

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Friday, 18 November 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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Concord Times

18 November 2005

Liberian Refugees Call for Taylor's Extradition

Story: Abdul Karim Koroma

Liberian refugees in the US have called on the Liberian president in waiting, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to immediately request for Charles Taylor's extradition from Nigeria and hand him over to the Special Court.

"Without doubt, your election promises a new beginning for Liberia. Your fellow citizens have enthusiastically demonstrated their faith in the democratic process, turning out in large numbers to vote, marking the freest and fairest election in Liberia's history," the refugees stated in a letter addressed to Johnson-Sirleaf and added that the US strongly supports Liberia's democratic process.

The statement said that Taylor is facing a 17-count charge of war crimes and crimes against humanity for which the Special Court has indicted him.

"The United States and many other governments strongly support the Court and its mandate and I urge you to do likewise," the letter states and continued, "the international community's considerable investment in Liberia remains in jeopardy as long as Taylor is permitted to elude justice."

The Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, the letter continues, has resisted numerous calls including that from the United States Congress to transport Taylor to the Court so that justice can be done and Liberia can enjoy better prospects for prosperity.

"Taylor must be held accountable for his past actions, and achieving this end will require your decisive and immediate action," the letter concluded.

[Note: The article refers to a letter written to the Liberian president-elect by U.S. Congressman Edward R. Royce. See press clippings for 14 November]

For Salone's 10 yrs war

TRC indicts SLPP and APC

The Research Officer coordinating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Working Process, whose ultimate objective was to present a report on the causes of the 10 years rebel war, Gavin Simpson, on the 17th of November 2005 at the American

Embassy, Walpole Street, Freetown, officially blamed the SLPP and the APC as they were the two political parties that dominated the political arena, in the period right after independence. The Researcher, who headed the TRC working process, in searching out the roots of Sierra Leone's senseless and Africa's most

brutal war, as the United Nations labelled it said "the period between 1961 to 1991 represented the most shameful years in the political history of Sierra Leone." He furthered that "during that period the entire leadership of this nation failed the whole Sierra Leone" adding, "this was an era of endemic corruption, abuses of power,

the forces, women, children, youth and a denial of human rights." The co-ordinating

officer, who joined the TRC in 2002, commented that "successive governments

were responsible for the kind of anarchy that befell this
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TRC indicts SLPP and APC

From Front Page

country," but added, "it is not one party that caused all these, it started right after independence." Mr. Simpson further revealed, "some group of people were marginalized, people in the provinces were denied their political rights" and that "in a society where the government fails the people, it is likeable that some group will get to doing anything." He however agreed that though "it was a war designed by Sierra Leoneans towards Sierra Leoneans," other external partners like Liberia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and other African countries also contributed. He made these statements at a ceremony organized by the TRC working group, in trying to reach the people through various stake holders, with the findings of their commission in their recently

launched "Witness True" book and Film, that explains if not exactly how the war was fought." The film features stories that are "moving and hard to bear," as Mr. Simpson put it. In another development, the Researcher and co-ordinator of the Working group blamed the ruling SLPP as they are the party that armed and sponsored the CDF, who also committed some of the worst human rights violation in the war, could not do anything towards the implementation of the TRC's recommendations. To support his claim he proclaimed, "some countries like South Africa, Peru etc implemented the recommendations of their Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, immediately the reports were out." He pointed out that a whole year after the launching of

the Commission's Official Report, the government is lagging in the implementation of some of the recommendations of the commission, which the Commission found were some of the principal factors that dragged Sierra Leoneans into 10 years civil war and to its present state of decay and indicated that "if we do not curb these situations, Salone is still on the way to slip back to the old era of disorder." The Researcher therefore appealed to all Sierra Leoneans to pressure their representatives to help in the speedy implementation of these recommendations, especially the 'Abolishment of the death penalty from the Sierra Leone Law Books' as it is used against political opponents, 'Repealing the laws that criminalize Libel and other forms of Expression' and also the strengthening and independence of the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC).

Awoko
Friday November 18, 2005

FDP

"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of repression and resistance."

- Robert Kennedy

From The TRC File

EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS DURING THE CONFLICT IN SIERRA LEONE

FORCED DRUGGING

Statistics in terms of the violation of forced drugging, like forced labour, remain inadequate because it was generally under-reported by women. A major reason for the failure to report the abuse is that drugging became part of many women's daily experiences and assumed a semblance of normality. However, a close reading of statements made by women and girls, as well as almost of all of the hearings testimony, confirms that forced drugging became the norm.

At the Special Hearings on Women held in Freetown, many women testified to the fact that in the course of their abduction and whilst living with the rebels they were given drugs every day. They also confirmed that drugs were on a daily basis added to their food. Their abductors would add marijuana into some of the sauces normally eaten with rice, such as cassava or potato leaves. Marijuana and other drugs such as cocaine, heroine and "brown-brown" were administered to women in a number of different ways, including forced inhalation, or making incisions on their bodies and rubbing the drugs into the wounds. Gunpowder was also administered to women, presumably as a stimulant. A woman abducted during the January 1999 invasion of Freetown told her story to the Commission:

"...I was forced to make sex with several rebels, the rebels did not only abuse me sexually but they also introduced me to drugs like cocaine and marijuana. In fact what they usually did was to have me properly drugged before they will have sex with me. The rebels also used me and some ladies whom they abducted as human shields each time the ECOMOG soldiers attacked them."

Another woman abductee who lived with the rebels for almost a year described how various substances were administered to her and other abductees:

"As a captive I was taken to Gbangbatoke town along with other captives... the next morning we were assembled in the open air and were informed that we would be leaving for Moyamba town. Before we left, I was given some black thing similar to powder to swallow, which I later learnt was gunpowder... some of us were called to assemble by Commander Murray. In the assembly I was injected with cocaine and was given one set of military uniform and a knife. After the injection and disarming into a uniform, we were then informed that we will be going to fight alongside the rebels."

Medical practitioners in Sierra Leone confirm that in the aftermath of the war, a major problem facing Sierra Leone is how to deal with the long-term consequences of poisoning, drug abuse. Many women who appeared before the Tribunal with a complaint of mood swings, depression, drug abuse, and feelings of intense hopelessness, and whose symptoms are not addressed

properly and contribute to an already violent and disturbed society showing signs of even greater dysfunction.

In this regard, the Commission finds that the armed forces and particularly the RUF were responsible for coercing victims and those over whom they had control into using a number of dependence – inducing substances with the deliberate intention of causing them to lose control both mentally and physically and with the intention of exploiting their vulnerability. The Commission is of the view that if the legacies of drug abuse and forced drugging are not addressed, they have the capacity to impact negatively on the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants, their partners and their victims into society and thereby threaten the prospects for continued and sustained peace.

KILLINGS

Scores of thousands of Sierra Leoneans, including thousands of women, lost their lives in the conflict. There was a deliberate policy by certain of the armed forces, particularly the RUF and the AFRC, to target civilians in campaigns of killings. Many families and communities were massacred. One example is this mass killing of a family at Kono Kangana, Gorama Chiefdom in 1994:

"...The soldiers started asking my sisters, uncle and mother's mate under threat to give them all that they had or they should buy them marijuana to smoke. My sisters in turn refused giving them anything. So the soldiers killed my mother's mate and my sisters; in all seven people were killed. Only two of us narrowly escaped the massive killing."

The RUF devised several special "operations" in which the primary objective was mass killing. A notorious example was "Operation No Living Thing" which was intended to leave nobody alive who crossed the path of the RUF. A woman in Mokonde town told of the private pain she experienced after witnessing the killing of her sister:

"While she was going back to search for her thing, I decided to wait under a tree until she returned...I heard men's voices questioning somebody along the footpath. I recognised the voice of my sister and immediately, I raised my head to see more. I saw my sister and two armed men in military uniform standing opposite a big tree. After some questioning by these men, I saw one of them raise his gun and hit her on her head. She immediately fell down and one pulled out a long knife, which was hidden in a long packet, and used it to split open her head into two. At this point, I saw blood flowing down her body and she was crying and calling our family name in Mende. I bowed my head crying silently...late in the evening, I came out to bid her farewell; I saw her lying in a pool of blood and I wept bitterly at her side as I was alone...I managed to drag her corpse from the road to the bush where I can identify her..."

A distraught mother described the death of her daughter, who was a nursing mother at the time:

"It was on a Monday during the time when rebels took over the city in January 1999. The incident took place in my house. We were all in the house on that day hiding in different positions when we noticed that it was prayer time. So I called on my daughter who was also a suckling mother to join me in prayer. We were now kneeling down for the first part of the prayer when her head was shot and she fell down dead. She was bleeding from the head and nose up to the time of her burial."

The Commission finds that all of the armed perpetrator forces pursued a deliberate policy of killing civilians, often in an indiscriminate fashion. In the course of pursuing this policy, the factions took the lives of many women and girls. The Commission finds that the RUF in particular pursued a strategy of mass killings under campaigns such as "Operation No Living Thing". In terms of both international human rights law and humanitarian law, the killing of civilians is strictly prohibited.

DISEMBOWELMENT OF PREGNANT WOMEN

Disembowelment was a gruesome violation perpetrated on women during the conflict expressly because of their gender. What is particularly repugnant is that many pregnant women had their stomachs disemboweled because members of the armed forces wanted to place bets as to the gender of the unborn baby. Some witnesses gave these testimonies to the TRC:

"...The captain of the RUF placed a bet with his colleagues that the woman was having a baby girl whilst the colleague insisted that it was a boy. The pregnant woman's stomach was then dissected to prove who was right. After opening the pregnant woman's stomach, they saw a baby girl who was later left to die and the pregnant woman had already died from the act. This is one of the worst violations I have ever witnessed in life and whenever I think about it, I become more traumatised."

And *"...The rebels captured a pregnant woman and they argued among themselves whether she was carrying a boy or girl. To prove who was right they decided to kill the woman. They opened up her stomach and realised she was carrying a girl. They removed the baby from her womb and killed the baby and divided it among them."*

The Commission recorded only a few incidents of disembowelment, but strongly suspects that the figure is not indicative of the actual number of women who suffered the violation or those that witnessed it during the conflict. Specialist consultants to the Commission on gender based crimes spoke of the tendency of victims

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Experiences of Women and Girls

From Page 3

and witnesses of such crimes to "suppress" memories of the event, which may explain why more people did not come forward to the TRC to speak about it. Interviews conducted by the Commission also unearthed the story of a woman who nearly suffered disembowelment but was saved because the induced trauma of the fear of disembowelment forced her into immediate labour where she gave birth to the child in the bush where the disembowelment would have taken place. Some disembowelments of pregnant women took place in front of family members, leaving behind deep scars in the minds of the living. One witness described, among other violations, the gruesome manner in which her pregnant sister was killed with her child:

"...My sister Nancy was pregnant. Her stomach was first split open with a cutlass and the baby removed from her. The foetus was cut into two. The two dead bodies were taken into the house before setting the house on fire."

The Commission has found that most violations in this category are attributable to the RUF. Given that the RUF was responsible for the highest number of abductions, they are also found to be responsible for the highest number of gender-based violations perpetrated against women. One young victim-turned-perpetrator of the RUF explained a situation in which he took part in a disembowelment violation:

"...I was captured in 1997 as a teenager and a primary school pupil of class two in Matru Jong, Bonthe District. I was forced to carry their loads to unknown destinations... After some time, one of their bosses came...and asked that we be trained and get enrolled in the RUF...a few days after, they gave me my own gun. One day, they brought a pregnant lady and asked us to kill her and remove the foetus from her womb. We did so under duress as little boys and that was my

first experience with the RUF."

Another former combatant from the RUF testified to having seen a similar act:

"...My mother was a business women...she took me to a village to sell some goods...in the night it was attacked by RUF rebels. I was captured and abducted by Komba Gbondema...at the age of six. Commander Gbondema took me to Camp Zogoda for training. Due to my braveness and technique of fighting, CO Gbondema promoted me to Corporal Highway...At one time we attacked Mile 91 and CO Gbondema ordered a rebel to butcher the belly of a pregnant woman to know whether she is carrying a boy or girl."

The violation of disembowelment invariably led to a horrific death for both mother and child. According to one testimony to the TRC:

"...They were snatching babies and infants from their mother's arms and tossing them in the air. The babies would free fall to their deaths. At other times, they would also chop them from the back of their heads to kill them, you know like when you slaughter chickens...One time we came across two pregnant women. They tied the women with their legs spread eagled and took a sharpened stick and jabbed them inside their wombs until the babies came out on the stick."

The Commission notes that the ICC elements define "enforced sterilization" as "depriving one or more persons of biological reproductive capacity, neither justified by medicine or hospital treatment nor carried out with their genuine consent". This definition includes acts committed upon women during war such as the removal of the foetus, castration, destruction of reproductive organs as well as medial sterilization without consent.



Peg Not Taylor's Surrender to Aid, Minister Sieh Tells EU

The Analyst (Monrovia)

NEWS

November 17, 2005

Posted to the web November 17, 2005

By D. Moses Wantu

The optimism for rapid reconstruction which Liberians have started greeting the result of the 2005 Presidential and legislative elections was recently seriously skewed by statement from the International community, specifically the European Union (EU). The EU as a post election observation commentary maintained that as a precondition of getting reconstruction aid from the European Union, the incoming government would have to turn over exile Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor to the Sierra Leonean Special War Crimes Court to make him answer to the seventeen counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes during that country's decade long war.

However, the Deputy Minister for Operation at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Mr. Cletus Sieh is one of several Liberian politicians who have vehemently spoken against the pegging of Taylor's surrender to the release of EU aid for Liberia's post war reconstruction.

"They are pegging the issue of Charles Taylor to the aid; I think it is not fair to the Liberian people. It is not fair to our nation, and the EU needs to go to where Taylor is and take him to Sierra Leone instead of getting the Liberian people involved in this matter," the deputy Minister reflected.

He added that after all, it was not the Liberian people who indicted Mr. Taylor; it is the Sierra Leoneans that indicted him. As such, he argued, "It was Sierra Leone that said that Taylor did something to them. Taylor is not residing in Liberia, but in Nigeria and the International community has the power to get him out of Nigeria to Sierra Leone." The deputy minister said that making the Taylor surrender a precondition for assistance, is as if, it is the Liberian government that is keeping Taylor, if we don't turn him over nothing will come to Liberia. I think it is not fair at all," Sieh told the Analyst yesterday at his office in Monrovia.

Mr. Sieh said his position is not to see Taylor going with impunity, but that he should be taken to Sierra Leone by the International community instead of getting Liberians involved.

According to the young minister Liberians are now focused on rebuilding their broken lives and not always having their minds preoccupied with Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Sieh who is an executive of the Liberian Unification Party (LUP) emphasized that the issue of Taylor coming back to Liberia at this time is a very dangerous thing for the country.

"With Taylor out of Liberia, we are now enjoying peace; we have just had elections and want to move forward. The Taylor situation should be between Nigeria and the International community, let them turn Taylor over to Sierra Leone. It should not be Nigeria sending Taylor to Liberia and Liberia sending him to Sierra Leone that is not a good exercise", Minister Sieh lamented.

Commenting on the just ended elections, minister Sieh, campaigning has made Liberians to engage in interpersonal attacks against one another and now the elections are over with much need to reconcile and forge ahead.

He challenged the new government to prioritize peace and reconciliation because for so long Liberians have been divided.

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LIBERIA: Peace supremo rejects EU demand to hand over Taylor

17 Nov 2005 18:06:13 GMT

Source: IRIN

MONROVIA, 17 November (IRIN) - It is still too early for Liberia's freshly-elected authorities to hand over the country's controversial former president Charles Taylor for judgement, according to Liberia's peace mediator and former Nigerian leader Abdulsalami Abubakar.

While president-in-waiting Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has yet to comment on the issue, officials close to the former World Bank economist concur that Taylor is not their top priority.

Rejecting a European Union request for the new government to call for the transfer of Taylor, currently exiled in Nigeria, to a Sierra Leone war crimes tribunal, Abubakar also implied that the issue was none of Europe's business.

"It is too early for the EU to demand the turning over of Taylor and this issue is beyond the scope of the European Union. This request does not meet the support of ECOWAS", Abubakar told reporters on Wednesday.

The Nigerian general was appointed special mediator in Liberia by the 15-nation West African regional group ECOWAS.

The EU reiterated that Taylor must go to trial in a statement released in Monrovia early this week in the wake of the country's landmark 8 November run-off ballot for the presidency. Preliminary results show Sirleaf won 59 percent of the vote against football star George Weah.

"The European Union also takes this opportunity to reiterate the importance of the new government, Senate and House of Representatives co-operating fully with the international community in ensuring that former President Charles Taylor is brought before the Special Court for Sierra Leone," the EU said.

But an aide close to Sirleaf told IRIN that it was unlikely that the government expected to be sworn in in mid-January would immediately heed to the demands of the EU, which has been a major development partner in Liberia's recovery programme.

"The Taylor issue is not an immediate priority of us right now," the aide said. "This country has a lot to do in terms of reconciling our divided people after years of brutal war, economic recovery programmes, and especially, in tackling corruption."

The UN-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone has repeatedly

called on Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo to hand Taylor over for trial. But he has declined unless an elected Liberian president asks him to do so, or Taylor breaks the terms of his asylum deal.

Taylor has been served 17 indictments for crimes against humanity for his involvement and support to the Revolutionary United Front rebel faction in Sierra Leone, known for hacking off hands, feet, lips and ears of civilians during the 1991-2002 civil war.

He led a brutal bush war against the government of Samuel Doe from 1989 until he was elected president during a break in the fighting in 1997.

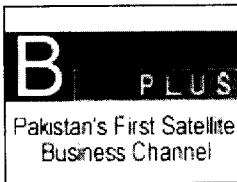
Liberians voted for Taylor in the belief that the war would only end once the rebel leader had taken control of the presidency. But within months, more and new rebel movements were beating a path to the capital Monrovia, wanting to see Taylor toppled.

Under international pressure, Taylor stepped down from office in August 2003 and went into exile in Nigeria as part of a peace deal. He now lives in a luxury mansion in the coastal town of Calabar.

IRIN news

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Daily Times

Your right to know A new voice for a new Pakistan

FIRST EQUITY

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Friday, November 18, 2005

VIEW: Time to send Charles Taylor for trial —Jonathan Power

In present day Africa with a large number of democratically elected governments and its increasingly free press the word is getting around that one can no longer expect to get away with brutal savagery. Even in "retirement", as with Taylor, you can't expect to live forever peacefully on your looted wealth, your crimes lost and forgotten in the political haze

No one is whiter than white in Liberia. Certainly not the new president-elect, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who at one time lent her support to Charles Taylor, Africa's most bloodthirsty and notorious warlord. But, as one Liberian I talked to in Monrovia's market said, "we have more than paid for our sins". Finally after mass murder, mass rape and mass economic destruction the human spirit has shown its amazing ability to somersault and become non-violent. Not a shot has been fired during this election; barely a bad word uttered, at least until the results came in. Somewhere the good words of the Christian book that the liberated slaves brought back with them from the United States are being recalled and remembered. It is a time for forgiveness, repentance and rebuilding. The churches, at least those still standing, are packed.

But this begs the question what to do about Charles Taylor, whose evil deeds probably bare comparison with Pol Pot? He lives on a comfortable estate in the seaside city of Calabar in Nigeria, a gift of Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo. Until now the international community has given this arrangement the benefit of the doubt. Indeed the Bush Administration from time to time has extended its protecting arm when Congress wanted to push for an opening of the can of worms.

After all it was a deal that at the time met with widespread approval. In return for agreeing to exit his hand-made killing machine and turn his personal rule over to an interim government that would welcome West African peacekeepers supported by US troops, Obasanjo, the deal's negotiator, agreed to give Taylor refuge. But the deal had its elements of ambiguity. The War Crimes Court established by the UN in Sierra Leone in 2000, continued to demand his presence for trial on charges incurred during the parallel civil war in Sierra Leone, which the diamond-hungry Taylor funded and supported. The court argued that Taylor was using his exile to stir up further mayhem in neighbouring Guinea and the Cote d'Ivoire and must be sent for trial immediately.

President Obasanjo himself opened a window of uncertainty when, two years ago, he told me in an interview that if a future freely elected government of Liberia requested Taylor's return to the country it had the right to try him at home or send him to Sierra Leone.

A month ago I asked the president-elect if she was going to request Nigeria to extradite Taylor. She replied, "It is better that he be sent straight to Sierra Leone. That's where the trial will be. There is no need for him to come here first". But Obasanjo sticks to his original position, arguing to me that he gave Taylor his word, that word ended the carnage in Liberia and only a request from Taylor's home government can override that.

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This seems fair enough. It is a nettle that Johnson-Sirleaf will have to grasp in the next few months. Better to get it over quickly than to allow it to linger and become a festering sore. Obasanjo, with his immense leverage in Liberia as the peacemaker-in-chief and the provider of the largest contingent of peacekeepers, which will remain in the country, can persuade the president-elect to act. Certainly Bush will have no further reason to quieten Congress on the issue, which has threatened to cut off all aid to Nigeria and will be reticent to approve the funds to help rebuild Liberia if the deed is not done.

Assuming this happens then a watershed for Africa will have been crossed. After a decade and a half of rampant civil war and economic decline a new Africa is finding its feet. And the extension of international law is playing a large part in it. Now that governments (the Sudan), rebel leaders (Uganda, Sudan and the Congo) and presidents-cum-war lords (Liberia) are being indicted or about to be indicted by either the International Criminal Court based in the Hague or the Special Court in Sierra Leone, the initial legal effort begun with the war crimes court set up a decade ago in Arusha, Tanzania, to deal with the genocide in Rwanda, is gathering an immense head of steam. In present day Africa with a large number of democratically elected governments and its increasingly free press the word is getting around that one can no longer expect to get away with this kind of brutal savagery. Even in "retirement", as with Taylor, you can't expect to live forever peacefully on your looted wealth, your crimes lost and forgotten in the political haze.

The worm has turned in Africa.

The writer is a leading columnist on international affairs, human rights and peace issues. He syndicates his columns with some 50 papers around the world

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INTERNATIONAL
Herald Tribune

Liberia: A society at a crossroads

Makau Mutua The Boston Globe
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2005

BUFFALO, New York The election last week of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, the Harvard-educated former World Bank economist as president of Liberia, is a milestone. She will become the first woman African head of state and give her tormented country the only real opportunity in more than a generation to emerge from the ashes of a savage civil war. But these rays of hope will be extinguished if George Weah, her vanquished opponent, becomes bellicose and stokes violent conflict.

It is virtually impossible to imagine a place on Earth where life has been more hellish than Liberia. For almost three decades, the country has been in the grip of brutal dictatorships or ruthless warlords.

It reached its nadir in 1980 when Samuel Doe introduced a reign of terror. In 1990, Doe was killed by rebel forces led by Charles Taylor and Prince Johnson, two equally ruthless warlords. Liberia remained lawless until 1997 when Taylor intimidated his compatriots into electing him president.

But rather than pursue peace and reconstruction, Taylor instigated coups and civil wars in neighboring states. He sold arms in exchange for diamonds to Sierra Leone rebels who cut off the limbs, ears and noses of opponents. In 2003, Taylor was forced to resign but was granted refuge in Nigeria in spite of an indictment for war crimes by the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone. His forced departure paved the way for last week's elections.

The election of Johnson-Sirleaf notwithstanding, history will repeat itself unless the international community acts resolutely. Although she won 60 percent to Weah's 40 percent, Weah has refused to concede defeat, charging fraud and other irregularities. International monitors have categorically stated that there is no evidence to bolster Weah's allegations.

Weah's threat to the democratic process should not be taken lightly. Liberia has been down this path before. Easily the most famous Liberian, 38-year-old Weah is a former international soccer star who draws most of his support from dispossessed urban youth, former child soldiers and scores of warlords. A product of the slums of Monrovia, the barely literate Weah's rags-to-riches story resonates with poor youth.

Even so, most Liberians seem to have voted for experience and technocratic competence over glamour. The belief is that 67-year-old Johnson-Sirleaf, with her connections and legitimacy in the world of global finance and capital, stands a better chance of leading Liberia to economic recovery and international demarginalization. The silver lining for Weah is that he has established himself as a powerful political force and the man likely to succeed Johnson-Sirleaf.

Liberia has not known a modern democracy. Weah can change that dismal history if he accepts the election results and joins a government of national unity or plays the role of a legitimate democratic opposition. What the country needs is not another warlord but a massive reconstruction effort.

But Weah's support from unsavory characters, including Taylor's backers, should give pause. There are indications that Taylor himself maintains an unhealthy interest in Liberian politics from exile. It is unlikely that Liberia will know peace until Taylor is held accountable for the atrocities he committed in office. Weah should join those democrats and reformers who have called for Nigeria to turn Taylor over to Sierra Leone's Special Court.

Unless Weah makes these commitments - and renounces confrontation - his backers are likely to revert to violence. Yet, it is his supporters who must be rehabilitated for this election to relaunch Liberia. UN peacekeeping forces cannot allow the situation to deteriorate. Nor should the international community permit thugs to reverse the freely expressed will of the Liberian people.

Finally, the United States must recognize its special responsibility. The country was established by Americans, and successive administrations treated Liberia like an unofficial vassal. That is why Washington bears some responsibility for Liberia's woes. U.S. material, diplomatic and logistical support is crucial if Liberia is to emerge from its long night of privation.

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FEATURES

November 18, 2005
Starting from Scratch in Liberia

The tough task of rebuilding a nation has been placed in the hands of an experienced woman.

(Angus Reid Global Scan) Gabriela Perdomo – This week, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was declared the winner of the presidential run-off in Liberia. According to the National Electoral Commission (NEC), the 67-year-old woman garnered 59.4 per cent of the vote, defeating former soccer player George Weah. But the sports hero has challenged the results and filed an official complaint to the Supreme Court claiming "massive fraud" and demanding a reassessment of the count.

The first presidential poll held after a 14-year civil war that ended in 2003 was closely watched by 302 international observers and 15,000 United Nations (UN) peacekeepers, and considered as widely free and fair. Weah's allegation of fraud is seen now as highly dangerous given the frailty of Liberia's current situation. He has urged his supporters to refrain from violence, but hundreds of people have already started rioting on the streets of Monrovia, Liberia's capital city. Eighteen members of his party—the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC)—have said that they will not take their legislative seats unless their demands are taken seriously. Meanwhile, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)—which brokered the end of the civil war two years ago—has urged Weah to concede.

Harmony remains the biggest challenge in a nation that endured one of the most brutal armed conflicts in Africa. Former American slaves founded Liberia in 1820. Some analysts point out that social tension still exists between the descendents of American families, and indigenous Liberians. The 39-year-old Weah is seen as a representative of the latter, while Johnson-Sirleaf's wider support comes from the upper classes and the educated elite. The biggest fear now is that most of Weah's supporters are young, usually unemployed ex-combatants, who are regarded as more prone to violence.

Both Johnson-Sirleaf—a Harvard educated economist, former World Bank official and also former finance minister—and the retired AC Milan soccer player with no political background agree that Liberia's first commitment is to peace. Even if Johnson-Sirleaf is sworn in, Weah's party will still play a major role in the House of Representatives, where the CDC finished in first place with 15

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of the 64 seats at stake.

The new head of state will encounter enormous political tests. Surrounded by Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Guinea, Liberia must demonstrate that it is capable of maintaining peace, and eventually foster stability in the region. The civil war left over 250,000 people dead, hundreds of thousands of refugees, and a generation of child soldiers who were forced to perform atrocious crimes. Former president Charles Taylor was accused of enhancing the violence throughout the war, and exporting the conflict to neighbouring countries. In March 2003, Taylor was indicted by a UN-backed court in Sierra Leone on 17 counts of crimes against humanity. In October 2005, the UN Security Council issued a unanimous resolution stating that Taylor—who is exiled in Nigeria—should be arrested if he sets foot on Liberian soil.

The local challenges, on the other hand, are as basic as they are essential. Large areas of the country have no running water or sewage systems; only generators provide electricity and there are no landline telephones. Most of the infrastructure is so old it has to be practically built from scratch. The new government will have to be robust—both in terms of security and the economy—to repatriate the thousands of refugees who are coming back to Liberia under the UN High Commissioner for Refugees program. Over 100,000 displaced persons returned to the country in 2004 alone, and the UNHCR expects another 340,000 to come back home before 2008.

The president will also have to deal with a demand for full amnesty made by Sekhou Conneh, the leader of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)—the country's biggest former rebel group. Observers have hinted at the possibility of creating a special tribunal modeled after South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Before the end of the year, Liberia's NEC is expected to release certified results from the presidential ballot. Only then will Johnson-Sirleaf's historical triumph—as the first democratically elected woman president in the African continent—will become official.

AngolaPress

Luanda - Friday, November 18, 2005 - 10:24:20 AM

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**Economic
news on
Angola**

News

EU hails presidential elections in Liberia

Brussels, Belgium, 11/15 - The European Union (EU) on Monday commended the conduct of the runoff presidential election held 8 November in Liberia between international football star, George Weah, and former finance minister, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who was declared winner of the poll.

In a statement issued here, the EU praises the National Elections Commission and the UN peacekeeping mission in Liberia (UNMIL) "which ensured the smooth and peaceful holding of the poll".

The statement described the election as a "significant evolution" in the restoration of peace in Liberia.

Therefore, the EU hailed the population for their genuine commitment to peace and democracy, and their willingness to put the past behind them.

Th EU urged leaders of political parties and rank and file to continue to show a sense of responsibility as they did during the election campaign.

The statement indicates that the EU observer mission will remain in the country to monitor all the aspects of the electoral process.

The EU, which reaffirmed its commitment to support Liberia in its march towards a stable and democratic future, also expressed its readiness to help the new government in rebuilding Liberia.

Meanwhile, the EU insisted on the necessity for all branches of the new government, including the Legislature, to fully co- operate with the international community in bringing former President Charles Taylor to the special criminal court in Sierra Leone.

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UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 16 Nov. 2005

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

International Clips on Liberia

11/16/2005 09:24:30

Liberia election commission opens investigation into fraud allegations

By JONATHAN PAYE-LAYLEH

MONROVIA, Liberia (AP) _ Election officials began investigating fraud complaints Wednesday by soccer superstar turned presidential candidate George Weah, who alleges poll workers stuffed ballot boxes for his opponent in **Liberia's** first postwar election. A day earlier, election officials said the final count gave Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf 60 percent of the ballots versus 40 percent for Weah. Johnson-Sirleaf would be the first woman elected president in Africa if Weah's complaints are found to be without merit and the results are certified.

Liberia mediator cautions Weah over poll dispute

By Alphonso Toweh

MONROVIA, Nov 16 (Reuters) - A top international peace negotiator for Liberia on Wednesday urged soccer millionaire George Weah to accept the outcome of an inquiry into his claims that a rigged run-off election robbed him of the presidency.

11/16/2005 07:19:08

UNMIL chief voices support for Liberian protest ban

Monrovia (dpa) - The head of the United Nations mission in Liberia (UNMIL) said Wednesday he fully supported a ban on unauthorized demonstrations in the wake of unrest sparked by last week's run-off presidential poll.

At a press conference in the Liberian capital Monrovia Wednesday, Alan Doss said the ban was necessary because "the city has to get back to work".

Liberia bans protests as Weah complaint probed

By Alphonso Toweh

MONROVIA, Nov 15 (Reuters) - Liberia's government banned street demonstrations on Tuesday while election officials investigate soccer star George Weah's allegations that a rigged run-off vote robbed him of the presidency.

15/11/2005 18:57:37

All ballots counted, Johnson-Sirleaf's victory hinges on fraud investigation

By JONATHAN PAYE-LAYLEH, Associated Press Writer

MONROVIA, Liberia (AP) _ Former finance minister Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf easily won the most votes in Liberia's presidential run-off, according to results released Tuesday, putting the Harvard-educated politician in line to become the first woman elected president in Africa.

Local Media – Newspapers

Elections Commission Hears Fraud Complaint Today

(The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst, New Democrat, Heritage and National Chronicle)

- The National Elections Commission (NEC) will today begin hearing the alleged vote rigging complaint filed by the Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) standard bearer George Weah, NEC Chairman Frances Johnson-Morris told a regular press briefing yesterday.

CDC Supporters Attack Another Journalist

(The News)

- A reporter of *The News*, Alloycious David--who was among journalists attending a CDC press conference yesterday--was attacked by CDC supporters who accused him of supporting a rival political camp.

Unity Party Commends Voters

(The Inquirer and The Analyst)

- With the final announcement of the NEC preliminary results from the 8 November presidential runoff, the Unity Party (UP) in a press release yesterday commended partisans and supporters for placing their confidence in the UP standard bearer Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who won the majority of the votes.

Two More Weah Supporters Call for Acceptance of Poll Results

(The Inquirer, The Analyst and National Chronicle)

- Two more politicians who supported CDC standard bearer George Weah in the runoff—Progressive Democratic Party standard bearer Sekou Damate Conneh and National Patriotic Party vice standard bearer Somah Paygai— have called on Weah to graciously accept the outcome.

University Condemns Threat against Student Leadership

(The Inquirer and Heritage)

- According to a press release, the University of Liberia (UL) administration has condemned terrorist threats against the student leadership by the purported People's Congressional Army (PCA).

Transitional Leader Denies Interim Legislature's Proposal

(Daily Observer, The News, The Inquirer and The Analyst)

- National Transitional Government Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant yesterday vetoed the passage of a binding resolution from the National Transitional Legislative Assembly (NTLA), which is intended to relinquish ownership of government assigned vehicles to the lawmakers.

World Bank Sees Opportunity in Liberia

(The News)

- *Reuters* quoting World Bank Country Director for Liberia and Ghana Matts Karlsson said that Liberia's elections have opened the door to possible large-scale development in a country that has suffered decades of isolation and conflict.

Local Media – RADIO VERITAS *(News monitored yesterday at 06:45 pm)*

Elections Commission Releases Final Run-Off Result

- Releasing the final preliminary result of the election runoff yesterday, National Elections Commission Chairman Frances Johnson-Morris said that with all 3,070 polling places nationwide reporting, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of the Unity Party received 478,526 votes netting 59.4 percent of the votes while George Weah of the Congress for Democratic Change scored 327,046 votes amounting to 40.6 percent.

(Also reported ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Interim Government Bans Unlawful Street Protests

- Following a meeting with his cabinet ministers yesterday, Transitional Government Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant imposed a ban on all unauthorized street demonstrations in the country. He advised people wanting to demonstrate to first obtain a permit from the Ministry of Justice as required by law.

(Also reported ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to Form Government of Inclusion

- In a press statement issued yesterday, UP standard bearer Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf assured Liberians that her government would not engage in "witch-hunting."

(Also reported ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

State Procurement Agency Reclaims Government Vehicles from Outgoing Officials

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Justice, General Services Agency (GSA) Director General Edward Farley announced yesterday that the agency would begin the retrieval of government vehicles and other properties today.

(Also reported ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Police Report Decline in Rate of Armed Robbery

- Authorities of the Liberian National Police have announced a reduction in the number of armed robberies in Monrovia and its environs.

CDC Standard Bearer Reiterates Claims of Fraud in Runoff

- In a speech read on his behalf yesterday, the CDC standard bearer George Weah maintained that the runoff was rigged with over 30 pre-marked ballots for the UP in the party's possession. He noted that the ballots were forcibly taken from election officers at the poll and exhibited to all Liberians through the media.

(Also reported ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Defeated Presidential Candidate Urges CDC to Accept Run-Off Result

Ghana Embassy Refutes Report of Supporting Presidential Candidate

- An Embassy of Ghana source yesterday told Radio Veritas that the Government of Ghana refuted a local media report that the Ghanaian government supported presidential candidate Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as opposed to George Weah in the runoff.

Defeated Presidential Candidates Support CDC in Runoff Fraud Claims

- Four defeated presidential candidates in the first round who had pledged their support for CDC's George Weah in the runoff said yesterday that they remained

committed to the party in pursuit of its fraud complaint. Winston Tubman of the National Democratic Party of Liberia, Alhaji Kromah of the All-Liberia Coalition Party, Togba Nah-Tipoteh of the Alliance for Peace and Democracy and Robert Kpoto of the Union of Liberian Democrats contended that the NEC Chairman Johnson-Morris was not credible.

(Also reported ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

STAR RADIO *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

UNMIL to Disallow Violent Street Protests

- Speaking to Star Radio yesterday, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General Alan Doss said the UNMIL would not allow any protest to get out of hand in Monrovia.

CDC Ends Street Demonstrations

- The Congress for Democratic Change has resolved to end its street demonstrations while its run-off fraud complaint is being investigated by the NEC, CDC Assistant Secretary Acarus Gray told Star Radio yesterday.

Interim Government Names Committee to Effect Peaceful Transition

- Briefing reporters after a cabinet meeting yesterday, Information Minister William Allen said that Transitional Government Chairman Charles Gyude Bryant had constituted a committee headed by Vice Chairman Wesley Johnson to work with the government-elect for a peaceful transition.

Transitional Leader Vetoes Lawmakers Resolution

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Jeddi Armah at armahj@un.org.



UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 17 Nov. 2005

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

International Clips on Liberia**LIBERIA: President-in-waiting vows to revamp country**

MONROVIA, 17 November (IRIN) - Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf for now is trying to avoid the limelight, waiting for the fraud allegations surrounding Liberia's election to be dealt with so she can be officially confirmed as the next president and Africa's first elected female head of state.

But after that, the 67-year-old Harvard-educated economist has no intention of sitting quietly in the corner of the African leaders' boys club. "I am a woman, hear me roar" was a popular anthem of her campaign after all.

"The election... was a fine hour for Liberia and it should not be stolen by these bogus charges of fraud."

The Miami Herald 17 November 2005

Africa's first woman president; LIBERIA

BY CESAR CHELALA

The election of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf as president of Liberia could mean that a tremendously positive transformation could happen in Africa, one that may extend beyond Liberia's borders. She is the first African woman elected as head of state. In a country where women make up more than half the electorate, the election of Johnson-Sirleaf could help galvanize women's political participation throughout the continent.

Local Media – Newspapers**Peace Facilitator Denounces EU Elections Observers' Position on Taylor**

(Daily Observer and The News)

- At a farewell news conference in Monrovia yesterday, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) chief mediator of the Liberian peace process Rtd.-Gen. Abdulsalami Abubakar at a news conference in Monrovia criticized the position of the European Union (EU) Elections Observer Mission that Liberia's cooperation in efforts to try former President Charles Taylor was a precondition for aid.

CDC Yet to Substantiate Fraud Claim

(Daily Observer and The Inquirer)

- The Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) yesterday failed to produce evidence in hearings at the National Elections Commission (NEC) to substantiate its claims of fraud in the 8 November runoff.

Press Union Announces News Blackout against CDC

(Daily Observer, The News, The Inquirer and The Analyst)

- The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) yesterday called on its members to boycott all activities of the CDC until the party can guarantee the safety of journalists attending its functions, according to a PUL press release.

Fraudsters Using Johnson-Sirleaf's Name

(The News and The Analyst)

- The Unity Party (UP) said in a press release yesterday that fraudsters had begun using the name of President-in-waiting Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to solicit money and other items from businesses in Monrovia. The UP urged the public's cooperation in apprehending people engaged in such a scheme.

UNMIL Wants Death Penalty Removed From Liberian Law

(The News and Liberian Express)

- UNMIL launched in Monrovia yesterday the first in a series of bi-monthly reports on the promotion and protection of human rights in Liberia. The report recommended the quashing of the death sentence from the Liberian constitution and the draft bill on rape.

German Government Aids Vulnerable Liberian Women

(The Analyst)

- On behalf of the Republic of Germany, German Ambassador to Liberia Thomas Freudenhammer recently approved a US\$200,000 project to provide mainly non-food items for vulnerable women heads of households at the Salala displaced camp in Bong County, according to the Diakonie Emergency Aid, a German non-governmental organization.

Local Media – RADIO VERITAS *(News monitored yesterday at 06:45 pm)*

Chief Peace Mediator Criticises EU Elections Observers

Representative-Elect Supports Ex-President's Extradition

- In an interview with Radio Veritas yesterday, River Gee County Representative-elect Elijah Sieh called on Liberians and the incoming legislature to support calls for former President Taylor to face the Special Court for Sierra Leone. He advised those who oppose the EU call to instead encourage Mr. Taylor to avail himself to justice.

Press Union to Shun Coverage of Congress for Democratic Change

(Also reported on ELBS Radio)

UNMIL Launches Human Rights Report on Liberia

(Also reported on ELBS Radio)

University President Assures Students of Maximum Security on Campus

- University of Liberia President Al-Hassan Conteh said that the university would operate normally despite terrorist threats by an unknown group.
- Dr Conteh assured that there was no need for extra security measures on the campus because the university has informed the police.

ELBS RADIO *(News monitored yesterday at 19:00 pm)*

UNMIL to Apprehend Ex-President Taylor

- The United Nations Mission in Liberia said it will ensure the arrest of exiled former Liberian President Charles Taylor if he lands in Liberia as requested by the United Nations Security Council -- even if the new government refuses to accept it.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Jeddi Armah at armahj@un.org.



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Acquittal in Bosnia war crime case

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) -- A former Bosnian Muslim army commander was acquitted of war crimes charges Wednesday relating to the massacres of Croat civilians during the 1992-95 Bosnian war.

Judges at the U.N. war crimes tribunal ordered the immediate release of Sefer Halilovic, 53, saying prosecutors had failed to prove he had been in charge of troops who carried out the killings in the villages of Grabovica and Uzdol.

The villages were occupied during an operation by Muslim forces to capture territory held by Bosnian Croats to end a blockade of the city of Mostar in 1993.

The three-judge panel said vicious murders of women, children and innocent people in their beds had been committed, but the prosecution's case was insufficient to prove Halilovic had effective control over the units that committed the crimes.

The tribunal "decided the accused is found not guilty and therefore is acquitted of murder," said the judgment.

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Voice of America

Questions Raised Whether Saddam Hussein Can Get a Fair Trial

By Andre de Nesnera

Washington

17 November 2005

The trial of former Iraqi president Saddam Hussein is scheduled to resume in Baghdad later this month.

The Iraqi Higher Criminal Court, trying Saddam Hussein and others, was originally established several years ago with the help of the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority. The Iraqi government and legislature subsequently adopted the court's statutes with minor changes.

On October 19, Saddam Hussein and seven others appeared before the court charged with crimes against humanity, the torture and killing of more than 140 people after a 1982 assassination attempt against him in the town of Dujail. The former Iraqi leader pleaded not guilty. After a three-hour session, the trial was adjourned until November 28, to give lawyers more time to work on Saddam Hussein's defense.

Derek Gilman is an attorney who helped Iraqis draft the statutes of the special court trying Saddam Hussein. He says the former Iraqi leader will also be charged with war crimes and genocide stemming from other atrocities.

"We are, of course, familiar with the Anfal campaign in which 180,000 Kurds were killed, which also includes the gassing of the town of Halabja in which 5000 Iraqis were killed," he said. "And the suppression of the Shia uprising in 1991, in which thousands of Shias were killed. And the campaign against the marsh Arabs in 1991 in which the marshes, the greatest wetland system in the Mid East was destroyed and turned into a dustbowl."

From the outset, Saddam Hussein and his lawyers said they did not recognize the court's authority, because the United States, as an occupying power, helped set it up.

Various human rights organizations, lawyers and experts have asked whether Saddam Hussein can get a fair trial.

Donna Arzt is an international criminal law expert at Syracuse University and adviser to the prosecution team in the Sierra Leone war crimes tribunal. She says from the start, there were questions whether the tribunal trying Saddam Hussein could be impartial.

"The fact that they held Saddam Hussein for so long without giving him access to an attorney is a problem," she said. "Normally, you should be able to see an attorney certainly within 24 hours. And it took about a year before they allowed him to see an

attorney. And then there was another few months before they even told him what he was being charged with."

Some experts point to shortcomings in the law creating the tribunal that may deprive Saddam Hussein of the right to a fair trial.

Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program for Human Rights Watch, says it's unclear whether the law respects what is known as "the right to remain silent."

"There's contradictory language between the Iraqi criminal procedure code and what's in the statute for the tribunal dealing with the right of the accused not to answer questions and not to have that silence be considered as evidence against him," he said. "The accused must have the right to remain silent without that silence being interpreted as an indication of his guilt."

Mr. Dicker says another concern is the standard of proof that is required to obtain a conviction at the tribunal.

"In the Iraqi law, it's something between the judges being satisfied by the evidence that the accused is guilty and the judges having the conviction that the accused is guilty," he added. "We feel that's too low a threshold, too low a hurdle and that the threshold for guilt, for conviction of the crimes alleged, must be 'beyond a reasonable doubt' standard of proof."

Mr. Dicker also says Human Rights Watch is against the death penalty, a punishment the court can mete out. He says the desire to execute Saddam Hussein, if found guilty, may have more vengeance driving it than justice.

But others see it differently. Attorney Marc Vlasic helped train the Iraqi judges sitting on the special tribunal and he believes Saddam Hussein can get a fair trial.

"And my reason for saying that is the fact that I have spent time with these judges who are not coming forward to murder Saddam," said Mr. Vlasic. "They are doing so because they feel it is very important that you have a trial to review the evidence and to weigh the evidence carefully before making a decision. If those people involved in the tribunal were just out to murder Saddam, it would be a lot easier to put a bullet in the back of his head than go through this process. And particularly, putting their lives and the lives of their families on the line to ensure the rule of law in Iraq, which is what I believe they are doing."

Two defense attorneys have been killed recently and in the past year, six officials of the Iraqi special court have also been murdered, one of them a judge.

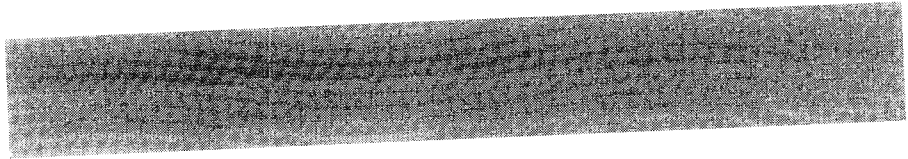
Michael Scharf from the Case Western Reserve School of Law is another leading U.S. expert on international law who helped train Iraqi judges. He says the challenge of a fair trial is great.

"In a case of this magnitude, mistakes are always made, there are always errors and missteps," he explained. "And at the end of the day, the question the world is going to have to say is not whether he got a perfect trial, or a textbook trial - but rather, given all the errors and missteps that are likely to occur, were they so significant that he was denied justice, that there was a miscarriage of justice. And I do believe at the end of the day, when all of the evidence comes out, the people will look at this trial and say, 'yes, it was fair.'"

For Ms. Arzt, adviser to the Sierra Leone international war crimes tribunal, Saddam Hussein must get a fair trial for one important reason.

"It's important for the world to see that he is getting a fair trial, since he was so unwilling to give anyone else a fair trial. It would be an important statement to make that now we are going to give it to you even though you never provided those rights for anyone else," she explained.

Experts say there is another potent incentive for a fair trial: the court of public opinion. They say the world will be watching to see if this will indeed be an impartial tribunal or simply a show trial.



Ecowas Mediator Differs With EU Observer Mission On Taylor

FrontPageAfrica (Monrovia)

NEWS

November 17, 2005

Posted to the web November 17, 2005

By John Walsh
Monrovia

ECOWAS' Chief Facilitator on the Liberian peace process has again disagreed with several international observers on setting conditions for the in-coming government.

He differs from the European Union International Observers Mission that the in-coming Liberian government should turn exiled former Liberian President Charles Taylor over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to answer charges of crimes against humanity as a precondition for aid.

The former Nigerian Head of State, Rtd. Gen. Abdul Salami Abubakar said it was unfair for international organizations to start making demands on the in-coming government

He emphasized that the issue of Mr. Taylor is beyond the scope of the EU Observers and that the issue must be handled with extreme caution.

Speaking at a news conference prior to his departure from the country Wednesday where he had come to observe the 8 November presidential run-off election, Gen. Abubakar said some international observers had gone beyond their observation mandate.

He said it is unfair to set conditions even before the in-coming government takes over. Gen. Abubakar said the request by the EU Observers is not timely and does not meet the support of ECOWAS.

Gen. Abubakar said though it is true that there are numerous problems that need to be solved; but called on organizations making demands to give peace a chance. "Yes, there are problems but there is always time for everything. Let us see Liberia setup a new government. People who are asking for this should rethink, if they are thinking like they are now. Liberia does not need any upheaval now," Gen Abubakar said.

The former Nigerian Head of State also dismissed reports that ECOWAS is divided. He told journalists that all of the West African leaders rated the elections as free, fair and transparent and peaceful.

The ECOWAS Facilitator appealed to supporters of the CDC to follow the procedures put in place by NEC to address its concerns and not to take the laws into their hands. He urged the CDC to give peace a chance by accepting the results of the elections

He cautioned Liberians to support the in-coming government rather than making early demands.

He said the international community was not interested in any candidate in the elections.

Rtd. Gen Abubakar said ECOWAS was interested in Liberia and not one individual Liberian.

ECOWAS' Chief Facilitator was reacting to media reports that ECOWAS was divided over the results of the Liberian elections.

He called on the Liberian press not to set the country on fire.

General Abubakar said journalists should not incite people to violence by inflaming the situation in the country.

He said journalists should be objective and report the facts in their stories.

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