

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE

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Wednesday, June 16, 2004

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Sierra Leone's War Crimes Court Opens

By CLARENCE ROY-MACAULEY
Associated Press Writer

June 15, 2004, 3:32 PM EDT

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FREETOWN, Sierra Leone -- His identity concealed behind a wall, a sobbing witness opened testimony in a U.N.-backed war crimes trial Tuesday by describing how his brother was beheaded and he was tortured during a militia raid.

Three leaders of the government-allied militia blamed in the raid are the first of at least nine defendants who will face the tribunal, created to try those bearing "greatest responsibility" for atrocities in a vicious 1991-2002 war in this diamond-rich West African nation.

The court is the first U.N.-sponsored tribunal to prosecute war crimes in the country in which they occurred and has strong U.S. backing as a model for future war-crimes prosecution.

The 52-year-old witness -- a watch repairman whose identity was concealed by a walled witness stand and a pseudonym, TF2-918 -- testified about an early 1998 attack by the loyalist Kamajor militia at the southern town of Bo, where his family fled as refugees.

"They took a plastic bag ablaze with fire and put it on my body, which was burnt on the shoulder," said the man, the first witness to testify.

"My younger brother and I were taken to the back of a hut where I saw two dead bodies. The Kamajors laid him on the ground and cut off his head," the man said before bursting into tears and prompting a 20-minute court recess.

"When I started to cry at what I saw, I was hit on the head. They said that they were going to cook the dead body of my brother," the man said when proceedings restarted.

The witness said the fighters told him to return to his village to warn of the consequences of any collaboration with rebels.

Both popular former government-militia figures, as well as the broadly feared rebels they were fighting, have been accused in the terror campaigns, with an estimated half-million victims of killings, systematic mutilation and other atrocities.

The civil war for control of Sierra Leone and its diamond fields was notorious for insurgents' trademark atrocity: using machetes to hack off the hands and feet of thousands of civilians.

The leader of the government-allied forces, Samuel Hinga Norman, is considered the top suspect in court custody.

Norman, the Kamajor leader and a former interior minister who is representing himself, said Tuesday in an opening statement that the hybrid U.N.-Sierra Leone court had no jurisdiction over him.

Four other high-profile suspects are beyond the court's reach.

Deposed Liberian President Charles Taylor, accused of trafficking guns and diamonds with Sierra Leone's insurgents, lives in exile in Nigeria, which has refused to extradite him.

Rebel leader Foday Sankoh died of natural causes while in U.N. custody awaiting trial. One indicted accomplice of Taylor and Sankoh was killed last year in Liberia, in what many believe was a move to silence him. Another has disappeared.

The court is trying alleged crimes including rape, burning and looting, use of child soldiers and forced marriage since late 1996, when a peace deal was signed, only to be widely violated. The four pro-government defendants have pleaded innocent.

Unlike the tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, the court is based in the country where excesses occurred, indicts fewer people and draws on local and international law.

The United States, an opponent of the standing International Criminal Court at the Hague, is providing the largest share of funding for this court.

Peace returned to Sierra Leone in 2002 only after forceful armed intervention by former ruler Britain and West African forces crushed the rebels.

Successful elections have been held and what was once the U.N.'s largest peace force anywhere is withdrawing, causing many citizens fear violence could flare anew.

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War crimes court hears tearful testimony

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP) -- His identity concealed behind a wall, a sobbing witness opened testimony Tuesday in U.N.-backed war crimes trials for Sierra Leone -- recounting the beheading of his brother and his own torture during a militia raid that targeted helpless civilians.

Three leaders of the government-allied militia blamed in the raid are the first defendants before the tribunal, created to try those bearing "greatest responsibility" for atrocities in a vicious 1991-2002 war in this diamond-rich West African nation.

The court is the first U.N.-sponsored tribunal to prosecute war crimes in the country in which they occurred, and is being heavily backed by the United States as a model for future war-crimes prosecution.

Prosecutors have opened proceedings with trials of widely popular government-militia figures, rather than the broadly feared rebels whom loyalists were combatting.

The 52-year-old witness -- a watch repairman whose identity was concealed by a walled witness stand and a pseudonym, TF2-918 -- gave testimony of an early 1998 attack by the loyalist Kamajor militia upon the southern town of Bo, where his family had fled as refugees.

"They took a plastic bag ablaze with fire and put it on my body, which was burnt on the shoulder," said the man.

"My younger brother and I were taken to the back of a hut where I saw two dead bodies. The Kamajors laid him on the ground and cut off his head," the man said before bursting into tears and prompting a 20-minute court recess.

"When I started to cry at what I saw, I was hit on the head. They said that they were going to cook the dead body of my brother," the man said when proceedings restarted.

The witness said the fighters told him to return to his village to warn of the consequences of any collaboration with rebels.

The leader of the government-allied forces, Samuel Hinga Norman, is considered the top indictee remaining in court custody.

Norman, the Kamajor leader and a former interior minister who is representing himself, said in an opening statement on Tuesday that the hybrid U.N.-Sierra Leone court had no jurisdiction over him.

Four men considered the most-important indictees are beyond the court's reach, including ex-President Charles Taylor of Liberia, currently living in exile in Nigeria. Rebel leader Foday Sankoh died in U.N. custody after a long illness and two others are dead or unaccounted for.

The court is trying abuses including rape, burning and looting, use of child soldiers and forced marriage since late 1996, when a peace deal was signed, only to be widely violated. The four pro-government defendants have pleaded innocent.

Unlike the tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, the court is based in the country where excesses occurred, is charging only a handful of indictees and draws on local and international law.

The United States, an opponent of the standing International Criminal Court at the Hague, is providing the largest share of funding for this court.

Sierra Leone finally returned to peace only in 2002, after forceful armed intervention by former ruler Britain and West African forces crushed the rebels.

Successful elections have been held and what was once the U.N.'s largest peace force anywhere is withdrawing. Many citizens fear violence could flare anew when the U.N. peacekeepers are gone, however.

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Jun. 16, 2004 01:00 AM

Sierra Leone tribunal begins

Ex-leaders charged with war crimes

Man tells of torture, brother's beheading

CLARENCE ROY-MACAULEY
ASSOCIATED PRESS

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone—His identity concealed behind a wall, a sobbing witness opened testimony in a U.N.-backed war crimes trial yesterday by describing how his brother was beheaded and he was tortured during a militia raid.

Three leaders of the government-allied militia blamed in the raid are the first of at least nine defendants who will face the tribunal, created to try those bearing "greatest responsibility" for atrocities in a vicious 1991-2002 war in this diamond-rich West African nation.

The court is the first U.N.-sponsored tribunal to prosecute war crimes in the country in which they occurred and could become a model for future war-crimes prosecution.

The 52-year-old witness — a watch repairman whose identity was concealed by a walled witness stand and a pseudonym, TF2-918 — testified about an early 1998 attack by the loyalist Kamajor militia at the southern town of Bo, where his family fled as refugees.

"They took a plastic bag ablaze with fire and put it on my body, which was burnt on the shoulder," said the first witness to testify.

"My younger brother and I were taken to the back of a hut where I saw two dead bodies. The Kamajors laid him on the ground and cut off his head," the man said before bursting into tears and prompting a 20-minute court recess.

"When I started to cry at what I saw, I was hit on the head. They said that they were going to cook the dead body of my brother," the witness said when proceedings restarted.

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VOICE of AMERICA

Testimony Begins in Sierra Leone War Crimes Trial

Carrie Giardino

Abidjan

15 Jun 2004, 15:31 UTC



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The special court on war crimes in Sierra Leone is finally hearing testimony, nearly two weeks after it first opened a case against leaders of the former pro-government militia.

Chief defendant, former Deputy Defense Minister Sam Hinga Norman appeared before the war crimes court in Sierra Leone on Tuesday to defend himself against charges of crimes against humanity he allegedly committed during the decade-long civil war.

A spokeswoman for the Special Court, Alison Cooper, says Mr. Hinga Norman is facing a number of serious charges.

"Crimes against humanity and international crimes are the ones. There is quite a range of them," she said. "There's the recruitment of child soldiers and that's quite an interesting one because our appeals chamber ruled on that that it was actually a crime under international laws to recruit child soldiers. He's also being charged with murder or unlawful killings, physical violence and mental suffering, looting and burning and terrifying the civilian population in collective punishment."

Ms. Cooper says Mr. Hinga Norman is representing himself, but there are lawyers standing by to assist him.

In his opening statement Tuesday, he argued the U.N.-backed court is infringing on the authority of Sierra Leone's own judiciary. He also claimed it was unclear whether the Geneva conventions on war crimes applied to civil wars. The court rejected both arguments earlier.

Ms. Cooper says about 160 witnesses will testify during the trial, some of whom will be shielded from the public.

"The way the courtroom is structured is it's a circular room and the public gallery sits in a sort of semi-circle slightly elevated overlooking the courtroom. There is a witness protection box, which makes it impossible for the public gallery to see it," she explained. "The judges are able to see the witness and so are prosecution and defense but in certain circumstances there will be voice distortion and they may also be obscured from view."

The Special Court was set up to punish those responsible for the tens of thousands of deaths and maimings that took place during the decade of civil war. So far, 11 people are under indictment, including former Liberian President Charles Taylor.



Samuel Hinga Norman is accused of war crimes during the 1991 to 2002, conflict in Sierra Leone

AP



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Trial proper at Special Court

CHIEF HINGA NORMAN ASKS TRIAL CHAMBER TO REJECT
ANY EVIDENCE FROM PROSECUTION AGAINST HIM

Tuesday June 15, 2004

The war crimes trial proper today was full of fireworks as Chief Hinga Norman , who is representing himself as his own attorney , asked the trial chamber of the Special Court to reject any evidence against him.

Chief Norman argued that the Special Court had no jurisdiction to try him or other Sierra Leoneans. He accused the court of usurping the powers of the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone. He questioned the constitutional right of the trial chamber itself.

In a stunning statement, Chief Norman said what happened in Sierra Leone has not been characterised as a war or a conflict and he asserted that he will not respond to any dramatic evidence the prosecution might bring against him .He said that such evidence will incite sentiments against him which he disavowed because the court had no reason to hold anything against him.

A total of 150 witnesses had been lined up by the Special Court to detail horrors allegedly committed during the Sierra Leone war . The Chief and two other members of the militia- Senesie Fofana and Allieu Kondowa are being tried by the Special Court for war crimes and crimes against humanity. They are deemed as bearing the greatest responsibility for the atrocities committed by the Kamajors.

While Hinga Norman testified , his crowd of supporters in the court gallery cheered incessantly and Presiding Judge, Benjamin Itoe, was constrained to warn them that this was not a political trial and therefore they should not disrupt proceedings.

FIRST PROSECUTION WITNESS ACCUSES CHIEF HINGA NORMAN OF
ORDERING KILLINGS AND DESTRUCTION OF KORIBONDO BY CDF

,,,Says Kamajors threatened to cook body of dead brother

Choking tears and crying bitterly and at one stage causing a brief adjournment to allow him to recover his emotions , a prosecution witness today told the Special Court that Chief Hinga Norman ordered the killings and the destruction of Koribondo , allegedly by the Kamajors during the Sierra Leone war.

In a dramatic testimony, the witness Chief Norman said Hinga Norman held two meetings with the Kamajors and chided them for not carrying out his orders at Koribondo. According to his translated testimony from Mende to English, the witness alleged that Chief Norman brawled: "You have not done my word! I told you that I wanted only three houses to remain here--The mosque, the Court Barri and my lodge. Why are you afraid of killing? Look at all these houses"

The man, a 52-yearold Sierra Leonean, who for security reasons, testified behind a security barrier and was tagged with the identification of TF2/198, made an emotional testimony about the alleged ordeal he and his brother suffered at the hands of the Kamajors, as he said.

The witness explained how he and his brother fled Koribondo and sought refuge in Bo. He narrated that they were identified when the Kamajors attacked Bo and tied up and returned to Koribondo where they were tortured. He stated that hot plastic that had been melted were poured on him and he was flogged by the Kamajors.

The witness further alleged that when he and his brother were taken to the back of a thatched house, he saw two dead bodies. Behind this house, he went on, his brother was laid on the ground and his throat was cut, severing his head. The Kamajors, he continued, then threatened that they will cook the dead body.

The witness also narrated that when Chief Norman went to Koribondo, he called a meeting during which he told the residents not to blame the Kamajors for the killings and the destruction of the town, as he had ordered them to do so.



Sierra Leone: Hinga Norman Rejects Jurisdiction of Special Court

UN Integrated Regional Information Networks

NEWS

June 15, 2004

Posted to the web June 15, 2004

Freetown

Sam Hinga Norman, the former leader of a pro-government militia group in Sierra Leone, said on Tuesday that he rejected the right of a UN-backed Special Court to try him for war crimes and urged its judges to disregard any prosecution evidence brought before them.

Hinga Norman sacked his team of defence lawyers at the start of proceedings on 3 June, only to be told by the court last week that he would not be allowed to conduct his own defence.

He nevertheless succeeded in making a 10-minute opening defence statement to the chamber before the first prosecution witness was led in.

"This court operating as a trial chamber in Sierra Leone does not have the constitutional right to try me or any other Sierra Leonean," the former militia leader and government minister said.

"It has taken the constitutional power of the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone" he added.

Hinga Norman further argued that "Whatever took place in Sierra Leone since 1991 to date under review has not been defined as a war or conflict."

He concluded by saying: "I will not respond to any dramatic pieces the prosecutors might have brought before the court against me to incite sentiments and they have no reason to hold anything against Hinga Norman."

Hinga Norman was leader of the Civil Defence Force (CDF), a militia group formed to defend the government of elected President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah during Sierra Leone's 1991-2001 civil war.

But like the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group which it fought against, the CDF was accused of widespread atrocities.

Hinga Norman had risen to the rank of Interior Minister by the time he was arrested and placed in custody by the Special Court in March last year. He faces eight counts of crimes against humanity for his role during the country's 10-year civil war.

Hinga Norman, who was deputy defence minister at the time he created the CDF, told the court he had become a soldier at the age of 14, but had subsequently grown to distrust the army.

"I was under tremendous stress so I decided to take up the battle against the Army and the RUF" he declared.

It was at this point that Trial Attorney Charles Caruso brought forward his first witness, a 52 year old man identified only as TF2/198.

Speaking behind a screen, the witness told how he had been beaten by CDF fighters who had also dripped hot molten plastic onto his shoulders.

He also told the court about how his brother was beheaded before his eyes in the town of Koribundo in southern Sierra Leone, while he himself was beaten by CDF militiamen and was forced to look on.

The witness broke down and cried at this point and the court was adjourned for 15 minutes to allow him to recover his composure.

The witness recalled two meetings which Hinga Norman had called in the town during which the militia boss told them that his fighters, widely known as "Kamajors" should not be blamed for what they had done there, because he had sent them.

He said Hinga Norman had incited his men to kill civilians and destroy buildings in the town.

The witness quoted the militia boss as saying: "So why are you afraid of killing? You have not done my word. I told you I want only three houses left: the Mosque, the Court Barri (village meeting place) and the house I would sleep in when I come to town. But look at all these houses!"

The trial continued with a court-appointed lawyer for Hinga Norman cross-examining the witness.

The court has assigned Hinga Norman a five-member team of defence lawyers known as stand-by counsel. This consists of two members of his original defence team and three other lawyers assigned to him by court registrar Robin Vincent.

Hinga Norman tried to reinstate his original defence team last week, but two of the four lawyers in it said they were no longer prepared to represent him.

He is on trial with two other top leaders of the CDF; War Director Moinina Fofana and High Priest Allieu Kondewa, who presided over traditional rituals to initiate new members into the force.

Prosecutors accuse Norman of presiding over a "killing frenzy against innocent civilians" as the CDF slaughtered, raped, burnt and looted their way across the West African country. A total of 150 witnesses are expected to appear in the trial, one of three which are due to be conducted before the court.

The second trial, of former RUF leaders, is due to start on 5 July.

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Norman starts his Defence

In another dramatic twist to the proceedings of the UN backed Special war crimes tribunal for Sierra Leone, the first accused Chief Sam Hinga Norman assumed the role of lead counsel by making the defense's opening statements to the court. Norman sacked his defence team

a week ago and called on them again to act in the capacity of standby counsels. The defense lawyers in a letter dated 10th June refused saying that "we will not return to defend the 1st accused in any other capacity in order to allow the 1st accused to exercise his right to defend himself as he has insisted."

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From Front Page

The Special Court registrar Robin Vincent assigned a new set of five standby lawyers, which included two Sierra Leoneans two British and an American John Wesley Hull whom Mr Norman had earlier rejected. The standby lawyers are employed by the court registry and would be assisting Mr Norman on issues of law. As leader of his own defense team Norman gave a short ten minute opening statement to the court. He disclosed that at the time, he "was under tremendous stress so (he) decided to take up the battle against the Army and the RUF," Norman challenged the legality of the special court to try him arguing that "This court operating as a trial chamber in Sierra Leone does not have the constitutional right to try me or any other Sierra Leonean." He added "It has taken the constitutional power of the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone." He further argued that "Whatever took place in Sierra Leone since 1991 to date under review has not been defined as a war or conflict." The former Internal Affairs Minister who told the court that he joined the army at age 14 said he would not "not respond to any dramatic pieces the prosecutors might have brought before the court

against me to incite sentiments and they have no reason to hold anything against Hinga Norman." It was at this point that Trial Attorney Charles Caruso brought forward his first witness, a 52 year old man identified only as TF2/198. Speaking behind a screen, the witness stated that he had lived in Koribundo for a very long time. He explained that the soldiers came to Koribundo when the war started and they were protecting the township. He stated that several times he witnessed the attack by rebels on Koribundo and how the soldiers defended the township. The witness explained how the Kamajors came to the town and joined forces with the soldiers. Later he said the Kamajors said they were going back to their homes because Tejan Kabbah had been overthrown. The witness recalled that they continued to live with the soldiers all throughout this period. On February 13 he said the soldiers started packing and when he enquired they told him that their leader Johnny Paul had been overthrown so they were all going to Makeni. The witness said he was advised by the soldiers to leave the township. As a result he said he took all of his family and walked to Bo, where they arrived at about

6am in the morning. He said after a few days the kamajors conducted a search of the township looking out for the people who had come from Koribundo. He said the first time they did not recognize him but the second time they picked him and they started beating him until he fell on the ground. When his brother heard his cries the witness said he came and the kamajors caught him too shouting junta. He said they took both of them to "Y" junction by CKC where they beat him and removed all his clothes. He said the Kamajors set fire to a plastic and as the hot molten plastic dripped they let it drip on his back. He removed his shirt and displayed the marks to the judges and the lawyers behind the screen although the audience outside the screen could not see. The witness continued that after that they took his brother behind the house and they cut his throat. He said he was beaten with the butt of their guns and his head was held tight so that he could watch while they were cutting his brothers head-off. He said he was then released and told that he was being released so

that he would take the message to the people what they were doing. At this point the defense lawyers objected that the prosecution had not told them about that piece of evidence which was appearing to be crucial to their case and that it should be struck from the records. The trial attorney for the prosecution Charles Caruso replied that they had complied with all the rules and that in such trials it was not necessarily all what was in the statement taken out of court, is what would be presented in the court. The judges deferred their ruling to a later date. And the trial continued. The witness then identified Chief Norman in the court as the man wearing the white hat and white rappel saying Chief Norman was the Regent Chief of his town Koribundo in the

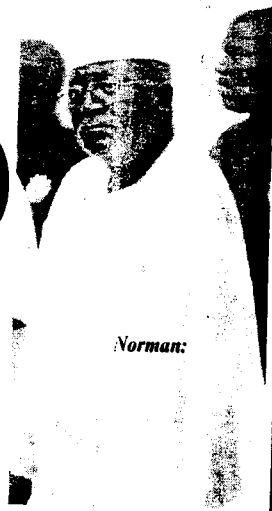
Jaiama Gbongor Chiefdom. The witness recalled two meetings which Chief Norman allegedly called in the town during which he told them that the Kamajors should not be blamed, because he had sent them. According to the witness, Chief Norman asked the Kamajors who numbered over a hundred in the meeting in the township "why are you afraid of killing? Soldiers killed and nothing happened, Kapras killed and nothing happened, so why are you afraid of killing." Norman he said continued "I told you I want only three houses, the court barray, the mosque and the house I will stay in, but look at all these houses?" On hearing this the witness said he went silently to his house and told his mother "trouble had come again." Under cross-examination

by standby counsel for Chief Sam Hinga Norman, Lawyer Ibrahim Sorie Yillah, the witness told the court that Chief Norman through the Kamajors help to protect the people of Jaiama Gbongor. But answering to another question why he did not inform the prosecutors about that achievement, he replied, "I was not asked." When he was being cross-examined by the first accused, the witness agreed with the former that they knew each other very well. The first accused then asked the witness to tell the court whether he had done evil to the people of Jaiama Gbongor. The witness responded saying "No." In answering to Chief Norman's question about burning down of houses within Jaiama Gbongor, the witness said, "Kamajor burnt down the houses." In responding to the counsel for the second accused, A. Bockarie, the witness told the court that Kamajors were armed with all weapons that soldiers usually carried.

Awoko

Wednesday June 16, 2004

Norman questions right to try him



Norman:

*** *Joined army as a Child Soja under the Brits.*

*** *First Prosecution Witness testify*

By Osman Benk Sankoh

The question of the Special Court's mandate to try indicted persons of the decade long civil war in the country was once again tested yesterday when Chief Sam Hinga Norman, First Accused in the ongoing Civil Defence Force (CDF) trial challenged the Court's constitutional right to try him.

Making his opening statement in his self-defence, Norman told the Court that there were no charges legally placed before him by the Trial Chamber nor has he taken any plea before it.

" This Court operating as a Trial

Chamber does not have the constitutional right to try me," he said and adds that they have taken away the constitutional rights of the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone."

Norman said whatever took place in

Sierra Leone since 1991 has not been defined, " whether it was war or conflict."

He said if it were a war, it should be defined as conventional or civil and if it were a conflict, it should be clearly defined as International or National.

Quoting Protocol 1 of the Geneva Convention, Norman said, in our own situation, what should have applied

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Concord Times

Wednesday June 16, 2009

to testify.

terest.

Norman questions right to try him

From front page



them and the soldiers on one hand and the Kamajors that later came to join them in Koribundo.

He also narrated how he was captured by Kamajors in Bo together with his brother, tied with an FM rope, taken to a place called Y junction where a plastic was set ablaze, poured on his eyes and back and forced to look when his brother's head was being chopped off by the Kamajors. The witness claimed that he was only spared because they wanted him to take the message of what awaits residents of Koribundo.

Chief Priest Kondewa(L), War Director & Moinina Fofana At some points, he broke into tears and the Court had to stand down.

was a Commission of Inquiry to look into the crisis itself. This was noted by the Presiding Judge, Benjamin Iloe who said, " we have taken note of your observations in the exercise of your rights under the rule," and asked that the Trial proceed.

Earlier, Norman indicated that he joined the army when he was 14 ½ years and during the interview, he said, when asked why he was joining the army at that age, " I was joining the army to defend Her Majesty's Empire."

The first witness of the prosecution was a protected one with the alias, TF2-198 who said he was a resident of Koribundu and aged 52.

He gave graphic account of the kind of relationship that existed between

Continuing with his testimony which was led by Trial Attorney, Charles Caruso, the witness claimed that he attended two meetings which Norman called and during the first, he claimed that the First Accused said he was disappointed with the Kamajors for not fully carrying out his orders of destroying the houses in the township while at the second, Norman was said to have stressed that the people should not blame the Kamajors but should hold him responsible for whatever happened to them. Defence Counsel Yada Williams, Arrow Bockarie and Norman himself with the aid of interim Standby Counsel, Ibrahim Yillah also cross-examined the witness.

The matter was adjourned to today.

Sierra News

Wednesday June 16, 2004

Norman question's Special Court's competence

By A. Max Konneh

The indicted former Coordinator of the Civil Defence Forces in Sierra Leone, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, has described the operation of the United Nations backed Special Courts of Sierra Leone as "a cynical manipulation of justice in the country"

Chief Norman who was making his opening statement at the special court room no.1 New England Ville

yesterday, said the court does not have the constitutional right to try him in accordance with the situation under review.

Dressed in white "rappel" suit and white hat, the confident looking inductee said "there is no charge or charges placed before the chamber against him."

Mr. Norman who informed the court that he joined the Sierra Leone Army at the age of 14 1/2 years to defend her Majesty the Queen's

Empire said he has been under tremendous stress like it was when he decided to take up arms against the army and the RUF.

Among reasons given for defending himself Mr. Norman argued that whatever took place in Sierra Leone in 1991 to date has not been clearly defined as to whether the war was national or international.

Chief Norman went on to



Chief Sam Hinga Norman

accuse the special court for taking the powers of the Chief Justice of Sierra Leone, adding that a Commission of Inquiry should have been instituted to investigate the stakeholders in the just-ended civil war.

Meanwhile the first prosecution witness, 52 year old Watch repairer of Koribondo Jaiama Bongor Chiefdom, has explained how he was tortured, and his younger brothers head slashed at Wai junction around Christ the King College School in Bo.

The trial continues.

Norman Damns Charges

The New Storm

Wednesday June 16,

2004

By Joseph Komeh



Hinga Norman down plays the charges

Chief Sam Hinga Norman made an opening statement at the trial chambers of the Special Court yesterday. The former CDF boss recalled joining the Sierra Leone Armed Force

when he was just fourteen and half (14½) years of age. He explained that at the interview panel, which comprised mainly British national, chief Norman said he told the panel: "I was joining the army to defend her Majesty's Empire." He challenged the court amongst other things that there is or are no charge(s) legally placed before the chamber against him.

Mr. Norman said, "this court which is operating as a trial chamber does not have constitutional right to try me and indeed anybody".

He said whatever took place

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from front page

in Sierra Leone since 1991 has not been properly defined as to whether it was a war or a conflict. "If it was a war, was it civil or conventional. And if it was a conflict, what type?" Mr. Norman queried.

Quoting Article 90 of the Geneva Convention wherein a commission of enquiry was to have been instituted instead of a trial chamber, the former Internal Affairs Minister said he was defending himself on that ground.

Meanwhile, the prosecuting Counsel called its first witness yesterday. The protected first witness with a pseudonym TF 2-

198, a 52 year old man described himself as a native of Koribondo in the Jiamā Bungor chiefdom. He said he ran away from Koribondo to Bo where Kamajohs murdered his brother. He said he was taken to see for himself and he was told that his brother's body was going to be eaten. On his return to Koribondo, he said he discovered some 106 houses burnt down by Kamajohs. He further testifies that chief Norman who was the Regent Chief of that chiefdom at that time summoned a meeting around march, 1998 at the court barry in Koribondo.

At the meeting, he went on, chief Norman told the people that they should not hold the Kamajohs responsible for what they did in the township but that they should hold him responsible, since they were acting on his orders. The witness stated that Chief Norman was even annoyed that the Kamajohs had not executed his orders properly, as he, Norman had ordered the fighters to spare only the mosque, the court barry and his (Norman's) house. Chief Norman is been tried together with Moinina Fofanah, and Alie Kondowa, all of them senior members of the Kamajoh militia.

As Norman Condemns Court...

Witness Exposes Kamajor Brutality

By Joseph Turay

A witness has testified before the Special Court that during the civil conflict the Kamajor militia burnt down their house in Koribondo and brutally murdered his brother.

The 52-year old witness, who was well protected from public view for security rea-

sons, testified that he was in Koribondo in Bo District between 1997 and 1998 when the Kamajor militia attacked the town and burnt many houses, which prompted them to flee to Bo.

Led in evidence by a mem-

ber of the prosecution team, Charles Cruso, the witness testified that in Bo, he and his brother were arrested by Kamajors, who manhandled them, adding that they brutally killed his brother. The witness further testified

Contd. page 2



Kamajors manhandling civilians during the war

From front page

that the militiamen were under the control of the first accused of the Civil Defence Force (CDF), Chief Sam Hinga Norman, whom he alleged held several meetings with the Kamajors and residents of Koribondo. Earlier in his opening statement, the first accused, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, said there was no reason why the Special Court should indict him for the crimes that were perpetrated during the ten-year civil conflict. He vehemently condemned the court, describing it as a

cynical manipulation of the law of Sierra Leone. Chief Norman cited the Article 90 of the Geneva Convention which stipulates a commission instead of war crimes court. The former Minister of Internal Affairs further asked the court to define the type of war that took place in Sierra Leone. Giving his military background, Chief Norman disclosed that he was recruited into the Sierra Leone Army at 14 and half years, and that it was even the British who trained him.

The first accused said when he was recruited into the army he took an oath to defend the territorial integrity of his country, but, ironically, he said, the Special Court has indicted him for crimes he allegedly committed during the ten-year rebel war. He however maintained that the court does not have the constitutional authority to try him. "Whatever took place in Sierra Leone, if it is a war what type of war it is, a conflict, what type of conflict?" Chief Norman queried the court.

The Exclusive

Wednesday June 16, 2004

AS NORMAN CROSS-EXAMINES, WITNESS REVEALS

'HOW KAMAJORS KILLED MY BROTHER IN BO'

By Mohamed Mansaray

The first prosecution witness in the case against 1st accused of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), Samuel Hinga Norman told the Trial Chamber of the Special Court at New England in Freetown yesterday that he saw the beheading of his younger brother by Kamajors in Bo sometime in 1998.

The witness (name withheld) TF2-198 told the court that he and his brother (name withheld) were initially taken to 'Y' Junction at Christ the King College (CKC) where they were subjected to all kinds of inhuman treatment.

The witness revealed that he was later taken at the back of a hut in the area where he saw

two corpses lying on the ground including his be-headed brother. "I was asked to watch how my brother was being killed" the witness told the court.

Born at Koribondo in the Jaiama Bongor Chiefdom in the Bo District, the witness recalled in 1994 and 1995 when rebels attacked. Before then,

soldiers were in the town following the out-break of war to protect the people. He told the court that in 1996 they received a message from the then Regent Chief, Samuel Hinga Norman that he had brought Kamajors in the to help soldiers prosecute the war. In 1997 however, the Kamajors returned to their villages after they learnt
SEE BACK PAGE



Norman in court

Si Leone Times

Wednesday June 16, 2004

about the overthrow of President Kabbah's government by the AFRC.

The witness speaking in Mende through an interpreter said that the Kamajors launched about four attacks on Koribondo in a bid to retake the town from government soldiers but that they were not successful. He said there was another attack on the town by Kamajors on February 13 1998 at about 1:30 pm where he saw a large number of people coming into the town from Pujehun direction as a result. The attack lasted for about 45 minutes he said, adding that one Sidi Kabba and other unknown persons were gunned down.

By 4 pm, the witness told the court, news went round Koribondo that ECOMOG forces had overthrown the regime of Johnny Paul Koroma in Freetown. He said that he went to seek refuge with his younger brother at Railway Line in Bo and realised heavy presence of Kamajors in the town. The witness also said that some Kamajors were searching some houses for people who fled from Koribondo to Bo and eventually succeeded to identify him as one of those who fled from Koribondo.

The witness said that Mr. Norman returned to Koribondo shortly afterwards and held a meeting with the people at which he commended the Kamajors for a job well done, though he said that he did not see Mr. Norman with his own eyes. According to the witness Mr. Norman was reported as telling the people that he wanted only three houses left in Koribondo.

Under cross-examination by Mr. Norman who is spearheading his defence team, the witness admitted that the first accused (Mr. Norman) had neither harmed him nor the people of Jaiama Bongor. He also admitted that Mr. Norman was not the Commander of the Kamajor attack on Koribondo on February 13. "Some of the Kamajors I saw in Koribondo came from Jaiama Bongor and others from outside the chiefdom. Some of the Kamajors burnt their own houses" the witness told the court. Earlier, Mr. Norman also presented his opening statement to the court saying that he will not say anything about the allegations levelled against him by the Prosecution. Mr. Norman stated in his statement that the court does not have any Constitutional mandate to try him and that Statute 8 of the Rules of Procedure of Special Court has Jurisdiction over the Sierra Leone Constitution and hence taking over the powers of the Chief Justice among others.

Hinga Norman Supporters Go Wild In Court

answered that there were hundreds of them, and that they (the Kamajohs) outnumbered the strangers who were among them. "Were there residents of Koribondo among the Kamajohs?" asked Norman. "Yes," replied the witness. Do you want to tell me that kamajohs from Koribondo burned

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The former CDF Coordinator was allowed to conduct his own case assisted by one of the assigned counsels, Ibrahim Yilla. The identity of the Witness was kept confidential for security reasons.

After the witness gave direct evidence of scenes he actually witnessed in Koribondo, which included the burning down

of scores of houses by members of the civil defence forces, the Kamajohs to be specific, Mr. Norman asked the witness in his

cross-examination whether he, Norman, was the commander there at the particular point in time.

The witness answered in the negative. Norman further asked the witness how many Kamajohs were involved in the incident. The witness



Chief Justice

Hinga Norman's cross-examination of a witness yesterday received wild applause from his enthusiastic supporters who had thronged to the court to offer him moral support.

The presiding Judge, Benjamin Itoe, warned that such a behaviour will no longer be tol-

erated in the courtroom.

Chief Sam Hinga Norman cross-examined the first wit-

ness for the prosecution who gave evidence relating to specific incidents that took place in Koribondo, Bo District, in 1998.

From Page 1

down their own town?" Norman continued.

After a short pause, the witness sighed and stated: "Yes," replied the witness. Apparently satisfied with the answer, Norman informed the court that he was handing over the rest of the cross-examination to his assistant, Ibrahim Yillah. Mr. Yillah asked the witness a number of questions aimed at testing his credibility. "Did you at any of the meetings you attended with Hinga Norman hear anyone refer to him as 'Saviour of Koribondo?'" Again, after a short pause, the witness answered that he heard that on at least one occasion. "Why did you not say that to the investigators for the Prosecution?" Yillah asked the witness.

The witness replied that he was not asked by the investigators. One of the three Judges, Itoe, asked the witness what was the name of his (the witness's) brother, whom he claimed was killed in Koribondo as he had told the court. At this, the prosecutor objected on the grounds of 'witness protection.' But Mr. Yillah suggested to the court that the name of protected witnesses could be disclosed in writing by a witness for the attention of the judges.

The Democrat

Wednesday June 16, 2004

Independent Observer

Wednesday June 16, 2004

Hinga Norman Delivers 10 Minutes Speech In Court

By John
Baimba
Sesay

Hinga Norman yesterday had the opportunity to speak at the Special Court and his ten minutes speech was emotional. He recalled joining the Sierra Leone army at the age of 14 and his aim then was to de-

fend Her Majesty's empire. When he did so a second time, it was to liberate Sierra Leoneans who were being brutalised by the RUF and AFRC rebels, he referred to as his brothers and sisters. He

made no political statement, however, as most people were expecting him to do. Hinga Norman told the Judges that the charges brought against him were not legal as the court

do not have the constitutional right to try him. He argued that what happened in Sierra Leone was not properly defined as to whether it was war or conflict. He therefore asked the court to apply Article 90 of the Geneva Convention which, according to him, states that what happened here needed to be investigated by a commission of inquiry of all the factions and compensation paid to the victims.

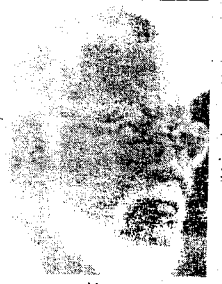
Supporters of Mr. Norman at one moment interrupted proceedings with loud cheers for him, to the annoyance of the Judges. And presiding Judge Benjamin Itoe was forced to issue a warning that any attempt of repeating such misbehavior in future those responsible would be thrown out of the courtroom. And thus reminded the audience that the trial was not a political one.

Later the first prosecution wit-

ness who was not referred to by name but simply as TF 2-198, and was protected from public view, recalled how he was manhandled by Kamajors at Koribundo where Norman was Regent Chief. He shed tears as he recount how he was forced to witness the slaughter of his brother.

He spoke of a meeting summoned by Norman at the court barray which he attended wherein Norman thanked the Kamajors for their good work but expressed dissatisfaction that they did not go according to his instruction as they were told to burn all the buildings except three which were the mosque, the barray and the house Norman was to occupy. Trial continues this morning.

Chief Norman starts his defence



Norman

(B) THEOPHILUS S. GRENDA

Indicted war crime suspect, Chief Samuel Hinga, made his opening statements yesterday June 15, 2004 before the trial chamber of the Special Court for

Sierra Leone in defence of his innocence of all the allegation against him.

The opening statements of chief Norman included among other things, his plans to go about his de-

fence in view of the crimes he is charged with and will no doubt be an important step forward in the trial proceedings, which has been held at bay for close to two weeks, following wrangling

concerning the pattern of representation of Chief Norman.

It could be noted that on June 3rd, 2004, when the trial was scheduled to commence, Chief Norman dis-

missed his defence and opted for self defence.

Taking into consideration the legal constraints the chief will face in defending himself, the trial chamber deemed it fit to order that a

team of standby counsels be assigned to him and that this team may include members of his former defence team.

Already, four lawyers, CONTINUED BACK PAGE

Norman starts his defence

FROM PAGE 1

namely Mr. Quiney Whittaker (British), Mr. Tim Owen (British), Mr. John Wesley Hall (American) and Dr. Bu-Bukei Jabbie (Sierra Leone) have been appointed by the registrar of the court, Mr. Robin Vincent, to serve in the stand-

by defence team of chief Norman.

While chief Norman would be doing the actual representation, the stand-by team will always be by his side to provide him with the legal and technical assistance he may need.

Meanwhile, the former de-

fence team comprising of Messers Jenkins Johnston, Suliaman Banja-Tejan-Sei and Adeatu Jalloh have addressed a letter dated July 14, 2004 to the court indicating that they no longer intend or wish to represent chief Norman in any capacity.

“ ”

Standard Times

Wednesday June 16, 2004

Sierra News

Wednesday June 16, 2009

Norman calls for "Standby" Defence Counsels

By A. Max Konneh

After some consideration and consultations, the indicted former Deputy Defence Minister and Coordinator of the Civil Defence Forces, Sam Hinga Norman, has requested for his previously rejected defence team to serve this time as "Stand by" Defence Counsels while he defends himself.

Mr. Norman who earlier objected to the court's decision to appoint a "Stand by" defence counsel to assist him in the trial in accordance with article 17 (4) (d), said his choice of "Standby" Counsels should be respected by the bench and not to choose for him.

"It's a serious violation of my right if the bench chooses for me and will be held responsible for any consequences" he said.

Dressed in a grey suit, the health-looking indictees said his right to self-defence has not been taken but qualified to which he has responded.

One of the trial judges, Pierre Boutet said the courts decision was in the interest of the indictee and fair proceedings.

Sierra Leonean-born judge, Bankole Thompson said the

of the court is not undermined.

When asked to comment on Norman's decision, one of his former defence lawyers,

Sulaiman Banja Tejan-Sie said he cannot make any comment in the absence of his colleagues.

He promised to get back

to the court over the weekend.

However Judge Boutet reminded him that he will be working with Norman as "Stand by" Counsel and not as his client.



The Problem With the Special Court for Sierra Leone

The Independent (Freetown)

OPINION

June 15, 2004

Posted to the web June 15, 2004

By Abdul Karim Bangura
Freetown

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was created by the Sierra Leone Government and the United Nations. Its mandate is to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in Sierra Leone since November 30, 1996.

While at first the Special Court seemed like the answer to Sierra Leone's eleven-year civil war, it has now become an instrument that could perpetuate civil war hatred, as the main perpetrators cannot be tried. Other troubling aspects of the Special Court include double standards and racism. The situation prompted even the former British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone during the war years, Peter Penfold, to question the value of the war crimes tribunal. He is also quoted as saying that the court "has outlived its usefulness as such and it should be disbanded." In essence, the continuation of the Special Court could create the conditions for another civil war in Sierra Leone.

First, of the 13 individuals who have been indicted so far, only eight have been arrested and held in a new prison complex next to the court buildings. The most troubling aspect of the eight in prison is the inclusion of the leaders of the Civil Defense Forces (CDF), Chief Sam Hinga Norman, Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa. The Kamajors, who are traditional hunters, are the backbone of the CDF. Many people

Throughout Sierra Leone consider members of the CDF and especially Norman to be heroes for having liberated Sierra Leone from the rebels. The Kamajors used the bush skills and traditional knowledge of forest youngsters to combat the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which had overthrown the elected government of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in 1997 aided by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Under the leadership of Norman, the CDF collaborated with UN peacekeeping forces and British troops to end the conflict. Norman was later arrested while serving as internal affairs minister in the present government headed by Kabbah.

Meanwhile, many major culprits of the war are either dead, missing, have found asylum, or have not been indicted. The founder of the RUF, Foday Sankoh, died of a stroke while in custody in 2002. His top field commander, Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie, was killed in a shootout in Liberia in May of 2003. The AFRC leader, Johnny Paul Koroma, has disappeared since December of 2002. He is believed to be in Liberia or dead. The most prominent name of all, former Liberian President Charles Taylor, accused of arming and training the RUF in exchange for "blood diamonds," was given a safe haven in Nigeria in August of 2003 to pave the way for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in his own country.

Also troubling is that Kabbah and the foreign arms suppliers who helped fuel the brutal war have not been indicted. In his 30-page report to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the United States-based spokesman of the CDF, Rev. Alfred Sam Foray, provided evidence that reveals Kabbah's support for and approval of CDF activities. Officials of Sandline International, a private military company, have long since been exposed for supplying weapons to Kabbah. The company and Kabbah's government entered into some contract to train the hunters and had a deal to hire mercenaries. Sandline International is also reported to be currently operating in Iraq. In addition, Victor Bout, who is said to

Be notorious for delivering sophisticated weapon systems virtually everywhere in the world to all sorts of terrorist and rebel groups, was reported to have supplied weapons to warring parties in Sierra Leone.

It was recently reported that Bout is now working for the United States in Iraq.

Second, the creation of the Special Court reflects a series of double standards. In the case of South Africa, after over one hundred years of whites killing, maiming, raping, torturing, and dehumanizing blacks, the United Nations and Western powers pushed for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that would give perpetrators immunity from prosecution.

However, for Sierra Leone, both a TRC and a Special Court were instituted. The TRC would not provide immunity, and the Special Court has the power to prosecute and sentence those found guilty.

Another double standard is evident when one considers that the biggest sponsors of the court are the United States and Great Britain, which have contributed about \$120 million to the effort. The prosecution team is run by Americans. But ironically, the United States has refused to be a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and has sought ways to undermine the ICC. One could not help but wonder whether Kabbah's non-indictment by the Special Court is due to the fact that he signed

On to the American effort, an action that was criticized by many organizations, including Amnesty International and Campaign for Good Governance.

Third, some of the statements that have been made by the Special Court's lead prosecutor, David Crane, a white American, seem to reflect a racist attitude. For instance, during a May 16, 2003 speech, Crane stated that "the devil is alive and he lives in West Africa." This statement is reminiscent of the colonial days when Europeans referred to Africans as "heathen," "uncivilized," "backward," "cannibals," and "monkeys." Even the poet Rudyard Kipling called dark-skinned people "half devil." On the Special Court and the justice system in general, Crane stated that "Believe it not, we don't have a lot of challenges. My challenge is more taking care of my people and keeping them healthy-both mentally and physically. It's a tough place to live and work. Some of us have been there and fully understand the challenges to that." So after trashing Sierra Leone's legal system, Crane went on to elaborate on the only challenge-i.e. the white man's grave challenge.

Finally, the Special Court's activities are sowing the seeds for another civil war in Sierra Leone. The Kamajor did not emerge for the pursuit of short-term and narrow interests. The traditional society has been deeply entrenched in the country's culture for hundreds of years. Its members and their relatives and friends comprise about one-third of the country's population. As a trained traditional hunting society, its duty has always been to defend the community. The perception that its leaders are being made scapegoats for the millions of dollars that have been spent on the court will have serious consequences in the very near future. The signs of this are already evident in the recent local elections countrywide, as those considered to be supporters of the Special Court were soundly defeated in many electoral constituencies.

Abdul Karim Bangura is Researcher-In-Residence at the Center for Global Peace and Assistant Professor of International Relations in the School of International Service at American University & Director of The African Institution, Washington, DC, USA

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NATIONAL NEWS

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Taylor's spokesman dismisses bid to make him face UN courts

By IseOluwa Ige, with agency reports

Wednesday, June 16, 2004

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ABUJA — A SPOKESMAN for exiled former Liberian leader Charles Taylor yesterday dismissed as “useless” a legal move to force him out of Nigeria into the hands of international justice.

On Monday lawyers acting for legal rights associations and two Nigerians who had their hands chopped off by Sierra Leonean rebels during that country’s war in the 1990s appeared before Nigeria’s Federal High Court to ask that Taylor’s protected status be lighted.

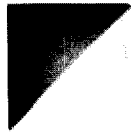
But Vaanii Paasewe who served as Taylor’s spokesman during his time as president of Liberia and followed him into exile said that the former warlord was unconcerned by the challenge.

A Federal high court judge, Justice Jonah Adah had ordered Governor of Cross River State, Chief Donald Duke to serve his guest and former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, a petition by two Nigerians, seeking to review his (Taylor) asylum status in Nigeria.

The two Nigerians challenging the asylum granted by President Olusegun Obasanjo government to the fugitive former Liberian warlords are Emmanuel Egbuna and David Anyaele.

But the court refused to assume jurisdiction on an aspect of the petition by the Nigerians inviting it to try Taylor for breaching their fundamental human rights while in Seirra Leone. Justice Adah had held that although the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act Cap 10 LFN 1990 had been adopted as part of the nation’s municipal laws, yet, the provisions therein did not constitute a statute that empowered Nigerian courts to entertain and deal with breaches of fundamental human rights committed in other African countries even if they were committed against the citizens of Nigeria.

Granting leave to the applicants for judicial review of the asylum granted to Taylor, the court held that the action sought to be reviewed by the applicants was within the jurisdiction of the court.



Nigeria: Amputees Seek to Have Taylor Tried for War Crimes

UN Integrated Regional Information Networks

NEWS

June 15, 2004

Posted to the web June 15, 2004

Abuja

Two Nigerians whose arms were cut off by rebels during Sierra Leone's civil war, have filed a joint suit in an Abuja court seeking former Liberian President Charles Taylor's trial for war crimes before a United Nations-backed court in Sierra Leone.

Emmanuel Egbuna and David Anyaele, in a court case which opened on Monday, are challenging Nigeria's decision to grant Taylor political asylum.

Both men want him extradited to Sierra Leone to face charges of crimes against humanity for backing the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel movement responsible for brutal atrocities that included hacking off the limbs of innocent civilians.

"They suffered physical and psychological tortures and had their limbs chopped off by RUF rebels in 1999 when they were in Sierra Leone," Maxwell Kadiri, their lawyer, told reporters.

Their case came to court in Nigeria as the UN-backed special court in Sierra Leone began the first of a series of trials of 11 people accused of bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes committed during the 1991-2001 conflict.

Egbuna and Anyaele, who were businessmen based in Freetown, argue in their suit that by granting Taylor asylum the Nigerian government was in violation of international treaties on war crimes.

They want Taylor delivered to the Special Court in Freetown. This has already indicted the former Liberian president for war crimes and has issued an international warrant for his arrest.

In his affidavit, Anyaele said RUF rebels captured hundreds of civilians in Freetown and deliberately picked out Nigerians for punishment because Nigeria had sent troops to

defend the elected government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah which the rebels were seeking to topple.

"After amputating me the rebels told me to go and deliver their message [that Nigerians will suffer for intervening] to the Nigerian government," Anyaele told the court.

When the case was called before judge Stephen Jonah Adah, there was no attorney present to represent Taylor. The judge ordered that Taylor be served a court summons through the Cross River State government which has jurisdiction over the city of Calabar in southeastern Nigeria where Taylor currently lives.

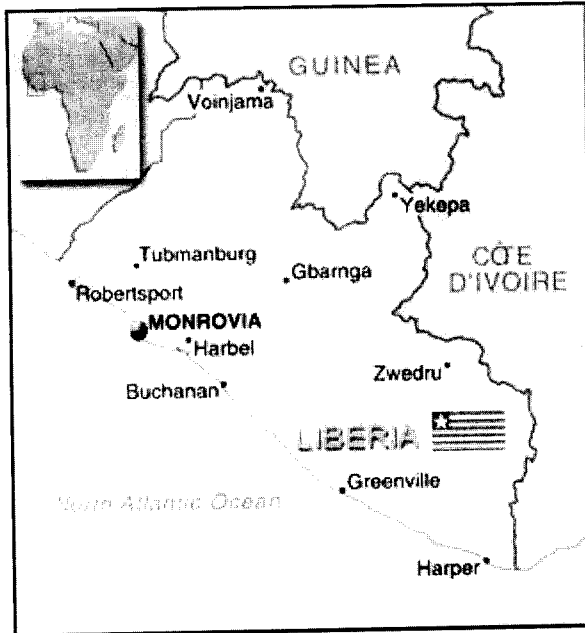
Adah fixed a new hearing for 1 July.

Taylor resigned as president of Liberia in August 2003 while rebel forces which had been fighting for four years to topple his government besieged the capital Monrovia.

The former warlord, who led a 1989 rebellion that started Liberia's 14-year civil war, has since been living in Nigeria where President Olusegun Obasanjo granted him political asylum.

Obasanjo has repeatedly rejected suggestions that he hand Taylor over for trial in Sierra Leone. Obasanjo insists that he obtained the consensus of the international community to grant Taylor exile in Nigeria as part of the process that brought fourteen years of Liberian conflict to an end.

LIBERIA: Curfew imposed in Gbarnga after ethnic fighting



MONROVIA, 16 Jun 2004 (IRIN) - One person was killed and four were wounded in ethnic clashes between the Kpelle and Mandingo communities on Monday in the central Liberian town of Gbarnga at the weekend, relief workers said.

UN peacekeepers subsequently imposed a curfew to restore calm, they added.

Relief workers arriving from Gbarnga, 150 km northeast of the capital Monrovia, told IRIN on Tuesday that the incident was sparked off by a quarrel between a former fighter of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel group and a local resident over a girl.

The argument soon took on an ethnic dimension since the LURD fighter was from the Mandingo ethnic group, which is widely spread across northern Liberia, while his rival was from the local Kpelle community.

"The conflict between those two men swelled into a large-scale fight after their kinsmen - predominately youths - got involved and tension erupted between the two tribes," one relief worker said. "Members of the two ethnic groups clashed using sticks, iron, cutlasses and knives," he added.

"Because the situation was getting tense and news of the conflict was spreading to nearby villages.....an intervention was made by UN Mission in Liberia troops leading to the imposition of a curfew in Gbarnga," he added.

Another relief worker from a local NGO said, "Right now, the tempers of the youths of the two tribes are still high..... it could lead to an uncontrollable conflict."

However, UNMIL spokeswoman Margaret Novicki told IRIN on Tuesday that the situation was under control.

"The situation in Gbarnga as for now is calm according to reports from our troops on the ground. The sector command instituted a curfew from 10pm to 6am which is still in place as a precautionary measure to ensure that the calm is maintained," Novicki said.

Joseph Cornomia, the Bong County Legislator in Liberia's broad-based transitional

assembly, told reporters that a mediation team comprising of elders of the two ethnic groups in Monrovia would be dispatched to calm the situation.

Cornomia, who is a Kpelle, said, "We have to live peacefully with our Mandingo brothers and sisters. We have been living in the county for more than one hundred years. We have inter-married and it is time to stop whatever our differences."

Bong County, of which Gbarnga is the capital, is the main homeland of the Kpelle. They are widely considered to be the largest of the 16 ethnic groups in Liberia.

The Mandingo are predominantly traders who have established an influential presence throughout northern Liberia.

In 1988 there were clashes between the two communities in and around Gbarnga which resulted in the massive destruction of homes and villages. No deaths were reported on that occasion.

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Wednesday June 16, 2004

From the sagely archives
By Tanu Jalloh

Is the TRC Reconciling?

When the disarmament of ex-fighters drew close to completion, the priority next was the setting up of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). "Witch hunt, a ploy to identify the perpetrators, a disguised instrument of the Special Court, a way to measure the extreme of atrocities", were all among the many comments from every corner-stretch of society. Some of these views are still living with the people: the ease of uncertainty has since then become invincible.

Look, don't blame it on the level of illiteracy rate in the country because even the so-called educated people, cunningly branded the Commission and adjudged its fate - 'the real purpose for which it was going to be set up'. If I may ask, was it because such international initiative and gesture was first of its kind not only in Sierra Leone, but the sub-region in particular?

However, when on the 14th of April 2003 the Commission started its hearings phase, first in Freetown and later in the provinces, the unclear atmosphere that once accompanied the Commission's establishment, began to gain precision. As a result, different interpretations and anticipations of what the TRC might turn into, laid the cause for controversies among the general public.

In spite of the unending efforts of the press and other agents of sensitization, at least to refine and re-define the then growing trend and for a better understanding of the TRC and its mandate, the testimonies of Tejan Kabbah, opposition leader, Ernest Bai Koroma, former Minister of

Information and Broadcasting, Julius Spencer, the 1992 N.P.R.C. Chairman, Valentine E. M. Strasser etc. have made matters even more abstruse. What do I mean?

As references set the basis for any equitable and lucrative arguments, so are recapitulations of the nature of that particular session of the TRC hearings, set the dais for a glaring elucidation of such a sensitive national issue - is the TRC reconciling?

The argument is a heated one. "The existence of the TRC and the Special Court at the same time in this country is a clear manifestation of the International Community's determination to put an end to impunity...because, as you know we were empowered - in the end - to make recommendations, whether legal, administrative, political, social or economic, to ensure that the occurrences in the ten-year civil conflict will not occur." - Frank Kargbo, Executive Secretary of the TRC, 9th July 2003. Kabbah and others mentioned above might have differently understood him. But Kargbo was never talking in riddles or proverbs.

The drowning man may clutch at a straw with his entire fist in an effort to save his life. This was exactly what was happening at that all-important session of the TRC hearings. But for God sake, how could men revered with knowledge about the TRC and the essence for which it was set up, use it as a platform for attacking one another, using the odd portions of the country's political history to justify their claims?

Testimonies indeed.

Marathon speeches about individual and political parties' successes could be heard, making the whole endeavor a mere canvass. Besides, it was more or less confrontational. As one party talks ill of the other, counterattacking with recriminations come from the other parties. That was exactly what we were presented with at that supposed milestone of the TRC's effort to collate information about the experiences of the civil conflict, with a view to map out lasting solutions. Perhaps they should rather be confessing their deeds of negligence that was responsible for the war in the first place, and escalating it for the most gruesome and bloody pages in its history - 1996 - 1999.

As a matter of fact, there were no signs of reconciliation because; all the accounts given by the various heads of factions/political parties were hinged around and on pulling down one another's dogmas. And it was during then, according to general perception, that Kabbah openly denied being a party to the Civil Defense Forces, a local militia group that fought alongside the national army to restore sanity and save the seat of power. But it happened that Sam Hinga Norman was the Deputy Defense Minister and incidentally the head of the CDF, and so he was disappointed and felt betrayed by a belief for which he had laid his life. That unfortunate development was a stark opposite of reconciliation. So, is the TRC really reconciling.

To be contd.

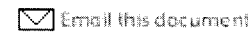


June 16, 2004

World Briefings

AFRICA

SIERRA LEONE: WAR CRIMES COURT HEARS FIRST WITNESS His identity concealed behind a walled witness stand, a sobbing 52-year-old watch repairman opened testimony in the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone by describing how he was tortured and his brother beheaded during a raid by the notorious pro-government militia called the Kamajors. In his opening statement, Sam Hinga Norman, above, a former government minister who headed the Kamajors during the country's decade-long civil war, said the court had no jurisdiction over him. He and two other militia leaders are the court's first defendants. (AP)



Source: Amnesty
Date: 16 Jun 2004

Day of the African Child: The unending plight of child soldiers

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News Service No: 151

As Africa observes the Day of the African Child, as many as 120,000 children under 18 years old, some as young as eight, may be compelled to spend the day as child soldiers across the continent, Amnesty International said today.

Despite the growing dynamic of peace in many conflict areas in Africa, the inadequate and insufficient response of African governments and the international community to solve the problem of child soldiering is encouraging the continued ruthless exploitation of Africa's children by leaders of armed forces and armed political groups to further their own material and political ends.

Whether in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, Somalia, children have been abducted in the streets or taken from classrooms, refugee camps or camps for the internally displaced. Many have also been taken from their homes at gunpoint, as their distraught parents looked on helplessly. Others have reported being picked up while playing in their neighbourhood or walking along the road. Some children are known to have voluntarily joined the army or armed political groups after being separated from their families and facing poverty and the collapse of basic social services such as educational and health centres.

Once recruited, forcibly or otherwise, some children are sent to camps for military training and indoctrination. Here, they are mostly subjected to violent treatment. In some camps children have died from deplorable conditions. After a few weeks of training, the children are deployed to the front lines for combat. In DRC, some front line duties have included serving as decoys, detectors of enemy positions, bodyguards for commandants, or sex slaves. Most girl soldiers are sexually exploited or raped by their commanders or other soldiers. Boys and girls are also often used as porters for ammunition, water and food, or as cooks.

At an unofficial camp for internally displaced people in Monrovia, Liberia, several adolescent girls recounted how they had been abducted from Ganta, Nimba County, by former government militia in March 2003; they had all been raped, including E.B., aged 14 years. "I was coming from church on Sunday morning. They abducted five girls coming from church. They took us to the front line. We had to cook and carry ammunition in the bush. They treated us bad; if I didn't go with them, they would kill me...They brought me to Monrovia and left me here. I want to go to school. I want to go back to Nimba to my people."

Once on the front lines, children are repeatedly forced to commit abuses, including rape and murder, against enemy soldiers and civilians. Jean-Noel R. joined the Burundian armed forces aged 15 in 1998. In the five years that followed before he deserted with serious mental health problems, he served in several areas of Burundi as well as Katanga, DRC. "Everything in the army is done through fear. I didn't want

to do the things I did. All I did was through fear. Congo was the worst. I saw too many things ... I am very tired."

The personal price paid by child soldiers is often high: brutalised and deeply traumatised by their experiences, many continue to be haunted by the memories of the abuses they witnessed or were forced to commit. For girl soldiers, beyond the brutality and trauma of rape itself, sexual assault may result in serious physical injury and forced pregnancy, as well as infection with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases.

Many former child soldiers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. Benedicte, who was recruited at the age of 11 by an armed group in Goma, eastern DRC, recalled to Amnesty International what she witnessed on the front lines: "Several of my friends were killed on the battlefield. And others lost their limbs - their arms, their legs. I remember there was one comrade, a friend of mine, who had his nose blown away. Another had a big hole blown in his face, around his lips and mouth."

Some former child soldiers who have been demobilized told Amnesty International that they are afraid to return to their communities because the local people witnessed them taking part in crimes.

"The recruitment and use of children under 15 in armed conflict is an egregious human rights abuse, and constitutes war crimes. On this Day of the African Child, African governments should sign, ratify and vigorously implement international standards which prohibit the recruitment and use of child soldiers, notably the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child," Amnesty International said.

"Tackling the practice and legacy of child soldiering is an important element in achieving a durable peace in which the human rights of all are respected. In those countries where disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes are ongoing, priority should be given to child soldiers," the organization urged.

Beyond the legal and political abolition of recruitment and use of child soldiers, economic development and peace building efforts must be addressed, so that demobilization and rehabilitation of former child soldiers are sustainable. If not addressed properly, the legacy of using child soldiers in Africa, and for its children who witnessed and committed crimes, will be profound and enduring.

For access to the Day of the African Child webpage, go to:
<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/childsoldiers-africanchild-eng>

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566
Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web:
<http://www.amnesty.org>
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Africa News June 15, 2004 Tuesday

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Africa News

June 15, 2004 Tuesday

LENGTH: 456 words

**HEADLINE: West Africa;
Significant Moves Towards Peace And Stability in West Africa Sub-Region** - Foreign Minister

BYLINE: Ghanaian Chronicle

BODY:

Foreign Affairs Minister, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo on Monday observed that there was a **significant** movement **towards peace and stability** in the **West Africa sub-region** but stressed the need to capitalize on this momentum in order to transform the **region** finally into a haven of **peace**.

"We need to intensify our efforts at conflict prevention in the **region** and strengthen our preventive organs," Akufo-Addo said.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of a seminar for ECOWAS Council of Elders on the role of the regional body in election observation, the foreign minister said he was happy to report that there was some cause for optimism in the **sub-region** as the various **peace** processes were on track.

He named the ongoing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in Liberia, the slow but sure progress being made in the Ivorian **peace** process and the calm political and security situation in Sierra Leone as well as the recently held peaceful elections in Guinea Bissau as **significant** achievements and sign that the **sub-region** was on the path to **stability**.

He noted that ECOWAS member states should be proud of their collective achievements under the chairmanship of President J. A. Kufuor, who had provided ECOWAS with quality leadership.

Nana Akufo-Addo, who is also the chairman of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, said the council of elders was one of the organs of the **region's** conflict resolution instrument which was very crucial to its efforts to consolidate **peace**, democracy, good governance and the rule of law, hence their role in the election observation.

ECOWAS Executive Secretary, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas said ECOWAS attached great importance to the council of elders and would strengthen it so that it could play an active role in preventive or pre-emptive diplomacy.

President Kufuor inaugurated the ECOWAS Council of Elders on March 23, 2004 in Accra.

A seminar was thereafter suggested to create a forum for the exchange of views among the

members to enhance the performance of their duties.

Aside of its mediation role, the council also plays a major role in election observation. Four of its members observed the recent elections held in Guinea Bissau.

However, Dr. Chambas said the critical challenges for 'Election Missions' was the issue of clarity of the role, relevance and mandate of missions.

He said international recognition and support for developing countries were inevitably bound to the holding and conducting of free and fair elections.

The German Ambassador to Ghana, Mr. Peter Linder said it was the logical consequence of Germany's policy **towards** Africa to actively be involved in issues like the possible role of ECOWAS in election observation.

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