and maybe at some point in time we will deal with what 1955 meant to Liberians, we have problems. The government of one of my predecessors, Samuel Kanyan Doe, had led a very violent campaign against citizens of the country, and I have no direct quarrels with him because maybe he may have had his own reasons, but citizens of Nimba were killed, the general that led the rising during that particular time, General Thomas Quiwonkpa, was captured, killed in Monrovia and cannibalized by then-members of the Armed Forces of Liberia. Elections were held; they were stolen by Doe, and there was a reign of terror. And so we went in to bring about some order and restore democracy in Liberia.

CHEESEMAN: He admitted providing the RUF with small arms and ammunition after the rebel group, ULIMO invaded Liberia from Sierra Leone in 1991. But he denied supporting Foday Sankoh's invasion of Sierra Leone.

CNN Online

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Charles Taylor testifies at his war crimes trial

(CNN) -- Former Liberian President Charles Taylor took the stand Tuesday as the first defense witness at his trial on war crimes charges at The Hague in the Netherlands.



Taylor is the first African head of state to go on trial for war crimes before the international tribunal.

Taylor, 61, is accused of fueling a bloody civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone that led to widespread murder, rape, and mutilation. The conflict ended in 2002.

He has pleaded not guilty to 11 counts, including murder, sexual slavery, terrorism and torture.

In his first statement to the court Tuesday, Taylor responded to accusations that he is a murderer and a terrorist.

"It is quite incredible that such descriptions of me would come about. Very, very, very unfortunate that the prosecution -- because of this information, misinformation, lies, rumors -- would associate me with such titles or descriptions," he said.

"I am none of those, have never been, and will never be, whether they think so or not. "I am a father of 14 children, grandchildren, with love for humanity," Taylor said.

"[I] have fought all my life to do what I thought was right in the interest of justice and fair play.

"I resent that characterization of me. It is false, it is malicious, and I stop there."

The war in Sierra Leone, which involved riches from the diamond trade, was fought largely by teenagers who were forced to kill, given addictive drugs to provoke violent behavior, and often instructed to rape and plunder.

Taylor is charged with five counts of crimes against humanity, including murder, sexual slavery and violence, and enslavement. He also faces five counts of war crimes, including acts of terrorism and torture, and one count of other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The United Nations and the Sierra Leone government established the Special Court for Sierra Leone in 2002. The U.N. decided to move Taylor's trial from Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, to the Hague last year because of concerns that Taylor's presence would harm stability and security in the region.

The trial opened in June 2007, but Taylor boycotted the first session, saying he could not expect a fair trial and calling the proceedings a "charade."

The prosecution began its case in January 2008 and finished in February this year.

Taylor is the first African head of state to go on trial for war crimes before an international tribunal.

He was president of Liberia -- where he is also blamed for fueling a lengthy civil war -- until 2003, when he was forced from office under heavy international pressure, much of it from the United States. He lived in exile in Nigeria until Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo decided, under political pressure, to hand him over to the tribunal.

Taylor testified Tuesday that he did not commit the atrocities in Sierra Leone of which he is accused, and said he even thought they were "a little strange" when he heard about them at the time.

"We heard that people were getting killed and women were getting killed, and we couldn't understand it. I couldn't understand it because we wouldn't tolerate these things in Liberia," he said.

It would have been "virtually impossible" for him to order anyone -- including the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the rebel group in Sierra Leone -- to carry out such actions, Taylor said, because he was too occupied with running his own country.

"I would have never, never ever permitted such (actions) to continue if I had anything to do with it," he said.

Taylor also denied that he even knew that rebels were amputating people's hands and feet, a brutal signature of the civil war in Sierra Leone. He said he would have "never encouraged that" in Liberia's neighbor.

Questioning Tuesday came from British lawyer Courtenay Griffiths, who leads Taylor's defense team.

Griffiths asked Taylor whether he ever took diamonds from the rebels in exchange for giving them weapons, and Taylor responded by saying "never."

Griffiths asked the question again, in more detail: "Were you regularly receiving mayonnaise jars full of diamonds from the RUF?"

"Never, ever did I receive, whether it is mayonnaise or coffee or whatever jar, never received any diamonds from the RUF," Taylor replied. "It's a lie. It's a diabolical lie. Never."

The civil war in diamond-rich Sierra Leone lasted more than 10 years and stood out for its viciousness, even on a continent that has suffered many vicious conflicts.

Three former top RUF leaders were convicted this year of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The New York Times

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Taylor Calls War Crimes Charges ‘Lies’

By MARLISE SIMONS

THE HAGUE — For months, Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia, has watched in silence as witnesses have passed through the courtroom, telling stories of mind-boggling violence, even cannibalism. His face remained blank, eyes hidden behind tinted glasses, as women spoke of rape and villagers told how their hands or their arms had been severed with axes.

But on Tuesday, when he took the stand in his own defense at the Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting here, he offered a robust denial of the charges and said: “This whole case against me is a case of deceit, deception and lies.”

Mr. Taylor is the first African leader to be tried for war crimes. Thus far in the hearings, he has seemed agitated only when longtime allies appeared, passing messages to his defense team, demanding to challenge the accounts.

His lawyers say that his testimony may go on for weeks, given the wide range of the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The prosecution, which has rested its case, has charged that he armed and commanded rebel groups to bolster his influence in West Africa and to seize a swath of neighboring Sierra Leone, in particular its diamond-mining areas.

His indictment holds him accountable for the rebels’ barbaric methods as they pillaged, killed, raped, used drug-crazed children as soldiers and hacked off limbs, ears or noses to subdue civilians.

Opening the defense case on Monday, Courtenay Griffiths, the lead lawyer, said that Mr. Taylor was not “an African Napoleon” bent on taking over a region, but a broker of peace who would exonerate himself when he gave his account.

As many as 200,000 people died in the decade of fighting, and Mr. Taylor’s war strategies are said to have affected many more in Liberia, his home country, but only crimes in Sierra Leone between 1996 and 2002 are within the mandate of the court.

For Mr. Taylor’s trial, the international judges of the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone are sitting in The Hague to avoid potential unrest in Freetown, Sierra Leone’s capital, where the court is based. The prosecution has brought 91 witnesses, many of whom made a 7,000-mile round trip to The Netherlands.

“We didn’t have documents and orders signed by Taylor, so we needed much circumstantial evidence,” said Stephen J. Rapp, the court’s chief prosecutor. “But key players close to Taylor have testified and painted the complex picture. Taylor was in another country, it was not his country’s army, he was not at the scene of the crimes. But we have direct evidence of his orders and communications.”

Mr. Rapp said that about a dozen “insiders” — witnesses once close to Mr. Taylor, whose testimony had been crucial — had been moved to other countries and given new identities. Several important witnesses had declined to testify because they had been threatened, he said.

The horrors of the Sierra Leone war have frequently perturbed the solemn setting of The Hague courtroom, with its officers in black robes with neatly starched white bibs and its crimson-robed judges high on the dais. At times, witnesses on the stand gesticulated with amputated limbs, swaddled in bandages. Or take the small but awkward incident on the day when Mustapha Mansary, a villager, came to testify. Rebel gangs had hacked off both of his hands.

The defense lawyer began: "Mr. Witness, can I ask you, can you read and write English?" Mr. Mansary listened to the translation, and then he held up his two stumps. "I have no hands to write anything," he said.

"I appreciate that; my apologies," the lawyer said.

At other times, witnesses described scenes of incomprehensible cruelty.

A rape victim who testified under the name "064" described the day a gang of rebels mutilated and killed many adults and children in the village of Foendor, among them members of her family, including her two children. After nine children and the adults had been decapitated, Tamba Joe, the gang leader, ordered her to look for her people. Their severed heads were put in a sack.

"They gave me the heads to carry," the woman said. "But at first I couldn't."

A man was told to help her carry the sack, dripping with blood. When they got to Tombudu, the next village, the rebels ordered all the heads thrown into a pond. The heads of her two children were among them, she said.

No one knows exactly how many people were killed or maimed in the civil war of the 1990s. Human rights groups have said that close to 4,000 amputees have not survived. Up to 3,500 amputees are believed to be still alive. Numerous former child soldiers are still in rehabilitation homes.

During the trial, the magnitude of the atrocities has not been in dispute. But the prosecution and the defense have described the case as legally complicated. The defense lawyer, Mr. Griffiths, said that the prosecution must prove Mr. Taylor's effective control over the rebel groups and that demonstrating influence or assistance was insufficient. "The case is all about linking the crimes to Mr. Taylor, but the evidence has been riddled with inconsistencies," Mr. Griffiths said.

Mr. Rapp, the chief prosecutor, insists that Mr. Taylor's criminal responsibility has been more than demonstrated with the insider witnesses. These included radio operators, describing orders given from the secret communications center in Mr. Taylor's mansion, and members of the president's security force who said they witnessed the movement of arms and ammunition to the rebels and attended high-level strategy sessions.

One of the most dramatic accounts came from Joseph Marzah, a longtime associate of Mr. Taylor's. He described himself as Mr. Taylor's onetime chief of operations and head of a death squad, now an affluent businessman. He said that African peacekeepers were killed and eaten by Mr. Taylor's militiamen and that weapons were easily smuggled. Four other witnesses also referred to the ritualistic eating of enemy flesh by Liberian combatants.

Mr. Marzah, known as Zigzag, spoke of the ease with which weapons were moved to Sierra Leone from Liberia during the Taylor government, despite an arms embargo. He said that Nigerian peacekeepers at the airport in Monrovia, the Liberian capital, were bribed and the weapons were transported in the peacekeepers' vehicles.

He became angry as the defense lawyer repeatedly insisted that he had no close contact with Mr. Taylor. Stung, Mr. Marzah blurted out that he and Mr. Taylor belonged to the same secret society and had together eaten human hearts. With that he nervously crossed himself.

When the lawyer asked if he crossed himself because he had just lied under oath, Mr. Marzah said he had just broken the secrecy laws of his society.

BBC Online

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Taylor testifies at Hague trial

Ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor has taken the stand for the first time at his war crimes trial in The Hague, dismissing the charges as "lies".

He denies 11 counts at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, including terrorism, murder, rape and torture. The prosecution says he armed and directed rebel groups from Liberia in order to seize control of Sierra Leone's diamond riches.

Mr Taylor is the first African leader to be tried by an international court.

"It is quite incredible that such descriptions of me would come about," he said in response to a question from his defence lawyer about charges of murder and rape.

'Love for humanity'

"It is very, very, very unfortunate that the prosecution, because of disinformation, misinformation, lies, rumours would associate me with such titles or descriptions."

The 61-year-old, whose testimony is expected to last several weeks, continued: "I am a father of 14 children, grandchildren, with love for humanity, have fought all my life to do what I thought was right in the interests of justice and fair play."

Wearing a dark suit and tinted spectacles, he told lawyer Courtenay Griffiths that the charges were "false" and "malicious".

He denied claims he was involved in atrocities committed by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels during Sierra Leone's civil war, which ended in 2002.

The RUF was notorious for using machetes to hack the limbs off civilians. Mr Taylor is accused of passing guns to the RUF in exchange for diamonds from Sierra Leone.

On Tuesday, he denied providing military assistance to the RUF. He also dismissed claims he had plotted to invade Sierra Leone with RUF leader Foday Sankoh.

Claire Carlton-Hanciles, of the court's defence office, told the BBC on Monday that Mr Taylor had been prepared for the past six weeks by defence lawyers.

TAYLOR TIMELINE

1989 Launches rebellion in Liberia

1991 RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone

1995 Peace deal signed

1997 Elected president

1999 Liberia's Lurd rebels start insurrection to oust Taylor

June 2003 Arrest warrant issued

August 2003 Steps down, goes into exile in Nigeria

March 2006 Arrested, sent to Sierra Leone

June 2007 Trial opens in The Hague

[Profile: Charles Taylor](#)

[Q&A: Trying Taylor](#)

His legal team began setting out their case on Monday, arguing that Mr Taylor had tried to broker peace in Sierra Leone.

They said he could not have micro-managed a rebel operation in Sierra Leone, while also running affairs of state in Liberia.

Mr Taylor has sat in the courtroom, housed in the International Criminal Court building in The Hague, for months, occasionally passing notes to his legal team.



Courtenay Griffiths (L) says Charles Taylor (R) tried to broker peace

In May, judges rejected a request by Mr Taylor's defence team to acquit him because of a lack of evidence.

His defence claims that Mr Taylor did not command RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, sell them weapons in exchange for blood diamonds or recruit child soldiers.

Mr Taylor started a civil war in Liberia 1989, before being elected president there in 1997.

After a period of exile in Nigeria, he was eventually extradited from Liberia in 2006.

The trial, being held by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, was moved to the Netherlands from Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, amid fears it could create instability in the country and neighbouring Liberia.

Charlestaylortrial.com (The Hague)

Monday, 13 July 2009

Liberia: Defense Says Taylor was Peacemaker Turned Scapegoat

Tracey Gurd

The Hague — Charles Taylor is not a war criminal but a peacemaker turned scapegoat by the international community. This was the message put forward by Taylor's defense in its opening statement today.

Charles Taylor's lawyer told a packed courtroom today that his client will declare his trial "political" and "set the historical record straight" that he was trying to bring peace, not foment war.

According to Courtenay Griffiths, lead defense counsel, Taylor was a peacemaker. He was acting at the behest of West African states and the United Nations to broker peace between the warring factions in neighboring Sierra Leone, negotiate with rebels to set free abducted UN peacekeepers, and usher one of the most prominent rebel leaders, Sam Bockarie, out of Sierra Leone to help calm the conflict. Taylor took on this peacemaking role as the leader of the "Committee of Five," a group set up by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) designed to bring peace to Sierra Leone.

Griffiths told the court that the trial was "political" because others who should have answered a case before the Special Court—such as the then Sierra Leonean president, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah—were not indicted. Taylor's role in the conflict was skewed to suggest he bore the "greatest responsibility" for crimes committed during the war. Griffiths also suggested that Taylor's indictment suited western powers such as the United States and United Kingdom who wanted "regime change" in Liberia.

Griffiths—a charismatic advocate who infused his opening statement with a quote from Jamaican reggae singer Bob Marley and held up a sign to the public gallery that stated "Charles Taylor is innocent" before the judges entered the courtroom—listed a litany of problems he saw with the prosecution's case. Griffiths complained that the prosecution's case was like a "lucky dip" because of its failure to settle on one consistent formula of joint criminal enterprise (a form of criminal liability) in its indictment, questioned the strength of the evidence linking Taylor to the alleged crimes, and stated that he would "expose" the prosecution's "corruption."

"Evidence has been bought and secured through favors," Griffiths said. "Justice cannot be polluted in this way."

Griffiths also accused former Special Court prosecutor, David Crane, of trying to "scupper" peace talks for Liberia that Taylor attended in Ghana in 2003 by unsealing the indictment against Taylor at the same time. He said Crane later described this move as an effort to "publicly strip this warlord of his power." Griffiths pondered "such ego and hubris" before quoting a Bob Marley lyric: Crane, he said, was "working iniquity to achieve vanity."

The central question of the case, Griffiths went on to tell the court, was whether the prosecution could show that Taylor was responsible for the alleged crimes. As Liberian President, not only was Taylor fully occupied with attacks on his own country which would not allow him to "micromanage" a conflict in a neighboring country, but as a West African leader and member of ECOWAS, he was "placed on the frontline" to bring peace to Sierra Leone, Griffiths said.

In an unusual move, prosecutor Stephen Rapp interjected during Griffiths' opening statement. Rapp objected because the defense was commenting on the prosecution's case rather than setting out the evidence his team will present. At the time, Griffiths was describing the breakdown of the prosecution's linkage and crime-based witnesses. The judges overruled the objection. Griffiths called the interjection "rude."

In a press briefing following the defense's opening statement, Rapp rebutted claims of corruption and described the legitimate forms of payments that could be made to witnesses to cover costs of testifying, including travel and lost wages. Rapp said the prosecution's formulations of joint criminal enterprise were fundamentally consistent

throughout the case and that Griffith's "lucky dip" description "mischaracterizes the case from the beginning." He also refuted the notion that the trial was political, and said that Taylor was on trial because he had a case to answer for serious crimes.

"I am here because of the victims of Sierra Leone—they are the people who suffered," Rapp told reporters.

Meanwhile Charles Taylor, in a gray suit wearing his signature tinted glasses, sat silently throughout the opening statement, occasionally looking into the public gallery while fiddling with scraps of paper. In highly anticipated testimony, he will take the stand tomorrow as the defense's first witness.

Aljazeera

Monday, 13 July 2009

PROFILE

Profile: Charles Taylor



Taylor resigned the presidency in August 2003 but was handed over to UN officials in 2006 [GETTY]

Charles Taylor, the former Liberian leader, is considered by some in Africa to be a man of many faces.

To his supporters, he is a Baptist lay preacher who drifted into nationalist politics while studying economics in the US. To others, he is a rebel leader who later became president in Liberia's first democratic elections.

But he is most likely to be remembered as the first former African head of state to face an international tribunal on charges of crimes against humanity.

In 2003, the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), an independent judicial body established with United Nations Security Council backing, issued a 17-count war crimes indictment against Taylor for his role in the 1996-2002 civil war which took place there.

The indictment charges that Taylor had used his power and influence in Liberia to support rebel groups who committed atrocities against civilian populations in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

The charges include knowingly supporting, directing and effectively commanding rebel factions, such as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who committed "acts of terror, murder, sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery, physical violence, including amputations, the conscription of child soldiers, enslavement and pillage".

Prosecutors say that Taylor used the so-called "blood diamonds" trade in Sierra Leone to arm the rebel factions, destabilise its government and boost his regional influence.

The UN estimates that about 120,000 people were killed during the civil war.

Taylor has pleaded not guilty to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including conscripting child soldiers and sexual slavery.

His defence team has argued that the case against their client is "political" and that the SCSL is "a political institution controlled by states opposed to Taylor's policies".

Rise to power

The US-educated Taylor entered the world of politics when he led a demonstration in front of the Liberian Mission to the UN in New York City and publicly debated William Tolbert, the then-president of Liberia, in 1979.

In 1980, Taylor returned to Monrovia, the Liberian capital, after a bloody coup d'etat led by Samuel K Doe, an indigenous army sergeant, deposed and killed Tolbert.

Doe appointed Taylor, who is of mixed indigenous and freed American slave (known as Americo-Liberian) heritage, to the post of director of the General Services Agency, a body which controlled much of the state budget.



Liberia and Sierra Leone have separately been ravaged by decades of civil wars

But in 1983, Taylor fled Liberia for the US after being accused of embezzling nearly \$1m of state funds. In 1984, he was arrested and jailed in the US, but while fighting an extradition order, he managed to escape with four other inmates.

Although they were later caught, he disappeared only to resurface in 1985 in the Ivory Coast, where he had begun to amass men, material and money to return and unseat Doe from power in Monrovia.

In late 1989, he slipped back into Liberia with a token force of 100 men, known then as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). His mixed heritage allowed him to appeal to both Americo and indigenous Liberians.

Taylor also made use of long-harboured animosity between Doe and neighbouring countries such as Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast, who supplied the rebel leader with arms and funding.

Targeting Monrovia

By July 2, 1990, Taylor's 10,000-strong army surrounded Monrovia. As the conflict dragged on, the NPFL splintered into several breakaway groups which led to factional fighting and all-out civil war.

It was during this time that news of widespread slaughter and massacres against ethnic groups began to surface.

As the fighting intensified, Nigeria proposed the creation of an armed peace-keeping force, Ecomog, which despite several setbacks was able to broker a ceasefire that led to the

country's first democratic elections.

Taylor was elected president in free and fair elections, though he was accused of intimidating voters.

However, the country had already become fragmented. According to the UN, some 200,000 people had been killed and 800,000 been made refugees in nearly eight years of civil war.

Losing control

In 1999, war broke out again as opposition to his rule mounted and Taylor began to lose control of the country.

Things worsened for the embattled leader when Nigeria led the chorus of neighbouring states who accused Taylor of fomenting the civil war in Sierra Leone by selling weapons to rebel groups in exchange for diamonds smuggled out of the war-torn country.

In March 2003, the SCSL charged Taylor with crimes against humanity.



The UN says children as young as eight were fighting during the Sierra Leone civil war [AP]

As he began to lose more control in Liberia, Taylor agreed to resign his post as president in exchange for the deployment of US peacekeepers in Monrovia.

He was then granted asylum in Nigeria. It would be another three years before he was handed over to the UN war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone.

Although it is the first such international tribunal to be established in the same country where the crimes were committed, Taylor has been on trial at The Hague since June 2007 for fear that his presence in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, could destabilise the region.

His defence team is expected to open their case in The Hague on July 13, 2009.

Taylor will take the stand as the first witness for the defence.

Nordic African News

Monday, 13 July 2009

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor in court

US, others conspire against Taylor, defence lawyer says

MAIN The defence has opened in the landmark war crimes trial of the former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, in The Hague. The defendant's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, described the prosecution as "ill-conceived and revenge-seeking" and said the aim had been to humiliate and humble his client.

In a statement lasting nearly two hours, Courtenay Griffiths, told the Special Court for Sierra Leone that the United States and other Western countries planned the prosecution to humiliate Charles Taylor. And he alleged that the prosecution indictment was shown to the US, before it was unveiled publicly.

He said Mr Taylor, who will take the stand on Tuesday, will prove to the world that his involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict was legitimate and not criminal as suggested by the prosecution.

"It must be noted that the United States was given a copy of the Taylor indictment two months before it was unsealed in June 2003. It was personally given to Walter Kansteiner, then the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa at a breakfast meeting in April 2003 with the US Ambassador, Peter Chaves at his home in Freetown," the defence lawyer said.

Mr Griffiths asked why the first African head of state to be put on trial at an international tribunal was a black man, an arrest which had echoes of slavery and imperialism.

"He was handed over by the Nigerians to the Liberians and from thence to the Special Court for Sierra Leone on the 29th of March 2006. It does sound calculated, doesn't it?"

"And three months later, like an illegal immigrant, refugee or worse – and for those of an historical mind in reverse – he was taken in chains from the shores of Africa and taken to Holland, thousands of miles away, the country of one of the colonizers of the black race for centuries, a historically familiar journey for some," Griffiths added.

Mr Griffiths said that, during his testimony, which is expected to last several weeks, Mr. Taylor will deny giving any support to the Sierra Leone rebels, the RUF and the AFRC.

And that the former Liberian president will rebut one of the main counts in the prosecution's indictment, that he supported the recruitment of child soldiers by the rebel groups.

Griffiths: "Child soldiers were not a Charles Taylor invention. Let me repeat: Child soldiers were not a Charles Taylor invention. The RUF did not need to look to him and his NPFL for a role model."

Mr Griffiths said it would have been impossible for Charles Taylor to have micro-managed crimes perpetrated in Sierra Leone while he had his own country, Liberia, to run.

It was a politically motivated prosecution, said the lawyer. And he questioned why other figures, who had

played important roles in the Sierra Leonean conflict, had not been indicted.

“Mr. Taylor will bluntly declare that his trial is political, and he will point, among other things, to the failure to indict former President Tejan Kabbah despite his role as defence minister in the Sierra Leonean government throughout the formation and deployment of the CDF even though he must, the same President Kabbah, on any objective analysis of the phrase, persons bearing the greatest responsibility, he must have been a more appropriate candidate for indictment than Hinga Norman – the Deputy, remember, Defence Minister. So we ask, why was Kabbah spared, and not Taylor? Why?”, the lawyer asked.

He said when Mr Taylor takes the stand, he would explain how he rescued the Liberian people from the late President Samuel Doe and his kinsman Charles Julu who had committed atrocities.

Mr. Griffiths told the Special Court for Sierra Leone, as for Mr. Taylor’s involvement in the Sierra Leone civil war after 1996, it was at the invitation of the ECOWAS Committee of Five and not motivated by a desire for diamonds or territorial gain.

National Journal
Monday, 13 July 2009

For War Crimes Czar, Atrocities Need Details

Obama's New Ambassador-At-Large For War Crimes Discusses His Path From Iowa To Africa

"The delivery of the truth in the court process is extremely important even apart from its result in judgment."

-- Stephen Rapp

Prosecutors aren't often known for their diplomacy, but Stephen Rapp owes some of his success to his irrepressible streak of Midwestern civility. He remained on good terms with now-Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, after losing two close House races to him in the 1970s. And when Rapp wanted to leap from the U.S. attorney's office in Iowa to the United Nations tribunals for Rwandan war criminals, Grassley threw his weight behind him.

After scoring convictions against media instigators of the Rwandan genocide, Rapp has spent the last two years trying former Liberian President Charles Taylor as chief prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. A verdict is expected next year.

Rapp's even temperament will serve him well in his new post. Last week, President Obama nominated the Iowan to be ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues. He'll have to be part diplomat -- working with other governments, the International Criminal Court and NGOs -- and part enforcer, helping direct America's response to war crimes in some of the nastiest places on earth. After his appointment was announced, Rapp spoke with NationalJournal.com's David Gauvey Herbert about his unusual career path and the challenges of enforcing international law.

NJ: You went from working as a U.S. attorney in Iowa to taking down war criminals in Rwanda. What inspired you to make the leap?

Rapp: Well, I'd always been interested in accountability for war crimes, and -- particularly when I was younger -- read everything on Nuremberg and thought if ever there was a chance to get involved in anything like that it would be great. During the time I was United States attorney in Iowa from 1993 to 2001 -- when you're a U.S. attorney you're constantly getting e-mails from Washington that will say, "Can you lend one of your staff to go to Colombia, can you lend one of your staff to go here or there?" And in the mid-'90s it became, "Can you lend one of your staff to go to The Hague to help establish the ICTY [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia]?" And at one point [they] even wanted people for Rwanda.

And I had a longtime interest in Africa -- my wife's a professor of African history, we've visited a lot of African countries -- and was fascinated by that. I wrote back and said, "Well, rather than sending a staff, could you send me?" And the answer was, "No, we can't do that, you have to stay with your ship," so to speak. But particularly as things developed during the late '90s, watching the atrocities -- particularly what happened in Kosovo and Sierra Leone -- I decided to go to Washington and seek out people who had been involved in this process.

NJ: How big is the shift from being a U.S. attorney in Iowa to prosecuting radio stations in Rwanda?

Rapp: I think the fit is probably better than people who come from most other legal careers. Particularly that's a reflection of the role United States attorneys play in leading investigations....

You have people who -- from the English tradition, like a lot of those in Commonwealth countries, except Canada, in which the lawyers or barristers don't even talk to witnesses -- they're great in court, fantastic on their feet, but they're not at all developing that part of it. People who come from a civil law tradition, people who are prosecutors, come out of an entirely different career track.... They are quite actively involved because they move between prosecution roles and examining-magistrate kind of roles in leading investigations.

NJ: Working in Africa, have you ever butted heads with someone from a different legal background?

Rapp: I don't butt heads in my nature. (Laughs). I find common ground, and I take that common ground and I build on that common ground until it's more my common ground than their common ground. But I don't antagonize. That's why a great many Northern European types went to places like Rwanda and washed out and ended up not succeeding and got falsely accused of prejudice of one kind or another. Never happened to me.

NJ: Former special envoys that I've talked to complain that there can be confusion about where policy emanates from and who is the final arbiter on an issue or conflict. Where do you see yourself fitting into Sudan, Eastern Congo and other high-profile conflicts?

Rapp: I've been talking being a prosecutor. I can talk about Charles Taylor, who we're going to court against on Monday. I can talk about the fact that Obama was a key leader in getting him arrested and was a sponsor of getting money for the court in November 2006 -- and the Sierra Leone court and the Rwanda court. But I've been strictly instructed not to talk about the future post and what I might do and what policies this government might have to decide on, because that's reserved for the senators.

NJ: The Dutch foreign minister said recently that he'd like to see an international court set up to prosecute Somali pirates. What do you think about that?

Rapp: When you're talking about special courts -- the hybrid model that's worked for the last three years in Sierra Leone -- it does provide some advantages. You've got both national and international staff together, you've got justice closer to the scene of the crime than you do at places like The Hague or in Arusha, which are separated from the scene of the crime by, respectively, 1,000 miles and 500 miles.

You get the benefit of the independence that the international judges provide, and that's an antidote to the potential for victor's justice after a conflict, where one side has won and the other side's committed all the crimes though the side that won may have committed atrocities as well. You're going to have to deal with that. It may be very difficult for people from that system unless there are powerful incentives to get involved.

The disadvantages are that it's expensive to bring international people in and pay people according to U.N. scale that are internationals, and it will be very hard not to do the same thing for nationals. You have the question of how to fund all of that...

It strikes me that the situation with piracy is not a question of independence. It's more a question of capacity. And when it's a capacity question, I think my instinct is to go more with repairs of the national system.

NJ: Even if in the case of Somalia, where there is no established legal system?

Rapp: Kenya has a developed legal tradition but has a very small judiciary. I've looked at the number of high court judges they have, and it's nowhere near enough high court judges to handle all the ordinary crime that occurs in the country, so it seems to me that the judicial system is underfunded, under-resourced. And that's a challenge also when it comes to dealing with the political violence of January and February 2008.

NJ: Is there any country or conflict that you think merits more American attention?

Rapp: (Laughs). That sort of sends a signal about what I would want to press forward at. One of the interesting things about this job I can say is that there's a law... called the Advancing Democratic Values Act, and it has a section that talks about war crimes, atrocity crimes, et cetera, which requires the president, with the assistance of my office... to collect information and to potentially make recommendations about achieving accountability. For that reason, and because that law is there... my office will have the responsibility of dealing with that probity.

NJ: In the past you've talked about how you were the victim of a violent crime as a young man. What makes all this worthwhile for you? What's the moment that makes all the paperwork and the tedium worthwhile?

Rapp: As an attorney, you want the story told in court. The witness survives and he tells the truth about what happened, and it's a victory in and of itself. The delivery of the truth in the court process is extremely important even apart from its result in judgment.

The last witness in the Taylor trial, who was a double amputee... he described that he had been dragged from his hiding place by the rebels, and [they] dragged him forward to a stump and proceeded to hack off his left hand. And his four-year-old boy started screaming, "Don't do that to my Daddy! Don't do that to my Daddy!"

So they brought the boy forward to chop off his hand, and the father said, "No, take my right hand." And they took his right hand. And he said, "My son's with me here today, now 14, and he's my hands." [Voice cracks]. And the dramatic effect of this guy who gave his right hand for his son, in our view testifying against someone who sacrificed the lives of thousands and the hands of thousands for his own selfish ends, I thought was dramatic and effective. When that happens, when someone who has suffered can tell their story and tell it in the presence of someone, it's dramatic.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 13 July 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Charles Taylor begins his war crimes defence against Sierra Leone atrocity charges

Source: Canadian Press Date: July 13, 2009

THE HAGUE, Netherlands _ Lawyers for Charles Taylor began his defence against war crimes charges Monday, arguing that the former Liberian president was not responsible for the murder, rape and mutilation of civilians by rebels in Sierra Leone and should not be blamed simply out of disgust at the atrocities. Taylor, the first African head of state to be tried by an international court, is charged with 11 crimes including murder, torture, rape, sexual slavery, using child soldiers and spreading terror. Prosecutors allege that he led rebels responsible for the crimes from his presidential mansion in the Liberian capital of Monrovia as a way of gaining influence over neighboring Sierra Leone so he could strip that country of its vast mineral wealth, an in particular its diamonds.

07/13/2009 08:16:31

Charles Taylor Defends Himself

Jul 13, 2009 (allAfrica.com/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Former Liberian leader Charles Taylor is scheduled to take the witness stand this week to testify in his own defense at his trial on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity arising from the civil war in Sierra Leone. The Special Court for Sierra Leone has announced that Taylor's defense lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths QC, is expected to deliver his opening statement on Monday. Taylor is not expected to give evidence before Tuesday. Taylor is being tried in The Hague, in the Netherlands, as a result of concerns about regional security if he is tried in Sierra Leone. He faces 11 charges including murder, rape, sexual violence, using child soldiers, enslavement, looting and terrorizing and imposing collective punishments on civilians. Human Rights Watch reports that the charges relate primarily to Taylor's alleged role as a major backer of the Sierra Leone rebel group, the Revolutionary United

Taylor begins his Sierra Leone war crimes defense

Source: English General News Date: July 13, 2009

THE HAGUE, Netherlands_Lawyers for Charles Taylor began his defense against war crimes charges Monday, arguing that the former Liberian president was not responsible for the murder, rape and mutilation of civilians by rebels in Sierra Leone and should not be blamed simply out of disgust at the atrocities. Taylor, the first African head of state to be tried by an international court, is charged with 11 crimes including murder, torture, rape, sexual slavery, using child soldiers and spreading terror. Prosecutors allege that he led rebels responsible for the crimes from his presidential mansion in the Liberian capital of Monrovia as a way of gaining influence over neighboring Sierra Leone so he could strip that country of its vast mineral wealth, an in particular its diamonds.

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea-Bissau denies preparing attack on Guinea

Source: AFP World News / English Date: July 13, 2009

BISSAU, July 13, 2009 (AFP) - Guinea-Bissau denied Monday it had massed troops on its border with Guinea, which put its army on the alert at the weekend, citing large troop deployments on its frontier. "We have no troops on the border with Guinea. The only elements we have is a detachment of border guards, customs agents and border police, nothing more," the head of Guinea-Bissau's armed forces, Zamora Induta, told AFP. Guinea put its army on alert on Sunday, saying troops financed by drugs traffickers had massed along its border and were preparing to invade, state television said. The announcement was greeted with skepticism in Guinea, ruled by a military junta since a coup last December. Opposition politicians said the announcement was an excuse for the military rulers to consolidate their grip on power ahead of promised legislative elections in October.

Local Media – Newspaper

Former President Charles Taylor To Begin Testifying Tomorrow

(New Democrat, Liberian Express, Public Agenda, The News, Liberia Journal, New Vision, Heritage, The Inquirer, The Monitor)

- Former President Charles Taylor is scheduled to take the witness stand tomorrow to testify in his own defense.
- Taylor's Defense Counsel, Courtenay Griffiths opened the case today arguing that Mr. Taylor was not responsible for the murder, rape and mutilation of civilians by rebels in Sierra Leone and should not be blamed.
- Mr. Taylor will take the witness box for a period of six weeks beginning tomorrow.
- Already, over 200 witnesses Liberia, Sierra Leone and other parts of the world have filed to testify on behalf of the indicted former Liberian President.
- Mr. Taylor is being tried on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, torture, rape, sexual slavery, using child soldiers and spreading terror during the civil war in Sierra Leone.

Government, UNMIL Says No Evidence of Troops Movement along Liberia's Border

(New Democrat, Liberian Express, Public Agenda, The News, Liberia Journal)

- Government and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) say there is no evidence to back Guinea's claim of troops' movement along Liberia's borders.
- The clarification follows claims by the Guinean junta that a drug cartel was sponsoring an attack on its territory.
- The junta named Senegal and Guinea Bissau on the North and Liberia on the South as positions from which the attack is to be launched and have placed its army on high alert.
- UNMIL authorities said they are closely monitoring the situation in consultation with the U.N. Mission in Cote d'Ivoire.
- Defense Minister, Brownie Samukai said the situation is being closely watched and reiterated President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's pledge not to use Liberia's territory to destabilize its neighbors.

Liberia-China Signs US\$10M Pact

(Heritage, Informer)

- Government and the People's Republic of China and have signed an agreement under which China will provide about US\$10 million grant to Liberia for completion of projects agreed upon by the two governments.
- According to the agreement, the assistance, which is in fulfillment of the outcomes of the 2008 Beijing Summit otherwise known as the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation, is intended

to further enhance the friendly relations and promote economic and technical cooperation between the two countries.

- The amount will be used to complete construction work on the new the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in Congo Town and other projects.

Obama Outlines 4 Conditions For Africa's Growth

(New Democrat, The Analyst, New Vision, The Inquirer, Informer, Public Agenda, The News, The Monitor)

- U.S. President Barack Obama has identified four key areas which he says are critical to the future of Africa and the entire developing world.
- In a speech delivered in Accra, Ghana over the weekend, he named the areas as democracy, opportunity, health and the peaceful resolution of conflict.
- President Obama underscored the need to support strong and sustainable democratic governments.
- The visit is his first to Africa since becoming President of the United States of America in January this year.

President Sirleaf signs 2009/2010 Budget into Law

(New Vision, The Inquirer, Liberian Express, The Monitor)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has signed into law the national budget amounting to over US\$371 million.
- According to an Executive Mansion release, the fiscal period runs from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010.

JICA New Country Manager Promises Technical Cooperation

(The Inquirer)

- The new country manager of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Makoto Fujimoto says he will work with Government in providing technical cooperation to enhance the capacity of the health sector in the country.
- Speaking to reporters, Mr. Fujimoto named the field of mother & child health, hospital management and maintenance for medical equipment as particular areas that are targeted for the provision of technical cooperation.
- He said his institution has restarted its training programme and has invited ten Liberian personnel to Japan or a third country for training in the areas of health, infrastructure, peacekeeping and governance.

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

Former President Charles Taylor to Begin Testifying Tomorrow

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

Thirteen LAC Security Guards Held for Murder

- Police in Grand Bassa County have begun investigating 13 security guards of the Liberia Agriculture Company (LAC) for allegedly killing a laboratory technician.
- The County Police Commander, Inspector Tito Lolin said the police are investigating the officers for their alleged involvement in the death the technician after he and his brother were allegedly flogged for stealing fuel oil from a factory at the plantation.
- Jackson reportedly died before he was taken to the Liberia Agriculture Company Hospital. His brother Papa Quoi who survived the incident is undergoing treatment at a local hospital.

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

Government Says it Will Not Tolerate Threats against TRC officials

- Government says it will not tolerate threats on the lives of officials of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia or their family members.
- In an interview, Information Minister Lawrence Bropleh said the commissioners were only charged with a responsibility and have since performed their tasks.

- Minister Bropleh clarified the report is only a recommendation and should not be taken out of context.
- The government spokesman called on commissioners of the TRC to immediately notify the Justice Ministry whenever there is a threat on their lives.

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

Truth F.M. *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

Detainees at National Correction Palace Calls for Speedy Trial

- Detainees at the National Correction Palace in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County have complained of frequent shortage of food, electricity and lack of proper health care.
- In an interview, the detainees called for speedy trial for them following months of detention.
- The Director of the detention facility, Samuel Tarly admitted to the prisoners' claim but said it was beyond his control.
- Mr. Tarly said 37 of the detainees have been convicted while 96 of them are still awaiting court trial.

Government Says Its Territory Will Not Be Used to Destabilize Neighbors

* * * *

Star Radio

Monday, 13 July 2009

ICGL commends TRC

Written by Emmanuel Broh

The International Contact Group on Liberia has commended the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for its just-ended work.

In a release, members of ICGL said they recognize that the TRC report is stimulating intense and interested debate healthy for reconciliation and peace.

The ICGL members urged Liberians to be responsible in their comments on the report and desist from making statements that might incite violence.

The group condemned the threats against TRC Commissioners saying they simply performed the responsibilities they were charged with by the TRC Act.

The ICGL members said it was now up to the Liberian people to decide how to implement the recommendations of the TRC in accordance with Liberian law.

They encouraged the establishment of the Independent National Human Rights Commission to follow up on the recommendations of the TRC.

The ICGL release said the group supports all efforts by Liberians to continue peaceful transition to fulfill the quests of democracy and reconciliation.

The Liberian Journal

Monday, 13 July 2009

Memory and Politics: Liberia's TRC Report (Guest Editorial)

By: Lansana Gberie

James Joyce was right that history is a nightmare, the African American writer James Baldwin wrote, reflecting in a somnolent Swiss village on the racial tensions in his country. "But it is a nightmare from which there is no awakening. People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them." The words were written about 40 years ago, and were issued out of a specific context. But they seem to have a particular resonance for post-war Liberia.

Over five years after its brutal insurgencies ended with the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) in 2003 and the deployment of thousands of UN troops (at a cost of over \$600 million per year), Liberia is enmeshed in another conflict altogether: a contest over its past and soul. The outline of the story is jarringly seductive, and there were very tantalizing hints of it at the 15-20 (2009) National Conference of Reconciliation organized by the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). It was held at the Unity Conference Center in Virginia, just outside Monrovia; the center was built for the jinxed Organization of African Unity (OAU) – the precursor of the more robust Africa Union (AU) – in Liberia in 1979 by President William Tolbert, who would be murdered in his bedroom by his own soldiers less than a year later.

Part of the once-famous Hotel Africa, the hall's main structure – a massive high-rise building – is now a monstrous ruin, making the conference center, still intact and even elegant, something of a minor wonder. On the walls of the annex, which the casual visitor is likely to miss, there is a very telling mural, of a group of confident black people dressed in Western-style clothing getting off a boat to be greeted by apparently dissolute and benighted Africans in their 'native' attire. This is not an accurate historical representation, of course, but this is exactly the point. And that point is also captured in the flowering communiqué issued at the end of the conference, the delegates of which, "representing citizens of Liberia from all 15 counties and from all walks of life, background, race, clan [sic] and tribe [sic]," were still able to recall, with no hint of irony, "the spirit of all our Great ancestors, who through love of unity, freedom, justice and liberty founded this great Nation." This is the standard, vainglorious narrative of Liberia's history, and here we are told that it is shared by "perpetrators and victims of crimes of all forms and degrees against our fellow brothers and sisters" during the country's recent wars.

Surely the presence of perpetrators and victims imply contest; and so an unruly voice among the drafters asserts itself, calling for "a historical review commission [to] be established to review Liberia's history and produce a version of it that reflects the lives of the people met here by the settlers in 1822." It persists on to point 24 of the communiqué, declaring that "the motto in the seal of Liberia should] be changed from its current form, 'The love of liberty brought us here,' to instead read: 'The love of liberty unites us here.'" In this same revisionist mood, the communiqué also called for "a national culture center [to] be established to promote Liberia's diverse culture[s]," as well as for "a national consultation process [to] be set-up to determine a single indigenous dialect to be spoken throughout the country and taught in Liberian schools."

You now get the basic idea. In its modern form, Liberia was established by the American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1827 as a colony for American freed slaves. The condition of freed blacks in the United States at the time was both pressing and complex for America's (racist) white masters like Jefferson, for they amounted to hundreds of thousands, if not millions. Jefferson and his revolutionary colleagues clearly did not envisage that their ideas of independence and liberty, which had led them to revolt against British colonial rule, should extend to their own black population. These leaders thought that the chief solution would be to repatriate the blacks to Africa, where they

would live in liberty with themselves. This point has been much stressed by various writers – from the English novelist and travel writer Graham Greene to the Liberian (indigenous) nationalist and academic George Boley, who later emerged as a factional leader during Liberia’s recent civil wars – but it surely had been settled over a century ago by that erudite Pan Africanist Edward Blyden. Noting the influential African voices in America who were yearning at the time for a return to Africa, Blyden wrote that while the whites clearly wanted to expel the freed slaves, the Liberian project “was in harmony with the instincts and desires of the Africans in America.”

The only problem was that by a cruel sub-Freudian dynamic, the “instincts and desires” of these Africans would come to reflect exactly the pathos and contradictions of the American revolutionaries: in Liberia they replicated the system of servitude they had known in the antebellum South, only this time with them as masters and the majority indigenous Africans as virtual slaves. This is hardly surprising: the classical writers of ancient Greece and Rome, the world’s first organized slave societies, had thousands of years ago postulated something about the “slave mentality”, the idea that a slave remains a slave even when freed, because the mind remains shackled and conditioned by an experience which makes freedom meaningful only if it exists side by side with servitude. This is Liberia’s foundational deformity, if you will, and it is why post-war Liberia today is burdened by a very special anxiety: the fear that it is relapsing into that condition against which the struggles of the late 1970s, the nihilistic coup of 1980, and the subsequent collapse into bloody anarchy was triggered.

That anxiety is most clearly expressed in the TRC report released early in July, the month that Liberia celebrated its 163th year as a Republic, making it the oldest in Africa. The TRC had been established by an Act of the Legislature in 2005, and in the course of its ponderous work collected more than 20,000 statements from victims as well as alleged perpetrators during the country’s nearly fifteen years of brutal civil war, 1989-2003. The Commission was mandated to inquire into Liberia’s tragic past from as far back as January 1979 – the final year of Americo-Liberian rule, and ten years before the war began – to 14 October 2003, the day of the inauguration of the transitional government which replaced Charles Taylor’s rule. This time-span was a compromise reflecting a fundamental Liberian problem: the tiny but still-powerful Americo-Liberian elite tend to view the crisis of state collapse and violence as beginning with the coup of 1980, which overthrew William Tolbert, the last of Americo-Liberian oligarchs. On the other hand, the majority indigenous Liberians tend to think that the coup resulted from the disastrous nature of the Americo-Liberian True Whig rule, contending that the entire period from 1847 to 1980 was disenfranchising, laying the foundation for the war that began in 1989. In fact, Article IV of the TRC Act stated that the Commission could look at “any other period preceding 1979” in order to create an “accurate historical record” of the past which would form the basis of reconciliation.

Thoughtful Liberians have long deplored the paucity or absence of such a historical record. In Wilton Sankawulo’s vastly underrated novel *Sundown at Dawn: A Liberian Odyssey* (2005), a very wise character (doubtless the author’s alter-ego) vents his frustration about this fact, noting that Liberia will move forward in peace and stability “Only if we know our history – history that highlights our strengths and other resources. But the true history of Liberia is yet to be written. All we have is a jumble of journals, reports, and memos which tell us when Liberia was founded, who have been its presidents – what parties have been in power – what nations aided us...we’re thriving on chaos and mistrust because we don’t know our true history.” The 370 pages of the TRC’s Consolidated and Final Report attempts to fulfill such a task, but it is not hard to imagine that Sankawulo, Liberia’s foremost literary figure who died early this year, would have found it almost entirely disappointing.

Here I must state, by way of full disclosure, that from January 2008 to June 2009 (shortly before the report was submitted) I was head of International Center for Transitional Justice’s (ICTJ) Liberia Program, and that the TRC was one of the core institutions we worked with rather closely. It was, however, a very difficult relationship, to put it no stronger, though it continued till the end of my tenure without open rancour.

2008 TRC Diaspora Public Hearing in Minnesota

Predictably, the report has a long list of “causes” for Liberia’s slide into civil war, including the “over-centralization and the oppressive dominance of the Americo-Liberian oligarchy” (who at no point have constituted more than five per cent of the population) over the indigenous Liberians; a weak judiciary, tribalism, disputes over land acquisition, distribution and accessibility, and “lack of clarity and understanding of Liberia’s history including its history of conflicts.”

Few would have any problem with this, though one can certainly quibble. A large part of the report is taken up by interesting but somewhat extraneous discussions around concept, methodology, personalities of those involved with the Commission, and various other mundane details. The historical section, deemed the most important, is brief to the point of terseness, and it is rather problematic. It opens, bewilderingly, with a notorious quote from Hugh Trevor-Roper, a former Regius Professor of History at Oxford, dismissing the idea of African history (“it does not exist”!) Perhaps the report-writers should have pressed further with Trevor-Roper, who for much of his career had to fend off accusations of racism and anti-Semitism, for he elaborated his foolish thesis by arguing that before European arrival in Africa, there was only “the gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the world.” Would such a dubious authority aid the TRC’s efforts in trying to include the contributions of indigenous Liberians to the development of the modern state of Liberia? Is the TRC saying that pre-Settler Liberia is irrelevant?

There is truth in the following observation (appearing in the historical section): “Central to understanding the socio-political conflict and its degeneration into armed conflict in the evolving history of Liberia is the choice made by the early leadership of Liberia from colony, to commonwealth and statehood. It was a choice of purpose or political direction for the new enterprise. One option was a Euro-American orientation with the idea of a civilizing and christianizing mission at its core. The other option was to attempt to build an African nationality that blended Western and African values, as Edward Wilmot Blyden and others have advocated. The choice of the former is at the root of Liberia’s yet unresolved historical problem of political identity and legitimacy. The choice, in time, alienated, marginalized, degraded not only the majority of the inhabitants of the Liberia area, but implicitly the very westernized black leaders who bought into and adopted the views derived from American colonialist sentiments.”

Again, one can quibble. Blyden has recently emerged as the great intellectual and political hero of Liberia, the most important inclusive personality among the settler types (in Boima Fahnbulleh’s remarkable historical novel *Behind God’s Back*, published in 2005, the same point is made even more forcefully, with Blyden appearing in the novel as “Dr. Caldwell”.) This is largely a myth, of course, and its appearance in the TRC report is telling. Blyden, as a highly cultured man, was certainly disdainful of the vulgarities of settler politics, and he had little time, himself a proud “unadulterated Negro”, for the Mulattos who dominated early Liberian politics: his quaint racial theory had them as degenerate and effeminate, an inferior breed. But far from being a consistent spokesman on behalf of indigenous Liberians, Blyden advocated the bringing in of more blacks from America and the Caribbean. Reflecting the views of some of his European friends, he looked upon indigenous Africans as degraded and benighted – the issue of equality with them did not arise in his mind.

Blyden himself was forced to flee Liberia by his political enemies, and he settled in Sierra Leone, where he died. Liberia remained in its state of inertia; at the end of the nineteenth century the settlers numbered only 25,000. When in 1874 the Liberian government decided that other groups adjacent to Monrovia would be allowed representation in the national legislature as “referees and advisers”, their advice was restricted to matters involving their own ethnic groups, and they were denied the vote. It is entirely moot given their background and demographic disadvantage whether the settlers could have afforded a more inclusive state: for political purposes, history does not make room for such nuance. Liberia, in fact, was probably too weak and indigent to have expanded its writ much: by the end of the 19th century, its entire budget, about 25,000 pounds sterling, was less than half what its

neighbour Sierra Leone was spending on education.

Liberia's fortune changed radically when in 1926 President Charles Dunbar Burgess King (who was born in Sierra Leone of settler descent) signed an agreement with the American Firestone Company to invest \$20 million in rubber plantation; the company also gave a loan of \$5 million to the government, and then took the management of the country's customs to ensure the loan was paid back. Firestone fueled both a measure of economic growth and an extreme form of patrimonial corruption, with receipts from its taxes and royalties being controlled directly by the Presidency. This ensured that the Liberian government had enough resources to ignore the overall socio-economic development of the country, as well make the Presidency a very potent and overwhelming force. The relationship between the Monrovia government and the indigenous population was so skewed that a League of Nations investigation in 1931 actually recommended that Liberia be deprived of its independence and colonized. In the mid 1950s, William Tubman, the embodiment of this new patrimonialism, had made the presidency utterly personalized: maintaining his personal yacht, bought at crippling cost by the indigent state, cost more than the allocation for education for Liberia's 2 million people. He was succeeded, after 27 years in power, by Tolbert, who was overthrown by the nihilistic Samuel Doe, a former Master Sergeant. Under his bloodthirsty reign, Liberia dissolved into anarchy.

However fair one wants to be about Liberia's settler elite, it is clear that they, out of ignorance, avarice or existential necessity, refused to adhere to Edmund Burke's vision of a state as a partnership with its citizens in all arts and sciences, in all virtues and vices, in all endeavours great and small. And they refused to see that disenfranchisement, the relegation of a large body of people to a position that Baldwin called that of "disesteemed," leads to rage. That rage, as Baldwin saw clearly, may be "personally fruitless, but it is also absolutely inevitable; this rage, so generally discounted, so little understood...is one of the things that make history." Liberian history for the past quarter century – from the Doe coup to the Taylor-inspired insurgencies – has been driven exactly by this rage of the disesteemed.

While the TRC report captures some of these undercurrents, the analysis often seem breezy and pat, as though what is being presented is self-evident: the writers do not even bother to make attributions (footnotes etc).

Attention is likely to focus on the recommendations around lustration and prosecution, but the manner in which these are made is rather irresponsible and foolish. The report notes that "Prosecution in a court of competent jurisdiction and other forms of public sanctions are [sic] desirable and appropriate mechanisms to promote the ends of justice, peace and security, foster genuine national reconciliation and combat impunity." And it asserts – without careful, deliberative evidence-based demonstration – that a number of groups, entities and individuals were "involved in a joint criminal enterprise or conspiracy, which planned, instigated, ordered, commanded, aided or abetted in the planning, preparation or execution" of crimes against humanity during the Liberian wars. The phrase "joint criminal enterprise" is the reductive, depoliticizing and intellectually slovenly formulation of David Crane, former prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Its use in the TRC report that pretends to weigh the political, economical and social factors that led to the civil war in Liberia is unfortunate – and utterly inapt.

TRC Massa Washington Talks About their Operation in Liberia

The following, deemed the "Significant Violator Groups" in the category of culpability, are well known and deserve little comment: Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), which is found to have been responsible for most of the violations, 41 per cent; Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD); George Boley's Liberian Peace Council (LPC); Militia [sic]; Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL); United Liberation Movement (ULIMO); Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL); Unknown [sic]; United Liberation Movement-K (ULIMO K); Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL); United Liberation Movement-J (ULIMO J); and Anti-

Terrorist Unity (ATU). In all, 106 people, including leaders of all the warring factions, are recommended for prosecution by an Extraordinary Court for “gross Human rights violations and war crimes.” But 36 persons, except for Joe Wylie all rather unknown characters, are exempted by the TRC from prosecution “though found to be responsible [for violations] because they cooperated with the TRC process, admitted to the crimes committed and spoke truthfully before the Commission and expressed remorse for their prior actions during the war.”

Doubtless the most unexpected, and certainly the most outrageous, recommendation is the one dealing with lustration. The TRC recommended that 52 persons, who were “political leaders and financiers of different warring factions”, should be barred from holding public office for 30 years. This category includes – sigh! – the current President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. It also includes the academic Byron Tarr, whose very useful analysis of the early stages of the war has been much cited by other academics. The list seems to come from nowhere: there is little in the entire report to suggest that most of the personalities were culpable of anything; in fact few of the names on the list are mentioned in the actual report – making the recommendation seem rather glib and asinine. President Sirleaf appears a few times in the report, and her name is thrown about rather carelessly: we are told somewhere that “Amongst Doe’s staunchest and most active political opponents in the Diaspora were Dr. Amos Sawyer and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, both victims of Doe’s brutality,” and that Sirleaf “led the pro Taylor elements while Dr Amos Sawyer led the opposition to any form of engagement or support to Charles Taylor.” Again, we read that as Taylor became “increasingly unpopular, he lost the popular support of the Liberian people and his traditional political allies and financiers in Liberia, including Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.”

This is about all – Sirleaf was not in leadership position in Liberia throughout the war period, and she has provided a convincing account of her dealings with Taylor, both to the TRC and in her memoirs, *This Child will be Great* (Harper Collins, 2009). Her first meeting was when “sometime in 1989” Taylor was presented to a group she belonged to in the US, the Association for Constitutional Democracy in Liberia (ACDL), by Tom Woewiyu; the second was in a Paris hotel just before the war started in Liberia, at which Sirleaf suggests buying breakfast for Taylor and Woewiyu, who had unexpectedly visited. Taylor said, ‘The money you spend for breakfast you could give to us’. She gave them the money, adding with a touch of pathos: “It was clear to me that whatever their plans, they were not going well at the moment if they needed the price of breakfast to keep on.” And finally when Sirleaf ventured into Taylor territory during the war to present him with \$10,000 her group had raised – to feed his troops and civilians trapped on his side of the frontlines. Sirleaf writes that she was appalled by Taylor’s viciousness and lack of a reforming vision for Liberia. She cut her ties with Taylor after that.

This account may well be abbreviated, incomplete; but the TRC does not present an alternative narrative: it simply makes strong, unsupported assertions, perhaps convinced that by simply doing so they would be taken at face value. This really in a way defeats the purpose for which more than \$8 million was expended on the TRC – Sirleaf’s government, as well as many other donors, was supportive throughout – in a period of two years. In fact this very dull, padded, and somewhat shabby report is rescued from utter irrelevance by its being so outrageous and irresponsible in the recommendations section. Can any sensible person who has seen the immense accomplishment of the Sirleaf government since it came to power in 2006 suggest with a straight face that she is unfit for public office? As it happens, the TRC, led by a youthful lawyer and activist named Jerome Verdier, actually recommends life-time pension for all Commissioners based on “standards commensurate” to their current position!

More useful and interesting is the statistical data, analyzed for the TRC by the US-based charity Benetech. We learn that forced displacement accounted for the most violations, 36 per cent (or 58849 cases), to be followed by killing at 17.1 per cent, or 28,042 direct war-related killings. This should cause some reflection on some of the casualty figures usually bandied about with respect to the war. The TRC accepts these figures, but curiously rejects another set of statistics produced for them by Benetech – which had determined that about 60 per cent of Liberians would rather “forgive and forget” the crimes of the past: in other words, the overwhelming majority of Liberians rejected prosecution for the offences committed during the war. I have myself advocated some kind of prosecution

for the egregious crimes committed with impunity in Liberia during the war, but I found this statement by the TRC totally confusing, incomprehensible: "The catalogue of violations enumerated [in the report] evidences the distinct nature of violations of human rights that characterized the conflict in Liberia. Rightly so, the TRC has determined that gross violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws, egregious domestic violations and other forms of violations were very much pervasive in Liberia's several wars and armed conflict during the TRC mandated period of review." The TRC "determines": so what was the point of the public hearings, the very elaborate effort to collect statements and views from across the board all over Liberia? Are these to be dismissed so glibly? This cavalier approach seriously undermines the relevance of the entire report.

Editor's Note: Lansana Gberie is a Sierra Leonean academic and journalist. He has been Senior Research Fellow at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Accra, Ghana. Gberie has written extensively on conflict and conflict management in Africa, including, most recently, *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (Hurst/University of Indiana Press, 2005). His scholarly articles have appeared in *African Affairs* (Oxford University Press), *Africa Development* (CODESRIA), and *Globalizations* (University of Newcastle). Gberie has been a key researcher for Partnership Africa Canada's Human Security and International Diamond Trade project, and was co-author of *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security* (Ottawa, 2000). He has since authored many reports and studies for the Project, and is editor of the *Sierra Leone Annual Diamond Review*. Gberie's chief interest is conflict and security in the Mano River Union area of West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea). He writes regularly for *Africa Week* and *New African* magazines.

The East African

Monday, 13 July 2009

Rwanda: ICTR Given One Year to Wind Up, As Govt Receives U.S. \$44 Million Boost

Catherine Riungu

Nairobi — The UN Security Council has for the second time extended the mandate of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), by a year.

The court will go on until December 2010 instead of initial plans of winding up this December.

A decision of Resolution 1878 (2009) issued last Tuesday also stated that contracts of all judges will be extended to December next year.

The extension follows concerns by ICTR President Dennis Byron, expressed before the UN Security Council, that not all trials would be completed by the end of this year.

Addressing the Security Council over his six-monthly report, Justice Byron said at least one joint trial of three former ruling party leaders in Rwanda would spill over to 2010 and that at least 11 cases involving 24 people were underway.

He said the closing strategy would also be affected if the 13 "most wanted" fugitives were arrested.

At least four of them, he said, must be tried by ICTR. The 13 include Felicien Kabuga, believed to be hiding in Kenya, and others said to be holed up in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The UN Court was established in November 1994 to try key suspects of the Rwanda genocide that left an estimated 800,000 people dead. It has convicted 39 people and acquitted six.

The extension comes in the wake of a decision by Belgium, Germany, Netherlands and the US to grant 35 million Euros (about \$43.8 million) to Rwanda to reinforce its judiciary in preparation for the country's hosting of genocide cases after ICTR closes, and jailing of convicts.

The agreement was signed by Rwanda's Justice Minister James Musoni and donor representatives on Wednesday in Kigali.

Also extended are the trials before the semi-traditional court, Gacaca (which is trying the majority of the alleged authors of the 1994 genocide). These trials could continue until the end of this year.

The National Service of the Gacaca Courts had initially planned to wind up the trials last month.

Also getting a reprieve are staff of the ICTR, who had been asked to go home by September.

About 349 members of staff had been earmarked for separation from both the Kigali and the Arusha offices, leaving the UN court with 693 staff by the end of September.

About 11 cases involving 24 people are yet to be concluded, most of which are in the stage of drafting the judgments. Five are in the trial stages. Several judgements are expected to be delivered between now and mid next year.

Meanwhile, suspects from Rwanda and the Balkans living in Britain could be tried in the UK, under plans outlined by Justice Secretary Jack Straw. The proposals cover war crimes since 1991 -- 10 years earlier than the current law allows.

The Associated Press

Monday, 13 July 2009

Uganda willing to arrest al-Bashir for war crimes

By GODFREY OLUKYA

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Uganda said Monday it would arrest Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir if he enters the country, an unusual stance after a summit of African leaders denounced the international arrest warrant against al-Bashir.

Henry Oryem Okello, Uganda's minister for international affairs, spoke after meeting with the International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo, in Kampala.

Police "will ensure that he is arrested" if al-Bashir arrives, Okello said.

Ocampo added: "It is a legal obligation for Uganda to arrest Bashir if he comes to Uganda."

Earlier this month at an African Union summit, Africa's leaders criticized the International Criminal Court and refused to extradite al-Bashir, who has been indicted for crimes against humanity in Darfur.

Sudan welcomed the move, and other Africans said it was a signal that the West should not impose its ways on Africa. But several African leaders appeared to strongly disagree with the AU statement, and Benin Foreign Minister Jean-Marie Ehouzou said Sudan's neighbor and antagonist, Chad, objected to the wording.

Heads of state at AU summits reach decisions by consensus behind closed doors, not from a vote, and it was not clear how the measure was approved.

A fugitive rebel leader in Uganda, Joseph Kony, also is wanted by the international war crimes court. Kony is the leader of the notorious Lord's Resistance Army, which has waged a vicious two-decade insurgency in northern Uganda.

But Kony, who has not been seen in public since 2006, wants clarification on how the government will address charges of atrocities against him and other rebels, mediators say.

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has agreed to approach the international court and request that the indictments be withdrawn if Kony signs a final peace deal. But any decision to drop the international charges would have to be approved by judges at the court, who would first want to be sure the rebels get a proper trial in Uganda.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Monday, 13 July 2009

Germany charges accused Nazi guard Demjanjuk

International Justice Desk



Munich , Germany

German prosecutors charged suspected Nazi death camp guard John Demjanjuk with helping to kill nearly 28,000 Jews in World War Two, setting the stage for what may be Germany's last big Nazi war crimes trial.

"State prosecutors in Munich have today charged the 89-year-old John Demjanjuk as an accessory to murder in a total of 27,900 cases," prosecutors said in a statement.

Nazi hunters hailed the announcement, which follows years of legal arguments over the wartime activities of Kiev-born Demjanjuk, who denies any role in the Holocaust.

Prosecutors said the long-time Ohio resident, who has been held in a jail in southern Germany since May 12 after he was deported from the United States, would be tried in a Munich court, but did not specify when.

Lawyers for the prosecution and the defence have previously said autumn could be a feasible start date.

The retired car factory worker tops the Simon Wiesenthal Center's list of its 10 most-wanted suspected war criminals. It says Demjanjuk pushed men, women and children into gas chambers at the Sobibor death camp in what is today Poland.

"This is a milestone on the way to finally achieving justice," said Efraim Zuroff, the head of the Wiesenthal Center in Jerusalem and a leading Nazi hunter.

"A trial of this sort sends a very important message, that even many years after the crimes were committed, it is still possible to achieve justice."

Demjanjuk has said he was drafted into the Soviet army in 1941, became a German prisoner of war a year later and served at German prison camps until 1944. He immigrated to the United States in 1951 and became a naturalised citizen in 1958.

Medical experts deemed Demjanjuk fit to stand trial despite protestations from his family that he is too frail.

Ethiopian Review

Saturday, 11 July 2009

How the ICC tries those responsible for war crimes

By Mehret Tesfaye

The International Criminal Court at The Hague tries persons in member States responsible for atrocities, including crimes against humanity.

Those targeted include top political party chiefs, military bosses and militia commanders, ministers, prime ministers and even presidents.

Ideally, arrests of suspects are made by officials of the affected country or the country where the indicted individuals live.

Member countries can also arrest those with warrants, but with a request from the UN Security Council.

Persons have to be indicted first by the court before arrest and transfers are made.

And before any indictment is prepared and issued against any suspect, it must be confirmed through a pre-trial court also based at The Hague.

The prosecutor then issues a sealed indictment after investigation is complete. Then a sealed indictment is issued after the prosecutor completes investigation. This is dispatched to member countries with intentions of aiding in the arrest of those indicted. The sealed indictment helps avert possible flight of the suspects.

Pre-trial verdict

After the pre-trial verdict has been entered, the ICC then asks for a warrant of arrest.

Confirmation hearings are then instituted to validate the charges. The accused persons are challenged to defend themselves against the charges.

The suspect is given a chance to appeal against both conviction and sentence.

The ICC has no law enforcers of its own and relies on the state to arrest and transfer the indicted person, who is by now referred to as a defendant, to The Hague.

The trials can also be conducted in the absence of suspects. The ICC has no minimum sentence but has a life sentence as the maximum imprisonment for those found guilty.

It is not mandatory to ferry the suspects to The Hague for trials, as the ICC is allowed to sit anywhere, Kenya included.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (often referred to as the International Criminal Court Statute or the Rome Statute) is the treaty that established the International Criminal Court (ICC). It was adopted at a diplomatic conference in Rome on July 17, 1998. The Rome Statute entered into force on July 1, 2002. As of January this year, 108 states are party to the statute.

Kenya became the 84th signatory on August 11, 1999, and ratified the treaty on March 15, 2005.