

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



A small boy armed with his home made “rubber fack” (“catapult” or “slingshot”) attends the Principal Defender’s Outreach in Kambia [November 2005]

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as at:

Friday, 21 April 2006

The press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Concord Times

21 April 2006

Are We Safe With Taylor in Our Midst?

BLUNT TALK

With Sahr Musa Yamba

The issue of trying Charles Taylor in Freetown is fast growing into a security hot potato for Sierra Leone.

The UN Security Council is yet to finally mandate the Special Court to transfer Taylor's trial to The Hague in the Netherlands. China's U.N. Ambassador Wang Guangya says the Security Council was still debating several technical issues, including who should pay the costs.

Prior to Taylor's arraignment before the Special Court friends, family members, and presumed lawyers argued that justice would rather be served were Taylor to be tried in The Hague. Their general fear was that because of the perceived hostility of the trial venue, Freetown, coupled with alleged audacious utterances made by erstwhile Chief Court Prosecutor David Crane, and what happened to co-indictee, RUF's Foday Sankoh who died in custody of the Special Court, Sierra Leone was perceived as hell on earth to mete out justice. But what brought about the U turn in stance is another pot of porridge.

In my view, the United Nations Security Council may have taken the fear seriously despite later indications that the reason for the transfer of Taylor's trial to The Hague is 'security' in Sierra Leone and the sub-region.

With the Council far advanced in its approval for the change of venue for the Taylor trial, Special Court Principal Defender on the day of Taylor's first arraignment before the court announced his client wanted to be tried in Sierra Leone. Why? I asked myself as the Principal Defender made the pronouncement.

Some of the reasons advanced for a Taylor trial in Freetown are for easy access to witnesses and for his family to visit him as a means of moral support.

Upon hearing the request, the first thing that came to mind was that Taylor has something up his sleeves.

Now, his temporary lawyer Karim A. Khan on the 6th April filed a motion on the grounds that in the case of a transfer of trial of the accused, it was in the interest of justice for the side of the accused to be heard before a final decision is taken on the matter.

And with the Court still in recess till the 24th April, A. Khan's motion is yet to be heard. But amid all this drama, fear seems to be fast overcoming many residents of Freetown that Taylor's fighters may have invaded the capital.

This fear has been expressed in newspaper reports of an influx of Liberians into the capital, Freetown since bring-

ing Taylor subdued in handcuffs.

Standard Times newspaper's 19th April edition reported that Taylor's Nigerian concubine, Victoria Adison Behna, believed to have links with the leadership of Calaba where Taylor resided during his exile in Nigeria arrived Freetown via Lungi international airport aboard Bellview airline on Tuesday 18th April, 2006 at 12:50 PM. The report says she introduced herself as Mrs. Taylor and was later taken away in a vehicle with registration number ABJ 116 guarded by hefty looking men believed to be members of the defunct Anti Terrorist Unit (ATU) of Taylor's regime. Victoria is believed to be putting up at Jays Guest House, Aberdeen Road where Jacky Taylor, said to be Charles Taylor's sister is currently residing.

Reading this story in Standard Times, I was rather skeptical and decided to do an independent investigation. I called the head of Immigration at the Lungi International Airport, Michael Bassie to enquire. His response was that he could not confirm whether the lady in question written about in Standard Times was Mrs. Taylor or whether she was in the country, but what he can confirm is that there has been a dramatic rise in the influx of Liberians, Burkinabes and Ivorians into the country through the airport since Taylor's arrival in March. The Immigration boss went further to disclose that it was the Liberian inflow that was alarming but could not give exact figures. He said most of the Liberians coming into Freetown upon interrogation do not know their way around or an address where they will be staying, nor was there any one to pick them up at the airport upon arrival.

"Of course we cannot stop them from entering as we have this ECOWAS protocol that renders free entry to all ECOWAS citizens," Bassie said and adds, "but we hand them over to the police."

My hair rose upon hearing this revelation. What came to mind was a statement made by Special Court Prosecutor, Desmond De Silver in his meeting with civil society activists the day after Taylor's arrival in detention. Civil society groups' position at the consultation with the prosecutor was a unanimous voice of "Taylor should be tried in Sierra Leone."

But the Prosecutor cautioned, "the trial of Taylor in The Hague was requested by no less a person than

Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia without whose help we would not have had Taylor in custody today... She has asked that Taylor's trial be transferred to The Hague... We don't know what intelligence she has got to have made such a request..."

Before continuing, there are some questions that I would want pondered. Firstly, all the Liberians coming into Freetown, are they the relatives Taylor was referring to as his family members that he needs for moral support or his witnesses? Secondly, what are the Liberians, Ivorians and Burkinabes coming to do in Freetown only now that Taylor is in Special Court detention?

Added to this development, Taylor's loyalists issued a statement in Monrovia that they would give him whatever support he needed to set him free. Does that now suggest the influx of Liberians into Freetown is as a result of that pledge? Food for thought! But I will bet my life that it is not only through Lungi airport that Taylor 'loyalists' have been entering Freetown. Mark my words.

That takes me to a recent development at the Special Court wherein Taylor has requested that his cell be changed because he is 'scared' of the humming of a generator located close by. Peter Andersen, Deputy Chief of Public Affairs at the Special Court confirmed this to Concord Times Thursday. Taylor may have been moved further away from the generator humming, but is it only now that Taylor knows there is a generator-humming close by after spending over two weeks in the detention facility?

The Liberian influx scenario brings into focus the arguments bandied about a Taylor trial in or out of Sierra Leone. In my view, I don't give a damn where Taylor is tried, be it in space or hell I don't care. What I care

about is justice and our safety. Period. Some of us cannot afford to run a second time or see our loved ones butchered in our eyes. We are still reeling from the past mayhem and it is enough for us, as we want to concentrate on rebuilding our lives.

The government of Sierra Leone has been conspicuously quiet on the issue of transferring Taylor's trial. The police, and military are on record as having cocaine confidence that they are on top of security and can deal with any threat. But the irony is the police claim to be in the driving seat in terms of security while armed robbers are having a field day in many parts of the capital. As for the military, the less said about them, the better. They are the same ones that could not have the ragged RUF under control, so, once bitten twice shy.

Andersen of the Special Court has maintained in a previous interview that talks of Taylor fighters invading the capital are "rumors and we cannot respond to them." He said while there was need for concerns regarding the rumors, there was no need to panic because the Special Court has a well-trained Mongolian contingent that takes care of security "very seriously."

Yes, security at the Special Court is watertight to ensure Taylor does not escape. But is Taylor's escape the only factor to be taken into consideration? It is my unequivocal submission that in as much as Taylor is kept secured behind bars, the general masses' security is also paramount. What should be driven home is that the Mongolians' mandate is to secure the Special Court, not Sierra Leone or even wider New England Ville where the Special Court is located. This begs the question, are we safe with Taylor in oudst?

New Vision
21 April 2006

Taylor - The Loosing Battle

The drama of the arrest and extradition of ex-President Charles Taylor should send signals to all warlords in the sub-region that crime does not pay, and that warlords and those who commit heinous crimes against humanity cannot go unpunished. Taylor is aware that if he is to appear at the special court he will be fighting a losing battle. This is why he tried by all means to escape.

The significance of Taylor's detention at the special court cell where he has joined other warlords like Sam Hinga Horman, Issa Sesay and others is an indication that when it comes to the application of justice and the rule of law no amount of rhetoric and philosophy ought to be listened. Taylor was like a drowning man who can virtually catch at any straw.

The pan Africanism philosophy was one last hope for Taylor. The argument was that under the new dispensation Africans are given greater role to chart their own political and security destiny. The New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) actually indicated that African countries should be vigilant in nipping from the bud all threats to regional security.

This is why at every summit of Heads of State at the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS), or the African Union (AU) levels one item that always tops the agenda, is the status of the conflict stricken countries. The Heads of State used to spend their times discussing the Sierra Leone, Liberia conflicts and how to resolve them. This time around with the peace process in the Ivory Coast still deadlocked, that country remains a priority at the ECOWAS and the AU summit meetings.

What is interesting is that Nigeria President Olusegun Obasanjo himself always made reference to the fact that the Charles Taylor issue was a regional matter and should therefore be treated and resolved within a regional context.

This is why when President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf made a formal request for Taylor to be transferred to Freetown to face trial at the Special Court, the Nigeria leader indicated that he was first going to consult with other regional leaders and stakeholders on the Taylor issue such as the European Union.

The Charles Taylor issue appears to be unprecedented in African politics. For this is the first time that a President of an African Nation has been arrested and detained in the prison cells of another African state to face war crimes charges. But if one reminisce the gravity of the offence to humanity that the ex-Liberian warlord committed one can not be able to muster an iota of sympathy in that instant.

Taylor is a criminal and a ruthless killer and there are a lot of evidences to buttress the statement. The best place for a dangerous criminal like "Charley Boy" is the prison cell such as the one reserved especially for him at the special court.

As a clear example Taylor remains on the "wanted" list of the US government for escaping from an American Jail. He was wanted by the Late Samuel Kanyon Doe's regime in Liberia for having embezzled over a million dollar as procurement Agency Director, the money was meant for the purchase of caterpillar spare-parts for the Ministry of Works. And also if one can take a quick look at the long list of people that Taylor's associates confirm that he eliminated because of his greed for power, one can equally be left with no sympathy, but can only consider him as an outlaw.

What the international community is requesting from Charles Taylor is a trial for those who bear the greatest responsibility for the civil war in Sierra Leone, a neighbouring country. What is essential is that Taylor is not alone in the trap of the Special Court. There are others like - the leaders of the various warring factions such as Sam Hinga Normaa, Issa Sesay, Moinina Kondowai. Etc.

But all evidences point fingers at Charles Taylor as the driving force behind the civil war that plunged Sierra Leone into destruction and senseless killings and decapitation for nearly a decade.

This is why no amount of African philosophy or affinity can save Taylor from being prosecuted. He simply deserves to be in jail, even if he were a white man. Let justice takes its course, so that it will serve as deterrents to others who choose the parts of dictatorship and violations of human rights with impunity.

The Democrat
21 April 2006

Taylor's Trial in Sierra Leone! ... ill-advised, insensitive and compensating!

...ILL-ADVISED,

Dr. Lausana Nyalley opines to weigh in on the on-going debate

The pros and cons for trying Charles Taylor in Sierra Leone or else where are engaging, interesting and sensational. I happen to strongly disagree with the option of trying Taylor in Sierra Leone. I may broadly categorise the argument into two classes:

1. The national interest of Sierra Leone – legal basis for or against moving the trial out of Sierra Leone. Without the full benefit of the fact which the Special Court is established in Sierra Leone, coupled with my lack of any legal background, I want to be more emphatic on the national security of Sierra Leone.

My grounds for moving Taylor's trial out of Sierra Leone are based on the following:

Count one: To prioritize the pending national elections. The Taylor saga has the potential to disrupt and divide our national focus away from the national issues facing the nation and the people. Public demonstrations by Liberia nationals and / or others with ulterior motives may introduce chaos and anarchy on our streets, which may require resources - especially the police force to clean it up. Elections are a serious business that demands our undivided attention. Why should we waste any resources if we can avoid it? Confusing isn't it?

Count Two: To save our hard earned peace, security and progress.

While it is possible that the big towns – especially Freetown – will be safe, the towns and villages on the borders with Liberia may not be so secured. I have not seen any restrictive movement of people in and out of Sierra Leone for which we may incur any unnecessary risk of cross border attacks and or disruptive public demonstrations. Though I do not have the adequate information to determine that security measures may be in place to deal with any unpleasant surprises, the free flow of people and lack of any special arrangements within towns and villages that borders with Liberia leaves me with no other option but to argue that trying Taylor outside Sierra Leone will save lives, property and resources, thus saving our peace and security.

Count three: Hit Taylor on his bankbook

I understand that Taylor currently owns lucrative businesses in Liberia that may include cell phone companies, lumber businesses and a political party. Taylor has to demonstrate beyond all reasonable doubt that paying to convey his witnesses beyond Sierra Leone will cause him an undue burden. Why should we compensate Taylor on his wish? He made millions on the Sierra Leone diamond deal.

He is said to have lots of diamonds available to him. Why should we treat him any easier by trying him in Sierra Leone?

Advocating the trial of Taylor in Sierra Leone without any irrefutable legal bases in the face of the current situations facing the nation may not be in the best interest of Sierra Leone.

Count Four: Taylor is an international indictee

In my opinion, all those previously tried by the Special Court are Sierra Leoneans. Taylor is a Liberian and a former President of Liberia. The Special Court of Sierra Leone is more associated with Sierra Leone while the Court in The Hague is more associated with renowned criminals. Therefore, moving Taylor to The Hague will make him appear more of an international criminal, which unwarrantedly accords him much respect.

Taylor is the one that originated, organized and launched the Liberian war that engulfed Sierra Leone and caused countless atrocities. He is the biggest of all the indictees, and for that merit alone, he should face the raw force of The Hague Tribunal. Anything less will be advocating Taylor's wish, which may fit in his bigger plans. We must not fall for his bait.

Count Five: Taylor is evil, ambitious and dangerous

Unlike Chief Sam Hinga Norman, Charles Taylor emerged from the war a wealthier man, with a functioning political party and lucrative businesses. Unlike Chief Norman, Taylor was once a President of Liberia with extended connections across the world, and many rogue friends ready and willing to dance to his bids. Unlike Chief Norman, Taylor has bought his way out of a US prison before, and he almost escaped from Nigeria. Even more so, many of the previous Taylor fighter loyalists remain armed and dangerous. It is possible that those who may remain loyal to him may cause havoc or threaten the lives of the Sierra Leonean citizenry. One single gunshot will okay a skirmish of chaos, which may set all of us on our toes. Why should we take this unnecessary and avoidable risk?

Count Six: A threat or any potential violence

may adversely affect the national economy.

A thrush of tourists, investors and donors' organizations are not stupid. The fact that the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom – Tony Blair; the President of the United States of America – George Bush; the President of Liberia Eileen Johnson Sirleaf had all advocated trying Taylor outside of Sierra Leone compel us not to be pointlessly dismissive of the competing argument to move Taylor.

As the International Community closely watches the situation, it may be tempted to scale down its commitments, reduce the size of its staff or decide to wait out till the trial is over. The Sierra Leone Government is doing so well that we do not need Charles Taylor to once again rudely interrupt our progress!

Finally, Count Seven: Who will remember six months or so later?

Right now, we may sensitize the masses. We may mount the best defense to counter any immediate foreign threats to our budding peace. But Charles Taylor and his evil plans may lie in wait until this debate dies down, and the masses re-engage in other commitments. Even if we are going to remain prepared for the next two or three years, why waste our resources, limit our joy and happiness for this avoidable evil? ***One other question: does Liberia and Sierra Leone have any treaty that may benefit Taylor?***

Any future videos and transcripts of Taylor's trial in The Hague may be transmitted to the country through the Ministries of Information or Justice or any such appropriate conduit; for we need to follow the trial.

Therefore, in order to prioritize our pending national elections; maintain our hard earned peace, security and progress; hit Taylor in his bankbook and expose him as an international criminal; gage the evil and danger in Taylor and save our resources and energy for better and brighter days for a greater and rising Sierra Leone in a shining tomorrow; let us ship Taylor to The Hague.

That is the way I see it.

Long live Sierra Leone and all Sierra Leoneans!

Contributed by Lansana Nyalley (PhD)

New Republic

20 April 2006

TRYING WAR CRIMINALS LOCALLY

Balkan Legal

by Adam M. Smith

Four years, 466 hearing days, more than 300 witnesses, and over \$200 million after it began in The Hague, Case Number IT-02-54, Prosecutor v. Slobodan Milosevic, was officially declared over on March 14, three days after Milosevic was found dead of an apparent heart attack in his prison cell. There will be no verdict. Following the dictates of international law, the U.N.'s Yugoslavia war-crimes tribunal in The Hague does not prosecute defendants in absentia, which means that the "butcher of the Balkans" died legally innocent of any of the war-crimes charges so painstakingly and expensively arrayed against him.

This result has led to disquiet and dissatisfaction in the halls of The Hague tribunal and, perhaps more importantly, at home in the Balkans. Images of thousands of weeping Serbs on the streets of Belgrade, and proclamations of Slob's martyr status by Serb hardliners, have left many in the Balkans feeling robbed, not just by Milosevic's ill-timed demise, but by The Hague itself. In fact, many think The Hague's days as the primary venue for war-crimes trials are over. But how will justice be served in the future?

Michael Johnson might have the answer. When I first met Johnson at his office in Sarajevo in March 2005, he was covered in sawdust, and, after a quick introduction, he excused himself to move a safe. "Sometimes, if you want it done right," he said as he rolled up his sleeves. Outside his office doors, construction crews roamed the hallway, laboring to put the finishing touches on Bosnia and Herzegovina's new war-crimes court, which Johnson, an American lawyer, had been asked by the U.N. representative in Sarajevo to set up.

At first glance, what Johnson and his staff have built may not seem novel. Architecturally, the pink-hued courthouse, sitting on a hillside overlooking Sarajevo, fits unobtrusively into the Bosnian capital's Istanbul-meets-Innsbruck skyline. Even inside the building, there is little to distinguish it from the world's other war-crimes courts. Visitors familiar with the U.N.'s Yugoslavia tribunal in The Hague, its Rwanda tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania, or even the new International Criminal Court, will immediately feel at home. Johnson spent many years working at U.N. tribunals. And his decisions--to place the polished-wood defense and prosecution stands at a particular (and, to American eyes, peculiar) angle in each court, to install a bevy of flat-panel monitors throughout the tribunal, even to use U.N.-quality microphones and translation headphones--confirm the emergence of a kind of war-crimes chic in interior design.

In its operations, however, the court is unique, both for Bosnia and for the world. Unlike the U.N.'s Special Court for Sierra Leone, the International Criminal Court (which is presently investigating Darfur), or South Africa's nonjudicial, post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this court is a domestic judicial body. It uses existing domestic law and adheres to existing domestic judicial procedures. Rather than having the international community extradite and try war criminals, the new court raises the possibility of states dispensing post-conflict justice on their own terms, in their own courts, with only limited international involvement. It is a long overdue experiment, and it's one that may hold the key to allowing states--in the Balkans and elsewhere--to deal with their vexed pasts.

Since 1993, the Hague tribunal has convicted more than 40 individuals who perpetrated war crimes during the 1991-1995 Yugoslav civil war. Though most Bosnians supported the tribunal at first, ever since the 1995 Dayton Accords ended the conflict, Bosnian citizens have expressed increasing dissatisfaction that they are standing on the sidelines in the search for justice. Not only is The Hague a world away from the conflict zone, but also, outside its translators, almost no Balkan citizen has ever been employed by the tribunal. A former Hague prosecutor argued to me that such discriminatory hiring was necessary to "stem leaks" of sensitive information. Regardless, in Bosnia, which is run as a fiefdom under the rule of a U.N.-authorized "High Representative," this judicial impotence compounds a more pervasive emasculation of almost all government and civil society.

The Hague tribunal has built an impressive body of international criminal law, and it has incarcerated a number of war criminals. But other goals of criminal law--reconciliation and deterrence, to name two--have remained effectively unmet. The United Nations itself seems to agree: Its own chief legal officer, Assistant Secretary-General for Legal Affairs Ralph Zacklin, has all but disowned the tribunal, calling its approach "no longer politically or financially viable." A senior U.N. official in the region is even more direct, bluntly admitting to me that, while the tribunal has taken some of the Balkans' "biggest thugs" off the streets, it has not repaired Yugoslav society. "The [Hague] has failed; ironically, the Balkans are probably more likely to Balkanize now than at any time since Dayton," he laments.

The establishment of the new court was catalyzed by these mounting frustrations, as well as by the international community's fatigue at funding the remarkably expensive Hague tribunal (more than \$250 million for 2006-2007). The United Nations has decided to conclude the tribunal's trials by 2008; in preparation, cases yet to be heard--and thousands of others that have been investigated but in which indictments have not yet been issued--will be sent back to domestic courts in the Balkans. Johnson's new Sarajevo court was designed, in part, to handle these cases.

The case transfers, however, had been stalled, largely over suspicions that ethnic minority defendants would not receive fair trials at the hands of ethnic majority judges. Such apprehension is not without merit. Immediately following the conflict, Croatia began a series of war-crimes trials of its own, almost always prosecuting Serbs. The cases had a conviction rate of 90 percent and often ended with absurd results: In a proceeding against Svetozar Karan, a Serb, the court found him not only guilty of war crimes, but also of the entire 500-year history of Serb crimes against Croatia.

The new Sarajevo court was designed to overcome such problems. Through a domestic court, the Bosnian government received a \$16 million grant (largely from the United States) to build a tribunal whose facilities and technology equaled those of The Hague. In order to manage potential bias, court personnel have been recruited from across Bosnia and from abroad. International judges sit alongside domestic jurists, and locals and foreigners work throughout the tribunal. But, unlike other aspects of the international presence in Bosnia, the international role in the court is limited by a statutory provision calling for full domestication of court functions within five years.

The court has had a rocky start. Since opening last spring, it has battled a corruption investigation (with allegations made against one of the international judges), an almost absent public profile (with recent surveys indicating that less than 60 percent of Bosnians are aware that the new court even exists), and a tense relationship with the still-functioning Hague court. But the court has also quickly bulked up its staff (it already employs several hundred), and it has made special efforts to ensure that local staff are not mere tokens--locals work on all levels of the court hierarchy.

After 50 years of communism, five years of war, and the last decade of international control, Bosnia has developed a legal and political order that is decidedly not its own, from the country's new criminal code (which, by a strange twist of legal fate, is partially modelled on Alaska's) to its thoroughly compromised national symbols (which include a national anthem "sung" without any words). The court is an attempt to rebuild some local ownership over the state. Its first real tests, now underway, are the transferred trials of two Bosnian Serbs--Radovan Stankovic and Gojko Jankovic--both accused of the systematic enslavement and rape of Muslim women. About a dozen further cases are set to be transferred from The Hague later this year. Already, the court represents a new chapter in home-grown justice for Bosnia and Herzegovina and a new model for other corners of the globe scarred by crimes against humanity. "It is time for justice to come home," an exasperated law student at the University of Sarajevo told me when I met with a group of students at the law college, down the street from the bombed-out national library. "It is time for us to do some of this ourselves."

Adam M. Smith is a Chayes Fellow at Harvard Law School.

Daily Independent

Friday, 21st April 2006

Charles Taylor is History

By Sam Kargbo

I have been off this column for a while. I apologize for the break in transmission. I sincerely do. There are times when one is forced to abandon hallowed hobbies for the critical tasks of survival. I know that many followers of this column have waited anxiously for my contribution to the Taylor saga. Many must have justifiably anticipated an early contribution from me having been on the forefront in the call for Taylor's trial. I took the cautious path for obvious reasons. Having been predictive and emotionally judgmental about Taylor over the years, it was advisable for me to step aside and watch events from a safe and firm rostrum. I did not allow myself to be provoked by the uninformed commentaries that were unleashed on the public by overnight international relations experts. Instead, I headed straight for Freetown the moment Taylor was spewed by President Olusegun Obasanjo. I have now returned with the irrefutable conclusion that Taylor is history. It is just a matter of time before we hear of the number of years he would serve for his satanic role in Sierra Leone's eleven year war. And that is, if he is not bumped in the course of his trial. Already, Sweden and Austria have been requested by the UN to start looking for places to keep the 58 year old civil war monger who the Prosecutor for the UN Special Court in Sierra Leone considers to be one of the three worst war criminals alive (the other two being the Serbian fugitives: Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic).

Thankfully, I have in a month earlier commented elaborately in another forum on Baba's third term project, so I could not be accused of missing out entirely on the major issues of the months of March and April, 2006. I therefore feel safe to dedicate this piece entirely on Taylor. When I boarded the Bellview aircraft at about 1:0 clock in the afternoon of March 5, 2006 for the two hours forty minutes flight to Freetown, I had the wish of sitting alongside someone I could share my excitements about Taylor's arrest and arraignment before the Special Court in Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, the gentlemen I shared a row with were businessmen who did not avail me the slightest opportunity for a chat. Disappointed, I slept off only to be woken by the air hostess' announcement that we (meaning the pilot) had commenced the final descent to the Lungi International airport. Yes! Although not much of a sight, the Lungi airport answers the name of an international airport. The immigration officials were polite and helpful. Having paid the naira equivalent about \$550 for the less than three hours trip, one was not prepared for the \$55 cost of the fifteen minutes helicopter flight across the Atlantic Ocean. Freetown is a peninsula and it is practically cut off from the Lungi airport. The hovercraft that would have provided an alternative did not function that day. A sizeable number of my fellow passengers on the helicopter were by their colour expatriates. Not one of us trusted the helicopter and if my inner feelings were a standard, I would say the fifteen minute flight seemed longer than the one from Lagos to Lungi. Not one of us utter a word until the helicopter landed safely at a heliport near the premises of the former United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone that folded up in December 2005.

I bought all the leaflets that were presented to me as newspapers to gauge the mood of Sierra Leoneans concerning their unwilling guest. I got a moderate guest house that cost me only about \$40 a night somewhere at Wilberforce. I slept off immediately after checking in and woke up to realize that unlike Lagos, the television is not much a cherish accompaniment of governance and

social engineering. To make matters worse for me, my hosts at the guest house were Middle easterners and therefore provided with only CNN and Arab channels. In less than an hour, I had flipped through the papers and got a sense of the issue concerning Taylor that bother Sierra Leoneans. The vaunted threat of Taylor's celebrated invincibility in the region did not bother them. The Mongolians guiding the UN Special Court give them a sense of security. I could sense that when friends that I had called up took me to some of the pubs in the evenings. Not too many of them volunteered opinions on Taylor. The general belief is that the Special Court that had nabbed people like Samuel Hinga Norma was quite capable of handling Taylor. The country's broadcasting house (SLBS) and the campus of the Njala University College by its side that are directly opposite the Special Court where Taylor is kept, do not wear any iota of fear. They have no securitymen and I was delighted to notice that the students did not care a hoot about the guest across the road. Besides, unless a first visitor is educated otherwise about the activities of the Special Court the surrounding environment is not different from that of a cathedral or mosque. Right on the fence of a part of the Special court are small kiosks and small time beer selling venues. Not a single one of the owners complained of their business being affected by the arrival of Taylor.

Of course, there is the call for the moving of the trial venue to the chambers of the International Criminal Court in the Hague. My sense is that the true reason for that expensive joke may not be known by ordinary men like us that soon. President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah and his Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) are gearing up for the general elections next year. There are clear indices to show that the party has a formidable opposition from the breakaway faction of Charles Margai, one of the offspring of the Margai political dynasty, as well as, the old foe, the All People's Congress (APC) led by the charismatic Alex Koroma. My thinking is that the old man who has staked the fate of the party in the person of his equally old vice President Solomon Berewa, would feel better without the distractions of the trial of Taylor. Already, his detractors are hoping that Taylor would have something to say that would smear his illustrious record as the bringer of peace to Sierra Leone. Another angle that catches my fancy is the fact that the old cowboy in the White House in Washington DC would prefer a venue that falls within his surveillance radar. Sierra Leone is too remote and difficult to monitor. The facilities of the ICC are obviously better and lend better grandstanding opportunities than the Special Court in Sierra Leone. The fact that the UN has already sanctioned it gives a hint about who is behind the call.

Taylor who had earlier preferred to be tried by the International Criminal Court and opposed the jurisdiction of the Special Court way back on July 23,2003 has understandably had a change of mind. He now prefers to be tried in Freetown even though he still insists that his trial is an effort by America to divide and destabilize the West African region. His motion against the change of venue is pending in the court and would not be heard until the resumption of the court on April 24, 2005 or thereafter. The Special Court went on recess soon after it took the plea of Taylor. To my mind, the idea of the change of venue is distracting and violates a fundamental principle of criminal justice. The alleged victims of Taylor's alleged atrocities must not be denied the fundamental right of seeing and witnessing justice being done in respect of their case. Justice as the saying goes, must not only be done but must be seen to be done. The hardship of the change or shift of venue is exacerbated by the fact that the Special Court that has obviously been starved of funds is to fund the cost of the proposed theatrical trial in the Hague. The Netherlands and the International Criminal Court have made it absolutely clear that they do not want to bear any of the cost of the proposed shift of venue. Out of the \$25 million needed by the Court for its regular business this year, it has only received \$6 million cash and another \$9 million in pledges.

Sierra Leoneans are satisfied that their number one enemy has been arrested and like all those they consider to be the major actors behind the war and its barbarism he would be tried and if

found guilty, he would be punished. One issue that agitated most of the elite that I interacted with is the fear that Nigeria would feel hurt by the eleventh hour drama surrounding Taylor's eventual arrest. They considered as evil America's sudden pressure on President Obasanjo for the handing over of Taylor to the Special Court. Sierra Leoneans are obviously still very grateful to Nigeria and did not take kindly the overzealousness of an outsider to hurt the long beneficial relationship between the two countries. I tried my best to explain that the average Nigerians know their friends and would always stand by them.

Specifically, the Special Court believes that Taylor had a common cause with Foday Sankoh and that he financed Foday Sankoh's RUF with weapons and personnel. The indictment gave the time and places of the actions that are ascribed to Taylor and if the history of such Courts or tribunals is anything to go by, Taylor is history.

Associated Press

Thursday, 20 April 2006

Denmark asked to take Taylor after trial

By JAN M. OLSEN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

COPENHAGEN, Denmark -- Denmark confirmed Thursday that it has been asked to imprison former Liberian President Charles Taylor if he is convicted of war crimes by a U.N.-backed court.

Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller said Denmark was one of the countries that had been contacted about Taylor, but no decision could be made until a formal request was received from the United Nations.

"I can only confirm this information, but there is no official request so there is nothing I can decide on," Moeller said.

Efforts to begin Taylor's trial on 11 counts for his role in Sierra Leone's vicious civil war have stalled because no country has agreed to hold him.

The Special Court in Sierra Leone has requested that the trial be moved to The Hague, Netherlands, for fear a man who once was among the region's most feared warlords could still spark unrest in West Africa. The Special Court would conduct the trial, with the Netherlands supplying only the courtroom and jailing Taylor during the proceedings.

The Netherlands has agreed - but only if the arrangement is endorsed by a U.N. Security Council resolution, the Hague-based International Criminal Court agrees to provide the venue and Taylor leaves immediately after the trial, regardless of the outcome.

Several European countries, particularly in Scandinavia, have been considered as possibilities in part because their prison systems are well-funded and secure. They also have offered previously to house criminals convicted by courts covering Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

After Sweden and Austria both refused to take Taylor if he is convicted, Denmark became the focus of efforts by the United States, which is leading the search for a country, several diplomats said.

A European diplomat in New York, speaking on condition of anonymity because the talks are secret and highly sensitive, said Wednesday the request had been made informally.

The Security Council appeared ready to adopt a resolution endorsing moving Taylor's trial, but not until the Netherlands is satisfied. The Netherlands is under pressure to let the trial start and find a country to take Taylor later.

Taylor's lawyers have filed a petition seeking to ensure his trial remains in Sierra Leone, saying it will be easier for his witnesses to attend hearings there.

Taylor went into exile in Nigeria in August 2003 as part of a deal that helped end Liberia's 14-year civil war. After the Nigerian government agreed last month to hand him over to the court, he tried to slip away but was captured and flown to Sierra Leone.

He has been held in the Special Court's detention facilities in the Sierra Leonean capital since March 29 and pleaded not guilty at an April 3 arraignment.

Reuters

Friday, 21 April 2006

Danes divided over warlord jail cell

Liberian warlord trial hits new snag

Danish politicians were divided on Thursday over whether Denmark should offer former Liberian leader Charles Taylor a jail cell if he is convicted of war crimes at a United Nations-backed court.

Foreign Minister Per Stig Moller confirmed that Denmark had been mentioned at the United Nations as a possible host for Taylor, but said it had yet to receive a formal request either to imprison Taylor or to give him asylum after the trial.

"I know that there are discussions at the UN about where to place him since he can't remain in The Hague," Moller told Ritzau news agency. "But there has been no official request so I don't have an issue to consider."

Members of the Conservative Party, the junior partner in the centre-right ruling coalition, said Denmark should take Taylor if asked, but the Danish People's Party (DPP), which supports the government in parliament but stays outside the coalition, said housing Taylor would pose an unacceptable security risk.

Taylor's rise to power in 1989 led to a 14-year on-and-off war in Liberia that spilled across regional borders and fuelled a civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone, where he is now imprisoned and guarded by UN peacekeepers.

"There is no doubt that a man like Taylor poses a major security risk. Denmark is definitely not equipped to house a criminal of Charles Taylor's calibre," said DPP justice spokesman Kim Christiansen.

Opposition leaders, however, said Denmark had an obligation to imprison Taylor if the United Nations asked it to do so.

A special UN-backed court in Sierra Leone has indicted the former warlord on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He is accused of arming rebels who killed, raped and mutilated civilians during Sierra Leone's bitter civil war.

Sierra Leone has asked for Taylor's trial to be moved to The Hague for fear it could spur unrest in the region. The International Criminal Court has agreed to try Taylor, providing the UN Security Council adopts a resolution first.

The Netherlands has agreed to host the trial but wants assurances that another country will jail the Liberian if he is convicted or accept him as an exile if acquitted. This has prompted the United Nations to search for a potential jailer.

Austria and Sweden have already refused, and the United States, which is leading the search, has focused on Denmark.

Taylor went into exile in Nigeria in August 2003 as part of a deal that helped end Liberia's civil war. He tried to escape when Nigeria agreed to extradite him, but was captured and flown to Sierra Leone last month.

The Vanguard
Friday, 21 April 2006

Constitutional Review: Those handling the process lacks credibility — Prof Odinkalu

By Innocent Anaba

Our guest for the week is Chidi Anselem Odinkalu, a visiting Professor of Law and the African Director of Open Justice Initiative.

He is a member of Campaign Against Impunity, a group that was early last year hunted by the Nigerian government for calling for the extradition of former Liberian Warlord, Charles Taylor, who is presently facing an 11 count charge of crimes against humanity before the Freetown, Sierra Leone, based UN Criminal Court.

In this interview, Odinkalu opined that the people associated with the on-going constitutional review are lacking in political and personal credibility, adding that the process itself is flawed and rigged.

On the recent statement credited to Lagos Lawyer, Chief Gani Fawehinmi (SAN) that Nigerians must obtain a police permit before embarking on any form of protest, Odinkalu said “Gani’s advice in this case was unnecessary and unsolicited. I fail to see his point”.

Commenting on the extradition of Charles Taylor, to Sierra Leone to face the charges against him, he said, “it is a statement by African humanity that we will not again tolerate characters like that to afflict our neighbourhoods with so much violation and get away with it. With Taylor in shackles, we can’t again argue immunity for Presidents who create graveyards where countries and thriving communities used to exist”.

He also dismissed fears that the court will not afford Taylor fair hearing, arguing that by appointing the best lawyers in the world for Taylor, no one will say he (Taylor) did not get quality representation.

Excerpt:

What is your assessment of the on going constitutional review?

In a few words, it is not credible. It is also a source of profound worry that the people most closely associated with it are lacking in political and personal credibility. A Constitution is more than a mere document; it should embody a way of life, ambitions and aspirations of a people, including unborn generations. The process of making or amending it is perhaps more important than the outcome of the process. Indeed, it’s the process that makes the Constitution the hallowed document that it is. Now you recall that there were these public hearings in six geo-political zones. How do you have public hearings before the amendments have been formulated into legislative proposals? And how do you have hearings in geo-political zones that are unknown to law and the Constitution, rather than in the States that are the federating units?

Then participants who wanted to address the hearings were prevented from getting there and, in at least one case arrested by the Police and detained incommunicado for eight days – and you know the Constitution prohibits detention without arraignment for more than 48 hours? Oh, and I forgot

the lawyers who went to serve a court order on the Review Committee and then got arrested and assaulted by Police orderlies of the Committee big wigs. The problem we have here is that we've got a process that appears firmly rigged, run by people whose access to their current positions were mostly rigged; and designed to produce a document that will be rigged; in order to enthrone a system that will thrive by rigging. This is not constitution making or amendment. The Americans have some explicit words for this kind of stuff but I'm not allowed to say stuff like that in a respectable medium like yours

Do you think this is the right time to amend the constitution, bearing in mind that the present regime has spent over six years in power without raising the issue of amending the constitution. But close to the expiration of its tenure, it is now talking of reviewing the Constitution. Is this the right time to amend the constitution?

First, to be fair to the facts, the issue of whether or not to amend the Constitution has been on the agenda since 1999. This government did establish the Clement Ebri Committee on precisely that subject in its first term. There is, I believe, considerable consensus that the manner and content of the 1999 Constitution left quite a bit to be desired. Indeed, my colleague and friend, Dr. Tunde Ogowewo, who teaches at the King's College of the University of London, did a major law review article some five years ago setting out a quite persuasive case as to why the 1999 Constitution should be annulled.

The case for Constitution review is well made out. Constitutions are living documents. You must realise that Nigeria's experience in operating Constitutions is at best non-existent. All the people exercising power under this Constitution fall into two categories – those who have never lived under constitutional rule or those who have only lived under Constitutions established by the military. It's an anomaly. Obviously, as the country learns from its errors, it will amend and adapt. I'm not sure the issue here is a matter of timing. It's rather a question of process and credibility. And on that, the facts lead us to one conclusion – the process is coloured, flawed, and rigged.

We have seen instances where media houses are shut, journalists arrested, political opponents arrested and charged to court. What does this portend for the country?

The French say “plus ça change, plus ça change.” The more things change, the more they remain the same. The recent record doesn't read too great.

From the innocent mothers tear-gassed last December for showing public grief about the loss of the most talented children in the country in an avoidable air crash, to preventing members of the House of Representatives from entering the Chambers of the House because they are seen wearing anti-Third Term buttons; from mass assault of journalists to the return of maximum policing, it all feels like déjà vu all over again. You ask me what this portends for the country. I'm not a clairvoyant or a Babalawo, so I can't respond to that directly. But, I do think Nigeria is finely poised on the proverbial fork in the road. Yogi Berra is credited with having advised: when you get to a fork in the road, take it! The country is surely going to take the fork. But I don't know which half of the fork it's going to walk.

What is your reaction to the police break up of an anti-third term meeting involving some serving governors, Vice President Atiku and former Head of State, Gen Muhammadu Buhari in Abuja a few days ago.

Malevolent government knows no limits. Regimes that grow used to mis-treating and degrading the poor and the anonymous, sooner or later get into the habit of seeing everyone as anonymous

and every anonymous a fair game for abuse. In a perverse kind of way, such things nurture and grow habits of accountable citizenship. It's easier to make a case against a government that is plainly abusive than it is to advocate against a government that is a shade of a colour of grey.

Chief Gani Fawehimni (SAN), has been reported as saying that the police was right to break up the meeting, saying that holding such a meeting without police permit was illegal, citing a Court of Appeal decision. Do you share his opinion?

Like perhaps every other Nigerian I know, I have the utmost respect for Gani as an elder colleague, a person, a professional, a defender of causes good and unpopular, and a believer in the innate goodness of the human being. But Gani lost me on this one.

I'm still struggling to get his point. Obviously, no one in their right senses, can advise anyone to break the law for the sake of doing so. I brook no such thing. But, as best as I can make out, Gani's advice in this case was unnecessary and unsolicited. I fail to see his point and that's not for want of trying. As with all matters legal, there is always more than one version to this point of view. Look, let's even assume that the position is as Gani says it is, that law still needs to be tested and you cannot test it if everyone were to sit down in their living rooms, writing and being refused applications for Police permits. Or, even worse, doing plainly nothing. So, first, testing the limits of the law does tremendous service to the law. Second, the decision in the Chukwuma case that Gani cites is not the only decision on the point.

There is also the recent decision in the Conference of Nigerian Political Parties case where Justice Chukwukere of the Federal High Court declared the Public Order Act and the requirement for permits unconstitutional. Now you can argue that the Court of Appeal is easily superior to the High Court in the judicial hierarchy but there is no agreement on the question of whether or not the cases were identical. As you are no doubt aware, lawyers make a heck of a lot of money from distinguishing the cases that don't support our points of view from those that do. But, thirdly, when the law is contrary to the Constitution, the only way to bypass a legislature that would not do its duty to the people is to disregard the thing that claims to be the law. Black people in the US would not have achieved equality if they all agreed to live less than a fraction of a full human being as decided in Dred Scott or separate and equal as in Plessy vs. Ferguson. Black people in South Africa could well have decided to live by the law that said they were eternally inferior in their own country to white South Africans.

And women all over the world should have all given up because courts and legislatures through the ages have pronounced them unfit to do every thing from owning real estate, through going to university or joining the professions, to voting. Nigerian lawyers are all fond of citing the case of UAC vs. McFoy, which decides that where something is manifestly void and unlawful, you don't need to get to court to declare it void. Perhaps that is what we're living with the Public Order Act.

The civil society and human rights community in Nigeria fought for a long time to have Charles Taylor extradited to Sierra Leone to face the charge of crime against humanity preferred against him before the court. Do you see his eventual hand over to the court as a victory for the civil society?

I've tried to keep out of discussing Charles Taylor since it became fashionable. We fought that fight. In the end, there were a whole lot of factors that came together to force his transfer. All we did was to make sure that the world did not forget.

Because we were sure that as long as the world remembered, his day would come. There was a point that needed to be made – that rulers who seek to take power or retain it by wielding killing and terror machines no longer have a place in the humanity and politics of Africa. Idi Amin presided over the killing of hundreds of thousands of our people on this continent and then escaped to Saudi Arabia to die a peaceful death. Siad Barré ran down Somalia into the desolate place it is today and we offered him safe haven in Nigeria where he died in peace. Mengistu is in Zimbabwe enjoying the quiet bliss that he never afforded the hordes that he massacred. Sekou Toure massacred over 40,000 Guinean Follahs and never lived to be held accountable. And Hissene Habre cavorts in Dakar while many of his victims never had the luck of a funeral.

We have too many of these characters on the conscience of our continent. For me and lots of people in my generation of Africans, our tolerance of them is a matter of profoundly personal shame and discomfort. Don't forget the number of people that had to die and lose limbs for us to get where we are today with Mr. Taylor. So you ask me whether Charles Taylor's eventual transfer to face justice is a victory for civil society? No. It is a statement by African humanity that we will not again tolerate characters like that to afflict our neighbourhoods with so much violation and get away with it. It is a line in the sand by peoples and for African rulers. With Taylor in shackles, we can't again argue immunity for Presidents who create graveyards where countries and thriving communities used to exist.

Taylor has alleged that he was set up by the Nigerian government, what you make of his claim? What happened between Mr. Taylor and his hosts in the Nigerian government is a matter exclusively within their knowledge. I do not have personal knowledge of the facts – and in these matters I prefer to deal in facts.

There is, however, room for intelligent speculation. Now, the distance between Calabar and the location, Gandoru, near Lake Chad in Borno State where Mr. Taylor was eventually picked up is actually about the longest continuous land journey in Nigeria. It's well over 1,200km of often hardy territory. If Mr. Taylor had driven non stop for 24 hours from Calabar, he wouldn't have got to Gandoru by the time he surfaced there. Yet, there he was looking quite sprightly with his Diplomatic plated 4WD, and the story is that he was on his way to Cameroon. The plotline is both counter intuitive and entirely implausible. Some things are easily ruled out. First, Taylor did not drive from Calabar to Gandoru. Some person or persons had to have deposited him in a location in northern Nigeria in close enough proximity to Gandoru. Second, Taylor was not going to Cameroon. Calabar, where he was resident, is less than 2 hours drive from Ikom, the border town on the Nigerian side with Cameroon. And the Tropical foliage of the Gulf of Guinea/Congo Basin is more likely to protect him than the dunes of Northern Cameroon/Lake Chad Basin.

The more likely theory is that Taylor was going to Chad. Gandoru to Chad is about the same distance as Calabar to Manfé (in Cameroon).

Taylor's family have expressed fears that he (Taylor) may not get fair trial in Freetown, as Taylor's sister had alleged in the media that the lawyers she brought were not allowed to see Taylor. What is your reaction to this concern?

I believe the Special Court for Sierra Leone is probably more concerned about fair trial for Charles Taylor than most people and for a good many reasons. Make no mistake about it: this trial will test the credibility of the Court and of international criminal justice. With the death of Milosevic, Charles Taylor is the biggest beast in the jungle of international justice at the moment. The system needs to be seen to be fair to him; but it also must be seen to be effective and

efficient. And it must, just as equally, be seen to be fair to the many victims of the crimes alleged against him. The Milosevic trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia seems to have lasted till the day after eternity without a verdict. No one wants to see that in this case. So, the trial has to be focused.

The charges must be focused and can't go on interminably. Grandstanding has to be cut out. Victims should have their say in Court. Mr. Taylor has already been assigned some of the best lawyers in the world by the Court at the expense of the tax payers of the world. Why? Because the Court has adjudged him indigent. Mr Taylor indigent?! That's fairness. So no one will say he didn't get quality representation.

Taylor has also said that he does not think he will get justice from the Freetown based tribunal. Is his fear justified?

So what did you expect him to say? That he'll get justice? C'mon! Look, this is a man who has made escaping from justice his life's preoccupation. He escaped from the justice system in Massachusetts; he escaped from Ghana when the indictment was served on him there in June 2003; he escaped from Liberia in August 2003 when the rebel factions of MODEL and LURD were on the doorsteps of the Presidential Mansion in Monrovia to visit rough justice on him. And when we sued him in Nigeria on behalf of some of the amputees of his war in Sierra Leone, he ran away. Rather than show up in court, he sent his publicist to say that he came to Nigeria by political arrangement and will only go by political arrangement. Now that a political arrangement has sent him to a judicial forum, he's looking for another easy escape. What do you want the man to say, please?

Some have argued that the Nigerian government only agreed to handover Taylor after coming under pressure from the United State of America and described same as unfortunate, for Nigeria to allow a country that does not have any regard for the International Criminal Court or allow its citizens to appear before the court, to put pressure on it (Nigeria) to hand over another person to the same court. Do you share this sentiment?

I don't hold brief for the Nigerian or US governments. I don't know what transpired between them. I speak as an ordinary citizen of the world. To begin with, Charles Taylor did not get transferred to the International Criminal Court, so the US administration's well-advertised dislike of that forum is irrelevant, even assuming that it had any role to play in it. Second, the day that Charles Taylor was transferred, President Obasanjo of Nigeria was in very warm embrace with President Bush of the US. So, what's the point? If any pressure there was, and if the pressure was an uncomfortable one, it sure wasn't evident in the bonhomie that the two President's shared.

Let's not fool ourselves. Governments play these games all the time of whipping up narrow nationalist sentiments to avoid big issues. I'm from Africa, from West Africa, and from Nigeria. My primary citizenship responsibilities are to hold the governments of my parts of the world accountable. We can't continue to blame the US and UK and Europeans and foreigners whenever we fail in our house-keeping responsibilities to ourselves and our own people on this continent. We should keep our eyes on the ball and not get derailed..

BBC

Thursday, 20 April 2006

Lebanon's groundbreaking tribunal

By Kim Ghattas

After more than 30 years of political assassinations going unpunished, Lebanon finally seems to be embarking on a new era of accountability.

In recent weeks, the UN Security Council has decided to set up a special tribunal on the murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

The decision makes it clear not only that the time for impunity is over, but more importantly that chief UN investigator Serge Brammertz believes he has enough evidence to put someone on trial.

The international court will be the first to try a crime described as "terrorist" by the UN.

While other special tribunals have dealt with war crimes and crimes against humanity, like in Sierra Leone or Cambodia, it will be the first time that international justice tackles a political crime that targeted a specific person.

Syrian denial

For those who dismissed the UN investigation as a politicised affair meant to frame Damascus in the Hariri murder, this is a sobering development.

On 30 March, the UN Security Council unanimously voted to authorise Secretary General Kofi Annan to start negotiations with Beirut to establish the UN-backed tribunal in the Hariri murder.

The political context and the scrutiny of Syria means the international community is particularly interested in speeding up the process

The former Lebanese prime minister, a self-made billionaire, was killed on 14 February 2005, along with 20 others in a massive blast on Beirut's seafront.

The assassination was widely blamed on Syria, but President Bashar al-Assad repeatedly denied that his country had anything to do with the murder.

Mr Assad did say, however, that if any Syrian was to be found to be involved he would be brought to justice in Syria.

But with the establishment of the special court, a domestic Syrian trial would not be acceptable to the international community.

Second report

So far no Syrian suspects have been named in the investigation, even though the first report issued by the UN team implicated top Syrian and Lebanese intelligence officials for planning and implementing the murder.

Four of Lebanon's once feared top-security chiefs, all allies of Damascus, have been in jail since last summer on charges of "murder, attempted murder and carrying out a terrorist act" in connection with the killing of Hariri.

The investigation continues and is expected to last until at least mid-June when Mr Brammertz, a Belgian prosecutor and deputy prosecutor of the Hague-based International Court of Justice, is due to present his second report into the murder.

The tribunal for the Hariri murder was approved in record time. In December, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1644 acknowledging Lebanon's request to set up a special tribunal.

The political context of the crime and the scrutiny Syria has been under means that the international community is particularly interested in speeding up this process.

After the first six months of the investigation under Mr Brammertz' predecessor, Detlev Mehlis of Germany, which were high in drama, the probe has become more low-key.

The Belgian prosecutor appears to be busy with building a case based on the evidence gathered so far, and media reports say good progress is being made.

But the UN team is still waiting to meet the Syrian president.

New instrument

There is still a lot of work to be done before the court is established.

A team of legal experts led by UN legal counsel Nicolas Michel is due in Beirut over the next few weeks to discuss the details.

The special court is expected to be a hybrid, with Lebanese and foreign judges to ensure impartiality.

This is a relatively new instrument of criminal law that has already been used in Sierra Leone for example.

The judges would use a mix of Lebanese and international law, but the death penalty which is available in Lebanon would not be applied.

The location of the court is still undecided, although it is certain to be outside Lebanon because of security concerns.

Cyprus has been suggested because of its proximity to the country - this would also enable the Lebanese to feel closer to the process and it would help control the costs involved.

But some legal experts in Lebanon believe The Hague would lend more credibility to the trial and has the necessary infrastructure and expertise in dealing with such courts, unlike Cyprus.

Estimates for the running costs of the tribunal vary, but they are thought to be about \$25m year with no clear indication of how many years the court would have to remain in place. Lebanon has pledged to secure the funding, but is bound to face hurdles in the process.

The formation of a court to try the killers of Rafik Hariri is likely to be a learning experience for both Lebanon and the UN.

United Nations



Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 20 April

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

International Clips on Liberia

Denmark asked to imprison Taylor if convicted

COPENHAGEN, April 20, 2006 (AFP) - Denmark has been unofficially asked by the United Nations to imprison Liberia's ex-president Charles Taylor if he is convicted of crimes against humanity by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, the government said on Thursday. "I can only confirm this information," Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Moeller told news agency Ritzau, adding however that "no official request has been made." The UN has also asked Sweden and several other countries whether they would consider the possibility of imprisoning Taylor if he is convicted. "Denmark has worked hard to ensure that Charles Taylor does not escape punishment," Moeller said.

LIBERIA: HIV/ AIDS infection rate rising rapidly

MONROVIA, 20 April (IRIN) - Liberia's new peacetime government is alarmed at the rapidly rising rate of HIV and AIDS infections, which is now a "serious problem", according to President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

"HIV/AIDS is now a serious problem in Liberia. The problem has been increasing very rapidly. Now we are talking an average infection rate of 12 percent [and] the rate of infection for women and children is higher," said Sirleaf at the recent launch of a new HIV/AIDS public awareness campaign in collaboration with the World Health Organisation and the African Union.

During Liberia's 14 years of brutal warfare, guns and mortars were used alongside sexual violence and rape to terrorise, intimidate and control the civilian population. The UN estimates that 40 percent of all women and girls were raped during the war.

Today, the fighting has stopped and security is provided by 15,000 UN peacekeeping troops from 46 countries. In the past, soldiers from West African states served as peacekeepers in Liberia too.

According to Sirleaf, the presence of large numbers of soldiers has added to the AIDS problem. "We have peacekeeping forces in this country, and they have been here many

years of our conflict. They come from areas where the infection rate is much higher. Our sexual behaviour, contribution and interactions with those who come with the peacekeeping forces, all increases the incidence of AIDS. So today we are feeling the effect," said Sirleaf.

Among the troops that make up the United Nation Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) force are battalions and police support from several southern African countries with some of the highest AIDS infection rates registered in the world.

"It is an international problem," said Paul Egunsola UNMIL spokesman in response to Sirleaf's comments. "However, on our side we have been doing a lot in terms of sensitising not only our staff members and troops, but also the public about the danger of HIV/AIDS, and also about measures they can take to prevent the spread of the virus."

VOA 19 April 2006

Liberian Authorities Tighten Security at Monrovia Port

By Franz Wild

Monrovia's port became a symbol of corruption and disorder during Liberia's 14 years of civil war. Goods were regularly stolen and huge amounts of revenue were lost. The new government is tightening controls to increase port revenue.

China records 163 million dollars in trade volume with Liberia

MONROVIA, Apr 20, 2006 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- China's annual trade volume with **Liberia** has reached more than 163 million U.S. dollars, Chinese ambassador to **Liberia** Lin Songtian said here Thursday.

International Clips on West Africa

Ivory Coast peace brokers urge parties to speed up process

ABIDJAN, April 20, 2006 (AFP) - International power brokers overseeing Ivory Coast's fragile peace process met in Abidjan on Thursday, urging parties to speed up the process amid fresh delays on disarming rebels. The International Working Group (GTI), which holds a United Nations mandate, is meeting for the sixth time since it was set up in October to steer the west African nation to elections within a year.

Local Media – Newspapers

Senate Sends Two Cabinet Ministers to Jail

(Daily Observer, The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst and The Informer)

House Speaker Attends Undergraduate Classes at University of Liberia

(Daily Observer)

- Appearing for the first time on the main campus of the University of Liberia (UL) yesterday to commence classes in the undergraduate program, House Speaker Edwin Snowe told a gathering of students that he was pleased to transfer to the UL and that he would prefer to be greeted and treated like a student while on campus. He said that his enrollment was not for political purposes, but purely to acquire knowledge that may be useful in his stewardship at the House.

Special Committee Set Up to Investigate Airport Incident Involving Weah

(The Inquirer and The Analyst)

- An Executive Mansion press release said yesterday that the government had constituted a special probe committee to investigate the recent incident at the Roberts International Airport involving leading opposition figure George Weah.
- Members of the committee include: Catholic Justice and Peace Commission Director Augustine Toe, Esther Seton-Cee of the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia, Bishop Edward Neufville of the Episcopal Church of Liberia and Frank Sainworla of Radio Veritas.

UN Envoy Praises Police Inspector-General

(Daily Observer and Liberian Express)

- In a meeting in Monrovia yesterday, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Alan Doss commended Liberia National Police (LNP) Inspector-General Beatrice Munah Sieh for her appointment as the first female head of Police in Liberia and assured her of UNMIL's continuous support to the LNP to build an effective national police force.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored yesterday at 18:45 pm)*

Senate Sends Two Cabinet Ministers to Jail

(Also reported on ELBS Radio)

Special Committee Set Up to Investigate Airport Incident Involving Weah

(Also reported on ELBS Radio)

STAR RADIO *(News culled from website at 09:00 am)*

China Sends Experts to Liberia

- Chinese Ambassador to Liberia, Lin Songtian told Star Radio yesterday that plans had been finalized for the arrival in Liberia of two separate teams of experts in malaria control and telecommunications.

Rubber Plantations Task Force Submits Report

- The joint government of Liberia and United Nations Rubber Plantation Task Force has submitted its mid-term report to President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, highlighting the need to develop a livelihood package for ex-combatants currently occupying the Guthrie and Sinoe rubber plantations.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Jeddi Armah at armahi@un.org.