

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Thursday, 17 December 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

Local News

Fambul Tok Reaches Koinadugu / <i>The New Vision</i>	Page 3
International Mediators Fear Guinea Could Destabilize Region / <i>Global Times</i>	Pages 4-5
The Guinea Junta Has Become a Sick Joke... / <i>Standard Times Online</i>	Pages 6-7

International News

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 8-12
Security Council Lengthens UN Tribunals for War Crimes in Balkans and Rwanda / <i>UN News</i>	Page 13
The International League of War Criminals / <i>World Socialist Website</i>	Pages 14-16
Mbeki Softens Stance on Darfur Hybrid Court Proposal / <i>Sudan Tribune</i>	Pages 17-19

The New Vision

Thursday, 17 December 2009

Fambul Tok reaches Koinadugu

In its efforts to reach the length and breadth of the country, Fambul Tok, a community reconciliation programme implemented by Forum of Conscience, a human rights organization in Sierra Leone this Monday concluded a one day consultations with the people of Koinadugu district in the north and officially launched the programme in that part of the country.

Giving a brief background, Programme Director, Fambul Tok, John Caulker said it all started when he went to study at Columbia University in the United States of America in 2007.

He went on to state that he developed the idea of reconciling communities thinking of the fact that after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the country there was need for a programme to heal communities as most of them are still divided. He said the idea was transformed into something real through the partnership of Catalyst for Peace, a US based foundation that supports reconciliation in post conflict countries.

The Director said consultations were held in various districts to know whether people are ready to reconcile adding that there were clear signs that people are ready to reconcile all over the country.

Caulker told his audience that majority of the people that suffered the brunt of the war live in remote villages and never had the opportunity to testify at the TRC. He said the programme is owned by communities, urging them to allow equal participation of everyone including women and children.

“It belongs to you, we as staffs are only here to walk alongside

communities so you have to own the process. Reconciliation takes time and is not an event but a continuous process.

Caulker disclosed that pilot phase started in Kailahun last year and just after a year of implementation, the programme has extended to Kono, Moyamba and now in Koinadugu district

One of the elders in Diang chiefdom, Ibrahim Sorie Kamara said they have been yearning for Fambul Tok to reach communities in that part of the country, adding that they are ready to embrace and sustain the programme.

Pa Sayo Marah stated that Fambul Tok enters into Koinadugu at the right time adding that they will use the programme to settle their problems.

“Our culture and traditions have been dormant for a very long time, with Fambul Tok, we can revive them now” Marah said

“Women have always lagged behind in participating in activities but this time round fambul tok has included everyone and we are ready to work together says, Malanga Jawara”

During consultations, participants were divided into groups to answer to questions relating to reconciliation.

Also, the eleven chiefdoms in Koinadugu district have been divided into three zones.

Wara Wara Bafodia, Kasunko, Folosaba Dembelia and Sinkunia chiefdoms are in zone one. Zone two includes Wara Wara Yagala, Sengbeh, Diang and Nieni chiefdoms. Zone three has Neya, Mongo and Sulima.

Meanwhile the District Executive of Fambul Tok Koinadugu has been appointed to work with district staffs.

Global Times

Thursday, 17 December 2009

International Mediators Fear Guinea Could Destabilize Region

Africa News

Economic Community of West African States Secretary General says Guinea is a potentially 'explosive' situation that could undermine regional efforts to consolidate peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Ivory Coast

International mediators say insecurity in Guinea could destabilize still unsteady neighbors, including Liberia and Sierra Leone. That is one the reasons they want an outside security force for Guinea.

Diplomats in the International Contact Group on Guinea are pushing for an "order and security" force to contain the political crisis before it spills outside Guinea's borders.

Economic Community of West African States Secretary-General Mohamed Ibn Chambas says Guinea is a potentially "explosive" situation that could undermine regional efforts to consolidate peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and Ivory Coast.

Liberia and Sierra Leone are still recovering from long civil wars. Guinea-Bissau this year elected a new leader to replace a president who was killed by mutinous troops hours after his chief political rival died in a bomb blast. Ivory Coast is still divided by its brief civil war and new elections there have been postponed for years.

Facing the prospect of spreading violence, regional humanitarian officials are preparing a contingency plan to feed as many as 500,000 civilians in Guinea and six of its neighbors if the political crisis deteriorates.

Thomas Yanga directs World Food Program operations in West Africa.

"The security situation remains very unstable. A deterioration of the situation leading to population displacement could potentially affect the sub-region," Yanga said.

During their wars, various Sierra Leonean and Liberian rebels were based in Guinea. The head of Guinea's national observer mission for human rights, Aliou Barry, says the free flow of arms in the region means instability spreads faster.

Barry says Guinea has all of the ingredients to deteriorate into a Somali-like situation of total insecurity. As the president of Sierra Leone has said, if Guinea is unstable, Sierra Leone will be drawn into the conflict. If nothing is done in Guinea, Barry says, the country will fall down and take the region with it.

That is one of the reasons why the International Contact Group is calling for outside intervention in Guinea. There is recent precedent in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ivory Coast. But in all those cases, there were rival military factions to separate.

Guinea's instability exists within its armed forces and in how those forces respond to political protest. Local human-rights groups say security forces killed at least 157 protesters and raped dozens of women in breaking up an opposition demonstration September 28. Military leader Captain Moussa Dadis Camara was shot by members of the presidential guard 12 days ago. Acting-leader Defense Minister Sekouba Konate has moved quickly to improve military discipline and respect for civilians.

But the military government says its rejection of an outside intervention force is non-negotiable. Ruling council spokesman Colonel Moussa Keita says dispatching any foreign force to Guinea would be considered an attack on state authority and the nation's territorial integrity.

ECOWAS Leader Calls For Intervention Force In Guinea

Talks to resolve Guinea's political crisis resumed Sunday in Burkina Faso

The head of West Africa's regional alliance says foreign troops should be sent to Guinea to establish security, following the shooting of the country's military leader. Talks to resolve Guinea's political crisis resumed Sunday in Burkina Faso. The secretary general of the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, says Guinea needs a regional intervention force to prevent further violence. Mohamed Ibn Chambas said the preventative deployment of such a force would ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance and establish a safe

environment for the Guinean people. Chambas said the regional and international community is determined to help Guinea restore constitutional legality amid a deteriorating security situation. He added that a special force for order and security would protect citizens, defend Guinea's territorial integrity, and play a role in guaranteeing peace and security.

Chambas spoke in Ouagadougou where diplomats from ECOWAS, the United Nations, the African Union, and the International Contact Group met with members of Guinea's military government and its political opponents.

ECOWAS mediator Burkinabe President Blaise

Compaore is proposing a power sharing arrangement. But that has been rejected by the main opposition coalition because it says the deal gives too much power to the military and its allies. These are the first talks since the shooting of military leader Captain Moussa Dadis Camara 10 days ago. He survived the apparent assassination attempt by members of the presidential guard. But there has been little news on his condition and no official word on when he might return to Guinea. Defense Minister Sekouba Konate has taken charge in Captain Camara's absence and has spent much of the last week calling for military discipline and respect for

civilians. Regional diplomats hope the change will make Guinea's opposition more comfortable about sharing power with members of a military council that took power in a coup last December. ECOWAS Secretary General Chambas says worsening security risks are destabilizing not only Guinea, but also the region by undermining efforts to consolidate peace in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Ivory Coast. Humanitarian officials are preparing a regional contingency plan to feed as many as a-half-a-million people if Guinea's security situation collapses.

Standard Times Online

Wednesday, 16 December 2009

The Guinea Junta Has Become a Sick Joke...Neighbours Sierra Leone,Liberia Beware!

By Joseph Dumbuya

The attempt on the life of Guinea's military leader Moussa Daudis Camara by one of his guards shows how desperate the situation in that country is becoming. One may say that the enemy is at the very heart of the military establishment. Since then, the atmosphere of suspicion has developed in the leadership, with arrest of alleged enemy soldiers and the cowardly hunting down of civilians believed to be connected to Lt Toumba Diakite - who fired the shot at Daudis continues, which confirms the worse fears that the country is on the brink of degenerating further.

Those who have contributed to this state of affairs must bury their heads in shame. I mean the country's self-seeking politicians who competed to endorse the coup so that they can be considered for positions in the junta government of national milking. And the regional leaders - except Abdulai Wade of Senegal - who in a classic case of hypocrisy failed to effectively engage the junta by pretending it is not their business apart from half-hearted hints. One would not agree with President Wade's position.

Infact, it was shocking and horrifying to witness such support coming from him, but one would respect him for taking a position and being confident about it. If all the other leaders had been confident about their positions maybe the situation would have been different. Now that Daudis has come to embody all that has gone wrong with Africa - lies, corruption, intrigues and commission of serious crimes.

When he warmed his way to power, as one expects, he was pressured into promising to handover to an elected civilian government within a year. It is now common knowledge he was only trying to buy time. He promised not to contest the election but his soldiers cowardly gunned down over 150 defenseless civilians for daring to question his underhand motives. It beggars belief that the army could unleash such level of violence on the people who pays their salary and have taken an oath to protect.

As if that is not bad enough, Daudis was plotting to divert attention to something more sinister. A Sierra Leonean journalist Karim Bah who followed events in that country closely was alarmed at the new strategy of pitching one tribe against the other. The strategy is intentional to inflame tension among the tribes to get them fighting each other, and then continue with business as usual. Intrigues?

Yes, Daudis proposed another government of national unity after the September 28, killings. He was talking about the brand of national unity governments - dotting the continent - in which the leadership of opposition parties is brought into government. One that short-changes the electorate and the country, as is always the case, with a balloon cabinet and a huge budget to run it. Under such conditions the cabinet would leech off a huge chunk of the budget leaving more important sectors like social services to suffer.

Don't get me wrong, this writer is not against national unity government per se, but thinks we can have one without bring in the leadership of the opposition into government. What he is opposed to is the brand on the continent whereby the role of the opposition is changed to a junior partner in government. Come to think of it, this is a kind of one-party arrangement which leaves a country with no effective opposition. The greedy politicians have it both ways; they bring in one-party through the back door and still have the West cheering in blissful delusion.

The SLPP tried it under the first parliament of the second republic and killed-off the second and third largest parties - United National Peoples' Party (UNPP) and People's Democratic Party (PDP) - by the end of the second parliament. It is the same mess in Kenya where a national unity government has seen a doubling of the size of the cabinet and the cost of maintaining it becoming expensive by the minute. We are witnessing the same shamble in Zimbabwe where President Mugabe treating the opposition in the unity government as a no national affair.

At his party conference last week, he taunted the opposition by telling cheering supporters "We are in charge and no other." These are the bad examples Daudis was trying to carbon copy in his proposed national unity government. He knows that the politicians are more interested in their pockets than the people. He won them over all too easily when he seized power in December 2008 and there was no reason why he should think he cannot pull them this time around. But the last straw for Daudis is the real possibility of becoming an alleged war criminal and a Special Court for Sierra Leone kind of court hanging over his head.

Fortunately, Sierra Leone has the facilities and personnel, so it will be a lot cheaper for Guinea to try war criminals. The cold-blooded killing of defenseless people has not gone unnoticed and should definitely not go unpunished. The detention of a leading Human Rights Officer during the fact finding visit of the United Nations has not been helpful either. Does it? For all its ruthlessness, the junta is beginning to show the jitters.

Despite the junta's preparedness to cling on to power at all cost and the appalling situation this has brought on the country, it is definitely not beyond rescuing. A lot can be done to stop the rot but this will be at a price. The peaceful resistance to the junta has to continue. Guineans owe it to those who have laid their lives for democracy to keep the heat on the junta. It is ruthless, yes, one knows, but to do otherwise would amount to cowing to dictatorship which would only worsen the situation. After all, a docile group of people is providing the oxygen for dictatorship. Also, it will be a let down for those who have lost loved ones.

Civil society groups should send clear messages to the junta that they cannot go away with human rights abuses. While the junta plots, they should plan. This is where they should borrow a leaf from their counterparts in Kenya, compile and investigate abuses for possible prosecution. Most importantly, the regional leaders especially those of the Mano River Union have a duty to engage the junta and pile pressure on it to hold free and fair elections, one they should not take part in without any further delay.

What they cannot do is to leave the country on its own until it slides into chaos and come later to clear the mess. Suspension of Guinean from ECOWAS is not good enough, the organization should engage the junta to draw up a timetable for the return of democracy, say, the first quarter of 2010 or face sanctions like a traveling ban on the leaders of the junta government. ECOWAS leaders should come out of their comfort zones and tell Daudis and his khaki friends in their face they have to GOOOOO!.

President Johnson-Sirleaf and Ernest Koroma should take the lead in mobilizing such efforts because as the saying goes, "If you do not put out a fire on a neighbour's house, you might end up being consumed by it."

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 16 December 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Charges dropped against boy, 9, in Liberian rape

The Arizona Republic - Dec. 16, 2009 09:03 AM

A Maricopa County Juvenile court judge on Wednesday dropped charges against a 9-year-old boy accused of rape. Judge Dawn Bergin ruled that the boy, whose name is being withheld by The Republic given his age, is incompetent to stand trial and is unlikely to be "restored," that is, to be taught enough about the court system to understand the proceedings against him, within the time limits set by law. The other three boys accused in the rape of a 9-year-old girl at a west Phoenix apartment complex last summer, remain in the court system. All of the boys, ages 10, 13 and 15, and the victim are refugees from the African nation Liberia. The oldest, Steven Tuopeh, was charged as an adult and has a hearing scheduled Friday to discuss whether he should be returned to juvenile court or be evaluated for mental competency in adult court. The other two boys are undergoing restoration. The girl's parents have been arrested and charged with child abuse.

Local company helps in Liberia

Source: McClatchy-Tribune Information Services Date: December 16, 2009

Most societies recognize that early childhood is one of the most vulnerable stages in life -- and that very young children need specialized education for their social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional development. But in Liberia, where two recent civil wars have involved children as young as 10, there is no teacher training for early childhood development, said Leslie Falconer. And preschool is conducted more like second grade. Now Falconer is hoping to change all that with a revolutionary pilot program in Monrovia, Liberia, aimed at enhancing education and literacy for children from birth through 8. In partnership with Youth Action International, Falconer's Interlochen-based company, Mother Goose Time, is providing six months of professionally developed preschool curriculum for more than 300 teachers in 80 schools. The monthly packets include daily lesson plans, project sheets and hands-on activities and crafts such as child art supplies, music and books.

Guinea

Guinea soldier: I shot the president

Source: English General News Date: December 16, 2009

CONAKRY, Guinea_Guinea's former presidential guard chief said Wednesday he shot the country's military strongman earlier this month because the junta leader wanted him to take the blame for a massacre by troops of pro-democracy demonstrators in September. Lt. Abubakar "Toumba" Diakite told Radio France International that he shot Capt. Moussa "Dadis" Camara on Dec. 3 because the junta leader betrayed the democracy of the West African nation. "I shot him because at a certain point, there was a complete betrayal in my view, a total betrayal of democracy. He (Camara) tried to blame me for the events of Sept. 28," Diakite told RFI in his first broadcast comments since the assassination attempt. "I will not turn myself in because they do not want the truth to be known. They'd prefer to kill me." The former presidential guard commander, who is accused of shooting

Camara at point-blank range after an argument, remains at large, and it is unclear how many of the roughly 150 men formerly under his control will stay loyal to him. Diakite said Camara ordered the Sept. 28 massacre at a pro-democracy rally where numerous witnesses and several human rights groups say 157 people were killed and soldiers dragged women to the ground and raped them in broad daylight.

Guinea: Junta to fight peace-keeping troops

AfricaNews Wednesday 16 December 2009 - 09:00

Guinea's military junta has vowed to fight and repel peace-keeping troops which ECOWAS intends to deploy to preserve order in that country. Diplomats from the AU, UN, and the EU say Guinea needs regional military and civilian observers to help protect civilians and organize new elections. ECOWAS president, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, first proposed this peace-keeping force during Guinea's crisis talks in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso last week.

He said it would "ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance, restore constitutional legality, defend Guinea's territorial integrity, and play a role in guaranteeing peace and security." But the junta's permanent secretary, Colonel Moussa Keita told reporters in Conakry on Tuesday that "We will consider such deployment as a declaration of war against the Guinean people and we are prepared to fight back and beat such an aggression."

"Let them go ahead and plan whatever force they want, but they should be reminded that it is impossible for such a force to gain a foothold in Guinea without our permission and which we do not envisage at this point in time," Col Keita added, AP said.

Ivory Coast cuts roadblocks but trade still menaced

ABIDJAN, Dec 16 (Reuters) - Ivory Coast's military says it is dismantling checkpoints that block the country's roads, but businesses still see no end to the hassle and extortion that add millions to their transport costs. The roadblocks, which menace civilians, choke trade and discourage foreign investors, sprang up across Ivory Coast after the war of 2002-2003 divided a nation once seen as West Africa's most stable and attractive for business. Army Chief of Staff General Philippe Mangou held a ceremony last week to remove a roadblock in Abidjan, symbolically re-launching a campaign to dismantle some checkpoints nationwide.

"We've said that when there's an improvement in security, we would remove checkpoints to give traders ... free movement."

Local Media – Newspaper

Press Union Condemns Arrest and Detention Of Manager Of Local Printing House (The Informer, The Analyst, Public Agenda, Heritage, The News, Liberian Express, New Democrat)

- The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) has strongly condemned what it says appears to be an intimidating policy of the Liberian Government expressed in the harassment of commercial printing houses whenever there is a publication the government considers unfavourable.
- The PUL in a statement Tuesday said the latest arrest of the owner of Seamarco Printing Press by the National Security Agency (NSA) clearly represents a ploy to subject the printer to psychological torture and the rule of fear.
- The PUL disclosed that Mr. Michael Makinde has been in jail at the NSA since December 12.
- The statement termed Mr. Makinde's detention as an anti-media manoeuvrings by Government aimed at pushing printers to begin screening and editing newspapers' contents before printing, thereby leading to absolute censorship and an impediment to press freedom.
- At the same time, the PUL says it is carefully following the ongoing investigation surrounding the publication of the Plain Truth and its publisher, Syrenius Cephus and will remain engaged to ensure that transparent justice is served.

First State Witness Testifies In Angel Togba Murder Case

(New Democrat, The News, Daily Observer, National Chronicle, The Informer)

- The first state witness in the Angel Togba murder case, former Police Crimes Services Department Boss, Colonel Joseph Flomo has told the court that the 13-year-old did not hang herself.
- According to Colonel Flomo, Angel was an inch taller than the rail on which her guardians Hans Williams and his fiancée, Mardea Paykue claimed they found her hanging.
- Col. Flomo said claims by the couple that little Angel committed suicide was an attempt to hide the truth.
- Angel was found dead in November 2007, hanging from a rope in the bathroom of her guardians.
- Her guardians have since been accused of involvement in her death, a claim they have consistently denied.

President Sirleaf for Second Term... Unity Party Chairman Declares

(Daily Observer, The News)

- Speaking at a news conference on Tuesday in Monrovia, the Chairman of the ruling Unity Party said President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is to contest the 2011 elections.
- Dr. Charles Clarke said the party had resolved that the President should seek a second four-year term.
- It can be recalled that during the 2005 General and Presidential elections, President Sirleaf said she would only seek one term if elected.
- However, the President has over the year received several petitions but has not been definitive about her intention to seek re-election.
- Observers say the latest admission by the ruling party ends speculation about her political future.
- Pundits on the other hand say the party needs to first consider public sanction recommended for President Sirleaf in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia final report.
- The report recommends a 30-year ban from political activities for President Sirleaf and a number of politicians for their alleged involvement in country's brutal civil wars.

State-Owned University of Liberia Graduates Over 1,500 Today

(The Informer, Liberian Express)

- The state-owned University of Liberia (UL) is graduating over 1,500 students today after completing their studies in various academic disciplines.
- This is the 88th commencement convocation and the second under the administration of UL President, Emmet Dennis.
- Authorities at the University said 124 students will come from the post-graduate programmes including Regional Science, Law School, Education, College of Medicine and MBA Finance while the rest will receive under graduate degrees.
- On Monday, oath and honour ceremony for 13 graduating students of the A.M. Dogliotti College of Medicine was performed in Monrovia.

FAWE Signs MOU to Enrich Girls' Education

(Daily Observer)

- The head of the Forum for African Women Educationalists in Liberia (FAWE), Dr. Evelyn Kandakai says women must move away from small skills training to advanced vocational education if they are to be competitive.
- Speaking Tuesday when FAWE entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with seven technical vocational institutions around the country, Dr. Kandakai said women need to venture in advanced areas like carpentry, mechanic and masonry in order to compete with their male counterparts.
- The terms of the MOU provide for the enrolment of two hundred "out of school" girls to acquire technical vocational training skills at those institutions.
- Institutions that signed the MOU include the Booker Washington Institute, FAWE Vocational Training Centre in Grand Bassa County, Stella Maris Polytechnic, William V. S. Tubman University in Maryland County, Monrovia Vocational Training Centre and the LOIC.

Ruling Unity Party Chairman Denies Rift with President Sirleaf

(The News, Daily Observer)

- The Chairman of the ruling Unity Party, Dr. Charles Clarke has dismissed report of a rift between him and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.
- Dr. Clarke termed the report as untrue and clarified that he has a cordial working relationship with President Sirleaf although he has personal differences with her on some issues.
- The UP Chairman's clarification comes amidst reports that UP executives were disenchanted over continued move by the President to recruit foreign-based Liberians in government.

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

Health Ministry Launches 5-Day Intensive Polio Immunization Campaign

(The Inquirer)

- The Health Ministry Tuesday launched a five-day intensive polio immunization campaign across Montserrado County.
- The launch of the campaign comes at a time Government says it has discovered a new caseload of the polio disease in the County. The campaign will target children from zero to 59 months.

TRC Wants UN Security Council Endorse Prosecution of "War Criminals" in Liberia

(Heritage)

- The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia is requesting the United Nations Security Council to support and endorse the prosecution of "war criminals" indicted in its consolidated final report.
- The TRC's request was contained in a recommendation to the international community.

President Sirleaf Launches National Gender Policy Tomorrow

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will on tomorrow launch the Liberia National Gender Policy recently validated by stakeholders.
- The stakeholders including Civil society, line Ministries, the UN System, women's group, local and international NGOs following a concerted period of consultation across the Country validated the policy document for the endorsement of the Cabinet.
- The National Gender Policy is an indication of government's commitment to address gender inequality and women's empowerment issues adequately.
- It will also provide a mechanism for accountability within the government itself and other sectors with regards to eliminating all forms of gender-based discrimination.

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

Minister Korto Outlines Significance Of Draft Education Sector Plan

- The Ministry of Education says the draft Education Sector Plan of Liberia is designed to complement government's poverty reduction strategy and provides a framework through which the Ministry will meet the education deliverables.
- Education Minister Dr. Joseph Korto said the successful implementation of the plan will require what he calls parallel and continuous progress in the sector.
- Dr. Korto spoke Tuesday at a National Consultation Summit of the draft education sector plan of Liberia in Monrovia.

UP Chairman Still Enjoys President Sirleaf's Confidence

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

First State Witness Testifies In Angel Tokpah Murder Case

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

FAWE Signs MOU to Enrich Girls' Education

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

Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 09:45 am)***Local Market Women Face "Harassment" In Guinea**

- [SIC]Reports from the Liberia-Guinea border say Liberian market women doing cross border trade are now facing daily security harassment at the hands of Guinean security personnel.
- Some of the market women said the security harassment began following last week's publication by the Plain Truth newspaper that the Liberian Government was supplying the country's dissidents with arms and ammunitions.
- Foreign Ministry sources however said that frantic diplomatic efforts are underway to help abort a diplomatic crisis between Liberia and Guinea.

Health Ministry Launches 5-Day Intensive Polio Immunization Campaign

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

Truth FM *(News monitored today at 10:00am)***PUL Condemns Arrest and Detention Of Manager Of Local Printing House**

UN News

Thursday, 17 December 2009

Security Council lengthens UN tribunals for war crimes in Balkans and Rwanda



New York, United States of America

The Security Council today extended the mandates of the United Nations tribunals set up to deal with the worst atrocities committed during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s and the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

Both the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and for Rwanda (ICTR) were given until the end of 2012 to conclude all appeals procedures and trial judges are to finish their work by 30 June 2010.

The ICTY in The Hague has indicted 163 people, two of whom remain at large, one remains at the pre-trial stage, 24 are presently on trial in nine cases, and 13 have appeals pending.

Five trials are expected to be completed during 2010, three during 2011, and the remaining case – that of former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić – should be completed in late 2012, the President of the ICTY Judge Patrick Robinson told reporters earlier this month.

Eleven accused by the ICTR are still at large out of the 81 people indicted for serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in Rwanda, where an estimated 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and Hutu moderates were killed by Hutu militants, mainly by machete, during a period of less than 100 days.

The ICTR, based in Arusha, Tanzania, holds two recently arrested indictees who are awaiting trial, and has 26 prosecutions in progress with 49 cases completed – including nine that are pending appeal and eight acquittals.

Source: UN news

World Socialist Website

Thursday, 17 December 2009

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2009/dec2009/pers-d17.shtml>

The international league of war criminals

The issuing of a British arrest warrant for former Israeli Foreign Minister and current leader of the opposition Tzipi Livni is only the latest event confirming an international body of legal opinion that Israel should be tried for war crimes over its treatment of the Palestinians.

Livni was a member of the war cabinet during Operation Cast Lead, the offensive against Gaza between December 27, 2008 and January 18 this year. Some 1,400 Palestinians—the majority of them civilians, including 400 women and children—were killed, at least 5,000 people were injured, and 21,000 homes and other vital infrastructure were destroyed.

In October, the United Nations Human Rights Council endorsed a report by South African Judge Richard Goldstone stating that the war was “a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorise a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity both to work and to provide for itself, and to force upon it an ever-increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability.”

The warrant against Livni was issued by Westminster Magistrates' Court at the request of lawyers acting on behalf of 16 Palestinian plaintiffs. Livni was due to address the Jewish National Fund conference on December 13, but it is claimed she had cancelled her appearance some time ago due to a “scheduling conflict.” However, the New York Times reported Thursday that Livni was tipped off about the warrant and the threat of arrest.

This is far from the first time that an Israeli political or military figure has faced the threat of prosecution. In 2001, a warrant was issued in Belgium for the arrest of former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, former Army Chief-of-Staff Raphael Eitan and former head of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) Northern Command, Amos Yaron, for their roles in the Sabra and Shatila massacres in 1982.

In September 2005, former head of IDF Southern Command Doron Almog faced arrest in the UK for ordering the demolition of 59 civilian Palestinian homes. The arrest warrant was supposedly issued secretly under UK law, but Israeli diplomats were tipped off and Almog refused to leave his plane for two hours until it took off again for Israel.

An arrest warrant was also issued by Spain for seven Israelis involved in the July 2002 bombing of an apartment building in Gaza City that killed Hamas military leader Salah Shehadeh and 14 civilians, including his wife and several children. Moshe Ya'alon, the Israeli deputy prime minister and strategic affairs minister, and the former defence minister, Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, were amongst the accused.

In September, the Westminster Court was asked to issue an arrest warrant for Ehud Barak, Israel's defence minister, under the 1988 Criminal Justice Act, for his involvement in the Gaza War. The court accepted the assertion by the Foreign Office that he was a serving minister who would be meeting his British counterparts and therefore enjoyed immunity under the State Immunity Act of 1978.

Ex-ministers, not on official business, such as Livni, enjoy no such immunity. For this reason both Ya'alon and Avi Dichter, the public security minister and head of the Shin Bet security agency, have turned down invitations to events in Britain.

The government of Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has mounted a campaign to end all possibility of future arrests under universal jurisdiction provisions of the Geneva Conventions and other international laws. As far as Israel's allies are concerned, however, Tel Aviv is kicking against an open door.

Whenever there has been a prosecution threatened against an Israeli official, Washington has brought pressure to bear to prevent it. This led to the dropping of Belgium's charges against Sharon, et al and changes to Belgian law to lessen the possibility of similar prosecutions in the future. In June this year, a Spanish court shelved its investigation into the Gaza City bombings. In addition, the US led a block of six nations that voted against acceptance of the Goldstone report, while Britain and France abstained.

Britain's response to Israel's official protests against the warrant issued for Livni was more than merely fawning. It led to promises by Foreign Secretary David Miliband and Prime Minister Gordon Brown to change the law allowing non-citizens to be brought before British courts.

In the naked language of imperialist realpolitik, Miliband declared, "Israel is a strategic partner and a close friend of the United Kingdom. We are determined to protect and develop those ties." So much for Western claims to uphold international law and democratic rights!

As with the position taken by the US, much more is involved in the UK's response than mere loyalty to an ally. There is a basic issue of self-preservation.

Time and again Israeli spokesmen have warned that the leaders of the major powers—including George Bush and Tony Blair over Iraq and Brown and President Barack Obama over Afghanistan—are threatened with prosecutions under universal jurisdiction provisions. Netanyahu himself warned, regarding Goldstone's report, "It's not just our problem... If they accused IDF officers, IDF commanders, IDF soldiers, IDF pilots and even leaders, they will accuse you too. What, NATO isn't fighting in various places? What, Russia isn't fighting in various places?"

The concept of universal jurisdiction allows prosecution by international or national courts when the case is deemed to be a crime against humanity and not likely to be tried in the allegedly guilty party's own state. It underlies the creation of a range of institutions such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), established in 2002, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The US and other major powers have been happy to see these bodies utilized against those regimes they have targeted as hostile to their interests, such as Serbia. But like Israel, the US opposes universal jurisdiction over itself and therefore endorses neither the ICC nor the ICJ.

When Obama gave his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize last week, he argued explicitly for war as an instrument of US foreign policy, defending military action whose purpose "extends beyond self-defense or the defense of one nation against an aggressor." He insisted that such pre-emptive imperialist wars—of the kind already conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan—were essential to the US maintaining its position at the centre of the "architecture to keep the peace" set up in the aftermath of World War II.

This supposedly included abiding by "certain rules of conduct" and the US acting as "a standard bearer in the conduct of war." To this end, he made great play of having personally reaffirmed "America's commitment to abide by the Geneva Conventions" and "other international laws of war."

This is one lie amongst many. Some newspapers have claimed that Spain and Britain pioneered the concept of universal jurisdiction, with the 1998 extradition warrant by Spanish judge Baltasar Garzon for former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. In point of fact, the concept is rooted in the Geneva Conventions, adopted on August 12, 1949.

Regarding war crimes, the Conventions require signatory nations, such as Britain and the US, to pass the necessary laws and "provide effective penal sanctions" for persons "committing, or ordering to be committed" any "grave breaches" of the Conventions. Article 129 goes on to state that each signatory "shall be under the obligation to search for persons alleged to have committed, or to have ordered to be committed, such grave breaches, and shall bring such persons, regardless of their nationality, before its own courts."

That is why the Goldstone report made an explicit call to countries that are signatories to the Conventions to use their "universal jurisdiction" to search for and prosecute those Israelis, as well as leaders of Hamas, it accused of war crimes.

In reality, the imperialist powers and their allies operate as a de facto international league of war criminals—dedicated to their mutual defence and self-preservation. That is why the US rejects universal jurisdiction when it comes to its friends, as well as its own politicians and military personnel.

Now Brown and Miliband have made clear that they too will abrogate the independence of the courts in order to prevent any prosecution for war crimes that runs contrary to the strategic interests of British imperialism. In doing so, they may hope to save themselves from the possibility of being brought to justice. But they should know that some crimes are too great for prosecution to be avoided forever.

Chris Marsden

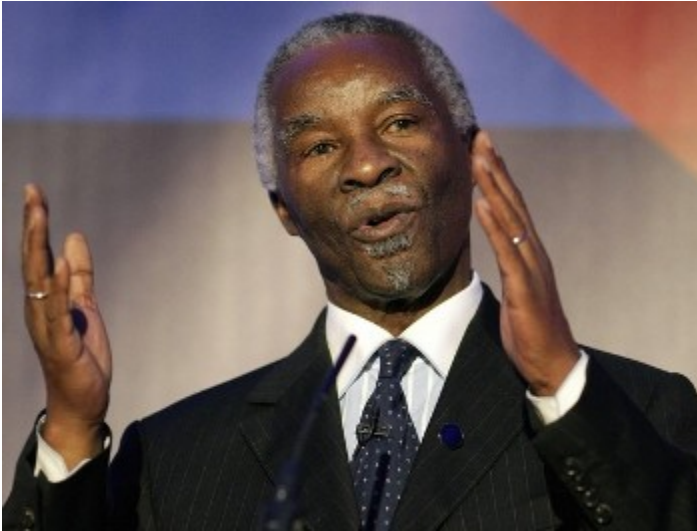
Sudan Tribune

Thursday, 17 December 2009

<http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article33484>

Mbeki softens stance on Darfur hybrid court proposal

December 16, 2009 (KHARTOUM) – The chairman of the African Union High Level Panel on Darfur (AUPD) Thabo Mbeki appeared to downplay the emphasis on implementing the recommendations included in the report compiled by his team this year including the hybrid court proposal to try the Darfur war crimes suspects.



The former South African president is currently in Sudan where he held talks with government officials and several political parties that focus primarily on the mechanisms needed to implement the report.

The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) endorsed the report last October and established the High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to execute its findings, comprising of Mbeki, former Burundian president Pierre Buyoya, and former Nigerian president General Abdul salami Abu-Bakr.

The AUPD has stated in its report that the Sudanese criminal justice response to Darfur was “ineffective and confusing” and that it “failed to obtain the confidence of the people of Darfur”.

“It will therefore require changes to be introduced within the Sudanese legal system to provide effective accountability for the different levels of criminal participation” the report of the AUPD stated.

The commission called for a “hybrid Criminal Court which shall exercise original and appellate jurisdiction over individuals who appear to bear particular responsibility for the gravest crimes committed during the conflict in Darfur, and to be constituted by judges of Sudanese and other nationalities”.

Last week the Sudanese president Omer Hassan Al-Bashir, who is subject of an arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court (ICC), said in an interview with ‘Russia Today’ TV that his country rejects the idea of foreign judges sitting on the bench for Darfur trials.

“We on our end expressed reservation on this point [hybrid court] because we have an independent judiciary and the judicial institution has the [final] say in forming any courts inside the borders to prosecute any Sudanese [citizen]. Mbeki understands our reservations” Bashir said.

“The proposed court is after achieving peace and reconciliation in accordance with the norms and customs of Darfur in resolving disputes and defusing differences and reconciliation is the master of all rulings” he added.

But Mbeki today denied that he is pressing Khartoum to accept the idea of creating hybrid courts for Darfur suggesting that the matter is up for negotiators to decide on it and denying that the proposal violated Sudan’s sovereignty as some officials have said.

“We should remember that these proposals, endorsed by the AU, are matters that are still going to be negotiated by the Sudanese themselves,” Xinhua news agency quoted him as telling reporters at a press conference following talks with Bashir.

“So when in the negotiating process, all of the parties negotiating peace in Darfur must consider these proposals,” he added.

Mbeki also hinted that his role will not be limited to the crisis in Darfur but will also include other areas that are not part of his original mandate.

“We will work out a program as to what the panel could do to accelerate the Darfur peace process, implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between north and south Sudan, and preparation for the general elections and referendum on self-determination for southern Sudan,” he said.

Sudan official news agency (SUNA) cited Mbeki as saying that Bashir assured him on achieving justice and prosecuting all war crime perpetrators with no impunity adding that the interim constitution does not contradict with amending any laws.

However, SUNA made no mention of the hybrid court proposal being tackled in Mbeki’s discussions with Bashir.

The statements by Sudanese officials on the justice portion of the report shows a rift with the Mbeki panel particularly on whether the constitution allows for the participation of non-Sudanese judges as well as the precedence of peace over justice.

The AUPD has concluded that “the objectives of peace, justice and reconciliation in Darfur are interconnected, mutually interdependent and equally desirable”.

The implementation of the hybrid court proposal will likely prove to be challenging to Mbeki and the AU in face of stiff resistance to the idea by Khartoum and the pro-government Sudanese bar association.

A number of pro-government columnists and independent figures have urged Khartoum to accept the proposal so as not to lose the support of the AU in the confrontation with the ICC.

The formation of the panel was made in the wake of the imminent issuance of the arrest warrant for Bashir by the ICC. Many critics along with Darfur rebels say that the pan-African body was seeking to circumvent the indictment and find an exit for the Sudanese president from prosecution.

The AU has criticized the arrest warrant and urged the UN Security Council (UNSC) to defer the indictment for 12 months under the Rome Statute. However, the council ignored the request prompting a decision by the AU summit last July not to cooperate with the Hague court even for countries that are signatories to the treaty.

During a briefing by the ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo at the UNSC this month, African countries on the council including Libya, Burkina Faso and Uganda urged Khartoum to comply with the panel’s findings.

However, some observers say that it is unlikely that the Sudanese government will come under pressure from the AU to implement the recommendations in light of the political support it historically afforded to Khartoum.

The Darfur rebel groups today deplored what they described as “blatant” bias by Mbeki in favor of Khartoum.

“This is a serious setback and very unfortunate position taken by Mbeki on the issue of justice. He now wants to make the hybrid courts he proposed a subject of negotiation. This is totally unacceptable. Our position has and always will be that justice is not on the table for compromise,” the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) spokesperson Ahmed Hussein Adam told Sudan Tribune.

“He [Mbeki] is now reneging on implementing the recommendations that he came up with right after meeting with Bashir. The Sudanese government is manipulating him as it always does with the AU,” Hussein added.

The JEM official posed a question “when will the Africans say enough is enough? When will they adhere to their constitutive Act? How can Mbeki propose something then throw it all behind him after talking to Khartoum? What credibility does he has left? He is now aligning his position with the statements made by Bashir last week on the hybrid court”.

JEM has previously refused to sit down with the panel during its fact finding mission citing lack of trust in its impartiality.

The Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) chief Abdel-Wahid Al-Nur said he is not surprised with the remarks coming out of Mbeki today.

“Before he chaired the panel he [Mbeki] was on Bashir’s side and against prosecuting him so what would you really expect? Even the AU which appointed him has never taken a firm stance on the genocide that took place against our people in Darfur. They just want to help Sudanese officials avoid prosecution” Al-Nur said.

“The ICC is the only credible venue to try those who committed the heinous crimes and massacres against the people of Darfur. Sudan now clearly said they don’t want the hybrid court so the AU must be brave enough and support the ICC. They saw firsthand how the [Sudanese] regime does not want justice” he added.

The SLM leader said that the AU “has wasted a golden opportunity to come clean on the issue of justice for their African people killed in Darfur”.

In his meeting with Darfur IDP’s, Mbeki has vehemently denied that the goal of his panel is to help Khartoum evade ICC prosecutions.

Alex De Waal, a Sudan expert who is also an adviser to the panel, writes in his blog ‘Making Sense of Darfur, about what they encountered in their discussions on justice with various parties they met.

De Waal gives examples of how the panel was initially met with intense skepticism on its impartiality by IDP’s and accusations that it is a cover up to protect Bashir from ICC.

“The allegation that Pres. Mbeki was intent on salvaging Pres. Bashir came up several times in the discussion. One woman said, “We fear you are here to defend the criminal Omar al Bashir.” One man stood up and said, “Seven members of my family were killed. How should I feel if Thabo Mbeki says that Omar al Bashir should not go to court?” De Waal writes.

“Pres. Mbeki challenged him, “from where did you get this information that I said that President Bashir should not go to court?” The man responded, “it is well known.” He then said that the Africans were the ones saying Bashir should not go to the ICC, citing the early June meeting in Addis Ababa to discuss the African position on the ICC. This reply did not satisfy Pres. Mbeki, who continued to press him, “I asked you a question. Please answer it. You made an allegation. From where did you get this information?” The man said it was the BBC”.

Last month the former Egyptian foreign minister Ahmed Maher Al-Sayed who was a member of the panel said that the AUPD goal “was to find a way out [to Bashir] from the dilemma of the ICC that sparked a great deal of controversy”.

“Incriminating the president is out of question and fundamentally unacceptable” the former Egyptian foreign minister said in an interview with the Egypt based Al-Masry Al-Youm newspaper.

Mbeki was reportedly outraged over Maher’s statements and sent a “strongly worded letter” to the Egyptian foreign ministry protesting them.

The former South African president will head to New York later this week to brief the UNSC on his report on Monday December 21st.