

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Babies As Young As Six Months, Victims Of Rape In War

- U.N. envoy, Zainab Bangura says

In her first seven months as U.N. envoy on sexual violence in conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura has visited a Congolese district where rebels raped babies, and Somalia where a woman was paid \$150 restitution for the rape of her 4-year-old daughter.

She met a refugee at a camp in Kenya who had been raped at gunpoint when she was

eight-months-pregnant while gathering firewood and a Somali father who was fighting for justice for his daughters, aged 4 and 6, who had both been raped.

"The stories are horrific and heartbreaking and when these survivors tell you what they endured, and continue to endure, you know that one person raped in war is one too many," said

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Babies as young as six months victims of rape in war

U.N. envoy, Zainab Hawa Bangura

From front page

Bangura, who briefed the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday.

She told the 15-member council it was still largely "cost-free" to rape a woman, child or man in conflict and that this must be reversed to make it a "massive liability to commit, command or condone sexual violence in conflict."

Any future peace and ceasefire deals in conflicts like Syria and Mali must include sexual violence prevention, Bangura said. Bangura, a former health minister of Sierra Leone, said she plans to visit Syria, Mali and South Sudan as soon as possible.

"I visited a community where last year 11 babies, between 6 and 12 months old, were

raped by elements of Mai Mai Morgan," she said, referring to a rebel group in the Democratic Republic of Congo. "It is unimaginable that anyone could have committed such an atrocity."

Bangura also told reporters that in the same community - the Ituri district in turbulent eastern Congo on its border with Uganda - 59 children aged between 1 and 3, and 182 children between 5 and 15 years old had been raped last year.

"Under the cold light of strategy and tactics, the rationale and purpose is clear. What more effective way can there be to destroy a community than to target and devastate its children?" she told the Security Council.

Exclusive
Friday, 19 April 2013

War Victim explains Ordeal



See story page 2

War Victim explains Ordeal

PEOPLE

Rebel soldiers disabled tens of thousands of civilians in a widespread campaign of terror during Sierra Leone's brutal civil war, chopping off hands and feet. But Mariatu Kamara has not let her fate stifle her hopes.

She was just 12 years old when her country's civil war entered her life, changing its course forever. Mariatu Kamara was living with her aunt and uncle in a village in Sierra Leone, helping on the family farm. Sierra Leone was in the midst of a decade-long war. Legions of war amputees - disabled by rebel forces - were making the world's headlines.

Mariatu and her family were not immune to these reports that ordinary children like her were being plucked from their families and forced into a life of violence - against other children. But it seemed far away. Then one day in 1999, Mariatu's peaceful childhood was shattered when rebel soldiers, not much older

than she was, abducted her. "In an instant, her life was transformed in a most brutal way. I was captured by the rebels with my cousins and held hostage for many hours," she recalls. "Then at the end of the day, they ended up cutting off my hands, both hands. Imagine: a 12-year-old girl, cutting off her hands! What do you expect that girl to become like?" The passage of time hasn't dulled the sense of anger and shock she still feels at being deliberately disabled.

Mariatu's attackers explained they were cutting off both her hands to prevent her from ever voting. She passed out after the attack. When she regained consciousness, she found herself amid a sea of dead bodies in a village in flames.

Gaining new strength

Mariatu managed to find shelter in a nearby forest where she spent the night. The next day, she met a man who offered her a mango. That act was to be a defining moment for her. She says it gave her

the will to go on.

"Just the fact that this was my first fruit after I was released by the rebels and also the first food after I lost my hands," she says. "But I wasn't able to hold the mango as I used to, with my regular hands." She had a choice: give up or take the mango from the man and manage to hold it with her two bleeding hands. She managed it.

"The sweet part of it is that I was able to do that and after that I was able to regain my strength again to continue walking," Mariatu says. "I realized that my will was stronger than what happened there." The experience inspired the title of her memoir, "The Bite of the Mango" published in 2008. The taste of the sweet fruit affirmed her will to live, but the difficulty of holding it in her bloodied arms underscored the enormous challenges she still faced.

After being treated for her wounds by doctors in Freetown, she spent three years in an amputee camp under very poor conditions and was forced to beg for money on the streets. But she found solace in a theater group that toured the city. It allowed victims to dramatize the impact of the war on them. Mariatu says that it helped her begin to overcome the psychological trauma she suffered as a result of the war. "The theater group in the camp helped me because music is a very healing thing," she says. "It was good. It raised awareness about the war." Mariatu's life then took a turn for the better.

A helping hand from Canada

Sierra Leone's brutal civil war raged in the West African country from 1991-2002. The plight of the conflict's victims appeared in newspapers around the world. A Canadian family read about Mariatu in The Toronto Star and offered her a place in their home. Soon she was on a flight to a country she knew little about. But for Mariatu, it was a lifeline. "I didn't know anything about Canada, I didn't know who I was going to meet there," she recalls. "But I was happy to get out of where I was, to go somewhere where I could have a better life."

Taking a leap into the unknown led to opportunities Mariatu had never dreamed of, such as the chance to have a formal education. Her move to Canada gave her the opportunity to attend school and helped her realize how important education is. Today, 27-year-old Mariatu says she learned to live independently without hands; she gets by without the use of prosthetics. She is now studying to be a social worker in Toronto and hopes that her unique experience will help others get through their own traumatic times.

"I believe my story will have a huge impact on helping me understand what other people are going through," she says. "If I am counseling a war victim or an assaulted person, I will be able to use my own experience to help me understand where they are coming from."

As a UNICEF Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict, Mariatu has also been sharing her story at schools and with groups - to empower, to inspire and to warn about the cost of war.

The New Age Online (South Africa)

Friday, 19 April 2013

Opinion

Analysis: Is it now time for TRC II?

Yacoob Abba Omar

Mahmood Mamdani certainly set the cat among the TRC pigeons when, speaking at the Mapungubwe Institute's annual lecture, he claimed that the TRC merely went through an exercise when the real deal had been settled at Codesa.

For South Africans who believe deep in their hearts that we have the best rugby team, the best cricket team, even the best soccer team (if only), to hear that ours was not the best model of settling age-old conflicts it was a rude awakening. Are we not the Rainbow Nation born out of a miracle process?

The professor and director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research was locating the TRC in the context of developments in transitional justice since the Nuremburg and Tokyo trials at the end of the Second World War, right up to the current attempts in the form of the International Criminal Court as well as national attempts such as in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide.

He distinguished between "victors justice", which the Nuremburg trials are the prime example of, and "survivors' justice", which the South African case is an example of. In the former, perpetrators of gross violations of human rights are seen as criminals and persecuted as such. In this way the ICC is following in the traditions of the Nuremburg trials.

Mamdani argued that such an approach excludes the possibility of a new political order by putting only the losers on trial. Thus crimes against humanity committed by the Allied forces were never accounted for.

In the South African case, he said: "The real exchange took place before the TRC was set up, in the negotiations known as Codesa. It was not an exchange for truth, but amnesty for political reform, that reform being the dismantling of juridical and political apartheid."

Our case is similar to that of a number of other attempts at resolving conflicts in Africa where the conflict had not actually ended but there was a recognition of the need for resolution. Hence he argues: "If South Africa is a model for solving intractable conflicts, it is an argument for moving from the best to the second best alternative."

This avoids criminalising either side and seeks to treat each other as political adversaries.

Mamdani suggests that political justice under Codesa came at the expense of criminal and social justice. It represented a paradigmatic shift from victors' justice to survivors' justice for all – victims, perpetrators and bystanders such as the business sector.

The African Union's Panel of the Wise released a report in January titled Peace, Justice and Reconciliation in Africa where it says: "South African transition is sui generis in the annals of transitions from repressive to democratic regimes."

It said it provided "a vivid example of the public role that a truth commission can play in reconciliation."

Like Mamdani it also points out that “the price for peace and democracy was amnesty, a compromise to balance the political realities with the desire to uncover crimes committed and hold to account those who ordered these crimes”.

It points out, as many South Africans have admitted, that the TRC process failed to address the socioeconomic effects of apartheid and its inability to facilitate individual reconciliations.

Sitting through the Mamdani lecture and poring through the report of the AU Panel of the Wise, I have been asking myself is it time for the second phase of the TRC? One which addresses the defects such as individual reconciliations and a review of the compensation families of victims have received? I believe that the core result of such a process would be a better-healed nation, where we don't walk around with the feeling that those who served apartheid have not only got away with it, but continue to thrive in the new South Africa.

As South Africans, we can learn from the continent's past 15 years' experiences. For example the Rwandans have engaged in the gacaca, a dispute resolution mechanism used in precolonial times to adjudicate communal disputes where respected community figures serve as “judges”.

Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Committee has been lauded by the AU Panel of the Wise report for setting several precedents and groundbreaking achievements. This included giving special attention to the abuse of women and children during the conflict. It also looked at the involvement of corporates in the blood diamond trade. Victims and perpetrators were involved in nationwide reconciliation ceremonies involving chiefdoms who organised activities according to their local needs.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was the first international tribunal to sit in the country where crimes were executed and its judgments have contributed to international criminal law.

These included the first sentence in history for the use of child soldiers, of “forced marriage” and the first conviction for attacking peacekeepers as a war crime.

Argentina and Chile have been known to address the atrocities committed under military dictators decades after the actual crimes. Ghana is thus not alone in having addressed wrongs of the past a decade after military rule ended in 1992. Its National Reconciliation Commission set up in 2002 investigated the period 1966 to 1992. It has been widely commended for having got around the 1992 constitutional proviso that absolved military personnel from any judicial action and laid bare the atrocities committed. By 2008 it had paid out \$1m (R9.15m) to victims of human rights violations.

As I watch in horror the shenanigans around the Wouter Basson trial unfold, I wonder whether we need a second bite at more relentlessly persecuting the worst perpetrators. One of the arguments against this is that so much water has passed under the bridge. The reality is that there is much of our past which still needs to be confronted, so much suspicion of people who may have been part of the apartheid system which remain unresolved, so many families and communities still carrying so many wounds.

As Evita Bezuidenhout once wisely noted: “Skatties, our future looks bright and prosperous; it's only our past that continues being tumultuous.”

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Frontpage Africa (Liberia)

Wednesday, 17 April 2013

U.S. Dept. of Justice Participates in Human Rights Conference for Liberian War Victims

The United States Department of Justice , represented by its Human Rights Special Prosecution (HRSP) section, will join an array of international human rights organizations, including the Center for Justice & Accountability, the Advocates for Human Rights, Center for Victims of Torture, and the University of Minnesota Human Rights Center, to participate in a historic human rights conference focused on the victims of Liberia's 14-year civil war. The Coalition for Justice in Liberia, principal organizer of this conference, aims to highlight the neglected issue of justice for the victims of the Liberian civil war who have been silenced and marginalized by Liberian policymakers. The conference is also organized to call attention to the need to hold perpetrators of human rights violations accountable.

The Human Rights and Special Prosecutions section is a component of the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice in Washington, DC. Among its many responsibilities it is charged with carrying out, HRSP investigates and prosecutes serious human rights violations such as torture, genocide, war crimes, and use of child soldiers. HRSP is also involved in a coordinated effort with other federal entities, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation(FBI), to ensure that the U.S. does not become a safe haven for human rights violators. HRSP also conducts outreach to nongovernmental organizations and immigrant communities across the United States.

A well-known and first-ever prosecution of a charge of torture involved the American **son of former Liberian president Charles Taylor**. Chuckie Taylor was commander of an armed security force in Liberia during his father's administration. He was accused of having committed torture by among other things, burning victims with molten plastic, lit cigarettes, candle wax, and an iron. Taylor was convicted after a jury trial and was sentenced in 2009 for 97 years in prison.

The conference shall feature several keynote speakers. One of the keynote speakers at this conference shall be Counselor Jerome Verdier, former Chairman of Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). **This august conference shall also be addressed by a key prosecution witness against Mr. Charles Taylor at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague, a survivor of Taylor's torture chambers.**

The Guardian (Excerpts)

Thursday, 18 April 2013

Chagossians suffer blow in fight to go home as court rejects WikiLeaks cable

US embassy cables allegedly detailing UK plan to stop return to Indian Ocean islands used by US military is ruled inadmissible

Owen Bowcott, Legal affairs correspondent



Chagos islanders demonstrating outside parliament at an earlier hearing of their case at the House of Lords. The British territory was leased to the US in the 1960s to build an airbase on Diego Garcia. Photograph: Martin Godwin for the Guardian

Classified American embassy cables obtained by WikiLeaks cannot be used as evidence in English and Welsh courts because they breach diplomatic privilege, judges have ruled.

The decision by Lord Justice Richards and Mr Justice Mitting in the high court will have far-reaching consequences and is a severe setback for the use of material obtained from leaks or whistleblowers.

-SNIP-

The case is the first one resulting from the leak of classified US cables in which UK officials had been ordered to appear. WikiLeaks material has been deemed admissible in other cases, notably the UN-backed special court for Sierra Leone in The Hague.

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