

**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:

Thursday, 20 October 2011

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

Local News

RUF, CDF Prisoners May Return Home / <i>Exclusive</i>	Page 3
MRU Youths Interact on Taylor Trial / <i>Concord Times</i>	Page 4
Gender-Based Violence Hinders Development / <i>Premier News</i>	Pages 5-6

International News

Talk of Taylor's Return Sparks Sharp Responses From U.S. Congressmen / <i>Allafrica.com</i>	Pages 7-8
---	-----------

Exclusive

Thursday, 20 October 2011

RUF, CDF Prisoners **May Return Home**

By Foday Jalloh

Prominent human rights lawyer in Sierra Leone, Melron Nicol-Wilson, has added voice to the call for the transfer of eight Special Court for Sierra Leone's prisoners from Rwanda prison to Sierra Leone. Lawyer Wilson noted that the government of Sierra Leone has to intervene in the matter and see to it that the Special Court for Sierra Leone either provides security for the prison facility, rehabilitate the Pademba Road prison to international standard or transfer the prisoners to a neighboring country.

Speaking to this press recently, lawyer Melron Nicol-Wilson explained that the concerns raised by the war crime prisoners are genuine and legitimate, as it falls outside the required international provisions for them. He called on the prisoners to continue expressing their grievances of maltreatment through the Special Court.

The human rights lawyer further promised to visit the prisoners in Rwanda and

see for himself firsthand to ascertain the claims raised by these prisoners. The young lawyer urged President Koroma to look into the issue as it has to do with Sierra Leoneans undergoing abuse in another nation. He added that recent jail break will serve as an issue but advised that arrangement be made within West Africa to lower the cost of care for them in Rwanda.

The eight Sierra Leoneans war criminals are currently serving long jail terms at Mpanga prisons facility in Rwanda. Some of the concerns raised by these war prisoners include, poor food, lack of access to facilities like education, medical, clothing, television, airtime, among others. They also cited language barriers and persistent assault committed including other human rights' abuses.

Meanwhile, the office of the Ombudsman has acknowledged receipt of the complaint letter from the prisoners but noted that the case falls outside his mandate.

[Note: Lawyer Melron Nicol-Wilson denies that he made any such statement to the Exclusive and states that he will demand a retraction.]

MRU youths interact on Taylor trial

By Victoria Saffa

The Mano River Union youth parliament for peace and development has organised a symposium with the theme: 'Young People Active in the Charles Taylor trial'. According to the Speaker of the MRU youth parliament, Donald Kalokoh, the union is supported by the Special Court for Sierra Leone and it aims at sensitizing colleagues in the region about the trial of former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, who was indicted on eleven counts for war crimes.

Giving an overview of the program, the administrative assistant in the youth parliament, Komrabai Egerton Dumbuya said the theme of the symposium 'Young People Active in the Charles Taylor trial' which is currently going on in the Hague, Holland was to actually hear views and opinions of youths that suffered in the brutal civil and political war that took place

some years ago.

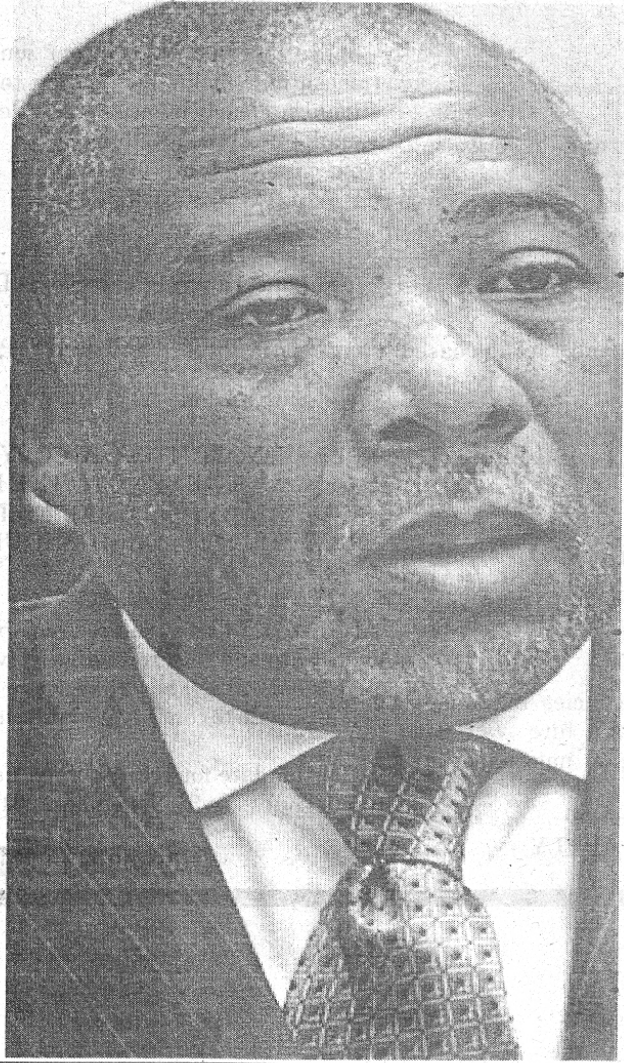
He said the objective of the interactive forum was to let young people have their say on issues affecting our lives, their growth and sustainability in the society.

In her keynote address, the deputy commissioner of the national youth commission, Madam Aminata Sillah congratulated the special court for its assistance towards the war in the country adding that the presence of the court has reduced the number of dangerous people in the society.

She also added that young people should be educated and given opportunity to know about the Charles Taylor trial adding that as a commission, they are ready to support youths, if only they are ready to learn.

President of the national youth coalition, Ishmail Al-Sankoh Conteh said young people should not participate in political fighting, adding that the 1992 war was full with

young people who helped destroy the country. He added that the former Sierra Leonean President Dr. Tejan Kabba has done well in calling on the United Nations to send a court to the country to sentence those who were part of the civil war.



Gender-based Violence Hinders Development -Human Rights Activist

“Gender-based violence (GBV) or domestic violence is one of the greatest hazards to development worldwide.”

By Alpha Bedoh Kamara

The Director of Campaign for Human Rights and Development Sierra Leone, Abdul Fatoma made this statement when contacted over the weekend.

He said though it is of high priority for many development organizations and the United Nations, it continues to occur in Sierra Leone at an increasing rate, the most common being battering, rape and beatings.

“Gender-based violence cuts across culture, class, caste, religion and location no one is immune to its devastation. It incapacitates families and partnerships and the ability for many to relate to themselves or others with love, compassion or respect,” he said, adding

that it spreads fear, pain and self-loathing - inhibiting the basic rights of adults and children alike.

“Gender-based violence restricts the achievement of development, peace, and freedom. As such, it is a major contributor to global poverty in both the income and human definitions of the term,” he said.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (constituting the International Bill of Rights), are international instruments that uphold the

Continued page 6

Gender-based Violence Hinders Development

From page 4

principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex.

The Chairperson of the Commission, Edward Sam, said during the launching of the 2010 Human Rights Report that though the HRCSL commends the efforts of government for improving the right to health of women, access to justice continues to be a major challenge for many due to lack of trust and confidence in the court system, bureaucracy, intimidation of victims and witnesses, inability to fulfill bail conditions, infrequent court sittings (especially in the regions), and persistent adjournments.

He said the interpretation of "Fair hearing within a reasonable time" as contained in Section 23(1) of the 1991 Constitution still needs further clarification by the court.

"The Commission believes this lack of judicial guidance as to what constitutes 'Fair hearing within a reasonable time' contributes to lengthy delays in criminal trials across the country," he said.

"Women, juveniles and people with disabilities are the most affected," he said.

According to Fatoma, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, promotes gender equality in access to social and economic opportunities and political power.

He said as the first international treaty dealing explicitly with women's rights, it provides for the elimination of discrimination against women in all the

fields, in particular the political, social, economic and cultural fields, through a range of legal and policy interventions.

"Compared with women, men, especially young men, are overwhelmingly involved in all types of violence. It is mostly men who commit acts of personal violence against women and girls, as well as towards other men and boys," he said, adding that men are also most often implicated in other types of "organized" or institutional violence as victims or perpetrators.

He said ending gender-based violence in Sierra Leone requires a cohesive combination of effective laws, social policies and fundamental transformation of the beliefs and practices of institutions and individuals.

He said historically violence prevention work has been driven by and focused on women.

"Women still need to be centre stage in terms of empowerment, equality and safety. Yet in terms of violence prevention, men have a responsibility to play a much greater role. Men are key power brokers, decision makers and change makers and men are the ones most implicated in gender-based violence," he said, adding that laws and policies mean little without institutions/organisations and cultural contexts as enabling environments.

He also stated that in the three Gender Bills, laws (inheritance and property ownership) and, setting percentages for women in governing bodies, needs to be strengthened and enforced.

Talk of Taylor's Return Sparks Sharp Responses From U.S. Congressmen

Washington, DC — Two influential members of the U.S. Congress have warned that a return to Liberia by former president Charles Taylor would have far-reaching consequences and seriously undermine bilateral relations.

One suggested he would support cutting U.S. aid if Taylor was allowed back into political life in Liberia.

Republican Ed Royce from California, who chairs the House Terrorism, Non-proliferation and Trade Subcommittee, and Democrat Jesse Jackson, Jr. from Illinois - both long-time supporters of Liberia - reacted to comments by presidential contender Winston Tubman saying Taylor would be free to come home if he is acquitted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone where he is now facing war crimes charges.

Tubman came in second in last week's voting and faces incumbent president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in a run off on November 8.

Speaking to London's Independent newspaper before the voting, Tubman said if Taylor is not convicted "he could come back home" and "re-enter politics". He refused to dismiss the possibility of giving Taylor a government post.

He said Jewel Howard Taylor, Taylor's former wife who serves in Liberia's Senate and is backing Tubman, would be part of his administration if he wins.

Royce, a long-serving member of the House Subcommittee on Africa, which he chaired from 1997 to 2005 during the height of the Liberian civil war, reacted strongly to Tubman on Tuesday on his blog. "Tubman's playing with fire - no, make that dealing with the Devil," Foreign assistance provides about 16 percent of Liberia's budget, Royce said, "and for my money, that spigot is turned off" if Taylor returns.

Royce welcome the "orderly and peaceful" first round of voting and commended Sirleaf "as a steady hand who has put her life on the line in trying to lift-up this desperate country." But he said he is "concerned about what's next."

Jackson's reaction was similar. "The return of a war criminal, especially to a role in government," Jackson said in a statement also released on Tuesday, "has the potential to completely reverse the progress Liberia has made to recover from civil war.

"As a nation with a vested interest in the continued growth and success of Liberia and the stabilizing role it plays in the region, we hope that our efforts to bring Charles Taylor to justice were not in vain," Jackson said.



Executive Mansion President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf with Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. (R-Illinois)

The stakes for Liberia are high. According to the State Department, the United States has contributed more than \$1 billion in foreign assistance to Liberia since the end of the civil war in 2003 and another \$1 billion to support the United Nations Mission in Liberia. For the fiscal year that ended on September 30, U.S. assistance to Liberia totaled nearly \$230 million.

The largest share of the aid package, which is expected to decline somewhat this year due to Congressional budget cuts, is spent on education, health and child survival programs, while peace and security and governance activities make up most of the rest.

At least as important is the backing Liberia receives from the U.S. military through Africom - the Africa Command, which has 64 mentors providing support for the rebuilding of Liberia's national army and assistance with reactivation of Liberia's Coast Guard.