

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Friday, 16 May 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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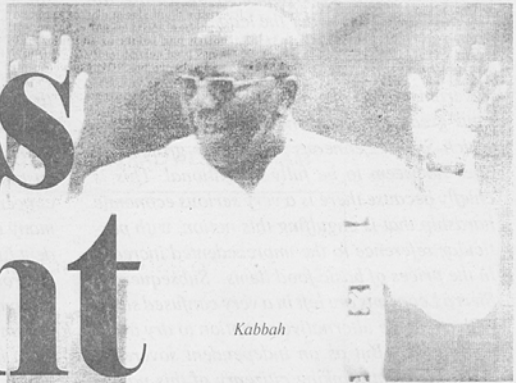
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Standard Times
Friday, 16 May 2008

Hinga Norman jubilates in grave...

Kabbah's statement rejected at Special Court



Kabbah



The late Hinga Norman

...Judge Itoe orders him to appear today

His continued refusal to honour the subpoena of the Special Court in Sierra Leone, an international court of law created by his SLPP government when he was President of the Republic of Sierra Leone with the help of the United Nation is nothing strange to judges of the ECOWAS Court in Abuja. Several subpoenas were issued for his appearance at the Community Court of West African States in Abuja, which he flouted and showed absolute disregard for the court.

Ex-president Kabbah has demonstrated similar actions in the international court in his country, where he ruled for eleven years.

On April 11, 2008 the ex-president was subpoenaed by the Special Court to deliver testimony on behalf of RUF self-styled General Issa Sesay. The court was disappointed to witness the conspicuous absence of the ex-president

and was informed that he had traveled to Guinea. Defence Counsel for Issa Sesay, lawyer Wayne Joreash

applied for a re-service of the subpoena on ex-president Kabbah which was done several days back.

On the 11th May, 2008 the ex-president made himself available, when he traditionally wedded Ms.

Isata Jabbie. Four days after his wedding ceremony, he dodged the [CONTINUED PAGE 15](#)

"I was duped, abandoned and dumped by British sojas

- cried Maj. Bangura

The testimony of Major Musa Bangura of the RSLAF, one of the Survivors of Operation Barras has exposed some of the self seeking interest policies of the western countries to Africa. The Sierra Leonean Military Officer, now a frustrated individual is in dire need of medical treatment if not he may

end up losing his life and soon become a victim of democracy. After the Operation Barras rescue mission in 2000, Major Bangura explained that he was dumped at the Military Headquarters while his counterparts were flown to Britain for medical treatment. "I was left to battle for my life, if not I would have been a dead man by [CONTINUED PAGE 15](#)



Kabbah's statement rejected at Special Court

FROM PAGE 1

Special Court again when he was required by law to appear on the 15th May, 2008. His refusal and open disrespect for the court has been interpreted by a cross section of the public as having the feeling of being above the law.

With this feeling of the ex-president, Justice Benjamin Itoe has issued out a stern order to the ex-president, demanding his appearance today at the Special Court at 9:30 AM to deliver his testimony.

The entrance of the Special

Court became an interesting scene yesterday as journalists, members of the public, relatives and friends of the late Chief Sam Hinga Norman all stood by watching to see the ex-president entering the wide gates of the court at New England Ville.

Shocks and disappointments sent them home after spending almost the entire day waiting in vain.

Meanwhile, Justice Itoe has rejected the application of the defence to allow the ex-president testify in closed session or submit a

written statement in lieu of oral testimony and has ordered the he makes himself available at 9:30 Am this morning.

Family sources of the ex-president has revealed to this press that the decision of the court has already been communicated to Alhaji Tejan Kabbah and has already made up his mind to comply with the orders of the Judge.

"If the ex-president adopts past action, the court would be left with no alternative, but to slam a contempt judgment or issue a warrant

that would force him to respect the court" A Special Court employee suggested.

It would be recalled that the late Chief Sam Hinga was arrested and indicted while serving as Minister of Internal Affairs in the Kabbah led SLPP government. The late Chief was detained, tried and died when Alhaji Tejan Kabbah was president of Sierra Leone and leader of the SLPP. His response to the late Chief's arrest, detention and trial has been " Norman went

outside his ministerial mandate for which he was indicted by the court and would not interfere with the independence of the Special Court.

"It would appear that this time round the table has assumed a different dimension, and while he keeps dodging the court the late Chief who suffered for the return of peace and democracy to Sierra Leone may be quietly jubilating in his grave" A founder member of the SLPP remarked.

Concord Times
Friday, 16 May 2008

Kabbah must testify today

Former Sierra Leonean President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah has been ordered to testify in open session today in the trial of three former members of the Revolutionary United Front.

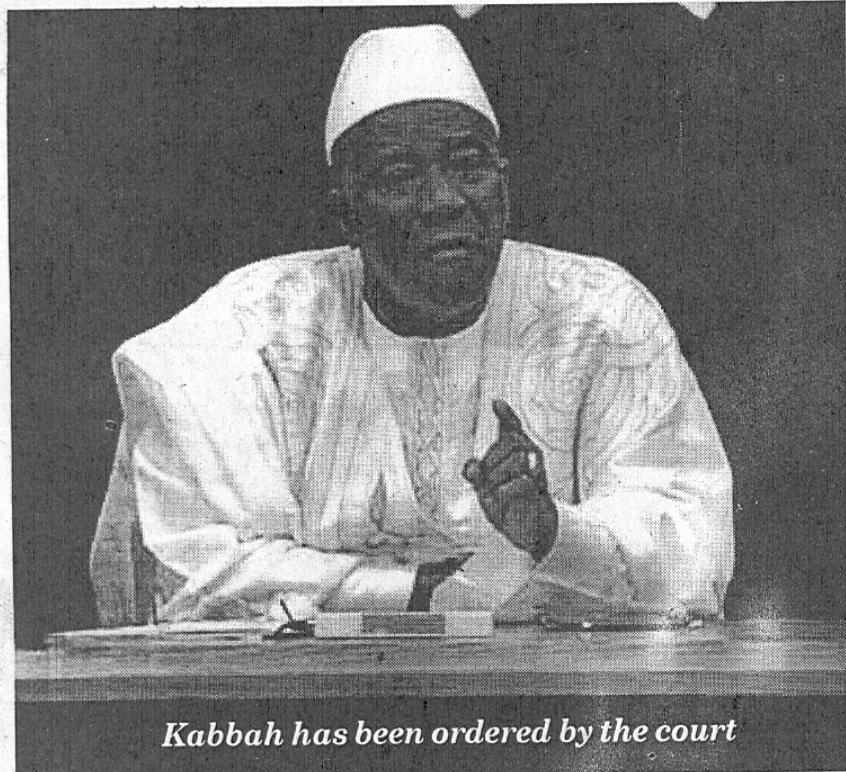
Kabbah was called by counsel for first accused Issa Hassan Sesay under a subpoena ordered by the trial chamber.

The ruling followed unsuccessful applications by the defence, first to allow

Kabbah to testify with protective measures, and then to admit his written statement into evidence in lieu of oral testimony.

Trial chamber I, consisting of presiding judge, Justice Benjamin Itoe, Justice Bankole Thompson, and Justice Pierre Boutet, ruled that the former president should appear in court today at 9:30 a.m.

The trial is open to the public.



Kabbah has been ordered by the court

Exclusive

Friday, 16 May 2008

Kabba Dodges Special Court

By Musa Sesay

Former President Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah yesterday failed to show up at the Special Court where he was on the 12th of May, subpoenaed by the Court as one of the witnesses for the former RUF leader, Issa Sesay who is currently on trial at the Special Court.

However, Kabbah's written statement was read and defended in an open court by Issa Sesay's

Lawyer, the British born, Wayne Jordash.

The hearing was preceded by a close door meeting at the Special Court Chamber.

When asked by the presiding Judge, Justice Benjamin Itoe whether Kabbah's statement was relevant to Issa's indictment, lawyer Jaordash replied in the affirmative. According to him, the statement will prove or disprove based counts 15-17 which

deals with the holding hostage of UNAMSIL officers in 2000.

Lawyer Jordash further maintained that the statement is specific to the deeds and behavior of the accused.

Issa, he said was crucial to the disarmament process which he said he undertook with all sincerity. He went on to state that ISSA was appointed by the ECOWAS to lead the RUF in place of the late RUF leader, Foday Sankoh who he said was recalcitrant to peace process.

African Champion
Friday, 16 May 2008

Taylor 'ignored rebel protests'

Liberia's ex-President Charles Taylor rejected complaints from Sierra Leone rebels about atrocities committed by his fighters, his ex-deputy has said. The RUF rebels were notorious for mutilating civilians but their leader Foday Sankoh complained to Mr Taylor about Liberian troops, said Moses Blah. Mr Blah told Mr Taylor's war

crimes trial that his former boss responded by threatening to withdraw his troops.

Mr Taylor denies 11 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Mr Blah, who briefly succeeded Mr Taylor as president, is the most senior figure to testify in The Hague. He is accused of helping Sierra Leone's Revolution-

ary United Front (RUF) rebels in their brutal conflict with the government.

'Human flesh' But the BBC's Hassan Arouni in The Hague says that Mr Blah told the court that RUF rebel leader Foday Sankoh personally complained to Mr Taylor about atrocities committed by Liberians helping the RUF. The RUF were notorious for mutilating civilians, as well

as killings and rape.

"We had men in Sierra Leone fighting... associated with the RUF," Mr Blah said. He earlier said that the commander of one of Mr Taylor's units in Liberia "had a habit of eating fellow human beings".

He said he saw Nelson Gaye roast a human hand on a fire and eat it with boiled cassava.

Mr Blah said that Mr Gaye's



Marine unit was one of Mr Taylor's forces, which he had been told should not be pursued if they committed atrocities.

But Mr Taylor is only on trial for his alleged role in the Sierra Leone conflict, not that in Liberia. As Mr Blah took the witness stand, he was careful not to look at the man he served for nearly 20 years.

He gave the court a detailed account of Mr Taylor's bloody rise to power and acknowledged the use of child soldiers.

'Aggressive'

Mr Blah became vice-president of Liberia in 2000. He became president after Mr Taylor was forced into exile in 2003. However, he was only Liberian president for two months, until October 2003, when a United Nations-backed transitional government was sworn in.

Charles Taylor denies war crimes and crimes against humanity. He came to the Hague re-

sonal against President Taylor - we worked together almost like brothers; we had a revolution going together, so I don't think I'm going to betray him," he added.

In court, Mr Blah provided a detailed insider's account of the early days of the civil war. He said he was one of the first 20 or so rebel fighters who received training at a military base in Burkina Faso.

It was not until a larger group was assembled at a military camp in Libya that Mr Blah met Mr Taylor.

They trained alongside rebels from The Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Philippines, all of them supported by the Libyan authorities.

Mr Blah told the court that when the time came to invade Liberia, three truck loads of weapons were provided by the defence minister of Ivory Coast.

Within days of crossing into Liberia in 1990, Mr Blah says he was briefly detained by child rebel fighters recruited by his own side.

He said they were used because they took orders and were "unreasonable and aggressive".

A lawyer representing Mr Taylor, Terry Munyard, told the BBC his client was not worried about Mr Blah's evidence and if he told the truth there was nothing to fear.

During Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war, which officially ended in 2002, tens of thousands of people died and thou-

Cotton Tree News

Wednesday, 14 May 2008

Former militia testifies at Special Court

Written by Ndeamoh Mansaray

Former CDF militia Tuesday testified in the RUF trial at the Special Court in Freetown. He is the eighteenth witness in the Kallon Defense. Witness DMK 082 explained to Defense Counsel Kennedy Ogetto his relationship with the accused. He said he first met with Morris Kallon in Masingbe in 1998. Mr. Ogetto asked where the accused was at the beginning of May 2000. That was to prove whether the accused was present at the abduction of the five hundred UN Personnel in Macuth. The witness told the court that Kallon was at Masingbe. The Defence Counsel also questioned the witness about forceful mining of civilians by the RUF. The witness said nothing of the sort happened. The former CDF militia described the first and the second accused as nice people whose relationship with the civilians at Masingbe was cordial. He told the court that the two accused persons even supported the civilians by giving them husk rice to farm. The trial continues.

Last Updated (Wednesday, 14 May 2008)

Agence France-Presse

Thursday, 15 May 2008

War crimes court orders ex-Sierra Leone president to testify

FREETOWN (AFP) — Judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Thursday ordered former president Ahmed Tejan Kabbah to take the stand in the war crimes trial of ex-rebel leader Issa Sesay.



After lengthy deliberations, the trial chamber, presided over by Cameroonian judge Benjamin Itoe, ruled that Kabbah must appear in court on Friday at 9:30 am local time (0930 GMT).

Kabbah had been subpoenaed to testify in Sesay's defence on Thursday but sought to avoid testifying in public.

Sesay's lawyers first asked that the former president be allowed to testify in closed session "to safeguard his privacy and security."

When that demand was rejected, they tried to get the judges to allow Kabbah to enter only a written statement.

Sesay, a one-time leader of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF), has been on trial with two other RUF leaders since July 2004.

Charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity including unlawful killings, sexual violence, abductions, use of child soldiers and attacks on United Nations personnel, he has pleaded not guilty to all counts.

Prosecutors say that RUF fighters committed numerous atrocities during the bloody 1991-2001 civil war in Sierra Leone.

By the time the war ended in 2001, about 120,000 people had been killed and tens of thousands of others had been mutilated, their arms, legs, ears or noses chopped off.

According to defence sources, Kabbah can give crucial evidence to show that Sesay did not order attacks against the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone between April and September 2000.

The attackers abducted and held hostage UN personnel and hundreds of peacekeepers.

Kabbah, who was president of Sierra Leone between 1996 and 1997 and again from 1998 to 2007, assisted in UN-brokered peace talks with the RUF rebels including the late RUF leader Foday Sankoh and Sesay.

Observers in Freetown say that Kabbah is reticent to testify in open court for the defence of the former RUF rebels.

He previously refused to take the stand to support Sam Hinga Norman, the former leader of the pro-government Civil Defence Forces (CDF), still considered a national hero by many for having fought the RUF rebels.

Norman, a former defence minister, died in February 2007 of natural causes in a Dakar military hospital while he was awaiting the outcome of his own war crimes trial before the Sierra Leone tribunal.

Cocorioko website

Friday, 16 May 2008

'No way, Kabbah : You have to testify in public', Special Court tells former President

Written by Moses Kargbo

Sierra Leone's former president, Alhaji Dr. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah has been ordered by the Special Court to testify publicly tomorrow at 9am in the trial of former RUF commander, Issa Sesay as judges rejected a defence application for him to appear 'under protective measures'.

The former president, who failed to appear in court today as expected, was also denied the request to submit a written statement in lieu of oral testimony. Sesay's lawyers had called for the court to compel Kabbah to take the witness stand but also requested that he be allowed to testify in closed session "to safeguard his privacy and security".

Lead defence counsel, Wayne Jordash presented the court with a witness statement by the former president, stating that the prospective witness had signed it on May 12 and therefore made an application for it to be considered instead of him appearing in person.

After about two hours of deliberations behind closed doors, the judges returned to reject the demand. Presiding judge Benjamin Itoe ruled that it will not be in the interest of justice nor within the rights of the accused for the matter not to be heard in public.

Ex-president Kabbah had been subpoenaed to testify in the war crimes trial of the former rebel leader as the defence considers his testimony crucial to prove that Sesay did not order attacks against the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone between April and September 2000.

Jordash told the court that Kabbah's written statement discusses his (Kabbah's) views that Sesay was crucial to the disarmament process, adding that the written testimony highlights the fact that Sesay has been helpful to securing the peace in the country.

BBC World Service Trust

Thursday, 15 May 2008

Former Liberian President Moses Blah has been giving testimony for the second day running in the war crimes trial of his predecessor, Charles Taylor.

On Wednesday, he confirmed Prosecution allegations that Taylor had connections with the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone.

So on day two of his testimony, what has Blah been saying? Adolphus Williams reports.

WILLIAMS: Former Liberian President Moses Blah spoke volume in court, but his testimony drowned in tears Thursday as he narrated the killings of Deputy Ministers John Yormei and Isaac Vaye, and his own 11-day detention.

Blah stole the Judges' attention

Taylor stopped taking notes, playing with his pen and shaking his head with his glasses hung over his nose.

As Blah's tears rolled down his cheeks, Presiding Judge Theresa Doherty asked whether he was all right or wanted a break in order to get hold of himself. The former Liberian president, Moses Blah:

BLAH: there was a call from Benjamin Yeaten again... It asked, "Is this President Blah?" I said, "Yes", and they said I should report to White Flower immediately and that the chief wants to see me...As I entered... all the cabinet ministers, legislators, sitting everywhere around. As I entered I was not given a seat and they said, "You, you, Moses Blah". He did not address me as "Vice-President" at that time. He said, "You, Moses Blah, wanted to overthrow my government when I was out of here", and I said "No, sir". He said, "Don't lie to me". I said, "No, sir"... if you lie to me you will see what will happen to you", and I said, "No". We argued for some time and he said, "Benjamin Yeaten, take the man out of here"... I was taken to Joe Tuah's house and taken to a room. Immediately I was there the room was locked.

PROSECUTOR STEPHEN RAPP: Did you have any visitors at that location?

BLAH: Yes. Later on in the night, that was very late, the door was opened, because I was not in control of the door. I don't know by what means my wife entered. She brought food.

RAPP: And did she tell you how she was able to get there?

BLAH: Excuse me (sobbing). I don't want to repeat.

PRESIDING JUDGE TERESA DOHERTY: Would you like a glass of water, Mr Witness? ... Are you feeling all right or would you like a break?

BLAH: I'm okay. I can go on.

WILLIAMS: Earlier, Blah had a long explanation of extra-judicial killings of NPFL Special Forces allegedly ordered by Taylor. Then he told the Court, former Special Security Service Director Benjamin Yetean killed former RUF Front Line commander Sam Bockarie in Nimba County Liberia.

BLAH: With three or four men that I had with me... We parked our vehicles, I think there were three cars. We went off the road, put out the lights and we were waiting. It was not up to 30 minutes that vehicles started passing with a heavy speed. People passing. Cars running at a high speed. So the boy crept on the road and said that it was Benjamin and his group passing, but that the speed was very heavy. Something has gone wrong... We took the road to Monrovia. We were almost approaching Ganta... at Saw Mill Camp. There was a heavy road block there mounted by soldiers that no vehicle should pass through. So I stopped the car. Then the boy came up to me and said, "Chief, Benjamin is in the company camp. He wants to talk to you"... I went to him and he was still sitting down and he got up and he said, "Oh, chief, I stopped you, I called you. We went on an operation last night". I asked him what operation it was. He said, "Look in that pick-up, you will see the operation". and you wouldn't recognise what was in the pick-up except you went close... I went to the pick-up and I saw the body of Sam Bockarie.

WILLIAMS: Former President Blah said Defence Minister Daniel Chea provided an official version of Bockarie's killing, declaring the RUF Commander died in cross fire with government troops who attempted arresting him for illegal entry into Liberia

Prosecution lawyers alleged Taylor had control over the RUF to the extent that he ordered the Sierra Leonean rebels to fight LURD.

Blah said RUF soldiers fought alongside government forces in their attempt to beat back LURD forces who fought Taylor. He said Taylor instructed the Sierra Leonean rebels to release captured UN peacekeepers.

BLAH: LURD was attacking Ganta and trying to control Ganta in order to stay and base there. We too were trying, our government, to push them out of Ganta into Guinea... RUF was fighting, assisting us to fight LURD to go back into Guinea from two fronts. The first front the fighting was in Voinjama. The LURD would come and attack to push us out of Voinjama. RUF will come from out of Guinea to assist us to push them back into Guinea.

WILLIAMS: In response to questions from Chief Prosecutor Steven Rapp, Blah spoke of key Liberians and foreign nationals with strong ties to Taylor.

But he said he knew nothing if these individuals helped Taylor to support the rebels in Sierra Leone.

Blah's testimony continues Friday.

Adolphus Williams – BBC World Service Trust / Search for Common Ground – The Hague.

BBC World Service Trust

Thursday, 15 May 2008

Moses Blah implicates Taylor

By Adolphus Williams in The Hague

The war crimes trial at the Special Court of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor has entered a crucial stage this week with his former vice president Moses Blah testifying in court. Blah detailed the support of Libya, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast to Taylor and his NPFL rebels in fighting the government of Samuel Doe. He spoke of how NPFL fighters killed and mistreated Sierra Leonean civilians.

He confirmed the prosecution's allegations that Taylor supported the RUF rebels.

Hear him: "I drove by a place called New Gbarnga. That was the time I saw Foday Sankoh that morning. I stopped my car and I alighted and embraced him, and said I had not seen him for a very long time, since in Libya. [Sankoh] 'Look, I am here now. I am a rebel commander. I am no more a small boy and you have to salute me'. And I saluted him and said, 'Okay, I know you are my boss now.' He said, 'Look, I have come here for a serious matter', and I asked him what the matter was. He said, 'The boys from NPFL, whom the chief sent to help me, they got involved into a lot of atrocities, raping women, looting people's property and killing people, and these are the people I have gone to liberate and I am losing respect amongst my tribesmen. This was what I have come to consult with the chief on'."

Blah, who had his back turned to Mr Taylor as he gave evidence of the former Liberian President's alleged support to the RUF, had entered the courtroom from a direction directly facing Taylor. He had a walking stick clutched in his right hand. He watched his steps, with his eyes drilling the courtroom floor as he picked his way to the witness seat. Nevertheless, he was calm throughout his testimony.

Moses Blah said he had told Taylor of the RUF leader's worry about the crimes Liberian fighters were committing in Sierra Leone. But he said Taylor brushed Sankoh's concerns aside. Moses Bah again: "It was not really a conversation. He was walking around his palace where he lived in Gbarnga and I went close to speak to him, to salute him. In a conversation, he said he didn't know earlier that Foday Sankoh had talked to me about this matter. He said, 'Look, your man Foday Sankoh is here and he is saying that the people are destroying his people, looting his property.' He [Mr Taylor] said 'how could the war be fought? When you talk about a guerrilla war it is destruction and this type of thing must happen if you are fighting a war. You are not eating bread and butter, you are fighting. If he continues with such a report, according to him he will withdraw his men from there.'"

He named Christopher Varmoh and Duopoe (Dopo) Mekazon as two of the commanders Taylor had sent to Sierra Leone to fight alongside Foday Sankoh's RUF.

Blah said that at the initial stage there was a small group of Liberian soldiers but they were a bit more than the RUF fighters. Under cross examination by the prosecutor Stephen Rapp, he said he knew their number from information from his soldiers, radio communication and their location. He said his operator would brief me on what was happening.

He said they were fighting alongside the RUF rebels.

Taylor sat calmly, looking in Blah's direction and occasionally hanging heads with his lawyers. He broke the silence at one point when he laughed at the presiding judge's inquiry to Blah on who between Agnes and Tupee was Taylor's wife in the beginning of the NPFL civil war.

The cross examination continues.

Courtesy: BBC World Service Trust / Search for Common Ground

BBC

Thursday, 15 May 2008

Taylor 'ignored rebel protests'

Liberia's ex-President Charles Taylor rejected complaints from Sierra Leone rebels about atrocities committed by his fighters, his ex-deputy has said.

The RUF rebels were notorious for mutilating civilians but their leader Foday Sankoh complained to Mr Taylor about Liberian troops, said Moses Blah.

Mr Blah told Mr Taylor's war crimes trial that his former boss responded by threatening to withdraw his troops.

Mr Taylor denies 11 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Mr Blah, who briefly succeeded Mr Taylor as president, is the most senior figure to testify in The Hague.

He is accused of helping Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in their brutal conflict with the government.

'Human flesh'

Mr Blah told the court that RUF rebel leader Foday Sankoh personally complained to Mr Taylor about the rape, looting and killings committed by Liberians helping the RUF.

"He [Mr Taylor] said this kind of thing must happen when you're fighting war," he said.

The RUF has a reputation for brutality, such as chopping off the arms and legs of civilians, as well as killings and rape.

Mr Blah also said that Mr Taylor mediated in arguments between the rebels.

He said on one occasion a rebel commander had disagreed with the Liberian president's judgement but said he had to accept "the chief's decision".

Mr Blah further said that RUF fighters tried to help Mr Taylor's forces against Liberia's Lurd rebels, who eventually forced him from power in 2003.

Mr Taylor sat taking notes during his former deputy's testimony.



The RUF often cut off civilians' arms and legs with machetes



“ I'm not going to crucify him - he's my former boss ”

Moses Blah

Mr Blah earlier said that the commander of one of Mr Taylor's units in Liberia "had a habit of eating fellow human beings".

He said he saw Nelson Gaye roast a human hand on a fire and eat it with boiled cassava.

Mr Blah said that Mr Gaye's Marine unit was one of Mr Taylor's forces, which he had been told should not be pursued if they committed atrocities.

But Mr Taylor is only on trial for his alleged role in the Sierra Leone conflict, not that in Liberia.

As Mr Blah took the witness stand on Monday, he was careful not to look at the man he served for nearly 20 years.

He gave the court a detailed account of Mr Taylor's bloody rise to power and acknowledged the use of child soldiers.

Mr Blah became vice-president of Liberia in 2000. He became president after Mr Taylor was forced into exile in 2003.

However, he was only Liberian president for two months, until October 2003, when a United Nations-backed transitional government was sworn in.

He came to the Hague reluctantly, but said he intended to tell the truth.

"I'm not going to crucify him - he's my former boss," Mr Blah told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme before travelling to the Hague.

"I have nothing personal against President Taylor - we worked together almost like brothers; we had a revolution going together, so I don't think I'm going to betray him."

'Aggressive'

In court, Mr Blah provided a detailed insider's account of the early days of the civil war.

He said he was one of the first 20 or so rebel fighters who received training at a military base in Burkina Faso.

It was not until a larger group was assembled at a military camp in Libya that Mr Blah met Mr Taylor.

They trained alongside rebels from The Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Philippines, all of them supported by the Libyan authorities.

He told the court that when the time came to invade Liberia, three truck loads of weapons were provided by the defence minister of Ivory Coast.

Within days of crossing into Liberia in 1990, Mr Blah says he was briefly detained by child rebel fighters recruited by his own side.

He said they were used because they took orders and were "unreasonable and aggressive".



Charles Taylor denies war crimes and crimes against humanity

A lawyer representing Mr Taylor, Terry Munyard, told the BBC his client was not worried about Mr Blah's evidence and if he told the truth there was nothing to fear.

Mr Taylor took up arms in Liberia in 1989, before being elected president in 1997 after a peace deal.

He is accused of sending guns and fighters to Sierra Leone in exchange for diamonds.

During Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war, which officially ended in 2002, tens of thousands of people died and thousands more were mutilated or raped.

Mr Taylor's case has been transferred from Sierra Leone to The Hague for security reasons, although it is still being conducted by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Afrol News

Thursday, 15 May 2008

<http://www.afrol.com/articles/28934>

Taylor's RUF link exposed

afrol News, 15 May - Moses Blah, the former Liberian President, has become the most high-profile figure to testify in Charles Taylor's war crimes trial in The Hague. Mr Blah has confirmed that Mr Taylor, a former warlord-turned-President, had links with Sierra Leone's rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

Blah first became Vice President between 2000 and 2003, and later President for two months after Taylor was forced into exile in 2003.

As one of the first rebel fighters who received training at a military base in Burkina Faso, Mr Blah's testimony was a recount of an insider's account. He said he had met Mr Taylor in a military camp in Libya. With support from Libyan authorities, Liberian rebels were trained together with colleagues from The Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Phillipines.

He said the Taylor regime "had men in Sierra Leone fighting and associating with the RUF." He also confirmed the dead Sierra Leone rebel commander, Sam Bockaries, who was in Libya, called Mr Taylor "chief."

Blah told the UN Special Tribunal for Sierra Leone that that RUF rebel leader, Foday Sankoh, had personally complained to Mr Taylor about atrocities committed by Liberians supporting the RUF.

Blah said his former boss had rejected complaints from Sierra Leone rebels about atrocities committed by his fighters and threatened to withdraw his troops.

He further informed the court that the Defence Minister of Cote d'Ivoire had provided them with three truck loads of weapons when they wanted to invade Liberia.

Mr Taylor launched arms rebellion in Liberia on 24 December 1989 before he was elected President in 1997.

The former President was accused of supporting RUF rebels with troops and weapons in exchange for diamonds to the RUF during that country's civil war characterised by a number of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including killings, amputation of arms and limbs and rape.

He had denied all the 11 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

By staff writer

Hirondelle News Agency

Thursday, 15 May 2008

Charles Taylor Trial Advances At Sustained Pace

The Hague

The testimonies of the prosecution witnesses in the trial of Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia, have been advancing at a sustained pace since January with 26 witnesses out of list of 72 , have already appeared on the stand of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) without interruption.

Shortly after the arrest of the former head of state in April 2006, in Nigeria, the Special Court, headquartered in Freetown, decided to hold the trial in The Hague.

The president of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, had made the request, considering that the trial of her predecessor in West Africa was likely to destabilize the region.

Taylor is accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes for having wanted to seize the diamantiferous riches of Sierra Leone, at the prices of some 150, 000 deaths, and several million displaced persons. According to the prosecutor, Taylor would have, once he forcible acquired power in Liberia, supported, trained and financed the rebels of the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, the neighbouring country.

One of the major difficulties of this trial is that it is not about crimes committed in Liberia, but those perpetrated in Sierra Leone starting in 1996.

The peace agreement in Sierra Leone, signed in 1996, and quickly violated, envisaged amnesty for crimes committed in this country. Organized 5, 000 kilometres from the sites of these crimes, the trial is in many regards remarkable after the notable wanderings of the international tribunals.

The proceedings are firmly directed by the judges, and delaying tactics, from either party, are not tolerated. The witnesses called by the prosecution directly mention the facts without reconsidering the history of the war in Liberia or in Sierra Leone, a part of the trial left to the experts. One of the major difficulties of the prosecutor comes from the defendant being tried for crimes committed in Sierra Leone, where he was not physically present.

Also, a number of witnesses are former acquaintances of Taylor, able to describe from the inside the machine of death and who testify without special precautions.

Several of them refused the use of a pseudonym or closed sessions. At the end of April, the prosecutor had to abandon the testimony of a victim. Three "insiders" had received threats.

Alimamy Bobson Sesay had complained to the Court that Joseph Marzah, chief of a death squad during the war, had been threatened to face consequences at the end of his testimony and on his return to Monrovia.

Moses Blah, who was president of Liberia in 2003, after the indictment of Taylor and his departure from the country, and who has been on trial since 14 May, also stated to have received a death threat by email. Called to testify by the prosecutor, he refused to voluntarily present himself.

Blah, inter alia, mentioned the training of 180 of Taylor's men in the camps of President Muḥammad Ghadaḥfī in Libya, before the beginning of the civil war in Liberia or the execution of commanders accused of conspiring to attack Taylor.

He mentioned the support of Blaise Compaore for Taylor's war, and that of the defence minister of Cote d'Ivoire, who had provided several trucks of weapons.

According to the witness, President Ghadaḥfī would have announced his dissatisfaction with Taylor, for the support brought by him to the men of Foday Sankoh, the chief of the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone, support which, for the Libyan leader, was not in agreement "with the principles of the revolution".

In the dock, Taylor seems perfectly at ease. After a few weeks, the lord of war replaced his gold-framed glasses with darker tinted glasses.

He follows each testimony conscientiously and makes some annotations on post-its of various colors which he hands to his lawyers, in which he consults regularly.

His lawyers, members of the Bar of London and Monrovia, receive 100,000 dollars per month for the defence of their client.

The Prosecutor Stephen Rapp announced that he was continuing his investigation on the assets of Taylor, which could allow the court to render him responsible for the expenses of his defence, until now ensured by the international community.

On this subject, the Special Court has issued several requests for co-operation. According to the prosecutor, the former president allegedly has two accounts in the United States of 375 million dollars.

The trial of Taylor is the first against a former African head of state. Before him, only Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and Slobodan Milošević of Serbia had been prosecuted for crimes against humanity.

Saddam was sentenced to death and hung at the end of an "irregular" trial, according to Human Rights Watch. Milošević died before the end of his trial at the tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The Inquirer (Liberia)

Friday, 16 May 2008

Blah Gives More Details

Liberia's ex-President Charles Taylor rejected complaints from Sierra Leone rebels about atrocities committed by his fighters, his ex-deputy has said.

The RUF rebels were notorious for mutilating civilians but their leader Foday Sankoh complained to Mr Taylor about Liberian troops, said Moses Blah.

Mr Blah told Mr Taylor's war crimes trial that his former boss responded by threatening to withdraw his troops.

Mr Taylor denies 11 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Mr Blah, who briefly succeeded Mr Taylor as president, is the most senior figure to testify in The Hague.

He is accused of helping Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in their brutal conflict with the government.

Mr Blah told the court that RUF rebel leader Foday Sankoh personally complained to Mr Taylor about the rape, looting and killings committed by Liberians helping the RUF.

"He [Mr Taylor] said this kind of thing must happen when you're fighting war," he said.

The RUF has a reputation for brutality, such as chopping off the arms and legs of civilians, as well as killings and rape.

Mr Blah also said that Mr Taylor mediated in arguments between the rebels. He said on one occasion a rebel commander had disagreed with the Liberian president's judgement but said he had to accept "the chief's decision".

Mr Blah further said that RUF fighters tried to help Mr Taylor's forces against Liberia's Lurd rebels, who eventually forced him from power in 2003.

Mr Taylor sat taking notes during his former deputy's testimony. Mr Blah earlier said that the commander of one of Mr Taylor's units in Liberia "had a habit of eating fellow human beings".

He said he saw Nelson Gaye roast a human hand on a fire and eat it with boiled cassava.

Mr Blah said that Mr Gaye's Marine unit was one of Mr Taylor's forces, which he had been told should not be pursued if they committed atrocities.

But Mr Taylor is only on trial for his alleged role in the Sierra Leone conflict, not that in Liberia.

As Mr Blah took the witness stand on Monday, he was careful not to look at the man he served for nearly 20 years.

He gave the court a detailed account of Mr Taylor's bloody rise to power and acknowledged the use of child soldiers.

Mr Blah became vice-president of Liberia in 2000. He became president after Mr Taylor was forced into exile in 2003.

However, he was only Liberian president for two months, until October 2003, when a United Nations-backed transitional government was sworn in.

He came to the Hague reluctantly, but said he intended to tell the truth. "I'm not going to crucify him - he's my former boss," Mr Blah told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme before travelling to the Hague.

"I have nothing personal against President Taylor - we worked together almost like brothers; we had a revolution going together, so I don't think I'm going to betray him."

'Aggressive' In court, Mr Blah provided a detailed insider's account of the early days of the civil war.

He said he was one of the first 20 or so rebel fighters who received training at a military base in Burkina Faso.

It was not until a larger group was assembled at a military camp in Libya that Mr Blah met Mr Taylor.

They trained alongside rebels from The Gambia, Sierra Leone and the Philippines, all of them supported by the Libyan authorities.

He told the court that when the time came to invade Liberia, three truck loads of weapons were provided by the defence minister of Ivory Coast.

Within days of crossing into Liberia in 1990, Mr Blah says he was briefly detained by child rebel fighters recruited by his own side.

He said they were used because they took orders and were "unreasonable and aggressive".

A lawyer representing Mr Taylor, Terry Munyard, told the BBC his client was not worried about Mr Blah's evidence and if he told the truth there was nothing to fear.

Mr Taylor took up arms in Liberia in 1989, before being elected president in 1997 after a peace deal.

He is accused of sending guns and fighters to Sierra Leone in exchange for diamonds.

During Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war, which officially ended in 2002, tens of thousands of people died and thousands more were mutilated or raped.

Mr Taylor's case has been transferred from Sierra Leone to The Hague for security reasons, although it is still being conducted by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Thursday, 15 May 2008

Blah continues testimony against Taylor

Written by Wellington Geevon Smith

Former President Moses Blah continues for the second day his testimony against his former boss, Charles Taylor standing trial in The Hague.

Mr. Blah spoke of ex-judicial killings in the now defunct National Patriotic Front of Liberia and some Liberians affiliated with the rebel movement.

He identified the prominent Liberians as Chief Cyril Allen, Grace Minor and Beninoi Urey.

Mr. Blah however, made it clear that he has no knowledge about how those Liberians assisted Mr. Taylor as regards the war in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Blah further commented on prosecution's allegation that Mr. Taylor used Liberia's maritime funds to support the rebel movement in Sierra Leone.

According to Mr. Blah, when he was President, he asked Mr. Urey about the maritime funds.

He told the UN-backed Special Court that Mr. Urey informed him that he, Urey had given Mr. Taylor four years in advance of the maritime revenue.

Mr. Blah explained that Mr. Urey did not show him receipt to prove that he gave such amount to Mr. Taylor.



Press Release, 14 May 08
UNMIL/PIO/PR/40

UNMIL Force Commander assures Sierra Leoneans and Liberians of continued peace and stability

Freetown, Sierra Leone - The Force Commander of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), Lt.-Gen. Chikadibia Isaac Obiakor, has said that UNMIL will remain resolute in maintaining the peace and stability of Sierra Leone and Liberia. The Force Commander gave this assurance to the peoples of the two countries in Freetown when he awarded UN peacekeeping medals to 250 officers of UNMIL’s Mongolian Guard Force stationed at the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL).



Lt.-Gen. Obiakor inspecting Mongolian troops in Freetown

“UNMIL will continue to provide a secure environment to consolidate peace in Liberia, which would affect the future of Sierra Leone and the entire sub-region,” Force Commander Obiakor said, as he spoke on behalf of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj. “The work you have been doing here in Sierra Leone will continue to have a positive impact on peace-building efforts, not only here in Sierra Leone, but also in Liberia and the entire West African region.”

Commending the Mongolian officers for their hard work and sacrifice, Lt.-Gen. Obiakor urged them to continue discharging their duties with great professionalism and dedication. The Force Commander paid special tribute to their late Commanding Officer, Col. Narantulga Danzandorj, who died in Freetown on 13 March 2008. He described Col. Danzandori, who had served in the military for about 28 years, as a soldier well-known for his professionalism and leadership. He served the UN as a military observer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Commanding Officer of the Mongolian Contingent in Iraq, as well as in Sierra Leone. Lt.-Gen. Obiakor also commended Lt.-Col. Baljid Baatar, the current Commanding Officer of the Mongolian Contingent, for his able leadership.

Mongolian soldiers were deployed in Sierra Leone as a result of Security Council Resolution 1626 of December 2005 which tasked UNMIL to provide a military guard force at the Special Court. The Mongolians provide security for the premises of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and convoy protection for detainees when they are moved outside the Special Court’s compound.



A military display by the Mongolian Contingent

The contingent is also responsible for evacuating officials and detainees of the Court in cooperation with the UNMIL’s Quick Reaction Force (QRF).

As part of activities marking the medal award celebration, the Mongolian peacekeepers donated exercise books, school bags and soccer balls to the Wilberforce Army Barrack Municipal School children in Freetown. The peacekeepers also put up an excellent display of martial arts skills, indicating their combat and physical readiness.

Present at the medal award ceremony were UNMIL Director of Mission Support, Mr. Stephen Lieberman; Officer-in-Charge of Mission Support of the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), Mr. Ilpo Mikkola; Registrar, SCSL, Mrs. Binta Mansaray; Chief of Defence Staff of the Sierra Leonean Army, Maj.-Gen. Sam Mbomah; Chief of Staff-Joint Force Command of Sierra Leone, Col. JAO Tucker; and Commanding Officer of Freetown Defence Battalion, Lt.-Col. BT Massaquoi.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
15 May 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

Blah Details Former President Taylor's Links with Sierra Leonean Rebels

(Heritage, The News, New Democrat, Liberian Express, The Independent, Daily Observer, The Inquirer)

- Former Liberian President Moses Blah in his first day of testimony provided detailed insider's account of the early days of the civil war as well as Mr. Taylor's bloody rise to power. Blah's second day of testimony continues today with detailed account of how Taylor allegedly controlled rebels in Sierra Leone from Liberia. Legal analysts believe such evidence is critical to prosecutors seeking to link Taylor to alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in neighboring Sierra Leone. Blah is the highest-ranking witness to testify against his former boss since the trial began early this year. Critics perceived his testimony as the strongest link yet in the prosecution's case against Taylor. Prosecutors alleged he orchestrated the atrocities from his presidential power base in Monrovia, a charge the accused denies.

Sub-regional Leaders Converge in Monrovia to Tackle issues of Security and Food Crisis

(New Democrat, Heritage, The News, Daily Observer, The Informer)

- A one-day summit of Heads of State and government of the Mano River Union gets underway today in Monrovia. The summit to be chaired by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will among other things consider concrete measures to strengthen the MRU Secretariat and issues of peace, security and the global food crisis. According to an Executive Mansion release issued in Monrovia, Cote d'Ivoire, which recently announced its decision to join the Union will formally be admitted into the group.
- Already, President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone and Guinean Prime Minister Lansana Kouyate have already arrived in the Country. Ivorian President, Laurent Gbagbo, is to be represented by the Head of the Country's Economic Council, Mr. Laurent Dona Fologo. The MRU was formed in 1973 to foster economic and regional cooperation between Liberia and Sierra Leone. Guinea joined the union a few years later and remains an active member.

Radio Summary

Star Radio *(News culled today from website at 8:35 am)*

Former Confidante Links Taylor to Sierra Leone's Civil war

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

MRU Presidents meet in Monrovia Today

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

Former Transitional Chairman Due in Court Today

- Former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant is expected in court today in Monrovia and is to appear with former Speaker Edwin Snowe, Senator Richard Divine, Mr. Siaka Sheriff and Andy Quamie for economic crime.
- Government jointly indicted the men last Friday for allegedly embezzling US\$923,500 from the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company(LPRC) during the transitional period and charged

them with theft and economic sabotage; including US\$214,500 used for bribery, which government considers an act that constitutes criminal conspiracy.

- The men were released to Episcopal Bishop, Jonathan Hart until they get their bail bond ready today.
- This is the second indictment facing Mr. Bryant. He was earlier indicted for embezzling US\$1 million while serving as transitional chairman.

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

German NGO Distributes Treated Mosquito Nets

- The German charity, German Agro Action in collaboration with a local NGO, MERCI has begun the distribution of insecticide mosquito nets in Maryland County.
- The Programme Coordinator of German Agro, Mr. David Hallowanger said the distribution is intended to prevent malaria.
- He said about 66,000 insecticide mosquito nets are being distributed to households and are part of the 300,000 mosquito nets donated to Liberia by the German government.
- According to him, the distribution is targeting about 18,000 households

Baptist Prelate Says Reconciliation Remains a Major Challenge

- In an interview, a Baptist Prelate says reconciliation remains a major challenge to the country as Liberians are yet to experience national unification.
- Reverend Joseph Gardea Johnson said Liberians are divided in all sectors of the country and unless all leaders of the country take the lead citizens would not have interest.
- He alleged that there are perpetrators posing as victims who do not want to be identified as contributors to the country's civil conflict and recommended an all-Liberian conference to find a way forward.

Open Society Justice Initiative

Thursday, 15 May 2008

Press Release

Latest Khmer Rouge Tribunal Report Covers New Crime Site and Progress on the Five Cases

New York, May 15, 2008. The Open Society Justice Initiative today released its latest report on current challenges and progress at the Extraordinary Chambers in Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), the court established to try surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge. The report is available here:

http://www.justiceinitiative.org/db/resource2?res_id=104086

The report covers significant developments at the court over the past two months, including:

The prosecutors' supplementary submission requesting that additional criminal acts be included in the ongoing investigation against the five charged persons currently before the court. The submission, spurred by information provided by victims, focuses on crimes committed at an unnamed detention center.

The adjournment of Khieu Samphan's provisional detention appeal after his counsel, French lawyer Jacques Vergès, refused to participate because of the court's failure to translate certain documents into French.

The Pre-Trial Chamber's determination that civil parties have broad participation rights even in the early stages of judicial proceedings, enabling them to submit briefs and present oral arguments in Nuon Chea's provisional detention hearing.

The 25-page report provides an overview of recent developments in the cases of all five defendants now in the court's custody: Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, Kaing Guek Eav, and Ieng Thirith. The report also looks at developments outside the courtroom, including the appointment of a UN expert advisor to help revise the court's budget and streamline administrative operations of the UN's side of the court.

In addition, the report addresses some of the court's pressing challenges, including:

Lack of transparency at the court, reflected in the continued closure of some proceedings to the public and the court's failure to provide general information about ongoing proceedings.

The need to continue improving human resource practices at the court, including by taking additional steps to address allegations relating to salary kickbacks.

Increasing tension between the ECCC and the media, particularly over the lack of press access to Duch's visits to Tuol Sleng and Choeung Ek.

The need for the court to increase substantially its translation and interpretation capacity.

UN News Centre

Thursday, 15 May 2008

Kosovo prison guard convicted by UN tribunal to serve rest of jail term in France

15 May 2008 – A former prison guard for the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) who was convicted by a United Nations war crimes tribunal for the murder of nine detainees and the torture of another prisoner will now serve the rest of his 13-year jail sentence in France.

Haradin Bala was transferred yesterday to detention in France, the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) announced today. France is one of 15 European countries to have signed deals with the tribunal to enforce sentences imposed on convicted individuals.

In November 2005 Mr. Bala was convicted by the ICTY for the torture, murder and cruel treatment of both Serb and Kosovo Albanian civilian prisoners at the KLA-run Lapušnik/Llapushnik camp between May and July 1998. Those convictions were then upheld by the tribunal's appeals chamber last year.

During Mr. Bala's trial, the tribunal heard how he had a personal role in maintaining and enforcing the inhumane conditions in the prison camp.

UN News Centre

Tuesday, 13 May 2008

Bosnian Croat commander jailed by UN tribunal to serve time in Italy

13 May 2008 – A Bosnian Croat military commander, found guilty of committing crimes against Bosnian Muslims in the area around Mostar, was today transferred to a jail in Italy to serve out the remainder of his 18-year sentence, the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) announced.



Vinko Martinović, also known as Stela, had served as commander of a sub-unit of the Convicts' Battalion, which was a military unit within the Croatian Defence Council.

In March 2003 Mr. Martinović was convicted by the ICTY for persecutions, inhumane acts, inhumane treatment, unlawful labour, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, murder, wilful killing, unlawful transfer of a civilian and plunder, and was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment.

Mr. Martinović was personally involved in the forcible removal of Bosnian Muslims from the west bank of Mostar, leaving that side of the town "completely rid of Muslims."

The Muslims, including many women, children and the elderly, were forced out of their homes at gunpoint and their homes were looted. Many Muslim civilians from Mostar were rounded up and placed in a detention camp, where they were forced to dig trenches or carry wounded and dead soldiers, and serve as human shields on the front line.

Italy is one of 15 European countries that have signed an agreement with the ICTY to enforce sentences imposed by the Tribunal on convicted individuals.