

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



Busy Howe Street in Freetown's Business District

**PRESS CLIPPINGS**

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

**as at:**

Wednesday, 17 January 2007

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



Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

## UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 16 Jan. 2007

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

### **International Clips on Liberia**

**BBC** Last Updated: Tuesday, 16 January 2007, 10:55 GMT

#### **Liberia: A year of slow progress**

By Ledgerhood Rennie

One year after Africa's first elected female head of state, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, started the massive job of rebuilding war-shattered Liberia, her government has made a good start but still faces huge challenges. Ashmun Street, one of central Monrovia's main streets, now has streetlights - a small but very useful sign of progress. At night, students can be seen underneath continuing their studies.

**AP** 01/15/2007 17:39:23

#### **Liberia's president says no reason for her country to try**

#### **Charles Taylor**

By HEIDI VOGT

MONROVIA – Liberia - Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said Monday that her country does not need to try former president Charles Taylor, who is already being tried by a U.N.-backed court for his role in atrocities committed in neighboring Sierra Leone. "He doesn't need to be tried here," Sirleaf said in an interview with The Associated Press. "Let him go through the due process that has already charged him on so many counts."

**VOA** 16 January 2007

#### **Liberia: Embattled Speaker Reacts**

By James Butty

The embattled speaker of Liberia's House of Representatives says he wants an independent investigation into his own accusations that the executive branch bribed some members of the House with U.S. five thousand dollars each to remove him from office. Speaker Edwin Snowe made his call Monday as some members of the House of Representatives boycotted the opening of the 2007 legislative session.

### **International Clips on West Africa**

#### **Ivory Coast minister wants reinstatement of banking services**

**ABIDJAN**, Jan 15, 2007 (AFP) - Ivory Coast's Finance Minister Charles Diby Koffi went Monday to the rebel headquarters in Bouake to begin talks on getting state financial and administrative services running again in rebel-held areas. "We are going to Bouake to start installing state financial services," Koffi told AFP by telephone, referring to state banks, the treasury, tax offices and other institutions shut down in territory held by the rebels since 2002.

## **Local Media – Newspapers**

### **“Renegade” Lawmakers Boycott Formal Opening, Held Parallel Session**

*(The News, The Analyst, Heritage, New Vision, The Informer, The Forum, The Diary, New Democrat, The Diaspora and The Inquirer)*

- A significant number of Representatives on Monday boycotted the formal opening ceremony of legislative functions and organized a parallel session in the Township of Virginia, outside Monrovia. Those who boycotted Monday’s session are said to be lawmakers who are pressing for the removal of Speaker Edwin Snowe.
- At the Centennial Memorial Pavilion, downtown Monrovia, the embattled Speaker presided over another opening session with about 16 representatives in attendance.
- In a related development, some members of the House of Senate on Monday boycotted the opening session of Senate on the grounds that the venue of the sitting violated Article 40 of the Liberian Constitution.

### **President Johnson-Sirleaf Marks One Year in Office**

*(The News, The Informer, New Democrat, New Vision, The Inquirer and The Analyst)*

- Today is exactly one year since the government of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took office. The government was inducted into office on 16 January 2006 following the October 2005 Presidential elections in which there were 22 presidential candidates. Information Minister Dr. Laurence Bropleh said the government has made significant progress in its first year.

### **ICRC Constructs Shelters and Distributes Food and Farming Tools in Lofa**

*(The Inquirer)*

- The International Committee of the Red Cross is presently constructing thousands of shelters for returning refugees in Lofa County. The ICRC is also distributing food items and farming implements for them.

## **Local Media – Radio Veritas** *(News monitored yesterday at 18:45 pm)*

### **President to Deliver “Special Statement” on First Anniversary**

- The Press Secretary to President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Mr. Cyrus Badio informed journalists that the Liberian leader would deliver a “Special Statement” after a Thanksgiving Service at the First United Methodist Church and later attend a special jamboree under the auspices of the Ministry of Gender and Development, in commemoration of the first anniversary of her government.
- In another development, Mr. Badio indicated that the Executive Branch of Government had nothing to do with the leadership saga at the House Representatives but wanted the interest of the Liberian people to be put first.

*(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)*

### **“Breakaway” Lawmakers to Boycott Session at Centennial Pavilion Today**

- Some 43 members of the House of Representatives seeking to remove, as Speaker of the House, Mr. Edwin Melvin Snowe, resolved not to attend today’s Session at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion.
- Speaking to reporters yesterday, the Representatives mentioned that they would not sit under the authority of Speaker Snowe as he has already stated that they opting to remove him.
- A spokesman of the “breakaway” Lawmakers, Maryland County Representative, Dr. Bhofal Chambers announced that they would convene the House Session at the Unity Conference Center in Virginia, outside Monrovia where the Senators were meeting and that their “Resolution” to unseat the Speaker would be discussed by Plenary whether the Speaker attends or not.

*(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)*

**"Beleaguered" House Speaker Gives Evidence on Bribery on CD-ROM**

- Addressing a news conference yesterday, "beleaguered" House Speaker Edwin Snowe provided what he called "partial evidence" to claims that some Representatives had been bribed with US\$5,000 to remove him from office.
- Speaker Snowe presented media institutions with copies of the CD which he claimed contains recording of Representatives, Dr. Ketteh-Kumen Murray and Samuel Bondo's admittance that they had received the amount each to execute his removal, adding that other testimonies would be made during an investigation into the matter.

*(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)*

**Senators Shun Opening Session on Constitutional Grounds**

- In a memorandum, a group of 9 Senators yesterday in Monrovia announced that they would boycott the opening of the Senate Session slated to be held at the Unity Conference Center in Virginia, citing Constitutional violation.

*(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)*

**Police Apprehend Ringleader of Cancelled Demonstration**

- Liberian National Police Spokesman Alvin Jask confirmed that the security forces arrested the Forum for the Establishment of a War Crimes Court in Liberia Chairman Mulbah Morlu, the ringleader of the planned demonstration which the Government cancelled due to security reasons.

*(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)*

*Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Weah Karpeh at [karpeh@un.org](mailto:karpeh@un.org).*

## Voice of America

Tuesday, 16 January 2007

### Analysts Generally Give Liberia's Johnson-Sirleaf Good Marks; But Point to Failures

By Nico Colombant

Dakar

One year into the term of Liberia's post-war President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, many foreign analysts and aid workers are joining Liberians in giving her good marks for a job well done. But they also point to several mistakes and warn of many challenges ahead. Nico Colombant reports from our West Africa Bureau, in Dakar.



Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is congratulated by Liberians in Monrovia

slipped under the rug. There are just efforts to address problems before they become too large."

In terms of governance, Tania Bernath from London-based Amnesty International, says Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has reacted very quickly to anything that could be seen as an internal obstacle to her aim for a better, more transparent, more efficient and less corrupt Liberia.

"When problems have arisen, there has been an effort to address them, immediately," she said. "Maybe, if there is ethnic tension, then a commission was formed immediately. There have not been delays on things and I think with former governments that has been a problem. Things have not been slipped under the rug. There are just efforts to address problems before they become too large."

Phillip Samways, from the British charity group Oxfam, says President Johnson-Sirleaf has sometimes almost reacted too quickly.

One of her promises during her Inauguration Day speech was to quickly restore electricity. This has only happened in a small part of the capital, Monrovia.



Liberian youth hope for better future

"This is serving a very small [part] of the slightly better, wealthier end of the city, with some limited amount of street lighting and some traffic lights. It is high profile," he said. "The president actually said in her inauguration speech, this government will get power back on within six months. And, they did actually achieve that, but at a very considerable cost. The generators they brought in are not as efficient as they had hoped and the fuel bills are just exhausting their meager financial resources at the moment, so it is possible that the power may have to go back off again."

Samways says many in the aid community feel some of the electricity money may have been better spent on the gargantuan task of getting more schools, roads and hospitals operational.

He says most slum-dwelling Monroviaans and Liberians outside the capital have seen little immediate improvement to their lives since the newly-elected government took office.

Economists point out the new president has been working on renegotiating resource contracts for the long term and also creating a better business environment.

Another one of President Johnson-Sirleaf's first actions was to fire hundreds of officials from the Finance Ministry, because of alleged corruption and incompetence.

Rolake Akinola, from the London-based Control Risks Group, says she has also worked closely with foreign monitors in key ministries, despite the risk of alienating even more Liberian civil servants.



VOA Photo - N. Colombant

"It is quite important to know that Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has faced a lot of obstacles. A lot of externally-backed policies are not entirely popular with the Liberian population, itself," she said. "These are really hard, crunching reforms we are talking about and we do know that Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, through her hard-hitting reforms, is stepping on a lot of big, heavy political toes. She will continue to face an uphill task. But, as long as the country's external donors continue to be involved and engaged in the process of reform, I think we should see major breakthroughs over the next couple of years in key areas."

Liberians depend on foreign aid

Aid workers warn there is a gap right now between emergency funding that is drying out and longer term development aid that has yet to start arriving as massively as is needed.

They also say tens of thousands of former fighters remain outside the rehabilitation process that was supposed to give them training and jobs. Some of these youths initially protested President Johnson-Sirleaf's election victory, alleging widespread cheating, even though no proof was given. But resentment and frustration remains, which some analysts say, could boil over into street protests and higher criminality.

## TIMES

Tuesday, 16 January 2007

### **No Trial For Taylor In Liberia**

(MONROVIA, Liberia) — President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said her country does not need to prosecute former president Charles Taylor because he is already being tried by a U.N.-backed court for his role in atrocities committed in neighboring Sierra Leone.

Sirleaf has said that she is more focused on moving Liberia forward than on punishing the rebel leader who launched a bloody insurgency in 1989. She said Monday that the Sierra Leone charges could stand in for any that could be levied in Liberia.

"He doesn't need to be tried here," Sirleaf said in an interview with The Associated Press. "Let him go through the due process that has already charged him on so many counts."

Sirleaf, Africa's first female president, has been seen as a reformer and peacemaker in Liberia since she took office one year ago.

But some in the international community have criticized her for being slow to ask for Taylor to be extradited last year from Nigeria — where he was in exile — to Sierra Leone, where he was charged with backing rebels who burned villages, hacked off people's limbs and raped women systematically during that country's brutal decade-long war.

Taylor's trial by the Sierra Leone Special Court is scheduled for later this year in The Hague, Netherlands. He has pleaded not guilty.

Taylor's fighters have been accused of similar acts in his homeland but Liberia has made no move yet to try its former president. After taking control by force, Taylor won elections that handed him the presidency in 1997.

Rebels took up arms against him three years later, and Taylor fled to Nigeria in 2003. Last March, he was captured as he tried to slip out of Nigeria after it agreed to hand him over to authorities seeking his prosecution.

"Don't forget that our war was regional, you know, so if you get charged in Sierra Leone, chances are the war was part of the same Liberian war," Sirleaf said in an interview at her office in the capital, Monrovia.

"If you get charged there, you get judged guilty or acquitted there," she said. "It has the same kind of implication and ramifications for the other countries that were involved in this cross-border war."

Liberia has set up a countrywide Truth and Reconciliation Commission to compile testimony by both victims and perpetrators in the West African country's 14-year civil war and that group may eventually make recommendations to the government to try certain serious offenders.

"If that process leads to those whose rights have been infringed upon insisting on judgment through due process, then the (commission) will insist on that and due process will take place," Sirleaf said.



## Voice of America

Tuesday, 16 January 2007

### **A Call for a Special Court in Liberia for Charles Taylor**

By Joe De Capua

Washington

In an interview with the associated press, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf says her country does not need to try former leader Charles Taylor. President Sirleaf says she'd rather concentrate on rebuilding Liberia rather than bringing Taylor to court.

Taylor is scheduled to go on trial later this year for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity relating to neighboring Sierra Leone's civil war. He'll be tried by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone at a courtroom at The Hague.

David Crane is the former chief prosecutor for the Sierra Leone Special Court. He says a special court is now needed in Liberia. He spoke to VOA English to Africa Service reporter Joe De Capua about president's Sirleaf's position on not holding a Taylor trial in Liberia.

"Certainly I respect President Sirleaf's intentions and strategic looking forward, but it's been my experience that you have to have truth plus justice to have a sustainable peace. And even though the truth is starting to come out about how Charles Taylor not only destroyed Sierra Leone, but Liberia. There's going to have to be justice for the 600,000 or so Liberians, whose lives were destroyed during the tenure of Charles Taylor. So he destroyed two countries and the Special Court for Sierra Leone is addressing what he did to Sierra Leone. And now it's eventually time for justice to be done in Liberia," he says.

Crane says it's not only about Taylor. He says a number of other individuals who allegedly bear responsibility for what happened in Liberia are still in the country. Some, he says, are in government.

But would trying Taylor in Liberia be comparable to ripping scabs off old wounds? Crane says, "It won't actually. Yes, it will cause a temporary pain. It's like ripping off a Band-Aid. The pain goes away quickly and the air allows the wound to heal...certainly these types of things cause an initial pain, but again, we have to think that rule of law or more powerful than the rule of the gun."

He adds, "The people of Africa matter. And that if cynical warlords and leaders abuse them and commit atrocities against them, they know that their lives matter now. And the lives of 600,000 Liberians matter.

Crane is a professor of law at the Syracuse University College of Law.

## Voice of America

Tuesday, 16 January 2007

### Guinea Strike Leaders Call for President to Hand Over Power

By Jordan Davis

Dakar

Guinea's trade unions say they are waiting for a response to their demand that President Lansana Conte hand over power and create a new national unity government. That is one of several conditions labor groups say must be met or else they will intensify a general strike that has paralyzed the country since last week. For VOA, Jordan Davis reports from our regional bureau in Dakar.

Union leaders met with Muslim religious leaders in the capital Conakry, hoping to gain their support.

Strike leaders say if the work stoppage is not settled by Thursday, they will extend the strike to the mining sector. Guinea is the world's largest exporter of bauxite, a key source of aluminum. The industry is critical to the country's economy.

Strike organizers have also threatened to organize mass demonstrations.

The capital Conakry is largely quiet. Officials in the capital have banned public demonstrations and stepped up police patrols. Dozens of people in the city's suburbs have been arrested in recent days following sporadic clashes with security forces.



In a list of written conditions addressed to President Lansana Conte late Monday, unions urged the leader set up a new government led by a civilian prime minister.

Mr. Conte is in his seventies and in ill health. After a number of government reorganizations in the past year, many observers say he is becoming increasingly erratic.

Lansana Conte is no longer able to handle his responsibilities as president, says Alioune Tine with a Dakar-based human rights association known as RADDHO.

Lansana Conte (File)

Labor groups called the strike to protest alleged corruption after the president personally visited a jail to free two political allies held in a corruption investigation.

Unions are also calling for the government to stop spiraling inflation. Life for ordinary Guineans has become increasingly difficult because salaries have not kept up with the rising price of basic goods.

The strike is the third in a little more than a year. The work stoppage was called by the country's main unions, representing most private and public sector workers.

Since Wednesday, government offices, banks and shops in major cities across the country have shut down.

Guinea was ranked the most corrupt African country in a 2006 survey by Berlin-based Transparency International.

## The Student Operated Press

Tuesday, 16 January 2007

<http://www.thesop.org/index.php?id=3955>

### **From Revolutionary to President: Mengistu Haile Mariam**

By Krzys Wasilewski

As moral authorities are fiercely debating whether it was right to hang Saddam Hussein, a number of other former dictators patiently await their fate. Some are held in custody of one of international tribunals. Like Charles Taylor – former president of Liberia – who changed his comfortable presidential palace into air-conditioned, DVD-equipped cell in the Hague. Some has already escaped the justice – passing away peacefully, like Chile's Augusto Pinochet or Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic. Others still, may enjoy their retirement, untroubled by anyone, in some remote places. This is how one of Africa's bloodiest dictators, Mengistu Haile Mariam, spends the autumn of his life. Although last week he was sentenced to life in prison, Ethiopia's former ruler does not seem to be worried. When the verdict was read out in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, Mengistu was thousands of miles away, basking on a terrace in his private villa in Zimbabwe. In 1991, when terrible famine struck Ethiopia and forces from neighboring Eritrea and Tigray were at the doorstep of the capital, the dictator was among the first to flee the country. Safe heaven was offered in Zimbabwe, where another of Africa's “big man,” Robert Mugabe, was carrying on his own social experiment. Mengistu has remained there ever since, bluntly refusing to go back and face a trial.

Should Mengistu return to Ethiopia, he would have an interesting story to tell. His tremendous career began in 1974 when he and a group of other officers, called the Derg, ousted emperor Haile Selassie. The monarch was a Second World War hero and widely viewed as a reminder of the nation's almost two-thousand-year long history, but lost the entire support when his government was virtually impotent against drought, and famine that followed, leaving hundreds of thousands of people to starve. It was Mengistu – a young army sergeant infected with socialism – to save the nation and give it back the respect and fame that it had always deserved. Officially, after the coup, the Derg was in charge; practically, three people, including Mengistu, accumulated the entire power. Year by year the ambitious sergeant eliminated his comrades, until in 1977, he became the sole ruler.

However, things were getting from worse to worse. The socialist dream that was to reshape Ethiopia completely and make it the most prosperous country on the continent, turned into a nightmare. The drought from 1974 had deeply exacerbated the already underdeveloped agriculture. Once the granary of the region, now had to rely on foreign aid. Of industry there was no sign – the money borrowed from the Soviet Union instead of building power stations, eventually funded new tanks, planes, and guns. In fact, if Mengistu's regime succeeded in anything, it was the military – by 1980, Ethiopia could boast the biggest army in the region. A big army as it was, it did not prevent the country from the crisis inside. When the first guerrilla attacks began in 1983, Mengistu resorted to terror to stabilize the country. That meant armed soldiers on the streets, mass arrests and execution without trial. In what later would be called the seventh worst genocide in world history, over 1,500,000 people lost their lives. The Red Terror, as the campaign was labeled, and pointed at not only the rebels and ordinary citizens; a number of Derg top apparatchiks were executed for alleged treason. After one year, the rebellion, real and imaginative, was crushed.

Mengistu got rid of the opposition, the crisis remained though. Another famine, this time more fierce than before, struck the north of Ethiopia. Millions of people, who survived the Red Terror, now had to die slowly of starvation, everything before the dictator's very eyes. As if nothing had happened, Mengistu and his disciples ordered a plane packed full with whiskey to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the revolution. One bottle could have saved dozens of lives; instead every toast raised by the ministers or Mengistu himself sentenced another man, woman and child to death.

September 10, 1987 began a new era in Ethiopia's history. On this day, a new constitution was introduced and Mengistu Haile Mariam proclaimed himself the president of the newly established People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The Soviet Union and other countries of the socialist block welcomed the move. However, just like the communist motherland in Europe, also Mengistu's Ethiopia was on the brink of collapse. The end came four years later. With the rebels launching a full-scale offensive and the Soviet Union dissolved, Mengistu was left alone. The big army, which the sergeant-turned-president boasted about few years earlier, now was in disintegration – buying brand new tanks and planes, Mengistu had forgotten that none of his soldiers knew how to operate the complicated machines.

Mengistu's presidency was abruptly ended in May 1991. The rebels from the Marxist Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) along with the foreign forces conquered the capital, facing no major resistance from the Ethiopian army. The defenders might have fought even less strongly, had they known that their president and commander-in-chief in one person had long fled the country. Being aware of the fate awaiting him, Mengistu eagerly accepted the personal offer from Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe and by the time the first rebel forces reached Addis Ababa, he had been safe in a palatial villa on the suburbs of Harare. Less lucky were other Derg officials. According to one of the first decrees issued by the new authorities, all of them were arrested and accused of conducting genocide and treason. At the same trial that charged Mengistu, over 70 former Derg members were sentenced to life in prison.

It is highly unlikely that Mengistu will ever return to Ethiopia. Were he to do so, he would establish a precedent in Africa's long and troublesome history of dictatorship rule. Neither Idi Amin, Uganda's notorious ruler responsible for the death of 500,000 people, nor Zaire's all-time president, Mobutu Sese Seko, nor dozens of other Africa's big men ever met justice. Amin died peacefully in exile in Saudi Arabia, whereas Mobutu ruled Zaire until the last day of his life, watching his empire crumbling to dust. So far, only one African former dictator, Liberia's Charles Taylor, has been arrested and put on a trial; and even this after years of tortuous negotiations with the Nigerian government where Taylor found asylum. Now, in the Hague, the Netherlands, he is awaiting the verdict of the International Tribunal of Justice.

When Mengistu sized power, he was only 37 years old. His ruthless rule left Ethiopia destabilized, devastated and demoralized. Sixteen years after he fled the country in a desperate escape, his dark legacy still haunts Ethiopia: the EPRP, which ousted the dictator, stamps on any form of democratic opposition.

At 70 years old, Mengistu can enjoy life to its fullest, unlike millions of Ethiopians whom he once promised paradise on earth.

## African News Dimension

Tuesday, 16 January 2007

### Saddam's Demise, Lesson For Mugabe

By Itayi Garande

My commentary on the execution of Saddam Hussein's hanging sparked a lot of controversy amongst TalkZimbabwe.com readers. Many felt that Saddam should have been spared execution and others felt that the comparisons I made between Saddam's hanging and Mugabe's impending prosecution were not only unfair but incongruous.

George Bachinche a regular commentator on the website felt that "I lacked scholarship in thinking which ... explains [my] failure to see that the West made a terrible blunder in Iraqi, by trumping up false charges against Hussein, notably the issue about the non-existing weapons of mass destruction". He also felt that I was trying "to sound international but [are] very provincial in thought". Bachinche also felt that I "suffer from racial inferiority complex and ... think all people who are not Europeans should be like [me] - who never question the political conduct of the West."

When I read Bachinche's comments for the first time I felt offended by some of his remarks. But the more I read what he had written, the more I realised that Bachinche did not take time to read and understand my ideas. Many of his ideas lose when actually reasoned out. Bachinche's hatred for the West had made him blind to many of the problems that we are facing in Zimbabwe. To attribute everything to U.S. or U.K. policy is intellectually foolish or dishonest or both. Although it is a common feature of anti-Americanism or anti-Westernism, it paradoxically invests Americans or the West with a god-like power they do not in fact possess. To accuse me of being brainwashed by the West because I decided to criticise Mugabe is irresponsible. I do not have to like one or the other. There are many criticisms levelled against the West that I agree with. In my last contribution I expressed my sentiments against the death sentence [including governor Bush's executions in Texas, but that's American law]. I was also highly critical of the former U.S. defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld's dogmatic insistence on transforming the U.S. military into a super hi-tech organisation with fewer people and trying new sophisticated weaponry on warbeds like Iraq. For that alone, Rumsfeld should have been sacked long ago and his policy reversed.

Similarly, TalkZimbabwe commented on prisoner abuse in Abu Ghraib and at Guantanamo Bay. Our conscience is rightly outraged, or it should be, over the lack of intervention in Darfur. There are many other examples to cite. None of these examples, however, bears on the reasonableness of both the moral and strategic case in 2003 for removing Saddam or today's case for removing Robert Mugabe. Bachinche failed to understand the nature of the charges against Saddam Hussein. Firstly, he implies that Saddam was tried for possessing weapons of mass destruction. Weapons of mass destruction might have been used as a pretext for going into Iraq, but these were never mentioned in Saddam's trial and had nothing to do with Saddam's execution. Saddam's trial was for genocide – mainly the murder of 180,000 Kurds in the late 1980s. This is well-documented. Secondly, Bachinche argues that "the West made a terrible blunder in Iraqi, by trumping up false charges against Hussein, notably the issue about the non-existing weapons of mass destruction". Coming from someone who accuses me of 'lacking scholarship', this is sad. Saddam was not charged and tried by the West. His empire might have been brought down by the West, but the trial was by an Iraqi interim government in an Iraqi court. The Coalition Provisional Authority voted to create the Iraqi Special Tribunal (IST), consisting of five Iraqi judges, on

December 9, 2003, to try Saddam Hussein and his aides for charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. I sincerely believe that there was a genuine desire to rescue the Iraqi people from Saddam, to improve their human rights, to topple a monstrous dictator. And certainly there was an ambition to change the political calculus in the Middle East and establish a democracy there. All of these considerations and others combined in the overall decision to act against Saddam. Each one of these considerations may have involved a miscalculation. None, however, was unreasonable and none was remotely dishonourable. I also think that those who criticise Mugabe have a genuine desire to improve the human rights of Zimbabweans and topple a monstrous dictator. And certainly there is an ambition to change the political calculus in the African region and establish a democracy there. Zimbabweans have nothing to apologise for if they hate Mugabe. You can hate the Bush administration or Tony Blair's labour government, but you are still right to oppose Mugabe's brutality.

### **The trial of Hussein**

The trial and execution of Saddam obviously had its own inconsistencies, but that does not mean we should forget about the charges levelled against him. It's difficult to know where to place one's sympathies. The West's insistence on ensuring that all of the legal niceties took place seems second nature to all of us, where we attempt to avoid any possible criticism through the emphasis on process. The Iraqis, naturally, did not see the value in adhering to processes intended to protect those whose guilt had more possibility of being debatable, and saw little value in delaying the inevitable. It's a story of a culture clash as well as power plays, and it's rather gripping even for those of us who have followed the story closely.

No matter what we feel, Iraqis tried and executed Saddam and achieved justice in their own eyes. By denying the Iraqis the right to try Saddam, we are guilty of the charges we level against the West. One has to understand that the death of Saddam sent a clear message to the Iraqis. Maliki no doubt wanted to end speculation of Saddam's return to power if the sectarian conflicts worsened, speculation that Saddam himself provoked. The existence of a deposed tyrant acts as a destabilising force to the successor government, no matter what form it takes. As long as Saddam remained alive, he existed as a symbol of Restoration to Ba'athist hard-liners. And without a doubt, the crimes Saddam committed personally against the members of the new government had an effect on their decision-making. Saddam had attempted to assassinate Maliki at one point.

### **Mugabe v Saddam**

There are a multitude of comparisons we can make between Mugabe and Saddam and I do not see how Bachinche can fail to realise this. For decades, both Mugabe's and Saddam's secret agents silenced people. They both used the tools of tyrant and terrorist: torture, assassination, mass murder and the documented evidence mounts. Many Iraqis testified at Saddam's trial. There is mounting evidence against Mugabe from the time of Gukurahundi to the present day. Bachinche's love for Mugabe has made him blind to all the crimes Mugabe has committed. Names of victims killed by the Mugabe regime are published everywhere. We will need to write another article with all these names and the reasons why they were killed. Supporting the removal of Saddam Hussein was entirely morally right. He was the most brutal and murderous dictator in the second half of the 20th century and infinitely worse than Ian Smith in Zimbabwe ever dreamed of being. It is tragic that the U.S. has made such a mess of the post-war phase of Iraq. However, even here it is important to assign moral blame correctly. Since the short conventional war in Iraq ended in 2003, the vast majority of Iraqis who have died have not been victims of American fire but of terrorists, ethnic militias or opportunist criminals.

The trial and execution of Saddam, whether comparable to Mugabe's impending trial or not, sends one clear statement – "Heads of States and governments will no longer kill with impunity".

They will be brought to book like any other citizen. With Saddam's execution, the myth of the Strong Man takes another major hit. Mugabe's Strong Man antics have started to wear off. The realisation that he is not exactly above the law has made him start to panic. He has started placing ex-army commanders in civilian institutions and his focus is now 100% on the military – a sign of panic.

The Arab Strong Man (Saddam), the Zimbabwean Strong Man (Mugabe), the fill-in-the-blank Strong Man—claim that obedience and submission lead to ideological or nationalist victory. It's a scam, of course, a scam to sustain personal power. Ultimately, the tyrant's show is narcissism maintained by ruthlessness and the secret police. We all believed them at one stage or if we didn't we did not have recourse to law for their crimes. Today that is over. The International Criminal Court (ICC) and the various national full or ad hoc tribunals serve as reminders that the time for impunity is over and no one is above the law.

In the past the Strong Man expected to die in one of two ways—with a 9 millimetre ballot (i.e., assassination or suicide) or old age. Hitler went by his own hand; Stalin and Mao succumbed in bed. Today leaders will be brought to book before they die. No-one envisaged the trial of Charles Taylor or that Kamuzu Banda would one day be deposed. Mobutu Sese Seko is no more. Mengistu is panicking moving around in Zimbabwe. Democracies have begun to replace tyrannies and Mugabe's tyranny is one amongst a few tyrannies still existent today. Mugabe will not have the dignity to die in office. The wave of democratic forces is too strong – even Zanu PF is beginning to feel the pinch. Mugabe has one alternative if he is to avoid indictment – he could commit suicide, but he is too proud to do that as it will leave a bad legacy. It will show that behind all that tough talking was a weak and vulnerable man. This is no option for him.

As I said in my last contribution, Mugabe's demise is imminent. He will answer to charges of corruption, torture, and genocide (in Matabeleland – yes it was genocide). This is no longer a possibility but an inevitability. It is difficult to envisage the scenario, but no tyrannies exist forever. History has taught us that. This has happened elsewhere—in Malawi, in Serbia, in Liberia. The list is endless. It's history-altering news. For terrible centuries, the yin-yang of tyrant and terrorist (Saddam) has trapped the Middle East. In 2003, the U.S.-led coalition (whether you like it or hate it) began the difficult but worthy effort of breaking that tyrant's and terrorist's grip, and offering another choice in the politically dysfunctional Iraq. The people of Zimbabwe have begun the difficult but worthy effort of breaking Mugabe's tyrannical grip. The politically and economically dysfunctional Zimbabwe will be replaced by another system – a system that will have Mugabe and his henchmen as spectating prisoners.

Saddam's demise serves as object lesson and example: to avoid Saddam's fate means political liberalisation. The message extends beyond the Middle East. At some reptilian level, destructive despots like Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe also understand it.

Many of us are reminded that Mugabe will definitely go. We just wonder how he will go and to what effect to his family and all his Zanu PF cadres. Remember, at one time, Saddam compared himself to Babylon's Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar. Now, the man who threatened the Mother of All Battles turned out to be a frightened, petty scoundrel. In late 2003, Saddam was captured without firing a shot; he faced the rope with strange surprise and a strain of fear. This is an important reminder to Robert Mugabe that he will face the same fate – people of Zimbabwe are watching the untouchable Strong Man crumble. Mugabe will crumble like Saddam.

Saddam's victims aren't forgotten. Saddam's trial for mass murder and eventual execution in Dujail, Iraq, gave the survivors and the victims' relatives a forum to establish the facts. Mugabe's

victims aren't forgotten. Mugabe's trial for mass murder, corruption and torture and his will give Zimbabweans a forum to establish the facts.

To Bachinche, I wish to make one point clear: "Take time to analyse the facts before you comment. It helps make your argument stronger". Here are some of your ridiculous comments. I hope you see how insensible they were.:

- "The sentence upon which Saddam was hanged had to do with the execution of people who attempt to assassinate him."

- "By the way, with a name like yours, [Itayi Garande] if you had ventured into rural Matabeleland during the 1980s, you would have been killed by the dissidents, for the simple reasons of being non-Ndebele."

- "Mugabe has presented his case, quite eloquently at international fora, notably the UN General Assembly, and if you follow the news, he has always received ovation from the gallery."  
To all the Bachinche's out there I say: Let Mugabe look upon Saddam at the end of the rope—and despair.

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