

**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:

Friday, 17 July 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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The Exclusive
Friday, 17 July 2009

The Taylor Testimony...

Day 2

*Johnson-Sirleaf Accused

On his second day of evidence at his war crimes trial in the Hague, the former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, has given his first account of the circumstances surrounding his escape from a jail in the United States in the 1980s. He also told the court that the Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was one of the founding members of the rebel group, NPFL, which eventually overthrew the regime of Samuel Doe.

One of the most controversial
Continued page 2



The Taylor Testimony

From front page

episodes of Charles Taylor's political life took place in the mid 1980s, though not a key part of his trial before the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting at the International Criminal Court in the Hague, Taylor talked about his imprisonment and eventual escape from detention.

He told his war crimes trial that he had fled to the United States after being accused of embezzling \$900,000 as head of the government's public procurement Bureau, the Government Services Agency (GSA) in the regime of Samuel Doe. The Liberian government submitted an extradition request and he was jailed for fifteen months in the state of Massachusetts. In November 1985, he disappeared from the prison, provoking speculation that he had been helped by agents of the Central Intel-

ligence Agency, the CIA. He explained that his escape began when a prison guard appeared without warning in his cell.

Describing his preparation for the insurrection in 1989 which toppled the regime of Samuel Doe, Mr Taylor said 168 men loyal to him trained for nearly two years at a camp in Libya. He visited the camp every three to four months while he was based in the state of Burkina Faso. He also alleged that the current Liberian president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, was not merely a financial backer of his rebel group, the NPFL. She was, he said, a founding member.

Earlier, Mr Taylor described how he had personally intervened to protect the daughter-in-law of the deposed President William R. Tolbert in 1980. She was allowed to leave the country to return to the Ivory Coast, but her husband, AB Tolbert, was executed.

Mr. Taylor told the court. Continuing his direct examination, Mr Taylor said he also took action as a minister in the Doe regime to prevent the American CIA from taking over a building in Monrovia in 1981. He felt this was subsequently held against him by the United States.

Mr Taylor also spoke at length about the tensions between Americo-Liberians and Indigenous Liberians. He said some in the Doe regime strongly resented him because he had tried to prevent the abuse of government privileges by fellow ministers and officials.

At the start of the session, Mr Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, was admonished by the judges for holding up a sign visible to the public gallery which read: Taylor is innocent. Griffiths promised not to do it again.

Mr. Taylor's testimonies continue on Thursday.

Awoko

Friday, 17 July 2009

Taylor denies recruiting child soldiers

By Betty Milton

Led in his examination in chief by defence counsel Courtenay Griffiths, Charles Taylor yesterday denied the prosecution's allegation that he recruited children to fight in the war in Liberia.

He said when the NPFL group entered some parts of Liberia some people volunteered to join them and they had about seven to ten thousand male and female above the ages of 18 years to fight against Samuel Doe.

Mr. Taylor added that training was done in two different camps one was in Tipplay and another in Gborplay and the training was done for about six weeks. This training he continued was for volunteers from Nimba County and it involved basic information formation, how to assemble

Continued on Page 6.

Taylor denies recruiting child soldiers

From Page 2

a rifle, how to carry military formation, how to deal with civilians and how to deal with Prisoners of War.

He said they had volunteers below the ages of 18 years but they were only helping with some task for the commanders such as fetching water, and laundering. "These children were never forced to join the revolution", Charles Taylor said.

Answering questions relating to the execution of some men he said the commanders were executed if they are found guilty by a Court Martial which was set up to try military men who went beyond the rules of the revolution.

Mr. Taylor also told the court that civilians who committed crimes were sent to the Justices of the Peace for trial and also this was done to ensure that there was order throughout the revolution.

On the issue of bush wives the witness told the court that this never happened "to the best of my knowledge no! This never happened" He said.

Adding that if it happened and it was reported to him then action will be taken to deal with the individual

responsible.

Questioned by the defence counsel whether human skull was used on the road the witness told the court that the human skull symbolizes death and that he saw the skulls of enemy soldiers on the roads but it should not be an important issue since he also saw skulls at university in America and also some fraternity organizations.

Speaking about the invasion of Liberia, Charles Taylor told the court that before the attack a platoon of 44 was sent ahead to different location in Liberia but they went in two's and three's for security purpose.

Some he went on were captured by the Liberian soldiers and forced to confess. The others who had reached their target were scared and went to Nimba County to meet their colleagues.

By the end of the second week the witness added, the whole of the unit had been deployed in Liberia and this was under the direction of Isaac Musa. The operation he said was successful because the security was captured and the men who happened to escape did so and dropped their ammunition.

For di People
Friday, 17 July 2009

I fought corruption, says Taylor

LIBERIA'S FORMER president Charles Taylor has told his UN war crimes trial that he spent years fighting corruption before he took power.

He told judges in The Hague he joined the government in 1980, but his anti-corruption stance made him unpopular.

He overthrew Samuel Doe's government in a bloody conflict in the late 1980s and is accused of directing rebels in the civil war in Sierra Leone in the 1990s.

He denies 11 charges including murder, terrorism, rape and torture.

Mr Taylor's British lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, is leading the former president through a reconstruction of his life and the circumstances of his 1997-2003 premiership.

Analysts at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone say the lawyer is trying to portray Mr Taylor as a virtuous leader and peacemaker, rather than the vicious warlord prosecutors say he is.

Mr Taylor appeared in the witness box for the first time on Tuesday, two years after his trial began.

CHARLES TAYLOR CHARGES

- **Violation of humanitarian law:** Conscripting child soldiers
- **Crimes against humanity:** Terrorising civilians,

murder, rape, sexual slavery, enslavement "Violence to life", cruel treatment (including hacking off limbs), pillage

He dismissed the case against him as "lies".

An estimated 500,000 people were killed, mutilated or suffered other atrocities in the civil war in Sierra Leone, which lasted from 1991 until 2002.

Some of the worst crimes were committed by child soldiers who were drugged to desensitise them.

Mr Taylor is the first African leader to be tried by an international court.

He told the court on Tuesday he had wanted to bring peace to Liberia's West African neighbour.

He denied being involved in atrocities committed by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels during the civil war.

"I am not guilty of these charges, not even a minute part of these charges," he said. "This whole case is a case of deceit, deception and lies."

Prosecutors have called 91 witnesses in pressing their case that Mr Taylor provided arms, money and support to Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for diamonds. Mr Taylor is the first of 249 witnesses the defence has said it may call.

The trial was moved to the Netherlands from Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, amid fears it could create instability there and in neighbouring Liberia.

A verdict in the case is expected in 2010.

The Satellite

Thursday, 16 July 2009

TAYLOR LABELS HAGUE CASE 'LIES'

Ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor has dismissed as "lies" the war crimes case against him, as he took the stand for the first time at The Hague. He denies 11 counts including terrorism, murder, rape and torture, at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The 61-year-old is accused of having armed and directed rebel groups from Liberia in order to seize control of Sierra Leone's diamond riches.

Mr Taylor is the first African leader to be tried by an international court. "It is very, very, very unfortunate that the



prosecution, because of disinformation, misinformation, lies, rumours, would associate me with such titles or descriptions," he said of the charges. He denied involvement in atrocities committed by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

Testifying for the first time since his trial began more than two years ago, he told a packed courtroom he had only wanted to bring peace to Liberia's West African neighbour. Mr Taylor, whose testimony is expected to last several weeks, continued: "I am a father of 14 children, grandchildren, with love for humanity, have fought all my life to do what I thought was right in the interests of justice and fair play."

The Spark
Thursday, 16 July 2009

Taylor labels case 'lies'



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Taylor labels case 'lies'

From front page

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Testifying for the first time since his trial began more than two years ago, he told a packed courtroom he had only wanted to bring peace to Liberia's West African neighbour. Mr Taylor, whose testimony is expected to last several weeks, continued: "I am a father of 14 children, grandchildren, with love for humanity, have fought all my life to do what I thought was right in the interests of justice and fair play." Wearing a dark suit and tinted spectacles, he told his lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, that the charges were "false" and "malicious".

Mr Taylor denied providing military assistance to the rebels - who were notorious for using machetes to hack the limbs off civilians - or having plotted to invade Sierra Leone with RUF leader Foday Sankoh. He also denied having been given coffee jars full of blood diamonds by the RUF. "Never, ever, did I receive whether it is mayon-

naise or coffee or whatever jar, never received any diamonds from the RUF. It's a lie, it's a diabolical lie. Never," he said.

Mr Taylor's legal team began setting out its case on Monday. He is the first of 249 witnesses the defence has said it may call to the stand. His lawyers say Mr Taylor could not have micro-managed a rebel operation in Sierra Leone while also running affairs of state in Liberia. The prosecution called 91 witnesses, many of whom provided graphic testimony of amputations, murder of children and cannibalism, before wrapping up its case in February.

Mr Taylor started a civil war in Liberia 1989, before being elected president there in 1997. He was himself overthrown by a rebellion and went into exile in 2003. After a spell in Nigeria, he was eventually extradited from Liberia in 2006. The trial at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone was moved to the Netherlands from Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, amid fears it could create instability in the country and neighbouring Liberia. A verdict in the case is expected some time next year.

Inner City Press
Thursday, 16 July 2009

At UN, Rapp Raps on Taylor Trial, Dodges on Johnson Sirleaf and Obama War Crimes Post

By Matthew Russell Lee

UNITED NATIONS, July 16 -- Already nominated to become President Obama's Ambassador at Large for War Crimes, Iowan Stephen Rapp came to the UN on July 16 to cautiously discuss the Charles Taylor trial ongoing at the Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague. In a nine-minute stakeout interview which only Inner City Press attended -- call it an exclusive -- Rapp and the Court's President Renate Winter took five questions and answer three and a half.

Inner City Press asked about the 227 witnesses that Taylor has called for his defense. Will the prosecution be trying to whittle the list down? Renate Winter said that will be up to the presiding judge. Rapp noted that in the case of the interim leader of the RUF, the defense named 330 possible witnesses and ended up calling 59.

Inner City Press asked about the missing and perhaps dead indictee Johnny Paul Koroma. Rapp said that either an internationalized court could be set up within the judicial system of Sierra Leone -- but then amnesty might apply -- or that the case could be transferred to other countries which would have jurisdiction. He said that discussion have begun with two such countries, which he would not name.



**Stephen Rapp at UN on July 16, 2009,
2 countries not shown**

Since the recent press coverage of the trial has revolved around the skulls Taylor acknowledges authorizing his forces to display at roadblocks, Inner City Press asked what probative value if any this might have, and if Rapp thinks the media is focused on the wrong things at the trial. Rapp said he will not comment on anything under judicial consideration, but that skulls could constitute a "gruesome display of human remains" and have some probative value.

As it has asked Ban Ki-moon's spokesperson, the UN envoy to West African Said Djinnat and Congo envoy Alan Doss, Inner City Press asked Rapp to comment on the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's recommendation that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf be barred from public life for thirty years, in part for providing financial support to Charles Taylor. Rapp said "what happened in Liberia... is up to Liberians," and noted that Liberia's parliament must consider the TRC's recommendations.

Now that Rapp has been nominated for his new U.S. job, Inner City Press asked Renate Winter what provisions are being made to replace him. She said there will not be a day with out a prosecutor. Rapp added that if he is confirmed by the U.S. Senate, he will begin arranging for a transition, seeing how much notice he should provide.

Rapp is a lawyer's lawyer, but whether his soft spoken style is best suited for the Obama Administration's Ambassador at Large for War Crimes, as the Administration considers joining the International Criminal Court, remains to be seen. The fact that only one reporter waited to question him even after the nomination speaks either to lameness within the UN press corps, or to a perceived lack of news value. Rapp knows the system, and could well advise a more public face of the fight against impunity. We'll see.

Voice of America

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Sierra Leone War Crimes Court in Danger of Funding Shortfalls

By Margaret Besheer
United Nations

The Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is trying accused war criminal Charles Taylor, says it is in danger of running out of funds by next month. The president of the Court told the U.N. Security Council Thursday that if additional money is not found immediately, the court would experience shortfalls by the first week of August that could disrupt its work.

The Special Court is the first international tribunal to be fully funded by voluntary contributions. More than 40 countries have contributed to its costs, with significant support coming from the United States, Britain, Canada and Nigeria.

But despite strong backing, the court has run into financial problems before. In March, it said it was on the verge of running out of money, and an appeal by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon helped bring in some new contributions.

But the Special Court's President, Renate Winter, told the Security Council that the Court, which has nearly completed its work, could be in jeopardy of not finishing it.

"This shortfall poses the real possibility of disrupting our work, which would have disastrous consequences for the [Security] Council's extensive peace building efforts in Sierra Leone and Liberia," said Winter. "A disruption in the proceedings would send the wrong message to the international community, jeopardizing the fight against impunity and potentially calling into question our collective commitment to international justice."

She said in total, the court would need some \$30 million to complete its work.

The Special Court was set up jointly by the Sierra Leone government and the United Nations to try those responsible for atrocities committed during the country's 11-year long civil war that ended in 2002.

Over the last six years, it has issued indictments against 13 persons. Eleven were arrested and transferred to the Court in Freetown. Two died in custody, one was killed in Liberia before he was arrested and the whereabouts of another indictee [Johnny Paul Koroma] remains unknown.

Justice Winter told the Security Council that she expects the court to wrap up its work in early 2011, after the completion of the trial of ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor, which, for security reasons, is taking place at The Hague.

The defense phase of his trial began this week. Taylor is charged with 11 counts of crimes against humanity and using child soldiers in his role backing rebels in Sierra Leone's civil war. He has denied the charges.

Justice Winter said the court also needs some funds once the trial phase is complete, to provide for residual issues such as paying for prison sentences for those convicted and funding a trial for the one remaining suspect who remains at large, Johnny Paul Koroma, the former head of Sierra-Leone's Armed Forces Revolutionary Council.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Friday, 17 July 2009

Special Court for Sierra Leone is almost bankrupt

By Saskia van Huijgevoort



Freetown, Sierra Leone

With an impending shortfall in funding, the Special Court for Sierra Leone may run out of funds by next month. This can have serious consequences including suspending the trial against Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor.

"The Court will experience a funding shortfall by the first week of August 2009," Renate Winter, president of the Court, told the UN Security Council on Thursday. "This shortfall poses the real possibility of disrupting our work, which would have disastrous consequences for the Council's extensive peace building efforts in Sierra Leone and Liberia." The current shortage amounts to twelve million dollars.

Winter made an appeal to the Council for 30 million US dollars, in order for the Court to complete its mandate. The SCSL is primarily funded by voluntary contributions by the UN-member states. It needs more than 32 million dollar to continue until 2010. Taylor's trial alone costs about 90 million dollar.

Justice Winter said it would be very difficult to retain competent court personnel without adequate funding. Chief Prosecutor Stephen Rapp added that "even if all pledged donations come in early, our funds will run dry before next year's round of donations, and the Special Court will not have the resources necessary to complete its work."

Thirteen people were originally indicted by the court. Charles Taylor is currently on trial at The Hague for 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Sierra Leone. A verdict is expected mid-2010.

Previously, the Special Court was funded by the US, the UK, the Netherlands and Canada. In May 2007, the court asked the European Union for more funds to have enough resources to last until the end of October.

BBC World Service Trust

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Report from The Hague

NEWS ITEM

July 16 Script

The recruitment of child soldiers is one of the counts for which the Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor is being tried in The Hague. On the third day of his testimonies, Charles Taylor denied using child soldiers in combat. He admitted that human skulls were used at NPFL check-points. Mr. Taylor also revisited the infiltration of the NPFL Forces into the intelligence network of Samuel Doe's government. From The Hague, Adolphus Williams reports.

The former Liberian president, Mr. Taylor, told the court on the third day of his testimony that children found near battle zones were his fighter's relatives.

He said children in NPFL territory at the time were never used as fighters.

TAYLOR: We've got about 15-20,000 soldiers. Some of them are leaving home. They take along with them younger members of the family, you have a young cousin, 10, 12, you take him along. He would carry your food, he would carry maybe even your rifle, he would hold it while they're going into areas where they're about to go into combat. And this I observed. The reports came, but why we did not really anything serious because those young men were not involved in combat.

WILLIAMS: Answering questions about rape and forced marriage in his rebel organization, the NPFL, Mr. Taylor outrightly denied the Prosecution charges.

He described the NPFL as a disciplined organization which did not tolerate rape and sexual slavery. He said harsh disciplinary measures were taken against perpetrators of such acts.

Mr. Taylor's own Lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, questioned him on the use of human skulls at check-points manned by the NPFL during the Liberian civil war which also form part of prosecution's allegation as "Act of Terrorism".

The former NPFL Leader told the Judges, the public display of skulls was not strange to the world. Mr. Taylor said he saw skulls at fraternities and universities in the United States. He however vehemently denied ordering the setting up of human skulls at NPFL check-points.

TAYLOR: There were, at checkpoints in Liberia, skulls. Not human heads. Skulls were used as symbols of death. I saw them, yes, not what the Prosecution said 'he drove by human heads', I drove by those skulls. They were used as symbols. These were not our people. I saw nothing wrong with using skulls. It's a blatant, diabolical lie that I, Charles Ghankay Taylor, or anyone, because of the discipline we had, would drive by a human head and intestines.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Taylor launched his insurrection in Liberia from the town of Gbuutuo in Nimba County in 1989. In his testimony Thursday, Mr. Taylor described three plans used to strategically position his men in Monrovia and other parts of the Liberia.

TAYLOR: There was a group within the Armed Forces of Liberia that was aware of this operation taking place. We also made some contacts at Camp [Naama]. And now Camp [Naama] served as the artillery base in the Republic of Liberia. Colonel [Varney] commanded that base and had sympathy and respect amongst the officers on that base. Now what we did was, we sent him with that Guinean group. Their job was to try to get in on the base, find some of the loyalists to Col [Varney] and use them to start and take

over Camp [Naama]. The third part of this was to into Monrovia both at the Barclay Training Center and Camp [Shuflin] some of our special forces that would be at those bases with their contacts, that once the operation started on the border we anticipated that the [Naama] and the [Butu] operation would take place. That would draw the Armed Forces of Liberia to begin to move reinforcements out of the city to the border. Those special forces in town and their collaborators would then seize [Shuflin] and [BTZ] which meant a very quick operation.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Taylor ruled Liberia for six years as president. He said the relationship between the United States and his administration was not cordial.

Liberia is caught in a web of American influence, and any Liberian Leader that turns his back on America is destined to fail, Mr. Taylor declared to the Judges.

The Boston Globe
Thursday, 16 July 2009

Charles Taylor claims US helped spring him from Plymouth jail

By Bryan Bender, Globe Staff



In this image made from a television broadcast on Tuesday, former Liberian President Charles Taylor addressed the United Nations backed court. (AP Photo/ICC)

WASHINGTON -- Breaking two and a half decades of silence, former Liberian president and accused war criminal Charles G. Taylor said today that his infamous prison break from the Plymouth County Correctional

Facility in 1985 was aided by the US government, addressing for the first time widely circulated conspiracy theories about his return to Liberia.

In the second day of his testimony in his war crimes trial that could settle the long-standing mystery, Taylor said that on the night of Sept. 15, 1985, his maximum-security prison cell was unlocked by a guard and he was escorted to the minimum-security part of the facility.

According to news reports from The Hague, he said he then escaped by tying sheets together and climbing out a window and over a prison fence where he said a car with two men he assumed were agents of the US government drove him to New York, where his wife was waiting with money to get him out of the country.

"I am calling it my release because I didn't break out," Taylor, 61, told the Special Court for Sierra Leone of the episode that has long been alleged to have been orchestrated by the US government. "I did not pay any money, I did not know the guys who picked me up. I was not hiding (afterwards)," Taylor testified in The Hague.

The FBI and other government agencies could not be immediately reached to respond to Taylor's claims, which could not be independently verified. Many observers have suggested that the claims could be designed to change the subject from his alleged war crimes by trying to falsely implicate the United States in his path to power.

Charles E. Waterman, a former CIA officer who briefly worked for Taylor in the 1990s as an international business consultant, said he didn't know whether Taylor's claims about the prison saga are true or not.

"I asked him the question," Waterman said in an interview today. "He didn't want to talk about it at all."

After the prison break, Taylor said he traveled freely in the United States and Mexico before returning to Africa. "My name was on my passport. No-one asked me any questions."

Four other inmates who escaped along with Taylor were soon recaptured.

The escape occurred just days before a Taylor ally, Thomas Quiwonkpa, launched an unsuccessful military coup against the Liberian leader Samuel Doe.

Taylor said in his testimony that he was "100 percent positive" that the Central Intelligence Agency was arming Quiwonkpa.

Doe's government accused Taylor of embezzling money and Taylor was being held in Plymouth pending extradition to face charges in his home country.

Taylor first arrived in the Boston area as a college student in 1972, but returned to Liberia in the early 1980s. He briefly held an economics post in Doe's government but fled back to Massachusetts in 1983 in the face of the embezzlement charges.

After his breakout in Plymouth, Taylor told the court, he recruited 168 men and women for the National Patriotic Front for Liberia and trained them at a former US military base in Libya. His forces eventually attacked Liberia in 1989, sparking a revolution and a bloody reign in which he is accused of arming child soldiers, ordering the killing of civilians and aiding rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone in the death of hundreds of thousands of people.

Voice of America

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Liberia's Taylor: No Problem Displaying Skulls

By VOA News



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is seen at U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague, Netherlands, 13 Jul 2009

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has told a war crimes court he saw no problem with his rebel forces displaying human skulls at checkpoints during a 1989 revolution.

In his third day of testimony Thursday in The Hague, the former Liberian leader said the skulls of enemy fighters were used as a symbol of death in the conflict that swept him into power.

Mr. Taylor is facing 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his involvement in the 1991 to 2002 civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone.

Prosecutors say rebels backed by Mr. Taylor in Sierra Leone resorted to tactics that included amputation, rape, enslavement of women and using child soldiers.

He has denied all allegations, calling them lies and rumors.

On Thursday, Mr. Taylor testified that skull symbols are used by Western fraternal organizations. He said that after seeing human skulls at the checkpoints he determined there was nothing wrong with the practice.

The 61-year-old Mr. Taylor is being tried by the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. The trial is being held in the Netherlands because of fears that his presence in Sierra Leone would spark unrest.

Mr. Taylor is the first African head of state to be tried by an international court. His testimony is expected to last several weeks.

Some information for this report was provided by AFP and AP.

The Liberian Observer

Friday, 17 July 2009

Gov't Debunks Taylor's Testimony

By **Alva W. Wolokollie**

MONROVIA, The Government of Liberia has categorically dispelled testimony made by former Liberian president Charles Taylor that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was the 'main fundraiser' of the disbanded National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) group to unseat former Liberian president, the late Samuel K. Doe, with a revolution stage in December 1989.

Clutus Sieh, Deputy Minister for Administration at the Ministry of Information, told reporters yesterday, July 16, 2009 at a regular press conference in Monrovia that the testimony of Mr. Taylor implicating President Sirleaf as the main fundraiser of the NPFL 'is a falsehood and a diabolical lie meant to implicate the sitting President of Liberia'.



Former President Taylor

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 16 July 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberia's Taylor saw 'nothing wrong' with displaying skulls

by Mariette le Roux

Source: AFP World News / English Date: July 16, 2009

THE HAGUE, July 16, 2009 (AFP) - Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor told a war crimes court Thursday he had seen nothing wrong with human skulls being displayed at checkpoints in Liberia during his 1989-90 "revolution." "Skulls were used as symbols of death," he told judges of the Special Court for Sierra Leone trying him on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity stemming from the 1991-2001 civil war in the neighboring state. "These were not our people. Enemy soldiers had been killed and their skulls were used. I knew that, and it did not bother me." The skulls were of soldiers killed in clashes with Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) which invaded the country from the Ivory Coast in 1989 to oust his predecessor, President Samuel Doe. Taylor sought to draw a distinction between human skulls and fleshed human heads, calling it "a blatant, diabolical lie that I, Charles Ghankay Taylor or anyone would drive by a human head."

Taylor Alleges U.S. Govt Helped Him Escape From U.S. Prison

The Hague, Jul 16, 2009 (CharlesTaylorTrial.org/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- In a dramatic day of testimony, former Liberian president Charles Taylor told of his 1985 escape from an American maximum security jail with alleged United States government help, only days before a failed US-backed coup attempt to overthrow the then Liberian government. With his prison cell unlocked by a US prison guard late one night in November 1985, Taylor walked out of the maximum security area of the Plymouth County Correctional Facility in Massachusetts, he told the Special Court for Sierra Leone today. Taylor said he was escorted by the same guard to the minimum security area. Tying a sheet to a window, Taylor climbed out the window and over the prison fence, where a car containing two men was waiting to whisk him to New York, he said. Taylor told the court that he believed the guard who set him free "had to be operating with someone else." Taylor also said he assumed that the car that took him to New York "had to be a [US] government car" because the men driving him feared he may be "picked up" if Taylor changed cars to be with his then wife, who had driven to meet the escape car with money to get Taylor out of the country.

Taylor says his men trained to avoid atrocities

Source: AP Online Regional - Europe Date: July 16, 2009 THE HAGUE, Netherlands_Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has told a war crimes court his band of rebel fighters were trained in Libya to avoid atrocities as they swept into the country in a 1989 revolution. Taylor is on the witness stand for the third day at his trial for allegedly commanding rebels during Sierra Leone's civil war. He has pleaded not guilty to 11 war crimes and crimes against humanity charges. Taylor told the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Thursday that for his 168-strong force to seize power in Liberia it would

have needed the support of the local population. Prosecutors say rebels backed by Taylor in Sierra Leone used terror tactics including systematic amputations to force the population's support.

International Clips on West Africa

Charles Taylor says serving Liberian senator Prince Johnson killed former dictator Doe

Source: Canadian Press Date: July 16, 2009

THE HAGUE, Netherlands _ Charles Taylor testified Thursday that Liberian senator Prince Johnson killed the country's former president, Samuel K. Doe, in 1990. Johnson, a former warlord turned politician, has publicly denied killing Doe, despite a well-publicized video of him drinking Budweiser beer as he ordered his men to cut off the former president's ears. Taylor, another former warlord who led a revolution to oust Doe in 1989-90 and was elected president in 1997, is defending himself against 11 charges of supporting a campaign of terror by rebels in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war. He said Johnson caught Doe in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, around September 1990. "Prince Johnson captures Doe alive and subsequently kills him," Taylor told judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Shortage of money may disrupt trial of Liberian ex-president Taylor: judge

UNITED NATIONS, Jul 16, 2009 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- With an impending shortfall in funding, the war crimes court in charge of trying Liberian ex- president Charles Taylor is in serious jeopardy, the president of the special court for Sierra Leone said here on Thursday. "The Court will experience a funding shortfall by the first week of August 2009," Justice Renate Winter told the Security Council. "This shortfall poses the real possibility of disrupting our work, which would have disastrous consequences for the Council's extensive peace building efforts in Sierra Leone and Liberia." Reminding the Council that it had previously recognized that "further arrangements" would be necessary, Justice Winter made an appeal for 30 million U.S. dollars in order for the Court to complete its mandate. Taylor, 61, is currently on trial at The Hague for 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in **Sierra Leone**. A verdict is expected in mid-2010.

Special court for Sierra Leone war crimes to wrap up in 2011

New York_(dpa) _ The special court prosecuting former Liberian president Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity said Thursday that all cases should be completed by February 2011. A judgment against Taylor, 61, could be expected in July 2010, said Renate Winter, the president of the court at The Hague, during a session with the United Nations Security Council in New York. The council authorized the establishment of the Special Court for Liberia to deal with crimes committed under Taylor's presidency. The Dutch government agreed to accommodate the court and Taylor is currently testifying. The special court functions simultaneously at The Hague and Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, where legal proceedings were being conducted on the same cases. "We must complete the trial of Charles Taylor in The Hague, which is so critical to preserving the fragile peace and stability in West Africa," Winter said.

Local Media – Newspaper

Taylor Alleges U.S. Government Helped Him Escape U.S. Prison

(Daily Observer, Heritage, The News, The Inquirer, The Informer, New Vision, New Democrat, The Analyst)

- Former President Charles Taylor has for the first time explain his escape from a jail in the United States saying he was led out of prison and never broke jail as has been speculated.

- Continuing his testimony at The Hague yesterday, Mr. Taylor alleged the U.S. government helped him walk out of the maximum security area of the Plymouth County Correctional Facility in Massachusetts, only days before a failed US-backed coup attempt to overthrow the then Liberian government.
- Meanwhile, the former Liberian leader has named President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as a founding member of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and not a mere financial backer as claimed.
- However, President Sirleaf appearing before the TRC said she was only part of a fundraising for the NPFL at its early stage.

Liberia Democratic Institute Releases Report on CDF Management

(Heritage, The Inquirer)

- The Liberia Democratic Institute (LDI) has released a report on the management of county development funds in the 2007/2008 fiscal year.
- The LDI report titled "People's Voice" revealed what it called a disappointing implementation of the projects earmarked during the period saying public awareness on the management of the county development fund was low.
- The report also considers as dismal the level of community participation in the implementation of the various projects and said a significant number of abandoned projects still remain.
- The LDI report came out of a survey conducted in ten Counties.

House Hears over US\$800M Concession Agreement

(Daily Observer, The News, National Chronicle)

- The Joint Committee of the House of Representatives yesterday held a public hearing on the concession agreement between the Government of Liberia and the Sime Darby Plantation Liberia Incorporated.
- Speaking during the hearing, the Chairman of the National Investment Commission (NIC), Dr. Richard Tolbert disclosed that the company will provide over 30,000 jobs for Liberians in Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, and Bong Counties if the concession is ratified.
- He told the House Committees on Agriculture and Forestry, Judiciary, Investment and Concession, Contracts and Monopoly that the company would operate 220,000 hectares of land for the cultivation of oil palm and rubber trees in the targeted counties.

Discontent at Supreme Court

(The Inquirer)

- Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of Liberia have threatened to limit their activities to their constitutional and statutory functions if Chief Justice Johnnie Lewis fails to include them in activities of the judicial branch.
- The Associate Justices are among other things accusing the Chief Justice of single-handedly running the affairs of the Supreme Court and refusing to cooperate with them.
- Efforts to get a response from the Chief Justice yesterday proved futile as he said he had no comment on the issue.

MRU Secretariat Decries Summit Annulment

(Daily Observer, The News)

- The Mano River Union (MRU) Secretariat has described the abrupt cancellation of the Union's 20th Summit to have taken place in the Guinean capital, Conakry, as a major setback.
- In an interview, the Deputy Secretary General of the union, Simeon Moribah, expressed disappointment over the sudden cancellation of the summit.
- The MRU Summit was scheduled to take place in the Guinean capital, Conakry this week but was cancelled by the authorities there.
- Correspondents suspect the cancellation is in connection with a coup scare that was announced by the Guinean Government early this week.

Opposition Liberty Party Says TRC Report “Comprehensive”

(National Chronicle, The Analyst)

- The opposition Liberty Party says the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) final report represents the most comprehensive attempt at compiling accounts and events of Liberia's 14 years war.
- The National Chairman of the Liberty Party, Israel Akinsanya said the party is working with its members in the Legislature to determine the best way forward.
- At the same time, Mr. Akinsanya has called on President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to exercise the leadership required to reconcile Liberia amidst debate over the TRC report.
- President Sirleaf has since promised to read the 345-page report in its entirety before making a comment.

TRC Chairman Says Liberia Does Not Have Amnesty Law

(Heritage)

- The Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Counselor Jerome Verdier has strongly questioned the existence of a law granting immunity to individuals who participated in Liberia's armed conflict from 1989 to 2003.
- The controversial act was passed by the 51st Legislature during the demise of the regime of former President Charles Taylor and was printed in to hand bill a day after its passage in August 2003.
- Counselor Verdier said at the time of the passage of the act the country was in a state of emergency and challenged anyone with the original document to produce same.

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

President Sirleaf is “Founding” Member” of NPFL, says Taylor

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

LDI Releases Report on CDF Management

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

Bill to establish War Crimes Court Introduced at Legislature

- A bill seeking the establishment of a war crimes court in Liberia has been introduced at the Legislature.
- The bill was introduced Wednesday by the Centre for the Protection of Human Rights headed by Counselor Dempster Brown.
- According to Counselor Brown, the Special Court the bill will seek to prosecute people indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It will target financiers of the war and those who may have arrange for training.

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

Opposition Liberty Party Says TRC Report “Comprehensive”

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

Detainees at National Correction Palace Want Clemency

- Nearly one hundred detainees at the National Palace of Corrections in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County have called on government to grant them clemency.
- In an interview, a spokesman of the group, Samuel Quansah said they want to be freed because government has failed to give them due process.
- The former Central Bank employee said some of them spend over two years with out trial at the Monrovia Central Prison before transferring to the Zwedru facility.
- Mr. Samuel Tarley admitted the prolonged detention of the inmates without trial but blamed it on the judicial system.

Liberia Qualifies for Int’l Chemical Management Initiative

- The Environmental Protection Agency says Liberia has met all requirements to form part of the International Initiative to manage chemicals.
- Speaking at the start of a two day workshop, EPA's acting head Jerome Nyenka said Liberia was now required to develop national documents on chemical management.
- The workshop organized in collaboration with the U.N. Institute for Training is to develop a National Chemicals Management Profile and a National Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

Finance Minister wants Financial Acts Passed

- Finance Minister Augustine Ngafuan has called on the Legislature to pass into law the Act amending the Liberian Revenue Code of 2000 and the Public Financial Management act of 2009.
- Minister Ngafuan described the acts as crucial to effective financial control in the public sector.
- The Finance Minister said the acts are also pre-requisites for proper accounting, auditing, and budget preparations among others.
- Minister Ngafuan spoke Wednesday at the Legislature during a Public Hearing on the financial acts which were organized by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) with support from USAID.

* * * *

Star Radio (Liberia)

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Varney Sherman challenges TRC recommendation on public sanction

Written by Matthias Daffah

The Standard-bearer of the Liberia Action Party in the 2005 Presidential elections says the TRC recommendation barring President Sirleaf from holding public office is legally flawed.

Cllr. Varney Sherman said he is of the considered opinion that the recommendation lacks any legal or political effectiveness.

According to Cllr. Sherman the TRC's blanket indictment of supporters of warring factions violates the language and Spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Accord.

Cllr. Sherman argued there is nothing in the CPA that authorizes the TRC to investigate and indict persons who violated the criminal laws of Liberia.

He said unless support for a warring action during Liberia's civil conflict is deemed to be treason, he sees no other law which sanctions support for warring faction and prohibits same from holding public office.

The former LAP Standard-bearer described the TRC final report as more divisive than reconciliatory and clearly inconsistent with the primary legal regime which authorized its establishment.

Cllr. Shermna vowed to challenge the recommendation banning President Sirleaf from holding public office at the Supreme Court if the TRC report is approved by the Legislature.

The Liberian people welcomed the "Comprehensive Peace Accord" only as instruments of peace, and means to appease warring factions and their repented leaders. The CPA is not and was not intended to substitute the laws of Liberia. Now that the war is over, I think it's time we take another look at the CPA.

It does make no sense, legal or moral, to brush aside the fine report compiled by TRC. Let's not preempt the legislature while they try to examine the report.

Cllr Sherman, do not scoot criticism at this time. Hold your shots for the appropriate time. Like you said you could challenge in court when the report is passed into law by the legislature.

Channel 4

Friday, 17 July 2009

<http://www.channel4.com/news/articles/world/africa>

In the hands of a Liberian tyrant

By Tim Lambon

Arrested and held in a Liberian jail for "espionage" whilst making a documentary in Liberia, Assistant Foreign Editor Tim Lambon writes about being held at Charles Taylor's pleasure in 2000.



Half asleep, the noise of men shouting, the clumping of heavy footfalls and the rattle of rifles can bring you awake instantly. I just managed to pull on my boots when they burst in. A braying mob of black uniformed thugs brandishing Kalashnikov rifles, Africa's curse.

My colleagues Sorious Samura, David Barrie and Gugu Radebe were already being roughly forced out the door as I managed to snatch up my shirt and bumbag. A huge hand slapped the small of my back, grabbing my trousers and belt, dragging me towards the door. I swivelled to provide least resistance and started running, harried by the last two goons.

Across the concrete of the compound, towards the gates. My recollection is a silent movie in sodium pink tones and half tones. I can't hear what they are shouting. The gates were open and at first glance the street was at 1am deserted. Terrified, I saw four bodies lying in the road and the headline "Arrested journalists shot trying to escape". I suppressed the image and worked on tactics for the immediate reality.

Turning left, half the fear subsided. Toyota pick-up trucks waited with engines running. No framed death yet. But the other half of the fear was "Where are they taking us?" Hands thrust in pockets to steal precious possessions. Thank heavens for the snotty hanky I'd secreted. Nasty surprise!

On instruction, Gugu, my big Zulu soundman and I vaulted into the truck. Sitting on the floor under the A-frame seat, I was pulling on my shirt when someone noticed the bumbag. Goodbye to all that.

"Hands on the seat!" We complied as the vehicles turning, lurched and roared away from the National Security Agency headquarters.



Tim Lambon, third from left, with the documentary team in Liberia

Standing on the tow bar, the bruiser hanging onto the tail board clocked my watch. "What's that?" he demanded with a sneer.

I remained silent and started taking it off. But he couldn't wait and lunging at it, missed as the Toyota rolled drunkenly around a corner. A moment's panic, an outstretched hand flailing in fresh air. When the corner straightened, he managed to grab the bench and hold on for dear life.

Recovering, he ripped the old Casio from my wrist. Something at the back of my mind smiled at the slapstick. It was the least of my worries.

Demented and drugged police

So started a week at the leisure of Dr Charles Taylor, President of the Republic of Liberia, a vain and petty dictator. Having assisted in the destruction of the country's economy and infrastructure, the regime is presently pillaging what few natural resources remain.

I accompanied a documentary team to Monrovia to talk to Taylor hoping to find out what is going on. Ever suspicious (can this be a guilty mind, I ask myself?) Taylor was not keen to grant either interviews or facilities with his government. A pity as it would have allowed him to put his spin on the tragedy that is his country.



Charles Taylor in 2003

Instead, having allowed the team to film unimpeded for nearly two weeks, the Ministry of Information at the behest of the sinister Reginald Goodridge, press secretary to the President, revoked what had been a valid accreditation. The piece of paper we had clearly stated we could film, but apparently, without the nod from the Executive Mansion, any filming was illegal.

We were detained in the "officers' cell" at the Monrovia Central Police Station on suspicion of spying. Being in the "officers' cell" meant we were saved the indignity of being stripped to our underpants and thrust into the inner sanctum of the "sweats".

That was a fate afforded other unfortunates guilty of such heinous crimes as leaving a night club drunk or arguing with a police officer. The former charge office boasted a single 60 watt bulb and a wobbly ceiling fan. The only piece of furniture was a counter, now turned on its side and used as an impromptu bed, supplementing a filthy foam mattress covering much of the floor.

The problem with being assigned to the "officers' cell" is just that - the officers. The worst of the nutters in black uniforms who transgress their own brutal code, end up marking time in that fetid hole.

Friday night when we arrived, there were six of them sprawled on the floor. We were snapped from our adrenaline stupors at five the next morning when they woke up and immediately started fighting. The struggle flared from punches to cracking heads on the floor and as suddenly as it started, was all over amidst shouts and laughter.

Throughout the weekend, the population of demented and drugged-up policemen ebbed and flowed, culminating with an influx of fifteen or so on the Monday morning. Violence was always there, a mean and capricious spirit hovering just beneath the ceiling, waiting to drop into some crazy's head and send him into a froth over nothing.

After being arrested in more vile places than I care to recall, I've learned that the best policy is to "present no edges". Stand with your shoulders drooping, head forward, hands held like a penitent Presbyterian. Never sit or lie down whilst there is a threat or when anyone new walks into the cell. Be alert to the mood swings and currents in the cell, always listening, but never overtly paying attention. Avoid eye contact and move quickly but unobtrusively away from any aggressive activity.

Terrified, I saw four bodies lying in the road and the headline "Arrested journalists shot trying to escape".

I quickly tutored the others in these tactics and we managed to avoid much of the unfocused aggravation which engulfed the place. Reminded of 18th century woodcuts depicting the chaos of Bedlam, I knew there was a similar element of malicious insanity abroad in the cells which had to be avoided.

After a few days amongst the policemen in detention we realised that it was a safe area for drug transactions to take place. The brutal mobs of black suited policemen who marauded the streets of Monrovia often appear to be high. What we saw in the gaol confirmed that large amounts of cannabis and alcohol are probably to blame.

Before our detention, a warrant to search our hotel rooms had listed "marijuana, cocaine and heroin" amongst the things they were looking for. I found it ironic that it was in the police station that narcotics came into their own.

The loudest and most aggressive of the Monday morning miscreants, having staked their places on the fallen counter, loosened their uniforms and took off their boots. Then they proceeded to smoke their way through at least three huge spliffs each, before falling soundly asleep. The dope was a blessing, suppressing the noise and aggression during our last few hours in the "officers' cells".

Loosing faith in victory

Our Counsel visited us on Monday afternoon. He insisted it was highly likely we would never be charged and anticipated our release the next day. We were heartened but I had a sneaking suspicion they were underestimating their opponents resolve.

Sure enough, less than 20 minutes after our council left we were taken to the steps of the court, summarily arrested and charged with "espionage".

Now on remand, our residence changed to the Monrovia Central Prison. It was late in the afternoon when we arrived and after perfunctory processing, were marched into a long low and very dark building.

The walls were painted boot brown to seven feet, the remainder and ceilings being bright yellow. There was a desultory selection of graffiti on the walls of the cell into which Sorious and I were ushered.

I took a scratchy drawing of an old fashioned helicopter on the west wall to be an omen good for our release. I fly choppers and the Sierra Leonian Ambassador had hinted that they might use one to fly us from the country should we be freed.

High on the east wall was the single word "Victor" which for the first few days I failed to recognise as a name. So set was I on encouragement that I thought it was the result of someone being disturbed before they'd been able to add the letter "Y".

Although I never underestimated how serious were the charges and accepted that the duration of our imprisonment might be extended, I never lost faith in the team of people I knew were working for the victory of our release in the UK.

Welcome to the 'republic'

Life in Monrovia's gaol was remarkably structured. The building was clean, the ablution block though old and destroyed in places was clean and the population was viceless. Smoking was not allowed and if drugs were in use, they were way out of sight.

This regime was maintained, not by the six or eight venerable warders who wandered around with plastic night sticks during the day, but by an internal mafia of inmates who called themselves the "government". Their realm the cell block, by night they ruled the plausibly named "Republic of You-go-sober".



Liberian flag

Their "commander in chief" or "C in C", was a mestizo of medium build, innocuously named Russell. He headed up the 15 man "government" that included a "cabinet" with ministers of finance, foreign affairs, justice and defence amongst others. His lieutenants were a six and half foot Nigerian called the Godfather and Hassan, a wiry Sierra Leonian.

We became aware of the "government" on our first night when someone started drumming energetically on an oil can and the clamour of the cells instantly stopped.

"This is a news-flash from Radio 'You-go-sober'" announced the newsreader several times from the far end of the corridor. What followed was an impeccable parody of a 1950's news bulletin informing the silent inmates that because a "cabinet" member had been transferred, another had been appointed after a vote within the "government".

There followed a series of comments as to the new incumbent's attributes and abilities from several of the senior "ministers" before the news-flash ended with another roll on the oil can.

It seems that the "government" is a self-perpetuating organism, deciding its own hierarchy through which the prison authorities work. After six at night, the whole block is locked and the keys to all the cells pass into the "government's" hands.

They are in charge until six the next morning when the uniformed officers nominally take over again. In charge of not only security but also the economy, Russell and his team supplied us with toothbrushes (welcome after four days), toothpaste, candles and matches at prices that had surprisingly, not been inflated to match our status.

Fear and freedom

After supplying our earthly needs, the "Church of You-go-sober" kicked in. Brother Tobias, a constantly sunny character on crutches with round National Health style glasses, handed out Billy Graham magazines of encouraging stories and supplied David with a Bible.

David read Exodus with zeal, no doubt dreaming of parting the Red Sea out of there. With little else to do and the African mania for Pentecostal Christianity, church services with much singing and chanting are a daily feature of prison life.

Through an experience like this I learned that fear is not a constant. But given that its level is continually rising or falling, I could dissect fear into two distinct categories. There is the fear of bodily harm which arises from what people can do to you in different places, and there is the fear born of how serious the general situation is perceived to be.

The first gives you that metallic taste in your mouth and makes it difficult to keep control of a pen afterwards. The nightmarish ride from the NSA to the Central Police Station on the first night was probably the biggest spike in the

fear quotient. The holding cells with their unpredictable sense of imminent violence then kept that dread at a high level.

But the structured environment of the central prison, after an initial peak from the apprehension of something unknown, came pretty low on the scariness list.

The second fear is always in the background. It is additional to the dread of bodily harm, but even when there is no threat to one's person, this generalised fear is there. It fluctuates with news from home, articles in the press or the prognoses of one's council.

This fear is the pulse of a prisoner's morale. Our states of mind were always influenced by the statements from individuals and whether they came true or not.

It led us, after the first few days and several disappointments, to almost write-off the Sierra Leonian Ambassador as a genial but over-optimistic buffoon.



Liberian police officers

Initially our Council, Varney Sherman looked like he had it nailed down, but ultimately, although he had a great deal of flash, the system ran him not as he claimed, the reverse.

The British Consul Brian Brewer however, was always straight and although like us all he initially underestimated the severity of the predicament, he never spun a line that ended up disappointing.

At a low level much of the time, morale plummeted the night they trounced the defence with our late charge and arrest. It clawed its way back slightly with counsel's optimism about the applicability of bail, only to plunge when bail was denied.

Only after that do I think the others started to learn the trick of hoping without counting on the outcome.

When rumours that we were to be released started to circulate, although they disturbed our night's sleep, we dared not hope.

The disappointment would have been unbearable.

Through that long last morning and into the afternoon, we told ourselves that nothing was happening until finally the call came, "Bring your things, you're going home." Only then did we dare to hope.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is currently on trial in The Hague for war crimes. He faces 11 charges of murder, rape, conscripting child soldiers, enslavement and pillaging while allegedly masterminding an 11-year war in neighbouring Sierra Leone from 1991-2002. He denies the charges.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Two weeks of testimony against Duch

By Saskia van Huijgevoort



*Phnom Penh,
Cambodia*

"Can you describe to the Chamber the events from the day of your arrest until you were transferred to S-21 prison? Can you describe all the events within that period?" "Mr. President, I will describe, based on my recollection of the events, from my arrest."

Stories of brutality and terror have filled the courtroom for the past two and a half weeks as victims from the S-21 prison testified against Khmer Rouge prison defendant Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch.

"My force would guard those prisoners and the executioners would get ready at the pit. Guards would post at the gates and each prisoner would be walked to the pit to be killed," 54-year old Him Huy said.

"When they were killed, first they were asked to sit at the edge of the pit, then they would be struck, then their throats would be slashed, then guards would take off their clothes and their handcuffs," he added.

In March Reuters reported that Duch said in a speech to the Cambodia tribunal he felt "heartfelt sorrow" and accepted responsibility for torturing and executing thousands of inmates.

"I am responsible for the crimes committed at S-21, especially the torture and execution. My current plea is that I would like you to please leave an open window for me to seek forgiveness," he said. "This is only the remedy that can help me to relieve all the sorrow and crimes I have committed."

Norng Chan Phal, the son of one of the killed prisoners, said that Duch 'has blood on his hands'. "When we arrived at Tuol Sleng the Khmer Rouge soldiers pushed my mother from the vehicle," he said. "I didn't know what she had done wrong, I didn't understand why they were punching and kicking her and treating her so badly.

He tried to find her later that week: "I kept running and crying for my mother, searching for my mother. Like almost everyone else who was imprisoned there, she had been killed. I never saw her again."

Duch disputed some of the witnesses' testimony. He said, according to his records, Phal had already been

killed. He also questioned the testimony of a man who said he had survived the jail when he was an 8-year old boy. Duch said confidently that he had made sure all children who entered the prison with their parents were killed.

"The more I met the prisoners, the more I was affected. I therefore avoided seeing them. I did not want to see the reality that did reconcile with my feelings. I did not allow myself to see or hear", he said.

About 1.7 million people died during the four years the Khmer Rouge was in power. That is almost a quarter of Cambodia's population.

Duch is first leader of the communist regime to stand trial at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC). He is one of five Khmer Rouge leaders who have been detained by the court for their alleged roles in Cambodia's Killing Fields.

He was indicted last year for overseeing the torture and extermination of more than 12,380 men, women and children when he headed Phnom Penh's Tuol Sleng prison, known as S-21.

All suspects before the genocide court held high level military positions in the Khmer Rouge regime. The regime implemented radical policies that lead to the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people from starvation, disease, overwork and execution. Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot, never faced justice and died in his jungle hideout in 1998.

The Guardian

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Cambodia: Trial gives killing fields survivors a chance of justice



A tourist walks past pictures of those who died at security prison 21, now the Tuol Sleng genocide museum. The Khmer Rouge killed almost two million Cambodians. Photograph: Tang Chhin Sothy/AFP/Getty Images

Chum Mey has waited for 30 years to tell his story to the world: the story of a prisoner, one of the very few, who survived incarceration in Pol Pot's most notorious and murderous prison.

Standing behind bulletproof glass in a courtroom in Phnom Penh, the former engineer, now a frail 79-year-old, recalled the agony of jail S21. "I was tortured for 12 days and nights. Every day they beat me with a stick. They used pliers to pull out my toenails," he said, breaking down in tears. "They used electric shocks. Twice I lost consciousness."

Vann Nath, another survivor, added to the narrative of horrors being heard in the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia – the official name for the United Nations-backed tribunal into the crimes of the Pol Pot regime.

"We were so hungry we would eat insects that dropped from the ceiling," the 63-year-old said. "We would quickly grab and eat them so we could avoid being seen by the guards. We ate our meals next to dead bodies, and we didn't care because we were like animals."

In the packed public gallery some of the 500 Cambodians present shed their own tears, triggered by painful memories of the killing fields.

The moving testimonies came during the first trial of a senior Khmer Rouge figure, Kaing Guek Eav, known as Duch, the former director of S21.

Duch, 66, a former maths teacher, has been charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes, and indicted for torture and the execution of more than 15,000 men, women and children detained in S21 during the Khmer Rouge reign of terror from 1975 to 1979.

Sitting only a few metres from his former victims Duch has for the most part remained stony-faced over the last few weeks, staring straight ahead. Almost every day the tribunal has heard gruesome details of torture – poisonous centipedes inserted into a prisoner's vagina, waterboarding, and medical experiments carried out on inmates.

Today it was the turn of a former prison guard to describe how he was forced to send thousands of detainees to an execution site.

Duch has admitted in court to some of these horrors. "Live prisoners were used for surgical study and training. Draining blood was also done," he has said.

The former commander has testified the torture regime was ordered and controlled from the top. He answered directly to Son Sen, Pol Pot's interior minister (now dead), and also to Nuon Chea, Pol Pot's second in command (a defendant in a second trial). Claiming that he was afraid to disobey their orders, Duch has performed with an intriguing mixture of admissions, remorse and denial.

"I would like to express my regret and heartfelt sorrow, and I accept responsibility for what happened in S21," he told the court tearfully on one occasion. But he has also vigorously denied claims he participated in beatings and torture.

Nam Man, 48, another survivor, believes otherwise. She said she saw him beat two of her uncles to death with a metal rod. "Are you going to deny the facts and the truth that I have just told the chamber?" she asked.

The last few weeks have marked a turning point in this UN-backed tribunal for the crimes of Democratic Kampuchea, a regime that emptied the cities and transformed the countryside into a vast complex of slave labour camps.

This long-awaited "mixed tribunal", which combines Cambodian lawyers and judges with international jurists, has always been controversial. In the 1980s, the US government blocked any attempt to get a tribunal off the ground. Western governments perversely permitted the Khmer Rouge to occupy Cambodia's seat in the UN.

Now, 30 years on, the tribunal that many said would never exist is under fire for alleged corruption and claims of political meddling by the prime minister, Hun Sen. With international funding far from assured, some have predicted its imminent collapse.

But the hail of criticism from some quarters is being balanced by a growing sense of the trial's importance, especially for the victims. Controversy is being outweighed by catharsis as Cambodia faces up to its past.

"So many ordinary villagers are coming to the court," said the tribunal's public affairs head, Reach Sambath. "This is a turning point in the trial. The public gallery was so full on one day that the New Zealand judge, Dame Silvia Cartwright, ruled that Cambodians had priority over international observers."

The respected Documentation Centre of Cambodia has concluded that the Pol Pot regime caused the death of just under 2 million people from torture, mass execution, disease, forced labour and starvation. Youk Chhang, the centre's director, insists that the packed gallery proves "Cambodians must have ownership over the process".

"It is important that Cambodians see for themselves justice and actively participate. This tribunal can even be a model for future tribunals," he said.

Ros Phirum, 54, was among the 400 villagers from Kien Svay district who recently attended the trial. "My brother was jailed by the Khmer Rouge and they burned him alive. Now I feel some justice is finally happening."

At the very least, this tribunal has made legal history. The Cambodian model has enabled victims to file a case against the accused alongside the prosecution, with civil-party lawyers also entitled to cross-examine and call witnesses. The tribunal has created a victims unit to facilitate the work of civil parties.

The search for justice has been accompanied by new moves to put the horrors of the Khmer Rouge on Cambodia's syllabus. A new book, *Democratic Kampuchea* by scholar Kamboly Dy, has been circulated to all 1,366 secondary schools as the first ever textbook on the Khmer Rouge era.

The Duch trial is expected to finish by September, but there are many doubts about a second trial involving the four surviving Khmer Rouge leaders.

Pol Pot's right-hand man, Nuon Chea (known as Brother Number Two), and his foreign minister, Ieng Sary, are both ailing and in their 80s. Many Cambodians say they will feel cheated if they die before a verdict is reached on the whole regime, and not just one executioner. But Human Rights Watch considers that even if all five former Khmer Rouge senior cadres are tried, the result will still offer incomplete accounting and flawed justice.

Thirty years after the toppling of the regime in 1979, there are inevitably gaps in the indictment. Pol Pot and military commander Ta Mok are dead. But for Cambodians who have waited so long to see their Khmer Rouge tormentors in the dock, incomplete justice is far better than no justice at all.

For Chum Mey, it was better to testify in front of a public gallery packed with deeply involved Cambodian villagers, than in the sterile legal atmosphere of the world court in The Hague.

"I was so excited when called to give evidence," Chum Mey explained. "I was happy to shed light before this chamber. Every single day I hear about Tuol Sleng [S21] my tears kept flowing. I feel so much relief about getting all this off my chest."

When asked about Duch's apology, Chum Mey responded: "A few tear drops could not wash away the suffering of millions who died. "Only the court can help to wash away the suffering."

Brutal leader

Saloth Sar – later known as Pol Pot – became involved in Marxist politics while studying in Paris in 1949, and served as a leader of the Khmer Rouge on his return to Cambodia.

After years of guerilla activity fighting the government, Prince Norodom Sihanouk was deposed in 1970 in a military coup. The new regime entered a civil war against Pol Pot's forces, and the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh in 1975.

It set about turning Cambodia into an agricultural society where most existed in appalling conditions in work camps. Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Centre of Cambodia, has calculated that just under 2 million were executed, tortured to death, or died of hunger or disease.

In 1979, the Vietnamese invaded and defeated the Khmer Rouge regime. Pol Pot fled, and remained free until 1997. He died a year later.

BBC Online

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Wanted Bashir 'drops Uganda trip'

Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir has cancelled plans to travel to Uganda, a Ugandan official says, following speculation he could be arrested.

Mr Bashir, wanted on an international arrest warrant for war crimes, had been invited to a development summit. But a Ugandan minister's suggestion he could be arrested, followed by a retraction, made the trip less likely.



Mr Bashir has visited Egypt and Libya since the warrant was issued

Mr Bashir has managed to visit several African countries despite the warrant for his arrest, issued in March.

But unlike those countries, Uganda is a signatory to the International Criminal Court (ICC), which issued the warrant for Mr Bashir's arrest.

Prosecutors accuse him of organising attacks on civilians in the Darfur region of Sudan.

'Avoiding embarrassment'

But the African Union, of which Uganda is a member, has decided not to honour the warrant. Ugandan foreign affairs official James Mugume told Reuters that Uganda was committed to the ICC, but wanted to avoid an incident.

He said the invitation for Mr Bashir to attend the Smart Partnership International Dialogue meeting still stood.

"We will handle it through diplomatic channels to avoid embarrassment and inconvenience to anybody," he said.

On Monday Uganda's state Minister for International Affairs Henry Oryem Okello told the press that Mr Bashir faced arrest in Uganda.

But on Wednesday Sudan's state-owned Suna news agency reported that Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni had telephoned Mr Bashir to apologise and distance his government from Mr Okello's claims.

President Museveni said Mr Okello was not mandated to speak on behalf of the government on the issue.

The Nation (Nairobi)

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Kenya: EU to Aid Hague Arrest Big Names in Waki List

Bernard Namunane and Benjamin Muindi

Nairobi — The European Union envoys on Thursday warned Kenya that their countries will help the International Criminal Court to deal with election violence suspects.

They said the EU will extend the same kind of help to the ICC it gave in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In that case, Belgium arrested former DRC vice-president Jean-Pierre Bemba and handed him over to the Hague where he is awaiting trial for crimes against humanity.

Indicted

Ms Anna Brandt, the representative of the EU presidency in Nairobi, gave a strong indication that European countries would help to arrest Cabinet ministers and business people who will be indicted by ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo.

However, she did not specify the exact form of assistance the EU would extend to the ICC.

She only said: "It would not be different from the one that has been offered for other countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Sierra Leone or even Yugoslavia."

In the case of those countries, EU member states arrested suspects, froze their foreign bank accounts or denied suspects entry visas to various EU countries.

The envoys also asked the government to move quickly and establish a tribunal locally.

On Thursday, it also emerged that the number of people to be tried at The Hague, if a local tribunal is not established, could rise beyond those in the Waki list of six Cabinet ministers and five MPs.

Mr Moreno-Ocampo on Thursday said he would use all the information received from Kenya and will not confine himself to the recommendations of the Waki commission.

"The findings of the Waki Commission are important but they do not bind the (prosecutor's) office; I should reach an impartial conclusion," he said.

This means the final list of those to be investigated by Mr Moreno-Ocampo and possibly indicted will be compiled from the evidence presented by the Party of National Unity (PNU), the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KCHR) and other sources, including NGOs. "In accordance with the Rome Statute, my office utilises all information received," he said.

Mr Moreno-Ocampo's statement came as politicians hardened positions, casting doubt that the Cabinet will reach an agreement on passing the Independent Tribunal Bill during its Monday meeting.

Contrary to popular belief that the Waki Commission only handed to Mr Annan a secret envelope, the ICC on Thursday revealed that the evidence consists of video clips, photographs and other materials.

"These materials consist of six boxes of documents and supporting materials compiled by the commission," Mr Ocampo said.

Naming suspects However, he said the law prevents him from naming suspects. "The content of the envelope will remain confidential, there will be no leaks."

Justice and Constitutional Affairs minister Mutula Kilonzo supported the decision to keep the names secret to guarantee that those to be investigated get a fair trial.

"The envelope is purely informative and it will become evidence after investigations," he said.

Mr Moreno-Ocampo vowed to punish crimes against humanity committed during the post-election violence. "There will be no impunity for the crimes that have been committed; this is the only way to prevent the commission of new crimes during the next elections," he said.

But he also said the government has the first option of prosecuting those involved. The ICC would only step in if Kenya fails to set up a tribunal.

Attorney General Amos Wako has already submitted a report on the investigations into crimes committed during the violence.

On Thursday, Mr Wako said he presented the report which stated that 81 cases involving 267 people have been concluded; 156 cases touching on 676 people are pending before the courts while cases under investigations involved 3,627 people. Inquest files had been opened into 400 cases.

On the political front, all is not well, however. Divisions in the Cabinet widened with Mr Kilonzo vowing not to remove the clauses that drove a wedge between his Cabinet colleagues.

Relevant Links

"I will enlarge the proposals by insulating the tribunal from injunctions by the Kenyan courts," he said. Among the disputed clauses were those that sought to strip the President of his immunity from prosecution; his powers of clemency; and barring the AG from exercising the powers of *nolle prosequi*.

Ministers failed to reach an agreement at a meeting on Tuesday and are scheduled to meet again on Monday.

While some who included ministers John Michuki, Kiraitu Murungi, Moses Wetang'ula, Dalmas Otieno and Esther Murugi supported the draft Bill with amendments, their colleagues Musalia Mudavadi and George Saitoti warned that should the local arrangement fail to meet international standards, The Hague would come in.

The Hague Cabinet ministers William Ruto and Henry Kosgey said the case should be taken over by The Hague. Mr Ruto has since changed his position and on Wednesday said trials of any nature would not help.

He has warned that violence would recur should the perpetrators of the violence be tried either locally or at the Hague.

Additional reporting by Lucas Barasa

Reuters

Friday, 17 July 2009

Kenyan politics transfixed by court controversy

By International Justice Desk



*Nairobi, Kenya
Nairobi, Kenya*

More than a year after Kenya's post-election trauma, few have been punished for the violence that killed around 1,300 people, uprooted more than a quarter of a million and crippled the economy.

Kenya's coalition government is struggling to create a special local tribunal to try perpetrators. If it fails, the International Criminal Court has vowed to put them on trial.

The issue is dominating Kenyan politics, weighing on local markets, and being closely watched by the outside world.

What is Kenya doing?

President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga -- who came together in a coalition to end the bloodshed in the early months of 2008 -- have been trying to push a local tribunal through parliament. But legislators have rejected their first attempt, for a mixture of motives: some are scared, others fear a whitewash unless the ICC gets involved.

Under pressure from abroad and at home, the pair are trying again, with Cabinet studying proposals for a special tribunal into post-election violence.

The plans, to modify the Constitution then create a court, would probably need parliamentary approval, though it is not clear how Kibaki and Odinga plan to overturn previous opposition. Some are calling for the court to be set up by special decree, bypassing the legislature.

What is the ICC doing?

ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo is gathering preliminary information on the Kenyan case, and has said he will take over if Nairobi does not set up a local court.

Crisis mediator Kofi Annan has sent the ICC investigator a list of 10 names of suspected chief perpetrators of the violence. That has both heightened pressure on Kenya to establish a court, and furnished Moreno-Ocampo with leads.

The various parties have made different statements on the timeline involved, but it seems clear that Kenya has until September of this year to come up with a concrete, approved plan, then until mid-2010 to actually set up the court.

Why does it matter?

Often forgotten in the political debate are the victims: the families of the bereaved, those still carrying wounds, and the refugees. There is deep resentment among Kenya's 35 million people at a crisis perceived to have been caused by political leaders -- whipping up supporters along tribal lines -- and the lack of accountability afterwards.

Since the election crisis exposed Kenya's instability, local markets have become susceptible to the political mood. Traders in the shilling currency are eyeing developments closely. Fragile stocks, which lost nearly a third of their value last year due to the local crisis and global downturn crisis, are also affected by any sign of renewed instability.

Tourists were scared away last year, and revenues remain down. In the corporate world, East African CEOs are more concerned about political instability than even the global panorama, a survey showed.

Kibaki and Odinga were deadly enemies during the post-election crisis, with then opposition leader Odinga accusing the president of stealing the vote through fraud. Since they came together in a coalition, their respective factions have been endlessly squabbling over petty matters like protocol and important matters of national policy. So the court controversy has put a further strain on them.

Many fear more violence at the next election, scheduled for 2012, if those behind last year's trouble get away free.

Who are the guilty parties?

Nairobi political and business sources say that the 10 names in the envelope now in ICC prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo's hands include at least two sitting ministers: one from Kibaki's side, the other from Odinga's.

Many are angry at Kibaki for failing to rein in his security forces during the crisis. Police shot dead hundreds of protesters at the height of the troubles. There is also criticism of Odinga for calling his opposition supporters out onto the streets and therefore fanning the crisis.

Prior to the election, politicians openly incited Kenyans along tribal lines, particularly between Kibaki's Kikuyu group -- Kenya's largest ethnic community -- and the Luos, Luhyas and Kalenjins who largely backed the opposition.

Most of the killings were in poor areas of Kenya: the slums of Nairobi and Kisumu, and rural areas of the Rift Valley. Images of gangs wielding clubs, machetes and bows-and-arrows shocked the world. Houses, and in one incident a church full of refugees, were set ablaze.

Kenyans are sceptical of their own authorities' ability to bring the guilty to justice. A procession of past inquiries into multi-million-dollar corruption scandals, land-grabbing, and other incidents of election violence, have all led to little other than huge bills for the taxpayer.

Source: Reuters

Examiner.com

Thursday, 16 July 2009

International Criminal Court considering material on post-election violence in Kenya



Lawrence Gist



The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Luis Moreno-Ocampo, has received material on post-election violence in Kenya.

This week, Luis Moreno-Ocampo received two reports from the Kenyan Attorney General. In the coming days, the Prosecutor will receive materials transmitted by Kofi Annan, the Chairperson of the African Union Panel of Eminent African Personalities. These materials consist of six boxes of documents compiled by the Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence -- known as the Waki Commission -- and an envelope with a list of possible suspects by the Waki Commission.

According to the ICC, the content of the envelope will remain confidential, and the Office of the Prosecutor will use all information received in its analysis work. The situation in Kenya has been under preliminary examination by the Office of the Prosecutor since 2008. No decision has been made yet as whether or not to open an investigation

The Toronto Star.com

Friday, 17 July 2009

<http://www.thestar.com/comment/article/667555>

Hopes for The Hague

EDITORIAL

Today is International Justice Day, an anniversary few recognize but many should celebrate. It marks the 11th anniversary of the statute that launched the world's first International Criminal Court, a permanent platform for bringing some of the worst war criminals and perpetrators of genocide to justice. Its first trial, of Congolese militia leader Thomas Lubanga, is now underway.

Canada, one of the founding members of the court, has reason to applaud. The ICC's first president was Philippe Kirsch, a Canadian who shepherded the Hague-based institution through its first years and recently handed over the job to Korean lawyer Sang-Hyun Song.

But the court began its work with a significant handicap that lengthened the odds on its success. The United States, under George W. Bush, withdrew its support because it feared it would be vulnerable to war crimes charges for American military campaigns abroad. An alarmed U.S. Congress passed the American Service-Members' Protection Act, nicknamed "The Hague Invasion Act." It mandated the use of "all means necessary and appropriate" to rescue any service person who fell into the court's clutches.

Now the new president, Barack Obama, has raised hopes that the big chill on international justice may be thawing. One positive sign is Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's declaration this week that America was entering a new "multi-partner" era in which justice, along with liberty and democracy, is a top priority.

Another is Obama's appointment of former Yale dean Harold Hongju Koh as a State Department legal adviser. The high-profile human rights expert will be the president's point person for an internal policy review of America's status with the court. The result could bring the U.S. to the table for the first time as an observer at a preparatory meeting for a landmark review of the court in 2010.

It may be years, rather than months, before America will once again sign onto the court and provide it with crucial moral, logistical and financial backing. That would require much political will in crisis-ridden Washington. In the meantime, the ICC has some reason to hope that its hand will be strengthened by an important ally in its worldwide struggle against impunity.

The Guardian

Thursday, 16 July 2009

Can Africa trust international justice?

Charles Taylor's European trial is not enough to persuade ordinary Africans that western-led justice will benefit them



Phil Clark

The image this week of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor, defiant in a black suit and dark sunglasses, taking the stand in a courtroom in The Hague – the first time an African head of state has been prosecuted for mass crimes – resonates powerfully. For many, the trial represents another victory for international justice and another signal of the end to impunity for the likes of Taylor, Slobodan Milosevic, Saddam Hussein and Alberto Fujimori – presidents who murdered, raped and tortured civilians before eventually finding themselves in the dock. In Africa, however, the Taylor trial elicits mixed – and more complex – reactions.

Current debates across Africa emphasise the need for accountability for African leaders. But they also demand the same justice for western leaders who have committed grave crimes and greater transparency and effectiveness from the institutions that deliver justice, especially the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is hosting the special court for Sierra Leone's prosecution of Taylor because of security concerns in Sierra Leone. Civil society actors in Nairobi, Kinshasa, Cairo and Freetown have lauded the Taylor prosecution, given the egregious crimes he directed rebels to commit in Sierra Leone between 1996 and 2002. However, there should be no triumphalism over this trial. There is much disquiet across Africa at the tendency of the ICC and other justice institutions to target deposed African leaders while turning a blind eye to African despots still in power, such as Robert Mugabe, as well as ignoring western perpetrators and their allies.

Two recent events form the backdrop to the Taylor trial and shape interpretations of it across Africa. Earlier this month, delegates to an African Union summit in Libya agreed a resolution to halt co-operation with the ICC over its indictment of the Sudanese president, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, for crimes committed in Darfur. The AU leaders stated that the ICC represented a form of neo-colonial intervention in Africa's affairs that would ultimately jeopardise peace and stability on the continent. A week later, in his speech in Ghana, Barack Obama argued that, while "Africa is not the crude caricature of a continent at war", it nonetheless suffers from rampant corruption and a lack of accountability among many of its leaders. Obama pledged greater US development support for African countries that tackled elite criminality and chose peace over conflict.

Obama's statements have chimed with African citizens much more than those of their ostensible leaders in the AU. Rwandan, Congolese, Ugandan and Sudanese colleagues have told me over the last week that the AU stance on Bashir is yet another case of African leaders seeking safety in numbers and using the smokescreen of neo-colonialism to hide the same crimes that Obama condemned. They see little wonder in the head of the AU, Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi, defending Bashir against calls for

international justice. Gaddafi himself is responsible for arms dealing and fuelling conflict in Chad and Darfur and may yet be implicated during the Taylor trial, given the support he provided to the Taylor-backed rebels in Sierra Leone.

At the same time, much of Africa sees hypocrisy in Obama's call for accountability for African leaders, as he equivocates over whether to launch an official inquiry into the Bush administration's policies after 9/11, not least the use of torture against suspected terrorists. Accountability is as necessary in Washington as it is in Khartoum.

Nevertheless, we should not interpret widespread African support for the prosecution of leaders such as Taylor and Bush as an unbending African faith in international justice. To date, most promises of international justice in Africa have gone unfulfilled, leaving the perception that justice is usually delivered for the sake of international judges and lawyers rather than for the victims of violence. While the special court for Sierra Leone's reasons for moving the Taylor trial away from Freetown are sound, in taking the trial to The Hague, the court is repeating a mistake made by the ICC and the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda – prosecuting suspects at a great distance from the populations most affected by their crimes. This denies local populations the chance to see and hear the alleged murderers, rapists and torturers firsthand. As a result, international justice institutions continue to have little direct impact on communities recovering from conflict.

There are also major concerns in Africa over these institutions' choice of trial targets. In the case of the ICC, the court's policy to date has been to pursue (usually middle-ranking) rebel leaders, while eschewing the more difficult cases of sitting government officials in countries such as Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. As a new institution, the ICC has pursued "small fish" in order to secure rapid judicial results and thus achieve international legitimacy. However, in doing so, the court has ignored crimes committed by state actors, such as Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni and Congolese president Joseph Kabila – both complicit in atrocities against their own civilians but both also important regional allies of the west. Africa has a long history of political elites manoeuvring to ensure that interventions by international actors ultimately play to their advantage. In extending this historical pattern, the ICC has forfeited legitimacy in its most important constituency – local populations that have directly endured those crimes.

The dismal irony is that after seven years of operation the ICC – the host but not conductor of the Taylor trial – has failed to prosecute any suspects as senior as Taylor. This is unlikely to change any time soon, as Sudanese president Bashir continues to evade the ICC's grasp. While Africa seeks justice for mass crimes, the ICC – and the entire enterprise of international justice – have a long way to go in convincing African populations that this brand of accountability is ultimately for their benefit.

Asia Pacific News

Friday, 17 July 2009

Japan to nominate Kuniko Ozaki for International Criminal Court

Tokyo - The Japanese government has decided to nominate Kuniko Ozaki as a judge for the International Criminal Court, the Foreign Ministry said Friday.

The 53-year-old professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies and a special assistant to the Foreign Ministry will run in an election among member countries scheduled for November for a place on the court, Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone said.

The International Criminal Court in The Hague currently has two openings on the 18-judge panel after Fumiko Saiga, the first Japanese judge, died in April and Mohamed Shahabuddeen of Guyana stepped down in February.

Ozaki joined the Foreign Ministry in 1979 and served as director for the treaty affairs division of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime in Vienna.

Since April she has conducted research on international, humanitarian, human rights and international organization law as a professor at the state-run graduate institute in Tokyo.