

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



A student from the Milton Margai School for the Blind reads from the Braille version of Sierra Leone's Constitution, launched by the Special Court at British Council on Thursday. See additional photos in today's *'Special Court Supplement'*.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Friday, 22 May 2009

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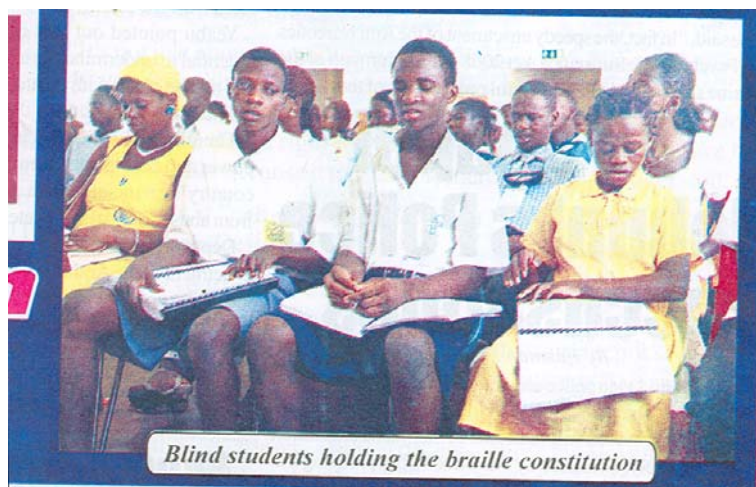
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Special Court Supplement

Launch of the Braille Constitution of Sierra Leone, in Pictures Pages 12-13

Awoko

Friday, 22 May 2009



Blind students holding the braille constitution

Braille version of Salone constitution launched

By Betty Milton

The Special Court of Sierra Leone yesterday launched the Braille version of the Sierra Leone which is aimed at helping the visually impaired to know about the country's law and system.

In launching the transcribed Braille version, the prosecutor of the court Stephen Rapp said that the court is in partnership with the people and the international community stating that the court believe they had an obligation to help the people of the country and so they are trying to support local organization and those who need help special assistance.

Mr. Rapp maintained that since the inception of the court they have been in partnership with the Milton School for the blind adding that it was during the last end of year visit to the school, that the Special Court decided that there is need for the Blind school to have a transcribed version of the constitution in a Braille version.

The prosecutor singled out Thomas Alieu who wanted to study law but could not because of the materials and books for studying law are not in Braille.

Mr. Rapp said that blindness is not a disability but has to be overcome by all means.

The constitution he went on is a very important document as it lays out the rights and responsibilities of a citizen adding that the constitution stipulates that the government is not ruled by one man but by those elected.

Because of this Mr. Rapp went on every citizen has equal right to any document which is for their purpose that

is why they have taken the first step to make sure that all important documents are available to all people in a form they can understand.

The Outreach Section Coordinator of the Special Court Patrick Fatorma in his statement said that the court has produced three books in Braille version for the blind. The first one was "Special Court made simple" which highlight the rules, mandate and work of the court, the second was "International Humanitarian Law made simple" which also helps the blind to learn about international humanitarian law. The reason he said for the production of these books is that he never before this time saw a book or material in Braille which is an indication that the visually impaired are not taken into consideration.

The court he went on is now at its final stage so they want

to leave legacy behind so that the country will not return to its former violent state.

The chairman of National Commission for Democracy George Coleridge-Taylor when opening the session said the constitution transcribed in Braille version is a significant contribution to democracy in the country. Adding that the constitution is the basis of which the country's democracy rest.

He said that the people who are not visually impaired do not know anything about the constitution and that they are not aware of their rights and responsibilities.

For good governance he said it is vital that people have access to the constitution which makes the citizen recover their position in the state so it is very important that it is has been transcribed into Braille version

Concord Times
Friday, 22 May 2009

MPs end transitional justice, peace-building seminar

By Regina Pratt

A one-day seminar for MPs on Transitional Justice and Peace-building has concluded Wednesday at Committee Room No. 1, Parliament building.

The seminar was organized by the International Centre for Transitional Justice in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Court Monitoring Programme.

In his keynote address, head of political office at UNIPSIL, Gebremedhin Hagoss - representing the ERSO - said for them in the UN there have been significant strides in the peace process in Sierra Leone.

Hagoss said their job is the prevention of conflict and therefore supports the local and international entities that work to prevent conflict in the country.

He said UNIPSIL also monitors human rights and enforces the rule of law, urging that all Sierra Leoneans should maintain the peace in the country that they have worked hard to achieve.

The deputy ERSO said they in the UN detest crisis because they do not want any war in the country. "Let us take ourselves seriously as peaceful citizens," he stressed.

Guest speaker, Hon. Jeh B. Browne said the hard-won peace in the sub-region must be maintained. He said the TRC in Liberia was passed into law in 2005 and implemented in 2006 to allow people to highlight their grievances.

Hon. Browne also noted



Majority Leader Hon. Eddie Turay

that the Liberian TRC has collected over 30,000 statements and conducted 800 hearings throughout the country. He said the Accra Peace Accord provided for the establishment of the TRC.

The European Union, Browne said has been very instrumental in the peace process in Liberia, noting, "Interconnection in the sub-region is important for lasting peace in the region".

Majority leader, Hon. Eddie Turay in his presentation on the "Role of Parliament in Peace-building" said the brutal civil war raged for almost 11 years until the Lome Peace Agreement was signed on the 7th July 1999 in Togo.

He said the agreement sealed the end of the brutal war and therefore a key factor in the reconciliation and reintegration processes in post-war Sierra Leone. He said the pact has also contributed immeasurably to creating the enabling environment in which it has been possible to put in place modalities for the series of elections that have been held since the formal declaration of the war.

"Parliament must accommodate the participa-

tion of all people, in the homogeneous as well as heterogeneous societies, in order to safeguard diversity, pluralism and the right to be different in the climate of tolerance, then peace will reign," he said.

According to the Majority Leader, the role of Parliament is to engender and debate where the opportunities exist so that concessions can be kept to a minimum.

"I urge you as Members of Parliament to remain relevant as the most galvanizing force, or agents for sustainable peace, and continue to take the lead on issues touching and concerning the future of our country," he admonished.

He expressed hope that the seminar would help to ignite and impel parliamentarians to assume generator responsibilities in peace building process "in our great country".

In his welcome address, Mohamed Suma of the Sierra Leone Court Monitoring group said Parliament has the key roles or issues to strengthen the peace process in Sierra Leone.

Hon. Elizabeth Alpha Lavalie chaired the opening ceremony.

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 21 May 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

U.N. forces can start Liberia withdrawal in 4 years

MONROVIA, May 21 (Reuters) - United Nations forces can begin withdrawing from Liberia in about four years time having bolstered the country after a ruinous civil war, Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said on Wednesday.

U.N. peacekeepers went into the West African state after the 14-year conflict ended in 2003, and about 10,000 of them remain propping up fledgling new national security forces.

Asked when the country would be able to stand on its feet without peacekeepers, Johnson-Sirleaf told Reuters after talks with a Security Council delegation: "Two years after the elections. Then we can ask everybody to leave."

Presidential elections are due in 2011.

International Clips on West Africa

Cote d'Ivoire former rebel to transfer northern part to gov't

ABIDJAN, May 21 (Xinhua) -- Cote d'Ivoire's former rebel is to transfer control of the northern part of the West African country to the government next week in another major step to a historic election to end the long-standing division, the government has said.

The ceremony of the power transfer of the Bandama Valley and the Bauake regions and Command Zone 1 of the New Forces (FN) "will take place Tuesday, May 26 2009 in Bouake," according to a communique released by the Interior Ministry on Wednesday.

The holding of the ceremony will be the first in a series of power transfer by the FN, which has maintained the control of the northern part since 2002 with Bouake as its stronghold

Local Media – Newspaper

Security Council Maintains Travel Ban and Assets Freeze on allies of Ex-Liberian leader

(Daily Observer, The Inquirer, The News, Heritage, The Informer, The Analyst, The Monitor)

- A visiting UN Security Council delegation announced Wednesday that UN sanctions including travel bans and a freeze on the assets of allies of ex-president Charles Taylor should remain in place. Susan Rice, the United States ambassador to the UN who headed the delegation to Liberia defended the Security Council sanctions at a crowded news conference held in the capital, Monrovia on Wednesday. "The United Nations Security Council maintains sanctions on certain individuals who the council continues to believe pose a threat to Liberia and to regional peace through their actions," Rice said.
- Former public officials in the Taylor regime have been making frantic efforts to get the restrictions on them lifted. Statements made by Ambassador Rice that the travel ban and

assets freeze would remain in effect appears to have attracted some not-so appreciative comments from some affected Liberians. Cyril Allen, a long-time confidant of Mr. Taylor who sounded rather disillusioned over the development, said that the Security Council is a "bogus entity that has no moral ground" to continue to impose restrictions on them. Judging from media reports, the general feeling among allies of Mr. Taylor is that the conditions which necessitated the imposition of the restrictions no longer exist, and as such, the continuous measures against them are unjust, especially in the absence of a fair hearing.

- Other stories covered by the print media included the UN Security Council's findings regarding Liberia following discussions with a number of key stakeholders. From all indications, the delegation concluded that despite a recent rise in crimes, Liberia was relatively secured but the situation remained fragile. "The message we have received is that the current calm is highly fragile and could be disrupted at any point. Our conclusion is that this is a security environment that needs close attention and care," Susan Rice, said.
- There was not much focus in the media on a possible withdrawal of UNMIL whose mandate expires in September 2009. However, a number of international wire services including Reuters spoke to signs that the 24-hour Security Council trip to Liberia had persuaded most members of the 15-nation body that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's cautious drawdown plan was the 'right one.' Accordingly, Rice said the peacekeeping force should be in Liberia 'certainly through the 2011 elections and perhaps a little bit longer.'

Armed Gang Brutalize Lawmaker

(Daily Observer, New Vision)

- Several unidentified gunmen early yesterday morning broke into the Bensonville home of Montserrado County Lawmaker Richard Holder and unmercifully brutalized him.
- Representative Holder's left hand was broken by his attackers with a gigantic iron rod. He was also wounded severely on his head and other parts of the body.

Liberia Gets US\$24M for Roads – Maryland, River Gee to Benefit

(Daily Observer)

- The African Development Bank (ADB) has, in collaboration with the Liberian Government, on Tuesday turned over and formally launched a road project valued at US\$24.95 million with River Gee and Maryland counties as targeted beneficiaries.
- At the launching ceremony, authorities of both ADB and the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) said the road project, being undertaken under the codename, Liberia Labor based Public Works Project (LBPWP), is sponsored by the ADB.

Government Pledges Support to Youth Volunteerism in MRU Countries

(The Informer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has pledged her government's unflinching support to youth volunteer services across the sub-region.
- Speaking Wednesday following the official opening the international conference on the establishment of National Youth Service Scheme in the Mano River Union Countries at the Samuel K. Doe Sports Complex, President Sirleaf said her government welcomes the promotion of youth initiatives which she said will make a significant impact on the growth and development of the sub-region.
- President Sirleaf noted that youth services through the exchange of knowledge with community dwellers is highly commendable, and will also add value to youth services, something which she said has been lost over the years.

Major Internal Shakeup at Liberia's Finance Ministry after L\$22 Million fraud

(The Informer)

- [sic:] After discovering a major check fraud at the Ministry of Finance totaling to more than L\$22M, Finance Minister Augustine Kpehe Ngafuan has disclosed that a major clean up exercise is now being put into place to avoid recurrence of the incident. Addressing a news

conference Tuesday in Monrovia Minister Ngafuan said several administrative actions and measures have been taken while others are being taken in connection with the fraud. "The Ministry of Finance has taken some administrative actions to curtail the repeat of this fraud and other forms of malpractices. These actions include procedural and control measures and direct personnel actions," the Minister told journalists. President Sirleaf Tuesday dismissed the comptroller general of Liberia, Mr. James Boker, in connection with the fraud. Mrs. Tresa Kerkula, Check Stamping Supervisor, and another staff Cecelia Roberts, have been suspended, the Minister said, while investigation continues into the saga. Jenkins Yonlay, Director of Electronic Data Processing (EDP) was substantively dismissed before he "resigned" as Director of EDP.

Local Media – Star Radio *(News monitored today at 09:00 am)*

UN Security Council Delegation Says Peace in Liberia Fragile

- A visiting U.N. Security Council delegation says the peace in Liberia is highly fragile and could be disrupted at any point with little warning.
- The Head of the delegation, Susan Rice, said though relative peace has returned to the country the security situation is at a point that needs close attention.
- She said her statement was based on reports of significant violent crimes and meetings with UNMIL, the President of Liberia and key Government officials.
- She named security sector reform, justice and the Rule of Law as areas that need urgent and sustained attention.
- Meanwhile, the Security Council delegation has maintained that Liberians on the U.N. travel ban and assets freeze list still pose risks to Liberia and regional security.
- The delegations statement runs contrary to that of the Liberian Government that it does not see the Liberians as threat.

(Also reported on Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Representative Mulbah Raises Alarm over GEMAP Operations

- Representative George Mulbah has warned that the terms of operation of the Economic Management Assistance Programme(GEMAP) of Liberia have expired and that the group was acting "illegally".
- According to Representative Mulbah, the legislation that established GEMAP in Liberia in 2001 ended 2008 saying since then there has been no effort to extend the mandate of the group.
- He warned that in the absence of a legislation to extend the operation of GEMAP all foreigners working with the group must cease their operations.
- Representative Mulbah said it was important for the Government to review the operations of GEMAP given the level of financial scandals in the country.

(Also reported on Truth F.M., Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Seven Students Arrested in Ganta, Nimba County

- At least seven students have been arrested by police Authorities in Ganta, Nimba County for allegedly vandalizing the George Toe Washington High School in that part of the country.
- The students went on the rampage accusing the administration of misusing fees paid for the ongoing West African Examination Council (WAEC) Exams.
- On Monday, several students of the Monrovia Branch of the George Toe Washington High School were arrested for allegedly vandalizing the school.
- The students accused the school's coordinator, Abraham Zion of failing to pay their WAEC fees into government's account and because of that they could not get their identification numbers to sit the exams.

Local Advocacy Group Issues Petition for Writ of Prohibition against Forestry Authorities

- The Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) has issued a petition for writ a prohibition against the Forestry Development Authority (FDA).

- In the nearly nine-count document, SDI argued that the FDA was in serious violation of the Forest management reform laws.
- The group said some companies violated the terms of their pre-qualification certificate by selling their shares arguing that such transaction created material changes and proved contrary to their declared pre-qualification certificates.

President Sirleaf Says Liberians have Lost Value of Service

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf says Liberia has lost the value of service where work ethics is highly considered.
- President Sirleaf said over the years Liberians have focused more on commercialization and personal financial benefits but encouraged the youths to return to the values of service.

The Globe and Mail

Thursday, 21 May 2009

A war-crimes trial that set a precedent before its verdict

The Quebec Superior Court will release its verdict today in the first case of a suspected war criminal to proceed in a Canadian court since four former Nazis were tried, unsuccessfully, in the 1990s.

Désiré Munyaneza was brought to court on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes on the basis of his alleged role in the 1994 Rwandan genocide that killed an estimated 800,000 people in 100 days.

A former militia commander, Mr. Munyaneza is accused of committing murder, psychological terror and sexual violence. He was living in Toronto when he was arrested by the RCMP in 2005.

In the media coverage, the trial has been most noteworthy for the emotional testimony of the first witness, who recounted her experience of being raped five times by the accused, as well as for the physical attack suffered by Mr. Munyaneza himself while in prison in Canada.

What has not received sufficient attention is the important place in history this trial will claim, both in Canada and internationally - regardless of the verdict.

Every functioning legal system in the world metes out punishment for crimes ranging from trespassing to shoplifting to murder, based on a belief in the importance of justice for the victims, to send a signal that such behaviour will not be tolerated and to deter the commission of future crimes.

Yet individuals who plan and execute campaigns of terror, killing, rape and mutilation of entire populations had in the past all too commonly done so with impunity.

While human-rights treaties were dramatically strengthened after the Second World War, missing were effective means of enforcement. This began to change at the end of the Cold War, when international tribunals were created to hold individuals criminally accountable for back-to-back genocides in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

Then came the establishment of the new International Criminal Court in 2002. The court's creation was heralded as a remarkable triumph because it required the government leaders supporting the treaty to agree that they themselves could be subject to criminal prosecution. Canada played a key role in this historic achievement.

The vision has always been that the ICC will handle only a handful of cases at a time against the highest level perpetrators, while serving as a catalyst for war-crimes trials in national courts around the world. Ideally the cases can be tried where the crimes occurred, but when this is not possible, the courts in other countries with the necessary legislation are empowered to take the cases. The law used to charge Mr. Munyaneza was created in 2000 as part of Canada's implementation of the ICC treaty.

The possibility of such trials in Canada was previously shut down by the Supreme Court in 1994, which upheld the acquittal of former Nazi Imre Finta. Mr. Finta admitted to shipping Jews from Hungary to Auschwitz and other camps by cattle car, but the trial judge allowed the defence that Mr. Finta believed Jews were the enemy.

The passage of Canada's new war-crimes legislation was a watershed moment, creating hope that Canada would build on its international reputation as a trail-blazer in international justice through renewed commitment to war crimes trials in its own courts.

Reports by the government of Canada indicate that at least 1,500 alleged war criminals and human rights abusers from countries around the world are currently living in Canada, often in the same communities as their former victims.

Despite these figures, the Munyaneza case is the only one of its kind to proceed to trial under the new law. A Globe and Mail opinion piece on Dec. 1, 2008, by Lloyd Axworthy and Penelope Simons pinpointed the problem as lying in the woeful underfunding of the unit of the Department of Justice responsible for the trials.

Canada would hardly be alone in making a greater commitment to using its domestic courts to try alleged war criminals. In recent years such trials have taken place in 13 European countries, resulting in over 50 charges and many convictions. In the United States the son of former Liberian President Charles Taylor recently faced criminal charges for torture.

Significantly, the courts of the countries in which such abuses occurred are also increasingly changing their laws and addressing their history through justice processes. Criminal cases have gone to trial in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe.

Such trials can provide a measure of hope to the large numbers of survivors of torture and war trauma worldwide. They also represent a global investment in the prevention of future atrocities, sending a clear signal that it is no longer possible to escape accountability for the most serious of international crimes.

The Munyaneza trial is a critical contribution by the Canadian government and Canadian courts to the emerging system of international justice. When the verdict is announced today, regardless of the outcome, it is our hope that the case will be noteworthy for its global significance - and that it will not be remembered in future years as one of the few of its kind in Canada.

Richard Dicker is the director of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch in New York. Jayne Stoyles is the executive director of the Canadian Centre for International Justice.

ReliefWeb

Wednesday, 20 May 2009

Nepal: How justice continues to fail as the country transitions, according to the Advocacy Forum

Source: Asian Human Rights Commission

(Hong Kong, 20 May, 2009) The Asian Human Rights Commission has broadcast an interview with Ms. Mandira Sharma, prominent human rights lawyer and director of Nepalese NGO, Advocacy Forum. In the interview last month, Sharma explained to the AHRC's Norman H. Voss that the high rate of human rights violations in Nepal stems from a deep set culture of impunity, in which those who torture, extort and kill are rarely brought to trial. She notes that the legal system is simply failing to function and that its different mechanisms have long been broken.

The failure to address these problems means that powerful criminals remain free and victims of crime are losing faith in the legal system. Sharma gives an overview of the system's break down, and the pros and cons of the avenues that are still open for those who want to complain. The Advocacy Forum has been supporting torture victims by pushing for the return to a strong rule of law, examining human rights issues and monitoring the culture of impunity. Sharma worries that the country's laws are not sufficient when it comes to processing torture cases, which are growing in number by the day.

The activist also casts doubt on the levels of compensation being awarded those victimised during Nepal's armed resistance movement, and during its transitional period. Staffs at the forum have been representing victims despite the heavy threat of harm from the perpetrators, who often hold positions of power. They have documented and monitored cases of torture, forced disappearances, the sexual abuse of women, and cases of children forced to join the various armed factions. In particular, they have been closely monitoring police detention centres, where often human rights are regularly and severely violated. The police, Sharma notes, often tend to be more of an active hindrance than a help in the investigation of human rights abuse.

The AHRC has uploaded the interview (Part 1 and 2) onto YouTube. Please take a look at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eb63mdjXfko>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7OTex97_ro

About AHRC: The Asian Human Rights Commission is a regional non-governmental organisation monitoring and lobbying human rights issues in Asia. The Hong Kong-based group was founded in 1984.

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