

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Monday, 17 August 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Local News

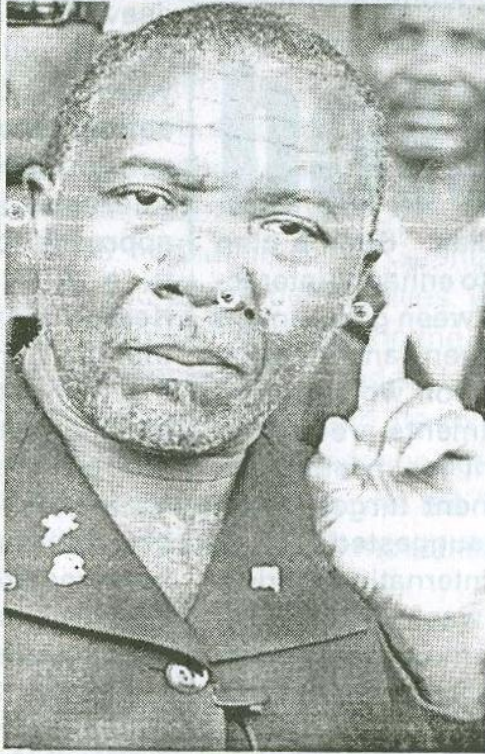
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The Exclusive
Monday, 17 August 2009

Taylor Denies Having Dealings In Blood Diamonds...



"My Hands Are Clean"

- Taylor says

Indicted Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor has on last Thursday denied that he was the custodian of the RUF

Diamonds. He said none of the RUF Documents before the court mentioned his name in diamond transactions.

Taylor also confirmed a

Continued page 2

My Hands Are Clean

From front page

United Nations 1999 report that Liberia was in a state of lawlessness during his presidency. Mr. Taylor also testified to the difficulties Liberia faced when armed bandits launched a second incursion into Liberia from neighbouring Guinea.

Mr. Taylor said the economic hardship which prevailed in Liberia during his presidency made it difficult for him to have exerted real control over the population.

Mr. Taylor told the court German base Liberian Artist, Ebenezer Kojo Samuel's song, Time So hard; Time So Hard, Everybody Going Crazy painted a clear picture of the economic situation in Liberia

during his administration.

He said unemployed ex-combatants were vulnerable to invitations from Sierra Leone, Angola and the Congo to return to the battle fields.

Mr. Taylor said illegal activities became uncontrollable. The Former Liberian President testified that Liberia was dragged back into war two weeks after the burning of the arms collected from the combatants.

He described the attackers as terrorists and bandits from neighbouring Guinea. Defence Lawyer Courtenay Griffiths asked Mr. Taylor about the seriousness of the incursion into Liberia on August 10, 1999.

Total News
Monday, 17 August 2009

RUF Report Made No Mention of Help from Charles Taylor

By Alpha Sesay

A key military intelligence document, written by and for high level Sierra Leonean rebel commanders summarizing their group's activities during a brutal time in the Sierra Leonean war, made no mention of any assistance by the then Liberian President, Charles Taylor, the Special Court for Sierra Leone heard today.

Mr. Taylor's lead defense counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, today read from a 'Salute Report' written by former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) commander Sam Bockarie to his returning leader, Foday Sankoh. The report was written after Mr. Sankoh's absence from the rebel group between 1997 and 1999, while he was imprisoned by Nigeria. The

document provided a detailed account of the RUF's activities while Mr. Sankoh was gone. Reading from the report, the defense sought to rebut prosecution allegations that the RUF was controlled by Mr. Taylor during Sierra Leone's war while Mr. Sankoh was imprisoned in Nigeria, and that during this time, Mr. Taylor promoted RUF commander Sam Bockarie to the rank of Brigadier General. Witnesses have further testified in the trial that diamonds mined by the RUF were taken to Mr. Taylor and that in return, he supplied the rebels with arms and ammunition. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations.

Asked by his defense counsel whether there was any mention in the report of him giving orders for the RUF to join the Armed Forces

Revolutionary Council (AFRC)-a group of Sierra Leonean soldiers who overthrew the government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in May 1997- Mr. Taylor said "No. I was not privy to any of this information. From what I got, this was an instruction from Sankoh on tape that was played on radio."

On his promotion to the rank of General in the RUF, the Salute Report quoted Sam Bockarie as saying "I was promoted to General by Johnny Paul Koroma [former leader of the AFRC]." Mr. Taylor buttressed this point by saying he never promoted Mr. Bockarie to such rank, saying that "in fact to the best of my recollection, when I met Bockarie, he was already a General."

In his testimony today, Mr. Taylor told the judges that the Salute

Report detailing the RUF's activities in Foday Sankoh's absence makes no mention of diamonds handed over to him.

"If they are sending diamonds to Taylor, why did they not say so in the Salute Report? This is because it never happened," he said.

Mr. Taylor also told the judges that the Salute Report submitted to Mr. Sankoh talks about arms and ammunition that were purchased from United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO)-another Liberian rebel group which fought against Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL); the sale of diamonds to Lebanese businessmen; and Mr. Bockarie's order to fellow RUF commander, Superman, to move with rebel fighters as reinforcements for the January 1999 attack on Sierra Leone's

capital Freetown. Mr. Taylor said that all these issues fall within the prosecution's allegations against him but that there is no mention of his involvement in them based on the Salute Report.

Mr. Taylor again blamed Western Powers for the state of affairs in Liberia after he became president in 1997. He said the western powers encouraged him to disarm all fighting forces in Liberia, burning all arms and ammunition and thereby rendering him powerless only for the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels to launch an attack against him.

"It ended up with an insurgency by LURD after we were led to burn our arms. After we burnt all our arms, LURD attacked," Mr. Taylor said.

The young men and women who had been

disarmed became vulnerable since they had no jobs or food.

"We did not have job for these young men and women who had fought. They had not been properly demobilized. They were available to fight. There is nothing to do when people take advantage of these young men and women," he said.

Mr. Taylor said that Liberia therefore became a ground for mercenaries and many of these former fighters became recruits for conflicts in Sierra Leone, Angola and Congo.

He said that with all these events, the issues he faces now were bound to happen. "The Charles Taylor incident was an accident waiting to happen," he said.

Mr. Taylor's testimony continues today, Monday. For the duration of Mr. Taylor's testimony, there was no court hearing on Friday.

FCC Starts Local Tax Check Today

From front page

The Principal Revenue

Director of Statutory Records

Total News

Monday, 17 August 2009

Charles Taylor Expelled RUF Collaborators from Liberia

Chronology of Steps He Took to Bring Peace to Sierra Leone
By Alpha Sesay

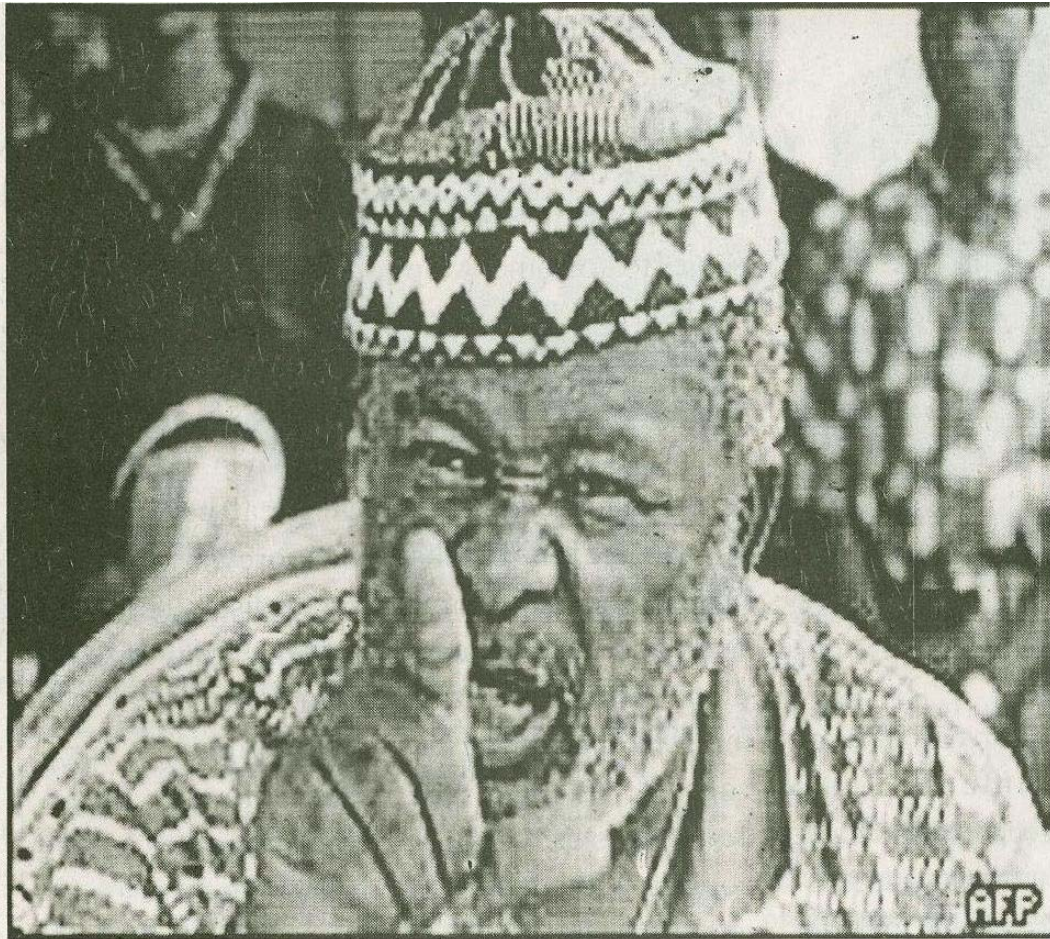
Charles Taylor today told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges that when he became president of Liberia, he arrested and expelled a British citizen and a Sierra Leonean diplomat who was secretly collaborating with rebel forces in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor also gave a chronology of steps that he took as president of Liberia to bring the conflict to Sierra Leone to a peaceful conclusion. Mr. Taylor told the court that the British citizen and Sierra Leonean diplomat who collaborated with Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone did so through a company operating in Monrovia called Red Deer International. According to Mr. Taylor, when security forces raided the premises of the Red Deer International company, they discovered several items which, intelligence sources suggested were for use by RUF rebels. "We saw some suits of uniform, military uniform, the police seized hand-held walkie talkies, the Government of Sierra Leone was fully briefed about what was going on," Mr. Taylor said. Mr. Taylor said the arrested persons were in touch with certain individuals who were connected to the RUF. Mr. Taylor has been accused of providing support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone through the supply of arms and ammunition. The prosecution has also alleged that he helped RUF rebels plan attacks on civilian populations in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations. In his testimony today, Mr. Taylor went through a list of steps he took to assure Sierra Leone and the international community that he was not supporting RUF rebels and that he wanted a peaceful end to the conflict in Sierra Leone. On May 5 1998, Mr. Taylor said he wrote a letter to the United Nations Secretary General denying allegations by the Nigerian Ministry of Defense that he was involved in the conflict in Sierra Leone. On June 24 1998, Mr. Taylor sent a delegation to meet with former Sierra Leonean president Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, a step Mr. Taylor called a "diplomatic move to assure your neighbor that these are just false allegations and there is no need to worry." President Tejan Kabbah also attended Liberia's independence celebrations in Monrovia on July 26, 1998. Mr. Taylor said this move by President Kabbah proved that there was no animosity between the two leaders. "If this conflict was so serious, Kabbah would not have visited me. Presidents at war with each other will not pay visits," Mr. Taylor said. On December 28 1998, Mr. Taylor said he issued a statement asking for the establishment of a commission of inquiry to look into allegations of Liberian involvement in the conflict in Sierra Leone and he asked the government

of Sierra Leone to be part of a joint patrol to monitor the Sierra Leone-Liberian border. On January 6 1999, Mr. Taylor sent a letter to the United Nations Security Council saying that Liberia wanted normalcy in its relationship with Sierra Leone and asking for the deployment of United Nations personnel along the border between the two countries.

When the January 1999 rebel invasion of Sierra Leone's capital Freetown took place, Mr. Taylor declared a unilateral ceasefire on behalf of the RUF rebels. The prosecution has alleged that Mr. Taylor helped the RUF rebels to plan the January 1999 invasion of Freetown. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations.

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RUF to Challenge President Koroma

Foday Sankoh, RUF Founder

By Abu Conteh

With the 2012 elections fast approaching, the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF) has announced its plans to bounce back to life and challenge the sitting President, Ernest Bai Koroma and his APC party.

The interim leader Eldred Collins who was speaking at a meeting with the

Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) said the party is doing all

in its power to mobilize resources to make

See Page 10

RUF TO CHALLENGE PRES. KOROMA

a strong showing in the next election.

He boasted of having a strong support base in the country, adding that the popularity of the party is nothing to worry about. However, Mr. Collins blamed the government of Sierra Leone for failing to put into practice the

Lome recommendations, citing that Article 3 of the Lome Accord called for the establishment of a trust fund for the RUF, training facilities and other forms of assistance to let the party thrive.

This he added was the key reason that has

made it difficult for the party to consolidate strong political gains since its establishment. Mr. Collins pointed out that the RUF has officially written a letter to President Koroma and other moral guarantors of the Lome Accord like the United Nations,

African Union and Ecowas to ensure that the government lies by its obligation by ensuring that the party functions effectively. RUF is the revolutionary movement founded by Foday Sankoh that waged the 1991 war that lasted for eleven years.

Salone Times

Monday, 17 August 2009

Did Taylor Fuel the War in Sierra Leone

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor expressed his incredulity at the testimony against him at his war crimes trial Tuesday, saying "there is no way" he is guilty of any of the charges.

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

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

He is the first defense witness at a trial that began two years ago at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is being held at The Hague, Netherlands.

"I am not guilty of all of these charges, not even a minute part of these charges," Taylor, president between 1997 and 2003, said in the first day of defense testimony. "This whole case is a case of deceit, deception, lies." The decade-long war, which involved riches from the diamond trade, was fought largely by teenagers who were forced to kill, given addictive drugs to provoke violent behavior, and often instructed to rape and plunder.

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

He has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He was president of Liberia -- where he is also blamed for fueling a lengthy civil war -- until 2003,

when he was forced from office under heavy international pressure, much of it from the United States. He lived in exile in Nigeria until Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo decided, under political pressure, to hand him over to the tribunal.

Taylor said he is still upset with Obasanjo for handing him over. "If you were alone in a room with Obasanjo, what would you do to him?" asked British lawyer Courtenay Griffiths, the head of Taylor's defense team. "You know, as I sit here, I am still perplexed. I can't claim to understand all of the intrigues that happened to me," Taylor said after thinking for a moment.

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

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

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

Griffiths asked Taylor outright whether he is guilty of the offenses in the indictment, prompting a lengthy response from Taylor on

why he is not.

"Quite frankly, I cannot understand how some of these people (witnesses) were brought to this point ... to tell some of the lies that I have heard sitting over there," Taylor said from the witness stand. "It's I guess what you lawyers call incredulous."

He said he couldn't understand how witnesses "can come and in an organized fashion lie -- lie and lie and lie," although he suspected that some of the witnesses were testifying because they had been threatened.

"I've got ministers -- former ministers of my government -- that wouldn't even take a phone call. (They'd) say, 'Mr. President, we're scared. If we ever talk to you, we're finished.'" Taylor said.

"This is a house constructed on disinformation, misinformation, rumors, assumptions, conjecture. Whether I live 100 years, this is the experience of a lifetime that no human --" Taylor said before he stopped himself.

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

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

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

The Leonardo DiCaprio movie "Blood Diamond" (2006) is set in Sierra Leone during the civil war, which lasted from March 1991 until January 2002. Despite the country's diamond wealth, 70 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

Hope For Over 20,000 War Victims

The National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), responsible for all reparation activities for war victims in the country, has registered over 20,000 war victims during the reparation registration exercises.

This was disclosed by Ibrahim Satti Kamara, NaCSA's Outreach Co-ordinator, at his Charlotte Street office in Freetown. He said, 'verification is still ongoing', stating that 'NaCSA will display the names of those eligible and those who will have doubts will be referred to the review committees that were set up in the districts by NaCSA for further verification'. He said all confirmed victims would be provided with assistance from NaCSA by mid September.

Mr Kamara stated that, 'NaCSA under the reparation programme has started providing medical treatment for sexually abused victims and two victims have undergone surgical operations successfully to remove bullets from their bodies, which were in them for the last ten years', while they would determine those that would undergo physiological surgery and the treatment they should receive from the Aberdeen Fistula Centre which is supported by Mercy Ship. He said the reparation programme was supported by UNPBS, IOM and the German government.

According to NaCSA's Outreach Co-ordinator, the reparation could take many forms, including rehabilitation, restitution,

compensation, the restoration of dignity and improving the quality of life of those who have suffered harm.

He said, 'the Sierra Leone reparations programme originated from the Lome Peace Agreement of 1999 and the TRC recommendations'. He said 'the programme will largely focus on the rehabilitation of victims through the delivery of social services packages as a symbolic measure acknowledging the past, the harm done to victims, and empower them to rebuild their lives.

Mr Kamara said for a person to be eligible for reparations, the event or injury sustained must have occurred between 23rd March 1991 and 1st March 2002 determined by considering those victims who are particularly vulnerable because of the human rights violations they suffered and the harm they continue to live with like 'the amputees, the war wounded, victims of sexual violence and the children. He said the TRC made recommendations for benefits in the following areas: health care, education, skills, training and micro-credits, pensions, micro-grant, fistula surgery, psychosocial reparations.

He concluded that, 'victims who have already benefited from previous programmes implemented by the government of Sierra Leone or other organizations/agencies will not be eligible for the same benefits under the reparation programme, and the programme will primarily target civilian victims of the war'.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 14 August 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Country is a Model for Post-Conflict Transformation, Clinton Says

Aug 14, 2009 (America.gov/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton says that after emerging from a 14-year civil war, Liberia is a model to other countries that are transitioning from conflict, praising the country's reform, reconstruction and reconciliation efforts, as well as the government's actions against corruption. Speaking with Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Monrovia August 13, Clinton praised the Liberian leader for being "dedicated to the betterment of the Liberian people" and "consistent in her leadership on behalf of solving the problems that Liberia faces." In the three years since the end of the civil conflict, Liberia is now "a model of successful transition from conflict to post-conflict, from lawlessness to democracy, from despair to hope," Clinton said. She praised the country's fiscal policies, including the way Liberia is decreasing its debt and has lately enjoyed a high rate of growth in its gross domestic product (GDP). The secretary also said she is impressed with Liberia's steps against corruption, describing them as being more advanced than those of many other countries. "We've seen a commitment by President Sirleaf and her government and the legislature which passed the [anti-corruption] laws," she said, adding, "Now they have to implement them."

International Clips on West Africa

Health authorities in S Leone distribute Tamiflu widely

FREETOWN, 14 August 2009 (AFP) - Health authorities in Sierra Leone have begun distribution of a huge consignment of Tamiflu after a scare that the first case of swine flu had been discovered in the West African state, health officials said Friday. According to the Director of Disease Surveillance and Control, Dr. Allieu Wurie, "what we have got is a confirmation of H3N2 which is quite different from the swine flu disease." He told correspondents, "we are distributing the drugs however as they can also be used for the treatment of the flu." "This is a human-to-human transmission and has nothing to do with swine or bird flu. The last time it was reported as a pandemic was in 2003 and 2004 and it was mainly in Europe and the Americas." He gave the symptoms as high fever, running nose, cough and generalized muscular pains as well as difficulty in breathing but treatable.

Landslide in Sierra Leone kills seven

FREETOWN (Reuters) - At least seven people were killed and 15 injured when homes collapsed in a landslide in heavy rain in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown Thursday, police said. Rescue teams were searching for bodies beneath mud, stones and rubble from three hillside houses that collapsed police official Ibrahima Samura told Reuters. "The victims were asleep when they were trapped by the landslide," he said. Flooding has left at least 300 people homeless, police said. Since the start of the rainy season in June, floods and landslides have killed dozens of people in West Africa, including 19 in Ivory Coast, 16 in Ghana and seven in Benin where the government declared a state of emergency. The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) estimates that the lives of about 150,000 people have been disrupted by floods in the region in the past two months.

Guinea junta sets up national transition council

CONAKRY, Aug 14, 2009 (AFP) - The military regime in Guinea has announced the creation of a National Transition Council (CNT) to prepare for elections, as demanded by political parties, unions and civic organisations. Under a decree read on state radio and television, junta leader Captain Moussa Dadis Camara late Thursday mandated the council to go ahead with a revision of the constitution and possible amendments to the electoral code. The CNT of 244 members will be active

for 30 days once it is inaugurated, according to the announcement, empowering the council to replace the national assembly, which the junta has dissolved. The announcement did not say when the council will start work, but it will be a broad grouping, including 35 members of political parties, 15 magistrates, 10 labor union representatives, 10 from the defence and security forces and 10 representing Guineans living abroad. The bosses' organizations, lawyers, religious communities and other civil society groups will also be represented. Members will be put forward by the group concerned "in common accord" with the head of the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), as the junta has named itself, according to Captain Camara.

Local Media – Newspaper

U.S. Government Commits over US\$17M Package to 2011 Polls

(The News, The Inquirer, Daily Observer, The Informer, National Chronicle, Heritage)

- The United States have announced a US\$17 million package to ensure free and fair elections in the country in 2011.
- Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told a joint news conference Thursday that the U.S. supports all aspect of democratic governance.
- Secretary of State Clinton said economic progress depends on good governance, adherence to the rule of law and sound economic policies.
- She hailed the high presence of women in Government and assured that America will continue to support the country to help improve the living condition of its people.
- Earlier, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf expressed appreciation to the United States for the level of partnership experience by Government.
- The President promise Government's commitment to ensure transparency, accountability and Good Governance.

Clinton Urges Lawmakers To Pass Code Of Conduct Act

(Heritage, Heritage, The Inquirer, The News)

- United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, has strongly urged the National Legislature to pass a Code of Conduct for public service personnel.
- The Draft Code submitted to the National Legislature for enactment by the Executive Branch has been stalled at the body.
- Touching on other issues, the U.S. Secretary of State observed that Liberia had made significant progress and said the gains made by the Government were a good sign of democracy and respect for the rule of law.
- She called a sound fiscal policy, debt relief, free education, roads, electricity, the passage of the Land Commission Act and the creation of a good economic climate in the country as signs of progress.
- Meanwhile, the U.S Secretary of State has called for the passage of the Threshold bill which has since sparked controversy.

U.S. Gives Official Position on TRC Report

(The News)

- U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has officially commented on the "controversial" Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC) final report currently before the Legislature.
- Secretary of State Clinton said the United State will support any decision reached by the Liberian Government on the TRC findings.
- She lauded the Administration for the steps taken so far in addressing the issue of corruption saying there were good laws on the books but their implementation needed to be given attention.
- The U.S. Secretary of State spoke during a joint press conference at the Foreign Ministry on Thursday following a closed-door meeting with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

More U.S. Support for Liberia National Police

(Heritage)

- The Government of the United States of America has promised to give more financial support for the development of the Liberia National Police.
- According to the United States Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton will put in more money for the training of the police.

- Secretary of State Clinton made the disclosure when she visited the National Police Training Academy in Paynesville outside Monrovia.
- In another development, the US Government has promised to provide all necessary equipment to make the Roberts International Airport (RIA) in Margibi fully operational.

Fight against Corruption Needs Holistic Approach'

(Daily Observer, National Chronicle)

- The Executive Chairperson of the Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC), Counselor Frances Johnson-Morris says if the Commission is to be effective and achieve its goals the fight against corruption will need a 'holistic approach.'
- Delivering a keynote address at the opening of the four-day anti-corruption, public awareness and capacity-building trainer of trainers (TOT) workshop, Counselor Morris said there was a need for trained manpower with knowledge about the mandate of the Commission and its internal workings.
- The workshop was funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and is designed, among other things, to build the capacities of LACC staff who are mandated to detect, investigate and prosecute corruption cases without fear or favor.
- The more than 30 participants at the workshop were drawn from various civil society organizations (CSOs), media institutions and stakeholders' outfits.

Education Ministry, Catholic Church Fail to Reach Compromise

(The Analyst)

- Reports say Education Ministry authorities have failed to convince the Catholic Church to reduce the sharp increase in tuition fees.
- According to the report a meeting between Education Ministry authorities and the Catholic Church Thursday failed to reach a compromise.
- During the meeting, Reverend Father Andrew Karnley insisted that the increment in tuition in Catholic Schools remain unchanged saying the new fees were far lower than other private schools in the country.
- Meanwhile, the Catholic Education Secretariat has agreed to extend the deadline for the purchase of uniforms for the first semester to December this year.

Former President Taylor Said He Advocated Peace in Sierra Leone

(Liberian Express, Heritage, Public Agenda, New Democrat, Public Agenda)

- Former President Charles Taylor said he was only interested in achieving peace in Sierra Leone for the people of the country and not for the benefit of the country's rebel leader Foday Sankoh.
- The prosecution has accused Mr. Taylor of providing support for the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone through the supply of arms and ammunition as well as provision of personnel for combat against the government and people of Sierra Leone.
- There have also been allegations that the RUF rebels sought advice from Mr. Taylor and that he used his position of authority to influence the rebel forces.
- Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations and insists that his involvement in Sierra Leone was purely for peaceful purposes based on a mandate from ECOWAS leaders.

Bishop Tutu , Others Support President Sirleaf Against TRC Report

(The News, Public Agenda)

- [SIC] An American consultant is drumming up a team of high-profiled international players including South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Nobel Peace winners Eli Wiesel, John Hume and the U.N. Special Envoy to Liberia Ellen Margrethe Løj, in support of Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.
- The move to seek support for the President comes in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia final report calling for a 30-year ban from political activities for her role in the civil crisis.

- The Chief Operating Officer of the Global Consult and a former United Nations official, Nadine Hack is said to be the brainchild behind a chain of email exchanges intended to galvanize international pressure against the recent findings of the TRC.

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

U.S. Government Commits over US\$17M Package to 2011 Polls

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

U.S. Gives Official Position on TRC Report

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

Education Ministry, Catholic Church Fail to Reach Compromise

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

Radio Veritas (*Monitored today at 9:45 am*)

NGO Coalition of Liberia Accuses Government of “Gambling” with Forest Sector

- The Non Governmental Organization (NGO) coalition of Liberia says the Government is gambling with the Forest Sector by granting logging concession to investors that do not have strong financial capabilities.
- The coalition says its assessment is based on the failure of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and the National Legislature to take corrective measures to improve the forest sector.
- In a statement, the NGO coalition said forest communities across the country stand the risk of getting the raw deal if timber companies do not pay their taxes.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Monday, 17 August 2009

HRW: Rwanda Tribunal's Work Incomplete

By International Justice Desk



Arusha , Tanzania

The Rwanda Tribunal may lose its credibility unless it indicts and tries Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) officers suspected of having committed war crimes in Rwanda in 1994, Human Rights Watch says in a letter to the

tribunal's prosecutor.

Human Rights Watch says that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) has brought to justice leading figures behind the 1994 genocide but failed to pursue officers of the RPF, the rebel group that ended the genocide and has since become Rwanda's governing party.

The RPF, led by current president Paul Kagame, is alleged to have killed between 25,000 and 45,000 civilians in the same three-month period.

ICTR chief prosecutor, Hassan Jallow, claims that he has done everything he can to investigate crimes on all sides for the events of 1994.

But Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch says Jallow's prosecution strategy has fallen short:

"The prosecutor's failure to commit to prosecuting senior RPF officers has undermined his credibility and that of the ICTR."

Although the tribunal has investigated RPF crimes for more than 10 years and has gathered witness testimony and physical evidence, Jallow told the UN Security Council in June that he did "not have an indictment that is ready in respect of these allegations at this particular stage."

In response to HRW earlier requests, the prosecutor issued a letter suggesting that his office did not have enough evidence to bring prosecutions against Rwandan Patriotic Front officers.

The prosecutor defended his June 2008 decision to transfer an RPF case to Rwanda to be prosecuted there.

Jallow claims that Rwanda's attempt to hold RPF officers to account in last year's domestic trial - known as the Kabgayi case - met international fair trial standards. But the rights organisation says the proceedings amounted to a political whitewash and a miscarriage of justice.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Monday, 17 August 2009

Netherlands should receive war crimes suspect Bemba

Written by: Thijs Bouwknecht and Saskia van Huijgevoort



*The Hague,
Netherlands*

The Netherlands should host Jean Pierre Bemba pending his war crimes trial if other states fail to do so, says Amnesty International

Democratic Republic of Congo ex-vice president Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo was granted conditional release pending his war crimes trial before the International Criminal Court (ICC) Friday as the search began for a country willing to host him.

The ICC in The Hague says there is no reason to believe that Bemba, charged with atrocities in the Central African Republic (CAR), would obstruct the investigation or repeat any of the crimes.

The countries Bemba wished to be released to, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal and South Africa, have all expressed "objections and concerns" to host the former warlord.

Belgium, where Bemba was arrested last year, said his presence in the country could pose "public security problems" among its Congolese expatriate community of divergent political opinions. The ICC allowed him to attend his father's funeral in Brussels last month, but the city said it had many problems to guarantee his safety.

France said through a foreign affairs spokesman that it was "not in a position to accommodate Jean-Pierre Bemba", while South Africa's foreign ministry said the country "has not made any offer to host Bemba".

"If no country agrees to receive him, Jean-Pierre Bemba could remain in ICC detention indefinitely," warns Amnesty International's Christopher Keith Hall.

He adds that "Bemba has the right to be presumed innocent until a decision is made by the ICC on his case. And given this ruling, to keep him in detention indefinitely would violate Jean-Pierre Bemba's right to a fair trial."

"The ICC simply will be unable to function if states fail to cooperate, and the Dutch government has a particular responsibility, as host of the ICC," Amnesty's Adviser says.

The Pre-Trial Chamber of the ICC has invited the governments suggested as hosts to Jean-Pierre Bemba to make further observations to the ICC before its next hearings on the issue between 7 and 14 September.

The trial against Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo will be the Court's third trial. The Court's first war crimes trial against Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga Dyilo started in January 2009. A second trial will start on 24 September 2009 against Congolese rebel leaders Germain Katanga and Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Monday, 17 August 2009

Prosecute Austrian soldiers for WWII crimes

By International Justice Desk



Munich , Germany

Austrian soldiers suspected of World War II massacres should be prosecuted, an Austrian deputy said Sunday, after a German court found a former army commander guilty of war crimes last week.

In a statement issued on the 66th anniversary of a civilian massacre in Kommeno,

Greece, Social Democrat deputy Johann Maier said it was time go after Austrian soldiers implicated in such crimes.

"Since the names of the mountain infantrymen (Gebirgsjaeger) involved in war crimes are known, the Austrian justice system should move against those soldiers in Austria who are still living," he said.

Numerous war crimes committed by Germany's Wehrmacht in occupied countries like Greece, Italy and the former Yugoslavia, had so far gone unpunished, Maier insisted.

"From 1943 on, soldiers from the 1st Mountain Gebirgsdivision took part in numerous massacres of civilians, the shooting of hostages and the murder of prisoners of war in the former Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece," he said.

Many in this division were Austrian, he noted.

In Kommeno, 317 men, women and children were killed by the Division's 12th Company on August 16, 1943, he said.

Further massacres of civilians took place in Lyngiades, Skines, Lamerivio, Paramythia and Mousiotitsa, while on the island of Kefalonia, German troops executed some 5,000 Italian prisoners of war.

Mountain infantrymen also worked with the local secret police to deport Greek Jews in Ioannina, Maier said.

"There is no statute of limitations for murder, and Austria is no exception," he added.

On Tuesday, a court in Munich convicted a 90-year-old former German army commander for the murder of 10 people in a mass killing that ultimately claimed the lives of 14 villagers in the Italian town of Falzano di Cortona in 1944.

Josef Scheungraber, a commander of Gebirgs-Pionier-Bataillon 818, was sentenced to life in prison in what was expected to be one of the last cases in Germany dealing with atrocities of the Nazi era.

Source: AFP

Photo: Flickr (RobW)

The island of Kefalonia, where German troops executed some 5,000 Italian prisoners of war

ToTheCentre.com

Sunday, 9 August 2009

U.S. Should Reconsider Its Attitude toward ICC

On Thursday, while on a tour of Africa, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that it was a “great regret” that the United States was not a member of the International Criminal Court, Breitbart.com reported.

This is basically the most support that has been shown by the U.S. for the court since the Clinton administration, before the court was even formally set up in 2002. Under Bush, the U.S. was almost suspicious of the international tribunal, which is a permanent body that prosecutes individuals for war crimes and has global jurisdiction.

Our supposed interest in the International Criminal Court seems to correlate with our general interest in the world outside of ourselves. With the Bush administration, we were focused inward. Instead of engaging in dialogues with other countries, we would call them evil. In fact, according to The Guardian, one of Bush’s main motivations in refusing U.S. membership on the court was his fear that U.S. officials could be subjected to war crime prosecution. Yet we generally professed to support the court’s goals. Hypocritical much?

Now we are in the era of Obama, who has repeatedly emphasized a more diplomatic approach and a greater use of “soft power.” He has also set the goal to close Guantanamo Bay in the near future and is tampering down our operations in Iraq. While we were still engaged in these two areas, Obama’s foreign policy advisers had said it would be difficult to reconcile that with membership on the court.

So now that our policies are changing, why don’t we join? As abstainers, we are currently in the company of the more defiant states of the world: Russia, China, and Israel, states that we often complain about for their lack of cooperation with us (Israel not so much, although the recent Netanyahu administration does have its fingers in its ears over the settlements issue).

Joining the court would signal to the world that, with the Bush days behind us, we truly are ready to enter a new era of cooperation and mutual respect. Instead of acting with the disregard that characterized America’s early 2000s, we should be embracing the opportunity to both lead and participate in the global community through diplomatic means.

The Zimbabwean

Thursday, 13 August 2009

Taking transitional justice to the people

By Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum

As Zimbabwe's power-sharing government presses ahead with its national healing and reconciliation programme, the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (Forum) has launched a parallel process to educate citizens about transitional justice and to gauge what form of redress victims of violence and abuse might prefer. (Pictured: Pro-Zanu (PF) youth militia – They featured prominently in most reports of violence against MDC supporters.)

The Forum released an interim report last week highlighting some of the key findings of its "Taking transitional justice to the people" programme. Excerpts:

Many years of direct and structural violence in Zimbabwe have left the country with a physically and emotionally wounded people; property destroyed; populations condemned to the Diaspora as political and economic refugees and many internally displaced peoples. Attendant on all this is the politics of violence and intolerance, which pervades Zimbabwe's political space and peoples.

The Global Political Agreement (GPA) between the two MDC formations and ZANU (PF) in September 2008 provided the necessary reprieve to ask questions about the transition of the country into a democracy.

The space or opportunity brokered by the GPA motivated the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (the Forum) to set out a series of meetings in its Taking Transitional Justice to the People Program to consult and educate Zimbabweans who have gone through epochs of state sponsored and politically motivated violence in their lives on the nature and processes of transitional justice.

The exercise was not in any way structured to begin processes of transitional justice or national healing in Zimbabwe. However, it was set to begin consultations, educate and equip citizens with the necessary and background information on transitional justice and redress in all its forms.

From January 2008–June 2008 the Forum visited thirteen constituencies and met and discussed with people from all backgrounds; teachers, police officers, mothers, youths, elderly people, clergymen, traditional leaders and other professionals.

The Forum conducted sessions in schools, town halls, in both rural and urban settings. Public discussions were held in English, Shona, Ndebele and Tonga speaking communities. In these open forum discussions, people expressed themselves in their language of choice.

In the consultative meetings, actors, sponsors and victims of violence were discussed. The participants noted the manifestations of these violent acts in rape, torture, murder, extortions, kidnappings, blackmail, disappearances, destructions of property, humiliations, selective food and agricultural input distributions and so many other methods.

Actors in violence were identified as men, women and youths, soldiers in uniforms, the policemen on duty, secret police and youth from the National Youth Training Service commonly known as the "Green Bombers" among others. The victims also cut across sections of Zimbabweans from all walks of life.

The transitional justice approaches that dominated the Taking Transitional Justice to the People's discussions were truth commissions, reparations, truth for amnesty and prosecutions. The participants made interesting contributions that should be used to inform and shape the direction of transitional justice discourses in Zimbabwe.

What became clear was that people want to talk about their past and they need the platform to do so. What they were not sure about was the possibility, in light of the fact that Zanu (PF) still wields enormous power to scuttle the process before it even begins.

Truth seeking and Truth Commission

Victims noted that the truth commission approach seemed to offer an opportunity for a public platform for victims. Victims noted that what they hoped to receive from a truth seeking process was acknowledgement by the perpetrators and the state for the harm suffered. Issues around victims feeling respected and recognized kept coming up in the meetings.

Most of the victims insisted on a public way of truth seeking because they felt that since most of the violations were done in secret, the perpetrators would feel secure knowing that the victims would not air their grievances or tell their stories in public.

The participants pointed out that a truth commission would need to be formed by the people and not on their behalf. It was strongly put across that people, who have unquestionable integrity, are morally upright and with experience, should sit on such a body. The participants strongly held the view that people needed to control what the commission would do if it were set up.

Participants recalled and mentioned the previous commissions set by the government whose reports were never made public, for instance, the Chihambakwe Commission set to establish what happened in the Midlands and Matabeleland Disturbances between 1983 and 1987.

While some participants felt that these commissions can be formed and report to the parliament, they remained skeptical of parliament-controlled commissions which they viewed as close to political manipulation by political parties having the majority in parliament. To protect the integrity of any such commission, the participants suggested that their compositions should consist of representation from the civil society, judiciary, faith-based organizations and ordinary people.

Participants also noted the limitations of the truth commissions and suggested that a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission was the way to go.

The participants acknowledged the weaknesses of truth commissions and aired their reservations around such processes. It was noted that under truth commissions, perpetrators of past violence often do not own up. Often, political parties protect their henchmen as a way of covering up the truth and avoiding prosecutions.

The participants accepted this problem and concurred that given such challenges, the process had to be gradually implemented with all sensitivities acknowledged.

Given this point, some argued that for Zimbabwe to achieve transition to democratic governance and have a complete break with the past, transition would mean the dismantling of Zanu (PF) control of the state and other functions which do not necessarily need to be controlled by the party such as state institutions – the police, army, CIO, state parastatals and so on.

The participants pointed out that as long Zanu (PF) still had power, it would stop all forms of transitional justice that would amount to punishment of their own. It was noted that any truth commission set to deal with Zimbabwe's past needed to create trust to enable the people to approach it for truth telling. Gender activists were concerned that commissions often leave out women representation on their panels.

The participants suggested that the composition of the commissions must have women who understand the concerns of women who will appear before them.

Some participants at the meetings argued that the Government of National Unity (GNU) lacked the legitimacy of taking a lead in transitional justice processes in Zimbabwe, because some members of the GNU were also actors in violence.

The Forum enquired on what could be done to ensure that the transitional justice process was achieved in the light of these arguments. They argued that justice delayed is justice denied and something has to be done to expedite the process of transitional justice.

Against this background, some participants argued for a new constitution and a new government that can be mandated to carry out the transitional justice process legitimately instead of the current arrangement.

In addition it was also noted that all transitional justice mechanisms should be part of a holistic, integrated process; truth telling without prosecutions will not be acceptable. Participants noted that "transitional justice processes should be conducted to their logical conclusion. Truth telling without justice (prosecutions) is not enough"

Avenues for transitional justice

(a) Truth for amnesty

One other avenue for transitional justice process is truth for amnesty in which the offender would trade truth with general pardon from the government. Participants felt disparaged by situations where the state can give amnesty in exchange for a truthful account from a perpetrator.

Victims argued that while the state can give amnesty, total forgiveness, healing and reconciliation can only come from the injured person or survivor of that violence, therefore people were not comfortable with general pardon for criminals.

(b) Reparations

Reparations were suggested as one method that can be used to achieve national healing and effective transitional justice. Reparations are the same as compensations. The participants were informed that reparations have to take place at various levels; the government and perpetrator levels. To be effective, it has to be commensurate to the harm done.

What came out of the meetings was the observation that some people who committed acts of violence could not afford to pay material reparations. It was pointed out that under such circumstances the government had an obligation to pay.

The difficulty with this approach was that government gets its resources from taxing people and therefore if the government were to pay it would be tantamount to victims/survivors compensating themselves.

(c) Prosecutions

There was general consensus among participants on the need to have prosecutions for violations that have taken place in the past. What was contentious in all the areas visited by the Forum was the form the prosecutions would assume, who would be prosecuted, for what violations and by which adjudicating body.

The retributive effect of prosecutions appealed to most of the participants who felt that before there could be any forgiveness and reconciliation the perpetrators had to be punished for their wrongs.

(d) Institutional reforms

In Zimbabwe, the police and military have in many ways played a partisan political role. Recently, 'the heads and other senior members of both the police and army have made public statements committing the loyalty of the security forces to the ruling party and denouncing the opposition MDC as violent, treasonous and the enemy of the State'.

The above background motivated the strong arguments for institutional reforms. It was pointed out that the writing of a new constitution should set the tone for institutional reforms in the country.

Participants observed that reforms in the security sector would help in professionalizing the security institutions, making them understand their mandate and that officers with dirty hands should be removed and public confidence restored in security institutions.

Participants also noted the need to transform traditional leadership institutions. It was observed that the majority of the traditional leaders took part in or directly sponsored and condoned violence.

Timing of transitional justice process

There were serious debates on when the process of transitional justice should begin and how far back this process would go in terms of Zimbabwe's history of organized violence and torture.

The participants could not agree on a particular cut-off date or period. Some argued that the history of Zimbabwe did not begin in 1980 and therefore Rhodesian violations needed to be taken into account.

Other participants argued that there was not sufficient memory left to fully account for the violations, as most of the actors were presumed dead or very old.

Some participants argued that ignoring pre-1980 occurrences diminishes the role of the liberation movement survivors in the acts of violence and presumes the official pardon and reconciliation pronouncement by Mr. Mugabe in 1980 were cathartic enough to effect lasting national healing in Zimbabwe.

Other dates proffered were 1983, 2000 and 2008. The choice of dates and periods for national healing seemed motivated by the individual circumstances, where violations did occur in that year or if a relative was killed or injured.

Those in Matabeleland provinces favoured the timing of transitional justice around the 1980s because this is when the vicious cycle of violence landed heavily on their communities at the back of armoured carriers and tanks in the era of Gukurahundi.

Recommendations

The participants suggested the following recommendations during discussions:

- The participants noted the need for a formal and comprehensive process of national healing, reconciliation and transitional justice to begin in Zimbabwe.
- They suggested that for transitional justice to be effective the local communities needed to be involved and take ownership of the process.
- Decentralization and restructuring of judicial processes in the event of massive prosecutions of many offenders was also recommended.
- The participants noted the capacity of the Zimbabwe judicial system and its past record in dealing with political cases as needing innovative and immediate reforms and decentralization, particularly of the court system in order to deal expeditiously and conclusively with cases of violence.
- The participants noted the challenges, which the victims and witnesses faced such as the long distances to the courts and the resistance by some perpetrators to stand before the courts and traditional leaders. The participants suggested the need for victim friendly processes that would also be accessible.
- It was also recommended that women and men of integrity constitute any body that might be created to deal with transitional justice issues such as truth seeking or prosecutions, on an equal basis to ensure that interests of both sexes are equally and fairly heard.
- The participants also voiced concerns on the involvement of actors in the former regime in any bodies that might be created and recommended victim-centered processes more than anything else.