

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



A packed courtroom witnesses the judgments in the trial of The Prosecutor vs. Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu (the AFRC Accused). See photos from the courtroom in today's *'Special Court Supplement'*

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:

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 20 June 2007

Guilty Verdicts in the Trial of the AFRC Accused

Three former leaders of Sierra Leone's former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) have each been found guilty on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Today's judgments were read out in court by Justice Julia Sebutinde, the Presiding Judge of Trial Chamber II, in proceedings which lasted just over two hours.

Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu were each found guilty on Count 1 (acts of terrorism), Count 2 (collective punishments), Count 3 (extermination), Count 4 (murder, a crime against humanity), Count 5 (murder, a war crime), Count 6 (rape), Count 9 (outrages upon personal dignity), Count 10 (physical violence, a war crime), Count 12 (conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities), Count 13 (enslavement), and Count 14 (pillage).



Not guilty judgements were entered on Count 11 (other inhumane acts – a crime against humanity), Count 7 (sexual slavery and any other form of sexual violence) and Count 8 (other inhumane act – forced marriage).

A sentencing hearing has been scheduled for July 16.

Today's judgment is the first to be handed down at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. A judgment in the case of two accused former members of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) are pending before Trial Chamber I.

This trial marks the first time that an international tribunal has ruled on the charge of recruitment of child soldiers into an armed force, and on the crime of forced marriage in an armed conflict.

Trial Chamber II, consisting of Justice Julia Sebutinde, Justice Teresa Doherty and Justice Richard Lussick, is also hearing evidence in the Special Court's trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor at The Hague.

#END

Awoko

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

Today is judgement Day

By Betty Milton

The Special Court of Sierra Leone will today hand down its first judgment on the three Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) indictees after three years on trial.

The three accused persons Alex Tamba Brima aka Gullit, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara, and Santigie Borbor Kanu, aka 55 were facing 14 count charges for crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 Common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and

other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

After presenting 59 witnesses to prove their case the Prosecution concluded its case on 21 November 2005 and on the 27 October 2006 the defence also concluded their case after calling 87 witnesses to prove the innocence of the accused.

Gullit who is alleged to have been a former official of the AFRC, was indicted on 7 March 2003 and was arrested and taken into Court custody, making his initial appearance on 10 March at the temporary courthouse in Bonthe where he pleaded not

guilty to all charges.

The second accused Ibrahim Bazy Kamara is also alleged to have been a senior member of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council.

Bazy made his first appearance on June 4, 2003 before Judge Pierre Boutet also on Bonthe Island where he pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

Santigie Borbor Kanu, the third accused is also alleged to have been a senior member of the AFRC and on September 16, 2003 he was transferred from the custody of the Sierra Leonean authorities, where he

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Today is judgement Day

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was awaiting trial on allegations of his involvement in a January 2003 attack on a military supply warehouse in Freetown. On 23 September he made his initial appearance before Judge Pierre Boutet at the

Special Court's temporary courthouse in Freetown, where he pleaded not guilty to all the charges against him. The 14 count indictment includes terrorizing the civilian population and collective punishments; unlawful killings, extermination, murder,

violence to life, health and physical or mental well-being of persons, sexual violence, the use of child soldiers and conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities.

Awoko

Thursday, 21 June 2007

AFRC convicted: Guilty



Santigie Kanu (55)

Ibrahim 'Bazzy' Kamara

Alex Tamba Brima aka Gullit

Justice Julia Sebutinde delivering the verdict

AFRC Convicted: Guilty

By Kelvin Lewis & Betty Milton

In her two-hour verdict, Ugandan born Justice Julia Sebutinde cataloged the crimes, which the three convicts had committed during the bloody reign of

the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council in Freetown and the provinces.

The three Alex Tamba Brima (Gullit), Brima (Bazzy) Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu (55) had been facing 14 count charges for war crimes ranging from terrorism, rape,

murder, pillaging to use of child soldiers.

Justice Sebutinde detailed how at least 1,145 people were killed and over 237 amputated.

She pointed out individual instances in which each of the three had personally

murdered amputated or ordered their men to burn people's homes, which they referred to in one instance as lighting the war candles.

Mention was made of the bloody attack on Freetown where she said Santigie Borbor Kanu had taken out ECOMOG soldiers from State house and had personally shot one of them.

Dressed in sleek European suits, 55 and

Bazzy in black and Gullit in grey they stood silently in the dock as the Presiding Judge read out their convictions.

The first and second indictees were found guilty on 11 of the 14 count charges, not guilty on count 11 which deals with other inhumane acts and no conviction was entered for counts 7 and 8 which deals with sexual slavery and other inhumane acts under sexual violence.

This was the same

conviction entered for Brima Bazzy Kamara but 3rd accused Santigie Borbor Kanu was found guilty on 12 counts and no conviction was entered for counts 7 and 8.

The Judges had dismissed count 7 saying "it was bad for duplicity".

The three now have to wait until July 16th for their sentencing.

This is the first time that an international court has handed down a conviction for use of child soldiers.

Awoko

Thursday, 21 June 2007

Sierra Leone: Landmark Convictions for Use of Child Soldiers

The war crimes court for Sierra Leone has handed down the first convictions by a UN-backed tribunal for the crime of recruiting and using child soldiers. Human Rights Watch said that these convictions are a ground-breaking step toward ending impunity for commanders who exploit hundreds of thousands of children as soldiers in conflicts worldwide.

In Freetown today, the Special Court for Sierra Leone handed down verdicts against three accused men from the rebel Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), one of three warring factions during Sierra Leone's 11-year brutal armed conflict, which ended in 2002. The judges found the three accused – Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu – guilty of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including

the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The defendants were also acquitted on three counts of crimes against humanity.

“This use of child soldiers is a particularly horrific crime. These children should have been learning how to read, not how to shoot an AK-47,” said Jo Becker, children's rights advocate for Human Rights Watch. “We hope that the Special Court's decision will protect children in other parts of the world from suffering what so many Sierra Leonean children were forced to endure.”

Thousands of children were recruited and used by all sides during Sierra Leone's conflict, including the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the AFRC, and the pro-government Civil Defense Forces (CDF). Children were often forcibly recruited, given drugs and used to commit atrocities.

Thousands of girls were also recruited as soldiers and often subjected to sexual exploitation.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established in 2002 to prosecute those “who bear the greatest responsibility” for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, along with several domestic offenses, committed since 1996. All nine defendants being prosecuted by the Special Court have been charged with the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The trial phase is complete for cases involving individuals associated with the CDF and AFRC. For accused associated with the RUF, the defense began presentation of its case this May. The Special Court began the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor on June 4 in The Hague.

“Commanders in many conflicts deliberately prey upon children as recruits,” said Becker. “Now that child recruiters are being brought to justice, their impunity is no longer so certain.”

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Sierra Leone: Landmark Convictions

From Page 4

The Special Court's Appeals Chamber also issued a significant ruling in 2004 that the prohibition on the recruitment or use of children under the age of 15 had crystallized as customary international law prior to 1996, and that individuals bore criminal responsibility for such acts.

The first individual being

tried by the International Criminal Court (ICC), the former militia leader Thomas Lubanga from the Democratic Republic of Congo, has also been charged with the crimes of enlisting and conscripting children as soldiers and using them to participate actively in hostilities. In March 2006, Lubanga was transferred to the ICC in The Hague.

Special Court verdict on 55, Bazzy today

By Ibrahim Seibure

The United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone will today pass judgment in the case of the

prosecutor versus Brima Kamara and Santigie Kanu, of former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), in Courtroom 2.

Santigie Kanu, alias "Brigadier 55," was issued a seventeen-count indictment that includes crimes against humanity, Violations of Article 3, common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of international humanitarian

law, while Ibrahim Kamara, aka 'Bazzy,' was also issued another seventeen count indictment of terrorizing civilians, sexual violence, use of child soldiers, looting and burning and attacks on United Nations personnel. He was alleged to be a commander in the military junta that overthrew the constitutional government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on the 25th May, 1997, which was later overthrown in February 1998.

We Want Heavy Sentences - Prosecutor

By Danny Glenwright

called 'war crimes' - and international humanitarian law. Collectively, these included acts of terrorism, unlawful killings, sexual violence, rape, outrages upon personal dignity, physical violence and other crimes against humanity.

Kamara and Kanu were also found guilty on two other counts of pillaging and enslavement, while judges found the three not guilty on counts of sexual slavery and other inhumane acts, including forced marriage - a finding Rapp said prosecution will want clarified.

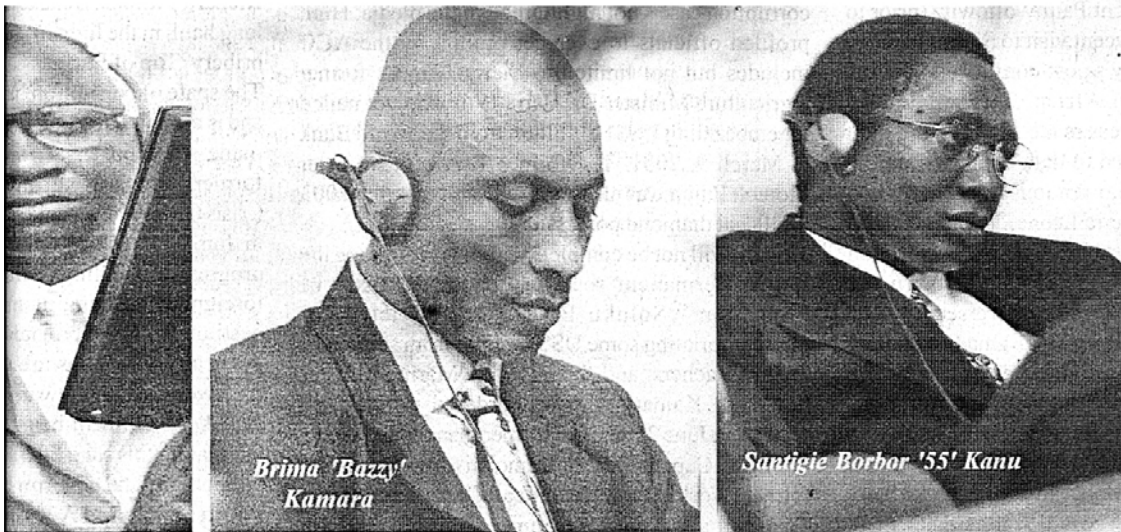
The accused, dressed in suits, were grave during proceedings, often resting with their hand over their mouth, or taking notes.

There were several moments during the two-hour judgment when the three hung their heads, staring at the floor, especially while Presiding Justice

Julia Sebutinde read gory accounts of the January 1999 invasion of Freetown.

Describing the 'brutal attack referred to as 'operation cut hand,' Sebutinde recalled the testimony of witnesses who heard Brima tell his subordinates "The hand that they are pointing at us, the fingers they are pointing at us,

Cont. page 7



Brima 'Bazzy' Kamara

Santigie Borbor '55' Kanu

Prosecution for the Sierra Leone Special Court (SLSC) case against three former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) leaders will ask for lengthy prison sentences after they were convicted on several counts of crimes against humanity yesterday.

Stephen John Rapp, lead prosecutor, said he was "very satisfied with the judgment," and will, in a submission in one week, ask for sentences which could see the three accused - Alex Tamba Brima, Brima 'Bazzy' Kamara and Santigie Borbor '55' Kanu - in prison for the rest of their lives.

"Historically, this is very important for Sierra Leone, but

it is also very important for the region and the rest of the world," he said, noting that the conviction yesterday was the first in world history for conscription of children under the age of 15.

Brima, Kamara and Kanu were found guilty on 11 counts of crimes against humanity, violation of the Geneva Conventions - commonly

[Note: the continuation is omitted from the paper.]

At Special Court

AFRC Indictees Face Judgment Today

By
Ayo Luk-
Johnson

Today Wednesday June 20, 2007 is judgment day for the AFRC indictees standing trial at the UN Backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The indictees - Santigie Kanu aka 55, Ibrahim Bazzy Kamara and Tamba Brima aka Gullit have for the past twenty four months been facing charges relating to war crimes and crime against

humanity. According to the indictments, they held the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed by AFRC fighters during the country's ten-year civil conflict.

It could be recalled that the AFRC over turned the hard-earned democracy when it overthrew the legitimate government of President Kabbah in May 25, 1997.

One of the AFRC indictees Johnny Paul Koroma (still at large) who was incarcerated at the Pademba

Road Prison was subsequently released with other prisoners by the coup plotters. On his release Johnny Paul Koroma was appointed Chairman of the Junta and Head of State. The AFRC was later driven out of Freetown by the Military wing of ECOWAS, ECOMOG.

Today's judgment will go down the history as the first to be delivered by the Special Court for Sierra Leone since the establishment of the UN backed court.

AFRC Men To Be Jailed In Austria Or Sweden

By
Alpha
Amadu
Bah

Alex Tamba Brima, Brima 'Bazzy' Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu alias 5-5 found guilty yesterday by the Special Court, are likely to serve their jail term either in Austria or Sweden, according to lead Prosecutor Stephen Rapp, in a press briefing just after Justice Julia Sebutinde had read her judgement which lasted some two hours. Sentence would be handed down on July 16 and the accused, according to the Judge, should continue to remain in custody. The British trained Ugandan Judge found the three

See Page 2

AFRC men found guilty

from front page

guilty on 11 out of the 14 count charges for which they were being tried since 2003 which include terrorizing the civilian population and collective punishment, unlawful killing, sexual violence, physical violence, use of child soldiers, abduction and force labour, looting and burning.

They were not found guilty on charges of sexual slavery (count 7), other inhumane act (counts 8 and 11). On these the prosecution failed to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt.

Prosecutor Rapp told journalists that the judgement will be remarkable in the history of Sierra Leone, the West African region and the world at large.

59 witnesses testified for the prosecution while the defence called in 87 witnesses.

AFRC Tamba Brima convicted

Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu have been convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity, which they committed during Sierra Leone's decade-long war. These were the first verdicts of Sierra Leone's UN-backed war crimes tribunal. These three guys were senior members of an armed faction that toppled the government in 1997. They were found guilty of 11 of the 14 charges, but acquitted of alleged sexual slavery and other inhuman acts. The men will be sentenced on 16 July. During the conflict tens of thousands were killed as the rebel forces raped and mutilated defenceless innocent civilians. The US-based Human Rights Watch hailed the verdict as "the first time that an international court has issued a verdict on child recruitment". The three had pleaded not guilty to the 14 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, rape and the use of child soldiers. Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu belonged to the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which

formed an alliance with the notorious Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels. As the rebel groups attempted to hold power the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, in return for Sierra Leone's diamonds, allegedly backed them. Following the end of the conflict five years ago, a UN-backed court was set up to try those people who bore the greatest responsibility for the atrocities committed. Trying all those who committed crimes would

have been an impossible task says the BBC's West Africa correspondent, Will Ross. So many in Sierra Leone now live side-by-side with the very people they saw committing atrocities, he says. The court has indicted 12 people, including Charles Taylor, although three of them have since died or are presumed to have died. Mr. Taylor is currently in The Hague, where his war crimes trial is due to resume next week. His case was moved there to avoid unrest in Sierra

Leone and Liberia. The head of the AFRC rebels was never apprehended but is presumed dead. The most notorious rebel leader, the RUF's Foday Sankoh died in custody while awaiting trial. Another high profile figure former Interior Minister Sam Hinga Norman, died after surgery with his verdict pending. It may be slow and expensive but many view the court's work as an important step to help end impunity, our correspondent says.

UNITED NATIONS  NATIONS UNIES

UNITED NATIONS INTEGRATED OFFICE IN SIERRA LEONE (UNIOSIL)

Ref.No.UNIOSIL/PIO/049/2007

PRESS RELEASE

UNMIL MILITARY CONDUCTS "EXERCISE GREEN HORIZON III" IN SIERRA LEONE IN SUPPORT OF SPECIAL COURT

The operation is consistent with UN Security Council Resolutions on UNIOSIL and UNMIL

The Military component of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), is conducting – with the full participation of the Mongolian contingent assigned to protect the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) – an exercise named "Green Horizon III" in Freetown, Sierra Leone, between 25 and 30 June, to test the readiness of troops to respond to any emergencies around the Court.

The exercise is a situational awareness, reconnaissance and liaison for UNMIL Force to practice its mandated tasks in support of the SCSL. The operation involves the ground movement of UNMIL's Quick Reaction Force (QRF) and the Mongolian Guard Force aimed at reinforcing security.

UNMIL forces will be deployed by air to Freetown in preparation for the exercise and will return to Liberia following completion of their mission. The "Green Horizon II" exercise was conducted last January.

The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) and the Government of Sierra Leone – based on Security Council Resolution 1620 – are fully involved in the planning of the military exercise, with support from UNMIL Force Headquarters in Monrovia.

BBC Online

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

First S Leone war crimes verdicts

Three men have been convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity during Sierra Leone's decade-long war.

These were the first verdicts of Sierra Leone's UN-backed war crimes tribunal.

Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu were senior members of an armed faction that toppled the government in 1997.



Tens of thousands of civilians were killed and mutilated during the war

They were found guilty of 11 of the 14 charges, but acquitted of alleged sexual slavery and other inhuman acts. The men will be sentenced on 16 July.

The judges read out their verdicts before a packed courtroom in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown. The three men face lengthy prison terms.

During the conflict tens of thousands were killed as the rebel forces raped and mutilated defenceless innocent civilians.

The US-based Human Rights Watch hailed the verdict as "the first time that an international court has issued a verdict on child recruitment".

Important step

The three had pleaded not guilty to the 14 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, rape and the use of child soldiers.

They belonged to the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which formed an alliance with the notorious Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels.

As the rebel groups attempted to hold power they were allegedly backed by the former president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, in return for Sierra Leone's diamonds.

Following the end of the conflict five years ago, a UN-backed court was set up to try those people who bore the greatest responsibility for the atrocities committed.



The AFRC teamed up with the other rebels after 1997

Trying all those who committed crimes would have been an impossible task says the BBC's West Africa correspondent, Will Ross.

So many in Sierra Leone now live side-by-side with the very people they saw committing atrocities, he says.

Cases

The court has indicted 12 people, including Charles Taylor, although three of them have since died or are presumed to have died.

Mr Taylor is currently in The Hague, where his war crimes trial is due to resume next

week. His case was moved there to avoid unrest in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The head of the AFRC rebels was never apprehended but is presumed dead.

The most notorious rebel leader, the RUF's Foday Sankoh, died in custody while awaiting trial.

Another high profile figure, former Interior Minister Sam Hinga Norman, died after surgery with his verdict pending.

It may be slow and expensive but many view the court's work as an important step to help end impunity, our correspondent says.

Voice of America

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

Sierra Leone Court Convicts Rebel Leaders of War Crimes

By VOA News

A UN-backed court in Sierra Leone has convicted three rebel leaders of war crimes committed during the country's civil war.

The court Wednesday found Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu guilty on 11 of 14 charges, including murder, rape, and using child soldiers.

They were acquitted on three charges related to sexual slavery and other "inhuman acts." Sentencing is set to take place July 16.

The verdicts are the first handed down by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is also trying former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

U.S.-based Human Rights Watch hailed the convictions, calling them a "ground-breaking step" toward ending impunity for commanders who exploit child soldiers.

Brima, Kamara, and Kanu led the rebel Armed Forces Revolution Council, a rebel faction that toppled Sierra Leone's elected government in 1997 and set up a junta with another rebel group. The three men had pleaded not guilty to the charges.

The war crimes court was set up by Sierra Leone's government and the United Nations to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed during the civil war. The 11-year conflict ended in 2002.

Associated Press

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

Sierra Leone Convicts 3 of War Crimes

By CLARENCE ROY-MACAULEY

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone -- A U.N.-backed court Wednesday found three former leaders of a Sierra Leone junta guilty of war crimes, the first convictions stemming from the country's decade-long civil war.

The court found the three defendants guilty of 11 of the 14 charges, including acts of terrorism, using child soldiers, enslavement, rape and murder, among others. They were acquitted of charges of sexual slavery and "other inhumane acts," said Peter Andersen, spokesman for the Sierra Leone Special Court.

The tribunal was set up following the end of fighting in 2002 to prosecute the worst offenders in a conflict that ravaged the small West African nation and spilled over into neighboring Liberia. The court has indicted 12 people, including former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who is charged with backing Sierra Leonean rebels.

The three convicted Wednesday were accused of heading a junta that raped women, burned villages, conscripted thousands of child soldiers and forced others to work as laborers in diamond mines. They had pleaded not guilty to all the charges.

Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu were indicted in 2003 as the alleged leaders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, a group of former military officers who toppled Sierra Leone's government in 1997 and then teamed up with rebels to control the country until 1998, according to the indictment.

"It's the first time that an international court has issued a verdict on child recruitment," said Corinne Dufka, a senior researcher at New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Dufka, an expert on the conflict, said the junta committed their worst atrocities after they were pushed into the bush by an international peacekeeping force in 1998.

They started "punishing the civilian population as a whole," Dufka said.

An estimated 500,000 people were killed, mutilated or suffered other atrocities during Sierra Leone's conflict, fueled by the illicit diamond trade.

Some have criticized the Special Court trials for being too slow. Three defendants have died since being indicted _ two of natural causes and one killed in what many believe was a move to silence him.

Taylor's trial opened earlier this month in The Hague, Netherlands. Although he is being tried by the Special Court, the proceedings are taking place outside Sierra Leone because of fears the case could trigger fresh violence in the region.

Associated Press Writer Rukmini Callimachi contributed to this report from Dakar, Senegal.

(This version CORRECTS number of charges convicted on to 11 not 12.)

Reuters

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

Sierra Leone court delivers first war-crimes verdicts

Christo Johnson | Freetown, Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's special war-crimes court handed down its first verdicts on Wednesday, finding three leaders of a militia guilty of war crimes that include killing, raping and mutilating civilians.

The verdicts against Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu stem from charges relating to Sierra Leone's 1991 to 2002 civil war that also target former Liberian president Charles Taylor, facing a separate trial in The Hague.

The three men were commanders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), former government soldiers who split from the army and sided with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels during the conflict that devastated the former British colony.

"They were found guilty but not on all counts," said Peter Andersen, a spokesperson for the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The United Nations-backed tribunal found them guilty on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, which covered terrorising the civilian population, unlawful killings, rape, the use of child soldiers, abductions and forced labour, and looting.

No judgement was entered on two counts of sexual violence while the three were found not guilty on one count of physical violence, Andersen said. The men, all of whom pleaded not guilty, were due to be sentenced on July 16.

"Captured women and girls were raped ... AFRC/RUF also physically mutilated men, women and children, including carving 'AFRC' and 'RUF' on their bodies," the prosecution said in its indictment against them.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up jointly by the former British colony's government and the UN in 2002 to try those deemed most responsible for human rights violations during the later stages of the civil war.

It initially issued 13 indictments against leaders from all three of the main warring factions during Sierra Leone's conflict, but three suspects have since died and the whereabouts of one is unknown.

Taylor's accomplices

The AFRC staged a coup on May 25 1997, ousting President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah just six months after he signed a peace deal. They then joined with the RUF rebels in a bid to gain control of Sierra Leone's diamond mines.

The prosecution said Brima, Kamara and Kanu acted in concert with Taylor.

Many ordinary Sierra Leoneans take only a passing interest in the tribunal, partly because rebel leaders Foday Sankoh and Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie are dead and partly because they are too busy living day-to-day in one of the world's poorest countries.

The prosecution listed towns and villages around Sierra Leone where fighters hacked civilians to death, kidnapped others and took them to bases with names like "Superman Camp".

Children were routinely abducted, trained in camps around the country and forced to fight, while others were forced to work as diamond miners, the prosecution said.

Forces loyal to President Kabbah forced the AFRC/RUF junta from power in February 1998 and his government returned the next month, but hostilities continued, including subsequent attacks by junta fighters on the capital, Freetown.

British military intervention to back up UN peacekeepers checked the rebel advance in 2000, helping to end a decade of war in which an estimated 50 000 people were killed. – Reuters

Alalam.ir

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

<http://www.alalam.ir/english/en-NewsPage.asp?newsid>

1st SLeone Tribunal Verdicts

FREETOWN, June 20--Sierra Leone's special war crimes court hands down its first verdicts on Wednesday against three leaders of a militia accused of hacking the limbs off civilians and carving its initials into their bodies.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up jointly by the former British colony's government and the United Nations in 2002 to try those deemed most responsible for human rights violations during the later stages of a 1991-2002 civil war.

Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu were commanders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), former government soldiers who split from the army and sided with the RUF rebels during the conflict.

"Captured women and girls were raped ... AFRC/RUF also physically mutilated men, women and children, including carving 'AFRC' and 'RUF' on their bodies," the prosecution said in its indictment against them.

"Many civilians saw these crimes committed. Others returned to their homes or places of refuge to find the results of these crimes -- dead bodies, mutilated victims and looted and burnt property," the indictment said.

The AFRC staged a coup on May 25, 1997, ousting President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah just six months after he signed a peace deal. They then joined the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in a bid to gain control of Sierra Leone's diamond mines.

The prosecution says Brima, Kamara and Kanu acted in concert with former Liberian President Charles Taylor, himself on trial at a special sitting of the court in The Hague, Netherlands.

The charges against the three men include unlawful killings, abductions, forced labor, sexual violence and the use of child soldiers during a campaign of terror against civilians.

All three pleaded not guilty.

Toronto Star

Wednesday, 21 June 2007

War crimes court scores victory for child soldiers

Olivia Ward

FOREIGN AFFAIRS REPORTER

The world was shocked at the plight of Sierra Leone's child soldiers, who were forced by ruthless warlords to commit thousands of appalling murders, assaults and mutilations during a brutal 11-year armed conflict. But yesterday, the United Nations-backed war crimes court for Sierra Leone handed down landmark convictions against three men for recruiting and using child soldiers – a verdict rights advocates say will help end impunity for those who exploit children in conflicts worldwide.

"This is a milestone toward ending this gross and horrific crime," said Windsor lawyer Allan Rock, a former Canadian ambassador to the United Nations who campaigned for the rights of children. "It sends a signal that the law really means something, investigations will be carried out, no matter how difficult and time-consuming, and that the international community will track down those responsible."

The verdict reached by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in the capital Freetown condemned three men from the rebel Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, one of three factions that fought each other in a war that prompted acts of inhuman savagery.

In addition to charges relating to child recruitment, Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu were found guilty of war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The International Criminal Court at The Hague has also charged guerrilla leader Thomas Lubanga from the Democratic Republic of Congo with snatching children as young as 10 and forcing them to fight.

"We hope that the Special Court's decision will protect children in other parts of the world from suffering what so many Sierra Leonean children were forced to endure," said Jo Becker, children's rights advocate for New York-based Human Rights Watch.

Some 300,000 underage fighters are still enlisted in conflicts worldwide. But reports from Sierra Leone were unsurpassed for sheer brutality. Children were forced to murder their families, including babies and the elderly, often hacking them to death with machetes.

"Children are of great value to warlords because they're malleable ... and can be held under the power of the leaders with the use of drugs," said Rock, who recently reported to the UN on child soldiers in Sri Lanka. "Once they are recruited, neither their own countries nor the international community will devote the resources needed to help them recover. This is a crime that does terrible harm not only to the (child soldiers') victims, but to the children themselves."

Amnesty International

Wednesday 20 June 2007

Press Release

AFRC Guilty Verdicts: Amnesty International Reacts

Amnesty International said that today's guilty verdicts by the Special Court for Sierra Leone against three senior members of Sierra Leone's feared Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) — while a positive step — should not be the closing chapter in the struggle to achieve justice for the terrible crimes committed against the people of that country during the 11 years of violent conflict.

The organization based its comments on preliminary reports of the verdicts, which have not yet been published.

Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu, all senior commanders of the AFRC, were convicted of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in a non-international armed conflict, including unlawful killings, extermination, rape, acts of terrorism, collective punishment, and mutilation. They were acquitted of sexual slavery and other inhumane acts.

"These verdicts send a positive signal to the people of Sierra Leone that someone will be held responsible for the brutal crimes perpetrated against them and members of their families — but there are many others who carried out terrible acts during the country's 11 years of conflict," said Hugo Relva, Amnesty International Legal Adviser. "Thousands of others can and must be held criminally responsible. Reparations must also be provided to the victims in order for justice to begin to prevail throughout Sierra Leone."

Remarkably, today's decision by the Special Court marks the first time in history that individuals have been convicted of war crimes for conscripting and enlisting children under the age of fifteen into armed forces or groups and using them to participate actively in hostilities.

Today's ruling also reaffirmed the well-established principle that a national amnesty granted to any person in respect of crimes against humanity and war crimes is not a bar under international law to investigation or prosecution.

"Today's verdicts send a powerful message to those still suffering the effects of years of violence — especially those thousands who bear the terrible scars of having been forced to participate in violent acts as children and the many women and girls who were victims of rape," said Tania Bernath, Amnesty International's researcher on Sierra Leone. "It is not only important that victims are made aware of these verdicts, but that either a fast track system or legal aid is provided so that victims can claim the compensation that is their legal right."

"These convictions should encourage the government of Sierra Leone to set aside the amnesty provisions contained in the Lomé Accord and make all crimes under international law — including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture and enforced disappearances — criminal under national law," said Hugo Relva.

Background To date, the Special Court for Sierra Leone has indicted 13 individuals under its limited mandate to prosecute those bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed since 30 November 1996 out of the thousands of persons who committed these crimes over a decade and who continue to enjoy impunity.

Out of the 13, nine are in custody and trials have started for all of them. Three have died and one remains at large.

A range of reparations and a trust fund to help fill the gap if a convicted person lacks the means to provide reparations are provided by the International Criminal Court to victims of crimes it prosecutes. However, the Statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone adopted a more restrictive approach, saying that it can only order the forfeiture of property taken from victims by a convicted person and its return to the rightful owner.

So far, the government of Sierra Leone has failed to review the national justice system to ensure that procedures are put in place so that victims of crimes prosecuted by the Special Court can seek compensation before national courts without delay. In particular, it is unclear whether a fast-track system will be established so that victims can claim reparations, including restitution, rehabilitation, compensation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition without delay or whether they will be provided with legal aid to seek compensation.

The amnesty of the Lomé Accord of 7 July 1999 still bars the prosecution of anyone in a Sierra Leone court for crimes against humanity, war crimes and other crimes under international law. Even if the amnesty did not apply, however, prosecutions for these crimes would not be possible since Sierra Leone has not yet defined them as crimes under national law.

Human Rights Watch

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

Press Release

Sierra Leone: Landmark Convictions for Use of Child Soldiers

(New York, June 20, 2007) – The war crimes court for Sierra Leone has handed down the first convictions by a UN-backed tribunal for the crime of recruiting and using child soldiers. Human Rights Watch said that these convictions are a ground-breaking step toward ending impunity for commanders who exploit hundreds of thousands of children as soldiers in conflicts worldwide.

In Freetown today, the Special Court for Sierra Leone handed down verdicts against three accused men from the rebel Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), one of three warring factions during Sierra Leone's 11-year brutal armed conflict, which ended in 2002. The judges found the three accused – Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu – guilty of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

“This use of child soldiers is a particularly horrific crime. These children should have been learning how to read, not how to shoot an AK-47,” said Jo Becker, children's rights advocate for Human Rights Watch. “We hope that the Special Court's decision will protect children in other parts of the world from suffering what so many Sierra Leonean children were forced to endure.”

Thousands of children were recruited and used by all sides during Sierra Leone's conflict, including the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the AFRC, and the pro-government Civil Defense Forces (CDF). Children were often forcibly recruited, given drugs and used to commit atrocities. Thousands of girls were also recruited as soldiers and often subjected to sexual exploitation.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established in 2002 to prosecute those “who bear the greatest responsibility” for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, along with several domestic offenses, committed since 1996. All nine defendants being prosecuted by the Special Court have been charged with the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The trial phase is complete for cases involving individuals associated with the CDF and AFRC. For accused associated with the RUF, the defense began presentation of its case this May. The Special Court began the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor on June 4 in The Hague.

“Commanders in many conflicts deliberately prey upon children as recruits,” said Becker. “Now that child recruiters are being brought to justice, their impunity is no longer so certain.”

The Special Court's Appeals Chamber also issued a significant ruling in 2004 that the prohibition on the recruitment or use of children under the age of 15 had crystallized as customary international law prior to 1996, and that individuals bore criminal responsibility for such acts.

The first individual being tried by the International Criminal Court (ICC), the former militia leader Thomas Lubanga from the Democratic Republic of Congo, has also been charged with the crimes of enlisting and conscripting children as soldiers and using them to participate actively in hostilities. In March 2006, Lubanga was transferred to the ICC in The Hague.

Cocorioko website

Thursday, 21 June 2007

Opinion

<http://www.cocorioko.net/Wednesdayjune202007p4.html>

Special Court: Verdict of No Consequence

By Jacob Sax Conteh, Senior Editor
Alexandria, Virginia, US

For a person whose senior brother Samuel Conteh was brutally butchered by RUF rebels in Gbonkolenken as he walked the road to go tie his goats in April 1994, yesterday's verdict which convicted Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu, senior members of an armed faction that toppled the government in 1997 – the AFRC, on eleven of their fourteen counts indictment does not bring any amount of satisfaction in my mind. For one thing, while the three were indeed part of the AFRC government, they were not the Foday Sankoh, Sam Bockarie, Johnny Paul Koroma or Issa Sesay that led the different factions that connived with Charles Taylor to rain mayhem and destruction on our nation. The Special Court which ironically is still asking for more money is so busy enjoying the free money from the UN that they are in no hurry to convict. Apart from Issa Sesay, none of the key players of the rebel war is in custody today, and that is a travesty for world justice. How can the people of Sierra Leone rely on international justice when the people who perpetrated some of the worst acts of terrorism in the world were never brought to justice?

One of the songs from Sierra Leone succinctly puts it, it would have been much better to have Foday Sankoh testify before a court of law and expose some of the people who roam about the country today either ruling or trying to rule Sierra Leone. But there was so much delay that he died a peaceful death; a luxury people like my brother and many others never enjoyed as they were tortured to death by RUF killers. For Sierra Leone to move forward, the special court should be disbanded. The millions of dollars spent on the court should be used to provide adequate housing and other amenities for war victims like the amputees.

Another aspect of the verdict that really disturbs me is to infer that Johnny Paul Koroma and his AFRC government caused the same atrocities as the RUF. When he invited rebels to co-rule with him, Paul Koroma naively thought that he was going to end the rebel war by making them part of his government. But the RUF was not bent of ruling the country, but on destroying it and leaving it to anarchy. While I understand the Special Court's quest for balance in prosecuting the perpetrators of the mayhem in Sierra Leone, the court should have concentrated of the people that caused the most horrible crimes like hacking people's limbs and burning infants to death, and without doubt, that was the trademark of the RUF who used rape and other forms of inhuman treatments to destroy the country.

As we move forward, we have to put the war behind us. We all know that Sierra Leoneans are naturally peaceful. We can yell and shout, but we are not prone to killing each other for political gain. The atrocities that our people suffered were concocted by a group of lawless selfish evil individuals who would rather see our country burn and perish. Some of them perished with their evil ambitions. Others are still in positions of power today, but as scriptures put it "their sins would find them out."

For the Special Court of Delay, the time has come to disband. We can use the luxury villas, the luxury cars and the fat checks to take care of war victims. Charles Taylor should be handed over to the International Tribunal in the Hague where I hope he rots in jail. Special court employees are profiting from the war in Sierra Leone and that is evil. South Africa has moved on, Liberia is moving on, and Sierra Leone should definitely move on. Many of us victims are already moving on with our lives without our loved ones. What angers us is to see a group of people live luxury lives in Freetown at the expense of the dead.

I also have a word of caution for people running for office in the upcoming elections. No one political party could be held responsible for the rebel war. There were rebel collaborators in both the APC and the SLPP. What we need now is leaders who would vow never again to resort to violence when they lose power. It was power-hungry persons from both major political parties who colluded with the rebels to destabilize the country from the NPRC Coup down to the January 6 destruction of Freetown. Only few hands of the present politicians are clean.

Recap, let's ask the UN to shut down the Special Court, use the funds for war victims and move the country forward. It is the best way to go.

Agence France-Presse

Wednesday, 20 June 2007

Malawi names new chief justice

MALAWI - Malawi's president has appointed a former justice minister under late dictator Hastings Kamuzu Banda as the country's new chief justice, his office said.

Lovemore Munlo, 57, who until April was registrar of the United Nations' Special Court for Sierra Leone, will replace Leonard Unyolo who retires at the end of this month, the statement from President Bingu wa Mutharika's office said.

Judges in Malawi retire at the age of 65, but Unyolo, due to retire next year, "has opted to go early," said high court registrar Sylvester Kalembera.

Munlo, who has also served as registrar of the UN Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, rose through the ranks in the Malawian justice ministry before Banda appointed him minister of justice and attorney general in the early 1990s.

Banda, who ruled the country with an iron fist for three decades until he lost the country's first democratic elections in 1994, later appointed Munlo secretary general of the once-powerful Malawi Congress Party.

"It will be quite a challenging assignment and I feel honoured to come back and work among my own people. It will be much more meaningful than working outside the country," Munlo told AFP.

The Daily Times (Malawi)

Tuesday, 20 June 2007

UDF queries Bingu on CJ



The United Democratic Front (UDF) has questioned why President Bingu wa Mutharika skipped the current Supreme Court bench to appoint an outsider, Senior Counsel Lovemore Munlo, as Chief Justice.

But Malawi Congress Party (MCP) reserved its comment, saying Munlo's appointment was not political, while the Malawi Law Society (MLS) said there was nothing unlawful for the President to appoint outside the bench.

Mutharika's appointment of Munlo comes against a background of the President's allegation in Parliament earlier that a mafia-like godfather had infiltrated the Judiciary, a statement that was roundly condemned by MLS.

The lawyers' body asked the President to substantiate his allegations and follow proper procedures in disciplining the judicial officers deemed to be in the wrong.

In an interview Tuesday, UDF spokesperson Sam Mpasu said although Munlo was at some point in MCP politics and a cabinet minister, that was a matter for UDF MPs to consider during a caucus in Parliament.

"Justice Richard Banda was once a cabinet minister. Justice Friday Makuta was once a cabinet minister. But that is not a problem. The problem is there is a Supreme Court bench and why didn't the President not approve one of them? But this is a matter for Parliament to look at... A Chief Justice is only a Chief Justice after Parliament has approved him," Mpasu said.

Mutharika's appointment of Munlo as Chief Justice to replace retiring justice Leonard Unyolo breaks a longstanding tradition whereby the most senior judge after a retiring Chief Justice would be promoted to the position.

MLS president Mabvuto Hara, commenting on the tradition in the past of elevating the most senior judge to be Chief Justice, said such was the case because the Judiciary used to be treated as a civil service where a junior could not be appointed to take up a senior post.

But he said the President was acting within the law because there was nothing in the Constitution that spells out that a Chief Justice should be appointed from the bench and should be the most senior judge at the Supreme Court bar.

MCP second vice-president Nicholas Dausi said Munlo's appointment was not political hence no need for political reaction.

"This is not a political appointment. Since it is as it is, there is no comment from MCP," Dausi said.

Munlo was once Secretary General of MCP when the party was in power.

A press statement from Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet said Munlo has served as Judge of the High Court and Supreme Court of Appeal, Minister of Justice and Attorney General, Deputy Registrar of the United Nations Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations and legal practitioner of Green Munlo and Company.

He was quoted in the media as pledging to maintain judicial independence.

Munlo's name will go before Parliament and must amass two thirds of the votes in Parliament to become Chief Justice.

Unyolo is retiring on June 29 and the next in seniority at the Supreme Court bar is Justice Micheal Mtegha, who is also going to retire next month.

The next after Mtegha is Justice James Kalaile who is also expected to retire "maybe" next year, according to Registrar of the High Court and Supreme Court Sylvester Kalembera.

Other Supreme Court judges include justices Duncan Tambala, Atanzio Tembo, Isaac Mtambo and Anastasia Msosa, who is currently chair of Malawi Electoral Commission (Mec).

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 20 June 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

Don't send us back to Liberia

Source: BRISTOL EVENING POST Date: June 19, 2007

A Mother and her two daughters say they will go on hunger strike and starve to death rather than be forced to return to war-torn Liberia. Kadijaut Jalloh, 35, and her daughters Mariama, 14, and eight-year-old Binta, who live in Kingswood, are at the centre of a deportation battle with the Home Office. Mrs Jalloh told the Evening Post her husband was murdered by a rebel gang in Liberia, where she also has two other children - Fatumatah, 19, and Mamadu, 16. After paying people-smugglers to help her come to England, she applied for political asylum almost five years ago and two years later Mariama and Binta followed.

Germany says refugees must have chance to return home

Source: Dpa English Date: June 20, 2007

Berlin_(dpa) _ Germany called Wednesday for international assistance to help refugees return to their homes, citing Liberia as an example of a successful repatriation policy. Assistance should not only cover the repatriation of the refugees but also the phase after their return and long-term development aid, German Economic Assistance Minister Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul said in a statement marking UN World Refugee Day. The minister said the repatriation programme in the West African state of Liberia, one of the biggest operations ever undertaken by the UN refugee agency UNHCR, was nearing completion. Since the start of the operation in October 2004 more than 150,000 refugees who fled to neighbouring countries and 314,000 internally displaced persons have returned to their home regions, she said.

County, Liberia Form Education Partnership

HOWARD COUNTY, Md. June 19, 2007-- A Maryland public school system is establishing new educational ties with the republic of Liberia. WBAL TV 11 News reporter Tim Tooten and a team of journalists visited the West African country in December to film a documentary, called Africa's Maryland, about how our two countries have a lot in common historically. Currently, Howard County has gone a step further, with county educators preparing to visit the country, as well. Liberia school children, especially those who live in the city of Monrovia, will benefit from the Howard County partnership. The two school systems have pledged to exchange personnel, educational knowledge and technology.

International Clips on West Africa

Sierra Leone court to deliver first war crimes judgement

FREETOWN, June 20, 2007 (AFP) - Sierra Leoneans trooped into a UN-backed war crimes court on Wednesday to hear the first verdict on atrocities committed during a decade-long civil war in which 120,000 people died and thousands were mutilated. Police and prisons chiefs were among the

crowds filing past tight security checks into the heavily guarded court complex in the capital Freetown where the verdict was expected. Facing judgement were three renegade soldiers-turned rebel commanders, allegedly supported by former Liberian president Charles Taylor in a war considered as one of the most brutal in recent history, which ended in 2001.

UN teams call for free and fair polls in Ivory Coast

ABIDJAN, June 19, 2007 (AFP) - A UN Security Council team Tuesday underlined the need for free and fair elections in Ivory Coast, the world's top cocoa grower which has been split in half since a September 2003 uprising. "It is very important to have a commitment to stage elections which are free, credible and certified by the international community," the leader of the delegation, Peruvian Jorge Voto-Bernales, told a news conference. "All parties have agreed to this," he said, notably referring to President Laurent Gbagbo, the target of the failed coup bid, and his new prime minister Guillaume Soro, formerly the leader of the rebels aiming to oust Gbagbo.

Ivory Coast wants UN to help ensure peace prevails, Security Council delegation says

Source: English Politics News
Date: June 19, 2007

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast _ The leaders of Ivory Coast want the United Nations to play an "active role" in ensuring that peace prevails after years of civil war, members of the U.N's Security Council said Tuesday. The 15-member delegation from the council was on a one-day visit to Ivory Coast, the world's largest cocoa producer, where they met with the political leadership to assess the progress of a recent peace accord. Signed on March 4, the deal allows the country to be reunited after a five-year-old civil war cleaved the nation in two. "The United Nations will play a role in certifying the upcoming elections," said France's U.N. Ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sabliere.

Local Media – Newspaper

Liberia's University Suspends Classes for Time Indefinite

(Daily Observer, New Vision, The News, Heritage, New Democrat, National Chronicle, The Inquirer, The Analyst, Public Agenda and The Informer)

- Authorities at the University of Liberia (UL) have suspended classes for time indefinite following what the media considered as a violent student protest.
- The University's President Dr. Al Hassan Conteh told a news conference on Tuesday that classes at the University were suspended for time indefinite until the situation that led to the disruption of classes can be properly investigated and brought under control.
- The protesting students besieged the office of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf yesterday demanding a return of their instructors to the classrooms to continue academic activities.
- While Daily Observer, New Vision, The News, Heritage, New Democrat, National Chronicle and The Inquirer reported that the Liberia National Police and their United Nations counterparts moved in to restore calm, The Analyst, Public Agenda and The Informer alleged that UNMIL and national security forces reacted violently and hurt several students and two journalists from the New Democrat and Public Agenda newspapers, a claim the Police denied.

'UNMIL Sues Former Finance Minister'

(The News)

- [sic:] The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has filed a lawsuit against former Finance Minister Lusinee Kamara for Theft of Property. A Writ of Arrest issued on June 12, 2007 by the Monrovia Magisterial Court said that in 2004 while the defendant was serving as Managing Director of the African Treasurers of Liberia Incorporated, he took away a white Nissan Patrol

Jeep belonging to UNMIL. The vehicle, according to Court records, disappeared at the UNMIL transport workshop at Star Base where it was being serviced.

Tense Atmosphere at Cavalla Rubber Plantation

(The News)

- [sic:] Situation at the Cavalla Rubber Plantation in Maryland County is reportedly tensed as workers attempting to undermine a decision to strike were chased out of the Plantation. At least one person was injured in the melee. United Nations security forces along with local police have reportedly been deployed on the Plantation. Employees at the Plantation have threatened not to resume work until their demand for salary increment is addressed. The workers are demanding 10 to 15 percent increment in their wages.

Government Says It Does Not Owe AFL Widows

(The Inquirer, National Chronicle and The Analyst)

- Defense Minister Brownie Samukai has clarified that the Liberian Government has no plan of making further financial payment any group of women under the banner of returnee widows, ex-combatant widows of widows of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL).
- Minister Samukai's clarification followed demands by a group of women that they want benefits for their late husbands who died in the line of duty.

Local Media – Radio Veritas (News monitored yesterday at 9:45 am)

Classes Suspended Indefinitely at State-owned University following Violent Student Protest

- Speaking at a news conference yesterday, the President of the University of Liberia, Dr. Al-Hassan Conteh announced that classes at the University were suspended for time indefinite until the situation that led to the disruption of classes can be properly investigated and brought under control.
- Hundreds of protesting students yesterday besieged the entrance of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf Foreign Ministry office demanding a return of their instructors to the classrooms to continue academic activities.
- The students' actions brought normal traffic to a standstill until UNMIL and officers of the Liberia National Police moved in to restore calm.
- Meanwhile, the University of Liberia Faculty Association (ULFA) says the professors and lecturers have resolved not to attend classes until their demands are met including the payment of 10 months salary arrears, four years research allowances and other benefits.

(Also reported on ELBS)

House of Representative Summons Auditor General Morlu

- The House of Representative yesterday reached the decision to summon Liberia's Auditor General, John Morlu to appear before it to present further explanation and documentary evidence on his claim that the current Government is "three times more corrupt" than the transitional government of Gyude Bryant.
- The Auditor General is due to appear before the House tomorrow, Thursday in the wake of public concerns about his recent comment on corruption in government which has triggered a row between the Auditing Commission and the Bureau of the Budget.

(Also reported on ELBS)

Land and Mines and Stakeholders Hold Forum on National Mining System

- Officials of the Land, Mines and Energy Ministry and stakeholders have gathered in Monrovia to discuss the draft of a National Mining Cadastre System and the Proposed Mineral Development Agreement for Liberia.
- The cadastre system would help minimize and address the long standing properties rights in the country leading to the mineral development agreement with mainly investors.
- According to Assistant Minister, Gesler Murray the objective of the mineral stakeholders' discussion is to create jobs and employment. USAID is said to be funding the project under GEMAP.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 19 June 2007

UN Officials Warn of Delays in Ivory Coast Peace Plan

By Nico Colombant
Dakar

Visiting officials from the United Nations Security Council are warning of delays in the latest peace plan in divided Ivory Coast. Despite the presence of U.N. peacekeepers, the world body is playing a limited role in the implementation of Ivory Coast's latest peace agreement signed last March by President Laurent Gbagbo and northern rebel leader Guillaume Soro. VOA's Nico Colombant reports from our West Africa bureau in Dakar.

Reading from a prepared text, Peruvian Ambassador Jorge Voto-Bernales said there has been some progress since the March deal signed in Burkina Faso, but there are delays for the planned identification of undocumented Ivorians and for reorganizing a reunified army ahead of new elections.

French ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sabliere says the United Nations is playing a limited role in Ivory Coast's peace process.

"We are ready to assist, to help," he said. "We have listened to what has been told to us. We were in a listening mood."

He told journalists the Security Council would prepare a new resolution on Ivory Coast before the end of the month. The United Nations, he said, would help certify the validity of the upcoming elections but play no role in organizing them.

A West Africa analyst with International Crisis Group, Gilles Yabi, says, despite progress, the core issues of the peace process remain unsolved.

"The relationship between Guillaume Soro and President Gbagbo seems to be holding and seems to be cordial but the key operations of identification of the population and restructuring of the armed forces which are really the most important operations in the peace plan remain to be done effectively on the ground," he said. "That means that the coming weeks and coming months will be really important and will determine the possibility of holding elections at least in the first quarter of the next year."

These elections have already been postponed twice. They were supposed to be held in October 2005. Even though Yabi believes Soro's high government position prevents renewed war between rebels and the southern army, he says there is a real threat of political violence.

"The risk of political violence remains high, especially when the key operation of identification will begin and when the electoral period will approach," he said. "It is very clear that Guillaume Soro and Laurent Gbagbo are not the only important actors on the political scene in the country. There is also the unarmed opposition."

The rebels have held on to more than half of Ivory Coast since late 2002, saying they are fighting for many undocumented northerners who are treated as second class citizens, without voting rights and constantly facing persecution from authorities.



Ivory Coast PM Guillaume Soro, front right, and Ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sabliere, (c), after a meeting with other Security Council dignitaries in Abidjan, 19 June 2007

Special Court Supplement
Photos from the AFRC Judgments
Wednesday, 20 June 2007



