

**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:

Wednesday, 23 May 2007

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

Wednesday, 23 May 2007

PMDC Offers Assistance to Indictees' Families

The North American branch of the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC -USA) is pleased to offer financial assistance to the families of the indicted leaders of the CDF in accordance with the Indianapolis accord of November 2006.

The national PMDC as well as its various international branches will continue to stand by the families of the CDF with financial and moral support despite the untimely death of Chief Sam Hinga Norman. We appeal to all our members at home and abroad to continue to assist the families of the leaders of the CDF through the National Executive Council of the PMDC.



We continue to pray for the family of our dearly departed, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, and trust that an official investigation into the cause of his death as ordered by the President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone will commence very shortly. We also look forward to the timely release from custody of the remaining CDF leaders, Mr. Moinina Fofana of Nogowa-Bullom Chiefdom, Bonthe District and Dr. Alieu Kondewa of Bumpe-Ngao Chiefdom, Bo District. We are curiously aware that a date for the verdict for the AFRC accused has now been set by the court while a verdict for the CDF accused is still pending six months after Defence for the CDF gave closing statements.

Dr. Baimba Kamara, Chair, PMDC-USA
 Rev. Alfred M. SamForay
 Coordinator, CDF Defence Fund
 ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL
 NEVER AGAIN

Associated Press

Monday May 7, 2007 11:01 AM

Taylor Witnesses Fear UN Travel Bans

By MIKE CORDER

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) - Potential defense witnesses for Charles Taylor are refusing to testify at the former Liberian president's war crimes trial for fear of being slapped with U.N. travel bans, Taylor's lawyer told a court Monday.

Taylor, 59, is to go on trial June 4 on 11 charges, including terrorism, murder, rape, sexual slavery, mutilation and recruiting child soldiers linked to his alleged support for rebels in Sierra Leone's brutal 1991-2002 civil war.

He has pleaded innocent and faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment if convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

At a pretrial hearing in The Hague, Taylor's lawyer Karim Khan said his efforts to build a defense were being hampered by the perceived threat of U.N. sanctions.

"Numerous individuals ... are unwilling to speak to the defense (because) they are petrified of having travel bans imposed upon them and having their assets frozen by the Security Council because they are associated to the defense of Mr. Charles Taylor," Khan said.

Khan said he would file a motion asking judges at the court to grant witnesses protection from sanctions.

He said that the possibility of sanctions, "would amount to witness intimidation, whether it comes from a group or a party or even as august a body ... as the Security Council of the United Nations."

The Sierra Leone court usually sits in the capital, Freetown, but Taylor's trial is to be held in a court room rented from the International Criminal Court in The Hague because of fears the case could trigger fresh violence.

Taylor sat in court listening to proceedings wearing a dark suit and brown tie. Judges also allowed him to wear sunglasses in the windowless courtroom because of an eye infection.

At Monday's hearing, slated to be the last before the trial starts next month, Khan also complained that the court was not funding an adequate defense team for Taylor.

Taylor has two attorneys and three legal assistants, while prosecutors have a trial team twice that size.

Taylor's lawyers are seeking to appeal the decision setting the start date for the trial, arguing that they have not had enough time to prepare.

Prosecutors say that in exchange for diamonds smuggled out of Sierra Leone, Taylor provided rebels with arms, ammunition, communication equipment, as well as alcohol, drugs and cigarettes.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 22 May 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

UN Secretary General and President Sirleaf Hold Talks in New York

May 21, 2007 (Liberia Government/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has held talks with United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon in New York, the United States. At a reception tendered in honor of the UN boss by the Permanent representative of Greece to the United Nations, Ambassador Adamanitos Vassilakakis, the Liberian leader expressed appreciation for the support the UN has given Liberia.

International Clips on West Africa

VOA 22 May 2007

Former Ivorian Combatants Pin Conciliation Hopes on Disarmament and Fair Elections

By Howard Lesser, Washington, DC

The long road to peace in Ivory Coast received a boost over the weekend as former militiamen turned in their weapons during a disarmament ceremony in the western town of Guiglo. Thousands of government officials, UN peacekeepers, and local onlookers watched the fighters lay down their arms in a confidence-building ceremony.

Local Media – Newspaper

President Johnson Sirleaf Meets UN Boss in New York

(The Analyst and The Informer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for the first time met with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York over the weekend. The focus of their discussion is not known, but *The Analyst* presumed that Mr. Ban and President Johnson Sirleaf might have discussed the challenges facing the UN and Liberia and how they can further strengthen cooperation between them.

Liberty Party Wants UN Reviews Travel Restrictions

(New Democrat, The Inquirer, The News and The Analyst)

- The Chairman of the opposition Liberty Party Israel Akinsaya yesterday repeated calls for the United Nations to review the travel ban imposed on some Liberians and entreated President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to take the lead in efforts to lift the ban to foster national reconciliation and healing.

Participants Urge Government to Set up Land Reform Commission

(The Liberian Diaspora)

- Participants at a four-day peace and security symposium have encouraged the Government to set up of a land reform commission in order to address conflicts arising from the multiple sale of land in the country. The participants assumed that land disputes in the country would continue unabated unless something was done to address the issue.
- The symposium was organized by the Kofi Annan Institute of Conflict Transformation in collaboration with the London-based Kings Collage and was held at the University of Liberia.

True Whig Party Chairman Rudolph Sherman is Dead

(The News, The Forum and The Inquirer)

- The Chairman and former Standard Bearer of the True Whig Party in the 1997 Presidential elections in Liberia has died. According to family sources, Mr. Sherman died early Monday following a brief illness at the John F. Kennedy Medical Center.
- Mr. Sherman, 66, served as an Assistant Minister for Administration at the Ministry of Finance during the Samuel Doe administration and represented Grand Cape Mount County in the National Legislature in the 1980s. He was also member of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly, which handed power over to the current Government in 2005.

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

Political Party Urges UN to Review Travel Ban on Liberians

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Major Rice Trader Rejects Accusations of Re-bagging Rice

- A major rice trader, the Sinkor Trading Company's Operation Manager Kofi Allen has rejected accusations that the entity was re-bagging rice it imported to the Country, stating that it was unrealistic to re-bag over 100,000 tons of rice and urged its accuser, the Liberty Party as well as journalists to visit the Company's warehouses at the Freeport of Monrovia to authenticate allegations.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Dredging of Monrovia Port Commences

- Correspondents said that Delta IPEX, the Company contracted to dredge the Freeport of Monrovia, has begun work to remove the sunken ship "Tom Alexandria" whose presence and that of other objects limited the capacity of the port to accommodate large vessels.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

President Rounds Up Tour of America

- A dispatch from the United States said that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was rounding up her tour of that country, holding meetings with Liberians in Atlanta whom she briefed on Government's progress and challenges in its development effort.
- The dispatch added that the President supported a bi-partisan effort in the US Congress to grant permanent residence status to Liberians in America. The President also addressed the World Affairs Council of Oregon thrilling her audience to the historical perspectives of the effects of colonialism on Africa particularly, the ravages after the Europeans pulled out.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Efforts Underway to Increase Women Participation in National Affairs

- Officials of the National Elections Commission (NEC) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) declared that efforts were underway to increase Liberian women's participation in the electoral process and national development programmes.
- To that effect, NEC would organize a workshop in collaboration with UNMIL's Gender Unit to strategize for greater women participation in national affairs which NEC's Executive Director John Langley said was part of the Commission's overall electoral reform measures.
- For her part, UNMIL Gender Advisor Joanna Foster lamented that Liberia had the smallest number of women in Parliament in post-conflict countries and that there was the need to strategize to increase the numbers.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Justice and Peace Commission Director Calls on President to Veto Act

- Addressing a news conference yesterday, Catholic Justice and Peace Commission Executive Director Augustine Toe called on President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to veto the Financial Autonomy Act which was passed by the National Legislature because it contradicted the Liberian Constitution and tenets of democracy.
- Counsellor Toe noted that President Johnson Sirleaf would be held accountable if she signs the Act which he thought was "anti-democratic".

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

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

Voice of America

Tuesday, 22 May 2007

International Criminal Court to Investigate War Crimes in Central African Republic

The International Criminal Court has begun investigating alleged war crimes committed in the Central African Republic during 2002 and 2003.

Court prosecutors Tuesday indicated the probe will focus on allegations of sexual violence, including hundreds of reported rapes.

The rapes and a number of killings allegedly occurred as forces of then-president Ange-Felix Patasse battled rebels led by the current president, Francois Bozize.

The Central African Republic asked the court to intervene in late 2004, saying it could not investigate the cases itself.

At the time, the government named several suspects, including Mr. Patasse and his ally during the fighting, Congolese rebel leader-turned vice president, Jean-Pierre Bemba.

Tuesday, Bemba denied any responsibility for the alleged crimes.

Mr. Patasse currently lives in exile in Togo, while Bemba is in Portugal, where he is receiving medical treatment. Bemba was an unsuccessful candidate in Congo's presidential elections last year.

UN News

Monday, 21 May 2007

UN genocide tribunal upholds life imprisonment for ex-councilman in Rwanda



21 May 2007 – The United Nations tribunal set up to try the worst crimes committed during the 1994 Rwandan genocide today upheld the life sentence in prison given to a former councilman convicted of genocide, rape and murder as crimes against humanity.

The five-member appeals chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda ([ICTR](#)), meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, confirmed the trial chamber's decision in 2005 to convict and sentence Mikaeli Muhimana, who had been councillor for the Gishyita Sector in Kibuye Prefecture during the genocide.

Although the judges allowed two of Mr. Muhimana's 16 grounds of appeal, reversing his convictions for the rape of two women and the murder of a pregnant woman, they said these errors did not invalidate either the convictions or the sentence, given his numerous other crimes.

At his trial Mr. Muhimana – also known as Mika – was found guilty of mobilizing people and distributing guns and grenades to them on 14 and 15 April 1994. In June 1994 he lured Tutsis out of hiding with false promises of medication and then ordered armed assailants to kill more than 2,000 of them. The former businessman also personally attacked and killed civilians at various locations inside Kibuye Prefecture, including inside several churches.

He raped numerous women, including nine inside a hospital and several in his home, and handed over two Tutsi women for two members of the notorious Interahamwe militia to rape.

An estimated 800,000 Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus were murdered between April and June 1994 across Rwanda, mostly by machete. The Security Council set up the ICTR in November that year to prosecute people responsible for genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

IRIN

Wednesday, 23 May 2007

SRI LANKA: UN agencies keep up pressure on rebels over under-age recruitment



Photo: [Amantha Perera/IRIN](#)

Children watch as Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadres train in Kilinochchi district, Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, 23 May 2007 (IRIN) - Over the past year, UN agencies in Sri Lanka have tried to keep the national and international focus on one of the most unfortunate aspects of Sri Lanka's long-running civil war - under-age recruitment of children as soldiers in the conflict.

According to the United Nations Children's Agency (UNICEF), currently there are 1,832 outstanding cases of under-age recruitment by non-state entities.

"There has been some improvement in the numbers, but still there are outstanding cases and even one child recruited is an issue for us," William Kollie, a UNICEF child protection specialist told IRIN.

On 10 May, the chairman of the Working Group of the UN Security Council on Children in Armed Conflict released tough statements regarding the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Karuna group - two parties UNICEF says still indulge in child recruitment and

abductions in Sri Lanka.

The chairman of the Working Group strongly condemned the recruitment and use of child soldiers by the two factions and urged them to release all under-aged recruits and halt new recruitments. There are 1,634 outstanding cases of under-age recruitment by the Tigers and 198 by the Karuna group, according to UNICEF figures.

Warning

"The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict calls the attention of the leadership of the LTTE to the fact that on 20 December 2006 the Security Council received a report by the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Sri Lanka, describing inter alia a continuous, ongoing and even increasing pattern of abduction, recruitment and use of children by the LTTE, in spite of previous commitments," Ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sablière, the chairman of the Working Group, said. He warned that if the LTTE did not curtail such practices, "further steps may be taken."

Dispute over numbers

The Tamil Tigers reject UNICEF's figures on the under-age recruits it still holds: "We have received only 20 or so complaints from parents about their children being within our ranks. We are now trying to figure out why there is a discrepancy," military spokesperson Rasiah Illanthariyan told IRIN.

UNICEF agrees there are differences over the numbers. "We will only list a child as released when we have verified the information. Just because a name is given to us, we can't adjust the lists," says William Kollie.

The Tigers also say UNICEF should not include in its tally those recruits who are now over 18, although they were recruited at a younger age. They have also said children engaged in non-combat tasks should be excluded. UNICEF disagrees with this reasoning.

According to UNICEF, at the end of April there were 550 people within Tamil Tiger ranks who were under 18.

"There has been some improvement in the numbers, but still there are outstanding cases and even one child recruited is an issue for us."

Disagreements over rehabilitation

UNICEF and the Tamil Tigers also disagree on procedures for rehabilitating under-age recruits.

In 2003 the Tigers agreed to an action plan under which three rehabilitation centres run by the Tamil Rehabilitation Organization (TRO), with some UNICEF support, were to be established for former child recruits in areas under the control of the Tigers in the north and east. Only one, in Kilinochchi District, the political headquarters of the Tigers, ultimately became functional.

However, Kollie says UNICEF and the Tigers disagreed on a variety of issues regarding the rehabilitation centre, including the time children should spend there. Only 173 children were released through the centre, which stopped functioning after about a year.

“We don’t encourage the opening of the centres,” says UNICEF’s protection specialist, Kollie. “We feel the best option is for the children to return to their parents.”

Karuna faction

The allegations against the Karuna group, which consists of former LTTE members who broke away in 2004, are more recent. UNICEF and other organizations say Karuna continues to abduct and recruit children, especially in the country’s east where it is strongest.

Last month, UNICEF issued a press release complaining that Karuna had not honoured pledges to allow its protection staff to visit camps to follow-up on allegations of abductions. UNICEF said its officials were taken to a hastily established camp where no children were present. The UN agency’s requests to gain access to other camps were turned down. Karuna says it cannot allow UNICEF unrestricted access for security reasons.

“Our supposed cooperation is obscured by the faction’s apparent determination to delay, frustrate, and mislead the process to end the use of children as combatants in this country’s conflict,” UNICEF Chief Protection Officer Andrew Brooks says.

“Our supposed cooperation is obscured by the faction’s apparent determination to delay, frustrate, and mislead the process to end the use of children as combatants in this country’s conflict.”

“The Vanni Tigers (LTTE) are a threat. They want to eliminate us. As long as the threat is there, we cannot give such access to UNICEF,” Karuna group spokesperson Azad Moulana told IRIN. “What if something happens at a camp when UNICEF is there, then who is responsible? Once that threat is gone, they are welcome everywhere,” he added.

Tigers “more open for dialogue”

UNICEF, nevertheless, feels that the renewed international attention - especially in the aftermath of last year’s mission to Sri Lanka by Allan Rock, special adviser to the UN special representative for children and armed conflict - has brought about some improvement in the situation. “With the Rock visit, the Tigers have been more open for dialogue and regular meetings,” William Kollie says. Karuna group spokesperson Moulana also said that after the visit they had opened proper communications with UNICEF, saying “We want to continue working with UNICEF.”

But Kollie was also quick to add that until all children are safely out of the ranks of the Tigers and the Karuna group, pressure should persist. “Zero tolerance, that is what we want, and we want to hold the parties responsible to commitments they make,” he said.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 22 May 2007

Central African Republic Rebels Negotiate Child Soldier Demobilization

In Central African Republic, one of the main rebel groups is negotiating to disarm hundreds of its child soldiers. This comes one month after it signed a peace deal with the government to put down its weapons and join the national army. The lead United Nations negotiator on the child-soldier deal hopes this is the first step toward reconciliation between the warring sides. But analysts say this may be just a rebel tactic to get more power. Phuong Tran has more from VOA's West and Central Africa Bureau in Dakar.



Simplicie Tolmbaye, a 14-year-old rebel fighter, poses for a picture in the bush near Ouandago, Central African Republic (Dec 2006) □□ After last week's negotiations with the rebel group L'Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement - UFDR - U.N. negotiator Jean-Claude Legrand, received a verbal agreement from the rebel chief to release 400 child soldiers.

Legrand, a U.N. regional advisor for child protection, says UFDR's agreement shows the rebels are ready to obey laws.

"They realize that if they want to get out of the bush, if they want to get into regular politics in the country, they have to comply with international standards," said Legrand. Hundreds of thousands of Central Africans in the north have fled violence and burning

homes during years of clashes between the rebels, who are seeking more power in the government and the military.

Government officials have asked for U.N. peacekeepers to be stationed where the borders of Chad, Sudan and Central African Republic meet.

Analyst Richard Reeve, with London-based Chatham House, says UFDR seems to be cooperating on the issue of child soldiers because it hopes this good behavior will keep away international peacekeepers.

"It would have severely hampered their ability to retake territory and achieve their military goals," said Reeve. "And secondly, it would have allowed the U.N. to investigate a bit more about where the UFDR is based, where it comes from and who is supporting it."

The Central African government has accused the Sudanese government of funding Central African rebel movements, including UFDR. The Sudanese government denies the accusation.

Regardless of the rebels' motives, U.N. negotiator Legrand wants to act quickly.

"We are not sure if this opportunity will last very long," said Legrand. "This is why we are moving as fast as we can to release the children. This is the start of the rainy season in Central Africa, so this area is already extremely difficult to reach."

The U.N. Children's Fund is waiting for the rebels to gather all the names of its child soldiers, who live in dozens of small, often remote communities, so the U.N. agency can start meeting with them.

Legrand says the next step is to reopen schools and start non-military activities for the children.

He says possibly thousands of children voluntarily join the army here because there is little else for them to do.

The U.N. negotiator expects all the names by next week, followed by an official agreement signing with UFDR at the beginning of June.

BBC Online

Wednesday, 23 May 2007

Twelve guilty of Djindjic murder

A Serbian court has found 12 men guilty of the 2003 assassination of the pro-Western Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic in Belgrade.

All the defendants, who include members of the secret police and alleged mafia kingpins, had denied the charges.

Two former policemen - Milorad "Legija" Ulemek and Zvezdan Jovanovic - received 40-year jail terms.

The prosecution argued Djindjic was killed to block his reforms, including the extradition of war crimes suspects.

The trial was the first at Belgrade's Special Court for Organised Crime.

Eyewitnesses murdered

Ulemek, an ex-French Foreign Legionnaire, and Jovanovic were said to be the ringleaders of the plot. They had been members of the Red Berets police unit.

Some of the other 10 found guilty had also served as paramilitaries in the Bosnian, Croatian and Kosovan conflicts.

"It was all prepared by Ulemek. Jovanovic fired the shots," Judge Nata Mesarevic was quoted as saying by news agency Reuters.

Dubbed the "Trial of the Century", the case was beset by problems.

One protected witness and another eyewitness were murdered, while one judge resigned and another received death threats.

The former prime minister was getting out of his official car outside government buildings in Belgrade when he was fatally shot by a sniper on 12 March 2003.



Zoran Djindjic wanted to extradite war crimes suspects



UN News

Monday, 21 May 2007

Burundi faces hurdles despite progress, Security Council told



Although the Burundian Government has made positive steps to consolidate peace, the small Central African nation still faces considerable obstacles, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon cautioned in a new report made discussed by the Security Council today.

In his first [report](#) to the 15-member body on the work of the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) since it replaced the peacekeeping operation in the country at the end of last year, Mr. Ban wrote that the Government led by President Pierre Nkurunziza has made significant strides since the beginning of the year.

“The improvement in relations with the media and civil society, the commitment to improve the human rights situation and fight corruption and the pledge of the ruling party’s new leadership to work in an inclusive and cooperative spirit with all political parties are welcome developments,” he said in the report.

Mr. Ban also urged the Government to tackle challenges to peace in a transparent manner within the framework of the law, and called on it to engage political parties and other groups in an inclusive dialogue.

He also commended the authorities’ participation with the UN Peacebuilding Commission, which was established to help countries recovering from war avoid a relapse of violence. Burundi and Sierra Leone are the first two countries chosen by the Commission, established in December 2005.

However, the country, which suffered decades of ethnic conflict pitting the Hutu majority against the Tutsi minority, still faces enormous challenges.

In particular, Burundi, which has been the victim of violent coups and political instability since gaining independence in 1962, has yet to implement last September’s ceasefire agreement between the Government and the country’s last major rebel group, the Palipehutu-National Liberation Forces (Palipehutu-FNL).

“It is essential that this final phase of the peace process be successfully concluded without delay so that all Burundians can focus on the urgent national reconciliation and reconstruction tasks that lie ahead,” Mr. Ban noted. “The genuine goodwill of all concerned will be required to bring this about.”

He commended the Government’s willingness to accommodate the FNL’s demands to move the peace process forward, and appealed to the rebel group to comply with its obligations.

Although external partners – including the South African facilitation of the process and the African Union (AU) – have been key in pushing the process ahead, “the onus clearly remains on the Burundian parties to ensure that their efforts to consolidate peace are not wasted, international engagement will remain essential in order to bring closure to the recovery and peace consolidation phase,” the Secretary-General observed.

He also encouraged the Government to reach an agreement with the UN to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as a Special Tribunal.

“Durable peace will also depend on how Burundians reconcile themselves with the consequences of their tragic past and forge a shared future,” he stated.

The death of some 300,000 people after the first free elections took place in 1993 led to increased international involvement and the establishment of the first UN mission in the country three years later. The mandate of the UN peacekeeping mission in Burundi, known as ONUB, expired on 31 December 2006, and was replaced by BINUB on 1 January.

In a related development, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour is in Burundi on the second leg of her mission to Central Africa.

Today, she met with the country's two vice-presidents and the ministers for human rights, justice and foreign affairs. In her meetings with authorities, she discussed transitional justice, including the creation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a Special Tribunal, the current state of human rights in Burundi and the importance of accountability and transparency.

The High Commissioner is scheduled to meet with civil society representatives tomorrow and the country's President on Wednesday before travelling to Rwanda, where she will wrap up her mission.