

**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:

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Standard Times
Thursday, 16 July 2009

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor today dismissed prosecution case against him as full of "disinformation, misinformation, lies and rumors" when he took the stand at the Special Court for Sierra Leone as the first witness in his defense.

When asked by his defense counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, what he thought about the charges against him, Taylor responded that they are "quite incredible, very unfortunate." Taylor said he has fought all his life to pursue justice and that the prosecution's characterization of him was "completely false."

Taylor also dismissed ideas that he fermented war in Sierra Leone and highlighted his role as a peacemaker. He would have to be a "superman" to run his country as President, control insurgency in his own Country, while planning and ordering the Commission of crimes in neighboring Sierra Leone, he said.

Instead, he invested his energy into fixing his war-torn country and helping other Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) leaders to attain peace in Sierra Leone. Taylor said that for all times that he was in contact with RUF leaders in Sierra Leone, he did so with the con-

Something to Think About

Taylor says prosecution is full of misinformation and rumours

sent of ECOWAS leaders. Taylor denied allegations of any association with former RUF leader Foday Sankoh and emphasized that he had no knowledge of earlier RUF plans to attack Sierra Leone in 1991. He was "outraged" when he heard the RUF invaded Freetown on January 6, 1999 after all his work to secure peace.

Taylor also "could not understand" why he was handed over to the Special Court after his ECOWAS peers told him they would work to quash his indictment.

Taylor's admitted to earlier associations with the RUF. Between August 1991 to May 1992, there was cooperation between the RUF and NPFL because the two groups were fighting against a common enemy; the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), a group Taylor claims was supported by the then government of Sierra Leone under the leadership of

Joseph S. Momoh. Mr. Taylor denied ever receiving diamonds from RUF rebels or providing them with arms and ammunition.

Mr. Taylor explained that he led a rebellion as leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) because the then president of the country, Samuel K. Doe was leading a "violent campaign against the country." He said that elections were stolen by Samuel Doe and it therefore became necessary to restore order and democracy in Liberia.

Mr. Taylor admitted that during the conflict in Liberia, his NPFL rebels committed some atrocities but that perpetrators were tried under military law and those found guilty were executed.

Much of today's testimony, however, described Taylor's early years, from childhood through to his role as a student leader during the coup d'etat in Liberia in April 1980.



Awoko

Thursday, 16 July 2009

“Gen. Quiwonkpa trained rebels in Freetown”- *Court told*

By Betty Milton and Judy Vue

Charles Taylor yesterday disclosed that General Thomas Quiwonkpa then Commanding Officer of the Liberian Army and former President of Sierra Leone late General Joseph Saidu Momoh trained rebels outside Freetown and supplied arms and ammunition to them for the overthrow of then Liberian President Samuel K. Doe.

He was continuing his evidence in his defence for the second day at the Special Court hearing at The Hague, The Netherlands. “Samuel Doe, the head of the People’s Redemption Council (PRC) took over power through a coup de-tat and wanted to remain in power” he said. Charles told the court that the people of Liberia wanted a civilian government and a return to democracy and this could only be achieved through General Thomas Quiwonkpa, then commanding officer of the army.

Taylor explained that General Quiwonkpa also wanted a change of power to civilian rule and that because Doe was aware of this he decided to transfer General Quiwonkpa to the PRC office as Secretary General and then put one of his men in the

position of Commanding Officer.

As part of the Council was not in support of Doe’s action Taylor went on, they advised General Quiwonkpa to make a move when Doe left the country for the United Kindgom.

Charles Taylor said that General Quiwonkpa refused to involve himself in the move.

The former Liberian President and war lord said that in 1985, General Quiwonkpa traveled to Sierra Leone to plan the invasion of Liberia and overthrow Doe. He added that many people were contacted, including President Elleen Johnson-Sirleaf.

He also told the court that while General Quiwonkpa was in Freetown, General Saidu Momoh, then-president of Sierra Leone, also supplied arms, ammunition and training just outside of Freetown.

Taylor said the invasion was successful to an extent since the radio station was seized and General Krogba made a broadcast.

He stated that there was some misunderstanding and General Quiwonkpa was captured, killed and eaten by the Krahn people.

Awoko

Thursday, 16 July 2009

11 Years Bullet Inside Man Removed

By Ophaniel Gooding

In his pursuit to find food during a violent clash between the Junta and the Nigerian led ECOMOG troop at the peak of Sierra Leone's civil war, Yayah Kanu was hit by a stray bullet on the back of his left thigh and has been living with the bullet for 11 years.

Yayah is one of the beneficiaries of the National Commission for Social Action's (NaCSA's) first social

service packages which is a component of the reparation programme.

NaCSA's director of reparation programme, Obi Buya Kamara explained that this is the first social service package to come to the assistance of wounded victims in life threatening situation after the war.

He revealed, "we are not doing health now because we want to know the total case load," but however, he noted, "we will

not have reparation and watch people die due to injuries sustained during the war, that is why so we came up with this emergency window to address those who are in critical situation. This is the very first one we have started," he said.

The director further explained that apart from the symbolic representation such as bush cleansing and reburials, the programme is a material benefit which includes service packages such as free health care, education support, pension, skills training and micro grant.

Explaining the dangers of a bullet inside the body Head of Surgery Connaught Hospital, Dr. Thaim Buya Kamara said "the dangers that bullet causes is in various stages; firstly, he said "the impact of the bullet can destroy the bones, nerves and blood vessels."

The surgeon explained, "when inside the body during the first few months, the bullet which is made up of lead will discharge toxic which is dangerous for the body, with time the body encapsulate the amount of toxic in the body," he said.

He further revealed that the bullet might migrate from its original position which might cause additional injury or complication. Dr Kamara explained that the long term effect is that it might also cause physiological effect, the realization that a bullet is inside your body.

Yayah Kanu who underwent a surgical operation yesterday at the Connaught Hospital under the NaCSA package explained that since he sustained the injury especially during the rains it has been hell for him.

He revealed that when he heard about the programme over the radio, he informed his colleagues, but they took it with a pinch of a salt and now when they heard that he has been operated on for free, they are asking him how he did it. He said he told them "the only way is to register at the National Stadium."

Awoko

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Symbolic reburial ceremony in Bonthe

By Saidu Bah

The National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) in collaboration with its implementing partner Hope Sierra Leone has restored the dignity of war victims and also provided a befitting reburial of the dead within the Bonthe Mainland at a historic and memorable symbolic ceremony held over the weekend.

War victims and perpetrators expressed compassion grief and reflection for the dead and war affected and pledged from the bottom of their hearts that NO MORE WAR by forgetting the past and moving forward for the rapid development of the District.

Local authorities expressed gratitude to Hope Sierra Leone and NaCSA for taking the bold step to care for those severely affected by the brutal civil war by providing them with shelter, medical, micro credit and schooling for children.

Delivering painful testimonies at the symbolic reparation ceremony held at a Community center a cross section of war victims in Matru Jong and Tihun in the Sogbeni Chiefdom promised to forgive and reconcile with perpetrators to give peace a chance.

Hope Sierra Leone Director John Bangura explained to war victims that his organization is based on moral principles and also work towards reconciliation, democracy and Peace Building among communities.

John Bangura noted that the objective of Hope Sierra Leone is to unite people across regional and tribal boundaries and also help to build true development in the country based on equal rights and justice.

Director of Hope Sierra Leone John Bangura also explained the symbolic reparation program to residents of Bonthe Mainland and its authorities. Noting that during the war several crimes against humanity were committed and it is in that vain that they are remembering the dead and war victims.

Director Bangura further explained that Hope Sierra Leone during the course of their work in Bonthe had discovered mass graves in Matru and Tihun where over (500) five hundred people comprising of the aged, adults, youths and children were either burnt to ashes, slaughtered or shot.

He called on residents to put the legacies of the war at their back to move forward for the development of the district. Clarifying further he said that war victims are the major beneficiaries of the reparation program

Hope Sierra Leone has been very instrumental in building peace and unity among political parties and communities. It is against this backdrop that the organization is implementing partner for the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) with funds from Government, UN-PBF, IOM and

the Government of Germany has discovered several mass graves within the Bonthe Mainland during a symbolic reparation ceremony held at Matru Jong for war victims.

Paramount Chief of Matru 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.

The District authorities gave a historical background of the war and its consequences on the people and the land.

They commended NaCSA for creating the social Justice Program for war victims by remembering the dead and also improving the lives of war victims. Concluding they also appealed to NaCSA and Hope Sierra Leone to extend the date and place of registration of war victims as far as Bonthe Island and other areas that were not targeted during the first phase of the registration.

NaCSA Senior Director of Programmes Dr. William Konteh and the Reparation Program Manager Amadu Bangura gave brief background of NaCSA activities and further explained the reparation program and the intended target beneficiaries who had already registered for the program.

Amadu Bangura further explained that war victims have been registered in various categories and that widows, amputees and school children will be adequately cared for with housing facilities, medical, micro credit and school fees for children to SSS III.

Delivering the key note address the Deputy Commissioner of NaCSA Charles Rogers implored residents of Bonthe to support the reparation program as it may likely be extended to Bonthe Island. He added that at long last war victims have been recognized and encouraged residents of Bonthe to work towards the development of their area.




John Bangura Director of Hope Sierra Leone explaining about symbolic reparation to war victims

The New Citizen
Thursday, 16 July 2009

WAR VICTIM

By Abu Kalokoh

BENEFITS FROM NaCSA REPARATION



War victim suffered a bullet wound during the intervention, Mohamed Kanu & Surgeon Specialist, Dr. Thaimu B. Kamara

The National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) Reparation Program, which caters for the welfare of war victims, has finally commenced operations with the first set of beneficiaries being Yayah Kanu of 30 Patton Street and Alusine Dukulay of Kenema Town successfully going through the registration process.

Yayah Kanu was shot in the chest during the rebel invasion of Freetown when he left home in search of food and in the process sustained a serious injury which medical

experts described as critical and has lived with the bullet in his chest for the past eleven years.

Surgeon Specialist and Care Manager, Connaught Hospital, Dr. Thaimu Buya Kamara, described the operation performed on Yayah Kanu as tasking due to the poisonous bullet in his chest which he described as a foreign element in his body requiring serious attention and assured that the successfully performed one-hour operation would enable Yayah Kanu live a normal life once more.

Director, Reparation Program, Obi Buya Kamara, revealed that the program has varied packages for war victims and advised others to stay in touch with the Commission to keep abreast with developments.

He further disclosed that the program focuses on the rehabilitation of victims through the distribution of services and other material packages like free medical service, educational support, pension, loan, skills training and micro credit, implemented in line with symbolic measures which involves the reburial of the dead and cleansing of bushes to acknowledge the past.

The Repatriation Program is done by government in line with donor partners, all in an effort to facilitate social solidarity.

The second beneficiary, Alusine Dukulay, will have his operation performed soon.

COMMENTARY

JUDICIARY REDUCES TRAFFIC CONGESTION

One of the serious mistakes made by the planners of the city of Freetown is the bunching up of all important government edifices in one place commonly refereed to as centralization.

BBC World Service Trust
Wednesday, 15 July 2009

Report from The Hague

NEWS ITEM

On his second day of evidence at his war crimes trial in The Hague, the former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, has given his first account of the circumstances surrounding his escape from a jail in the United States in the 1980s. He also told the court that the Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was one of the founding members of the rebel group, NPFL, which eventually overthrew the regime of Samuel Doe. From the Hague, Adolphus Williams report.

One of the most controversial episodes of Charles Taylor's political life took place in the mid 1980s. He told the court that he had fled to the United States after being accused of embezzling \$900,000 as a minister in the regime of Samuel Doe. The Liberian government submitted an extradition request and he was jailed for fifteen months in the state of Massachusetts. In November 1985, he disappeared from the prison, provoking speculation that he had been helped by agents of the Central Intelligence Agency. He explained that his escape began when a prison guard appeared without warning in his cell.

TAYLOR: I can remember one evening at about ten he came, opened my cell, it was during lockdown time, and escorted me from the maximum security side through several gates to the minimum security side where there were two other detainees there, standing there, they were already out. Those two guys and myself with the guard, this one guard, and I do not know and will not lie if he was operating with anybody else, but I believe that he had to be operating with somebody else. I was taken out, we got to the window, these guys took a sheet, we tied it on the bar and a very short distance and we came down, got over the fence. There was a waiting car outside. There were two guys in the car. These other two guys and myself got in the car and drove, and their instruction, the guys who were driving the car, their instructions were to get me as far as New York where I had told them I wanted to go. They drove me from Boston. We stopped in Providence, Rhode Island. I followed those instructions. I do not know those guys. They never identified themselves to me. I had never known them before. They drove us all the way to New York. I got out of the car and I showed them that I would be okay. Those guys, plus the two guys that broke out of the jail with me, I have not seen or heard from them today.

WILLIAMS: Describing his preparation for the insurrection in 1989 which toppled the regime of Samuel Doe, Mr Taylor said 168 men loyal to him trained for almost two years at a camp in Libya. He visited the camp every three to four months while he was based in Burkina Faso. He also alleged that the current Liberian president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, was not merely a financial backer of his rebel group, the NPFL. She was, he said, a founding member.

Earlier, Mr Taylor described how he had personally intervened to protect the daughter-in-law of the deposed President William Tolbert in 1980. She was allowed to leave the country to return to the Ivory Coast, but her husband, A.B. Tolbert, was executed. Mr Taylor also took action as a minister in the Doe regime to prevent the American CIA from taking over a building in Monrovia in 1981. He felt this was subsequently held against him by the United States.

TAYLOR: Oh, there were some pretty mad Americans I know – and probably rightly so, they were upset and I guess this later on proved to be why, I would say, I was later on arrested on extradition charges by them. They were pretty angry.

Mr Taylor also spoke at length about the tensions between those, like him, of Americo-Liberian stock and aboriginal Liberians. He said some in the Doe regime strongly resented him because he had tried to prevent the abuse of government privileges by fellow ministers and officials.

TAYLOR: They were calling for things that they felt they were entitled to, because the Americo-Liberians before them had those things.

GRIFFITHS: Things like what?

TAYLOR: Vehicles, they wanted their homes furnished properly, and who will blame them. I surely had nothing against that, and still don't. They wanted vehicles of the status that other ministers that were America-Liberians had in previous governments, they wanted carpets, furnitures, the whole, what we used to say in America, the whole nine yards. Everything that they felt that the Americo-Liberian groups had when they were in power, they wanted that.

WILLIAMS: At the start of the session, Mr Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, was rebuked by the judges for holding up a sign visible to the public gallery which read: "Taylor is innocent." He promised not to do it again.

AW, BBCWST, The Hague

Charlestaylortrial.com

Wednesday, 15 July 2009

Taylor Alleges US Govt Helped Him Escape From US Prison

Taylor Alleges US Govt Helped Him Escape From US Prison by Tracey Gurd In a dramatic day of testimony, former Liberian president Charles Taylor told of his 1985 escape from an American maximum security jail with alleged United States government help, only days before a failed US-backed coup attempt to overthrow the then Liberian government.

With his prison cell unlocked by a US prison guard late one night in November 1985, Taylor walked out of the maximum security area of the Plymouth County Correctional Facility in Massachusetts, he told the Special Court for Sierra Leone today. Taylor said he was escorted by the same guard to the minimum security area. Tying a sheet to a window, Taylor climbed out the window and over the prison fence, where a car containing two men was waiting to whisk him to New York, he said.

Taylor told the court that he believed the guard who set him free “had to be operating with someone else.” Taylor also said he assumed that the car that took him to New York “had to be a [US] government car” because the men driving him feared he may be “picked up” if Taylor changed cars to be with his then wife, who had driven to meet the escape car with money to get Taylor out of the country.

Taylor was in US custody in 1985 pending a US government decision on an extradition request by the Liberian government on charges of embezzlement.

Taylor’s escape took place only days before his friend and Liberian military leader, Thomas Quiwonkpa, staged an unsuccessful coup against the Liberian government of President Samuel Doe in November 1985. Taylor alleged that the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was working with, and arming, Quiwonkpa to overthrow the Doe government in the months leading up to the coup attempt.

Taylor told the court that he was “one hundred percent positive” that the weapons Quiwonkpa was using “were paid for by the CIA.”

Taylor later went on to describe his efforts to recruit a total of 168 men and women to be part of his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) group to undertake military training in a former US military base in Libya between 1987 and 1989. Taylor told the court that the training aimed to produce a “well-trained and disciplined force” which were “trained in the laws of war” and could “work with the local population” in Liberia.

His overall aim, Taylor said, was for the NPFL to support the Liberian people in staging a revolution in Liberia and then “to submit ourselves to fair and free elections.”

Taylor told the court that for a revolution to be successful, he would have to rely on the civilian population in Liberia. He said it would be “stupid to terrorize civilians” because he would “lose their support.”

He also described the separation of military and civilian activities when he eventually attacked Liberia in 1989, telling the court that military people who carried out atrocities would be dealt by military courts under the military justice code.

In speaking of the NPFL in the 1980s, Taylor also said that he “did not encourage any children under the age of 17 to be involved in military activities.”

Charges against Taylor by the Special Court include, among others, the war crime of terrorizing the civilian population, and the conscription, enlistment and use of child soldiers under 15 years of age (categorized as other serious violations of international humanitarian law) in neighboring Sierra Leone after November 30, 1996.

Taylor continues his testimony tomorrow.

The Associated Press

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Taylor says his men trained to avoid atrocities

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has told a war crimes court his band of rebel fighters were trained in Libya to avoid atrocities as they swept into the country in a 1989 revolution.

Taylor is on the witness stand for the third day at his trial for allegedly commanding rebels during Sierra Leone's civil war.

He has pleaded not guilty to 11 war crimes and crimes against humanity charges.

Taylor told the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Thursday that for his 168-strong force to seize power in Liberia it would have needed the support of the local population.

Prosecutors say rebels backed by Taylor in Sierra Leone used terror tactics including systematic amputations to force the population's support.

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Voice of America
Thursday, 16 July 2009

Former Liberian Leader Denies Responsibility for War Crimes



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is seen at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague, Netherlands on July 13, 2009.

The trial of Charles Taylor has resumed in The Hague, the Netherlands, where the former Liberian President took the witness stand for the second time in his defense.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor portrayed himself as an anti-corruption fighter and a peacemaker during the second day of his war crimes trial defense.

He told the judges he spent years fighting corruption in Liberia before coming to power. He said his anti-corruption stance made him deeply unpopular with other politicians in the 1980s.

He then described falling out with former Liberian leader Samuel Doe and his escape from jail in the United States, where he was held on charges of embezzlement.

Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes in Sierra Leone, Liberia's neighbor, but he denies responsibility, arguing that he is a humanitarian. Tuesday, he dismissed the case against him as "built on lies."

Shelby Grossman is a U.S.-based researcher on Liberian politics. She says it is important that the court hears the details of Taylor's story.

"It is crucial that we hear his side of the story," said Grossman. "Liberians and Sierra Leoneans are watching and they want to know what Taylor's side of it is, they want to know how he is going to try to explain some of the things that happened."

Tens of thousands died in the Sierra Leone civil war, which was started by the Revolutionary United Front. The rebels are blamed for hacking off the arms and legs of civilians with machetes and eating the organs of civilians they had killed.

Taylor is accused of managing the war from Liberia.

Once Taylor's testimony is complete, the court is expected to hear from defense witnesses.

The prosecution called 91 witnesses to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which was moved from

Freetown to The Hague amid fears of provoking instability in West Africa. Some testified about the brutality of the Revolutionary United Front rebels that Taylor is alleged to have supported. Others said they had passed so-called "blood diamonds" to Taylor in exchange for weapons.

Grossman says the prosecution came under some criticism for calling witnesses whose stories were irrelevant to the case. "Taylor does not deny that many crimes were committed in Sierra Leone, he denies responsibility, so the burden is on the prosecution to show linkage," she said.

Taylor is the first African head of state to be tried in an international, UN-backed court.

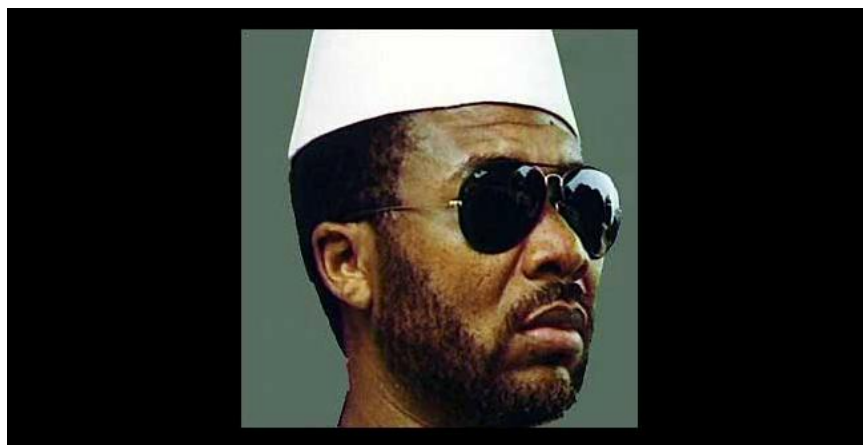
VOA News / Jul. 16, 2009 09:05 KST

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Wednesday, 15 July 2009

Liberia's Taylor tells of "release" from US prison

By International Justice Desk



The Hague, Netherlands

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor told a war crimes court Wednesday he was "released" from a US prison in 1985 before returning

home for the "revolution" that unseated his predecessor Samuel Doe.

"I am calling it my release because I didn't break out," he told the Special Court for Sierra Leone of the episode, widely described as a prison break but alleged by at least one former ally to have been orchestrated by the US government.

"I did not pay any money, I did not know the guys who picked me up. I was not hiding afterwards," Taylor testified in The Hague without saying who helped him.

Prince Johnson, a former warlord first allied and then opposed to Taylor, told a Liberian truth commission last year that the US released the strongman from jail to engineer Doe's overthrow.

Taylor was imprisoned in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1985 pending an application for his extradition to face graft charges in Liberia.

He told the court he was fetched from the prison's maximum security section one night by a guard, who took him to the minimum security wing where two other inmates were waiting.

"We got to the window, these guys took a sheet and we tied it to the bars. I was taken out," Taylor testified. "There was a car waiting outside" which took him to New York.

In the following weeks, he moved around freely in the United States and Mexico and was never in hiding, claimed Taylor.

"My name was on my passport. No-one asked me any questions."

Taylor said he eventually made his way to Libya where a group led by him underwent military training with the aim of invading Liberia and unseating Doe.

Taylor, 61, on Tuesday took the witness stand for the first time since his trial started in January 2008, describing charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity against him as "lies".

He faces 11 charges for murder, rape, conscripting child soldiers, enslavement and pillaging stemming from the brutal 1991-2001 civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Liberian Leader's Hague Testimony 'Risky Strategy' Says Former Prosecutor

By Chinedu Offor

The former Chief Prosecutor of the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone said he's surprised by former Liberian President Charles Taylor's testimony at his war crimes trial in The Hague.

Taylor is facing a number of charges, including war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war.

Taylor told the court Tuesday that he was not guilty of the charges against him, and that he was surprised that the prosecution was relying on what Taylor called misinformation and rumors.



David Crane (file)

Crane, who is now a professor at the College of Law at Syracuse University in New York, prepared the charges against Taylor.

He said Taylor's testimony is contrary to the evidence.

"The case against him in the indictment that I signed on March of 2003 showed clearly that [President Charles Taylor of Liberia] was directly involved in the tragedy that took place in Sierra Leone," Crane said. "So the fact that he is actually denying these charges against him was a surprise. I think it is a very risky strategy."



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor sits in the courtroom of the International Criminal Court prior to the beginning of his defense case during his trial in The Hague, 13 Jul 2009

He said there is specific evidence linking Taylor to the crimes he is charged with, including payoffs from Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels of Sierra Leone.

"There are several smoking guns. During the investigations and the great job the prosecution did and during the presentation of their case, there was witness after witness, both inside and others who said that Charles Taylor was directly involved," he said.

Crane said it is important for people to understand that during their trial, RUF rebels consistently brought up Charles Taylor's name and implicated him in the crimes.

"This is a very interesting defense, he has a right to have that defense and to make that defense and he is allowed to make that defense, but I was quite surprised to see that he is some ways denying everything," he said.

Crane says Taylor's claim that he has not been directly linked to any of the atrocities flies in the face of overwhelming evidence of his guilt.

"Your listeners have to understand that there are ways a head of state can be implicated in crimes and crimes against humanity," he said.

Crane said one of the charges against Taylor included aiding and abetting the war crimes that took place in Sierra Leone as well as having command responsibility.

Associated Press

Wednesday, 15 July 2009

Charles Taylor begins his war crimes defense

THE HAGUE, Netherlands -- Charles Taylor has begun his defense against charges he led rebels in Sierra Leone who murdered, raped and mutilated villagers.

The former Liberian president's lawyer has urged judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone not to let the horrors inflicted by rebels during the country's civil war cloud their judgment about Taylor's involvement in the crimes.

Yahoo! BuzzTaylor is charged with 11 crimes including murder, torture, rape, sexual slavery, using child soldiers and spreading terror.

Courtenay Griffiths said Monday he was in court "to defend a man who we say is innocent of these charges."

Taylor is the first African head of state to be tried by an international court. He is to take the stand in his own defense Tuesday.

The Liberian Times

Thursday, 16 July 2009

LIBERIA: Liberian Parliament Finally Agrees To Debate War Crimes Court



Counselor Dempster Browne

The Liberian Parliament is at the moment holistically debating a bill for the establishment of a war crimes court in Liberia following years of advocacy by the Forum for the Establishment of War Crimes Court in Liberia.

The objective for the establishment of this court in Liberia, according to the Forum, is to drastically deal with those who have committed heinous crimes against innocent civilian population during the Liberian civilian war, and are living with impunity.

Yesterday (Wednesday) the Executive Director for the Center for the Protection of Human Rights, Counselor Dempster Browne introduced the bill seeking the establishment of a war crimes court in Liberia.

Counselor Browne told legislative reporters, the Special Court for Liberia will have five judges and will be independent of the judicial branch of Government.

The instrument further indicates that all judges on the proposed Special court shall be Liberians including the Chief Prosecutor.

When passed into law fifteen percent of the budget of the Special court shall be provided by Government while the rest will come from international partners.

The bill will seek to prosecute people indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and will also target financiers of the war and those who may have arranged for training.

Star Radio

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Heads of warring factions apologize for Liberian crisis

Written by Matthias Daffah

Heads of former warring factions in the country have offered open apology to the Liberian people for their role in the civil conflict.

In a statement issued and signed by the Spokesman of the group Thomas Nimely Yaya the former warlords said they regret the lost of lives and properties as a result of the conflict.

The former warlords vowed they would never repeat the vices that led to the conflict and asked all Liberians to remain in the path of peace.

The former warlords clarified their roles in the conflict were to bring about peace and stability which eluded the country for many years.

They commended the TRC for its report, saying the process was a call to duty.

The warlords had earlier rejected the TRC final report claiming an act of the 51st Legislature granted them immunity from prosecution.

The Signatories who issued the apology include all warlords dating back from 1989 to 2003.

Star Radio

Wednesday, 15 July 2009

“President Sirleaf is a founding NPFL member” says Taylor

Written by Vivian Gartyn

Former President Charles Taylor has named President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as a founding member of the NPFL.

Testifying in his war crimes trial in The Hague, Mr. Taylor said Madam Sirleaf was not a mere financial backer as claimed.

According to Taylor, President Sirleaf was the main fund raiser of the organization because of her international influence.

But president Sirleaf during appearing before the TRC said she was only part of a fund raising for the NPFL at its early stage.

Taylor also explained for the first time, his escape from a jail in the United States.

Mr. Taylor said he was led out of the court by unknown men and never broke jail as has been speculated.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 15 July 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberia's Taylor tells of "release" from US prison

Source: AFP World News / English Date: July 15, 2009

THE HAGUE, July 14, 2009 (AFP) - Former Liberian president Charles Taylor told a war crimes court Wednesday he was "released" from a US prison in 1985 before returning home for the "revolution" that unseated his predecessor Samuel Doe. "I am calling it my release because I didn't break out," he told the Special Court for Sierra Leone of the episode, widely described as a prison break but alleged by at least one former ally to have been orchestrated by the US government. "I did not pay any money, I did not know the guys who picked me up. I was not hiding (afterwards)," Taylor testified in The Hague without saying who helped him. Prince Johnson, a former warlord first allied and then opposed to Taylor, told a Liberian truth commission last year that the US released the strongman from jail to engineer Doe's overthrow. Taylor was imprisoned in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1985 pending an application for his extradition to face graft charges in Liberia.

13 Cops Back From Peacekeeping Missions

Source: All Africa Global Media Date: July 15, 2009

Harare, Jul 15, 2009 (The Herald/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Thirteen policemen have returned home after serving under the United Nations peacekeeping missions in Sudan and Liberia for the past year. Twelve were in Sudan while one was in Liberia. Addressing the officers in Harare yesterday, Police Commissioner-General Augustine Chihuri said as distinguished ambassadors, they had performed their duties with correct insight, discernment, professionalism and conduct that was a distinct feature of a Zimbabwean police officer the world over. "The testimony which is for all to behold is that you were able to steadfastly and robustly steer the course of your assignment with zeal and zest which testifies to the content of the purity of your hearts and minds," he said.

Going Into Debt for Health

Source: All Africa Global Media Date: July 15, 2009

Dakar, Jul 15, 2009 (UN Integrated Regional Information Networks/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- One in four families living in the world's poorest countries borrows money or sells assets in order to afford health care, according to the most recent issue of the US medical journal "Health Affairs". The authors calculated almost 26 percent of 3.6 billion surveyed people - most often the poorest households with little or no health insurance - used "hardship financing" from 2002 to 2004 to cover health costs. Widowed after her husband was killed during Liberia's civil war, Mary Dewh, a 39-year-old mother of four, told IRIN she alone covers her family's health care costs. "When my son was hospitalized with malaria two weeks ago and the bill came to US\$50, I did not have enough money for him to be discharged from the hospital." She said a neighbor loaned her money so her son could come home. In 2007 Liberia tested lifting health care fees for basic care in public health

centres, but Solomon Bah, a doctor in the capital Monrovia told IRIN free care is not easy to find now in cities.

International Clips on West Africa

Sierra Leone

07/15/2009 08:47:36

Ex-Liberian leader Charles Taylor rejects war crimes charges, says he was a corruption fighter

Mike Corder@, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS@

Source: Canadian Press Date: July 15, 2009

THE HAGUE, Netherlands _ Charles Taylor retraced his rise to power in Liberia to war crimes judges Wednesday, casting himself as an anti-corruption fighter who ousted the military in a coup to restore democracy. Taylor is charged with 11 counts of murder, torture, rape, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers and terrorism in his role backing rebels in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war. He has denounced the accusations against him as "disinformation, misinformation, lies, and rumors." An estimated 500,000 people were the victims of killings, systematic mutilation or other atrocities in Sierra Leone's civil war, with some of the worst crimes committed by drugged child soldiers. Prosecutors have called 91 witnesses to back up their claim that Taylor provided arms, money and political support to Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for that country's mineral wealth, encouraging them to terrorize the countryside to suppress any opposition.

375 peacekeepers honoured

Jordan Times, Amman

Source: McClatchy-Tribune Information Services Date: July 15, 2009

Jul. 15--AMMAN -- Members of the Jordanian Formed Police Units (FPU) serving with the UN police in Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast) were honored at a ceremony in Abidjan earlier this week. Y.J. Choi, special representative of the UN secretary general for Cote d'Ivoire, presented the UN medals to the 375 peacekeepers, according to a statement released by the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI). Choi said that the UN was expressing its gratitude to the Jordanians "for the work they perform professionally in Ivory Coast especially during this crucial and delicate process". "The FPU is the backbone of our police. We are very grateful for Jordan's contribution. We are also pleased that they have reiterated their commitment to the United Nations and to stability and peace in Cote d'Ivoire," he added.

Local Media – Newspaper

Taylor "Rebuffs" War Crime Charges Against Him

(Public Agenda, The Inquirer, New Democrat, National Chronicle, The News, Liberia Journal, Heritage, The Informer, Daily Observer)

- Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has dismissed as "lies" the war crimes case against him.
- Taking the witness stand for the first time yesterday, Mr. Taylor denied the eleven-count charges levied against him including terrorism, murder, rape and torture.
- The former Liberian leader said it was unfortunate that the prosecution would associate him with the Sierra Leone war based on misinformation and lies saying he never provided military assistance to Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels to invade that country.

- Over two hundred other witnesses from Liberia, Sierra Leone and other parts of the world are expected to testify during the defense case.

Senate Rejects Confirmation of Labour Minister-Designate, Two Others

(The Inquirer, New Democrat, National Chronicle, Liberia Journal, Heritage, The Informer, Daily Observer, The Analyst, The News)

- The House of Senate has rejected the confirmation of three Presidential nominees including Counselor Tiawon Gongloe Labor Minister-Designate and Marc Amblard who was appointed as Inspector General of the Police.
- The other candidate, Samuel Lynch was nominated as Commandant of the Liberia Coast Guard but was rejected for failing to renounce his U.S. citizenship.
- Counselor Gongloe was rejected for the second time yesterday for what most Senators termed as “miscarriage of justice” during his tenure as Solicitor General.
- The Senators cited the murder case involving Senator Roland Kaine, the economic sabotage case against Senator Richard Devine and other high profiled case in which Government lost.
- Meanwhile, a motion for reconsideration has been announced on the rejection of the Police Inspector General-designate, Marc Amblard

Press Union Criticizes Media over Reports of President Obama-Morlu “Meeting”

(The Inquirer, Public Agenda)

- The Press Union of Liberia has criticized media institutions that rushed and published the purported meeting between U.S. President Barack Obama and war crimes advocate, Mulbah Morlu.
- PUL said it did not understand why reports of the alleged meeting were hastily reported without verifying the truth.
- The union reminded journalists to be careful not to erode the confidence of the public by reporting stories that are not carefully checked.
- The U.S. Embassy has since denied that any such meeting was held though Mr. Morlu insists that the meeting took place.

Carter Centre Cautions Liberians to “Carefully and Peacefully” Consider TRC Report

(National Chronicle, Daily Observer, The News)

- The Carter Centre has admonished Liberians to consider carefully the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in a calm and peaceful way.
- Speaking to reporters yesterday in Monrovia, the Programme Manager of Carter Centre-Liberia, Mr. John Hummel said it was the task of Liberians to be consistent with the desire for 'genuine, lasting, national unity, and reconciliation' as prescribed in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).
- Meanwhile, the group has described as “unacceptable” any threat to send Liberia back to war.
- In an interview, Mr. Hummel said Liberians are tired of fighting and would no longer support acts of war.
- Mr. Hummel's statement was in reaction to utterances that Liberia could slip back to war if the TRC recommendations were implemented to the letter.

MOF Initiates US\$ 1.5M Custom Data System

(The Informer, Liberian Express, Daily Observer)

- The Ministry of Finance has introduced a modern technology data system for the department of revenue in the country, Automated System of Custom Data (ASYCUDA), to provide efficiency and transparency in the custom system.
- Addressing reporters Tuesday, Deputy Finance Minister for Revenue, Elfreda Tamba, said the system will help enhance the department's efficiency, transparency, and help to fight custom's fraud.

- Minister Tamba said the ASYCUDA will definitely impact the economic of the country and improve the revenue systems.
- The programme is funded by the Liberian government with support from the African Development Bank.

Police, Street Peddlers Clash

(Liberian Journal)

- Police and street peddlers yesterday clashed on Mechlin Street in downtown Monrovia.
- The brawl ensued after the police attempted removing the sellers from the street which has been overtaken by the peddlers.
- The squabble which lasted for almost an hour was brought under control following police reinforcement.
- This is the second time in two weeks that the police have clashed with the marketers in a bid to remove them from the streets.
- It can be recalled that an attempt to remove sellers from the streets some two weeks ago resulted into a clash with a police officer being injured in the process.

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

Heads of Warring Factions Apologize for Liberian Crisis

- Heads of former warring factions in the country have offered an open apology to for their role in the civil conflict.
- In a statement, the Spokesman of the group, Thomas Nimely Yaya said the former warlords regretted the lost of lives and properties as a result of the conflict.
- They commended the TRC for its report saying the process was a call to duty.
- The warlords had earlier rejected the TRC final report claiming it was anti-peace.
- The Signatories who issued the apology include all warlords dating back from 1989

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

Threats of War “Unacceptable” Carter Centre Maintains

- The Carter Centre has described as unacceptable any threat to send Liberia back to war.
- In an interview, the Programme Manager of Carter Centre-Liberia, John Hummel said Liberians are tired of fighting and would no longer support acts of war.
- Mr. Hummel's statement was in reaction to utterances that Liberia could slip back to war if the TRC recommendations were implemented to the letter.
- Mr. Hummel made the comments following a news conference arranged to explain in simple terms the TRC report for the understanding of the Liberian people.

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

Taylor Rebuffs War Crime Charges Against Him

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

China-Liberia Universities to Give Joint Degree

- Discussions are ongoing between the Chanchung University in China and the University of Liberia (UL) to offer a joint degree in the college of Science and Technology.
- In an interview, UL President, Dr. Emmet Dennis said they have agreed to develop Science programmes that will be applicable to two Universities.
- Dr. Dennis said they have also agreed to establish a cooperation that would allow UL Professors pursue further studies in China in particular disciplines.

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

Justice Minister Pledges to Work with Other Security Agencies to Combat Crimes

- The new Justice Minister, Counselor Christiana Tah has pledged to work with other security apparatus in combating the increasing wave of crimes in the country.
- Speaking during a night patrol, Counselor Tah said she will prioritize the reducing the rate of criminal activities throughout the country.
- The tour with the Liberia National Police was intended to acquaint her with the challenges faced by the police in the discharge of their duties.

UN News Centre

Tuesday, 14 July 2009

Prosecution wraps up case of Congolese warlord at International Criminal Court



Thomas Lubanga Dyilo

The prosecution wrapped up its presentation of evidence against a Congolese warlord accused of recruiting child soldiers, the first suspect taken into custody by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, the founder and leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots in the Ituri region of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), marks the first in the history of international law to see the active participation of victims in the proceedings, including child combatants.

He faces two counts of war crimes: conscripting and enlisting child soldiers into the military wing of his group and then using them to participate in hostilities between September 2002 and August 2003.

Over the course of 22 weeks, 28 witnesses – including three experts – testified, all of whom were cross-examined by the defence.

Nearly all of the prosecution's witnesses were granted protective measures, including voice and facial distortion and the use of pseudonyms. A psychologist sat in during the proceedings to support and monitor witnesses.

Mr. Lubanga, who surrendered to the ICC in March 2006, and his defence team were able to see all of the witnesses as they gave their testimony, but some required further special measures to avoid direct eye contact with the accused.

Nearly 100 victims have been authorized to take part in the trial, which began on 26 January, to date.

Established by the Rome Statute of 1998, the ICC can try cases involving individuals charged with war crimes committed since July 2002. The UN Security Council, the ICC Prosecutor or a State Party to the Court can initiate any proceedings, and the ICC only acts when countries themselves are unwilling or unable to investigate or prosecute.

Voice of America
Wednesday, 15 July 2009

S. African President Urged to Honor ICC Warrant for Sudan's al-Bashir

By Delia Robertson
Johannesburg



South Africa President Jacob Zuma (file)

Prominent South African individuals and civil society groups have urged President Jacob Zuma to publicly state that he respects the country's constitution and treaty obligations. The call follows an African Union decision not to honor the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court for Sudan President Omar al-Bashir.

The call on President Zuma comes from 17 of the country's prominent civil society groups, including the constitutionally mandated Human Rights Commission. Individuals supporting the call include Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu and Richard Goldstone, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

In a statement, the organizations and individuals said the decision by the African Union to withhold cooperation from the ICC with respect to the warrant for Mr. al-Bashir represents the most serious challenge to the struggle against impunity and lawlessness on the African continent.

Howard Varney, from Cape Town's International Center for Transitional Justice tells VOA that Mr. Zuma and his foreign minister did not voice any objection to the AU decision. Varney says Mr. Zuma's legal obligations are plain.

"This is to make the position of civil society, or at least many prominent organizations within civil society, to make our position clear that we expect our government and President Jacob Zuma to abide by the treaty obligations that South Africa has entered into, but not only the treaty obligations but also our own constitution which requires us to abide by international law, which in fact in relation to the Rome Statute we have incorporated the enabling statute of the International Criminal Court into our domestic law," he said.

Varney says if Mr. Zuma fails to publicly state his willingness to cooperate with the ICC and if Mr. al-Bashir enters South African territory, he will be sending a message that for him and his government the rule of law is a matter of expediency.

"And if on one day one can decide to abide by the law, and on another decide it is no longer suitable or convenient for us to do so, it certainly, and I believe fundamentally, undermines our commitment to the rule of law and sends out the wrong message to those who are breaking the law," said Varney.

Some African leaders, including Ghanaian President John Atta Mills have argued that Mr. al-Bashir is central to the peace process in Sudan,



Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir (File)

which would likely collapse if he were arrested. Varney disagrees.

"We do not believe it is. If it in fact was, and relevant supporting information had been put to the Security Council, then I am sure the Security Council would have considered that and invoked Article 16 of their own statute, which allows for the referral that the Mbeki panel of the AU have called for," he said.

"Certain information that is emerging from Sudan is that al-Bashir himself does not necessarily make or break the agreement."

Many African countries played a crucial role in the establishment of the ICC, which they saw as a way to combat genocide and crimes against humanity on the continent. Thirty African countries have signed the so-called Rome Statute to become State Parties to the Court, and most cases referred to the court for investigation have been referred by African countries.

The New Vision (Uganda)

Wednesday, 15 July 2009

Traditional courts cannot handle war crimes effectively

By Fredrick Ssemwanga

I write in response to the article that appeared in The New Vision of July 13, entitled: "Traditional Courts can handle crimes against humanity." The writer in the article must understand criminal law and procedure specifically. He claims that traditional justice systems can remedy crimes against humanity.

Traditional courts, if allowed to handle war crimes and crimes against humanity, will be unconstitutional. Under the laws of Uganda, there is no provision for criminal customary law.

The criminal procedure in Uganda is very clear. It properly describes the application of the substantive criminal law and regulates the procedure by which criminal offenders are brought to punishment.

In criminal prosecutions, unlike civil proceedings, it is the state which seeks redress on behalf of the victim by punishing the offender, who is the accused. Thus, a crime is a legal wrong, the remedy for which is punishment.

The law provides that in any criminal proceedings the prosecution shall be designated by the word Uganda. This is an affirmation that under the law every crime is a public wrong and against the state which must be prosecuted by the state.

The purpose of criminal proceedings is mainly to give the prosecution a chance to prove the case against the accused. The other reason is to enable the accused exercise his or her constitutional right to defend himself.

Under Article 23 and 28 of the Constitution, the accused must be tried by an independent, competent and impartial court. Traditional courts lack such important cardinal legal principles for proper dispensation of justice.

Let me enlighten Michael Baingana about the background upon which the International Criminal Court (ICC) was created. The absence of the ICC for many years had discredited the rule of law in the world. Article 92 of the UN Charter provides that the International Criminal Justice shall be the principal judicial organ of the UN.

This is intended to empower the body to create other judicial organs in the UN system, such as a court with jurisdiction in criminal matters. It, therefore, becomes ridiculous for one to claim that the ICC is an imposition from European countries. The existence of technical and political disagreements cannot preclude the creation and functioning of the ICC.

The ICC is not at variance with the sovereignty of states. Uganda has already recognised international jurisdiction over crimes by ratifying the Rome Statute. War crimes and crimes against humanity fall under international jurisdiction and they constitute a threat to international peace and security. LRA crimes constitute international crimes since they have not only been committed in Uganda but across national borders.

We should understand the current desire for the application of universal principles and responses. I personally find a very big gap in traditional justice systems. The *mato put*, for instance, can only apply in Acholi, which means many traditional justice systems lack the aspect of universal application.

The LRA insurgency did not only affect Acholi but also other parts of the country which may find it difficult to adopt such a traditional justice system. It is true to a certain extent that traditional justice systems provided redress for some crimes in society but we must ask ourselves at what level, what degree and what time.

We should acknowledge the fact that at the moment, traditional justice systems lack the required standards and capacity to respond to new and emerging trends of criminality in modern society.

The legacy of colonialism was entrenched by the imposition of new legal frameworks and introduced a new legal order over the colonised people. They introduced self-legal doctrines and principles of equity and common law in the country.

These laws promoted the interests of the colonial masters which were detrimental to the colonial people. Some of these laws were discriminatory and racist in nature. They neglected the development of traditional cultural forums. Traditional practices were, for instance, subjected to the repugnance clause by the 1902 Order in Council. They were considered barbaric and backward.

The above argument, therefore, confirms that the colonial era did not give chance to traditional justice systems to grow and develop new responses to new crimes. We must understand the fact that the northern conflict requires much more than the formalistic forms of justice or traditional justice systems.

It must extend far and beyond the search for mere justice to the search for sustainable peace and reconciliation, which necessitates all the stakeholders to address the root causes.

Therefore, we need to build the capacity of traditional justice systems to deliver, without compromising the major principles of sustainable justice.

We should also note that neither the ICC nor the traditional justice systems can be adequate to bring about lasting peace, forgiveness and reconciliation independently. What we need is a combination of both the ICC and traditional justice systems.

The ideal punishments and justice must always reflect both international standards and the desires of the local people. Underlooking the role of the ICC will be one way of promoting impunity in Africa. That is why the decision by the African Union not to cooperate with the ICC to effect the warrant of arrest against the president of Sudan is an expression of lack of commitment by African leaders to end impunity and to promote respect of human rights and the rule of law in Africa. We must not forget that sustainable peace must include an element of justice.

If the Rome Statute is domesticated by passing the ICC Bill into an Act, special attention must specifically be put on the provisions of Article 17 of the Statute. It provides that any national alternative which would oust the ICC jurisdiction, meet substantial benchmarks, including credible prosecution, willingness and ability to conduct credible investigations and internationally recognised fair trial as well as penalties on conviction.

The writer is a consultant on
human rights and justice

Institute for War & Peace Reporting (London)

Friday, 10 July 2009

Africa: ICC Seen as Struggling to Communicate

Analysis

Court accused of doing too little to tell people in Africa about its work.

The International Criminal Court, ICC, is under increasing pressure from lawyers, NGOs and journalists to do more to inform African communities affected by violence about the progress of investigations and trials of those accused of war crimes.

The ICC is based in The Hague in The Netherlands, thousands of kilometres away from the countries it deals with: Uganda, the Central African Republic, CAR, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC.

It is in the DRC - the country with the most indictees before the court - that the voices of discontent are the loudest.

IWPR has interviewed Congolese journalists, lawyers and civil society activists who say that people on the ground have little idea about what is going on in The Hague.

The ICC has instigated proceedings against five Congolese so far and investigations continue. Ituri militia leader Thomas Lubanga is currently on trial, and Germain Katanga and Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, also from Ituri, will take the stand in September.

Shortly afterwards the trial of ex vice-president Jean-Pierre Bemba will commence. Only rebel leader Bosco Ntaganda remains at large.

Spreading the word about what is happening in The Hague in the DRC, a country the size of Western Europe, is an unenviable challenge.

The court has thus far concentrated its efforts in Ituri province, holding daily two hour-long interactive conversations with eight community radio stations there.

But journalists say attention needs to be spread elsewhere.

OTHER WORRIES

Faustin Kuediasala, from the daily Kinshasa-based newspaper Le Potentiel, says because there is little access to information about the court, interest in it is waning, "The Congolese have other worries than the ICC."

It is to reach people like Kuediasala that the outreach section of the ICC was established. Four outreach staff are stationed in The Hague and six in the DRC, dedicated to ensuring that affected communities understand and can follow the work of the court.

After a long struggle to find the right people (one post had to be re-advertised five times) there are now two outreach officers in Bangui, the CAR capital. Two people work on outreach in Darfur - mainly from refugee camps in Chad - and five in Uganda.

They are plagued by logistical problems. Getting to affected communities, which frequently lie in pockets of ongoing violence, is often deemed too risky.

Even the court says the annual outreach budget of 650,000 euros (910,000 US dollars) is not enough.

"It needs to be very clear that with the limited resources we have, we will only be able to conduct very limited outreach. We want to do it, but if the states don't give us enough resources, we can only do what we can do," said Claudia Perdomo, head of outreach at the ICC.

But activists on the ground say the court's limited budget is misspent and outreach targets the wrong people, leaving those who need to know about the court in the dark.

NORTH KIVU

The problem appears to be most serious in war-torn North Kivu province. The area has been beset by conflict in recent years and ICC prosecutors have started an investigation into sexual violence crimes, the recruitment of child soldiers and the illegal flow of weapons.

Prosecutors remain tight-lipped about progress and the four ICC outreach officers stationed in Kinshasa and Bunia have only been to North and South Kivu a handful of times.

Journalists in Goma - North Kivu's regional capital - say they don't have enough information about the court, and are struggling to provide news to the population.

"Two years ago, a journalist from Bujumbura brought me a leaflet speaking about ICC. This is the only occasion I heard about it," said Primo Pascal Rudahigwa, programme officer at DRC broadcaster RTNC, the official radio in Goma. "Personally, I have no idea on what ICC is doing in Kivu," he added.

Goma journalist Albert Kambale said the ICC has to intensify its activities, "It could be better to organise activities between three and four times a month ... they have to inform us so that we can inform others."

As well as engaging with journalists to disseminate information, Juvenal Munubo, a lawyer from Goma, says more needs to be done to brief the legal community, and that the lack of communication of the ICC is tarnishing its image, "The ICC is holding meetings of 30 to 60 minutes in luxury hotels, [but] to what end?"

"You cannot understand the ICC within 30 minutes, even if you are a lawyer. You need at least two weeks. But apparently the preoccupation of the ICC is elsewhere [than Goma]."

Perdomo said her team is working out the best way to inform the Kivus about what is happening at the ICC, but until an arrest warrant comes out of the Kivus investigation, her team is bound to concentrate efforts on Ituri.

But international NGOs say the court should start outreach in an area as soon as it decides to investigate.

"Otherwise you get to the stage of the trial and people don't know anything about the ICC, and it is hard to go back and create informed awareness," said Alison Smith from the NGO No Peace Without Justice.

INSECURITY

The ICC has cited continuing insecurity as a reason for not being on the ground in the Kivus, but Smith says that not being present is the ICC's biggest flaw. "You need to be there. People want to know but if you don't go there, there is no chance they will know," she said.

Perdomo said that her team follows security advice from the United Nations Mission in the DRC and that "whenever there is a window of opportunity because the security conditions allow us, we go".

She stressed that security issues influence who she hires and field coordinators have to be international so that they can be plucked out of the country if there is a problem. "With a local person we cannot - their families are still there. They can face retaliation from enemies of the court. We operate in ongoing conflicts," she said.

Perdomo insisted that the court cannot put people in risk, "This is something we are not going to do. This is not a game."

However, Chidi Anselm Odinkalu from the Open Society Institute said, "If the ICC cites security as an excuse for not taking outreach to where it is needed, we must spare more than a thought for the victims who live in these places that the personnel of the ICC are afraid to go to. What happens to them?"

The court is dedicated to broadcasting the opening and closing days of each trial in the DRC but sending the satellite signal to RTNC is expensive, and broadcasting the beginning and end of all the current trials adds up to 90,000 euros.

This takes quite a chunk out of the overall 650,000 euros, but Perdomo says sending live TV images is necessary.

BIG SCREEN

To make sure as many people as possible saw the first day of the Lubanga trial in January, the ICC set up a big screen in the town centre in Bunia, the capital of the Ituri region. But far more people than expected tried to cram in to the screening, and it eventually had to be suspended.

To make matters worse, RTNC cut the transmission just before the defence's opening remarks, causing uproar among Lubanga supporters. "If you don't control what's broadcast you can't control the message. It means the ICC is not in complete charge of the message they want to give to people of DRC," Smith said.

She also rejected arguments that a lack of money is the reason for poor outreach.

"A full robust outreach programme needs proper financial support. But in the interim there are less expensive ways to do it. All you need is someone on the ground with a mobile, an internet connection, and some documents, and you can do effective outreach. But you need enough people on the ground to do outreach in this way," Smith said.

But Perdomo said it is not a matter of calling by phone to relate a story, "It is about bringing people together to have a dialogue, and you need to pay transportation, meals and accommodation."

Each outreach activity in the DRC costs approximately 750-800 dollars, including renting a venue, hiring equipment, and paying for transport, accommodation and meals for participants.

The ICC also pays local community radio stations to broadcast its audio update about court proceedings. "We pay them to broadcast our materials, because we understand they have to live on something," Perdomo said.

"You try to be as creative as possible, and expand the funds you have so that you have an impact in what you are doing."

"WRONG TARGET"

But Congolese journalists are critical of some of this creative thinking, and say some outreach activities focus on the wrong people in the wrong regions.

In May an event, called No to the use of child soldiers, was organised in Kinshasa. Children recited poetry and performed ballet, and actors and singers were drafted in to raise the event's profile.

Thomas d'Aquin Moustapha from North Kivu said Kinshasa was not the right place for such an event., "[It] should be organised directly in the provinces affected by the armed conflict and where the recruitment of child soldiers is a reality."

Perdomo said the ICC had wanted to hold an event in Bunia, but it was not possible because of internal problems in schools. She stressed it was important to raise awareness in Kinshasa, where the country's political direction is determined.

Those in the Kivus say the absence of on-the-ground activities is causing victims to lose faith in the court.

Evariste Mabruki, president of an NGO from Goma, says that "lacking a field office in North Kivu and lacking information about the ICC, victims do not know anymore whom to turn to", and ignorance about the ICC has led to a lack of interest among victims.

Odinkalu says that if the ICC is to be credible, it needs victims and host communities to trust and take it seriously, "Speaking about the situation and locations that I know, this is not presently the case."

EARLY START

Mariana Pena from human rights group FIDH is disappointed that outreach did not start earlier in the CAR, "It has been two years now and one person has been arrested, but the number of activities is extremely low.

"It is a key issue in the CAR and was also a problem in the DRC. If you don't start early with outreach, misunderstandings start circulating and it is difficult to counter these perceptions later."

In March, Marie-Edith Douzima, a central African lawyer representing victims in the Bemba trial, told IWPR that central Africans are growing impatient, "Last year we worked together with the ICC to outline strategies for informing people in our country. But they went back to The Hague and we didn't see any results."

Lucile Mazangue, a member of the association of women lawyers in the CAR, said that when the ICC office was first set up they organised seminars and broadcast material on the radio, but after a while they stopped.

"[Soon] we noticed the ICC did not do anything. So the association asked why the ICC didn't engage with us so that we could explain it to the people," he said.

Pena said this is causing disappointment and frustration, "When someone from the court comes, there are planning sessions but no follow-up. People then don't want to hear about the ICC because they don't believe anything about it anymore."

Marcel Nboula, from Le Citoyen newspaper, told IWPR in March, "We never receive information about what is happening at the court. We search the internet and republish [articles] but don't get any news from the ICC. We used to get information from Goungaye Wanfiyo [a CAR lawyer who was killed in a car accident in December] until he died."

Since these interviews were conducted, sources in Bangui say outreach activities have been ramped up, including awareness-raising workshops around the city and nearby provinces, during which videos are shown and question and answer sessions held about the court.

Two training sessions have been hosted for 72 journalists in Bangui, and in July, the court will start broadcasting a radio programme called Ask the Court.

The programmes are in Sango, the national language, and respond to frequently asked questions. Each of the 13 episodes will be broadcast three times on seven different radio stations in the capital.

The country has no national radio station and virtually no media outside Bangui, meaning that central Africans away from the capital are largely cut off from information.

"We have pleaded for the court to give information in Bangui for [details about the court] to be known," said lawyer Celestin N'Zala. "But people in the provinces do not know about the ICC. A lot needs to be done. People need to be sensitised so they know."

KENYAN VIOLENCE

Kenyan journalists like documentary maker Maina Kiai say that while the ICC considers opening an investigation into post-election violence committed in December 2007, it should engage and inform people about whether the crimes fit ICC's mandate, and what factors influence their decision making.

"In a situation where Kenyans are waiting with baited breath, it would not hurt the ICC to keep informing us and answering the questions we have," Maina Kiai said.

While the prosecutor's office has been helpful in organising interviews, Kai said the same is not true for other organs of the court, "It would help if the ICC would consider how hard and difficult it is to access The Hague from Africa."

Justice Richard Goldstone, former chief prosecutor for the Rwanda and Yugoslav war crimes tribunals, said that the media is "the most effective way to explain what is happening in the court, and counter any negative rumours or misconceptions. If the court doesn't do this, then it will lose an essential ally".

Silvana Arbia, the ICC's registrar, agreed that "the role of journalists is very important for justice", but stressed that reaching journalists is not always easy.

"In villages we have journalists who do not know how to receive information. We try to reach every journalist who is interested, and also to outreach and show other journalists and urge them to be interested in the ICC," she said.

In support of this, 27 listening clubs have been set up in villages around Ituri, and given radio sets and mini-recorders to enable communities to listen to news about the court, and send back their taped questions.

Perdomo hopes to roll out the idea in the Kivus, "We give them telephone cards and the equipment to install the club. This helps us cover areas that are not easily accessible on the ground."

But Enack Makunda, NGO coordinator in Goma, said communicating with people through radio is not enough, "Many people will get the message, but will not be convinced. There is no interaction. People cannot discuss with the radio on the programme it is broadcasting.

"Therefore, it is good to develop grassroots activities which can enable the community to discuss more points which were broadcast."

Perdomo acknowledged it is not the same as engaging people face-to-face, "We need to engage the people not once and leave, but meet with the same group several times and update them, and let them know the court cares."

NGO ROLE

As well as ramping up their work with journalists, NGOs are calling for the ICC to engage with them more actively, because they can reach parts of the country the court cannot.

"The ICC office [in the CAR] should be reinforced so that a wider awareness campaign can be done, so that simple people in the street can say something about the ICC. The ICC should work with local NGOs. If we work in collaboration we can tell people about the ICC," Mazangue said.

Smith said the outreach team at the Special Court for Sierra Leone worked with NGOs, which knew how to reach people and overcome cultural and language barriers, "There are certain messages that have to come from the court, but civil society played a crucial role in getting the message out."

Arbia agreed that local NGOs play a crucial role in helping the court to reach people, "We are very grateful for that. Without the contribution of NGOs in this difficult situation, it would not be possible for us to act as we do."

When asked whether the 109 states that support the court and back it financially, called the Assembly of States Parties, ASP, should apportion more money to outreach activities, Arbia said that there are other factors which limit the court's ability to reach all affected communities, and called on the 109 states also to play a role.

"Even if we get more money, the court alone can never do everything that is necessary. It is not possible for us - the number of staff will always be limited. Sometimes we fail because we don't receive support. We cannot go to a village because we don't have security sometimes because of lack of cooperation of the state," she said.

NGOs, journalists, lawyers and victims are frustrated by the lack of information about the ICC because they believe in the court and are impatient to see justice in their countries.

Getting through to war-affected people is a challenge. Speaking about the detention of Bemba, one woman in Bangui said, "I don't know where Bemba is. He must be in his own country. We heard about ICC but made no effort to know about it. We have bad memories of Bemba so don't want to know."

She said she cannot read newspapers and does not have access to a radio and would therefore struggle to hear about the court even if she wanted to. However, she stressed that she hopes the court's involvement in the CAR will "stop people raping, knowing they may face justice".

Mathurin Constant Nestor Momet, from Le Confident newspaper in Bangui, said, "The ICC is reassuring, because it is fair in the middle, not on the side of the government or the people."

NGO leaders in North Kivu hope that the ICC will start engaging them soon, or speculation about what the court is doing, and disappointment about what it does not appear to be doing, will spiral.

They are impatient for the ICC to bring its message clearly to the Kivus, confident that it could help deter violent behaviour from authorities and militia leaders.

"The authorities are protecting perpetrators and say that they need peace first and justice after, but there is no peace without justice. People want to see ICC sensitising those authorities as well," Moustapha said.

Reported by Jacques Kahorha in Goma and Katy Glassborow in Bangui. With additional reporting by Patrick Tshamala and Taylor Toeka Kakala in the DRC, and Ewing Ahmed Salumu in The Hague.