

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Friday, 22 June 2007

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

Friday, 22 June 2007

Justice needed to be done – *Prosecutor Rapp*

The Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone Stephen Rapp has said in Freetown, that “Justice needed to be done.”

The Chief Prosecutor was speaking to journalists immediately after the verdict had been delivered by presiding Judge Justice Julia Sebutinde on the three leaders of the defunct Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) military junta.

Cautiously admitting that he was happy with the verdict, Mr. Rapp was

quick to point out that “happiness is sort of a strange thing when you talk about convicting other human beings and sentencing them for long periods of punishment”.

Pointing out that he had been Prosecutor in the Rwanda Tribunals for almost six years and also in his country (USA) for eight years Mr Rapp added “but as I reflect on these events and as I read the evidence and talk to people that went through it - justice needed to be done and people responsible for the horror visited on this society – men, women, and children of

Sierra Leone, deserve to be punished and justice needs to be done, and I am happy when justice is done.”

The Chief Prosecutor also noted that “Historically this is very important for Sierra Leone but it’s also important for the region and the entire world” because “the first judgments in the history of the world of the crime of the conscription for the use in active hostility of children under the age of 15” had been delivered.

“This is indeed the first conviction that has ever been obtained for that crime and I think its important that it be obtained here” he stated.

Awoko

Friday, 22 June 2007

You Said It

On Wednesday the three members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), indicted by the Special Court, were convicted on 11 out of the 14 count charges against them. Alex Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu were indicted by the



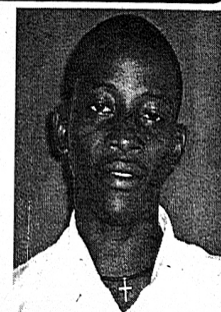
Ephraim Davies



Femi Cole



Ibrahim Barrie



Mohamed Lamin Sesay



Mohamed Sullay Kamara

Special Court for crimes committed during the AFRC regime. To know whether these verdicts were just and to assess the work of the court, our reporter *Betty J. Milton* was out to sound the views of people on this issue.

Femi Cole "the whole judgment for me is a mere ridicule. I am saying this because if you look at the statuses of these accused persons you will notice that they are in a better condition more than the victims themselves. I was authoritatively informed that these accused are given allowances and those that suffer in the war are left with nothing. As far as I am concerned, they should just forget about this nonsense called Special Court as this is plain ridicule. With some of these facilities given to these accused, and after they would have been sentenced they would be taken to a better country to serve their jail terms, so I don't believe that for such a crime these people deserved these conditions."

Mohamed Lamin Sesay "I believe that all of us here are governed by the law of the country, and if someone commits a crime I believe it is this same law that should be used to judge him or her. Though these accused committed serious crimes against international humanitarian law, I believe that the international court has judged them the right way. As far as I am concerned, I believe the Special Court has done something worthwhile."

Mohamed Sullay Kamara "for me the verdict is in line with justice. So long as justice is being meted out to those who committed the worst atrocities during the war, I am happy. Such trials have been going on in other countries and other regions of the world, therefore Sierra Leone should not be an exception. I believe this verdict will deter other people from committing such crimes in this country in the future. The work of the court is good; it will save humanity from future impunity."

Ephraim Davies "the verdict passed at the [Special] Court I believe was in place as this will serve as deterrence for those who may want to engage in human rights violation in the future. People who are planning to engage in future crimes will know that they will not go Scot free, because a court like this will make Africa and the sub-region safe. I see the Special Court as a normal one, though we don't have lots of Sierra Leoneans in the defence and prosecution teams but the court is very vital."

Ibrahim Shady Barrie "if the judgment passed is according to the crimes the men committed then they should face the penalty. If these accused are going to be sentenced, I believe they should be taken to countries which have prisons with stiff conditions. The Special Court here is doing a good job but the only thing they should embark on now is to arrest more people, who we believe also played great role in the war."

Concord Times

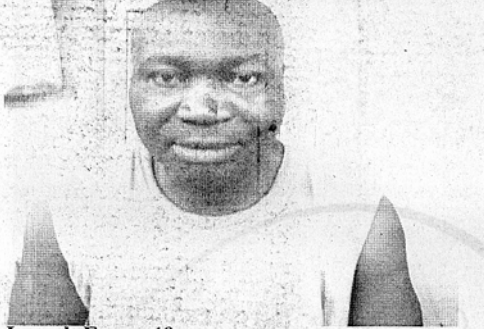
Friday, 22 June 2007

Concord Times

Vox Pop

This week, former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) leaders Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu were found guilty by the Sierra Leone Special Court of 11 counts of crimes against humanity. The Concord Times asked the people of Freetown if they thought justice has been done. We found a variety of opinions on the conviction.

Some people thought justice had been done and were happy to see the former AFRC leaders put away forever. Others, like Fatmata Sesay said "Let's forgive and forget, let them be sentenced to just five years. Some people did worse than they did, but today they are passing freely in the streets of Freetown." Have a look.



Joseph Fyne, 48
Krootown Road

"I think this is real justice. There were lots of atrocities committed against us. Even myself, I was jailed at the Pademba Road Prison because the AFRC people thought I was against them. I am happy today to see justice done. I was brought to zero and all of my properties were taken by them. I have no way to retaliate. Thanks to the Special Court."



Alex Brown, 58
Krootown Road

"We have seen justice done, we have suffered. We have been eagerly waiting for justice and equal rights. Thank God it is here today."

Jeremiah AB Conteh, 28
Hosskah Tailoring,
Siaka Stevens Street

"It is justice done for the people of Sierra Leone."

Kadiatu Kamara, 35
Waterloo Street



"I am not pleased with the AFRC people. My mum was killed. I will never be happy with the situation. During those days I went through hurdles."

Mayeni Foulah, 50
Waterloo Street



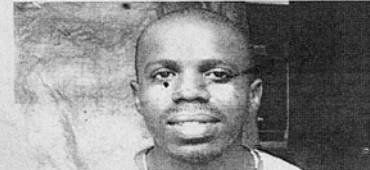
"I am completely happy about the verdict. I can still recall how I suffered during those terrible days."

Sheku Basco, 47
Siaka Stevens Street



"I am happy because all of them were found guilty. Some of us were on the ground and saw the atrocities committed by the AFRC guys. I want them to be sentenced and jailed outside of Sierra Leone."

Aduli Kamara, 30
Siaka Stevens Street



"I am happy for the verdict. All of us know the constraints we underwent during those days. We never knew who these guys were, but yet we suffered terribly under their regime. Thank God truth is coming out now. The sentence should be a little bit subtle because there are different people with different minds."

Salimatu Bangura, 35
Siaka Stevens Street



"We have been asked to forgive them. Why won't we leave them to exist? It is indeed true that we still feel the pain for what they did. We should forgive and allow God to fight for us. The problem now exists between those who give evidence against the AFRC guys and the relatives of the AFRC guys because we don't want a grudge."

Mabinty Mansalay, 35
Cotton Tree



"The war has ended. We should forgive. They have families too. Whether they are sentenced or not, they deed has already been done."

Concord Times
Friday, 22 June 2007

Exercise Green Horizon to support Special Court

The United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) yesterday issued a release disclosing that the Military component of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), will be conducting - with the full participation of the Mongolian contingent assigned to protect the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) - an exercise to test the readiness of the troops to respond to any emergencies around the court.

The exercise, named "Green Horizon III" will take place between 25 and 30 June.

According to UNIOSIL, the exercise is a situational awareness, reconnaissance and liaison for the 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, and is 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 release stated.

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.

Salone Times
Friday, 22 June 2007

FIRST SIERRA 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.

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. 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.

The AFRC teamed up with the other rebels after 1997



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

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.

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.

He 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.

The News

Friday, 22 June 2007

The Special Court for Sierra Leone: An Update

By Ibrahim Jalloh

The Trial of Charles Taylor

The trial of former Liberian President Charles Ghankay Taylor by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) is still in the pre-trial stage. In his debut appearance, the accused pleaded “not guilty” to all the revised 11 Counts charges in the Indictment put against him and contended that the trial proceeded. So far, Taylor has made five appearances before the judges in Trial Chamber II with the most recent being on 7 May, 2007. This would probably be the last status conference before the actual trial itself begins on 4 June this year. The four pre-trial conferences held in The Hague centered on two key issues: the first on the conduct of the actual trial and the second, on the rights of accused while in detention.

During the pre-trial conference on 7 May 2007, the Prosecution stated that their team was fully formed and had provided the list of members to the Registry as matter of procedure. The lead Defence counsel on the other hand pointed out that he was working on constituting a legal team as he was still looking for a co-counsel. Concern was raised about the level of support and assistance the Defence Counsel stated that although he had been given the task to form a legal team for his client, only two counsel can be heard in the Trial Chamber. He compared his client to that of the late Slobodan Milosevic in the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) and pointed out the kind of support the later was accorded regarding his defence until his death. The accused’s counsel stated that he would file in another motion to allow Mr. Singh (another Defence Counsel) to be given limited audience in the Trial Chamber when both substantive counsel were unable to attend any trial process thus easing their workload.

The Defence also pointed out the delay in the filing and disclosure of witnesses by the Prosecution, with particular emphasis on expert witnesses and their reports. Counsel stated that it “is relevant because that is the trigger point for the Defence to object to those experts or to agree to those experts.” The Defence emphasized the need for the timely disclosure of witnesses to the adversary party especially that which relates to their particulars and the use of pseudonyms as it would give the Defence ample time to prepare. The Defence further said that they would file a motion so that the accused (Taylor) would be allowed to give an unsworn statement from the dock. Defence made reference to the ICTY trial, from which the SCSL derives its Rules and Statute *mutatis mutandis*, where that is allowed though absent in the ICTR but rest his case on the authority of the Trial Chamber as they have control and power on how the trial should proceed. Defence also proposed to file a motion in order to lift the travel bans on witnesses that may want to come forward and testify on behalf of Taylor, as most of the anticipated witnesses for Taylor have travel bans imposed upon them by the United Nations. The Prosecution stated that they would give a four-hour opening statement at the beginning of the trial on 4 June 2007 and hoped to present a total of 13⁰ core witnesses of which 52 were going to be predominantly “linkage” witnesses. This linkage witnesses are meant to prove the connections between Taylor and

the atrocities committed in Sierra Leone as it is a necessary part of the Prosecution's case. Issues of trial management, time to be utilized, language and interpretation was also addressed and the tendering of exhibits and time required to circulate exhibit came to the court's attention. The whole pre-trial conference mainly centered on trial dynamics, especially to modify and amend anomalies that are imminent to slow down the trial process and examples were learnt from the trials at the Special Court in Freetown. The Presiding Judge, Justice Julia Sebutinde, in her closing remarks wished both parties well and hoped to see them again on the adjourned date of 4 June 2007 at 9:00am.

The trial would be screened via video link at the Trial Chamber II of Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Acting Registrar, in a press conference informed the public that the BBC have provided funds for journalists, both from Sierra Leone and Liberia to travel to The Hague to witness the trial. Also four representative of civil society organisations, two from Sierra Leone and two from Liberia, would be monitoring the trial each trial month.

Appointment of Justice Sow

Another Justice, Justice EI Hadji Malick Sow of Senegal, was sworn in on Friday 11 May 2007, as an alternate Judge to the Justice of Trial Chamber II. In a Special Court Press Release, the newly sworn-in judge made a solemn declaration before the Acting Registrar and the President of the Special Court, Herman von Hebel and Justice George Gelaga-King respectively. The ceremony was witnessed by Special Court Staff, journalists, members of the Diplomatic Corps and eminent personalities, among them were Mr. Frederick Carew, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice representing the Government of Sierra Leone and Mr. Kedar Poudal, the Human Rights Coordinator at UNIOSIL's Rule of Law Section representing the United Nations. Justice Sow becomes the first alternate Judge at the Special Court and now joins Justices Julia Sebutinde (Presiding), Teresa Doherty and Richard Lussick in Trial Chamber II which presides over the trial of Charles Taylor at The Hague. According to the Press Release, Justice Sow will be presented at each stage of trial and will replace a Judge who may be unable to attend any Court sitting.

Justice Gelaga-King Re-Elected

Justice George Gelaga-King has been re-elected Presiding Judge of the Appeals Chamber, a position which automatically makes him President of the Special Court for an additional one year term.

Prior to his appointment as a Judge at the Special Court in December 2002, Justice Gelaga-King served as President of the Appeals Courts of both Sierra Leone and the Gambia. From 1974 to 1978, he was Sierra Leone's Ambassador to France, Spain, Portugal and Switzerland while at the same time Sierra Leone's Permanent Representative to UNESCO. He also served as Sierra Leone's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations between 1978 to 1980.

In a related development, the Appeals Court Judges also elected Justice Emmanuel Ayoola of Nigeria as Vice-President of the Special Court. Justice Ayoola also served as President of the Special Court from 2004 to 2005.

The AFRC Trials

The Court has issued a statement that Trial Chamber II will pronounce judgment in the case of the Prosecutor against Alex Tamba Brima (a.k.a Gullit), Ibrahim Bazy Kamara, and Santigie Borbor Kanu (a.k.a. 55), first, second and third accused respectively, on the 20th of June 2007 at 11:00 am at the Court's seat in Freetown.

Awareness Times
Friday, 22 June 2007

AFRC men Found guilty

Reports state that three AFRC men have been found guilty last Wednesday by the Special Court of Sierra Leone and the judgments were delivered by Justice Julia Sebutinde. According to reports the leading Prosecutor Stephen Rapp in briefing journalists after the judgment stated that the three are likely to serve their jail term in Austria or Sweden.

Voice of America

Thursday, 21 June 2007

War Crimes Tribunal To Reconvene on Case Against Charles Taylor

By Nina Maria Potts

Brussels

The first international trial of an African leader is set to reconvene June 25th, despite a faltering start after the defendant, former Liberian President Charles Taylor, refused to show up in court.

Undeterred, prosecutors at the U.N.'s special tribunal for Sierra Leone are preparing to call more than a hundred witnesses to its temporary base in the Hague. Some are expected to testify anonymously, for fear of retribution. Nina-Maria Potts reports.

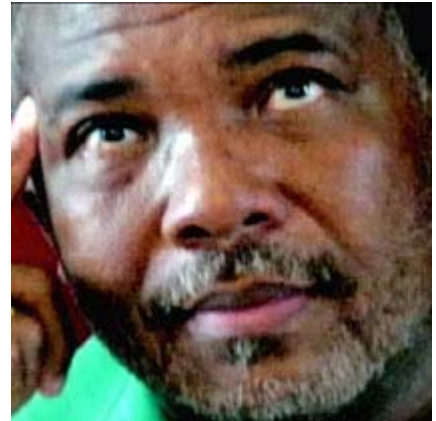
The face of a warlord, now fallen.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor had escaped prosecution for years. Now he is in The Hague, transferred there from Sierra Leone, amid fears a trial in West Africa would destabilize the region.

He stands accused of horrific crimes, linked to his backing of Sierra Leone rebels during more than a decade of violent conflict from 1991 to 2002

He is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and has pleaded not guilty to accusations of murder, rape, terrorism and other atrocities.

Prosecutors say Taylor provided weapons and ammunition to rebels in return for diamonds plundered from Sierra Leone's mines.



Charles Taylor



Kharim Khan

Still, Taylor is defiant, facing down international justice in a letter, delivered to the court by his now ex-lawyer, Kharim Khan. "Mr. Taylor states: I am driven to the conclusion I will not receive a fair trial before the Special Court at this point. It is therefore with great regret that I must decline to attend hearings in this case until adequate time and facilities provided to my defense team, and until my other long-standing and reasonable complaints are dealt with. It follows that I must terminate instructions to my legal representative in this matter. "

International justice brings international problems, such as transferring an entire legal process abroad.



Amputee victims

Witnesses must be flown in to testify. Some will enter witness protection programs, to prevent possible revenge attacks by Taylor's supporters.

There are political dilemmas too. Particularly for Washington. It played a key role in Taylor's transfer to The Hague by pressing Nigeria to refuse to give him asylum. But the Bush administration refuses to recognize a permanent international court.

Professor David Crane of Syracuse University in New York state specializes in international law. He is a former prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone and he says the U.S. position on international justice is driven by politics. "The United States will act according to its own

interests, versus the rule of law related to individuals who are involved in these horror stories."

Crane says even though the U.S. is reluctant to give up its sovereignty to an international body, men like Taylor can no longer be immune to international justice. "It's the beginning of the beginning of the end of leaders who cynically kill their own citizens."



David Crane

In The Hague, prosecutors are determined to avoid a public relations disaster like the Slobodan Milosevic case.

The former Yugoslav leader, whose belligerent courtroom manner enraged judges, died before his lengthy trial at the Hague ever concluded.



Stephen Rapp

If Taylor hopes to thwart the legal process, chief prosecutor Stephen Rapp, warns him to think again. "He is, at the end of the day, hurting only himself, his ability to instruct his counsel and to effectively represent himself by absenting himself from the courtroom. But it does not, in my view affect our ability to proceed, to present the evidence against him. It's not his justice system, it's the justice system of the people of Sierra Leone."

Even as witnesses prepare to take the stand, it could be two years before Charles Taylor's trial will be over.

Back home, the victims of war have no choice but to wait.

The Statesman (Ghana)

Friday, 22 June 2007

An empty chair at The Hague: trying Charles Taylor

The video transmission from The Hague showed a courtroom in the International Criminal Court. There sat the Prosecutor and his team from Freetown, Sierra Leone, as well as the Defense team consisting of appointed counsel and a barrister from the Office of the Public Defender.

The judges had yet to come in to start the trial of the first African head of state for war crimes and crimes against humanity. But his chair remained empty.

Indicted President Charles Taylor of Liberia on March 3, 2003 at a moving signing ceremony in my office in Freetown. Taylor was indictment number one of eight that I signed that fateful afternoon. A week later six indictees would be in jail, all the various leaders of the warring factions in the brutal conflict in Sierra Leone, started by Taylor with the support of Blasé Campore and Muammar Khadafy of Libya.

The indictment of Taylor that I signed contained seventeen counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity ranging from murder, rape, pillage, enslavement, mutilation, and the unlawful recruitment of child soldiers, among others. That indictment was later amended down to eleven counts, making for a tighter, more concise instrument to hold this destroyer of two nations accountable.

The conflict in Sierra Leone was started by criminals for their own personal criminal gain and to geopolitically take over all of West Africa. Diamonds, gold, and timber were sold for cash and guns to fuel the effort. The vast majority of the profits were pocketed by Taylor and his band of thugs in the amount of several hundred million dollars.

The center point to a vast joint criminal enterprise, Taylor controlled this operation to take over Liberia and Sierra Leone for over ten years. The result of this misadventure was the murder, rape, maiming, and mutilation of over 1.2 million human beings in West Africa making him one of the mega-murderers of the 20th century behind Mao Tse-tung, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Pol Pot, and Saddam Hussein. Including Taylor, this small and sordid gang of despots is responsible for the destruction of over 100 million of their own citizens.

So what of the empty chair this past Monday, 4 June, four years to the day that I unsealed the indictment publicly humiliating him before his peers and the people of Africa in Accra, Ghana?

Not much should be taken from it. Taylor and his counsel are predictably providing the histrionics that accompany the public disgrace of a bloody tyrant. Goering and Hess at Nuremberg, Milosevic in The Hague, Norman in Freetown, and Hussein in Baghdad all acted up at the beginning of their trials, in large part to no avail. Taylor's antics are no different and cannot prevent the proper and forceful march of justice in a fair and open trial.

The tactic to deflect the power of an opening statement of the Chief Prosecutor of a high level indictee is also a test of the trial chamber to ensure that there is proper control throughout the proceedings. A hesitant and insecure bench will turn the trial into a disaster and bring discredit upon both the judiciary and the rule of law.

Not so at The Hague last Monday. The presiding judge quite properly, and with great patience, managed the fumbling efforts of the defense counsel to derail the opening and shift the spotlight from the war

crimes and crimes against humanity Taylor allegedly committed to Taylor's political perspectives and his contempt for the proceedings.

Very much like Sir Geoffrey Lawrence, the presiding judge at Nuremberg, the presiding judge here firmly reigned in all court personnel sending the signal that the trial chamber was in control.

And so it begins - one of the major international criminal trials of the decade - in an orderly and proper fashion, showing the people of West Africa that the rule of law is more powerful than the rule of the gun.

As the trial unfolds, the brave men and women of Sierra Leone will come forward, some damaged physically and emotionally, almost beyond understanding, holding up the stumps of their limbs and saying to Taylor, "you did this to me." The chair may have been empty on 4 June 2007, but the hearts of the countless victims of the atrocity perpetrated in West Africa are full with the grace and hope that no man is above the law.

David M. Crane is a professor at Syracuse University College of Law, and former founding Chief Prosecutor for the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (2002-2005).

Rapaport News
Thursday, 21 June 2007

UN Orders Panel to Re-examine Charles Taylor's Wealth

By Avi Krawitz

RAPAPORT.. A panel of financial and diamond experts will renew investigations over whether UN sanctions against Liberia are being broken, given findings that the country's former President Charles Taylor has access to "considerable wealth."

A previous council decision in 2004 ordered all governments to freeze Taylor's assets and those of his immediate family. Taylor, who is currently standing trial in a special court for Sierra Leone set-up at The Hague on 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, has requested that the court cover his legal costs due to his being indigent.

Taylor was arrested in March 2006 in Nigeria, three years after being indicted for his involvement in the civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone, which included funding arms purchases through the illicit diamond trade.

In a unanimous resolution passed June 20, 2007, the United Nations Security Council called on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to set up the three-person panel within a month, expressing concern over "credible allegations" that Taylor may still have substantial investments in Liberia and Nigeria.

The resolution follows the findings of another panel of experts monitoring Liberia, which conducted assessments in West Africa and elsewhere between February and June. That panel discovered that Taylor may have substantial hidden assets in Liberia and Nigeria, and that he retained ties to a large Liberian cell phone company.

The UN reported that the Nigeria did not permit the panel to investigate those allegations. In addition, Liberia has not yet adopted legislation authorizing a freeze, and Nigeria apparently has not seized any Taylor assets, the panel stated.

The June 20 resolution requires the new panel to further investigate Taylor's assets, in order to prevent his associates from "using misappropriated funds and property to interfere in the restoration of peace in Liberia and the sub-region."

The panel is also expected to assess the implementation of forestry legislation passed by the Liberia's Congress and signed into law in October 2006 by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and to gauge the government's compliance with the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme.

Earlier this year, the UN cleared Liberia to restart exports of timber, and in May it ruled to allow diamonds.

Business Day

Friday, 22 June 2007

Waiting for the hard rain of culpability

Sarah Hudleston

IN THE past few weeks, the world has seen former Liberian president Charles Taylor face his jury at a special international tribunal in Sierra Leone. The International Criminal Court is also trying him in The Hague for crimes against humanity, allegedly committed during the 1991-2000 civil war in Liberia.

Also hitting the news was the decision by Edinburgh University's senate to strip Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe of an honorary degree awarded in 1984, following years of campaigning by politicians and students.

At the same time as pressure was put on the university's senate, South African publisher Jacana Books took the brave step of publishing for international distribution a report originally published 10 years ago by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe and the Legal Resources Foundation. The original title was *Breaking the Silence: A Report on the Disturbances in Matabeleland and the Midlands*, and it is now republished as *Gukurahundi*.

This is the name given to the 1980s slaughter of mainly Ndebele at the hands of Zimbabwe's Korean-trained Fifth Brigade, said to have been a pet project of Mugabe's. According to the report, a conservative estimate of 20000 people were killed.

Elinor Sisulu, known for her work with the Zimbabwe Crisis Coalition, writes in the introduction to the report that *Gukurahundi*, a Shona word meaning "the first rain that washes away the chaff of the last harvest before the spring rains", once had pleasant connotations. She says the more recent campaign, Operation Murambatsvina, in which the Mugabe government deployed police and army units to destroy the homes and businesses of people around the country, has echoes of *Gukurahundi*. "Once again the imagery of cleansing is used. Murambatsvina literally means to remove filth. The poverty-stricken urban masses are described by the police chief, Augustine Chihuri, as a 'crawling mass of maggots bent on destroying the economy'."

Sources close to Mugabe say that, above all, he fears being sent to The Hague to face up to the litany of human rights abuses committed under his rule since 1980. But this is unlikely to happen.

Despite recent claims by the Catholic Bishop of Bulawayo, Pius Ncube, that more people die in Zimbabwe each year than died during the entire 20-year-long bush war, the end to Mugabe's rule will most probably be contingent on an attractive exit package, in terms of which he will go into exile and receive an amnesty that will rule out any criminal prosecution.

According to the charge sheet against Taylor, he is allegedly responsible for the deaths of 50000 people. Many would argue that Mugabe is responsible for the deaths of three times that number and should be tried for crimes against humanity.

Questions also arise about how to deal with Mugabe's cohorts, some of whom were actively involved in human rights abuses.

Air force commander Perence Shiri was once known, during his tenure as commander of the Fifth Brigade, as the “Butcher of Bhalagwe Camp”— a reference to the brigade’s Matabeleland headquarters. Shiri reported only to Mugabe and took orders from only him. What would the International Criminal Court make of Shiri and others? Would he and Mugabe ever get a fair trial?

The meticulously compiled evidence in the republished report is compelling. In Lupane in March 1983, 62 young men and women were killed in a mass shooting on the banks of the Cewale River. As Sisulu points out, unlike the massacre at Sharpeville, when shock waves of condemnation reverberated around the world, the silence that surrounded the Lupane and other killings was deafening. Just two of many eyewitness accounts are detailed in the report and they should, by rights, present a strong case for justice.

It is debatable whether it is in Zimbabwe’s interests to let Mugabe get off scot-free in the event of a negotiated settlement that would lead to free and fair elections in Zimbabwe. Talks kicked off this week in Pretoria between the ruling Zanu (PF) and both factions of its main opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change. It will take time for the fruits of these first and faltering negotiations to become known.

Sources say that an amnesty from prosecution for Mugabe may be offered, although he will never be free from the threat of prosecution in individual civil cases. The evidence is stacked against him.

But there has to be some sort of accountability, and there can be no forgiveness for past atrocities without contrition. And judging by his attitude since the Gukurahundi, Mugabe will never be contrite.

n Hudleston writes for Business Day’s sister newspaper, The Weekender.

‘Sources close to him say that, above all, he fears being sent to The Hague’

UN News Service

Thursday, 21 June 2007

Sierra Leone: UN official applauds guilty verdicts for rebel leaders

The United Nations envoy for children and armed conflict has welcomed the judgment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), which found three former rebel leaders guilty of multiple counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity – including the recruitment of child soldiers – during the West African country's prolonged civil war in the 1990s.

Yesterday's judgements were not only the first from the Special Court, but they marked the first time that an international tribunal has ruled on the charge of recruitment of child soldiers into an armed force.

“This first verdict sends a strong signal to the perpetrators and it will have a crucial deterrence effect,” said UN Special Representative Radhika Coomaraswamy, stressing that such crimes need to stop. “This first triple conviction will motivate the international community to pursue its fight against impunity.”

Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu were each found guilty on 11 charges, including committing acts of terrorism, murder, rape and enslavement and conscripting children under the age of 15 into armed groups. A sentencing hearing has been set for 16 July.

The SCSL, the second international war crimes tribunal established in Africa, was mandated to try those bearing the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian and Sierra Leonean law within Sierra Leone's borders since 30 November 1996.

Associated Press

Friday, 22 June 2007

Three convicted of war crimes

SIERRA LEONE JUSTICE: Although children have been used in wars throughout history, experts say their recruitment reached a new level in Sierra Leone at the end of the 1990s

A UN-backed court convicted three former Sierra Leonean military leaders on multiple counts of war crimes, issuing the first verdicts over the country's brutal civil war and the first-ever conviction for using child soldiers by an international court.

The court found the three defendants guilty on Wednesday of 11 of 14 charges, including terrorism, using child soldiers, enslavement, rape and murder.

The three were acquitted of charges of sexual slavery, "other inhumane acts" related to physical violence and acts related to sexual violence, said Peter Andersen, spokesman for the Sierra Leone Special Court.

The ruling marks the first time an international court has issued a conviction on the conscription of child soldiers -- a practice made notorious by images of drugged elementary-school age boys wielding automatic weapons in the regional conflict.

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

The three defendants convicted on Wednesday in Freetown had pleaded not guilty to all the charges, which linked them to fighters who raped women, burned villages, conscripted thousands of child soldiers and forced others to work as laborers in diamond mines.

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

The judge read the ruling three times -- once for each defendant as the accused stood. The men, all in suits and ties, kept their faces blank during the verdict-reading and then bowed their heads.

Sentencing is scheduled for the middle of next month.

The public gallery was filled with about 200 people, including the defendants' relatives, military officials, police officers and the general public.

David Crane, the founding prosecutor of the Sierra Leone Special Court, called the ruling a watershed moment for human rights.

"It's a huge moment for children around the world who have been oppressed in these conflicts," said David Crane, now a law professor at Syracuse University. "This particular judgment sets the cornerstone forever -- those who recruit children into an armed force are criminally liable."

Although children have been used in wars throughout history, experts say the recruitment and conscription of children reached a new level in Sierra Leone and neighboring Liberia. In Liberia, Charles Taylor's men are accused of organizing the so-called Small Boys Unit, which conscripted boys who were armed with machine guns and baptized them with names like Babykiller.

In Sierra Leone, the proportion of child soldiers to the general population was particularly staggering, with about 30,000 children fighting in a country with a population of about 6 million, said Enrique Restoy, who oversees the region for the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, an advocacy group.

"It's the first place in the world that the use of children became obvious, and was seen everywhere," Restoy said.

The group led by the three men committed their worst atrocities after they were pushed into the bush by an international peacekeeping force in 1998, said Corinne Dufka, a senior researcher at New York-based Human Rights Watch. It was then that they started "punishing the civilian population as a whole," she said.

It is estimated that about half a million people were victims of killings, systematic mutilation and other atrocities during the conflict.



OSRSG/070621-25

PRESS RELEASE

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
First convictions on recruitment and use of child soldiers

New York, 21 June 2007 – Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict welcomes the judgment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone against three former leaders of the Sierra Leone's former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC).

This marks the first conviction by an international tribunal for the recruitment and use of child soldiers in armed conflict.

"This first verdict sends a strong signal to the perpetrators and it will have a crucial deterrence effect. These crimes have to stop. This first triple conviction will motivate the international community to pursue its fight against impunity" said, Ms. Coomaraswamy.

Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu were found guilty on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the conscripting or enlisting of children under 15 years into armed forces or groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities.

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For further information, please contact:

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UNICEF

Wednesday, 21 June 2007

Press Release

UNICEF applauds verdict passed by the Special Court for Sierra Leone

Landmark verdict ends impunity for child rights violations during armed conflict

FREETOWN/SIERRA LEONE, 20 June 2007 – Today marks a major milestone in the annals of Sierra Leone as the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) handed down the first judgement on three former leaders of the former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu. They were found guilty on eleven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. These include conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities.

The AFRC played a critical role in Sierra Leone's brutal civil war which affected the country for over a decade (1991-2002). Thousands of people were killed, defenceless innocent civilians were mutilated and about 1,200,000 people were internally displaced. Children and women suffered most. More than 10,000 children, including girls, were recruited as combatants. Many women and girls were raped.

The judgment was read out in court by Justice Julia Sebutinde. It is the very first time that an international tribunal has ruled on the charge of recruitment of child soldiers into an armed force.

Reacting to the verdict, the UNICEF Representative, Geert Cappelaere said, "This is another very important positive step to end impunity for all perpetrators of violations of children's rights. Armed conflict is no justification! Children need respect and special protection under all circumstances. The judgement is another proof that no one should be considered any longer above the law. It is however only a meagre consolation for those many child victims of the decade long civil war. Nothing can compensate for their lost childhood. I hope, he concluded; that the verdict will send a strong message to the whole world and help prevent similar atrocities in other countries."

Sierra Leone was one of 59 countries in February to adopt the Paris Commitments to stop the unlawful recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and endorse the Paris Principles, a set of concrete programme guidelines to prevent the unlawful recruitment of children and facilitate their release and long term social reintegration.

About UNICEF

UNICEF is on the ground in over 150 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments.

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UN News Centre

Thursday, 21 June 2007

UN encourages Sierra Leone to improve prisoners' rights

The top United Nations envoy in Sierra Leone today presented the Government with a report aimed at encouraging it to improve prisoners' rights, noting that failure to protect them constitutes "a threat to peace and stability" in the West African nation.

"In a country that has endured a decade-long war, peace consolidation is only achieved once all the potential threats to stability are addressed. The failure to protect and promote human rights for a particular group of people is one such threat," stated Victor Angelo, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Executive Representative in Sierra Leone.

The report – entitled "Behind Walls: An Inventory and Assessment of Prisons in Sierra Leone" – was presented to Sierra Leone's Minister of Internal Affairs, Pascal Egbenda, in a brief ceremony held at the Freetown headquarters of the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), which Mr. Angelo heads.

Major challenges facing prisons in Sierra Leone include overcrowding and squalid living conditions, including the lack of adequate food, clothing, medicine, hygiene and sanitation.

The result of physical inspection of the country's 13 prisons and interviews with inmates and staff, the report highlights that though the 13 prisons have a combined capacity of 1,495 detainees, there are a total of 1,693 persons detained as of 13 April 2007. Twenty of them, including one woman, were on death row.

UNIOSIL has already put in place measures for emergency relief assistance to the prisons and is supporting the Government in developing a project to strengthen the prisons through the UN Peacebuilding Fund, which was launched in October 2006 in response to the growing global demand for sustained support to countries emerging from conflict.

The Fund supports countries before the UN Peacebuilding Commission, currently Burundi and Sierra Leone, but is also available to countries in similar circumstances as designated by the Secretary-General.

UNIOSIL has also been conducting training programmes for prison officials, which is one of the recommendations of the report released today.

UNMIL Public Information Office
Press Clips 21 June 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

All girl UN squad a success

By Shabnam Grewal
BBC Producer, This World: UN Girl Squad

12 June 2007 - The world's first all-female unit of United Nations peacekeepers has been deemed a success, and has had its mission extended for another six months. A 105-strong paramilitary police unit of women from India has been based in Liberia since January, working to help keep the peace in a country which is still recovering from 14 years of civil war.

Initially deployed for six months as a trial by the UN, no-one knew if they would be up to the job.

But a UN spokesman said they were impressed by the unit: "They are very committed, disciplined and well trained."

Instead of returning to India in June, the women will now remain in Liberia until the end of the year.

Missing home

Commander Seema Dhundia, the women's leader, says the unit knew that they were good at their jobs, but were surprised when their mission was extended.

"Initially we were not mentally prepared to stay, but now it's settled and we are happy to do what our orders say to the best of our ability."

But it is still hard being thousands of miles away from their families.

Many of the women have left behind children, some as young four years old.

Seema, who has a ten-year-old daughter, Stuti, and a 15-year-old son, Ripu, uses a laptop to keep in touch with her children.

"I'm missing my kids. Stuti is a very emotional kid of girl. She speaks from her heart, whatever she feels she says it. So is my son but he is a bit shy. I do miss them and get emotional, but it's not good for police to get emotional is it?"

The women had been expecting to return home this month, but instead have 21 days leave to visit their families before they return to Liberia for another six months.

Seema said initially her family did not react well to the news. Her husband is also a soldier and has been looking after the children.

"They didn't feel very good about it but now they have got used to it."

Fragile peace

The women are part of India's Central Reserve Police Force, and were hand picked from across the country for this mission.

They are experts in crowd control and veterans of many conflicts in India, including Kashmir and fighting in the north-east of India.

For most of the women, the peacekeeping mission took them outside of their "motherland" for the first time.

For the last six months, the unit has patrolled the capital, Monrovia, 24 hours a day. They have kept guard at public buildings such as the foreign ministry and protected the unarmed, recently-trained Liberian National Police officers as they gained "on the job" experience.

According to the Indian women, there is little interaction between themselves and the Liberians. Part of the reason is a difference in culture, part a deliberate strategy.

"They try hard to be friends with us, but we don't want to. We just do what the job requires, that's all," one of the peacekeepers said.

When out of uniform the women keep to themselves. Except for going to church or the temple, they are not allowed off the base.

Tanushree, one of the peacekeepers, says they do not mind.

"For us, the way we live together is like a family, it's a very good relationship. It's like a family where there are mother, father, sister, brother. It is just not possible that at some point I would be bored with them, absolutely not."

But Tanushree likes being out on patrol.

"We really like it here, because everything is a lot like India, the trees and plants and the food even, we can get Indian fruits."

Sexual exploitation

The UN is experimenting with all female units because female soldiers are seen as less threatening and more approachable in post-conflict situations, where populations are recovering from years of violence and fear.

In Liberia this is of particular importance because the country has experienced an epidemic of sexual violence against women.

Lucia Williams, a midwife who works at a free medical centre with Medecines Sans Frontiers in Monrovia, says rape is on the increase and "has become a sport."

As part of the ongoing campaign to end sexual violence, it is hoped the visible presence of female soldiers will empower local Liberian women and encourage them to join the police force.

The Indian women have also given talks to Liberia's female police cadets. Poonam Gupta, the contingent's second-in-command, says it seems to make a difference.

"There has been a significant boost in the police, so I think this could be one of the defining moments for the ladies. Once they try their hands at things and are successful, they will become role models for the other women."

Not afraid

But the Indian women are not just good at the softer, more people orientated work; they have also been on drugs raids and supported law enforcement officers responding to crimes.

"Men can have more distractions, liquor, women, all sorts of things. But women, I find them more disciplined, more task-oriented and more dedicated," said Poonam, who has commanded both men and women.

So far the women have mostly worked in Monrovia but the UN could send them anywhere in the country, including the east and the borders with Guinea and Cote D'Ivoire.

There things are much more volatile than Monrovia, but these well-trained, fully-armed women are unafraid.

"Casualties can happen any time. If something has to happen it has to happen. I could have got killed say, two years back. I'm alive today because God wants me to be alive" said Poonam, a practising Hindu. "We are ready to die, we are soldiers."

This World: "UN Girl Squad" will be broadcast on Thursday 21 June 2007 at 1900 BST on BBC Two.

Security Council Requests Panel to Assess Situation

Jun 21, 2007 (UN News Service/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- The Security Council today called on Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to set up a panel of financial and diamond experts to renew investigations of whether UN sanctions against **Liberia** are being broken after learning of "credible allegations" that the notorious former president Charles Taylor may still have access to considerable wealth.

In a unanimous resolution, the Council asked Mr. Ban to establish a panel of up to three members to carry out a follow-up assessment mission in **Liberia** and neighbouring countries to determine the effectiveness and impact of the measures introduced against Mr. Taylor and others.

A Council resolution in 2004 ordered all governments to freeze the assets of Mr. Taylor and his immediate family and barred them from using "misappropriated funds and property" to obstruct the restoration of peace and stability in the region.

The panel, which must be set up within a month, is expected to draw "as much as possible on the expertise" of the existing panel of experts, whose mandate expires today, which monitors Liberia.

That group, in a report released earlier this month, found there are "credible allegations" that Mr. Taylor - who is facing war crimes charges before the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) - has investments in Nigeria that have been unfrozen. Mr. Taylor has called on the SCSL to cover his legal costs at his trial, claiming he is indigent.

The panel report also noted allegations "of a large sum of money being with Charles Taylor at the time of his arrest in Nigeria" last year and his continuing ties to a cell phone company in Liberia. It added that the Nigerian Government had not allowed the panel to pursue the allegations and Liberia has not adopted laws authorizing a freeze.

But in its resolution today, the Council lauded the "sustained progress" made by the Liberian Government since January 2006, when the inauguration of a democratically-elected president, Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson, capped the peace process envisaged in a 2003 peace accord ending the country's bloody civil war.

The Government has made great strides "in rebuilding Liberia for the benefit of all Liberians, with the support of the international community," the 15-member body noted.

The new experts' panel is also expected to probe the Government's compliance with the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, a mechanism introduced to prevent so-called "blood diamonds" from reaching international markets.

Meanwhile, the Council extended the mandate of the Group of Experts monitoring the arms embargo in Cote d'Ivoire until 31 October, determining that the situation there still constitutes a threat to regional peace and security.

This Group was created in early 2005 to gather and analyze information on arms caches and flows in the region, and was asked by the Council today to submit a written update before 15 October.

Liberia probe into graft remarks

BBC
Thursday, 21 June 2007

Liberia's parliament has summoned the auditor general, John Morlu, to appear before it to explain his damaging allegations about government graft.

Mr Morlu recently accused President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's administration of being "three times more corrupt" than its predecessor.

A BBC correspondent in the capital, Monrovia, says the accusations are a big embarrassment for the president.

She declared corruption "public enemy number one" after taking power in 2006.

Her election marked the end to 14 years of civil war.

The government has called the allegations unfair and unsupported.

Set back

Mr. Morlu says millions of dollars are unaccounted for in the budget for 2007-2008.

He also criticised what he called a serious lack of transparency in the draft budget presented to parliament.

The BBC's Ledgerhood Rennie in Monrovia says the allegations have shocked many Liberians.

Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf, who previously served in top posts at the United Nations and World Bank, has been waging an all-out fight against graft.

Our correspondent says she has won acclaim for going after former transitional government officials - accused by regional body, the Economic Community of West African States, of stealing state funds during the peace process.

She has also worked hard to win the backing of financial institutions to invest in Liberia.

If Mr Morlu's evidence stands up in parliament, it would serve as a major set back to Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf's drive for fast-track debt relief for Liberia, our reporter says.

It will also erode public confidence in her inaugural declaration that corruption will not be tolerated under her watch.

Media watchdog claims UN, Liberia police beat up journalists

DAKAR, June 20, 2007 (AFP) - A global press freedom group on Wednesday accused Liberian and UN peacekeeping forces of beating up journalists covering student protest marches, prompting an investigation by the United Nations mission in Liberia.

The Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) alleged that national police and the UN mission (UNMIL) forces assaulted Daylue Goah of the privately-owned daily New Democrat and Evans Ballah of the twice-weekly Public Agenda.

"The two journalists were attacked by members of a joint Liberian National Police and UNMIL unit, who tore up their ID cards and forced them to delete the photos from their digital cameras," said RSF.

"Such police brutality against journalists is disgraceful and unacceptable," the press freedom group said, adding that the law-enforcement agents "clearly lost control of the situation and used disproportionate violence."

"We are amazed by the clear lack of professionalism and self-control displayed by troops acting under UN authority," RSF said urging punishment for the perpetrators.

UNMIL spokesman Ben Malor did not confirm the attacks but said an investigation has been launched into the matter.

"The mission has ordered an investigation into these reports and allegations," Malor told AFP by telephone from Monrovia. UNMIL has responsibility to ensure public order in Liberia.

Goah and Ballah were covering a University of Liberia student demonstration against conditions on campus.

The protests later degenerated into rioting spilling onto the streets of the capital near the presidential palace, said RSF.

"UNMIL does not condone inappropriate actions in quelling demonstrations or protests," said Malor.

Reliving horrors of the homeland: Young refugees to lead depiction of treacherous flight from African wars

Source: Chicago Tribune (KRT) Date: June 21, 2007

Jun. 21--Jerry Nahn won't discuss how his older brother was killed in Liberia, casting his eyes down with an "I don't remember" about the day government soldiers stormed into their home, carting away his sibling.

But the 17-year-old who now lives in Chicago wants others to understand what happened afterward. So on Friday he will lead a group of teens in a re-enactment at a Rogers Park gymnasium, meant to help them imagine his family's two-week trek to the Ivory Coast in 2002, as civil war consumed his country.

With the help of refugees and volunteers, he will also try to re-create the fights over food that punctuated his two-year stay in a refugee camp and simulate the gunfire, the barked orders in foreign languages, the confusion that became part of his everyday life.

The event, part of a week of activities surrounding World Refugee Day on Wednesday, will involve 100 children from throughout the city, members of youth

groups partnered with the non-profit Heartland Alliance, which is

International Clips on West Africa

Sierra Leone war crimes court convicts rebel chiefs

FREETOWN, June 20, 2007 (AFP) - A UN-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone handed down its first verdicts on Wednesday, convicting three rebel chiefs of crimes against humanity during a decade-long civil war.

The court found Alex Tamba Brima, 35, Brima Bazzy Kamara, 39, and Santigie Borbor Kanu, 42, guilty on a dozen of the 14 charges they faced.

Judge Julia Sebutinde set a sentencing hearing for July 16.

The three commanders, who were found guilty of murder, rape and enlisting child soldiers, were allegedly backed by former Liberian president Charles Taylor in exchange for Sierra Leone diamonds.

The were acquitted on two charges of sexual slavery and other inhuman acts.

By the time the war ended in 2001 in the West African country, some 120,000 people had died and thousands others had been mutilated -- their arms, legs, ears or noses chopped off.

The trio belonged to the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), a rebel faction led by Johnny Paul Koroma that toppled an elected regime in 1997 and joined forces with the notorious main rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

After ousting the government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on May 25, 1997, the AFRC set up a junta which included RUF members. They briefly led the government before embarking on terror campaigns that included burning children to death and mutilating civilians.

"This is the end of the trial phase ... there is, however, still some time to go before the final end," the court's chief spokesman Peter Andersen, told AFP.

He said all three had the right to appeal.

Top security chiefs and amputee victims of the civil war were among those packed into the heavily guarded court complex in the capital Freetown.

The trio, whose trial opened in March 2005 and ended in December last year, had pleaded not guilty to all 14 charges.

AFRC leader Koroma was among the 13 people originally indicted by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). He was never arrested and is now widely presumed dead.

Created in January 2002, the court is a hybrid of international and local law under a deal between the west African country's government and the United Nations.

Charles Taylor is the most high-profile defendant to appear before the court, although his trial venue was switched to The Hague amid official concerns of unrest if it was held in Freetown.

Taylor's trial opened at the beginning of the month.

Although the civil war broke out in 1991, the court is only mandated to handle cases beginning in November 1996, the date Kabbah signed a peace deal with the RUF which did not hold.

While it was set up with the backing of the UN, the court operates independently and is financed by contributions from several countries.

Red Envelope Entertainment and 'SIERRA LEONE'S REFUGEE ALL STARS' Team Up on Red

Letter Day for Refugee Youth Multi-Awarded Inspirational Film Will Donate Portion of Sales to International Refugee Campaign

SAN FRANCISCO, June 20 /PRNewswire/ -- On International Refugee Day, June 20, Red Envelope Entertainment, the original content division of Netflix, announced their acquisition of the home video rights to SIERRA LEONE'S REFUGEE ALL STARS, the inspiring and acclaimed documentary about a group of simple, displaced musicians from war-torn West Africa who become unwitting heroes and sources of light and hope for their suffering countrymen.

In the spirit of Red Envelope Entertainment's continuing commitment to the project, a portion of the film's DVD sales -- handled through their partner on the film, New Video's Docurama Films label -- will go directly to the ninemillion.org campaign -- so named for the number of refugee children in the world today.

Initiated by The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), ninemillion.org was conceived specifically to raise awareness and funds directly for education and youth programs for refugee children worldwide, many of whom spend years of their young lives away from home with little or no hope of returning.

The film and its message of strength in the face of one of the enduring Sierra Leone refugee crisis created the perfect opportunity for the UNHCR to become involved and support the project with outreach.

"Few stories are as uniquely inspiring as this one," said Liesl Copland, Head of Acquisitions for Red Envelope Entertainment. "We are more than excited about adding this film to our label: we are proud and happy to be associated with ninemillion.org."

For every copy of the film purchased from the August 14 street-date, Red Envelope will donate \$1 to benefit the campaign. Netflix subscribers can add the film to their queue immediately in advance of its release and see the film beginning July 17 via the service both on DVD and their new Watch Now platform.

Agonized by a brutal, decade-long civil war -- among the bloodiest in a continent no stranger to bloody conflict -- the people of Sierra Leone had little or no reason to dance until the ragtag band began impromptu concerts along the refugee border towns that housed them.

Serving as a unique tribute to the power of music and the triumphant celebration of the human spirit, SIERRA LEONE'S REFUGEE ALL STARS has won praise from fans and critics alike and has been a favorite of the film festival circuit, winning, among others notable awards, the Grand Jury Prize at AFI Film Fest in Los Angeles.

"We're thrilled at finding a home for the film with Red Envelope," said Zach Niles, the film's co-director and co-producer. "It made perfect sense."

Banker White, co-director and co-producer, added, "The offer to partner and donate to ninemillion.org just cemented our good feeling about this link-up."

Docurama Films and ninemillion.org are part of an eventful summer in the United States for both film and band, who are about to embark on a national tour that includes performances at the 75th Anniversary of Save The Children in New York and at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles on June 24. The film will also be broadcast June 26 as part of PBS's POV.

The band raised the spirits of their fellow refugees after forming in a refugee camp during Sierra Leone's civil war but, even as they begin new lives back in their homeland, they continue to help those still in need. Their upcoming tour is a shining example of the group giving back - and while they have little more to give than their music, they are sharing it wherever they feel it can make an impact.

Their just released collaboration with Aerosmith on John Lennon's "Give Peace A Chance" is featured on the all star Instant Karma CD with proceeds to benefit Amnesty's Darfur campaign.

SIERRA LEONE'S REFUGEE ALL STARS is a Red Envelope Entertainment Presentation in association with ninemillion.org, A SodaSoap Production co-Produced by American Documentary/P.O.V. in association with Shangri-La Entertainment and Cube Vision.

For more info about the film and the band: <http://www.refugeeallstars.org>

Further donations can be made directly to ninemillion.org at any time online at <http://www.ninemillion.org> .

About Red Envelope Entertainment

Netflix is committed to providing consumers with access to the widest variety of films available. With over 80,000 titles, the Netflix catalog spans every major genre, from documentaries and dramas to comedies and how-to. To that end, Red Envelope Entertainment is acquiring and funding original content projects to increase consumer options and provide an innovative method for film distribution. While giving filmmakers a platform to expose less commercial projects to a broader audience, Red Envelope Entertainment looks to leverage its proprietary technology to offer the nearly seven million Netflix subscribers unique and original content to which they wouldn't otherwise have access. This original content initiative creates a national distribution channel for films and entertainment programming otherwise not available to broad audiences. For more information, visit <http://www.netflix.com> .

About Docurama Films

Founded in 1999 by parent company New Video Group Inc., Docurama Films is the only label dedicated exclusively to bringing critically acclaimed and cutting-edge documentary films to the home entertainment marketplace. Since its launch, Docurama has released over 200 award-winning and highly acclaimed films including D.A. Pennebaker's Bob Dylan: Dont Look Back, Paradise Lost, Lost Boys of Sudan, Andy Goldsworthy's Rivers and Tides Working With Time, the 2005 theatrical sleeper hit The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill and the widely acclaimed Sundance Channel documentary series The Staircase. New Video is also the exclusive label and distributor for the A&E Home Video and The History Channel(R) and Biography(R). To find out more about these or any Docurama films visit <http://www.newvideo.com> . <http://www.docurama.com>

Mbeki stresses peace in Cote d'Ivoire

JOHANNESBURG, Jun 20, 2007 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- South African President Thabo Mbeki said on Wednesday that elections in Cote d'Ivoire is a priority but this should not be done at the expense of peace in the country.

Briefing the media following discussions with Cote d'Ivoire's Prime Minister Guillaume Soro in Cape Town, Mbeki said the unification and disarmament process currently underway in the West African country was the main priority.

The president noted: "You have to complete those processes to create conditions which are conducive for peaceful elections."

Soro concurred with Mbeki, saying it was important for the elections to be conducted when all Ivorians were prepared for them.

He said: "They should take place when all Ivorians are ready for them; the most important thing at the moment is to achieve peace."

The elections, which were previously scheduled to take place in 2005, had to be indefinitely postponed following political wrangling over the implementation of past peace agreements.

At the center of the wrangling was the issue of what qualified one as an Ivorian citizen.

As a result, close to 3 million Ivorians had no identity documents because their citizenship was being questioned.

Soro said the government would soon dispatch a team of magistrates to issue those people with ID documents so they could participate in the forthcoming elections.

"We have started the process of deploying magistrates to go and give documents to those people," he said.

The United Nations wants elections to be conducted as early as October.

Earlier mediation attempts by Cote d'Ivoire's former colonial ruler, France, the UN, the African Union, and a west African regional bloc have all failed to bring lasting peace to the country.

But, the latest Ouagadougou agreement, brokered by northern neighbor Burkina Faso, seems to have finally brought the country's warring factions to some form of political consensus.

The west African coastal nation had been divided into the rebel controlled north with its headquarters in Bouake -- the second largest city -- and the government administered south where the seat of power is located in the port city of Abidjan.

UNMIL Daily Newspaper Summary
Thursday, 21 June 2007

[The newspaper summary does not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

National Security Forces Ban Midnight Movement

(The Analyst, Daily Observer, The Monitor, The Inquirer, National Chronicle, Heritage and The Informer)

- National security forces have banned the movement of people in the streets of Monrovia after mid-night in a campaign to crack down on criminal activity.
- The crackdown according to *Daily Observer* has become necessary after the Police discovered that suspected criminals, after being raided out their various hideouts, have in recent times, begun infiltrating night clubs and other public places under the guise of transacting normal business.
- The media and the public seemed to have misinterpreted this security measure to mean an imposition of a curfew even though Deputy Police Inspector-General Asatu Bah Kenneth clarified that the restriction was a "life-saving measure" in the wake of a reported increase of criminal activities, especially armed robbery.
- The Analyst reported that although the Police clarified that there is no curfew, they are rounding up people at night who do not have genuine identity to justify being out late night.
- Critics of the Government according to media reports said the exercise is strange. But the Police said it is part of the recent operation launched to crack down on criminals.
- It can be recalled that UNMIL in collaboration with national security agencies recently launched "Operation Crime Watch" intended to combat crimes in the country.

Government Moves to Settle Impasse at State-owned University

(The Analyst, Daily Observer, The Monitor, The Inquirer, National Chronicle, Heritage and The Informer)

- Presidential Press Secretary Cyrus Badio corroborated media reports that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf had directed the Bureau of the Budget to allot US\$350,000 to settle arrears to instructors and other employees of the University of Liberia.
- Additionally, the University's President, Dr. Alhassan Conteh said the Liberian leader has also instructed the Bureau of the Budget to allocate US\$380,000 to purchase four buses and rent additional ones to ease transportation problems of student and faculty commuters.

Media Groups Criticized Alleged Assault on Journalists

(The Monitor, The Inquirer, National Chronicle, Heritage and The Informer)

- The Press Union of Liberia and a global press freedom group, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), have criticized the alleged manhandling of two journalists by personnel of UNMIL and national security forces.
- The criticisms was in response to media reports that UN peacekeepers and the Police had assaulted two print journalists and forced them to delete photos from their digital cameras while they were covering student demonstrations recently.

UNMIL Daily Radio Summary **Thursday, 21 June 2007**

Following are excerpts of select Liberian radio stations' news programs. Parts of the transcripts have been paraphrased and edited to conform to UNMIL style. The radio summary does not necessarily reflect the views of UNMIL.

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

Press Union Condemns Attack on Journalists by Security Forces

- [sic:] The Press Union says several journalists were brutally attacked by security forces during the University of Liberia students' protest on Tuesday.
- [sic:] In a release issued in Monrovia yesterday, the Union condemned the reported attack on journalists by personnel of UNMIL and the Liberia National Police (LNP).
- [sic:] The PUL said it was not surprised that government security forces were involved in such an attack on the press but said the fact that UNMIL soldiers allegedly participated in the flogging of journalists present a gloomy picture for the new democratic order and described the action as unacceptable.
- Meanwhile, the police have denied that officers of the LNP brutalized anyone during the students protest when UNMIL and the National Police moved in to restore calm.
- Speaking at UNMIL weekly press briefing yesterday, the Police Deputy Inspector General, Colonel Asatu Bah Kenneth said the officers were only performing their duty in restoring law and order.

(Also reported on ELBS)

Auditor General Appears Before House of Representative Today

- The Auditor General of Liberia, John Morlu is to appear before the House of Representative today to explain and give documentary evidence on his claim that the current Government is "three times more corrupt" than the previous one.
- The decision to summon Mr. Morlu was reached during plenary on Tuesday following mounting 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)

University of Liberia Student Union gives Authorities 48-Hour Ultimatum

- The University of Liberia Student Union has given authorities a 48-hour ultimatum to reopen the institution in addition to other demands.
- In a six-count position statement issued yesterday, the student leadership called for the Government to immediately address the concerns of the faculty so that academic work can resume.
- The students also demanded the release of colleagues they claimed were arrested by the police on Tuesday without precondition and called for a thorough investigation into the alleged manhandling of some students.
- The President of the University of Liberia, Alhassan Conteh has however said the indefinite closure of the university was intended to guarantee the protection of lives and properties.

(Also reported on ELBS)

Government Assures Security Protection for Refugees

- Speaking during the celebration of World Refugee Day yesterday, Vice President Joseph Boakai assured that there would be no more horror of war and that government was committed to providing security protection to the most vulnerable.
- Vice President Boakai urged Liberian refugees in the sub-region to honour the June 30 deadline for assisted voluntary repatriation to avoid undue embarrassment at their respective camps.
- The Acting UNHCR Representative to Liberia, Raouf Mazou said the agency has repatriated about 60 thousand refugees from Lofa County out of the over 100 thousand refugees repatriated in Liberia.

- Meanwhile, Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia say they are plagued with life threatening conditions since the UNHCR seized support to the refugees in 2004 and appealed to the agency to grant them their request for integration in Liberia and settlement in a third country.

Police Arrest Suspected Smugglers at Port of Monrovia

- [sic:] Police have arrested three men in connection with the smuggling of 500 bags of rice from the Freeport of Monrovia.
- [sic:] A Radio Veritas investigation revealed that on Monday, the rice was smuggled from a warehouse at the port by men believed to be business agents of a local rice importer, the Fouta Corporation.

The Nation (Nairobi)

Friday, 22 June 2007

When the Continent Ignores the Youth, Its Warlords Celebrate

By Dr. Peter Kagwanja
Nairobi

Guns may have gone silent in many war-torn parts of Africa, but the continent is still in the thick of the bitter winter of youth rebellion.

The recent flare-up of lawlessness and violence involving the shadowy Mungiki youth movement in Kenya has thrust into the international spotlight the fragility of Africa's emerging democracies.

Sadly, the Kenya government's iron-clad response to the Mungiki extremists-estimated at between 1.5 and 2 million and mainly youths between 18 and 40 years, with 400,000 of them as women-reveals an unsettling lack of appreciation in official circles of the depth and complexity of Africa's youth crisis.

Worse still, the June 18, 2007 minor explosion that left one person dead and scores injured in Nairobi has thrown the spectre of terrorism into this dangerous mix.

Boosting up youth participation in public governance and decision-making processes and substantially investing in better education, healthcare and skills training for Africa's marginalised and vulnerable young people are central to reducing the risk of tension and violence, and pulling the continent back from economic brink.

Faced with the violence of the Mungiki type, theorists like Uganda's Mahmoud Mamdani contrasted this "non-revolutionary" and "senseless" violence with the activities of nationalist youth icons like the Veranda Boys who ushered Ghana to independence in 1957 or South Africa's Umkonto we Sizwe (the spear of the nation).

Mungiki typifies a global surge of "uncivil nationalism" representing a claim for power based on insular identities like Croat, Hindu, Serb or Tutsi, which has underpinned armed conflicts in post-Cold War Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe.

Invariably, Africa's young people have served as fodder to the cannons of warlords who recruited them into armed forces, paramilitaries, civil defence units, or militias.

For instance, Liberia's warlord, Charles Taylor -now being tried at the Hague for crimes against humanity- recruited a cadre of Liberian and Sierra Leonean child soldiers into his National Patriotic Front, organising them into the notorious Small Boys Unit (SBU).

The World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation, the World Bank's flagship publication, estimates that some 300,000 young people under the age of 18 in developing countries have recently been involved in armed conflict, and another 500,000 have been recruited into military or paramilitary forces.

With thousands of children and young adults trapped in civil wars in Angola, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Somalia in the last two decades, Africa is reeling under the insidious legacy of "stolen childhood"-the lost chance for social and skills development.

Marginalized and disillusioned by the forces of economic globalisation, many youth movements joined the fray of anti-globalisation, also feeding on an amalgam of radical ideas from Karl Marx to Malcom X and Che Guevara.

Others draw inspiration from such religio-political movements like Dini ya Kibangu in Congo or Dini ya Msambwa and Legio Maria in Kenya. More recently, African youths have adopted the tactics and images of globalised violence, taking on names like Baghdad Boys or Talibans with Mungiki taking up the tactic of abducting and beheading its enemies a la Iraq.

Even within Africa's military establishments, young soldiers contributed to the 80 successful coups, 181 failed ones and an unknown number of take-over attempts that rocked the continent's security between 1961 and 2006.

Overtime, young soldiers like Mobutu Sese Seko (Congo), Mengistu Haile Mariam (Ethiopia) and Samuel Doe (Liberia) would hurtle their countries down to anarchy and chaos.

The dynamics of democratisation transformed the African youth into pawns in the intra-elite power game. For instance, during the turbulent 1992 to 2002 decade, the various factions and fractions of Kenya's elite stridently sponsored militias of sorts or "Majeshi" (informal armies in this context) turning the landscape into a cesspool of all genres of communal violence.

Majeshi as a political strategy reflected the pervasive phenomenon of "informal repression" adopted by the ruling elite to covertly derail political opposition, counter multiparty democracy and recapture political initiative.

In the 1980s, the apartheid regime had sponsored Unita in Angola, Renamo in Mozambique, the Kolvoet (crowbar) in Namibia, the Inkatha and Ama Afrika within South Africa to fight its opponents.

During the 1994 elections in Malawi, the Nyau traditional dancers were recruited to wreak havoc on Kamuzu Banda's opponents. In Cameroon, the Lamibe traditional chiefs were turned into dangerous marionettes used to beat, detain and intimidate the critics of president Paul Biya. In 1994, the state-sponsored Interahamwe largely youth militias would hack down nearly a million Tutsis in Africa's worst case of genocide.

The renowned Sudanese scholar, Mohamed Salih, alerted the world of the dangerous ploy by Sudan's new Islamic government to use "tribal" militias to fight its enemies. The use of Janjaweed militias in the country's Western region of Darfur has claimed some 200,000 lives and displaced nearly two million Darfurians.

In the September 11, 2001 aftermath, "terrorism" has rapidly become the main nomenclature framing the thinking and policy responses to youth militancy. Although Africa's Muslim youths have been increasingly recruited as agents of international terrorist groups like al-Qaeda, the reasons for this are more complex than Samuel Huntington's Clash of

Civilizations thesis that portrays cultures as rocked in deadly combats.

Nor is the dividing line between cultures and faiths that neat. For instance, the top leadership of the neo-traditional extremist Mungiki were converted to Islam in October 2000, arguably to win the financial and political support of Islamic jihadists. In a similar vein, after 1989 Uganda's Lord's Resistant Army (LRA), an extremist Christian group, joined forces with Sudan's Islamic militants who bankrolled its bush war against the Government of Yoweri Museveni.

The debate on how to deal with Africa's youth crisis has thrown up several scenarios. One scenario calls on governments to engage the youth in dialogue. The second one is the 'smoke-them-out' response largely inspired by hard-nosed strategies on the 'global war on terror' by the world's major powers.

A third scenario calls on the governments to scrupulously adhere to the rule of law in dealing with lawless youths.

The fourth suggestion, the doomsday scenario, calls on developing countries to invest in their young people or face economic down-turn, violence and chaos. A more blissful scenario projects the youth stratum as an asset, urging African countries to invest in better education, healthcare, and skills training for their young people to experience a surge in economic growth, poverty alleviation, job creation and reduced risk of social tensions and instability.

Africa has the lion's share of the world's 1.5 billion people aged 12 to 24 - the largest-ever youth group in history - with nearly 90 per cent (1.3 billion) residing in developing countries.

The continent is the only part of the world expected to experience a youth bulge by 2020, offering a vital window of opportunity for demographic and socioeconomic development.

However, African governments have been slow to tap into this asset.

Sadly, Africa's 'lost generation' forms the bulk of some 130 million of the world's population without basic skills or literacy. Owing to population pressure, the number of young people looking for work is expected to increase by 28 per cent in the next two or so decades.

With nearly half of Africa's population under the age of 18 as compared to Canada's 18.95 per cent or Sweden's 18 per cent, African governments have an uphill task of developing innovative strategies to rehabilitate "lost generation"-the continent's potential care-givers and taxpayers. As François Bourguignon, the World Bank's Chief Economist and Senior Vice President for Development Economics, warns: "Such large numbers of young people present great opportunities, but also risks". Fail to address the youth's socio-economic marginalisation and powerlessness and the continent's future looks bleak.

The net must be cast wider to capture thousands of African youth in detention. According to the Statistics SA report, of the approximately 171,000 people counted in prisons, correctional institutions and police cells by 2007, as many as 122,000 were between the ages of 14 and 34 years (71.4 per cent). An overwhelming 96.2 per cent of youth in detention were males, introducing a critical gender nuance to rehabilitation projects.

Youth crime and violence have their roots in poverty and squalour. Thus, a successfully handling of the social economic situation is central to avoiding tensions and crime linked to the young people.

While decisively dealing with youth lawlessness through the law, Africa must also tap on the creative potential of its youth. For instance, the Mungiki in Kenya has not always been vandals.

Some of its members have adopted lawful ways of making a living by engaging in subsistence farming where they grow maize, potatoes and keep livestock, while others have reportedly taken to commercial poultry farming in Kitengela near Nairobi.

And there is no shortage of support. The international community, African institutions and countries have worked to deal with the African youth crisis. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has invited the partners to reaffirm their support to advance the well-being of youth.

With few African countries currently on the path to meeting the MDGs by the 2015 cut-off date, Africa's young men and women are still not out of the woods. At the continent, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999) has provided an ideal framework for asserting the rights of African youth.

On July 2, 2006, the African Union adopted the 'Youth Charter', which recognizes the youth as Africa's greatest resource. More fundamentally, the Charter acknowledges the myriad problems facing the African youth: It is marginalised from mainstream society through inequalities in income, wealth and power, unemployment and underemployment, infected and affected by the HIV and Aids pandemic.

The African youth also lives in situations of poverty and hunger, experiencing illiteracy and poor quality educational systems, restricted access to health services and to information, exposure to violence including gender violence, engaging in armed conflicts and experiencing various forms of discrimination.

The AU Youth Charter therefore calls on African states to develop a comprehensive and coherent national youth policy frameworks. These instruments must be based on extensive consultation with young people and should

provide for their participation in decision-making at all levels of governance and development. Accordingly, Kenya adopted a National Youth Policy (2002), but the policy has not been fully implemented.

Similarly, in 2004, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) promulgated its Strategic Framework for Youth Programme aimed at advancing youth empowerment and development.

In view of these national, regional and international frameworks, governments must take urgent action in support of African youth at three interrelated levels.

First, they should create opportunities for better education and healthcare to enable the youth acquire skills and to safely navigate the risky adolescence and to secure jobs in the job market.

Second, the promotion of youth participation and involvement in political processes and social organizations is a must. This is essential in fostering young people's civic life in their own communities and also for good governance. It also has the potential of defusing frustrations, preventing them from boiling over into economic and social tensions.

Third, is the creation of second chances to young people who might have fallen behind due to prolonged involvement in wars and other difficult circumstances such as drug addiction and protracted unemployment.

African youth emerging from war or from the difficult situations imposed by the violence of the one-party state and democratization need demobilization and rehabilitation into communities.

An ideal framework of assisting Africa's lost generation to reconstruct their lives and to acquire useful skills is to expand and improve upon existing National Youth Service facilities. These facilities, existing in many African countries, can not only deal with youth delinquency and vigilantism, but also provide the young with employable skills, discipline and sense of social responsibility.

Finally, governments should put the Youth at the centre of government economic recovery blueprints like the Accelerated and Shared Growth in South Africa or Kenya's 'Vision 2030'.

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