

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



Didier Lwanga Watanga, former member of the Finance Section, who died in the earthquake in Haiti. His death was confirmed yesterday by the United Nations.

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, 21 January 2010

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

Thursday, 21 January 2010

Charles Taylor Denies Allegations That the Liberian Judiciary Was Not Independent Under His Presidency

As Prosecutors today described Liberia under Charles Taylor's rule as a country in which human rights abuses were rampant and the rule of law was undermined, the former president denied that he was politically interfering with the Liberian judiciary or that human rights abuses were rife under his leadership.

As his cross-examination continued into another week, prosecutors have sought to establish that Liberia, under Mr. Taylor's presidency, did not enjoy good governance, with widespread reports of human rights abuse, corruption and political interference with the country's judiciary. Questioning Mr. Taylor about his alleged judicial interference, lead prosecution counsel Brenda Hollis read a report of a conference at which lawyers and other judicial officials made statements that the "Liberian judiciary is rotten." Ms. Hollis quoted two Liberian lawyers who both alleged that there was a "strong influence of the government on the judiciary." She further read portions of the statement made at the conference by the then Chief Justice of Liberia that there was government interference in the judiciary and that the government's financial support to the judiciary was very low.

Mr. Taylor dismissed the allegations as "totally incorrect."

Referring to the report on the conference as read by Ms. Hollis in court today, Mr. Taylor said that "your conclusion of this entire document is ludicrous."

"The judiciary was rotten, I agree with the contents, but I met it this way and I'm trying to fix it. This is a conference where Liberians are trying to solve historical problems," Mr. Taylor said. In her response, Ms. Hollis asserted that there was nothing mentioned in the statements by the various speakers at the conference that they were referring to historical problems.

"The interference into the judiciary continued during your presidency," Ms. Hollis insisted.

"No it didn't. The alleged interference didn't continue," Mr. Taylor replied.

As Mr. Taylor gave his responses to Ms. Hollis's questions, the lead prosecutor accused Mr. Taylor of using his responses to deliver speeches. To this, Mr. Taylor responded that

"I am not delivering speeches, except you are the audience, so stop referring

to my comments as speeches."

During Mr. Taylor's direct examination, he said he brought good governance to Liberia and that he respected the fundamental human rights of his citizens. Prosecutors now seek to establish that Mr. Taylor was not a good president for Liberia. Prosecutors allege that as leader of Liberia's rebel group the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), Mr. Taylor was involved in the commission of atrocities against the people of Liberia and that when he

became president of the country in 1997, his system of governance did not reflect a democratic society. Mr. Taylor wanted the same system of governance to be reflected in neighboring countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia and that is why he kept supporting rebel forces in these countries, prosecutors allege. Mr. Taylor has dismissed the prosecution accounts as "untrue."

"You did not act in a way to show the people of Liberia that your new order replaced the old order of violence," Ms. Hollis stated to Mr. Taylor. "You are totally incorrect," Mr. Taylor responded.

Ms. Taylor also denied Ms. Hollis's assertions that "human rights abuses were rife" during his presidency.

In seeking to demonstrate the dire human rights situation in Liberia under Mr. Taylor's presidency, Ms. Hollis also read portions of a letter written to Mr. Taylor by former United States president Jimmy Carter on November 6 2000, explaining why his human rights organization, The

Carter Center for Human Rights, was withdrawing from Liberia.

When first asked whether he was told why the Carter Center was withdrawing

from Liberia, Mr. Taylor originally said "I don't know why they pulled out. I was not answerable to the Carter Center. I have great respect for President Carter but I don't know why they pulled out."

Ms. Hollis continued to read the contents of the letter, which indicated that the Carter Center was withdrawing from the country because of the actions of Mr. Taylor's government.

"Because of prevailing conditions and the actions of your government, you have made it difficult for the Carter Center and

others to operate within democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Reports of serious human rights abuses are common, journalists and civil society members are suppressed. Liberia's role in the conflicts in the sub-region has become a destructive one." President Carter was quoted as writing in his November 2000 letter today.

"On reflection, I now see this," Mr. Taylor said.

Mr. Taylor is responding to charges that he was involved in a joint criminal enterprise with RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has denied allegations that he supplied arms and ammunition to the rebels in return for Sierra Leone's blood diamonds and that he helped them plan certain operations during which atrocities such as rape, murder and amputation of civilian arms were committed.

From July 14 to November 10, 2009, Mr. Taylor testified in direct-examination as a witness in his own defense.

Mr. Taylor's cross-examination continues tomorrow.

Awoko

Wednesday, 20 January 2010

Mano River Basin Women Hang Heads Over Crisis In Guinea

The Republic of Sierra Leone's Ambassador to Liberia, her Excellency Rev. Mrs. Marie Jilo Barnett, over the weekend joined Mano River Union Women in their discussions pertaining issues affecting the MRU Region and the present political crisis in Guinea.

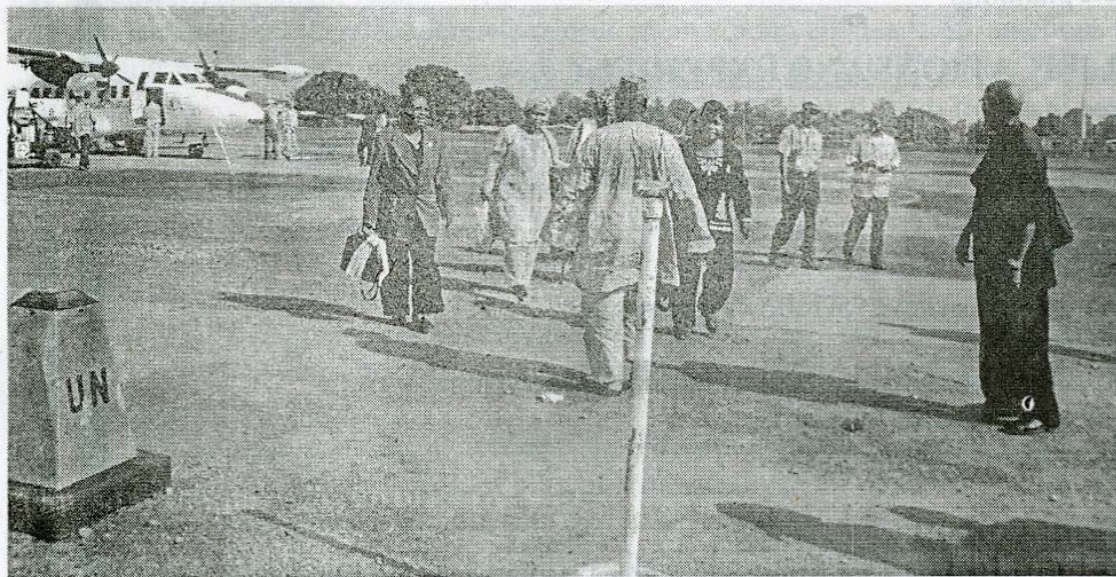
Addressing the meeting at the Corina Hotel in Monrovia, the current Chairperson of MRU, and President of the Republic of Liberia, H. E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf commended MARWOPNET for the relentless and active role they played during the peace process in Liberia. The active and positive strides undertaken by the MRU women during her country's crisis she said, was a shining example for others to emulate.

President Sirleaf suggested, MARWOPNET's intervention in resolving the present crisis in Guinea under the leadership of the Guinean Chapter with the full support of Sierra Leone and Liberia's Chapters including the women of Cote d'Ivoire.

President Johnson Sirleaf stressed the need for unity, trust and mutual respect among MARWOPNET's various chapters, also, she emphasized. The need for continuity and communication in order for the network to grow.

Meanwhile, MARWOPNET has now adopted a plan of Action on Guinea in order to ensure effective intervention with regards lasting solution in that country's crisis. They however confirmed that modalities to enable the women from the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire to join them in their struggle which they said was underway.

Representing Sierra Leone for this all important meeting were Hon Elizabeth Alpha-Lavalie and Human Rights Lawyer and Activist, Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff. Among the Guinean delegate was founding member, Hadja Tiquidinke Dyakabe, whilst the 2nd Regional vice President Madam Amelia Ward and Mary N. Brownell formed part of the Liberian delegation.



By John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

The prosecution in the trial of the former Liberian President Charles Taylor has accused him of planning to destabilise West Africa during his time in power. He was accused of supporting a rebel attack in Ivory Coast seeking to unseat General Robert Guei in 2002. But Mr. Taylor said he was a regional peace maker. John Kollie has this transcription from The Hague...

Charles Taylor has told the trial that he was a key promoter of peace for the Economic Community of West African states, ECOWAS. But the lead prosecutor, Brenda Hollis, has sought to undermine this claim.

At the hearings on Wednesday prosecutor Brenda Hollis accused Mr. Taylor of sending troops to support the Ivorian rebels in 2002. And she claimed that the RUF rebel leader, Sam Bockarie, held several meetings with other rebel commanders in Ivory Coast to plan a three- pronged attack on the Ivorian state.

Mr Taylor described himself as a peace maker and said his involvement in the conflict in Ivory Coast was to protect the Liberian border.

Brenda Hollis also questioned him about consignments of weapons delivered to Liberia. She said that, according to a report by a U.N. Panel of experts, in August 2000, Mr Taylor received two aircraft fully loaded with weapons.

The prosecutor suggested that Mr Taylor's decision in 2001 to disengage from the RUF and to expel Sam Bockarie from Liberia was because he feared being indicted for war crimes.

For Charles Taylor dismissed "total nonsense" claiming that his decisions were in response to a resolution by the UN Security Council.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Wednesday, 20 January 2010

Liberia: Charles Taylor Denies Sending Fighters To Destabilize Ivory Coast

Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor did not send fighters to destabilize neighbouring Ivory Coast, the accused former Liberian president told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges today.

Mr. Taylor, who stands accused of supporting rebel forces in Sierra Leone, was responding to prosecution allegations that he had an agenda to destabilize the West African sub-region by not only supporting Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone, but that he also gave similar support to other rebel forces in the Ivory Coast. Lead prosecutor, Brenda Hollis, today read several reports in court which alleged that Mr. Taylor did send fighters to Ivory Coast in support of rebel groups in that country. Mr. Taylor dismissed all the reports as “totally incorrect.”

Reading from a May 2005 Frontline World news interview with Mr. Taylor’s former defense minister Daniel Cheah, Ms. Hollis quoted Mr. Cheah as saying that “On the Ivorian issue, when I realised that militia forces from Liberia were involved, I talked to him [Mr. Taylor] one day... and I said ‘Look, before going into an area, you must have an objective, either military or political, and in this case, we have none. We have our own issues, we are under attack by LURD [Liberians United for Reconciliation and Development] forces.’ And he said to me, ‘Well, Dan, sometimes there are things that you do not understand. There are too many things happening in this region, and sometimes you can be consumed, and you can be assured that whatever it is will get under control.’”

Mr. Taylor dismissed the news report as “untrue.”

“That is not right. This is an interview. No one knows who conducted the interview, no one knows this paper. My minister of defense, knowing that I was fighting a war, could not have said this to me,” Mr. Taylor said.

Ms. Hollis also read a portion of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) report in which it is stated that “October 21, 2002: The incursion by Benjamin Yeaten, Joe Tuah, Edward Zarmey, Joe Walloe, Osebeo Dehmin, and Mathew Karn into Ivory Coast on the mandate of Charles Taylor. The purpose of the incursion was to act as mercenaries for Philip Doh. A number of people died in the operation, including those who refused to sign on.”

Mr. Taylor also dismissed the TRC’s findings as untrue, saying that it is merely somebody’s opinion.

“That’s total nonsense. Totally incorrect. This is an opinion of somebody that has not been tested in this court. Totally incorrect,” he said.

Also read in court by Ms. Hollis was an April 2003 report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) which revealed that after the assassination of the Ivory Coast’s former military ruler, Robert Guei, Mr. Taylor sent fighters to assist Mr. Guei’s supporters who had promised to revenge the former military ruler’s death.

“At least 500 fighters from Mr. Taylor’s former NPFL [National Patriotic Front of Liberia] rebel group, from the Sierra Leone RUF and ‘able bodied men and women trained in Nimba County, apparently crossed into Danane to join fighters that had been loyal to General Guei. Liberians in Nimba County reportedly saw Taylor’s commanders Benjamen Yeaten and Roland Duo take truckloads of Liberian fighters recruited in Nimba County to Danene late at night every week following Guei’s death,” the report said.

In his response to the ICG report, Mr. Taylor said that “I disagree with everything you have read here. I disagree with this... it is warped. It is totally incorrect, everything that you have read.”

Ms. Hollis further read from the 2003 United Nations Panel of Experts report in which it was alleged that rebel forces in Ivory Coast admitted that they had received support from Mr. Taylor.

“Political leaders of the forces nouvelle acknowledged to the panel that they had asked for and received support from Charles Taylor,” the UN Expert’s report read.

Mr. Taylor again dismissed the contents of the report as “totally incorrect.”

While Mr. Taylor is being tried for his alleged support to RUF rebel forces in Sierra Leone, prosecutors have sought to establish that Mr. Taylor had a policy to destabilize the West African sub-region by supporting rebel groups in various countries including in Ivory Coast. To establish that Mr. Taylor’s activities in Sierra Leone were of a consistent pattern, prosecutors have tried to lead evidence on his alleged activities in Ivory Coast, arguing that it was similar to that of his alleged support to RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has maintained that his involvement in these countries was merely to enhance peace in the sub-region. Ms. Hollis said otherwise.

“Mr. Taylor, in the Ivory Coast, while you were publicly presenting yourself as working for peace, you were in fact involved in escalating and continuing the conflict in Ivory Coast...And in fact Mr. Taylor, that is similar to your approach regarding Sierra Leone, isn’t it?” Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor responded that “that is not correct.”

Also in his cross-examination today, Mr. Taylor dismissed suggestions that he ordered the execution of RUF commander Sam Bockarie because he knew that Mr. Bockarie had been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone and he did not want Mr. Bockarie in the hands of the court.

While denying that he ordered the execution of Mr. Bockarie, Mr. Taylor also insisted that at the time of Mr. Bockarie’s death in 2003, he did not know that Mr. Bockarie had been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Ms. Hollis read news reports which revealed that as of March 10, 2003, seven people had been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone and this included Mr. Bockarie. Mr. Taylor insisted that he did not hear the news reports.

“I did not hear the announcement,” Mr. Taylor said.

“With all due respect counsel, I was not aware of the list of people that had been indicted,” the former president added.

Ms. Hollis also read a BBC news article which indicated that after the arrests of some people who had been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, a public request was also made that any government in the possession of two accused persons who remained at large, including Mr. Bockarie, were to be handed over to the court. Mr. Taylor also maintained that he was not aware of the request.

“Truthfully, I was not aware.”

Mr. Taylor is responding to charges that he was involved in a joint criminal enterprise with RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor has denied allegations that he supplied arms and ammunition to the rebels in return for Sierra Leone’s blood diamonds and that he helped them plan certain operations during which atrocities such as rape, murder and amputation of civilian arms were committed. From July 14 to November 10, 2009, Mr. Taylor testified in direct-examination as a witness in his own defense.

Mr. Taylor’s cross-examination continues tomorrow.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 20 January 2010

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberia & Guinea: Arcelor, BHP to pool iron assets

Business Report 20 January 2010-Steel giant ArcelorMittal and miner BHP Billiton on Tuesday said they are in talks to combine their iron-ore interests in Liberia and Guinea, which would create a platform for a West African business for the mineral. Talks to combine the assets are expected to take several months. The companies are also seeking the support of the West African countries' governments, BHP Billiton said, which is essential for an industry that has had difficulties in the region. "At this stage, it is premature to comment on the nature of the overall investment. We are at an early stage of reviewing the opportunities and development options," a BHP Billiton spokeswoman said. The discussions include BHP Billiton's 43.5% interest in Guinea's Euronimba, which owns 95% of the Nimba project, including exploration leases at Dieke and Nimba North, as well as the miner's four Liberian leases. The combination would also include ArcelorMittal's 70% interest in five Liberian leases and rights to upgrade Liberia's Yekepa-Buchanan railway and Panamax port. The close geographic proximity of the deposits means that from an infrastructure perspective, the companies' interests are well-matched.

International Clips on West Africa

Local Media – Newspaper

UNMIL Holds Memorial Service for Victims of Haiti Earthquake

(The Analyst and The Inquirer)

- The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) today held a special memorial service to mourn the loss of victims including peacekeepers of the January 12 earthquake disaster, which occurred in Haiti.
- In a statement today, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ellen Margrethe Løj paid tribute to Mr. Hédi Annabi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the UN Mission in Haiti- MINUSTAH and his Deputy Luiz Carlos da Costa, former Deputy Special Representative for Rule of Law at UNMIL and two others who had also served in Liberia.

Threshold Bill Passage Imminent...Senate Holds Special Session Today

(The News, Public Agenda, The Analyst, Daily Observer and Heritage)

- The Senate is today holding a special session on the passage of the 'controversial' population threshold bill.
- The special session comes against Tuesday's deferral of the passage of the bill.
- Meanwhile, some members of the Senate have warned that no level of tactic will stall the passage of the threshold bill.

In Angel Togba Murder Case Prosecution Testimonies Point To Strangulation

(The Inquirer)

- The prosecution has ended the production of evidence in the Angel Togba murder case in which it produced 10 witnesses in proving its side of the murder trial.
- Their testimonies point to strangulation as the cause of the death of littleAngel Togba.

- The Filipino doctor, Dr. Servillano Ritualo who explained the autopsy report of the Cuban pathologist said he agreed that the girl was sexually violated.
- Dr. Ritualo said his agreement with the Cuban was based on a review of the Cuban's report and photos of the victim he viewed. The Defense is expected to begin putting forth witnesses next Monday.

NORDIC Parliamentarian Assesses Projects in Liberia

(The News)

- A visiting NORDIC Parliamentarian has expressed satisfaction over the implementation of projects the organization is funding through the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- Mr. Peter Myhre said assessment carried out so far shows that the NORDIC funded- projects are well on course.
- Mr. Myhre speaking Tuesday when he visited THINK-Liberia, a local NGO catering to Sexual-Based Violence victims through UNFPA, said his organization was concerned about reports of continued sexual abuses against women and girls in Liberia.
- THINK-Liberia Executive Director Rossana Schaack expressed thanks to NORDIC for the support but said the challenges are still numerous.
- Also speaking, UNFPA Country Representative Esperance Fundira said her organization looks forward to seeing more support in the fight against sexual violence in Liberia.
- NORDIC is a tripartite organization which comprises Norway, Denmark and Sweden.

Finance Minister Admits to Firestone's Royalty

(Daily Observer)

- Finance Minister Augustine Ngafuan has admitted that Firestone Rubber Plantation made a payment to government for Margibi County.
- Appearing before the House Tuesday Minister Ngafuan said the money was placed into government's account and has not been expended.
- The Minister's admission followed a complaint by Margibi Representative Saah Gbollie that government was withholding the money.
- House spokesman Isaac Redd said Minister Ngafuan assured that the money would be disbursed February this year.

PUL Fines Local Daily For Branding People "Corrupt And Wicked"

(Inquirer and Public Agenda)

- The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) has fined the New Broom Newspaper US\$50.00 in reaction to the paper's year-end edition captioned Personalities: Most Wicked /Corrupt People.
- In the publication, the paper categorized certain individuals as 'most corrupt politician, dubious businessman and chief rapist of the year', among others.
- The PUL says it takes serious exception to the publication and has asked the paper's Publisher Roland Worwee to pay the fine within three days describing the publication as careless and negative journalism which should be discontinued.
- At a meeting Monday, PUL President Peter Quaqua cautioned Mr. Worwee to desist from embarrassing the Union or face complete isolation.

Amnesty International-Liberia Frowns On Students Arrest

(The News and Public Agenda)

- Amnesty International– Liberia has expressed dismay over what it termed as recent brutal action carried out by state securities against student leaders and sixteen others at the recently held FLY Congress at the Ministry of Youth & Sports on at the weekend
- The group said such brutal action by state securities is a violation of human rights and does not represent the tenants of democracy saying it must be stopped.
- In a statement issued in Monrovia, Amnesty International–Liberia called on authorities to ensure that the fundamental rights of the students are protected and should be accorded the due process.

IOM Counter-Trafficking Expert Challenges Security Officers

(Daily Observer and In-Profile)

- A counter-trafficking expert working with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Mr. Freddie D. Goe, has challenged participants at an ongoing workshop to help combat the wave of reported human trafficking in the country.
- The workshop which is being conducted under the theme, 'Counter Trafficking' and is intended to support the government's efforts through the Ministry of Labor.
- The 70 participants attending the workshop are drawn from various security apparatus working in the county as well as local community leaders in the county.

ZAKHEM International Dissociates Itself from Report

(National Chronicle, Liberian Express, The Inquirer, Public Agenda)

- Zakhem International Construction Limited-the international group that signed the contract with the Government of Liberia for the rehabilitation of the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company (LPRC) storage facilities has denied media reports that it intends to engage Government in a legal battle over the cancellation of its contract with Government.
- The company said contrary to the reports, it is in the country to resolve matters following the cancellation of its contract for the refurbishment of the Storage Terminal at the LPRC.
- Meanwhile, the National Chronicle, which have written several articles suggesting that Zakhem was poised to among other things sue Government for the cancellation of the contract has reacted sharply saying it did not need the endorsement of the company to publish the reports.
- The local daily said for a contract worth over US\$24 million which affects a multinational company, the Government and thousands of citizens, it is only ethical that it gave the news the prominence it deserved vowing to continue with publications of such nature.

Local Media – Star Radio *(culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Senate Holds Special Session on Population Threshold Bill Today

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

House Summons Foreign Minister Akerele

- The House of Representatives has summoned Foreign Minister Olubanke King Akerele to provide details to the increase in the price of acquiring Liberian passports.
- Foreign Minister Akerele is to also brief the House on the status of Liberian foreign missions.
- The decision to summon the Foreign Minister was sparked by a report from the House Foreign Relations Committee, which complained that the Foreign Minister failed to honor an invitation to appear before it as part of an investigation into the matter.
- Despite the high cost of living in the country, the new Liberian or international readable passport is being sold for US\$50.00.

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

Finance Minister Admits To Firestone's Royalty

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

NORDIC Parliamentarian Assesses Projects In Liberia

Angel Togba Murder Case: Prosecution Testimonies Point To Strangulation

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

GAC Performance Rated "Poor", but Spokesman Dismisses Claim

- The Liberia Institute of Certified Public Accountants (LICPA) has rated the performance of the General Auditing Commission (GAC) as poor.
- LICPA alleged some of the audit reports coming out of the General Auditing Commission are dismal and detrimental to the image of the country.
- The Director of Training and Examination at LICPA, Mr. Nimely Mambo said a lot of the audit reports emanating from the GAC are short of what he called professional marks.

- Mr. Mambo said while it is true that the GAC is a pivotal institution in driving corruption out of the country, the audits must be professionally conducted.
- But the GAC has dismissed claims that some of its audit reports are short of professional marks.
- GAC Communications Director Ernest Maximore said the commission conducts its audits in line with international auditing standards and currently has international auditors aiding the commission with its work.

PUL Fines Local Daily For Branding People “Corrupt And Wicked”



Press Release, 20 January 2010

UNMIL/PIO/PR/05

UN Staff in Liberia hold memorial service for victims of the Haiti Earthquake

Monrovia, Liberia – With a wreath-laying ceremony and observance of a minute of silence, UN Envoy Ellen Margrethe Løj led peacekeepers and members of the UN family in Liberia in a solemn memorial service held at its Headquarters in remembrance of the victims and survivors of last week’s earthquake in Haiti. The service took place alongside other similar services and commemorations that began last night in UN offices throughout the world.

In her remarks, Ms. Løj said: “Many of us have lost dear friends, colleagues and loved ones to this incomprehensible disaster in a country that has suffered so much. Today we remember all the UN staff lost and still missing in this tragedy.” The earthquake was the United Nations’ single biggest loss in the history of the organization.



Bemoaning the loss of staff of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH in French) “who were dedicated to ensuring peace and stability in Haiti,” Envoy Løj paid a special tribute to four victims whose contributions touched many lives here in Liberia. She said, “Hédi Annabi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, ‘a true citizen of the world’ to quote the Secretary-General, was a true icon of UN peacekeeping and one of its most dedicated and committed sons. He was a mild man with the heart of a lion. His death is a big loss to the United Nations and to Haiti itself.”

She recalled Luiz Carlos da Costa, Annabi’s Deputy in Haiti, who served in Liberia prior to Haiti and who is remembered by UNMIL staff as “a brilliant colleague and boss, but also as a true friend.” He was commemorated by the Secretary-General as “a peacekeeping legend, with extraordinary professionalism and dedication only matched by his charisma and warmth, and his devotion to his many friends,” she noted.

Ms. Løj paid tribute to Fred Wooldridge, who was among the first to join UNMIL in 2003 when he worked with former SRSJ Jacques Klein. “Fred leaves behind our colleague, Teamar, his beloved wife, whom he met and fell in love with whilst serving in Liberia,” she said. She described Mr. Wooldridge as “a true gentleman, with a warm and sensitive nature, who was dedicated to his friends and family,” and added, “we mourn his loss, and extend our deepest condolences to his wife, family, friends and colleagues.”

Jerome Yap, Mr. da Costa’s Personal Assistant, was next on the special tribute. She reminded the gathering of his sense of humor and infectious love of life and noted that he complemented Mr. da Costa and was equally committed to his job and the United Nations. She similarly extended the Mission’s condolence to Jerome’s family and friends.

She expressed her gratitude to UN staff who have volunteered to help “relieve the disaster in Haiti and support our fallen colleagues,” and said, “The United Nations is proud of and grateful for your support, dedication and solidarity.”

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UNMIL website: www.unmil.org

Newstime Africa

Wednesday, 20 January 2010

ICC's Intent on Prosecution is a Big Threat to Guinea's Security



Dadis Camara - Still an important player in Guinea's Politics

The International Criminal Court (ICC), seems determined to bring members of Guinea's junta to face justice over the massacre in Conakry that left 157 people dead according to human rights activists. This intention seems to lack the understanding of the ethnic, social and political makeup of the Guinean society. The U.S. recently voiced its support for such a move, but as usual U.S. policy on Africa is somewhat misguided. Any mistake in Guinea could have serious consequences in the entire region. The international community should not easily forget the carnage in Sierra Leone as a result of 10 years of Civil war, and the brutal killings in Liberia that saw thousands of people killed. The politics of West Africa should not be approached with a western style textbook formula. Africa's inherent political issues cannot be solved on the corridors of western power.

At the moment, the West African region is very fragile. Guinea's junta has made serious mistakes and they are already paying a heavy price for that. They have agreed to hand over power. Dadis Camara has paid another heavy price. He has consented to relinquish power and agreed to a peaceful transfer to a civilian administration through democratic elections. All as a result of U.S. and International pressure. Dadis Camara still has a huge support within Guinea's military – support that should not be under-estimated. Camara's tribe has been under-represented in Guinea's political life for far too long. And any attempt to pursue Camara would ultimately lead to chaos as at the moment the situation is tense, as his tribal people see him as having been isolated from the political landscape and are observing the situation from a distance.

The U.S. and the International community with emphasis on the ICC should revisit their intent on pursuing Camara and other members of the junta and allow common sense to prevail and let the Guinean people, who have been the Victim of this heinous crime, decide on the ultimate punishment for these perpetrators. The quest for justice should not overshadow the need for a second-thought process. The ICC and the West will be held fully responsible for any volatile consequence of their intended actions. West Africa and indeed Africa should not be the playground for US test-diplomacy. The recent political history of the West of Africa if studied carefully, should be a serious guide for anyone making a foolish attempt to register their concerns about human rights at the moment, through a legal course of action.

Guinea's political future rests in the hands of its people. Recent comments by the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner can only be viewed as an attempt to interfere into the political makeup of a country that sees its old colonial master struggling to regain some amount of influence in the country. There is no place for political game in Guinea at this present time. Guinea needs to recover from the pain of dictatorial rule from the time of Sekou Toure through to Lansana Conte and the recent turmoil that left its populace scarred with horror.

Dadis Camara still has a role to play if Guinea is to enjoy any semblance of lasting peace. The West should put on hold any knee-jerk reaction and help institute a framework for peace that will secure regional calm in an already fragile environment. Sierra Leone's President Ernest Koroma is deeply concerned about events in his country's neighbour as he makes attempt to help bring his people out of poverty. Any attempt to bring about disruption to the calm already prevailing in the region will bring about total disdain from someone who is working tirelessly to promote peace and security in the region. Liberia's president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will tell you about her experiences of civil war when she witnessed her country being torn apart by rebels bent on destroying all forms of human life and development in a country that has rarely known peace as a way of life. No one is condoning the brutality that took place in Guinea. And no one is saying the perpetrators of this barbaric act should not face justice. But how this is achieved will ultimately define the political future of this West African country.

The Hague Justice Portal

Thursday, January 21, 2010

New judges at the ICC



*The Hague,
Netherlands*

The International Criminal Court has welcomed two new judges in a swearing in ceremony in The

Hague.

On 20 January 2010, the International Criminal Court (ICC) welcomed two new judges in a swearing in ceremony in The Hague. Ms Silvia Fernández de Gurmendi (Argentina) and Ms Kuniko Ozaki (Japan) were elected by the Assembly of State Parties in November 2009.

The new judges swore their oaths in the presence of the other ICC judges, including President Sang-Hyun Song. Prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo Deputy Prosecutor, Fatou Besouda, as well as the Registrar, Silvana Arbia and the Deputy Registrar, Didier Preira were also in attendance. The Vice-President of the ASP, Jorge Lomónaco witnessed the event in accordance with the Court's Rules of Procedure and Evidence.

Judge Fernández de Gurmendi brings to the Court over 20 years of international and humanitarian law as well as extensive practice of human rights issues. Judge Ozaki has experience as an academic lawyer and has specialist knowledge of international criminal law, humanitarian law and human rights law.

Opening the ceremony, President Sang-Hyun Song welcomed those present to the “heart of a fully functioning judicial institution [where] the once nascent concept of individual responsibility for international crimes is made manifest: the Prosecution and the Defence present their evidence; witnesses and victims tell their stories.”

The ASP Vice-President, Jorge Lomónaco, reporting on the election of the new judges, underlined that “the requirements set out in the Rome Statute take due regard of an equitable geographical representation and seek to ensure that this Court, and by extension the international community, can count on having judges of the utmost integrity and professionalism, as well as an equally unwavering commitment to the application of the law”.

During their solemn undertaking the new judges took the oath to exercise their functions impartially and conscientiously, respecting the confidentiality of investigations and the secrecy of deliberations. Both judges were sworn-in for a term of eight years and two months (to fill a judicial vacancy). The Court will later hold a closed plenary session to assign the judges to judicial divisions.

The International Criminal Court has a bench of 18 judges who are nationals of States Parties and persons of high moral character, impartiality and integrity with the qualifications required in their respective countries for appointment to the highest judicial office.

BBC Online

Thursday, 21 January 2010

Rwandan genocide suspect arrested in France

A Rwandan doctor wanted on charges of genocide and war crimes has been arrested in France, police say.

Sosthene Munyemana, 45, who had been working in a hospital in Bordeaux for eight years, denies the charges.



Some 800,000 people were killed in Rwanda's genocide

His arrest on an extradition warrant from Rwanda comes weeks after France and Rwanda restored diplomatic ties. France had rejected an asylum bid by him in 2008, saying there were "serious reasons" to suspect his involvement in war crimes in 1994, AFP reported.

Some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in the 100-day massacre in 1994.

Mr Munyemana was released on bail, but must report to judicial officials until a court date is set.

He had been on the Interpol list of wanted men for a few years.

Shooting down

The arrest comes weeks after French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner made his first visit to Rwanda since diplomatic ties were restored in November.

Relations between Paris and Kigali had been poor for several years but were severed in 2006 after a French judge accused President Paul Kagame and several senior officials of being behind the 1994 murder of Rwanda's Hutu President Juvenal Habyaremana.

The shooting down of his plane triggered the 1994 genocide.

Those suspected of being most responsible for the killings are being tried by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) based in Arusha, Tanzania.

Reuters

Wednesday, 20 January 2010

Karadzic appeals against court-appointed lawyer



*Amsterdam,
Netherlands*

Former Bosnian
Serb leader
Radovan
Karadzic
appealed on
Wednesday
against the
imposition of a

court-appointed lawyer at his war crimes trial, arguing that Bosnian and Serbian lawyers were excluded from representing him.

Judges appointed London-based barrister Richard Harvey in October after Karadzic boycotted the first three days of his trial, saying he needed more time to prepare his defence.

The United Nations court trying Karadzic for genocide overruled his objection to the appointment. Wednesday's filing was to the appeals chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague.

Karadzic denies all 11 counts of war crimes relating to the 1992-95 Bosnian war, including the genocide of 8,000 Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica, the worst atrocity of the conflict.

His trial was adjourned until March to give Harvey time to prepare.

In a 23-page filing, Karadzic argued that a shortlist of lawyers to assist in the defence prepared by the court's registrar ignored the court's own rules on eligibility.

"This procedure resulted in the elimination of every single lawyer from the Balkans and left only three lawyers eligible for the appointment," Karadzic said in his appeal. Two more lawyers were added to the list, but Karadzic rejected all five.

It was then that the court appointed Harvey.

"Instead of allowing the accused to choose a lawyer, and thereby enjoy a collaborative relationship, the Trial Chamber sanctioned the imposition of a lawyer on the accused whom the accused did not want and cannot trust," Karadzic said.

He asked the appeals chamber to order that he be allowed to pick a supporting counsel from the court's original broader list, before it was whittled down.