

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



Cross section of participants at an outreach event in Gbanga, Liberia last week

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:

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

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

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Oneworld.net

Tuesday, 17 March 2009

<http://us.oneworld.net>

Sierra Leone War Criminal Convictions 'Not Enough'



- Sierra Leonean forced to flee their homes during the civil war leave neighboring Guinea, where they took refuge during the conflict. © allAfrica.com "For the peace-process to be sustainable, there must be a focus on community reconciliation," said John Caulker, director of the human rights advocacy group Forum of Conscience, which operates in Sierra Leone. "I am calling on the Sierra Leonean government and international institutions to back the reparations program for victims of the war."
- Despite calls for greater assistance for survivors, many observers hailed the convictions as a key step towards recovery in Sierra Leone. Syracuse University law professor David Crane told Voice of America: "it's important [for people in Sierra Leone] to know that those who destroyed their country, those who had the entire country in the palm of their hand, those who felt they were above the law, now have been fairly found guilty of the crimes that they perpetrated against not only the people of Sierra Leone, but also (against) the people of Liberia and Guinea."
- In 1991, the Revolutionary United Front rebel group launched its first attack to gain control of Sierra Leone's lucrative diamond mines, sparking a civil war that claimed tens of thousands of lives and forced 2 million people to flee their homes. With the help of Britain and a sizable United Nations peacekeeping force, the violence was finally brought to an end in 2002. The UN subsequently backed a special court to try individuals from both sides of the conflict for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Nonetheless, Sierra Leone "is still considered a fragile state and faces the challenges of poverty, corruption, and economic mismanagement," writes BBC News.
- Violent clashes in recent days between the two main political parties in Sierra Leone "threaten to set back the country, still battling the legacy of a decade-long civil war," reported BBC today. The alleged rape of several women during the protests harks back to the brutality of the civil war, when rebels used sexual assault and amputation to instill fear in civilians.

Oneworld.net

Friday, 27 February 2009

<http://us.oneworld.net>

Convictions fail to provide justice for war survivors

The conviction of three Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leaders by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is not enough to provide real justice for victims of the civil war

The Special Court in Freetown has found three senior rebel leaders of the RUF guilty of multiple crimes against humanity - but, although we welcome the Court's decision, there is still an urgent need for greater support for the survivors of the conflict.



Ex-civil war combatant Aminata Sesav (in yellow) is training as a hairdresser with Caritas Makeni [Annie Bungeroth]

Mary Convill, our regional representative in Freetown says: "We welcome the decision as it is vital that those who've committed such crimes face justice. It also sends out a message beyond Sierra Leone that human rights will be upheld.

"However, for the legacy of the war to be transformed into something positive, the level of international investment in the Special Court must be replicated with the same investment in rebuilding the shattered lives of the orphans, the amputees, the displaced and the thousands who live with the mental trauma it caused."

Special concern for young people

She continues: "CAFOD in Sierra Leone has a special concern for young people who survived the war but whose childhood was marred by loss of education, parental support and guidance when families members were killed or when the children themselves were brutalised or traumatised by the war.

"The court is 'Special', but detached from the reality of Sierra Leone. If the convicted leaders are finally sent to jail, it will almost certainly be a prison overseas and ordinary Sierra Leoneans, their victims, will most likely continue to live in far worse conditions than the guilty prisoners. Survivors of the conflict will struggle to see that as 'justice'."

The charges against Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao included murder, amputation, sexual slavery and enlistment of child soldiers.

The nine year civil war had a devastating impact - tens of thousands died and more than two million people were made homeless. The rebel groups showed their brutality against communities with rape, torture, amputations and forced recruitment of children - some as young as eight years old - into their ranks.

John Caulker, director of our local partner Forum of Conscience - which works on community reconciliation - says: "The court's decision is positive, but can only be part of the process.

"We must look at the plight of the victims, who are still suffering nearly ten years on. Three men have been convicted but there are thousands more who have committed atrocities and still living free out in the villages.

"For the peace-process to be sustainable, there must be a focus on community reconciliation. I am calling on the Sierra Leonean government and international institutions to back the reparations programme for victims of the war.

"People's dignity must be restored if we are able to move on from the war. The Special Court is failing to address real issues for real people.

"We need to focus on reconciliation at a village level, to allow victims and perpetrators to understand what went wrong so we can never again suffer such a conflict."

OneWorld.net: Latest News, Groups Working on Sierra Leone and Justice and Crime Worldwide

Daily Observer (Liberia)

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

Taylor's Lawyer Craves Africa's Support

Says 'Whites' Are Acting above the Law

By **Leroy M. Sonpon, III**

Lawyers representing Liberia's former president Charles Taylor at the United Nations (UN) backed Special Court for Sierra Leone say they have detected unfair treatments not only against the interests of ex-president Taylor but other accused black Africans on the global stage. Taylor is on trial in The Hague, The Netherlands, on several charges including war crimes and crimes against humanity, murder, rape and recruitment of child soldiers, among others, for his alleged involvement in Sierra Leone's brutal armed conflict.



Cllr. Courtenay Griffiths

New Democrat (Liberia)
Tuesday, 17 March 2009

Lawyer Ambivalent

Over Court's Fairness

Mr. Courtenay Griffiths, lead counsel for former President Charles Taylor, says if his client were to be tried in a different court, he would have been confident of acquittal.

"Let me tell you this, if I Pg.3



Lawyer Ambivalent

were conducting that trial in front of any other tribunal, given what we've done to their witnesses, I will be confident of acquittal," Mr. Griffiths told journalists at a news conference here Monday.

Flanked by co-defend counsel, Laveli Supuwood, Mr. Griffiths said although he respects the judges sitting on the benches of the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone and their independence, the world wide perception of his client being guilty, could play on the judges' decision subconsciously.

"Although I have the utmost respect for the judges in the court, although I am sure that in their own mind they are anxious to demonstrate their own judicial independence, and objectivity, nonetheless, I am sure that subconsciously they are aware that the world at large because they have been misinformed already for years they want to see Taylor convicted. Subconsciously that kind of pressure is working around," he said.

He said it was not a question of he loosing hope in the trial, but that he was being realistic, judging from the fact that none of those brought before the court or former world leaders tried elsewhere have been set free before.

"So, it is not a question of me loosing hope, it is a question of being realistic looking at history. The history of this particular court..." he said.

Plain Truth (Liberia)
 Tuesday, 17 March 2009

TAYLOR'S TRIAL POLITICAL NOT LEGAL

-Courtenay Griffiths

The lead counsel for the defense team of President Charles Taylor currently on trial in The Hague for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, Courtenay Griffiths has said that the entire trial is political and not legal, indicating that if he were the one conducting the trial he would have dismissed the case because there is no concrete evidence to present to the trial jury.

Given a rather precarious observation of the history of the court, Griffiths said the International Court

has no records of acquittal but rather convictions of people brought before it from the days of Charles I, to Slobodan Milosevic.

He said though he has implicit confidence in the integrity and independence of the judges presiding but noted that given the level of negative western media propaganda it may seem likely that judges could develop a mindset towards conviction because of immense pressure from some quarters.

Speaking further, the
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Former President Charles Taylor



Cllr. Courtenay Griffiths

... NO DOCUMENTS TO CAP

TAYLOR'S TRIAL

Queen's lawyer said there are glaring contradictions in both the prosecution's indictment and the testimonies of witnesses produced at the trial.

Highlighting some of the contradictions Griffiths said even though the prosecution's indictment linked his client and the RUF to the Freetown invasion of 1998 by the AFRC military Junta but a recent ruling by three of the judges of the Special Court in the trial of three former commanders of the RUF concluded that the RUF had nothing to do with the Freetown invasion.

The lead counsel also noted that Moses Blah's testimony that RUF Commander Sam Bockarie was strangled to death was also contradicted by a post mortem report commissioned at the behest of the prosecution which revealed that Bockarie died from bullet wounds rather than from strangulation.

He said such contradictions are so grave that it is now glaring that the prosecution does not have a case against his client.

Addressing a news conference at the Crystal View

Hotel in Mamba Point, Monrovia, Griffiths said during the trial the prosecution produced 91 witnesses but noted that not a single witness linked his client to the crimes charged and stressed that the prosecution miserably failed to provide incontrovertible evidence in support of its indictment.

He described the health condition of President Taylor as good and added that the former Liberian leader is very anxious to speak out and dispel many of the lies that have been spread about him by the western media.

"President Taylor is very anxious to give his account of what he knows and will testify for about two months covering the period from the regime of President Samuel Kanyon Doe to his departure from power in 2003", Griffiths added.

He said Taylor was taken out of Africa not because of security concerns for the sub region but because it is easier to commit injustices in the dark against people.

He said the arrest and prosecution of Charles Taylor is not intended for justice but rather for revenge purposes and insinuated that judges may contemplate a conviction on the strength of the inconsistent evidence adduced by the prosecution but based on what the west wants.

However, in a brief statement later distributed to the press, Griffiths said he came to Liberia at the critical stage of Taylor's trial to make a plea not just for his client but for Africans generally.

"My hope is that we can together rekindle that hope that Africans can be treated equally on the global stage", he added.

Griffiths said if the experiences of Charles Taylor and more recently President Al Bashir of Sudan provide a guide, then Africans must be prepared to continue that struggle.

"When Charles Taylor was arrested and dragged in handcuffs to The Hague in Holland to stand trial, he warned to borrow a phrase "that if they came for him in the morning they would come for others that night. That vision has now come true as the President of Sudan can now testify, and watch out Robert Mugabe", he added.

Concluding Griffiths said the African public must be informed that the trial is not just about Taylor but Africans themselves and stressed the Taylor case is a useful place for a collective defense of the rights of the African people, pleading "we who defend him need your support".

The News (Liberia)
Tuesday, 17 March 2009

VOL. 19 No. 226 TUESDAY 17 MARCH 2009 PRICE L\$20

TAYLOR'S LAWYER UNCERTAIN ABOUT ACQUITTAL

Former President To Testify Soon



Courtenay Griffiths



Charles Taylor

One of the main lawyers defending former Liberian President Charles Taylor has sounded rather ambivalent on the issue regarding the acquittal of his client.

Courtenay Griffiths, the lead defense

lawyer in the trial of Mr. Taylor said the case involving the ex-president is primarily political; therefore, he could not say definitively whether Mr. Taylor could be acquitted.

However, he indicated that if he was defending Mr. Taylor in another court, he would have been acquitted. Mr. Griffith said based on his experience at the court, he has not seen a former head of state indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity acquitted.

Addressing journalists Monday at a local hotel in Monrovia, Mr. Griffith explained that the purpose of the conference was to provide the Liberian people with an update of the trial and what he anticipates will happen.

He disclosed that the defense case would begin this summer and anticipates that the case would last between four to six weeks.

Asked whether he lost confidence in the special court, the defense lawyer said he hasn't, but noted that the Taylor case has political undertone.

According to Mr. Griffiths, Taylor will be defense first witness to testify which, he

Cont'd on page 3

TAYLOR'S LAWYER

said, would last for more than a month.

He said the former president is in good health and in high anxiety to testify. Mr. Griffiths told journalists that he anticipates that during his testimony the former president would give evidence.

Mr. Taylor's testimony, according to the lawyer, would start from the 1980s, his days in the military Junta of Samuel Doe, the crisis period and up to his administration.

Mr. Griffiths informed reporters that the defense team has recruited about 200 witnesses for the trial. The lawyer said some of these witnesses have been accessed and are found fit and ready to testify.

Mr. Taylor faces 11 counts of incitement and seven counts of terrorizing, used of child soldiers, rape, among others.

The Inquirer (Liberia)
Tuesday, 17 March 2009

Taylor's Lawyer Doubtful About Fair Trial

The Lead Defense Counsel in the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor says the trial is not about law or legal issue as it should be but it is a case that is highly political as he is convinced that much pressure would be upon the judges to convict Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Courtney Griffiths says available records of the Special Court trying Mr. Taylor, has so far shown that none of those indicted and arraigned before the Court for prosecution has been acquitted stressing that the entire prosecution process is about what he called, "victim justice," or 'revenge.'

Mr. Griffiths' comments were in response to a question from this reporter as to whether he was confident in the ability of the Court to dispense justice in a free, fair and transparent manner in the Taylor's case when he addressed a news conference in Monrovia.

Mr. Griffiths said although he had a lot of respect for the judges of the Special Court, he thinks the world at large has been misled

about Mr. Taylor's involvement in the case stressing that when he looks at the history of the case, he just can not be optimistic that his client would get a free and fair trial.

He added: "Objectively, Mr. Taylor ought to be acquitted based on what I have seen in the prosecution's case. If I was the one trying this case, I would have

dismissed the case."

According to Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Taylor's indictment covers seven areas of alleged criminality, which he noted cover various districts in Sierra Leone. He said for most of the periods, the indictment also covers from the time the Military Junta came into being in May 25, 1997 to the cessation of the Freetown invasion in January 1999, stressing that within this period in reality, the time alleged in the indictment covers a 12-month old period between

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Mr. Griffiths (right) addressing the press yesterday while Cllr. Supuwood looks on

Isaac Nyenabo To Go To Court Again

By Morrison O.G. Sayon

As the leadership crisis deepens in the Liberian Senate, embattled President Pro-tempore of the Senate, Isaac W. Nyenabo is set to run to

the Supreme Court again for redress.

Speaking to legislative reporters over the weekend, Pro-tempore Nyenabo said since the ruling of the Supreme

Court of Liberia in the case between him and some members of the Liberian Senate the court ruling has not been implemented to the

fullest by that august body.

Sen. Nyenabo said some of his colleagues are playing

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Taylor's Lawyer

Cont'd from front Page

the 1st of February 1998 when ECOMOG soldiers mainly from Nigeria took over the city of Freetown and drove the junta away from the city up to the end of the junta invasion.

Mr. Griffiths, who was flanked by his Liberian colleague on the defense team, Cllr. Laveli Supuwood, said dealing with the Freetown invasion, which has been the focus of the atrocities committed by the world media, the judges of the Special Court in two previous cases before the Court, said the RUF, which media report has alleged Mr. Taylor

directed had nothing to do with the invasion, stressing that the defense is waiting to see what the judges in the Taylor's case would say on this issue.

Touching on Mr. Taylor's condition in prison and what anticipation he had about the trial, Mr. Griffiths said the former President is in good health and is anxious to dispel what he termed, 'the lies' against him which he blamed largely on the western media.

According to Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Taylor would be the first witness for his own defense stressing that the

former President has a lot to say and will give details of his political history from the time he (Charles Taylor) served in the former President Samuel K. Doe government.

Mr. Griffiths said not because he representing the legal interest of Mr. Charles Taylor in the case that this should suggest he is not sensitive to what happened in Sierra Leone adding, "I accept that there were sufferings in Sierra Leone and people were amputated, raped and killed. But we need to know who should bear the consequences, because Taylor has been made a scapegoat".

Mr. Griffiths quoted former President Taylor as saying when he was handcuffed during his arrest, that what was happening to him, would happen to others adding, "three years after that time, we have seen an

indictment against the Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir."

According to Mr. Griffiths there are five others including Mr. Taylor at the UN facility in The Hague, where the former President is being prosecuted, adding, "why only Africans? Is it only Africans that are suspected of violating crimes against humanity?"

He added that the practices of the West to arrest only Africans for suspected war crimes, is a reality that racism still exists at a very high level and it is on the increase that Africans including the AU, must rise up and say to the West that the continent cannot be treated like a child any longer. He suggested the need for the AU to set up its own court that would handle such cases, instead of the West taking

Survey Notice

The public is hereby notified, that, the Bureau of Lands, and Surveys, Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy, by and thru its team of surveyors headed by

over the case.

Mr. Griffiths wondered why the case could not be tried in Africa like the one in South Africa where Africans would have the opportunity to closely follow the case, stressing that the West has opted for The Hague, not for many eyes to be on the

case.

He wonders why former US President George Bush and British former Prime Ministers can not be held for crime against humanity for their war efforts during their tenures. By: Patrick K. Wrokpoh

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
17 March 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

Chinese Here with US\$300 Million

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer)

- A Chinese construction company, Hainan Century Investment has arrived in the country to construct about 10,000 housing units across Liberia's 15 counties at the cost of US\$300 million. Stephen Neufville, Managing Director of the National Housing Authority (NHA) told a local radio Monday that the housing projects which would be carried out in phases will kick off in Lower Margibi County and be completed in five years. He said under the first phase, the Chinese company would construct one thousand housing units.
- The NHA Managing Director indicated that the first housing units would be intended for low-income earners. For his part, the Chairman of the Hainan Century Investment reaffirmed the commitment of the Chinese Government to helping in rebuilding post-war Liberia.

Germany Pledges Five Million Euros to Liberia's Commercial Debt Relief

(New Vision, Daily Observer)

- Germany has pledged five million euros, nearly ten million U.S. dollars to Liberia's commercial debt relief. Germany's Ambassador to Liberia announced the contribution at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries.
- The MOU is aimed at enhancing Financial Cooperation that is subsisting between Liberia and Germany. Foreign Minister Olubanke King-Akerele signed for Liberia while German Ambassador Ilse Lindemann-Macha signed for her government. Foreign Minister King-Akerele expressed gratitude to Germany for its numerous financial support to Liberia's reconstruction and debt relief effort. For her part, Ambassador Lindemann-Macha recommitted her government's support to Liberia's reconstruction and development.

Charles Taylor's Defense Team Ready to Fight back

(National Chronicle, The Inquirer, Plain Truth, The News, New Democrat)

- Speaking at a news conference in Monrovia on Monday, the Defense team of Former President Charles Taylor says it is prepared to present evidence that he is innocent of all charges levied against him by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.
- The lead Defense Counsel, Courtenay Griffiths said Mr. Taylor will be the first to present evidence to prove he is not guilty of the alleged crimes.
- Mr. Griffiths said more than 200 witnesses have been recorded to testify on behalf of Mr. Taylor.

President Sirleaf Calls for Measures to Counter Decline in Investment

(The Analyst, The Inquirer, National Chronicle, The Informer, Heritage)

- Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is among a number of African leaders discussing the impact of the global financial crisis on Africa, with the view of formulating a common African position for consideration by the World's leading economies known as the G-20, at its Summit

early next Month in London. The two-day consultative meeting called by British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, got underway Monday in London.

- During the meeting hosted by the British Prime Minister with a few African leaders and institutional heads, it was agreed that additional and urgent resources are needed to help Africa counter the decline that could reverse the economic gains on the continent.

Deputy Justice Minister Wants New Correction Officer Exhibit Discipline

(New Vision, The Informer, The Analyst)

- The Liberian Government with support from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and other partners has completed the training of an additional 24 senior correctional managers to improve the country's corrections sector. The eight-week management training course funded by DFID (the UK's Department for International Development), brings to 43 the total number of correctional superintendents and senior officers trained from prisons across Liberia.
- Deputy Justice Minister for Administration and Public Safety, Counsellor Eva Morgan urged the newly-trained correctional managers to exhibit a high degree of discipline in performing their duties. "No reform can take place without your active participation; therefore professionalism, integrity, and discipline should be your guiding principle to prevent the corrections sector from crumbling," she said.

Radio Summary

STAR RADIO (News monitored today at 9:00 am)

Former Charles Taylor Takes Witness Stand Shortly At Special Court

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

President Pro-Temp to Respond to Resolution for His Removal Today

- The embattled President Pro-Temp of the Liberian Senate, Isaac Nyenabo is expected to respond today to mounting calls for his resignation.
- Senator Nyenabo's response is in line with a promise to answer to a resolution by over two thirds majority members who declared a vote of no confidence in the entire leadership of the Upper House.
- The action of the "majority" of the Senators prompted the immediate resignation of the five Statutory Committee heads.
- Correspondents say the pending response of the "embattled" pro-temp is highly critical to deciding the next stage of the leadership crisis. Sources say, Mr. Nyenabo is poised to return to the Supreme Court as he did last year during similar crisis at the August body.

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

Population Threshold Bill Passage to Feature High At Legislative Session Today

- Discussion on the passage of the controversial Population Threshold Bill is expected to take a centre stage at the House of Representatives today.
- The debate comes as the Committee of Elections and Inauguration has completed hearings on the threshold bill.
- Since last year, the passage of the bill has been experiencing setbacks with objections from lawmakers of South-eastern counties who contended that the proposed threshold of 45,000 was an attempt to reduce their representation in the House.
- Lawmakers from counties with higher population however argue that representation is by number.
- The National Elections Commission want the threshold bill passed to begin delineating electoral constituencies across the country.

Truth F.M. (News monitored today at 12:00 noon)

World Bank Delegation Ends Visit to Liberia

- A visiting delegation of the World Bank has ended a four-day visit to Liberia, identifying the need for the improvement in the road network, education and health.
- Addressing a news conference Monday, the Head of the Delegation, Jim Hagan said the findings from the visit show that Liberia's road network is in a deplorable state.
- On the issue of health and education, the World Bank Executive said though the country was making progress there was a need for the construction of more educational and health facilities across the country.

Punch (Nigeria)

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

<http://www.punchng.com>

Al-Bashir's war crime charges

By Punch Editorial Board

The indictment of the Sudanese President, Mr. Omar Al-Bashir, for war crimes, including genocide, in Darfur region by the International Criminal Court (ICC), has been generating heated debate globally. Al-Bashir's government is accused of playing a key role in the Darfur conflict, which has claimed about 400,000 lives and displaced over 2,500,000 people. In announcing its much-anticipated decision, ICC said the Sudanese President was charged with two counts of war crimes and five counts of crimes against humanity.



media.2news.tv

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir

The statement explained that Mr. Al-Bashir “is suspected of being criminally responsible, as an indirect (co-)perpetrator, for intentionally directing attacks against an important part of the civilian population of Darfur, Sudan, murdering, exterminating, raping, torturing and forcibly transferring large numbers of civilians, and pillaging their property.”

It was the first time the ICC would issue a warrant of arrest for a leader while he is still in office. But the court made it clear that Al-Bashir's official capacity as a sitting head of state does not exclude his criminal responsibility, nor does it grant him immunity against prosecution before the ICC. The United Nations has asked the Sudanese government to comply with the ICC order and urged it to ensure the safety and security of the civilian population, UN personnel and property, and that of its implementing partners.

But the Sudanese authorities refused to recognise the ICC's jurisdiction. Khartoum has been mobilising Arab, Islamic and African countries against the court, dismissing it as a Western instrument of regime change. Immediately the Court issued the warrant, the Sudanese government reportedly made an “aerial show of force” in two areas of Darfur. At least, six to 10 Non-Governmental Organisations had their permission to operate in Sudan withdrawn and told to leave the country.

The expulsion of international aid groups has left a number of refugee camps without essential humanitarian services. In many cases, the assets of the expelled NGOs were confiscated as well. There were also nonviolent demonstrations in a number of towns in the region. The UN Secretary-General has assured the international community that the joint AU-UN mission in Darfur, along with other UN assistance operations, will continue working.

It is unfortunate indeed that some world leaders, including African, are turning the Darfur carnage to mere international politics. The global community had really expressed serious rage over the viciousness with

which the Sudanese government-backed Janjaweed prosecuted its ethnic cleansing agenda in Darfur region since February 2003. Yet the Sudanese government continues to defy the UN.

For more than half a century since the Nuremberg and Tokyo trials, states have mostly failed to bring to justice, people responsible for committing war crimes, genocide and other crimes against humanity. That explains why wars in Africa are fought with scant regard for international conventions. From Somalia to Angola, from Liberia to Sierra Leone and from Cote D’Ivoire to Sudan, millions of innocent children and women were molested, amputated, raped and brutalised in some of the most bizarre wars in modern history. The establishment of the ICC in 2002 was, therefore, a direct response to such impunities.

It is wrong for the African Union to demand for the suspension of the ICC proceedings against Al-Bashir by claiming that the international justice system is being applied disproportionately against Africa. Ad hoc war crimes tribunals had handled war crimes and related cases in recent times in the former Yugoslavia and other places. And the world may have started moving to a new order when any leader, no matter how powerful, indicted for war crimes will be brought to justice. Why then should the Al-Bashir’s indictment be treated differently?

Al-Bashir should appear before the court to defend himself as the ICC indictment does not automatically lead to a conviction. The international community should ensure that the era of impunity for war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity is brought to an end. Al-Bashir and all other persons, especially in the Middle-East and Africa, indicted for war crimes are brought to justice immediately.

AllAfrica.com

Tuesday, 17 March 2009

Sudan: No Mercy for Al Bashir

EDITORIAL

African Foreign Ministers who attended the NORDIC-Africa summit in Copenhagen, are reported to have condemned the International Criminal Court (ICC) for issuing an international warrant for the arrest of Sudanese President, Omar Al Bashir, describing the decision as wrongly timed.

According to a report filed by the GNA it was the view of the Ministers that the ICC should have considered the concerns of the African Union (AU) that the warrant should be suspended, to allow the continuation of the peace processes in Sudan.

The Chronicle finds the attitude of the Foreign Ministers and the African Union (AU) as a mark of hypocrisy. Where were these same Ministers and the AU when Charles Taylor was arrested and sent to The Hague to face justice over his alleged role in the Liberia and Sierra Leone conflict that killed thousands of innocent people? Clearly, there is no way Africa would develop if our leaders continue to support such naked robbery and murder by some of their colleagues.

The AU and African Foreign Ministers have witnessed the atrocities of Al Bashir, yet they have failed to bring him to book, or use mediation as they are now claiming, to stop the killings and human right abuses going in the Darfur region. If the world hailed the arrest and trial of the late Serbian President, Slobodan Milosevic, for his role in the killings that went on in his country, why should leaders in Africa behave as if the international warrant that has been issued for the arrest of Al Bashir has never happened before?

If they are convinced that Al Bashir has not committed any crime, they should persuade the man to surrender himself to the court to defend his case. We do not think the ICC can deliberately put him behind bars if they do not have any incriminating evidence against him. The Chronicle is calling on civil right organizations on the African continent to rise up against the undue support being offered to Al Bashir by our African leaders, because it has the potential to encourage other Presidents on the continent to abuse power in order to commit heinous crimes and go away with it.

Zimbabwean and The Gambian Presidents, Robert Mugabe and Yahaya Jammeh have for something now been using all foul means to suppress opposition in their respective countries, which the AU is aware of, yet they have not made any single statement on it, but if the international community decides to crack the whip, the same African leaders will come out to support their colleagues.

The Chronicle is, therefore, not surprised with the latest attempts to shield Al Bashir. We however, urge that the ICC should not relent on its efforts to arrest the Sudanese President, if the court can prove that the evidence at their disposal is incriminatory enough.

News24

Tuesday, 17 March 2009

www.news24.com/news

Call for Gaza 'abuses' probe



(photo: AP / Ben Curtis)

London - A group of the world's most experienced judges and human rights investigators called on Monday for a full international investigation into alleged abuses of international law in the Gaza conflict. In an open letter supported by Amnesty International, they stress the need for an investigation into "all serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflict". The letter

argues that the UN investigation "should not be limited only to attacks on UN...