

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



The River Rokel bridge at Magburaka

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:

Monday, 20 October 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, 20 October 2008

Prosecutor Accuses Taylor Defence of Causing Hardship for Victim Witnesses

Special Court Prosecutor Stephen Rapp has accused Charles Taylor's Defence lawyers of causing hardship for victim witnesses by requiring the witnesses' presence in court when their evidence is not in dispute.

The Prosecutor's remarks come after Taylor's Lead Counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, said last week that the Prosecution was responsible for misusing the Special Court's money by bringing unnecessary witnesses from West Africa to The Hague for testimony in Taylor's trial.

"Victims of the atrocities are being forced to relive their horrors on the stand for one reason only—because, contrary to their public statements, the Defence is unwilling to agree that these crimes happened," responded Prosecutor Stephen Rapp.

At issue is the presentation of evidence of Sierra Leoneans who personally suffered atrocities, who are legally described as "crime base" witnesses.

Taylor is on trial on an 11-count indictment charging him with responsibility for Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes committed during the civil war in Sierra Leone. The crimes include murder, mutilation, rape, sexual slavery, forced labor, pillage, the use of child soldiers, and acts of terror and collective punishment.

To secure convictions, the Prosecution must link Taylor to the rebel groups in Sierra Leone. But the Prosecution must also prove that the rebel groups committed these crimes in each of the places alleged in the indictment and document the seriousness of the crimes.

That means presenting evidence of victims who suffered the crimes.

To save these victims from having to travel and testify, the Prosecution sought to submit the evidence of most in the form of sworn statements or testimony from prior trials, as is permitted by the rules of the Special Court.

"For months, the Defence has been saying publicly they did not dispute that these terrible crimes took place, only that their client was not responsible," said Rapp.

"They claimed they were quite happy for the statements of the victims to be submitted as evidence without any challenge. But in Court they've done just the opposite."

To date, the Prosecution applied to admit the evidence of 22 witnesses in writing. The Defence objected to them all.

The Trial Chamber has ruled that the Defence can require these witnesses' presence in court to submit to questioning. As a result, they have all been brought to The Hague and are in the process of giving their testimony.

The Prosecutor said that there about 20 additional witnesses whose evidence is necessary who will probably also have to come to The Hague, given the consistent demands of the Defence.

“Rape victims, amputees, former child soldiers and other victims are being made to travel from West Africa to The Hague to be questioned by the Defence,” said Rapp.

“The Defence lawyers challenged one woman on her description of being raped by rebels and seeing her friends and relatives' limbs chopped off. Had they not insisted on questioning her directly, she could have been spared this ordeal.”

Rapp was also sharply critical of Defence Counsel Griffiths for describing the evidence of Prosecution witnesses as “rubbish,” and for suggesting that it would not be offered by “proper lawyers.”

“This statement shows a profound lack of understanding of the kind of evidence that arises when there are massive violations of humanitarian law involving the murder, wounding, and displacement of large parts of the population, and the destruction of communities and institutions,” said Rapp.

“It also shows a lack of respect due to prosecution lawyers who are some of the most experienced in the world in presenting evidence of mass atrocity.”

The Prosecution originally sought to call 72 witnesses to the stand and submit 72 witnesses in writing.

After the Defence demanded to question each of the crime base witnesses, the Prosecution has reduced the number of both “linkage” and “crimes base” witnesses in order to ensure that the trial is concluded within the available time and resources.

The total number of Prosecution witnesses now expected to take the stand is about 95. So far 64 have testified.

“Many of them should not have had to come to The Hague, but they have done so and have testified to the horrors that they suffered with great courage.”

“They deserve appreciation and compassion, as well as renewed international efforts to provide them with reparation for their injuries.”

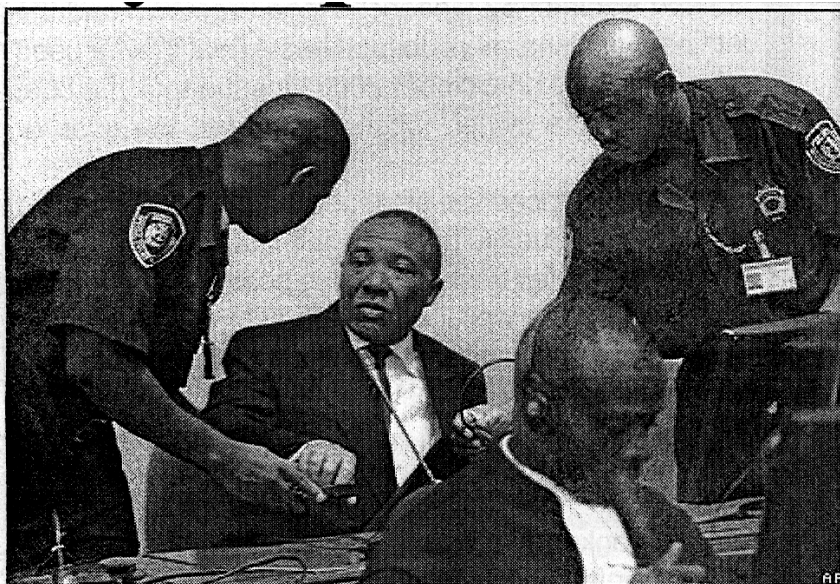
Rapp predicted that at the present rate of witness presentation, it would be possible to conclude testimony of all Prosecution witnesses before the Special Court's judicial recess begins on 12 December 2008.

#END

The News

Monday, 20 October 2008

Taylor Prosecutors Nearing Conclusion



By Joseph Cheeseman in The Hague

In what looks like nearing the end of their task, the prosecution in the trial of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor at the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Monday called on four witnesses to showcase "the brutality" of the rebel RUF and their AFRC allies.

James Kpungbu, 33-year-old prosecution witness told the judges that a rebel soldier laid his right hand on the root of a plum tree and chopped it off with an axe. Under direct examination, the 53rd witness said that he pleaded in vain for his left hand to be spared but that the rebels refused, and chopped the left hand which they left dangling.

He also testified to rape and the burning of houses in Freetown during the 1999 invasion of the city by the rebels. He recalled the effect the amputation had had on him, as well as a message the rebels gave him, to go and tell then President Tejan Kabba that they were

fighting for power.

He said he was still feeling pain where his vein was chopped off. On whether he had ever set eyes on Mr Taylor, James said he only saw him on television. He also told the court that he didn't know the name of the rebel group that invaded Freetown in 1999.

Defence Lawyer, Courtney Griffiths pressed the witness on why the prosecution gave him money for "lost wages" when prior to the war he did not work, and he's unable to work since the war ended. He replied saying, "They did not pay me."

The 54th witness, Samuel Komba had testified in another trial involving one Brima Kamara and others. S the prosecution only presented his previous testimonies to the defence team for cross-examination.

60-year-old Komba showed to the judge his amputated hand, his bruised side and his swollen right leg, saying a rebel commander known only as Savage brutalized him. He became furious and raised his right hand bearing four stiff fingers when Defence lawyer, Courtney Griffiths asked whether he could work with the hand. "I can't. I can't write any... I can't do anything with this... Look at it... This one and this one, are they the same? Twice, it was chopped with a cutlass, you see? And he also chopped me on my leg. He stabbed me also on my side, and he slapped me in the

face. And you see my eyes? I can't see clearly."

The third witness of the day, Sorie Kondeh said he was captured at age 20 years by a joint AFRC/RUF force in Yormadu, in the eastern Kono District. He told the court that

Bangali had ordered members of his Small Boys Unit to inscribe the letters AFRC/RUF on his chest alongside other civilian.

Another witness, a 26 year old Sierra Leonean woman named Yei Sundu Macaulay testified in

open session that she was raped by the rebels. She ended her testimony after she was briefly cross-examined by Taylor's lead lawyer Courtney Griffiths.

Courtesy BBC World Service Trust

Omar al-Bashir is accused over attacks on civilians in Darfur

JUDGES AT the International Criminal Court have asked for more evidence before deciding whether to issue an arrest warrant against Sudan's leader.

Chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo wants the court to issue a warrant for President Omar al-Bashir over war crimes allegedly committed in Darfur.

Mr Ocampo has been given a month to provide the additional evidence.

President Bashir has denied the charges and Sudan has been lobbying to get the investigation delayed.

The African Union and Arab League agree with Sudan that any arrest warrant could jeopardise the peace process in Darfur.

The UN estimates that up to 2.7 million people have been forced from their homes and some 300,000 have died during the five-year conflict in Sudan's western Darfur region.

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST BASHIR

Genocide: Killing members of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups; Causing these groups serious bodily or mental harm, Inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about these groups' physical destruction

Crimes against humanity: Murder, Extermination, Forcible transfer, Rape, Torture

War crimes: Attacks on civilians in Darfur, Pillaging towns and villages

Sudan's government has always denied charges that it armed the Janjaweed militias accused of widespread atrocities against civilians in Darfur.

Mr Bashir launched a new initiative to bring peace to Darfur on Thursday, however the rebels and opposition parties did not take part.

One rebel spokesman said the move was an attempt to "circumvent" international justice.

Mr Moreno Ocampo asked the ICC to issue an arrest warrant against Mr Bashir in July, saying there were grounds to believe Sudan's president bore criminal responsibility on 10 counts of genocide, crimes

against humanity and war crimes. But a statement from the ICC on Thursday said that prosecutors must submit "additional supporting materials in relation to some confidential aspects" of the prosecution's request by 17 November.

Alex de Waal, an expert on the Darfur conflict based in the US, said it was very unlikely that it would affect the likelihood that the pre-trial chamber would issue an arrest warrant against Mr Bashir.

"What is not in much doubt is that the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity will pass the rather low threshold... It's almost inconceivable that the pre-trial chamber would throw out those charges."

But he said the court may say there is insufficient evidence to bring "credible charges" of genocide against the Sudanese president.

Black African rebels took up arms in 2003, accusing Mr Bashir's Arab-dominated government of ignoring the region.

He blames the violence on the rebels and says the extent of the suffering has been exaggerated by the West for political reasons.



Omar al-Bashir is accused over attacks on civilians in Darfur

"Liberia On Trial, Not Taylor"

...Defense Lawyer Says

A member of former President Charles Taylor's defense team says it is Liberia that is being put on trial and not Mr. Taylor.

In an interview at the end of a news conference organized by Taylor's defense team at the St. Theresa Convent in Monrovia, Cllr. Supuwood said if Taylor is found guilty of the charges brought against him it would be Liberia that would

likely pay reparation to the families of the victims in Sierra Leone.

He made reference to Libya paying reparation to victims or family members for a plane that was hijacked by its nationals.

Although Cllr. Supuwood said the case involving Taylor was different, he said Taylor can't pay reparation if he is found guilty because he was president

of Liberia when he was indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

He indicated that Taylor doesn't have money to pay reparation to victims of the Sierra Leone war.

Explaining why he joined the Taylor's defense team, Cllr. Supuwood, a former critic of Taylor said he joined the team because he believes it was Liberia that is being tried at The Hague and not the former president.

At the same time, Cllr. Supuwood said

Cont'd on page 3



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor

LIBERIA ON TRIAL

Taylor never committed any crime in Sierra Leone and that he was not guilty of charges brought against him.

"We insist that he was not responsible for the crimes committed in Sierra Leone. The charges and the trial are heavily politically motivated," he said.

He noted that prosecution witnesses who have taken the stand were yet to say they saw Mr. Taylor in Sierra Leone.

Cllr. Supuwood said former President Taylor is being accused for what other people did in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Taylor is on trial in The Hague for war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed during the Sierra Leonean civil war.

Meanwhile, a legal advisor to the Taylor defense team Cllr. Lansana K. Kamara has disclosed that more Sierra Leoneans have agreed to testify for the former Liberian president.

Although Cllr. Kamara did not provide the exact number of witnesses recruited in Sierra Leone, he said they are more than the Liberians who could testify for Taylor.

Making reference to the number of Liberians who testified against Mr. Taylor, Cllr. Kamara said many Sierra Leoneans were against the trial of the former Liberian president in view of the willingness to provide testimony in his favor.

He disclosed that Taylor's defense team is still having difficulties in recruiting witnesses for its client due to the travel ban and asset freeze on some associates and family members of the former president.

Cllr. Kamara said although the travel ban on some Liberians willing to testify for Mr. Taylor will be suspended to allow them travel to The Hague but wonders what happens after their testimonies.

He indicated that defense team targeted three areas for recruitment of witnesses for the accused president which included Sierra Leone, the alleged crime scene, Liberia and the international community.

The News (Liberia)
Monday, 20 October 2008

Allow War Crimes Court Advocates Audience

Security personnel of the United Nations Mission in Liberia along with local police officers yesterday impeded an officially authorized and peacefully organized demonstration by a group known as Forum for the Establishment of War Crimes Court in Liberia.

The war crimes court advocates had sought and were granted permission by the Liberian government to stage a peaceful march in solidarity for the establishment of a war crimes court, following years of civil wars in which many persons including children were murdered under gruesome circumstances and recruited as soldiers.

Whether the government had a change of mind at the eleventh hour of the peaceful march was not known; authorities at the police headquarters and at the Justice Ministry declined to comment on why the demonstration was impeded to the extent that the demonstrators had to call off their march.

The peaceful demonstrators had intended to converge at the Monrovia City Hall, opposite the UN headquarters to present their statement followed by an onward march to the American Embassy.

Prior to yesterday's incident, there had been controversy over the call for a war crimes court in Liberia, with some holding the view that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) be given a chance to complete its public hearings of witnesses in the civil crisis, an exercise in which the TRC is expected to submit recommendations at the end of the hearings.

There are others who are against the establishment of a war crimes court for fear that such a court would create a destabilizing effect for the country just emerging out of a protracted civil war.

Whatever weight these competing views may have, it is imperative within a democratic setting that proponents of such competing views are allowed to explore all peaceful means possible as required by law to further advance their stance.

Whether the call for a war crimes court for Liberia is an unpopular call or not, the United Nations including other foreign partners and the Liberian government should create space for such a call.

But to create an impediment to the extent that the views for a war crimes court would be suppressed by means of armed security tactics as was witnessed on Wednesday is unacceptable.

The Informer
Friday, 17 October 2008

UN To Relax Travel Ban On Taylor's Witnesses

By: Kennedy L. Yankien

It has been disclosed in Monrovia that the United Nations Security Council is willing to relax travel ban placed on former president Taylor's close associates who have agreed to testify on his behalf at the Sierra Leone court sitting in The Hague.

The Outreach and Public Affairs coordinator at the Special Court, Patrick Fatoma made the disclosure recently at the St. Theresa Covenant School on Randall Street, at a one

day training of civil society and media representatives in Liberia.

The training organized by the Outreach section of the court in collaboration with the Outreach Secretariat of Liberia, according to its organizer was held as a means to link the people of the two countries on development unfolding at the court both in Sierra Leone and The Hague.

According to the Outreach coordinator, the lifting of the travel ban on Taylor's Witnesses is intended to give the former

president standing trial for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity a free and fair trial.

Former president Charles Taylor is among those accused by the Special Court of allegedly bearing the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in the decade long civil conflict in Sierra Leone which started in March 1991.

He is charged with 11-count charges including rape, murder, torture among others but had since denied committing

such crimes in the sisterly Republic of Sierra Leone.

The United Nations Security Council in 2001 placed a travel ban on the former president Taylor and his close associates for their alleged role in diamond trade in Sierra Leone but many Liberians termed the ban as unjust because none of the accused has ever been tried and found guilty of the allegation.

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
17 October 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

Brumskine Denies “Premature” Departure of ECOMOG Due to SOFA

(The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst, Heritage)

- The Liberty Party political leader, Counsellor Charles Brumskine has expressed regret for the manner in which the advocacy of the 1994 Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with West African Intervention Force (ECOMOG) was handled. Testifying Thursday at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC) ongoing Thematic and Institutional Inquiry Public Hearing on the Contemporary History of the Conflict in Monrovia, Counsellor Brumskine dismissed allegation that the status of forces agreement between the transitional government and West African leaders prompted the premature departure of ECOMOG from Liberia following the 1997 elections.
- He said the SOFA was endorsed by all member states of ECOWAS, the United Nations, the United States Government and members of the LNTG. The media reports that issue of the status of forces agreement triggered hot exchanges yesterday between Brumskine and TRC Commissioner John Stewart who asked string of questions that may have annoyed the politician who threatened to walk out of the hearing.

CEO Accused of Illegally Requesting Money from Teachers ...In Nimba County

(The News)

- The News newspaper reports that the Nimba County Education Officer, George Wuo has been accused of forcibly requesting teachers in the county to surrender L\$400 each from their salaries every month. Mr. Wuo is alleged to be engaged in this illegal act in Zoe-Geh District, Nimba County. Sources who spoke on condition of anonymity disclosed that the CEO has threatened to demote or dismiss any principal or teacher who refused to comply with his decision to surrender LD\$400 from their salary each month. According to the sources, the Nimba County CEO recently demoted and dismissed several principals and teachers who refused to succumb to the scheme.
- The principal of a public school in Buu-Yar Clan was recently demoted, while several teachers were dismissed because they refused to honor the CEO’s request to surrender their money to him. When contacted, Mr. Wuo refuted the allegations and refused to comment further, saying “you can publish whatever information you have in your possession”. Meanwhile, principals and teachers in the district are calling on authorities at the Ministry of Education to intervene in the situation because Mr. Wuo has not given any reason for the collection.

Two Junior Ministers Fired over 'Fraudulent Act

(The Informer)

- Two more officials of government have been relieved of their positions for their alleged involvement in a possible fraudulent act. The dismissed officials are Mr. Martin M. Sheriff, Assistant Minister for Administration, Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and Mr. Stephen Kaizer, Acting Deputy Minister for Administration, Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs.
- An Executive Mansion release says Mr. Sheriff was relieved of his position by President Johnson Sirleaf due to a possible fraudulent act which implicates the former Assistant Minister in the acquisition of a bus from a local business entity, known as Fancy Trading, Inc. The Ministry of Justice has been directed to determine whether Mr. Sheriff's role in the fraudulent transaction warrants prosecution.
- The President also relieved the Acting Deputy Planning Minister for Administration of his position for the lack of leadership he demonstrated in the actions of Assistant Minister, Sheriff. Meanwhile, President Sirleaf has appointed Madam Lucia Herbert to act as superintendent of Bong following the suspension of Superintendent Rennie Jackson. Mr Jackson was suspended Wednesday for his role in certain financial malpractices in the use of the county's development funds is resolved.

Opposition Figure Demands Johnson Sirleaf's Appearance at TRC

(The Analyst, The News)

- A prominent politician has differed with individuals and witnesses who had expressed opposition to the appearance of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). In a statement read at the TRC Thursday, Cllr. Charles Brumskine demanded that President Sirleaf publicly appear before the Commission to use the public forum to appeal to Liberians to reconcile their differences. He said the appeal for reconciliation by President Johnson Sirleaf must be made from the foundation of truth.
- It can be recalled that some individuals and witnesses including former Army Captain Edward Slinger opposed the president's appearance, saying it would scare investors. Cllr. Brumskine said although some Liberians have valid reasons why the President should not appear, however, he believes that her appearance could assist the reconciliation process.

Senate in Contradictory Claims over Withdrawal of US\$178,000

(Heritage, The Parrot, National Chronicle)

- The National Chronicle reports that the Liberian Senate is grappling with new allegations that those of its members who led the revolt against "suspended" President Pro-temp Isaac Nyenabo were allegedly involved in financial discrepancies in the wake of the leadership struggle. The "Acting" Senate Pro-Temp, Lahai Lassanah is at the centre of the discrepancy, benefitting from a budgetary transfer of more than US\$178,000 for the use of his office.
- The money constitutes 42% of the budget of the Office of the Senate Pro-temp to be used within the five months suspension of Senator Nyenabo. In an interview with the Inquirer recently, Senator Lassanah said the Senate approved the amount saying it was not done unilaterally. But Vice President, Joseph Boakai has denied forming part of any budget preparation for the office of the Acting President Pro-tempore of the Liberia Senate. According to him he has never part of a group that constituted a committee to prepare a budget for that office.

Radio Summary

Star Radio *(News culled today from website at 9:00 pm)*

Anti-corruption axe swings over Planning Ministry

- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has dismissed two officials at the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs.
- The two officials dismissed by the President include Steven Kaizar, Acting Deputy Minister for planning and Assistant Minister for Administration Martin Sheriff.
- Information Minister Lawrence Bropleh said Mr. Kaizar was dismissed for his alleged failure to exercise oversight responsibility of people who were found in corrupt practices.
- Dr. Bropleh said Mr. Sheriff was also dismissed for bogus purchase of a bus for the ministry in the tone forty-four thousand US Dollars.
- The Information Ministry boss said the two dismissed officials have been forwarded to the Justice Ministry for prosecution.
- Dr. Bropleh disclosed the business entity from which the bus was dubiously purchased, Fancy Trading Incorporated has also been forwarded to the Justice Ministry.
- The Information Minister also said Police would immediately begin arresting those using siren in the country other than the President and Vice President.
- Minister Bropleh said by law only the President and the Vice President are allowed to move with siren.
- Dr. Bropleh said it has been observed that non-authorized individuals are constantly using siren to bypass traffics at the embarrassment of commuters.
- He told a news conference government has put a stop to people, regardless of the status who use opposite lines during traffic jam.
- Minister Bropleh called on motorists to move ahead of time or remain patient in case of any traffic jam.

Liberia allocates US\$80,000 to equip technical institutions

- The Education Ministry has disclosed that government has allocated US\$80,000 to equip vocational and technical institutions in the country.
- Assistant Minister for Vocational and Technical Education told Star Radio the money is intended to purchase tools and other essentials for five institutions.
- Mr. Yonton Kesseley said the institutions include the Zwedru and Voinjama Multilateral Schools.
- According to Mr. Yonton, vocational and technical institutions in the country have not benefited from government's allotment for the past two years.
- He noted that the allotment would go a long way in making the institutions more viable and responsive.
- Assistant Minister Yonton further said plans are under way to reactivate vocational and technical institutions that have been dormant over the years.

The Analyst (Liberia)

Sunday, 19 October 2008

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's TRC Appearance!

Edward Slangar says it would erode public trust

The Thematic Public Hearings being conducted by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as part of efforts to reconcile and unite the Liberian people is winding to a close with a million-dollar question on the public's lip: "Will President Sirleaf appear to testify her role in the Liberian conflict as the Commission hinted recently she would?"

There is overriding suggestion that the President should appear, "for the sake of peace". But testifying his own role in the Liberian conflict early this week, former army General Edward N. Slangar says the President should not appear.

With The Analyst Staff Writer and reporter J. Nathaniel Daygbor, compiled this report.

Former AFL general, Edward N. Slangar, told the TRC Thematic Hearings that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf should not be invited to testify her role before the Commission.

The AFL general, Tuesday this week, broached the issue, which many say promises to be the subject of intense national debate and heart-searching in coming days, while testifying his own role in the Liberian conflict.

Hush-hush street discussion since her scheduled appearance date passed last month with comments from neither the Executive Mansion nor the TRC.

But Mr. Slangar, also a former aide to slain President Samuel K. Doe, warned that the impact of the President's appearance before what seems a preliminary legal inquiry would be grave on the nation's peace, reconciliation, and reconstruction efforts.

He did not elaborate. But he said besides that the cross-examination of the President of Liberia outside the prescription of the Constitution of Liberia would prompt the international community to consider the appearance as a deliberate departure from the principles of the rule of law and dismiss the Liberian people as "unserious".

He, however, said what the law says and what the international community may say were not the only foreseeable negatives that were likely to mar the President's appearance and leave troubling aftereffects.

In a likely scenario where a group of planted troublemakers deemed the President not saying what they wanted to hear and decided to boo her, he said, that would not only be embarrassing but that it would also erode the President's image and eventually the credibility of her administration.

"If that happens, Liberians could resist their elected leader and that lost of confidence and trust could cause investors not come to the country," he said.

He said Liberia has just began building its culture of genuine democracy and that therefore anything that works against the law and public confidence in the government would be nationally devastating.

According to him, those who are calling for the appearance of the President before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) were only doing so because of mere propaganda, obsession with settling old scores, and cheap politics that will not lead the country forward but stunted or backwards. He said such detractors from the nation's forward-march agenda will not succeed because Liberians were tired of petty bickering and dangerous politics borne of jealousy.

That aside, the former AFL general, who said he was ready to play a wholesome role in the peace process, said those calling for war crime court has no good intention for the country.

He said Liberians were not ready for legal tussles and endless litigations over their two-decade long socio-political and economic mishap and national catastrophe. If anything, he said, they wanted to put the past behind them quickly through national dialogue and forgiveness in order to chart a new course of unity and stability.

“Our society does not need it. It will open old wounds that the court will not heal,” he said.

According to him, those advocating the creation of war crime court were playboys who do not know the geneses of the country's political, economic, and war conflicts.

Meanwhile, the former AFL retired General has added his voice to those of many Liberians in favor of the removal of the travel restrictions imposed on several Liberians.

He called on the Unity Party-led government not to give credence to international calls to freeze the properties of former government officials of the Charles Taylor regime, noting that it has propensity to discourage others from building for fear that their assets could be seized at the end of the day.

President Sirleaf had been in the political opposition since the True Whig Party, under the rule of which she served as finance minister, was toppled in a bloody coup d'etat of April 1980 and since she abandoned the senatorial seat she won in the presidential and parliamentary elections of 1985.

Some say her long time in the opposition, which was short-circuited by a violent civil war in 1989 and again between 1998 and 2003, and her alleged ties with Charles Taylor's NPFL, make her a fair suspect for what actually went wrong.

Her testimonies, they say, will therefore go a long way to address the issue of what actually went wrong. But not all agree, though, and the controversy rages to the moment.

The Christian Science Monitor

Monday, 20 October 2008

First justice, then peace in Sudan

An international warrant for Omar al-Bashir, accused of genocide in Darfur, could speed his political demise.

By Ana Uzelac

The Hague - For almost two decades, Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir has waged foul wars on ethnic groups within his country that happened to live on oil- or mineral-rich land. Today, the international community is finally close to holding him accountable. Though it could make for a rocky transition, it is the key to peace.

Even before Darfur, aerial bombing, murder, and rape seemed to be his government's tools for settling scores with the mainly African Christians of southern Sudan. In that 23-year war for resource control, just under 2 million people died as a result of mass violence.

In 2005, the US brokered a peace deal that divided control of the oil fields. But it did not address the crimes committed. And by the time it was signed, Mr. Bashir was back to the same, in Darfur.

This summer, however, things changed. The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, requested an arrest warrant against Bashir on suspicion of genocide. A flood of worst-case predictions followed. A fear that the situation will worsen has increased. And so have worries about chances for any meaningful peace process.

The pressure is now mounting on the United Nations Security Council to defer the ICC proceedings – as soon as this month – before the court judges decide the fate of the warrant request. This political emergency brake was meant to be used only when the interests of justice and peace collide.

Bashir is clearly doing his best to convince the world that the call for his arrest will indeed collide with peace in Darfur. He recently sent a diplomatic mission to Security Council member states, promising renewed peace and possible deals. Back home, his troops attacked Darfur's largest refugee camp, killing dozens.

In fact, the most serious threat to peace and security in Sudan is Bashir himself. His regime has the power to make the Darfurians' life worse yet. It can also endanger international peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, upset the fragile peace in the south, and continue to destabilize its neighbor, Chad. In the past, Khartoum has often used its power in unsettling ways – and many believe that it would not hesitate to do it again.

But is pursuing the course of justice the right answer to this threat? Within the Security Council, divisions run deep on that question. About half of member states support a deferral, and many others still sit carefully on the fence.

In order to credibly pull the brake on justice, the Security Council would have to promptly ensure real peace in Darfur, including a military force strong enough to back it up. Such a deal would have to offer the victims immediate security and relief. It would need to tackle the division of power and natural resources in order to create sustainable peace. And this time it would also have to address past crimes and guarantee that the country's rulers won't resort to genocide again.

It is doubtful whether Bashir would be ready to accept such terms. But anything less ambitious would undermine not only the ICC, but also the credibility of the member states that would allow it.

A better option is to simply let the ICC do its job – while ensuring that the innocent in Darfur do not suffer the consequences of the regime's reaction to such a principled stand.

As the third sitting head of state to be suspected or indicted for war crimes, Bashir is the real watershed in the history of international justice. Allowing the court to decide on the issue of his criminal responsibility would mean that the two previous cases – Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and Liberia's President Charles Taylor – were not oddities, but part of a genuine paradigm shift.

It would make international justice a player and introduce new checks and balances into the unruly world of international relations. Equally important, this shift would send a clear message that genocide has become unforgivable.

There might also be some real political benefits in letting justice run its course. An international arrest warrant could erode Bashir's authority at home and abroad and speed up his political demise. The war crimes indictment surely hastened Mr. Milosevic's fall from power: It made him useless as an international negotiator.

There is obviously no guarantee that in the case of Bashir the consequences would be as quick and beneficial. Sudan is a large, oil-rich state with needy and influential friends. But an arrest warrant would surely make some of his allies wonder about the wisdom of doing business with a fugitive.

And, yes, the prospect of an eventual change at the top of such a volatile country may seem unsettling. But the only stability under Bashir that Sudan has known is the one of repression, recurring armed conflict, and mass murder. The Sudanese president may have been moderately cooperative on the war on terror, but the price has been allowing him to terrorize others. His country and the millions of its war-tired citizens deserve a different future. And the US deserves a better ally.

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