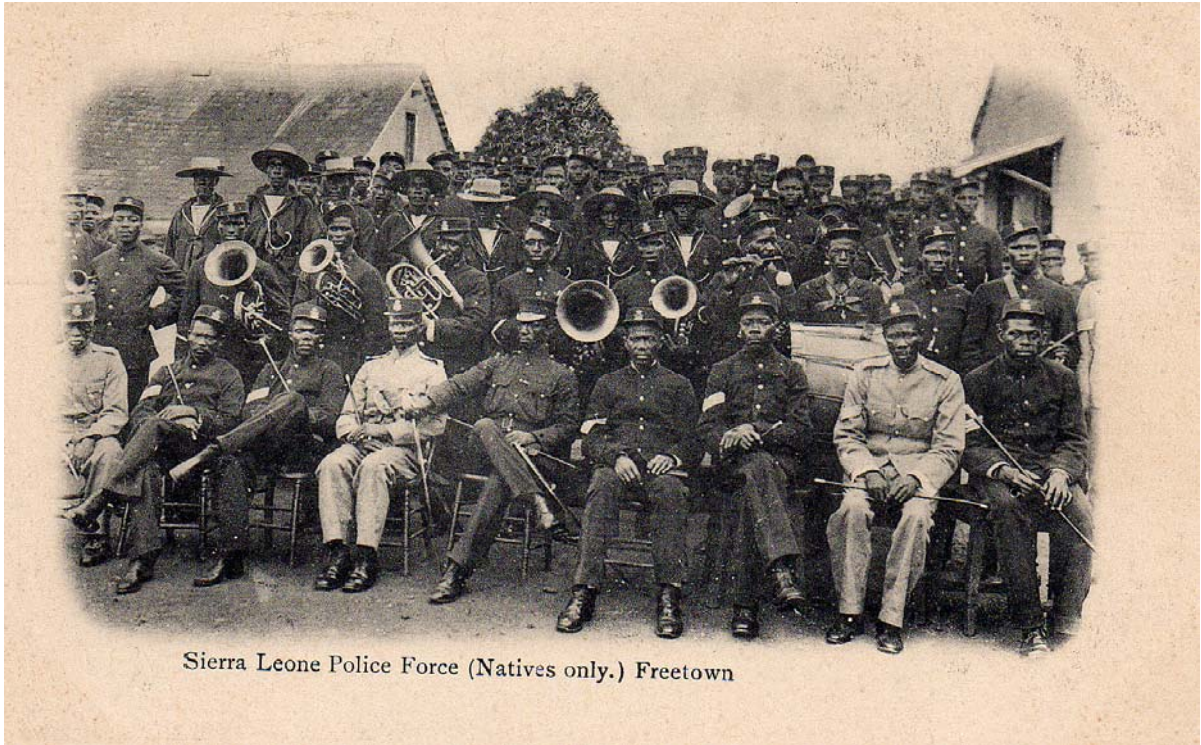


**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



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:

Tuesday, 20 July 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Premier News
Tuesday, 20 July 2010

Ivorian Government's Role in Rebel War Exposed

In his second week on the witness stand, a former Sierra Leonean rebel leader convicted of mass crimes during Sierra Leone's brutal 11-year conflict pointed away from Mr. Taylor when speaking about support provided to his forces by outsiders.

This week, the witness said that the Ivorian government helped his rebel group much more than the former Liberian president in terms of housing for his troops, and that West African leaders, not Mr. Taylor acting unilaterally decided to remove one of his rebel colleagues from Sierra Leone when he became a hindrance to the country's peace process.

On Monday, Issa Hassan Sesay, former interim leader of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group told the court that from 1996 to around 2000, the Ivorian government provided housing facilities where RUF leader Foday Sankoh was based together with his special adviser David Kallon and an RUF radio operator Memunatu Deen.

Prosecutors have long maintained that Mr. Taylor supported and controlled the RUF rebels during the conflict in Sierra Leone, including the provision of a guesthouse in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, sometime in the late 1990s. The guesthouse, according to prosecutors, served as a residence for RUF commanders when they brought diamonds to Liberia for Mr. Taylor to exchange for arms and ammunition. Mr. Taylor himself has admitted that sometime in the late 1990s, he indeed provided a guesthouse for the RUF in Monrovia - but it was solely to facilitate meetings geared towards bringing the conflict in Sierra Leone to an end. On Monday, Mr. Sesay testified that another government - the Ivorian one - was far more supportive to the RUF than Mr. Taylor was, at least in terms of places for his rebel forces to stay.

"Mr. Sesay, what was the distinction between the assistance provided by the Government of Ivory Coast to the RUF and the assistance provided by the Government of Liberia?" Mr. Taylor's lead defense lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, asked Mr. Sesay.

"Well, the Ivorian government provided housing for the RUF from 1996, so they provided accommodation for a longer period than the Liberian government," Mr. Sesay responded.

He said that the RUF maintained the residence in Ivory Coast until the year 2000.

When asked about which RUF officials occupied the house in Ivory Coast, Mr. Sesay explained that "it was Mr. Sankoh who was there, but when they arrested Mr. Sankoh in Nigeria, his adviser Pa Kallon was there.

"When they both [Sankoh and Kallon] returned to Sierra Leone in 1999, Mr. Sankoh's wife Josephine Tengbeh was there up to 2000 with some wounded soldiers," Mr. Sesay said.

Was there a radio operator based at those premises from 1996 to 2000?" Mr. Griffiths asked Mr. Sesay.

"It did not go up to 2000 - but up to 1998 an operator was there and it was that operator who left and moved to Liberia," Mr. Sesay said. "She was Memunatu Deen."

He added that Ms. Deen returned to Sierra Leone at some point in 1998, but that during the signing of the peace agreement between the Sierra Leonean government and the RUF in Togo in 1999, she was again deployed at the guesthouse in Abidjan. She was subsequently relocated to the RUF guesthouse in Monrovia, Mr. Sesay said.

As prosecutors have alleged that Mr. Taylor served as the main source of support for the RUF, defense lawyers now seek to establish that the RUF received assistance from several other sources, including foreign governments and West African peacekeepers. In Mr. Sesay's testimony, he has pointed out that the RUF did not receive assistance from Mr. Taylor but rather from officials in Burkina Faso who supplied them with arms and ammunition, and Ivory Coast where he says that housing was provided to the RUF leadership.

Mr. Sesay also on Monday testified about diamonds that were given to him in 1998 and which went missing while he was in Liberia. According to prosecutors, Mr. Sesay had taken these diamonds to Mr. Taylor in Liberia - an account which Mr. Sesay has denied. The former RUF leader has said that he was on transit in Liberia on his way to Burkina Faso where the diamonds were to be used to purchase arms and ammunition. He explained that RUF commander, Sam Bockarie, instructed Ms. Deen to pick up Mr. Sesay in Sierra Leone and take him to Liberia to meet RUF associate, Ibrahim Bah. Mr. Bah was to eventually take Mr. Sesay to Burkina Faso where the diamonds were to be delivered and arms and ammunition collected, Mr. Sesay said on Monday. (Prosecutors allege that Mr. Bah was a close associate of Mr. Taylor).

"She [Memunatu Deen] was instructed by Bockarie to come to Kailahun. The purpose for her to come when Bockarie called her was to take me to meet Ibrahim Bah. Ibrahim Bah was to meet us in Monrovia so that we can go to Burkina Faso," Mr. Sesay.

The diamonds eventually went missing in Monrovia and were never given to Mr. Bah, Mr. Sesay said.

Mr. Sesay refuted suggestions that the diamonds were to be

taken to Mr. Taylor, saying that if that were to be the case, he would not have taken several days carrying the diamonds in Monrovia when they eventually went missing.

On Tuesday, Mr. Sesay told the court that atrocities committed during the 11-year conflict in Sierra Leone increased when the RUF teamed up with disgruntled members of the Sierra Leone armed forces after a 1997 military coup in Sierra Leone.

In May 1997, members of the Sierra Leone army overthrew the elected government of Sierra Leone and formed the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC). The soldiers invited RUF rebels and together, the two groups formed a junta regime which ruled Sierra Leone from May 1997 to February 1998 when they were forcefully removed from the country's capital Freetown. As the two groups withdrew to the country's hinterland, they committed atrocities, culminating in the infamous rebel invasion of Freetown in January 1999, an attack which Mr. Sesay has said was undertaken solely by the AFRC with no RUF involvement. As Mr. Sesay continued his testimony on Tuesday, he told the court that the massive increase in the commission of atrocities took place because the RUF joined up with the AFRC. These atrocities, Mr. Sesay said were committed mainly by the AFRC soldiers who had themselves become a rebel faction in the country. Mr. Sesay explained to the court the kinds of crimes that were committed once the AFRC joined forces with the RUF.

"Well, we are talking about amputations, burning down of houses, killing of civilians, and those were the practices they did up to the time they entered Freetown," Mr. Sesay said.

"And when they entered Freetown, they continued the same practice, they captured people forcefully, they asked them to carry their loads for them, they amputated civilians, burned and killed civilians, burnt down police stations, killed police men, such things," he added.

Prosecutors alleged that the Mr. Taylor was involved in a joint criminal enterprise with both the RUF and AFRC rebels and that it was in pursuit of such a common plan that

the rebel forces invaded Freetown in January 1999. Prosecutors say that while the rebel forces were in Freetown in 1999, the high command of the RUF gave regular updates of their activities to Mr. Taylor and his Director of Special Security Services (SSS) Benjamin Yeaten, both of whom allegedly congratulated the rebels for their success in invading the country's capital. Mr. Taylor has denied these allegations. According to Mr. Sesay, when the AFRC forces invaded Freetown in 1999, they did not communicate with RUF commanders until they got into Freetown and needed extra help from the RUF, a help which Mr. Sesay said never came in.

The AFRC, Mr. Sesay said, held a grudge against the RUF leadership because they believed "we were responsible for their being driven from Freetown because they said if we had reinforced them, they wouldn't have driven them from Freetown."

On Wednesday, Mr. Sesay said that the decision to relocate a fellow RUF commander Sam Bockarie from Sierra Leone to Liberia in 1999 to promote peace in the war-torn country was not taken by Mr. Taylor alone, but rather by West African leaders acting jointly.

Mr. Sesay explained that after the RUF signed a peace agreement with the Sierra Leonean government in 1999, Mr. Bockarie, who was one of the rebels' top commanders, resisted disarmament. Mr. Bockarie then moved to Liberia. According to Mr. Sesay, a meeting in of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) leaders - including Nigeria's former president, Olusegun Obasanjo - decided it was best for Mr. Bockarie to stay in Liberia as he had become a hindrance to the peace process in Sierra Leone. This information was told to Mr. Sesay, he said, by the rebels' then leader, Mr. Sankoh.

In his statements to the Special Court on Wednesday, and consistent with his testimony since taking the witness stand last week, Mr. Sesay continued to distance Mr. Taylor from the Sierra Leonean rebel group - and from prosecution charges that the former Liberian president controlled the RUF and its actions.

"He [Sankoh] went to Monrovia and they had a meeting about Sam Bockarie's issue and that himself, president Taylor, president Obasanjo of Nigeria attended that meeting and they decided, because Sam Bockarie was an obstacle in respect of the Lome Peace Accord, Sam Bockarie should stay in Liberia and Foday Sankoh should implement the peace process," Mr. Sesay told the court.

"Was the decision for Sam Bockarie to go to Liberia made



by Charles Taylor alone as alleged by this prosecution?" Mr. Griffiths asked Mr. Sesay.

"No, it was not Charles Taylor's singular decision," Mr. Sesay responded. "Obasanjo was involved in the decision for Bockarie to stay in Monrovia, including Mr. Sankoh." When asked whether Mr. Bockarie had gone to Liberia "on the invitation of Charles Taylor," Mr. Sesay said "No."

"Sam Bockarie went there because he had a quarrel with Mr. Sankoh. He knew that what he was doing was a bad thing that is why he left to go to Liberia because he knew that if we had met him, we would have disciplined him," Mr. Sesay said.

Mr. Sesay also explained that when Mr. Sankoh was arrested in May 2000, after having ordered RUF fighters to abduct United Nations peacekeepers in Sierra Leone, Mr. Taylor sent his Director of Special Security Services (SSS) Benjamin Yeaten to invite Mr. Sesay to a meeting with him (Taylor) in Liberia. Mr. Sesay said that upon arriving in Monrovia, Mr. Taylor was very angry about the action of the RUF.

"He [Taylor] looked very angry," Mr. Sesay told the court. "He [Taylor] said if Foday Sankoh and I thought that we can fight the UN - He said that other people will be thinking now, like America and Britain, they will be

thinking now that this is the handy work of Charles Taylor but as long as God almighty knows that my hands are clean," Mr. Sesay continued.

He said Mr. Taylor informed him that he had received a mandate from West African leaders that "he should talk to the RUF to facilitate the release of the peacekeepers."

Prosecutors allege that since Mr. Taylor was in control of the RUF, he used his powers over the rebels to secure the release of the peacekeepers. Mr. Taylor has insisted that he was only acting on the instructions of other West African leaders. Mr. Sesay, as he testified on Wednesday, supported Mr. Taylor's position.

"Was he [Taylor] talking to you because he was in control of the RUF or because he had a mandate from the guarantors of the peace process," Mr. Griffiths asked Mr. Sesay.

"He talked to me because he had mandate from the guarantors but he was not controlling the RUF. RUF was under the control of Mr. Sankoh," Mr. Sesay said.

The witness said that his meeting with Mr. Taylor after the abduction of the UN peacekeepers was the first time he had spoken to or met with the former president.

On Thursday and Friday, the court took early adjournments because Mr. Taylor's defense counsel Mr. Griffiths was indisposed and could not be present in court. The court also commenced a one week judicial recess on Friday in accordance with the Special Court for Sierra Leone's judicial calendar which indicates that the court will observe a one week summer recess from July 19 to 23 2010.

Also in court on Friday, it was established that the much anticipated appearance by British Supermodel Naomi Campbell may no longer take place on the July 29, 2010. Prosecution counsel Nicholas Koumjian informed the judges that the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) had received a call from representatives of Ms. Campbell that they wanted her appearance to be rescheduled. The representatives are supposed to communicate with the court in writing indicating when exactly Ms. Campbell will appear. Mr. Koumjian, however, stated that the rescheduled date will not be very far from the originally scheduled July 29 date and that in any case, the testimonies of Ms. Campbell, along with her friend Mia Farrow and former agent Carole White will be heard before the former RUF leader Mr. Sesay concludes his testimony.

Concord Times
Tuesday, 20 July 2010

Naomi Campbell testimony deferred

By Alpha Sesay

As the trial of Charles Taylor moved into a week-long judicial recess, news broke that the much anticipated appearance by British supermodel, Naomi Campbell, may no longer take place at the end of July.

According to prosecution counsel, Nicholas Koumjian, Ms. Campbell planned to ask the judges to reschedule her appearance and would soon put her request in writing. The judges, however, could not rule on her request until after the judicial break.

Koumjian assured the court that Ms. Campbell's preferred date of testimony is close to the one indicated in

her subpoena (July 29) - and will likely take place before the current witness - former Sierra Leonean rebel leader, Issa Sesay - leaves the witness stand.

Testimony by actress Mia Farrow and Ms Campbell's former agent, Carole White, will likely follow that of the British supermodel. The three high profile women are set to testify about allegations that in 1997, while on a visit to South Africa - and after a star studded dinner hosted by former South African president Nelson Mandela - Taylor sent men to deliver rough diamonds to Ms. Campbell.

Prosecutors suggest that the rough diamonds were given to Taylor by

Sierra Leonean rebels in the hope that the former Liberian president would exchange them during his travels for arms and ammunition, which helped to fuel the rebels' crimes during the conflict. Taylor has denied the allegations.

In Issa Sesay's testimony as a witness for Taylor, the former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader has denied that his group gave diamonds to Taylor, and dismissed as false allegations that the former Liberian leader bought weapons and ammunition for RUF rebels.

Taylor's trial resumes on Monday, July 26, with Sesay again taking the witness stand.

Concord Times
Tuesday, 20 July 2010

Commentary

Diamonds may prove not to be a girl's best friend later this month as the model Naomi Campbell travels to the Hague to testify at the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. Instead, she will find herself in the hot seat in one of the court's most closely watched cases.

In 1997, Ms. Campbell allegedly received a diamond from Charles Taylor, former president of Liberia and current defendant in a trial accusing him of crimes against humanity and other serious offenses across the border in Sierra Leone during its civil war. Taylor allegedly armed Sierra Leonean rebels with weapons used in brutal attacks against civilians in exchange for diamonds mined in that atrocities-ridden country. Prosecutors seek Ms. Campbell's testimony, as well as testimony from actress Mia Farrow, to help establish the timing of Taylor's possession of Sierra Leonean diamonds.

Ms. Campbell's appearance at the tribunal in The Hague is noteworthy for more than her celebrity. The spotlight her appearance shines on the structure supporting the atrocities in

Naomi Campbell, Blood Diamonds, and the Big Picture

Sierra Leone is useful far beyond the Taylor trial. Too often, governments and people seeking an end to mass atrocities focus their attention only on the perpetrators of those crimes. Those who commit the crimes certainly deserve that attention -- but they aren't alone. Also deserving of attention and pressure are those governments, commercial entities, and people who enable the commission of those crimes, whether through helping to fund, arm, or otherwise support the perpetrators. Pressure on these actors, on whom the perpetrators depend for critical resources, is an underused tool that could change the dynamics of these horrific human rights abuses.

When Naomi Campbell takes the stand later this month, let's not lose sight of the real story: those who commit mass atrocities are sustained by the support of third parties, and these enablers, too, should be held to account.

Ms. Campbell's appearance at the tribunal in The Hague is noteworthy for more than her celebrity. The spotlight her appearance shines on the structure supporting the atrocities in Sierra Leone is useful far beyond the Taylor trial



Torch;light

Tuesday, 20 July 2010

Naomi Campbell testimony in Hague postponed

British supermodel Naomi Campbell has requested a later date for her testimony in the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, a spokesman for the Special Court for Sierra Leone said on Friday. Prosecutors want Campbell to testify over a "blood diamond" they allege Taylor gave her. She was due to appear in court July 29 and the spokesman said the new date "is not expected to be more than a days later."

The prosecution has said Campbell could provide material evidence to rebut Taylor's claims that he never possessed rough diamonds. They accuse Taylor of taking diamonds to South Africa to buy weapons, which he denies.

In January, they said that during a visit to South Africa in 1997 Taylor gave Campbell a large rough cut diamond after a dinner hosted by Nelson Mandela.



On trial in The Hague, Taylor denies all 11 charges of instigating murder, rape, mutilation, sexual slavery and conscription of child soldiers during wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in which more than 250,000 people were killed. (Reporting by Ben Berkowitz; editing by Philippa Fletcher)

Xinhua

Tuesday, 20 July 2010

U.S. Extends Sanction on Former Liberian President Taylor

Accusing the regime led by former Liberian president Charles Taylor of posing an "unusual and extraordinary threat" to U.S. foreign policy, the Obama administration on Monday declared an extension of sanctions on the regime for additional year.

In a letter to U.S. Congress, President Barack Obama told lawmakers that he has decided to make the national emergency on Taylor and his regime, which will be expired on July 22, continue in effect for another year. Under the national emergency, the administration could adopt a series of economic sanctions.

"The actions and policies of Charles Taylor and others have left a legacy of destruction that continues to undermine Liberia's transformation and recovery," said Obama, adding that the actions and policies "continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat " to U.S. foreign policy.

Charles Taylor, 62, served Liberia's president from 1997 to 2003. He is currently standing trial at the United Nations tribunal in The Hague. He is accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity for allegedly overseeing the brutal 10-year civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone.

News Blaze

Saturday, 17 July 2010

NCICC Statement International Justice Day

The National Coalition for the International Criminal Court (NCICC) today issued a statement, urging the government of Nepal to abide by the Rome Statute.

Today is World Day for International Justice, also called International Justice Day. It is celebrated throughout the world each year on July 17 to recognize the a system of international criminal justice. July 17th is the anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, the treaty that created the International Criminal Court. Each year, many groups promote international criminal justice on this day.

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE DAY: 17 July

On International Justice Day National Coalition for the ICC (NCICC) urges the Government of Nepal to Join the International Criminal Court by acceding to the Rome Statute

The world celebrates International Justice Day on 17 July to mark the anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Marking International Justice Day in Nepal is to remind the urgency that Nepal government has to reaffirm its commitment to ending the culture of impunity and to take necessary steps to accede to the Rome Statute of the ICC.

Twelve years ago on this date, the Rome Statute was adopted by an overwhelming vote of 120 states. Today, 111 states have joined the Court and the number has kept on growing. NCICC, in this context, is celebrating this day in solidarity with victims of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes.

While honoring the International Justice Day we recall the unanimous parliamentary motion adopted by the then House of Representatives four years ago on 25 July 2006 directing the Nepal Government to accede to the Statute. Since then, however, no major step has been noticed in order to accede to the Statute. When the Foreign Minister of former Government on 11 February 2009 tabled proposal for the accession of the Rome Statute to the cabinet, the move raised expectations that the government had been making some necessary arrangements for accession. But, discussions on the issue were postponed later and the process has been stalled.

Immediate accession to the ICC Statute could largely contribute to direct the overall legal and institutional mechanisms towards ending the culture of impunity and ensuring a safer future. Similarly, it could assist Nepal's constitution making process by providing a wider framework for justice as set forth in the treaty, and could also open up improved options for early review of legislations, undertaking necessary steps to adopt relevant laws and policies, and creating foundations for institutional procedures.

Considering Nepal's stand for Human Rights, peace, democracy and the rule of law, there is a prime need to join the ICC that presents international options for ending impunity at the national level. Therefore, NCICC urges the Government to forward the process immediately being guided by the unanimous direction of the House of Representatives in July 2006.

The Guardian

Monday, 19 July 2010

Imperfect justice: impact of Srebrenica war crimes court

New book finds that the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, has delivered an imperfect justice for the families of victims of the Srebrenica genocide

This week marks the 15th anniversary of Europe's worst atrocity since world war two: the Srebrenica massacre, in which some 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were slaughtered by Bosnian Serb soldiers.

Established by the UN two years before Srebrenica, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) failed to stop the massacre. Many observers questioned the court's value, seeing it as yet another symbol of the UN's ineffectiveness in stopping the violence in the Balkans. Later, the tribunal ruled that what happened in Srebrenica was a genocide, and many observers again derided the court, dismissing the ruling as cold comfort for Srebrenica's victims and their families. Yet the court's finding of genocide is in fact a major accomplishment in international justice. For those who lost loved ones in Srebrenica, international acknowledgment of genocide is deeply meaningful.

A new book, *That Someone Guilty Be Punished*, examines the impact of the ICTY in Bosnia, with particular attention to the voices and perceptions of Bosnians, including survivors of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Their opinions are nearly unanimous in citing the genocide ruling as one the court's greatest accomplishments. As one Bosnian woman said, "finding that what happened at Srebrenica was a genocide is the most important achievement and without the ICTY this would not be possible." Another Bosnian interviewed for the book added that solely "based on this decision, the ICTY is successful."

As *That Someone Guilty Be Punished* makes clear, the ICTY is often criticised in Bosnia—for its lengthy and complex hearings, for engaging in plea bargaining, for issuing sentences viewed by many as too short, and for providing a stage for the self-aggrandising antics of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. But in drawing a nuanced portrait of Bosnians' complex feelings about the court, author Diane F. Orentlicher, professor of law at American University, also finds that the ICTY has succeeded in many ways, including helping to identify and punish the guilty, maintain peace, promote reconciliation, and establish the truth of what happened as the former Yugoslavia imploded.

In accomplishing this, the ICTY accomplished something greater: it delivered justice. As experienced by those who were interviewed by Orentlicher, that justice may be imperfect. But it is, as one interviewee says, "some sort of satisfaction."

One indication of the ICTY's success is the number of courts established since its founding to address atrocities in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, Kosovo, and Timor Leste, as well as the creation of the International Criminal Court. *That Someone Guilty Be Punished* extracts lessons from the ICTY to inform these courts, as well as potential future tribunals. The book also serves as a companion to Orentlicher's earlier study of the impact of the ICTY in Serbia, *Shrinking the Space for Denial*.

This week's anniversary serves as a reminder that, despite the ICTY's many achievements, its work is incomplete: the man who led the Srebrenica massacre, Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic, is still at large. Every day he remains free, the ICTY's already imperfect justice becomes a bit more flawed

Euractiv.com

Monday, 19 July 2010

Serbia, Croatia to stop 'looking back at the past'

Croatian President Ivo Josipović paid his first official visit to Serbia yesterday (18 July), during which he discussed resolving all open issues with his host, Serbian President Boris Tadić. Josipović said the two countries, which were at war from 1991 to 1995, no had longer any reason to "look back at the past". BETA agency, EurActiv's partner in Serbia, reports.

Background

Croatia is poised to become the first country to join the EU since the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007. The country is expected to complete its accession negotiations in 2010 and to join in 2012 (EurActiv 06/11/09).

Existing tensions between Croatia and Serbia date back to the Croatian war of independence, fought between 1991 and 1995 between Croatian and Serbian forces. Commentators believe that atrocities have been committed on both sides during the fratricidal war.

Serbia filed a lawsuit for genocide against Croatia at the International Court of Justice on 4 January, a move seen as a response to the Croatian lawsuit. Serbs' claims of genocide refer to Operation Storm in 1995. Croatia's accusations are instead linked with Milosevic's ethnic cleansing.

In the immediate aftermath of Croatian presidential elections held on 10 January, the newly-elected president, Ivo Josipović, foresaw a potential halt to the war between Croatia and Serbia at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague regarding genocide accusations (EurActiv 12/01/10).

News:Serbia 'elephant in the room' at Croatia celebrationThe Croatian president was greeted in Belgrade by President Tadić in front of the Palace of Serbia, together with Serbian Prime Minister Ivica Dačić and Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Božidar Djelić.

After the welcoming ceremony, Josipović and Tadić started discussing ways of improving cooperation between the two countries and resolving open issues.

The two presidents told a news conference later on that they each supported the European integration of the other country.

The presidents also said the issues that were standing in the way of better relations between the two countries included those of refugee returns in Croatia, the border dispute between Serbia and Croatia, the question of missing persons, minority issues and the protection of minority rights.

As for Croatia's genocide suit and Serbia's counter genocide suit before the International Court of Justice (see 'Background'), Tadić said he supported an out-of-court settlement, while Josipović said the genocide charges were the result of certain problems and if they could be solved out of court, then "all the better for that".

Both presidents said they generally supported the creation of a regional football league featuring teams from both countries.

Later that day, Tadić and his Croatian counterpart Josipović attended a ceremony marking the 20th anniversary of the Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina, a party representing ethnic Croats from the province.

A central aspect of Serbia's policy is that every citizen has the right to his or her own identity and culture and no-one can question this in any way, Tadić said at the celebration.

The Croatian president remarked that "both countries on are the right road to solving their problems," saying that although not all of the problems of the past had been solved, "today's policies and today's governments" were not to be blamed for them.

"There is no longer any reason to look back at the past," Josipović said.

"Croatia is en route to the EU and this is our chief objective, but at the same time, it is in our strategic interest for every country in South-East Europe to get there as soon as possible, and we will aid this process using all the means at our disposal," Josipović said.

Josipovic thanked the Democratic Alliance of Croats in Vojvodina for its huge contribution to preserving the identity of Croats living there, adding that the local Croat community could expect assistance from both states in the future.

Vojvodina is an autonomous province of Serbia, located in the northern part of the country bordering Hungary and Croatia. Vojvodina prides itself on its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural identity and has a number of mechanisms for the promotion of minorities.