

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Friday, 20 February 2009

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

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State House Online

Thursday, 19 February 2009

<http://www.statehouse.gov.sl>

President Koroma urges speedy end to Special Court Chapter



After gracing the Armed Forces Day celebrations, President Ernest Bai Koroma yesterday said there is a great need for the activities of the Special Court, which is a chapter of the war, to be quickly concluded so that the nation can move on.

Addressing members of the Management Committee of the Special Court who are visiting the country and called on the Head of State at State House, President Koroma said, “We are happy about the

progress made so far and it’s our desire that we bring to a conclusion the issues of the Special Court as soon as possible.”

He noted that although the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor would have to continue, those within Sierra Leonean jurisdiction would soon be ended, hence the need for the Court to fold up: “When that happens, we will put the legacy of the war behind us and move on as a nation.”

The President said he has been very much involved in discussing the residual issues consequential to the Court’s closure, and that government would soon come up with proposals to the effect.

One thing he however took particular interest in was the issue of enforcing the prison sentences of convicted persons, proposing that it would be desirable to have some of them serve their terms in another country or countries “just as Charles Taylor has been accepted.”

He thanked the management committee and their respective countries for having seen Sierra Leone through her most difficult period.

Speaking earlier, the Chairman of the Committee, Keith Morrill of Canada, said they were cognizant of the fact that the Special Court was jointly formed by the UN and the Sierra Leone Government and would have to notify the President on any developments.

He said the Court is now rounding up its activities but there are residual issues like setting up the archives, enforcement of sentences, and the question of new evidences that should be dealt with.

He intimated that the treaty that set up the Court would therefore need to be modified by legislation. Mr. Morrill said it should be noted that the Court’s sponsors would have to still make contributions because the work has not completely come to an end.

Committee members (coming from the US, the UK, Canada, the Netherlands, Nigeria, and Sierra Leonean diplomats at the UN mission in New York – twelve in all) were introduced by Foreign Affairs Minister Zainab Bangura.

The Press Secretariat
State House
19 February 2009

Awoko

Friday, 20 February 2009

President Koroma urges speedy end to special court

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Pres. Koroma wants speedy end to Special Court

From page 5

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UN mission in New York - twelve in all) were introduced by Foreign Affairs minister, Zainab Bangura.

Awareness Times
Friday, 20 February 2009

Ernest Koroma Raises Concern on Special Court Convicts

By Abdul Karim Kabia

President of the Republic of Sierra Leone has expressed concern on the issue of enforcing the prison sentences of special court indictees who will be convicted after the trial, whilst proposing that it would be desirable to have some of them serve their terms in another country or countries "just as Charles Taylor has been accepted." Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma made this observation whilst addressing members of the Management Committee of the Special Court who are visiting the country and called on the Head of State at State House on Wednesday 18th February 2009.

A press release issued yesterday by the Press Secretariat of State House quoted President Koroma as saying that he has been very much involved in discussing the residual issues consequential to the Court's closure,

and that government would soon come up with proposals to the effect. According to the release, President Koroma urged that there is great need for the activities of the Special Court, which is a chapter of the war, to be quickly concluded so that the nation can move on.

President Koroma said, "We are happy about the progress made so far and it's our desire that we bring to a conclusion the issues of the Special Court as soon as possible." He noted that although the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor would have to continue, those within Sierra Leonean jurisdiction would soon be ended, hence the need for the Court to fold up: "When that happens, we will put the legacy of the war behind us and move on as a nation."

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Independent Observer
Friday, 20 February 2009

Criminal Case Handbook Lunched

By Mohamed Bah

The Justice Sector Coordinat-

ing Office under the Ministry of Justice, recently lunched the Practical Handbook of Criminal Case Management Pilot Project in the Southern provincial headquarter town of

Bo.

Speaking at the launching ceremony at the Methodist Youth Resource Centre, the Attorney

Continued page 2

Criminal Case Handbook Lunched

From front page

General and Minister of Justice, Hon. Abdul Serry Kamal expressed concerns over the criminal case justice system for the entire country. He said the Criminal Case Management Pilot Project emanated from government's Justice System Reform Strategy and Investment Plan 2008 - 2010 designed by government and its implementing partners specifically its funding agencies - UNDP and DFIF. He seized the opportunity to call on them to continue their support. The Minister went on to state that the pilot project was a machine used to solve problems faced in accessing justice. He assured the audience of government's support and commitment to the project. Honorable Kamal furthermore highlighted what he referred to as the "tremendous performance" of government by passing of series of Acts into legislation and at the same time, amending archaic

ones. The practice handbook, he said, is a clear indication of judiciary transparency.

The Attorney General concluded by urging members of the Criminal Case Task Force and the Law Officers Department to work as one as according to him, their goal is to achieve, as they deliver justice to the people.

Justice Coordinator, Madam Sarah Ann Lewis briefly outlined the background of the pilot project which she said focuses on the criminal case management and aimed at enhancing communication, coordination and cooperation, between stakeholders in the justice system in Sierra Leone. She stated that the regular monitoring and evaluation of the justice system, and the practical handbook, were developed mainly to identify the bottlenecks within the criminal justice system in Sierra Leone and to cut down on high level of remand prisoners that have been deprived justice.

Delivering the keynote address on behalf of the Her Lady Chief Justice of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Honorable Umu Hawa Tejan Jalloh, Justice of the Supreme Court, Hon Justice P.O Hamilton highlighted the administrative setbacks facing the judiciary in the country, which he said include prejudicing, delay in prosecuting among others and said needed urgent attention in the criminal case management pilot project. Justice Hamilton also outlined the importance of the practical handbook, which he said was well written and concise and a guide to meet the international judiciary standard.

He concluded by assuring the audience of the judiciary's support in ensuring that project is well implemented in the country and encouraged the audience to be a law abiding citizens, and to take the pilot project very seriously while commending justice sector for a job well done.

Agence France Presses

Thursday, 19 February 2009

Verdict in Sierra Leone's RUF trial next week

FREETOWN (AFP) — Sierra Leone's war crimes tribunal will hand down a verdict next week in the trial of three former rebel leaders accused of ordering atrocities during the 1991-2001 civil war, the court said Thursday.

The leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao, face 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, rape, sexual enslavement, cruel treatment, using child soldiers and attacks on UN soldiers.

They have all pleaded not guilty before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

On Wednesday the judges are expected to rule whether the defendants are guilty. If they are convicted, a special hearing will follow to determine sentencing.

Prosecutors say RUF fighters committed numerous atrocities during Sierra Leone's bloody 1991-2001 civil war.

By the time the conflict ended some 120,000 people were killed and tens of thousands of others had been mutilated, their arms, legs, noses or ears chopped off.

At the opening of the trial in June 2004 prosecutor David Crane called the indictment against the men "a tale of horror" and said the RUF leaders were "dogs of war, hounds of hell".

During the trial prosecutors painted a picture of the RUF rebels involved in a joint criminal enterprise together with former Liberian president Charles Taylor in order to get control over the diamond fields of Sierra Leone to finance their warfare. The so-called blood diamonds harvested by the rebels through violence and intimidation were traded for military and financial support.

"Blood diamonds are the common thread that bound together this criminal enterprise. The rule of the gun reigned supreme," Crane said.

Prosecution witnesses testified at length about the RUF rebels' atrocities. They told horrific tales of murder, rape, men and women taken by the rebels and forced to work in the RUF-controlled diamond fields, while women were used as sex slaves.

They also spoke of the so-called Small Boys Units, boys forcibly recruited by the rebels and issued with small lightweight guns like AK-47's and often given marijuana, cocaine or brown-brown (heroin) to prepare them for battle.

These units of boys aged between ten and fifteen had a reputation of particular cruelty among the civilian population.

The three RUF leaders were initially indicted along with the RUF's founder and close Taylor ally Foday Sankoh but he died in custody before the case ever came to trial.

Charles Taylor is currently on trial in a separate case before the Special Court for Sierra Leone, sitting in The Hague for those proceedings. He faces 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Sesay, Kallon and Gbao have been on trial since June 2004 and closing arguments in the case were heard in August 2008 after judges heard testimony from 170 witnesses.

The defence says the men are not responsible for the atrocities and Sesay's lawyers in particular tried to cast him as a peacemaker because he signed the Lome peace agreement which ended the war.

Witnesses presented by the defence countered the prosecution allegations of widescale atrocities and said that in areas controlled by the RUF leaders there was safety and security. According to one witness, Kallon even shared his food with the hungry villages.

The RUF case is the last of the three special court trials held in Freetown. The only trial still ongoing before the Sierra Leone tribunal is the Taylor trial which has been moved to The Hague for security reasons.

Voice of America

Thursday, 19 February 2009

Sierra Leone War Victims Sign Up for Reparations

By Kari Barber

Makeni, Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war, which ended in 2002, thousands of people were raped, had their limbs cut off by rebels with machetes, or were otherwise maimed. Now some of these people may receive money as well as education and health benefits to compensate for their loss.

In the northern town of Makeni, the government was interviewing those who say they are victims to decide who should receive reparations.



Ebrahim Sherif is a war amputee and father of nine. While his wife picks through palm nuts to process into oil to sell, Sherif watches. Before the war he was a farmer and a diamond digger, but now he can no longer work.

"This is where my right hand was that they cut off by RUF rebels," Sherif said. "Before they cut it off, they sliced up my head, my back, my shoulder, my foot." Sherif says they also raped a woman in front of him.

Victims like Sherif are coming to the government's National Commission for Social Action to receive reparations.

Ebrahim Sherif

Regional coordinator Sainku Fofanah said. "If your tongue was cut it has a percentage," "If your eye was damaged it has a percentage, your arm...any part of your body that was damaged during the war, they are going to look at it on a percentage basis."

To register, a photo is taken of the alleged victim and their family members, and they must give an oral testimony about what happened to them.



Sainku Fofanah



Victims must show identification or paperwork proving he or she was wounded in the war

An applicant must show identification or paperwork proving he or she was wounded in the war. Amputees have formed associations, so many of them have ID cards. But victims of sexual violence often have no proof.

Government officials say patience is needed to make sure victims of sexual violence are also compensated.

Sherif says amputees face stigma in society. He hopes reparation money will make life easier.

Because former fighters received cash after the war to disarm, Sherif says it is only fair that victims should receive something also.

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
19 February 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

SRSG Løj Entreats Liberian Women to Strive for Success – Identifies Empowerment, Decentralization as key to Reducing Poverty

(The News, The Monitor, The Informer, Heritage)

- Speaking at the inauguration of the Women's Resource Centre in Grand Kru County, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), Ellen Margrethe Løj entreated Liberian women to strive for success, urging the members of the South-Eastern Women's Development Association (SEWODA), to "show everyone that you resolutely want to move out of poverty".
- The Women's Resource Centre in Grand Kru County was handed over to the SEWODA, a Liberian NGO of over 4500 women with 100 networks all over the region.
- The multi-functional centre was built at a cost of almost US\$25,000, funded through the UNMIL Quick Impact Projects (QIP) programme, and was implemented in partnership with SEWODA. It will provide a meeting place for women to discuss and prioritize their needs, and will address the pressing issue of income generation by providing members with an adult literacy program, training in tailoring, soap-making, batik (tie-and-dye), and baking pastries.
- The UN Envoy commended the women of the region for setting an example of promoting self-help for the rest of the country. In responding to a campaign calling for development of the county, the women made requests to the donor community for the centre, and got actively involved in building it. They fetched water and sand, crushed rocks, and cleared the building site.

MOA Receives US\$100,000.00 for Caterpillar Control

(Daily Observer)

- In an update on the caterpillar invasion in Liberia, the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. J. Chris Toe, says the Liberian Government and other agricultural stakeholders have provided US\$100,000.00 for containment efforts to the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).

Auditor testifies how Ex-Transitional Officials Siphoned Public Money at LPRC

(Daily Observer, The Inquirer)

- Retired Internal Audit Manager (IAG) at the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Company (LPRC), Edward G. Deshield, and now serving as prosecution second witness in the US\$927,000 theft case, on Monday informed the court of how the five defendants allegedly used the money from the coffers of the company.

Radio Summary

Local Media – Truth FM *(News monitored at 2:00pm)*

Liberia gets International Award for Making Progress in Implementing EITI Objectives

- The Board of Directors of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) has presented Liberia an award for the rapid progress the country has made towards the

implementation of the objectives of the EITI. Making the presentation on Tuesday in Doha, Qatar, at a reception hosted in honor of delegates, the Chairman of the Board of EITI described as remarkable, Liberia's progress in the Initiative. Mr. Peter Eigen praised the partnership between the Liberian Government, civil society groups and the private sector. Liberia's achievement, Mr. Eigen said, represents the level of progress that can be achieved when stakeholders work toward a common objective.

- Receiving the Award, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf praised civil society groups, particularly the secretariat of the steering committee of LEITI for the hard work. Credit, she said, must be given to the group for the country's progress in the LEITI process as well as all those who worked assiduously for the progress Liberia has made.
- The President reiterated government's commitment to the process in ensuring that Liberia meets all of the benchmarks to enable it become fully compliant to all EITI standards.
- Liberia was among three countries to receive an award in recognition of special efforts towards the EITI initiatives. Kyrgyzstan and Azerbaijan also received awards.

Star Radio *(News culled from website at 12:00pm)*

President Sirleaf Insists Resources from Extractive Industries should Benefit the People

- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf says state authorities should ensure resources from extractive industries are used in the interest of the people.
- President Sirleaf spoke at the 4th International conference of the Extractive Industries Initiative in the Asian Gulf State of Qatar.
- President Sirleaf recalled her government inherited dysfunctional institutions and an entrenched criminalized value system.
- She said rent seeking and corruption became a way of life to support conspicuous consumption at the top and a source of livelihood at the bottom.
- Despite the setback, the Liberian President told the international audience, her government instituted measures to reverse the trend.
- She said as part of the measures, government sought to settle huge salary arrears and to improve compensation levels to minimize vulnerabilities.
- President Sirleaf mentioned government submitted several laws to the Liberia to govern the behavior and action of public servants.
- She made specific reference to the Code of Conduct, the Freedom of Information Act, the Corruption Offenses Act and the Public Broadcast Act.
- President Sirleaf also commented on Liberia's justice system and said efforts to punish violators of the public trust is hampered by a weak judicial and corrupt system.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Radio Veritas, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Minister Williams Delivers Consignment of Textbooks to MCSS

- Deputy Information Minister Gabriel Williams has presented a consignment of over 3,000 textbooks to the Monrovia Consolidated School Systems through the Ministry of Education.
- According Minister Williams, the textbooks were a donation made by a humanitarian family based in Sacramento, California, the USA.
- He said the textbooks are in categories from Elementary to High School levels. He said they are in keeping with the Liberian School Curriculum.
- The Deputy Information Boss then expressed the hope that these textbooks would be used for the purpose intended.
- At the same time, Assistant Education Minister Christopher Sorbor thanked Minister Williams for his farsightedness.
- Minister Sorbor said such a donation was timely as his Ministry was faced with what he called acute shortage of textbooks.
- The presentation ceremony was held on the campus of the G.W. Gibson High school in Monrovia

LTA Clarifies Chairman's Whereabouts amidst controversies over corruption

- The Liberia Telecommunications Authority has confirmed that its Chairman, Albert Bropleh has departed the country.
- A statement issued Wednesday said the departure of Mr. Bropleh was done without the official knowledge of the rest of the Board of Commissioners of the LTA.
- The statement signed by the LTA Board of Commissioners clarified that the board was not informed in any way about the purpose and destination of Mr. Bropleh's trip.
- On the issue of financial misapplication at the LTA the board disclosed that the General Auditing Commission was conducting a forensic audit of the entity.
- The board's statement noted that its attention was drawn to series of local and international publications about the LTA thus prompting the clarification.
- The LTA board however further clarified that it would not subscribe to reports that the Chairman of the entity Albert Bropleh has run away.
- The Board of Commissioners also clarified that the ongoing disagreement among commissioners was based on policy and operational differences and not personal.
- The statement assured that the LTA was mindful of its statutory responsibilities and shall in the final analysis ensure commitment to good governance

(Also reported on Truth FM, Radio Veritas, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Citizens Recommend Prosecution of Ex-Township Commissioner

- A group calling itself Concerned Citizens Movement of Mount Barclay wants government to ensure the prosecution of a former Johnsonville Commissioner for forgery.
- Mr. John Berry has been constantly accused of illegal land sale and forging of land deed for over one thousand acres of land in the area.
- The citizens expressed concern over the release of Mr. Berry without charge even though police investigation showed he forged land deeds.
- The residents claimed the former Commissioner was arrested early February but was released a day after without charge.
- The group wants government to intervene as the citizens are continuing to be victimized by the alleged acts of Mr. Berry.
- CID Commissioner Steve Zargo confirmed the release of Mr. Berry but said it was after his lawyers filed a writ of Habeas Corpus because he was kept beyond the statutory period.
- The CID official also confirmed that investigations proved that Mr. Berry falsified land documents and assured he would be prosecuted.

Grand Kru County Gets Free Medical Services

- A local medical charity group has performed free surgery on 102 patients in Grand Kru County.
- The Liberia Surgical Outreach Programme said the work was in collaboration with the Health Ministry and the International Committee of the Red Cross.
- A statement issued said the team performed the surgical operation during a ten day free surgical campaign in the county.
- The statement said campaign, which was carried out at the Rally Time Hospital in Grandness, ran from January 13 to February 9.
- According to the statement, the patients were suffering from various illnesses including goiters, hernias, hydroceles and fibroids.
- It indicated that the patients, most of whom were children, women and the elderly, came from Sasstown, Barclay Ville, Grandness and Picnicess, among others.
- Meanwhile, the Executive Director of the group, Dr. Peter Coleman has expressed gratitude to all the organizations and individuals that contributed to the campaign.

World Bank Approves two key Infrastructure Projects for Liberia

- The World Bank in collaboration with the oversight committee of the Liberia Reconstruction Trust Fund has approved two major infrastructure projects for Liberia.

- The projects are the Urban and Rural Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project and the Monrovia Urban Sanitation Project.
- A statement from the bank's Africa Region said the two projects would address the rehabilitation of critical infrastructures and the solid waste management system of Monrovia.
- The World Bank is expected to provide forty-five million United States Dollars to support of the projects.
- The infrastructure project would focus on the rehabilitation of streets in Monrovia, the Pleebo-Barclayville Road and the construction of an oil jetty.
- The Bassa-Monrovia Highway from Cotton Tree to Bokay Town is one of the projects identified.
- The Liberia Reconstruction Trust Fund is also providing eighteen point four million dollars for the Monrovia sanitation project.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Radio Veritas, Sky FM, and ELBC)

American Philanthropist Worries about underprivileged children

- An American Philanthropist says the future of underprivileged Liberian children remains bleak unless there are structures in place to care for them.
- The Executive Director of the Addy Hope Child Welfare Home said children have no reason to suffer when there are individuals willing to care for them.
- Sister HollyAnn Petree said the government needs to enact legislations to ensure that adoption processes are done legally.
- Sister HollyAnn said more parents in the United States have expressed their wiliness to assist less fortunate Liberian children through adoption.
- She however, said those parents are mindful that the process is conducted legally in conformity with Liberian and American laws.
- Sister HollyAnn spoke Wednesday when she introduced to journalists a group of adopted American parents currently visiting Liberia.
- The group is in the country to assess the condition of children they adopted but cannot take to America because of a government's ban on adoption.
- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf announced the moratorium on the process during her annual message.
- The President said until laws are enacted to ensure that the welfare of children are not compromised, no adoption of Liberian children would take place.

All Hands on Deck for Runoff Polls in River Gee - NEC Cautions against Violence

- The Chairman of the National Elections Commission has urged voters in River Gee County to avoid violence in the run-off polls next Tuesday.
- Mr. James Fromoyan said NEC would appreciate a peaceful atmosphere that characterized the first round of voting in the county.
- The Senatorial run-off by-election is between Ambassador Conmany Wesseh of the Unity Party and Nathaniel Williams of the Liberia Destiny Party.
- Mr. Fromoyan said ballot papers for the run-off senatorial by-election are already in the country and would remain in safe keeping until Election Day.
- According to Mr. Fromoyan, NEC is continuing its civic education activities in the county to encourage high turnout.
- The NEC Chairman however, called on the two run-off candidates to assist the Commission carry out massive awareness on the process.
- Mr. Fromoyan encouraged all twenty-two thousand registered voters in River Gee to turn out in their numbers and vote the candidate of their choice.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Radio Veritas, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Temper flares at Senate Committee's hearing

- [sic] One of the key figures in the attack case against the Auditor General Wednesday demonstrated acts of aggression against the Special Committee of the Senate. Nickie Jah burst into emotions and harshly addressed Representative Moses Kollie who is a witness to the case. Jah shouted at Representative Kollie despite being repeatedly called to order by the

Special Committee of the Senate. The aggressive act by Jah was later contained by the Co-Chairman of the Senate's Special Committee Jonathan Banney who vowed not to tolerate her action. Nickie Jah's emotional outburst was triggered by Representative Kollie's testimony.

- Representative Kollie testified that Jah alone with the Deputy Auditor General Martu Tubman and one Maryanne insulted the Auditor General. The Finance Ministry Personnel Director described Representative Kollie's testimony as false, saying his testimony was based on Lofa solidarity. However, another witness James Jensen confirmed the action of Jah, Martu Tubman, Maryanne and other women. In her testimony Jah confirmed interacting with the Auditor General at the Legislature but said he was not insulted. Auditor General Morlu complained to the Senate that a gang of women led by his Deputy, Martu Tubman, insulted him saying he was a criminal.

New Liberian

Thursday, 19 February 2009

Latvian Investigative Journalist Reveals Taylor, Ghadafi, Ex-CIA Agent Organized Arms, Diamonds Smuggling Company

Mambu James Kpargoi, Jr., Monrovia

A retired Italian agent of the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) joined then NPFL rebel leader Charles Taylor, and others, to organize an enterprise to smuggle weapons into the West African sub region.

Roger D'ONOFRIO Ruggiero collaborated with Mr. Taylor, a representative of Libyan leader Muammar Ghadafi, eastern European arms smugglers and RUF's Ibrahim Bah to organize the International Business Consultant Ltd. (IBC) to serve as a support for large weapons deal.

According to the transcribed testimony of Mr. D'ONOFRIO Ruggiero in 1995 before an Italian prosecutor presented Thursday to Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) by Mr. Immants Liepins, an investigative journalist of the Latvian Public Investigation Bureau, D'ONOFRIO, Taylor and others had shares in the company and the entity was also used to smuggle Liberian and Sierra Leonean diamonds in exchange for weapons.

The document revealed that the company entered into deals with a Bulgarian Company, Kintex, which supplied weapons and bullets to IBC and sold diamonds in return, camouflaged as oranges and olives with the aid of some Bulgarian companies in Zurich, Switzerland represented by a Swiss lawyer, Rudolf Meroni.

According to Mr. D'ONOFRIO's transcript, in 1993 alone the company earned more the US\$3 million dollars.

"The company IBC is a Liberian Company de iure that was founded by me, Mr. Charles Taylor and Michele Papa, who was my representative in all deals with Libya, as he and Massimo PUGLIESE had trade relations with President Ghadafi," the transcript said.

Mr. D'ONOFRIO told the prosecutor that he was introduced to Mr. Ibrahim John Bah, who posed as Liberia's minister for mineral resources, saying, "these resources were diamonds, which Liberia sold widely and about which Libya has always shown a great interest."

He said Bah collaborated with Libyan leader Ghadafi and Taylor to form a rebel group which was then operating in the Sierra Leonean jungle after fighting in Liberia.

Mr. D'ONOFRIO said Bah and an Italian national only identified as PORCARI also operating in Liberia had big business ventures in Liberia's tropical timber and operated another bigger enterprise to conceal the criminal profits.

He said during a visit to Liberia he was taken to the town of Foya, Lofa County where he met Mr. Taylor and a representative of the US Government, Nill Taylor, not a relative of Taylor. "Nill Taylor, in fact was an ambassador, but in truth he was Nicolas OMAN's friend."

D'ONOFRIO said OMAN was a Slovenian weapons smuggler who was named Liberia's honorary consul in Slovenia, while his son occupied similar portfolio in Australia.

He disclosed that he and Mr. Taylor offered equal amounts of diamonds to serve as guarantees for the arms deals.

Mr. Liepins made the presentation while testifying Thursday at the ongoing Economic Crimes Hearing of the TRC at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in Monrovia. Liepins is an investigative journalist who previously worked for the largest media institutions in Latvia: Daily Business, Evening News, Independent Morning News amongst others before he founded the Public Investigation Bureau.

Imants is the author of two books, one on financial crime and corruption (2008). In 2006, he was voted for Best New Latvian Writer and this year was nominated to UNESCO as one of the candidates for the World Press Freedom Prize.

Under the theme: “Economic Crimes, Corruption and the Conflict in Liberia: Policy Options for an Emerging Democracy and sustainable peace,” the hearing is addressing the contribution of economic crimes to the conflict including corruption and the illicit exploitation of natural resources.

The hearing is also discussing the correlation between the extractive industry and the fueling of the conflict and appropriate policies aimed at reversing the unauthorized exploitation of the natural resources by individuals, groups and the government for purposes external to the national good.

Pursuant to the TRC Act of 2005, the commission is mandated to investigate gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as well as abuses that occurred, including massacres, sexual violations, murder, extra-judicial killings and economic crimes, such as the exploitation of natural or public resources to perpetuate armed conflicts during the period January 1979 to October 14, 2003.

The commission is mandated to determine whether these were isolated incidents or part of a systematic pattern; establishing the antecedents, circumstances, factors and context of such violations and abuses; and determining those responsible for the commission of the violations and abuses and their motives as well as their impact on victims.

Committee to Protect Journalists

Thursday, 19 February 2009

<http://cpj.org/blog>

Liberian journalist will not have to reveal source

By Joel Simon/Executive Director

We received good news this morning from The Hague, where the presiding judge in the war crimes trial of Charles Taylor dismissed a request to compel Liberian journalist Hassan Bility to reveal the identity of a confidential source.

Bility testified on January 14 about a 1997 reporting trip to Sierra Leone in which he documented alleged ties between Liberian government troops and Sierra Leonean rebels. Taylor, Liberia's ex-president, is being tried by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for crimes against humanity and war crimes based on his alleged sponsorship of the rebels.

Bility refused to provide the name of the person who facilitated his trip to Sierra Leone, saying only that he was a Nigerian soldier who was part of a regional peacekeeping operation. The Court considered written submissions from both the defense and prosecution and promised to provide a written judgment in the near future.

In our February 3 alert, I noted that forcing Bility to reveal his confidential source could compromise conflict reporting, particularly reporting on war crimes and human rights abuses. We look forward to learning more about the court's reasons for rejecting the defense request, but this is certainly welcome news and an important victory for press freedom at a time when the ability of journalists to protect their confidential sources is being eroded in many parts of the world.

The Liberian Journal
Thursday, 19 February 2009

Global Witness to Testify at TRC on Role of Timber in Liberia's War

Global Witness will testify before the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on the subject of economic crimes committed during Liberia's civil war.

Since 2000, Global Witness exposed the way in which exploitation and trade of natural resources fuelled armed conflict in Liberia and across the region. The focus was former president Charles Taylor's harnessing of Liberia's forest sector to fund his political ambitions and military campaigns, and the role of national and international companies in abetting him.

Since the end of the conflict, Global Witness has worked with local partners, advocating for Liberia's natural resources to be managed as a basis for sustainable and equitable development.

Liberia's conflict exemplifies a post-Cold War pattern of wars being financed by the exploitation and trade of natural resources. Resource-fuelled wars in Africa alone have caused the deaths of millions and destabilised entire regions. "Liberia provides a salutary lesson to the international community in the need to identify these conflict resource cases much earlier and develop a far more effective array of responses." said Global Witness Director Patrick Alley.

Global Witness' testimony will detail the patronage system via which Charles Taylor granted logging concessions to Liberian timber companies, and their owners, in exchange for financial and military support. It will describe how these companies and individuals proceeded to commit a range of crimes relating to tax evasion, environmental destruction, human rights abuses and UN sanction violations.

The testimony will also highlight international dimensions of this resource-conflict nexus. It will outline the role in sustaining the conflict played by foreign buyers through their purchase of illegally sourced timber. It will also examine the failure of the international community to halt these activities quickly.

"Without the material support of international buyers, Taylor would have been unable to fund his war - these timber buyers were one cheque book away from the terrible human cost of the wars they helped fund" said Global Witness Director Patrick Alley. "Global Witness urges the TRC and any court which may subsequently be established, not only to hold to account the key players in Liberia, but also those international actors who facilitated the natural resource trade that kept the conflict alive. "

Over the course of the conflict, Global Witness produced five reports on Liberia. These reports and supporting documentation were submitted to the TRC on 20 March 2008.

As well as presenting evidence of the crimes committed, Global Witness will also put forward recommendations for the TRC to include in its final report.

Editor's Note: This is a Global Witness press release. For further information, contact Patrick Alley @ 231-0773-56495.

Ethiopia

Thursday, 19 February 2009

<http://www.ethiopianreview.com>

Bashir vs. the International Criminal Court

By Paulos Milkias

Crimes against international law are committed by men, not by abstract entities, and only by punishing individuals who commit such crimes can the provision of international law be enforced." - World War II Nuremberg Tribunal

Darfur is not the only case of international intervention in an African human rights dilemma. During the last two decades, Africa had several crises that needed international attention. The conflicts in Somalia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Liberia devastated entire communities. Of particular concern to the international community was the widening conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) which spilled over into the neighboring countries of the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zambia—several of which were already experiencing humanitarian emergencies of their own. Even after a shaky peace accord was signed in the DRC, humanitarian conditions did not improve significantly, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) had to deal with known human rights abusers.

While humanitarian emergencies continue to proliferate in Africa, a question with far-reaching implications arises: what is to be done regarding Darfur? Are there justifications for the Sudanese government's position that no international organization can interfere in its own internal affairs? And if intercession is contemplated, what constitutes a sufficiently just cause to warrant intervention? All these depend on several factors: the intentions of the interveners, whether interventions are a last resort, who and what might be a legitimate target of intervention, reasonable prospects for success, and proper authorization.

The issue of just cause requires that severe suffering warranting help has arisen. These include such threats to vital interests as indiscriminate killings, torture, rape, and displacement of people. These would count as significant threats to human dignity and normal life. When such activities are widespread, and the state either perpetrates the injustices or does nothing appropriate to end the suffering of people, it would be reasonable to suggest the just cause threshold has been attained. These were undoubtedly present in ICC's Darfur case.

Sudan has vehemently opposed what it considers intervention in its domestic affairs by the ICC. The Sudanese government has rejected the ICC's request that war crimes suspects Ahmad Harun and Ali Kushayb be arrested and handed over to them. They consider the action an intrusion into their national affairs and have dubbed the ICC "a tool for [imposing] the culture of superiority." But they could not stop the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) from publishing a notice for the arrest of Harun. Sudan's Justice Minister Ali al-Mardi said that any attempts to arrest Harun and Kushayb through INTERPOL would be treated as "kidnapping and international piracy."

This opposition to the ICC's adjudication represents both practical and fundamental hurdles. On one level, there is no possibility for an international tribunal to operate without a state's cooperation in turning over defendants and evidence and permitting investigation within its own territorial boundary. If the government of President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir shields its citizens from the ICC, the court would be hard pressed to carry out its prosecution.

On another level, criminal proceedings by international tribunals have rarely fulfilled victims' expectations of universal justice. The international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and Yugoslavia were both severely criticized as being too remote, too sluggish, and biased in their choice of defendants. The prosecutions were accused of sparing the most senior defendants from the local courts where they might be tried in accordance with local standards and within view of the local population that had witnessed the atrocities, and where, just like their subordinates, they could face the death penalty if convicted. This of course could not be expected in the Sudan, where the chain of command in the crime stretches up to President Bashir himself whom the ICC is now seeking to prosecute.

The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, after a thorough study of international law and conventions, determined that it may be appropriate for supranational bodies to intervene in what are normally considered the domestic affairs of a state for the purpose of protecting people who are at risk. The commission's report pinpointed principles on which its prominent jurists reached consensus and which it believes to be "politically achievable in the world as we know it today." The cardinal principles the commission considered legitimate were stated in the following words:

State sovereignty implies responsibility, and the primary responsibility for the protection of its people lies with the state itself... However, where a population is suffering serious harm, as a result of internal war, insurgency, repression, or state failure, and the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt or avert it, the principle of nonintervention yields to the international responsibility to protect.

The report does not deny that sovereignty is important, but it calls attention to what sovereignty entails. For the jurists, sovereignty is not best conceived of in terms of control but rather in terms of responsibility. Government officials are responsible for assuring the safety of citizens and for advancing their welfare. The commission did not find genuine support for a view that sovereignty necessitates unlimited state power over its own citizens, but instead acknowledged that "sovereignty implies a dual responsibility: externally—to respect the sovereignty of other states—and internally—to respect the dignity and basic rights of all the people within the state." The report noted in its conclusion that "sovereignty as responsibility has become the minimum content of good international citizenship."

The general responsibility to safeguard peoples' welfare requires the implementation of three specific tasks. In the first instance, it entails a responsibility to prevent or to contend with the root causes of conflict that puts people at risk of requiring humanitarian intervention. Contending with the root causes can mean putting to an end political repression. In the second instance, it entails a responsibility to respond aptly when there is a pressing human need. A fitting response may call for sanctions, international prosecutions, or military interventions. And last but not least, the responsibility to protect people in distress demands a responsibility to rebuild by providing the right kind of help with recovering, reconstructing, and setting in motion a process of national reconciliation.

Regarding the issue of proper type of authorization for interventions, there is no better or more appropriate body than the United Nations Security Council that charged the ICC to take up the Darfur crisis. By its very design, the Security Council bears a primary obligation to deal with all requests for emergency authorizations and it has to do that within an appropriate time period, particularly when they entail urgent, large-scale crises like Darfur. There is clear tension between the goals of nations shielding themselves from outside interference and international goals of responding to victims who suffer in humanitarian crises; but when it comes to respecting sovereignty and respecting the welfare of individuals who are in distress, the matter should definitely be resolved in favor of protecting the vulnerable individuals who suffer in humanitarian crises.