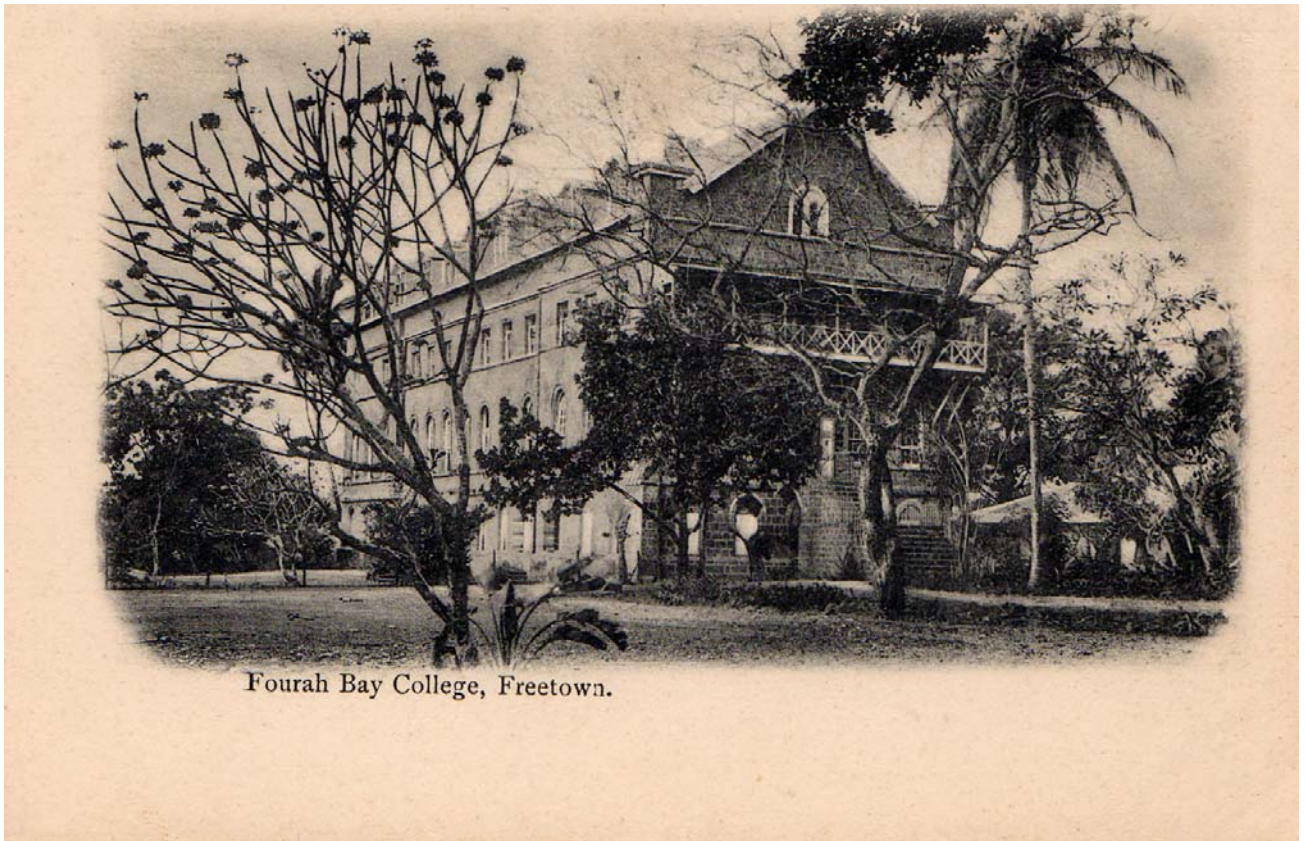


**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



Fourah Bay College, Freetown.

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:

Thursday, 19 March 2009

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

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NEWS

Defence Lawyers ask Judges to release Gbao give Issa Sesay 15 to 20 years and Kallon lenient sentences

By Betty Milton

The defence team of the three Revolutionary United Front convicts have submitted to the Judges of the Special Court that Issa Sesay be sentenced for 15 to 20 years while the defence team for Morris Kallon asked for lenient sentences and Augustine Gbao to be released.

This is in response to the submission made by the prosecution for 60, 60 and 40 year jail terms respectively.

According to Kennedy Ogeto counsel for Morris Kallon in an interview with Awoko he said "we do not ask for a specific number of years. We are leaving it with the discretion of the court. We believe that we have demonstrated sufficient litigating factors to warrant a very lenient sentence."

About the 60 years jail term asked for the prosecution the Counsel Ogeto said "it is outrageous to jail him for such a time."

In the area of good conduct as a mitigating factor the defence counsel said that throughout his stay at the detention center Morris Kallon has demonstrated good character and was even given a certificate by the Commanding Officer of the Special Court Detention Center in respect of his good conduct.

One of the major grounds of their mitigating factor Mr Ogeto said was the role played by the accused during the

peace process stating that Morris Kallon was very instrumental in the process, and this can be proved by the evidence of different commanders of UNAMSIL at that time including General Opande who clearly testified in court about the role played by Kallon during the peace process.

Kennedy Ogeto said "we will feel disappointed if the court did not give Kallon a lenient sentence" adding that the court Statutes does not provide a life time sentence for a convict and so sentencing their client for 60 years is outrageous. The defence counsel maintained that one should not consider the number of counts but rather they should consider the mitigating circumstances.

The defence counsel urged the court not to heap all the blame for the crimes and atrocities committed by the RUF on an individual "we are pleading to the court to resist the temptation of heaping blame on ½ individual for crimes committed by the RUF as there are many players such as Foday Sankoh Superman and others who are not in court so it is important to look at it from that view."

The defence team for Issa Sesay on the other hand in their sentencing brief submitted that the prosecution proposal of 60 years is manifestly excessive and

contradictory.

It was further submitted by the defence counsel that if at all the Trial Chamber finds that there is merit in comparison (concerning gravity) as suggested by the prosecution it is clear that the sentence Issa Sesay should receive should be substantially less than 60 years and more in the region of 15-20 years. This would reflect Sesay's cogent and unique mitigation."

It was further submitted that in the event that the Trial Chamber accept that the crimes committed by the AFRC were more serious and that Sesay's mitigation is significant or, as the Defence urge, substantial, it is submitted that Sesay's sentence should reflect these differences. In these circumstances Sesay should receive in the region of 10-15 years imprisonment.

In their submission, the defence team for Augustine Gbao stated that based upon an assessment of the gravity of the offences in the majority judgment against Gbao, the lack of aggravating factors, and a wealth of mitigating factors, "the defence team for Gbao respectfully request that Gbao be given a sentence for time served up until the date the sentencing judgment is rendered." This in effect means that Gbao should be released.

Issa Sesay & Co To Serve Jail In Rwanda

With preparation by the Special Court for Sierra Leone to begin sentence hearing by the defence and prosecution in the RUF trial of Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao next Monday, news came through last evening that the Registrar of the Court was in Rwanda to sign an agreement for all convicts

to serve their sentence in that country.

The Registrar, the report says, has even inspected the detention facility and was satisfied.

Initially, there was talk of the convicts serving their sentences in different European countries that had agreed to take them in, but why this arrangement changed suddenly and dramatically was not explained.

By this development, it is expected that both AFRC and CDF convicts will be transferred anytime now to Kigali, the Rwandese capital, to continue their imprisonment.

Back home, the court said yesterday that both defence and prosecution in the RUF matter had made written submissions in preparation for Monday's hearing.

Sentencing is however not yet scheduled.

Standard Times
Thursday, 19 March 2009

PRISON WATCH EXPRESSES CONCERN FOR WEST SIDE BOYS

BY ABU BAKARR KARGBO

Prison Watch-Sierra Leone has expressed grave concern on the long incarceration and their lack of legal representation in court of the West Side Boys. Addressing a news conference at their 37 Mend Street Office, the Programme Coordinator of Prison Watch Mambu S.

Feika told journalists on Thursday 12th March 2009 that that six counts charge of which the West Side Boys were found guilty of and sentenced to ten years each, is on the right track but only that the ten years they are to spend in the Prisons should have started since 2000 when they were arrested instead of 2003. He said even though they have appealed against this, it is good that their rights must be given in accordance with the laws, especially section 230 (3) of the Criminal Procedure Act no. 33 of 1965, which states: "The length of any term of imprisonment imposed by the sentence of any court shall be treated as reduced by any period which the offender was in custody before sentence by reason only of having been committed for trial or remanded, after arraignment".

Mr. Feika further said that the Judge should have considered the period during which the seven convicted prisoners were remanded in his passing of judgment. In other words, he said their length of term of imprisonment should have started from 2003

and not in 2006 as pronounced in court. He stressed that even though they have made several moves to ensure the right of the convicted persons are given, nothing positive has come out. The Coordinator revealed that the contracted Master and Registrar has responded that the seven convicted persons must see that they are treated fairly, and they suggested that if any thing goes wrong it is government that will carry the blame. "We are not challenging the verdict of the court, but only that their over-incarceration is of grave concern", he said, and added that the West Side Boys have something to reveal to the public when they are released, especially on the film showing their atrocities.

The wife of one of the convicted persons, Madam Isata Kallon said on behalf of the other family members that they contact Melron Nocol-Wilson, a Human Right Lawyer to represent the convicted persons but was referred to Lawyer Sahid Sesay who visited the court only twice. She said the last time they appeared in court was on 26th February 2009 without a lawyer. She was joined by Prison Watch officials to call on government to intervene immediately before things get out of hands. They noted that even though they respected the decision of the court, but at the same time over-incarceration should be of great concern.

Concord Times

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

Opinion

Liquidating This Enterprise of Violence

Kingsley Lington

For some, the memories of the RUF war have now blurred, receded as months rolled into years, and democracy, even if fledgling, descended. Frankly, memories of war are like fads: they appear, they tingle, they quickly disappear until old wounds reopen.

The scars of war, like the fashionable tattoos, last forever. The scars of our war are with us, and so the memories will forever have a life. It is bad enough if the scars remind us of those hellish days. But if the drums of war are sounding in 2009, the scars and the memories will embrace to a devastating effect. The events of the last days have fast-forwarded to present those memories. It appears the halcyon days are on a cliff. We should strive to ensure that the scars remind only of how deep we were willing to sink as a people, and that they must ignite our determination to make such period an aberration.

I suspect the above exhortation will fall on deaf ears because there are many who are happy to sacrifice peace on the alter of self interest. This worries me. Just to refresh, herewith a list of some of the scars of our last efforts at self-immolation.

First, a generation was wasted. Many would-be doctors, lawyers, nurses and administrators who should be competing on the global stage and making valuable contributions to their country had their dreams cut short. Some of them were among the more than 50,000 souls lost in the war. Even today, some 156 babies out of 1000 still die at birth. Life expectancy still hovers around 40 years. Those over 40 are doing overtime.

Second, social infrastructure was destroyed. Those cocooned in Freetown may beat their hollow chest and proclaim great strides in infrastructural development. Common! Celestial choir must minister to these efforts! Think about it, really. In 2008, people danced when streets lights blinked at night. The drums of joy must rattle when only about 24,000 fixed telephone lines are available and GDP is dancing at the lower single-digits and roads are bad while taps still cough while running.

Third, the process of good governance is delayed. Both the rulers and the ruled have yet to come to terms with the interfaces that help nurture democracy and prevent the ruler from being an octopus and the ruled from falling into slumber. The civil society is just about waking up, government officials are just now hearing there is something called good governance and globalization and its attendant inter-dependence is ensuring there is no hiding place for thieves and others who commit acts of criminality.

Fourth, the seed of hatred was sown. The war sharpened the divisions among different interest groups: between the military and the civilian population; between the military and the police; between different tribes; between the elites and the grassroots population; between those at home and the rest abroad; between victims and perpetrators of the war; even between the living and the dead. Social cohesion comes after a healing of the many wounds, a reconciliation of the various interests groups, a rebirth of the customary Sierra Leonean values, one of which is, 'I am my brother's keeper'.

Something to know from the current crisis is that there are still itching fingers happy to pull the trigger or brandish the machete at the slightest provocation. As I write this, I hear even our women have been raped.

Those who raped should know that each of those women could be their mother. Someone should tell the rapists they are sons of dogs.

Another thing to learn is that the so-called peace and reconciliation activities of the TRC and the no-more-impunity mantra of the Special Court have been like water on duck's back - easily shaken off. There is still a feeling of inequity in the land and the failure of the political class, past and present, to show leadership in the reconciliation process has exacerbated the problem.

The recent crisis is not an offshoot of the bitterness of the last election, as some are wont to claim. People are always embittered after an election especially in countries where there is so much power in the hands of government and to be in opposition is to be out of circulation, politically and financially. However, when bitterness pushes rival supporters to draw daggers and shed blood, raw anger must be pumping the adrenalin - the sort of anger that had the nation in animated suspense for eleven years.

My gut feeling is that what we have witnessed is the manifestation of a rather troubling malaise, which I would like to call the enterprise of violence. It was a lucrative enterprise during the eleven-year war, an enterprise that is assumed to have infected and affected the last elections, and which is being canvassed vigorously by some people as the alternative to civility and dialogue.

This problem was not caused by the present administration, the present administration is simply failing to deal with the cause of the problem. Here are practical steps to take right now.

Step One: Immediate restoration of law and order. The government must move swiftly to arrest the perpetrators and have them disgraced before the law. When there is utter lawlessness, it is necessary to show leadership that is directive and strong. In essence, some people must pay a price for stupidity. Give us some examples of how no one is above the law, Mr. President. It shouldn't matter who is involved or the colour of their party cards. A show of guts is all we need to arrest the situation.

Step two: There should be attempts to promote the Sierran Leoneseness in the citizens and the political leadership can begin by taking actions that appear to readjust perceived imbalances in government, including a noticeable bi-partisan approach to major national issues. This will immediately soothe frayed nerves. A bi-partisan committee of senior citizens to look into issues of political, tribal or generational conflicts is a good idea. The fact remains, in post-conflict situation, where one party wins by a close margin, an accommodating administration is the ideal.

Step three: If we understand that reconciliation is a process, then government must embark on projects that promote reconciliation among people of different interest groups (tribe, religion, politics, etc). Once people are brought together, they set common goals for themselves. Cross-fertilization of ideas and ongoing interactions will reinforce and enhance commitment to and love for the country.

Step four: Following the above must be a deliberate move to rebrand the country. Rebranding must involve a reorientation of all Sierra Leoneans about the times we are in - the need for all hands to be on deck. It must be about an indivisible Sierra Leone, with common destiny and shared values. Come to think of it, a Mende or a Temne or a Creole, all have the same needs and they feel the same pain when hungry. The SLPP and APC supporters are Sierra Leoneans. When the taps run, the colour is neither red nor green. When the streetlights shine, they do not serve any one group. If Sierra Leone were to atrophy, there will be no escape route for members of any party. When there is chaos in Freetown, businesses close, schools shut, food flies away and everyone suffers. We need a new kind of Sierra Leone. Tony Blair did it in Great Britain. Nelson Mandela did it in South Africa. Barack Obama is doing it in the United States of America. Ernest Koroma can do it in

Sierra Leone. Party apparatchiks may be offended but the country will be better for it.

Additionally, a more coordinated and holistic attempt at reorientation should swallow the seemingly wobbly 'changing minds and attitude' campaign, which, although lofty, seems to have the feet of clay.

Finally, nothing works better than to provide the enabling environment so that jobs can be available and people can live a decent life. The value of human life can be measured by the magnitude of loss were it to go. A productive youth will think twice before resorting to violence. One without hope may envy the dead.

Let the warring parties sheathe the sword and let's liquidate this enterprise of violence.

Kingsley Lington, once editor of Concord Times, is Head of Community Outreach at the United Nations Mission in Liberia

UN Radio – Tea Break

Thursday, 12 March 2009

MAMADIE KAMARA: Leading Defence lawyer for former Liberian President Charles Taylor, Mr. Courtenay Griffiths, is presently in Sierra Leone. He has been on the Defence side of the former Liberian president since he changed his entire Defence team in June 2007. Well as I mentioned earlier, he's here in our studio with me this morning to talk more on the Hague-based Taylor trial. Welcome to Tea Break, sir.



GRIFFITHS: And thank you for inviting me.

KAMARA: Now tell us, what is the present status of the Charles Taylor trial?

GRIFFITHS: Well currently the Prosecution closed their case a couple of weeks ago. Now we're now in the process of putting together a legal submission that the Prosecution have failed to prove certain aspects of the indictment they have levelled against Mr. Taylor. That argument is to be heard on Monday the 6th of April. And thereafter, depending on the outcome of that argument, the Defence case hopefully will start some time in the summer.

KAMARA: So how challenging is it for you and your team defending Mr. Charles Taylor, talking about the Prosecution failing to prove certain aspects of the indictment?

GRIFFITHS: Well it's challenging on a number of levels. Level number one is the fact that even before the trial began there had been an assumption by many people globally that Charles Taylor was already guilty. And of course it didn't help when people like Kofi Annan, who have the ear of the media, went on to suggest that this Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up to, in effect, try people already found guilty. So we've had to challenge that assumption from the very outset. So that is a real difficulty. We also need to appreciate that this prosecution is primarily political in nature. It is nothing to do with bringing someone to account in terms of the law. It is about teaching an African leader a lesson if he fails to understand the place he occupies in the world. So we've had to deal with that political dimension as well. And then thirdly of course there is the legal dimension, because we feel that the Prosecution have very real difficulties in proving certain aspects of their case. For example, one of the important parts of their case is the fact that former President Taylor instigated the Freetown invasion despite the fact that in the AFRC trial, and in the RUF trial, both sets of Judges have agreed that the RUF had nothing whatsoever to do with it. So those are the kind of difficulties we've been facing.

KAMARA: So do you have substantial evidence in your possession to prove him not guilty?

GRIFFITHS: Well, Mr. Taylor will be giving evidence. He's anxious to give evidence because he wants the world to know what the true situation was rather than the web of obfuscation and lies which – we say – has surrounded this prosecution. So he wants his day in court and undoubtedly will have it. Thereafter, we will have to make assessments as to what additional evidence we feel we need to call in order finally to prove his innocence.

KAMARA: So are you suggesting that Mr. Taylor will eventually walk out as a free man?

GRIFFITHS: I can't make that prediction because I'm not a prophet, I'm a lawyer. In legal terms, my view is that he *should* walk out a free man. But whether or not that is possible in due course is another matter altogether.

KAMARA: How productive and helpful have witnesses for the Defence been?

GRIFFITHS: Well, despite a number of obstacles placed in our way, we have managed to put together a number of witnesses who we feel will substantiate the case that we put forward on behalf of Mr. Taylor. And, you know, we've been facing those difficulties not only here in Sierra Leone but also in Liberia. Difficulties occasioned, for example, by the fact that a number of the people we would like to call are on a UN travel ban and asset freeze, and a lot of our witnesses are saying to us, "Look, if I come forward and stick my head above the parapet, and I'm seen publicly to be giving evidence on behalf of Mr. Taylor, I might be stigmatised in the same way and find myself on the UN travel ban and asset freeze list. So that's been a real concern. Another concern is that the Prosecution at the Special Court were the first ones into the field looking for witnesses. What they effectively did was to interview in blanket terms witnesses all over the country, and then obtain from the Court an order to the effect that the Defence couldn't talk to any Prosecution witness. So as a result, it's very difficult to approach someone, because you don't know whether that person was, or could be, a Prosecution witness. And that has also hindered our efforts to put together a proper Defence case.

KAMARA: All right thank you very much. I'll come back to you. Continue to stay with us. He is the leading Defence lawyer for former Liberian President Charles Taylor. His name is Courtenay Griffiths. If you have questions for him, you can send them to 076-316735. The number again, 076-316735.

KAMARA: Well in the studios with me this morning is leading Defence lawyer for former Liberian President Charles Taylor. His name is Mr. Courtenay Griffiths. He is presently in Sierra Leone. He has been on the Defence side of the former president since he changed his entire Defence team in June 2007. Now, Mr. Griffiths, there are some text messages in already. I don't know if you want to respond to them for go on.

GRIFFITHS: Well, the first question that I was asked was, if Charles Taylor was freed, what would be the fate of Issa Sesay and the other two defendants in the RUF trial who are awaiting sentence. Well, it's difficult for me to predict whether or not Charles Taylor will be acquitted. I already observed that there are difficulties standing in the way of such a conclusion. Likewise I have no control over the trial of Issa Sesay and others; neither do I know where in due course they will be serving their sentences. But I think an important point to make is that in all the trials conducted at the Special Court not one person has been acquitted. And if that fact affirms what many commentators have suggested, that international criminal law is not really about applying principles of law at all. It's really the law of vengeance. It's victor's justice. You're guilty until proven innocent. And I think the very fact that not one person has been acquitted in this court – not even Mr. Fofana in the AFRC trial (sic.), may well be ample evidence of what this court is about.

KAMARA: Now Mr. Griffiths there's a question there for you. Would you like to respond?

GRIFFITHS: Well I think the trial of Charles Taylor is of international significance. It's the first trial of a former African head of state. But it should be noted that already there's evidence that he's not the only African head of state who appears to be on the target list of international justice. Just recently the president – the sitting president – of Sudan was indicted by the International Criminal Court. Now, from my vantage point in The Hague, I go to visit Mr. Taylor in the United Nations detention unit in Scheveningen, just north of The Hague. And it's curious that all of the individuals currently awaiting trial in that unit are – guess what? – Africans. And it's somewhat curious to me that every single investigation

being conducted by the ICC is where? Here in Africa. And I wonder how it is that only Africans appear to be committing international crimes, because after all, remember that Charles Taylor is charged with – effectively – arming a rebel group in a neighbouring country. Have the Americans not done that in Nicaragua? Have the Americans not done that in Afghanistan when they armed the Mahajadin to fight against the Soviet Union? And the same Mahajadin bred al Qaeda which came back to bite them in the butt years later. How is it that Jonas Savimbi led UNITA, committed atrocities in Angola? That was the first place where the whole concept of “blood diamonds” came into being. Yet is there any suggestion that Jonas Savimbi’s going to be charged? No, because he was backed by the West. Likewise South Africa, under the apartheid regime, committed atrocities in Namibia. Is there any suggestion that any white South African responsible for those atrocities is going to be tried? Likewise look what Israel did in Gaza recently. Is there any prospect that Israel will be put on trial for that? No. So we as Africans need to ask the question: “Why is it only us being dragged in handcuffs from our own soil to be tried in a foreign land?” Why was Charles Taylor not tried here? And I think we as Africans need to take responsibility for that, because we are allowing the West to use this concept of international justice as a form of neo-colonialism. It’s another way of controlling Africa and its assets, the better to exploit it.

KAMARA: Now, talking about what you’ve just said, as if you think the ICC is African biased. Do you think the ICC is as powerful as having Mr. Blair or Mr. Bush to stand trial in their court?

GRIFFITHS: Interestingly, in light of your question, let me remind you of something. Our former foreign minister in the United Kingdom, Robin Cook – the late Robin Cook – after the United Kingdom had signed the Rome Treaty affirming its support for the ICC, a press conference was called and he was asked by a journalist, “Does this now mean, Mr. Cook, that President Bush or your own Prime Minister Blair could be put on trial at the ICC for the invasion of Iraq?” Mr. Cook, our foreign minister, replied indignantly, this was not a court set up to try the likes of the President of the United States or the Prime Minister of England. No. What in effect he’s saying is, this is a court set up to try those lesser breeds below the law, i.e., us Africans. That’s what my own foreign minister said, and we need to bear that in mind when we look at this concept of international justice. We Africans need to wake up, smell the coffee, and understand what is happening here.

KAMARA: Thank you very much, I go over to my studio guest again. That’s the leading Defence lawyer for former Liberian President Charles Taylor. Now sir, is it possible to tell whether when the trial will end at this stage?

GRIFFITHS: Yes, I am hopeful that the trial will finish this side of Christmas. If the Defence case, as we hope, commences some time in the summer, I anticipate it lasting between four and six months. And if we are allowed sufficient time to put our witnesses together – and you can appreciate the logistical difficulties involved in transporting them to The Hague – and if we are able to run our cases smoothly as the Prosecution were able to run theirs, then I feel that we can complete it in four to six months. But Mamadie, let me just take up one of the text messages which has recently come in which mentions the suffering of the people of Sierra Leone. Now I do want the people of Sierra Leone to appreciate that even though I represent Charles Taylor, and even though as a consequence I declare him innocent of the charges on that indictment, I don’t want anyone here in this beautiful country to think that somehow I was not aware of the suffering which was visited on this country – some 50,000 people killed, many women raped, many people amputated. We are aware of that. We are humans too, even though we’re defending him. And so I don’t want people to think that somehow I’m ignoring that aspect of the case. Yes, wicked things were done and those responsible should be brought to justice. I am just insistent that it’s the right people who should be brought to justice. So that for example – let’s just take an example of this, whether or not we are looking at an equal playing field here. Chief Hinga Norman was put on trial for crimes committed by the CDF, the so-called Kamajors. Everybody seems to forget that Hinga Norman at the time was the Defence Minister (sic.) in the Kabbah government, which means that the Kabbah government was

sponsoring a force which committed war crimes and other atrocities. Is former President Kabbah likely to be put on trial? I doubt it. And so there's an illogicality there which we need to address. And many of these illogicalities are being swept under the carpet at present in the rush to convict the scapegoat, Mr. Taylor.

KAMARA: We're still with Mr. Griffiths. Now tell us sir, which of the Prosecution witnesses do you see more challenging – those from Liberia, or those from Sierra Leone?

GRIFFITHS: I think all of them are challenging in their different ways, because all of them were dealing with different aspects of the case. So it wouldn't be possible, in fact it would be artificial, to seek to create that kind of division between the two countries.

KAMARA: Now [gap] text messages that have been in this morning suggest, or seem to believe, that Mr. Taylor will be finally convicted. So how could your Defence team prove them wrong?

GRIFFITHS: That is part of the difficulty I was seeking to highlight earlier, the fact that already there is this assumption that Mr. Taylor is guilty – an assumption that is being fed over the years by the Western media who have their own reasons for wanting to demonise him in that way. And I think, picking up on a more recent text, that it's imperative that the African Union does something about this and about the situation in the ICC. Because, I don't want people to misunderstand my position. I am not suggesting that there is no place for international law. In fact, I would be a very firm public advocate to the setting up by the African Union of a court for the African continent. Because, let us be realistic about this. Many African presidents over the years have been guilty of committing the most heinous crimes against their people, and there should be no impunity for that. But my difficulty is this: I grew up according to a legal tradition which says, whether you're princess or prostitute, whether you're the President of the United States or the President of Liberia, the law is above you. That's not the way things are operating at present. At present, certain Western leaders are above the law. And that's the concern I have about international justice in its current form. I'm not saying that these African leaders should not be brought to justice, but why can't we Africans set up our own court and dispense our own justice to our own leaders, thereby establishing for ourselves our time-honoured adherence to the rule of law and justice for our fellow Africans? Why can't we do that?

KAMARA: So are you saying the ICC is not necessary?

GRIFFITHS: I'm saying that we Africans ought to be ploughing our own furrow, and I do not see why we should be sending our people away, thousands of miles away to the cold European continent which enslaved us in the first place, looking for justice. We should be seeking to provide that justice for ourself here.

KAMARA: All right thank you very much. Over to you Lucien Momoh.

MOMOH: We have some more text messages for the Lead Defence Counsel, and this one reads, "Why are you delaying to bring in your own witnesses to the Court?" And the following one is asking him again, "How do you feel defending such a man so many people regard as an international criminal?"

KAMARA: Right over to you again, sir.

GRIFFITHS: Let me deal with the last question first. It is a question that I'm often asked as a defence lawyer. I've been practicing for the last, almost 30 years in the United Kingdom, over the last 15 years or so mostly at the Old Bailey which is perhaps the most important criminal court in that country. And throughout all of that time with one exception I've been defending. And people always ask me, "How can

you defend these people?” Now the question is the result of a misunderstanding about the role of the lawyer. I am there to present a case. I am there to be the mouthpiece for the defendant. It doesn't mean that I thereby become the defendant and owe some kind of moral duty on his behalf. That is not my job. My job is to present a case dispassionately, without getting involved in the emotion of the situation. That is my role. And so consequently the answer to the question is, everybody deserves to be defended. Article 17 of the Court's charter provides that every defendant, however heinous the crimes committed, is entitled to a legal defence, and that is all I am doing, without making any kind of moral judgment about Mr. Taylor. And so far as delay is concerned, we are not delaying. But it has to be appreciated that there is a great disparity between the resources available to the Prosecution, both in The Hague and here in Freetown, between the Prosecution and the Defence. In The Hague, by way of example, the Prosecution on my latest count has something like 8 to 12 lawyers working for them. We have four, and yet we have to deal with the same volume of evidence and yet, whilst dealing with the Prosecution case, we've had to be conducting investigations here in Sierra Leone and in Liberia. It's one of the reasons why you haven't seen me before in Sierra Leone during the currency of the trial. I just have not had the time, because it's been all hands to the pump in The Hague to deal with the Prosecution case.

KAMARA: All right thank you very much indeed. Now before you go tell us, why are you here in Sierra Leone now?

GRIFFITHS: Well part of the reason why I'm here is in order to start talking to some of our witnesses, and trying to lay the groundwork for them to travel to The Hague later this year in order to give evidence. That's why I'm here. So I'll be visiting not only Sierra Leone but also Liberia in order to complete that process.

Press Statement

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

THE REGISTRAR OF THE SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE SIGNS A SENTENCE ENFORCEMENT AGREEMENT WITH THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

Herman von Hebel, Registrar of the Special Court (left), H.E. Mrs. Rosemary Museminali, Minister of Foreign Affairs (center), and H.E. Tharcisse Karugarama, Minister of Justice (right).

KIGALI, 18 March 2009. The Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Rwanda signed today a bi-lateral Agreement for the Enforcement of Sentences pronounced by the Special Court, marking an important milestone in the mandate of the Special Court.

The delegation of the Registrar, travelled to Kigali on Monday to visit the recently built Mpanga prison, which the Registrar qualified as being “beyond international standards.” Mpanga prison is located one and a half hour South of Kigali. The Dutch Government recently financed the construction of an additional wing, comprising thirty large cells, designed to house convicted persons from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, which brokered the Agreement between the Special Court and the Government of Rwanda.

Since 25 February 2009, a total of eight persons have been convicted by Judges of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, three of whom are still awaiting their sentence, and if applicable, an appeal. At the end of all proceedings, the total number of convicted persons could be transferred to Rwanda to serve their sentence.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Justice referred to this Agreement as a big step towards the implementation of the rule of law in Africa and the restoration of justice in countries, such as in Rwanda and in Sierra Leone, where horrendous crimes have been committed.

BBC Focus on Africa

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

LEAD-IN: Now, the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Rwandan government have signed an agreement to allow the Court to transfer convicted persons to serve their sentences in Rwanda. The Registrar of the Court, Herman von Hebel, said 5 out of 9 Sierra Leonean suspects have been sentenced and are now ready to start serving their terms, although he did not say when. This arrangement is due both to prison capacity concerns as well as for security reasons. From Kigali, the BBC's Geoffrey Mutagoma sent this report.

The Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Herman von Hebel, said the Court had entered into agreements similar to the ones signed today with a few European countries, but that they were not enough for eight suspects under its custody. He referred to Rwanda's signing of this agreement as a show of this country's commitment to cooperation in international justice and in the fight against impunity. There was no mention of when the convicts would be transferred to serve their sentences here, but Rwanda says it's ready to receive them any time.

The Registrar has been visiting Mpanga prison facility in central Rwanda where convicts will be held once they're transferred to serve their sentences here. He told journalists that he was satisfied with what he had seen. Mpanga facility was constructed purposely to hold convicts sentenced by the international Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, but the tribunal did not transfer convicts to serve their sentences, doubting whether they would get fair treatment.

That was Geoffrey Mutagoma in Kigali.

Hirondelle News Agency

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

FONDATION HIRONDELLE - HIRONDELLE NEWS AGENCY IN ARUSHA
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR RWANDA

RWANDA/SIERRA LEONE

KIGALI SIGNS AGREEMENT TO RECEIVE CONVICTS FROM SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE

Arusha, 18 March 2009 (FH) - The Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) and Rwandan government Wednesday signed an accord in which Kigali has agreed to receive convicted persons, reports Hirondelle Agency.

The accord was signed in Kigali between the Rwandan Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Rosemary Museminali and SCSL Registrar, Hermann von Hebel, reported Rwanda radio.

Also present at the ceremony was Rwandan Minister for Justice, Tharcisse Karugarama, who stated that the accord was demonstration of the international community's determination to eradicate the culture of impunity.

He seized the occasion to urge the international community to track all the alleged authors of the 1994 genocide, which resulted in his country in nearly 800 000 people killed, according to the UN estimates, primarily ethnic Tutsis.

According to the agreement, the convicts of SCSL will be those whose sentences vary between 15 and 50 years in prison, added the radio.

Rwanda will be responsible for provision of food and ensuring the convicts safety.

They will be held at the prison of Mpanga, in southern Rwanda, a detention centre built by the Rwandan government in the hope of receiving convicts from the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania.

No prisoner from the Arusha tribunal has been transferred to Kigali despite many requests from the Rwandan authorities.

The SCSL is tasked to try key persons responsible for crimes against humanity, war crimes and certain crimes envisaged by the law in Sierra Leone committed since 30 November 1996, the date of the Abidjan (Ivory Coast) Accords, which had tried, unsuccessfully, to stop the crisis.

The SCSL differs from the other tribunals created by the UN Security Council. It is not an ad hoc international criminal tribunal. Whereas the international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and for Rwanda (ICTR) have their headquarters respectively in The Hague and in Arusha, the SCSL sits in the country where the crimes were committed.

In particular, this court was part of the Sierra Leone legal system, even if it receives an important international support and that some of its judges are international judges. It is also a hybrid court, because it associates international law with Sierra Leone's national law.

ER/MM/SC/GF

The New Times (Rwanda)

Wednesday, 18 March 2009

War Crime Convicts to Serve Sentences in Rwanda

James Karuhanga

Nyarugenge — Rwanda and the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), a UN approved tribunal for masterminds of the crimes committed during the latter's past civil war Wednesday signed an agreement that will see some of the convicts completing their sentences in Rwanda.

This came shortly after a visiting SCSL team concluded touring and inspecting country's detention facilities and, expressed their solid appreciation for the "quality of the facilities," an approval duly welcomed by government.

"I want to express our positive sentiments towards this cooperation and tell you that this is in our view, part of our constant search for cooperation on the delivery of international justice," Foreign Minister Rosemary Museminali assured the delegation during the ceremony at her ministry.

"Upon signing this agreement, we will commit to do our part, she noted.

SCSL Registrar Herman Von Hebel underlined that his team had visited the detention facilities "which have been dedicated for the purpose of enforcing sentences of those people" convicted by international tribunals such as SCSL and, was impressed after touring the state-of-the-art prison in Mpanga, in Southern Province.

"I was very much impressed by the quality of the facilities. They meet international standards, or better put, they exceed international standards," he emphasized, underscoring his observations were based on "further consultations" during his stay.

Von Hebel added that he was convinced that the current "maximum of eight" SCSL convicted persons will receive "an enforcement which meets international standards."

Museminali reiterated that Rwanda has worked vigorously to ensure the delivery of justice but also sought the support of international bodies and other countries.

"We feel that what we are doing here today reinforces that endeavour. It also emphasizes our commitment - giving our own contribution to international justice," she said.

The signing was also witnessed by Justice Minister Tharcisse Karugarama, who pointed out that the agreement signifies Rwanda's modest contribution to cooperation in international justice.

He noted that the convicts have a place where they can serve their sentences while all their rights are respected in accordance with international standards.

He stressed that Rwanda's current contribution is supported by the desire, "in the context of Rwanda's history" for the whole world to cooperate in enforcement of sentences against crimes against humanity and, that cooperation in all other aspects of justice to ensure that "people are brought to book."

The UN approved the SCSL in 2002 and, unlike the Arusha-based International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), it is based in Sierra Leone where the atrocities were committed.

It is believed that because SCSL combines both international and domestic law, it fronts a new generation of international tribunals which experts say will deliver justice "faster and at a lower cost" than its equivalents for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
18 March 2009**

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

Newspaper Summary

Embattled President Pro-tempore Succumbs to Pressure – Resigns Finally

(Heritage, The News, Public Agenda, The Informer, The Inquirer, Liberian Express, National Chronicle, Daily Observer)

- The embattled President Pro-Tempore of the Liberian, Senate Isaac Nyenabo has resigned. "I am resigning as president pro-tempore of the Liberian senate," Nyenabo said in a farewell speech Tuesday.
- The decision followed intense pressure by twenty-three Senators who declared a vote of no confidence in his leadership.
- During Tuesday's session, Senator Nyenabo said his resignation was intended to move the Senate and the country forward.
- Meanwhile, the President of the Senate, Vice President Joseph Boakai said elections for the post of Pro Temp and the heads of the statutory committees would be held shortly.
- Senators vying for the Pro Tempore post include Lahai Lassana of Bomi, Sumo Kupee of Lofa, Cletus Wortorson of Grand Kru, Mobutu Nyepan of Sinoe and Gloria Scott of Maryland.

Former Liberian Diplomat Appeals to US Not to Deport Liberians with DED Status

(The Inquirer)

- A former Liberian diplomat has appealed to US President Barack Obama to assist thousands of Liberians obtain a permanent residence status. The Liberians who have been on the Deferred Enforcement Departure (DED) are due to be deported at the end of this month. Mr. Abdulah Dunbar wants President Obama to use his presidential powers to ensure that the vulnerable Liberians obtain the Permanent Residence Status. The former Deputy Chief of Mission at the Liberian Embassy in the United States has written an official communication to the U.S. President.
- Mr. Dunbar fears there would be a humanitarian crisis if there is a mass exodus of Liberians from the US. Mr. Dunbar said the war destroyed institutions like schools and hospitals which US based Liberians are helping to build through remittances. According to him, the country is now on the path of total recovery which requires the involvement of all Liberians local and foreign based.

ECOBANK Takes Banking to Lofa County

(Daily Observer)

- [Sic:] As the need increases for the provision of deepening financial services to rural Liberia, the management of Ecobank-Liberia has disclosed that it will on Saturday, March 21, 2009 make its presence felt in Voinjama, Lofa County, by opening a bank branch in the area. Voinjama is the provincial capital city of Lofa County and is situated not too far from neighboring Guinea. Making the disclosure in Monrovia Tuesday morning, Ecobank Managing Director Morenike Adepaju said the Voinjama branch was in furtherance of Ecobank's commitment to enhancing financial access to the Liberian public even in upcountry locations.

Bassa Students Want 10% Mittal Funds, 10,000 Hectares

(Daily Observer)

- [Sic] Students of Grand Bassa County attending various universities in the country have called for a 10% allotment to them from the Mittal Steel Annual community development funds. Under the umbrella of Grand Bassa University Students Union (GBUSU), the students are appealing to the county's leadership to provide the funds to GBUSU for scholarship and agricultural purposes. The student group made the appeal on Friday, March 13, 2009 at a souvenir program marking the official launch of the GBUSU Intellectual Discourse at Stella Maris Polytechnic on Capitol Hill in Monrovia.

Radio Summary

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 9:00 am)*

Nyenabo Resigns President Pro-Tempore Post

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

House passes Population Threshold Act

- The House of Representatives has passed into law the controversial Population Threshold Bill but with an amendment reducing the threshold from forty-five thousand to forty thousand.
- The House said the forty thousand-threshold was to ensure that counties with lower population are represented.
- The National Elections Commission submitted the threshold bill in line with Article 80 of the Constitution which empowers the Legislature to set a threshold for political representation after every National Census. The bill would be sent to the Senate for concurrence.

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

Defendants in Economic Sabotage yet to Testify

- Defendants in the Economic Sabotage Case have not begun testifying as was expected.
- According to court records, the former transitional officials should have begun testifying Tuesday but correspondents said former Transitional Chairman Gyude Bryant who should have been the first to testify is sick.
- Defense lawyers asked the court to delay the trial until Thursday when Mr. Bryant will probably be well enough to testify.
- Mr. Bryant, Representative Edwin Snow, Senator Richard Divine, Siaka Sherriff and Andy Quamie are on trial for allegedly stealing nearly a million US dollars from the LPRC. The men have since denied any financial wrongdoing and described their trial as witch-hunt.

Liberia Faces Serious Capacity Challenge" World Bank Executive Director

- The World Bank Executive Director for African Affairs says Liberia faces serious capacity challenge in defining its projects for funding.
- Dr. Togar McIntosh Gayewea said the problems range from the capacity to write clear projects to delivering and monitoring them.
- Dr. McIntosh was part of a World Bank team that recently ended a four-day visit to assess the progress and challenges Liberia is facing in its reconstruction process.
- Meanwhile, the World Bank has expressed renewed commitment to support Liberia in all sectors of its recovery process.

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

- 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.