

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



Flashback to November 2003: Construction of the courthouse.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Friday, 15 February 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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New Citizen (Online Edition)

Thursday, 14 February 2008

Commentary

Fight Against Impunity Continues

Now 46 years after independence, it seems very clear that the fight against impunity which started in may 25 1997 is continuing unabated and for many good reasons.

Impunity which means getting away with wrong doing especially when no form of punishment is prescribed was rejected in 1997, when Johnny Paul Koroma announced his coup against President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. It happened at a time when the OAU was meeting in Zimbabwe with the full participation of the out gone UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The shock waves experienced by the OAU leaders in Zimbabwe following the Johnny Paul Koroma coup and the carnage that followed had forced the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan and other Heads of State assembled in Zimbabwe to declare that the days of impunity were over and that future coup makers would have to contend with the consequences of their coup.

This declaration in Zimbabwe in 1997 served to strengthening the hands of civil society in Sierra Leone who rose up against the Johnny Paul Koroma regime and chased it out of power eleven months later. Those soldiers who survived the counter coup mostly referred to as 'sobels' were rounded up and tried for treason in which 24 of them were found guilty and executed publicly in Freetown, including a female officer, Major Kula Samba.

The government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah at the time had affirmed strongly that impunity would never again be allowed to rear its ugly head.

Shortly after that the international community turned its attention to the ending of the eleven year rebel war in Sierra Leone and when the Lome Peace Accord was signed, the international community refused to grant amnesty to the Sierra Leone rebels in the name of fighting impunity.

The fight against impunity continued when parliamentarians and other groups organized a demonstration against Foday Sankoh for the unlawful capture and imprisonment of 538 Zambian soldiers.

As the demonstrators approached Foday Sankoh's gates, shots where fired from inside, a stout display of impunity which was countered later and Foday Sankoh and some of his cohorts were arrested and incarcerated awaiting a trial.

Subsequently the leader of the RUF Foday Sankoh died in prison as the fight against impunity continued. Earlier, the leader of the Kamajors was also arrested as it was widely rumoured that Kamajors had killed and maimed a lot of helpless citizens with impunity.

The imprisoned leader of the Kamajors later died in detention and under the authority of the Special Court of Sierra Leone, as that court claimed that the fight against impunity must continue.

And only recently the fight against impunity was again spotlighted when the chairman of the National Electoral Commission declared that those who were involved in malpractices in the run-off election of September 8 2007 were blacklisted as not fit to take any part in the conduct of future elections according to the regulations of NEC.

Whatever way one looks at it, it was evidently clear that the blacklisting of presiding officers is another way of fighting impunity which some times implies the identification and punishment of wrong doers. Some of these presiding officers who have lost their credibility for positions, and lost their chances of continuing with NEC might not have personally engaged in election malpractices that resulted into excess votes in 477 polling stations all over Sierra Leone.

There is however, the feeling that a man of authority may delegate his authority to a subordinate but can never delegate his responsibility if some thing goes wrong after delegation of authority. This means that if a subordinate whom one has trusted to carry out responsibility on his behalf or underperforms, the responsibility will always be on the shoulders of the one who delegated the authority.

This is how some of the 477 presiding officers of polling stations where excess votes were found to lost their positions.

There were some who didn't care whether they had done wrong or not, thereby promoting the idea of impunity which is now declared as zero tolerant in Sierra Leone.

The lessons to learn here is that one must always realize that he is ultimately responsible for the action or non-action of his subordinates.

The days of doing wrong and getting away with it are gone forever, and this is a lesson we must all learn, especially the 477 presiding officers who have lost their jobs, even though some of them may be innocent or not personally responsible for over voting in their areas. Let us accept the situation as it is and continue to grow.

BBC World Service Trust

Thursday, 14 February 2008

By Joseph Cheeseman at The Hague

The Prosecution twelfth witness took the stand today, Thursday, and testified from behind a screen with her face and her voice distorted by a mechanical technology. This was a protective measure put in place by the Court and the parties for this Sierra Leonean woman, only identified as TF1-026. The distorted Krio of the crime base witness is being interpreted.

Witness TF1-026 started her testimony with confidence, but was later overwhelmed by distress. She broke down in tears after she testified that four RUF fighters raped her in 1999.

The Court called off the trial proceeding five minutes before its usual morning break which is 11:30 a.m. Netherlands time to allow the distressed witness recovered from her grief.

BRENDA HOLLIS: Witness, what was the fourth rebel doing when the third rebel was using you?

WITNESS: He was standing, waiting, telling him to hurry up.

HOLLIS: Witness, what did you do when this was happening to you?

WITNESS: I was crying that time.

HOLLIS: Witness, when this was happening to you, do you know what was happening to the other seven girls that were in the parlour?

WITNESS: Yes, it was the same thing that they were doing to them, because it was a big living room.

HOLLIS: Are you able to describe what was happening to them?

WITNESS: Yes.

HOLLIS: Your Honour, can the Court perhaps ask the witness if she'd like a break?

JUSTICE DOHERTY: Madam Witness, are you feeling all right and are you able to continue?

WITNESS: I want to have some time away. (Crying)

JUSTICE DOHERTY: Support unit please...(off microphone). We will take the mid-morning break early in light of the witness's distress.

After the witness was escorted out of the courtroom on the order of Presiding Judge Teresa Doherty, Defence Lawyer Courtney Griffiths made a submission that it was not necessary for the Prosecution to prove the guilt of the accused by subjecting a witness to her distressful past.

GRIFFITHS: Your Honour, I thought it would be difficult to experience anything more distressing than the DVD we watched the other week, but this experience certainly comes close. Now there has to be a limit to which the Prosecution are willing to go in calling this kind of evidence. I say this for this reason: Why do we need to go into this degree of detail given the nature of the case being put by the Prosecution

against this accused man? Does it really assist the Court in deciding his role to be causing this young woman to relive this experience in this kind of detail? I cannot see how, given the way in which the indictment is put, any of this detail is necessary, or indeed relevant.

CHEESEMAN: But Prosecution lawyer, Brenda Hollis, said it was this cruelty as described by the witness, perpetrated by the RUF under the command of the accused former Liberian President that brought the parties to Court. So, the testimony was necessary no matter how unbearable it was.

HOLLIS: Prosecution must prove not just this Accused's involvement in these crimes, but the crimes themselves. And the world, if they see this, that is part of this process. Now we do not bring witnesses who say they will not come, because we understand how distressing it is. But talking about it in Court is no doubt much less distressing than when it was happening. It is because of the crimes that we are here in Court, and there's certainly relevance to it. There are three things we have to prove: the underlying act; the rapes such as she is describing and the other crimes, that they were crimes against humanity or that they were violations of Common Article 3 or they were other serious violations. And thirdly, this Accused's involvement in all of this. So this is a component of our proof, and it is most distressing. It's unfortunate that we're here at all, but it is a part and a very real part of this case.

CHEESEMAN: The Court had to make a determination whether the witness's testimony should be continued or terminated.

JUSTICE DOHERTY: If it is alleged that crimes have been committed, then there is an obligation and a duty on the part of the Prosecution to prove those crimes in the absence of any other form of agreement or agreed facts. The evidence of the witness will proceed.

CHEESEMAN: The Prosecution twelfth witness then continued the testimony by saying she was marked with the inscription RUF on her chest, and subjected to forced marriage. Witness TF1-026 testified that to date she and her nine year old daughter born to an RUF fighter from the forced marriage suffered rejection and humiliation, constantly being referred to by neighbours as rebels. The testimony of the crime base witness, or victim of the Sierra Leonean war, was intermittently stopped because of the expression of unbearable grief accompanied by weeping from the witness.

Following the afternoon break of the Special Court, the Sierra Leonean female Prosecution witness had not overcome the trauma, so the Court, in agreement with prosecution and defence, postponed testimony to a later date.

The suspension of the testimony of witness TF1-026 led to immediately bringing on the witness stand another crime base witness, an amputee from Sierra Leone. He has started testifying to how the RUF amputated him and others.

This is Joseph Cheeseman reporting for the BBC World Service Trust and Search for Common Ground, from The Hague.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Thursday, 14 February 2008

RUF victim testifies against Taylor

Written by Wellington Geevon Smith

The 12th witness for the prosecution in the trial of detained former President Charles Taylor took the stand Thursday in The Hague.

Report says the witness testified from behind a screen with her face and her voice distorted by a mechanical technology.

This is a protective measure put in place by the court and the parties for this Sierra Leonean woman only identified as TF1-026.

The female witness started her testimony with confidence but was later overwhelmed by distress when she broke down in tears.

This followed her testimony that four RUF fighters raped her in 1999.

The court called off the trial proceeding five minutes to allow the distressed female witness recovered from her grief.

However, the defence said it was not necessary for the prosecution to prove the guilt of Mr. Taylor by subjecting a witness to her distressful past.

But the prosecution said it was this cruelty of the RUF under the command of the accused former Liberian President that brought the parties to court.

The prosecution maintained the testimony was necessary no matter how unbearable it was.

New Democrat (Liberia)
Friday, 15 February 2008

Witness On Cobra Base

Cobra Base, SBU

Defense lawyers for former President Charles Taylor Wednesday sought to discredit a Gambian mercenary's testimony of weapons transport into Sierra Leone, the existence of the Small Boys Unit at the feared Cobra Base near Gbernga, and Taylor's personal role in these affairs.

The witness, Suwandi Camara, told the court that the leaders of Gambian mercenaries serving in the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, simply known as Dr Manneh, was privy to confidential plans for Sierra Leone's invasion.

In the absence of direct quotes from the proceedings, the summary of the exchange between witness Camara and Taylor lawyer Terry Munyard is reproduced here, courtesy blog "The Trial of Charles Taylor".

Defense Counsel Terry Munyard continued his cross-examination of Prosecution Witness Suwandi Camara and questioned him on the following:

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Witness On Cobra Base

Transport of arms and ammunition to Sierra Leone during ULLMO-K control of Lofa County

Munyard questioned Camara on his knowledge of footpaths in Lofa County. Camara answered that he knew footpaths in Lofa County, Bong County and (parts of) Gberopolu County but not as far as Grand Cape Mount County. Munyard sought to establish that during the time that ULLMO-K controlled Lofa County, it was impossible for the LDF to use these paths for the transport of arms and ammunition from Gbarnga to Sierra Leone. Camara admitted that at that time he was in Gbarnga and did not know if these bush paths were in use for this purpose.

Camara stated that when he was at Cobra Base, which is near Gbarnga, he was able to hear explosions and gunfire in Zorzor (distance: about 100 km). The Defense disputed this on account of the large distance between the two locations.

The Defense disputed there was an airstrip near Gbarnga, but Camara insisted that there was one and that airplanes, not helicopters, were used to transport arms and ammunition from this airstrip to Sierra Leone. After (part of) Gbarnga had fallen into the hands of ULLMO-K, Camara was assigned to the Executive Mansion Ground (EMG). Camara testified that he had escorted at least on one occasion the transport of arms and ammunition from the EMG to the airstrip and was present when the load was boarded on the plane, destined to fly to Sierra Leone. At this occasion several Generals were present as well, but Camara mentioned no names. Camara claimed to have personal knowledge of many more of these transports, however he cannot testify to have actually been present at these occurrences.

Small Boy Units (SBUs)

The Defense suggested that there were no SBUs in Cobra Base or in the EMG. Camara insisted that Cobra Base was a training base especially for SBUs and SBUs were also present at the EMG. When Munyard stated that the only reason Supoom was present at the EMG because he was a relative of Charles Taylor, Camara testified that Supoom was a SBU-commander and that to this day he did not know Supoom to be a relative of Charles Taylor.

Overhearing secret radio messages

The Defense disputed Camara ever having overheard top-secret military radio communications. Camara testified that on that specific occasion he could overhear a radio message because he was assigned to make and bring tea for Charles Taylor himself, so he was present. Furthermore the message was transmitted in the Mandingo language, which is his native tongue. Camara further stated that on two or three other occasions he overheard military radio messages in Mandingo as the gate he used to watch was about 5 meters from the radio message room and about two meters from the bedroom of Charles Taylor.

Death of Maurice Kallon

In answer to a question from the Defense, Camara stated that Maurice Kallon was in Gbarnga in 1996, but later Camara was informed that Maurice Kallon had died. He did

not know how he had died, nor did he receive any information about him afterwards. Munyard informed Camara that Maurice Kallon is alive and on trial at a different division of this very same Court. Camara said he does not know if this is the same Maurice Kallon whom he knows, as he has not seen him.

Meetings with Charles Taylor

The Defense questioned Camara on a meeting with Charles Taylor in Burkina Faso shortly after the time in Libya. Camara testified that he himself was not present at this meeting, but was briefed afterwards by his leader Dr. Manneh. Only Charles Taylor, Foday Sankoh and Dr. Manneh were present at this meeting. The three worked out a plan to enter Lofa County. Taylor could enter from there into the rest of Liberia, Sankoh could enter from there into Sierra Leone.

The Defense questioned why Camara did not inform the Prosecution's investigators until his 5th interview that he was present while Charles Taylor and his company (and a load of arms and ammunition) flew in an airplane from Burkina Faso to Ivory Coast. Camara said this took place in 1991 and he was given short notice by his leader Dr. Manneh that this was going to happen the next day. Munyard called Camara a liar and said that if there was a plane trip at all Charles Taylor was not present. He stated that, because Camara did not mention such a dramatic event until his 5th interview with the investigators of this Court, this event may have been suggested to him.

Inconsistencies

The Defense continuously focused on inconsistencies between prior interview statements by Camara and Camara's testimony in this Court, in particular the confusion of dates.

Imprisonment and return to Gambia

Camara confirmed that he was in detention in Senegal from August 1996 until December 2000. In August 1996, the gendarmes conducted a raid and arrested several members of the group of Gambians, including Camara, but Dr. Manneh was able to escape. According to Camara the government of Senegal and the leaders of his group were negotiating the conditions for their return to Gambia, but they could not reach an agreement. Munyard contested this, saying that the real reason for their arrest was the planning of a coup d'état in Gambia and suggested that Dr. Manneh went to Liberia to meet with Charles Taylor to persuade the government of Senegal to release the group of Gambians. Camara said this did not happen. "It's your pay back time, isn't it?" asked Munyard as Camara replied that it was not a matter of vengeance, he only wished to tell what Charles Taylor had been doing.

Reimbursement, payment, assistance and money

The Defense extensively questioned Camara on the testimony he gave Monday afternoon about not receiving any benefits for giving testimony at this trial. Camara insisted that he received only reimbursements for transportation from his home in Gambia to the meeting place in Gambia with the investigators, for mobile telephone calls and

meals. He did however admit to having received financial support as a "voluntary assistance" (assistance in West-Africa means financial support) and became combative when Munyard referred to this as "payments". Munyard continued his cross-examination refraining from using the words "paid" but using the phrase "given money" instead.

The Defense extensively questioned the Witness about the signed receipts for money that Camara received on dates when interviews took place and on dates when no interviews took place. Sometimes the currency was US dollars, other times Gambian Dalasi. The total amount of money received by Camara was \$1,706.18.

When Munyard concluded his

no one will be above this TRC process. We intend to do our job well and none of us will be threatened or cowed into silence or chicken away. The Liberian entrusted us to do this job and we intend to this job to the best of our ability," she said.

Dearboy is accused by victims and witnesses of gang rape, murder, and pounding babies in motors.

The TRC says Dearboy should come clean and give full disclosure about his actual role during the war. Dearboy told VOA that he was forced to join Charles Taylor's rebel movement, the VOA said.

"My mother and I left from Monrovia as a result of the rebel insurgency when Prince Johnson took over Monrovia. We walked and went to Grand Bassa County. That was as a result of being conscripted into the rebel group. In fact, I was a direct victim of the situation because I was tortured and beaten on several occasions. And the only option I had at that time was to be part as a child soldier," he said.

VOA: He said the TRC has been manipulated and undermined by certain individuals for their own selfish aims. Dearboy specifically singled out TRC commissioner Mass Washington who he said manipulated he Sundaygar's photograph in front of his accusers.

Dearboy told the VOA that he has not confessed, although sources say there is a written statement at the TRC in which he has admitted doing some unsavory things.

"I have come to tell you that I did not confess anything. I did not say that I committed any atrocities. And if they believe that I confessed, that's Malu (Massa) Washington who is commissioner of the TRC during the public hearing who took my photo and showed it to the guy who accused me and said is this Sundaygar? I would have preferred for Malu (Massa) Washington to have produced more than two photographs so that the person who accused me would be able to choose among them. But instead she used one photograph. I think that was intended to direct the alleged victim to be able to say yes this is Sundaygar. And that was very unethical. And she is one of the brains behind making sure that I be convicted as a rapist, as a murderer which of course I did not do any of these things," he told VOA's James Butty.

VOA quoted TRC Commissioner Washington as saying, the mandate of the TRC is to find the root causes of the Liberian civil war with the

cross-examination, Lead Prosecutor Brenda Hollis stated that the Prosecution had noticed that payment receipts of October 2006, November 2006 and February 2007 were missing. Having just received an e-mail from Liberia with this information, she read it out to the Court and the Defense and arranged for this information to be printed and distributed. The total amount received by Camara now amounted to \$1,984.79. She said she had given orders to Liberia to check and double-check the reimbursements of all the Witnesses. If any inconsistencies exist the Court and the Defense will be notified.

At 4:10 p.m. Prosecutor Alain Werner began his examination on redirect and concluded this at 4:30 p.m.

At 4:30, Presiding Judge Doherty dismissed Camara and the Court adjourns until tomorrow 9:30 a.m.

"I Never, Never Raped..."



aim of reconciling the country. She said the TRC does not wish to engage victims or perpetrators or even witnesses word for word.

Washington said if Dearboy feels he was conscripted into the war as a child soldier, the commission would compute his age to and during the time of the war, and if it is proven that Dearboy was truly a child sol-

der member of Charles Taylor's movement but said he did not rape anyone. He said he was trying to make the best of the past.

"One thing we are not in of that God decided to leave our past. Our past remains. We are in control of the present to make a better future. And



dier he would qualify for the TRC policy which grants immunity to children combatants. But first Washington said Dearboy must come out and give full disclosure of his role during the war.

Dearboy said he regretted being

one thing I'm not going to do I was conscripted as a child soldier. And this is why I'm using this opportunity to have a foundation able to promote or assist every soldier who a direct victim situation," Dearboy said.