

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



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, 24 July 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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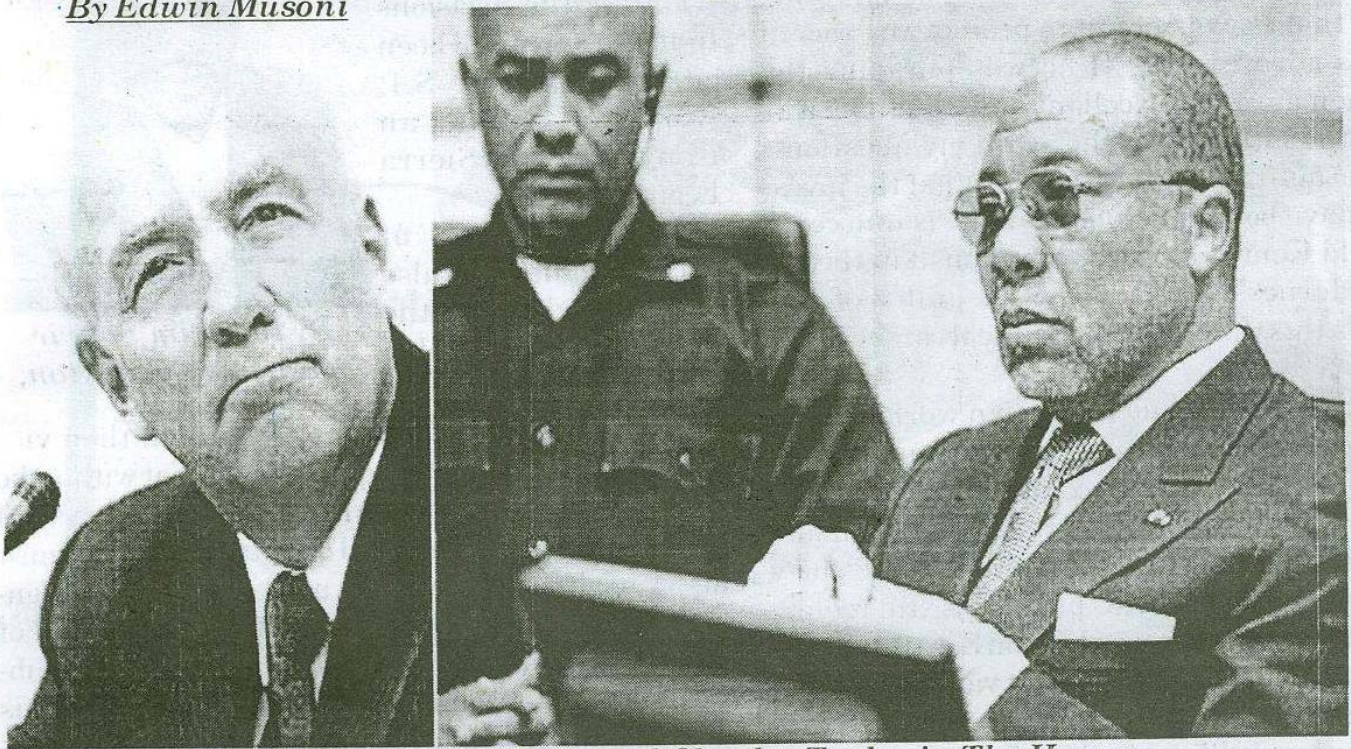
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Concord Times
Friday, 24 July 2009

Special Court inspects Rwanda prisons

By Edwin Musoni



Chief Prosecutor Rapp and Charles Taylor in The Hague

A team from the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone is currently on a tour in Rwanda to assess the state of that country's prisons in anticipation of hosting the

court's convicts there.

The team comprises of specialists from the court's detention centre, and the visit comes after Rwanda signed an agreement with the tribu-

nal to host some of the convicts.

Speaking to Rwanda's 'The New Times' after the group's tour of Kigali central prison transit centre, the director of

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Special Court inspects Rwanda prisons

From page 1

prisons. Steven Balinda said the country has put in place several requirements that meet international standards of prisons.

"The new exotic holding cells built for several convicts who are yet to be transferred to Rwanda are well equipped and can hold eight prisoners who are in transit to the main prison," Balinda said.

The new cells have been put up at Kigali central prison, commonly known as 1930. Each room is 2.7x 3 metres with a television set, a library and washrooms for the occupant.

Head of the prison, Dativa Mukanyangezi, told the group that the

transit centre has also put up several programmes to meet international correctional facility standards like anger management, health follow-ups and a standard system of handcuffing. The team was also briefed that the prison has special caretakers of inmates with each convict taken care of by a team of specialists.

After their tour of Kigali central prison, the team headed to Mpanga prison in the southern province from where the convicts are expected to serve their sentences. The construction of the prison is complete except for a 27-cell wing designated for possible ICTR

transferees or foreign extradition suspects to serve their sentences.

Upon the completion, the prison will be capable of providing adequate detention facilities for all convicts to meet international standards. The prison covers nearly 10 hectares on a plot of 72 hectares.

Later, the team paid a visit to Kubumwe enterprises, an industrial food processor that has been mandated to supply prisons with well prepared and nutritious food. The director of the company, Dr Celestin Kubumwe revealed that they have plans of expansion and also supply hotels, supermarkets and schools.

Awoko

Friday, 24 July 2009

Hope Sierra Leone Healing the Wounds of War Victims

By Saidu Bah

Hope Sierra Leone a non-governmental humanitarian organization has continued their focus on peace building and reconciliation among war victims in Sierra Leone with the objective of restoring lost dignity and creating a level playing field for a common ground.

According to the Director of Hope Sierra Leone John Bangura the aim and objective of the organization is to restore the dignity of war victims by healing their wounds and also promoting peace and reconciliation among hostile communities.

He intimated that conflict resolution among communities is an essential tool for peaceful co-existence among people who are traumatized after a brutal civil war that directly and indirectly affected both the perpetrators and the victims.

Bangura further explained that his organization has been very active in promoting peace and reconciliation among political parties and communities with the hope of bridging political barriers to move the country forward by putting the interest of the country first.

Hope Sierra Leone Director also said that his organization undertakes training in Moral Principles of Democracy by planting the moral roots from which it grows as a hallmark of democracy and a basic requirement of all kinds of freedom.



Director of Hope Sierra Leone John Bangura with some war victims

Bangura also said that "a nation must be ready to serve and care for others is needed to build a true democracy, where people matter more than things. But there is another battle line, where we are ready to give, where people no longer fight over who is right, but try to find together what is right." He argued.

He said democracy is a moral backbone; it will be strong and alive with vigor and initiatives for an honest, unselfish, pure and love universally being expressed as the aims for human beings to find their way to live together.

The New Times (Rwanda)

Thursday, 23 July 2009

We are ready, Rwanda tells UN – S. Leone court officials



Joanna Pauline from SCSL (R) , Kigali Central Prison Director Dativa Ngaboyisonga (C) and Steven Balinda tour Kigali Central Prison. (Photo J Mbanda)

NYARUGENGE - A team from the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) is currently on a country tour to assess the state of Rwandan prisons in anticipation of hosting the court's convicts here.

The team comprises of specialists from the SC-SL detention centre.

The visit comes after Rwanda signed an agreement with

the tribunal to host some of the convicts.

Speaking to The New Times after the group's tour of Kigali Central Prison transit centre, the Director of Prisons Steven Balinda said that Rwanda has put in place several requirements that meet international standards of prisons.

"The new exotic holding cells built for several convicts who are yet to be transferred to Rwanda are well equipped and can hold eight prisoners who are in transit to the main prison," Balinda said. The new cells have been put up at Kigali Central Prison, commonly known as 1930.

Each room is 2.7x 3 metres with a television set, a library and washrooms for the occupant. Director of the prison, Dativa Mukanyangezi, told the group that the transit centre has also put up several programmes to meet international correctional facility standards like anger management, health follow-ups and a standard system of handcuffing.

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The prison covers nearly 10 hectares on a plot of 72 hectares.

Later the team paid a visit to Kubumwe Enterprises, an industrial food processor who have been mandated to supply prisons with well prepared and nutritious food.

The director of the company, Dr Celestin Kubumwe , also revealed that that they have plans of expansion and also supply hotels, supermarkets and schools.

Speaking to *The New Times* on phone from Sierra Leone, Peter C. Andersen, Chief of Outreach and Public Affairs at the Special Court for Sierra Leone said that the team was in Rwanda to assess the standards of the prisons.

He however could not comment on Rwanda's chances of hosting the convicts but hastened to add that Rwanda is the only African country that has signed an agreement of hosting prisoners with the SC-SL. "The decision will only be taken by the president of the court depending on several reports that will be handed to him," Andersen said.

So far, the other countries that have signed the agreements include Finland, Sweden and Austria. The agreement signed by Rwanda and the court stipulates that in enforcing the sentence pronounced by the Special Court, Rwanda shall be bound by the duration of the sentence so pronounced and ensure the sentence is served in a prison facility identified and agreed to by the parties.

"The conditions of imprisonment shall be governed by the laws of the Government of Rwanda, subject to the supervision of the Special Court," states the agreement.

The Special court for Sierra Leone was established by the Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone signed on the January 16, 2002.

Currently, former Liberian President Charles Taylor is on trial by the Special Court. Eight persons have been convicted by the two Trial Chambers of the court, haveive prisoners have so far been sentenced to terms ranging from 15 to 50 years, and three more are awaiting sentencing in Freetown.

BBC World Service Trust

Thursday, 23 July 2009

Report from The Hague

Indicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor has defied Intelligence-gathering Agencies of the world to prove that he had contacts with the Sierra Leone rebel group, RUF beyond 1992. Taylor's Defence team said NPFL combatants did not fight in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor described allegations that he had knowledge of a letter written by RUF Leader Foday Sankoh to the Libyan Government as a hypothesis. Adolphus Williams reports from The Hague.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Taylor has challenged those whom he said constructed his indictment to prove that Foday Sankoh was his subordinate and that he, Taylor, directed everything the RUF did. The accused, Mr. Taylor, called on his accusers to make available to the court any information about his RUF link beyond 1992.

TAYLOR: Lieutenant-Colonel David Crane, retired army personnel of the United States Army; Dr. Alan White, a 20-year veteran of Defense Intelligence of the Pentagon in the United States; our learned counsel, a retired Air Force colonel – they had professional military people in the area. It's their business to intercept communications and to listen to telephones. Let them bring to this court any evidence of any intercepts or transcript. It's a fabrication, and I challenge them...My life is on the line here. If these major governments, they have brought me here. I don't want to hear about classified intelligence. De-classify any information you have about Charles Taylor ...aerial photography of trucks going across" – nonsense. Where is it? I challenge them to bring the intercepts.

WILLIAMS: He described those who prepared his indictment as military people with knowledge in gathering information of intelligence nature.

Liberians who fought in the Sierra Leone civil war were hired by the government of Sierra Leone, Taylor's Defence team told the court on Thursday.

Many Prosecution Sierra Leone Witnesses testified that fighters who invaded their villages and towns were Liberian English-speaking men.

The Defence team presented into evidence Former President Tejan Kabbah's report to the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, TRC.

In the letter, Mr. Kabbah told the TRC that remnants of the Liberian rebel group, United Liberation Movement of Liberians for Democracy, ULIMO, were recruited into the Sierra Leone Army without his knowledge.

But, Mr. Taylor said, Tejan Kabbah and his successors were aware of the existence of Liberians in the Sierra Leone Army.

TAYLOR: They know who these Liberians are and in the indictment when they talk about Liberian fighters they know who they are. They know that they are not my people when they refer to Liberian fighters in the indictment. They know that these are the people that they have hired as mercenaries over the years are there, they are part of the Sierra Leonean army, they are paid, they are fed and they are maintained...And these very people that they are talking about later on we'll get to know remain in Sierra Leone until today. When the British came they used them to fight the West Side Boys. Some of these Liberians right now are officers in the present Sierra Leonean armed forces. They know all of this.

WILLIAMS: Mr. Taylor continues to disassociate himself from the RUF. He said his last contact with the RUF was in May 1992.

Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, presented into evidence a letter former RUF Leader Foday Sankoh wrote to the Libyan Government. In the letter, Sankoh requested for \$1.5 million dollars to purchase some materials

Mr. Taylor denied any knowledge of such letter.

TAYLOR: I think there is ample evidence here to demonstrate to anyone that Mr Sankoh is operating on his own and is doing that for a long time...this whole thing about being a subordinate...it's evident here that this man as of 1992 has had it, he doesn't want to be bothered with me, he wants to carry on his revolution by himself, he is doing it on his own without my knowledge, without my consent, without my participation.

The testimonies of Mr. Taylor continue on Monday.
AW, BBCWST, The Hague

Charlestaylortrial.org

Thursday, 23 July 2009

Taylor Says Liberian Fighters in Sierra Leone Were Recruited By the Sierra Leone Army

By Alpha Sesay

Liberian nationals who fought in Sierra Leone during the civil conflict were recruited by the Sierra Leone army, Charles Taylor told judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone today.

Mr. Taylor, testifying in his own defense told the court that during the war in Liberia, many Liberians traveled to Sierra Leone as refugees. These Liberians, Taylor said, later became members of the rebel group United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) and were armed by the Sierra Leone army to attack Taylor's forces in Liberia. According to Taylor's evidence, many of these armed Liberians later stayed in Sierra Leone and became known as the Special Task Force (STF). Taylor's defense presented evidence that these STF forces were armed by the Government of Sierra Leone and fought alongside the Sierra Leone army.

Taylor's defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths read from the statement presented to the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission by former President Tejan Kabbah in which he said that the STF were remnants of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the Liberian Police who traveled to Sierra Leone and became members of ULIMO. President Kabbah's statement further read that these fighters were received and armed by the then government of Joseph Momoh in Sierra Leone to go and attack Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). President Kabbah's statement read that those who stayed in Sierra Leone were later renamed the STF and were almost incorporated into the Sierra Leone Army. When the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) coup took place in Sierra Leone, the STF joined them and were part of the fighters who attacked Freetown in January 1999. President Kabbah, however, said that he only knew about the STF when the AFRC coup took place in May 1997.

Responding to the contents of President Kabbah's statement, Taylor said that "it is very clear who they are – remnants of ULIMO who had been engaged as mercenaries in Sierra Leone. They are not my people."

Prosecution has alleged in evidence that Mr. Taylor sent Liberian fighters to join the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and that these Liberian fighters were part of the group that attacked Freetown in January 1999. Many witnesses have also testified that rebels who attacked their villages in Sierra Leone spoke with Liberian accents, and they believe these Liberians were sent to Sierra Leone by Charles Taylor.

Mr. Taylor told the court that he "heard that there were Liberians fighting in Sierra Leone but only became aware of the name STF after the 1997 elections in Liberia."

Mr. Taylor denied that he had given arms and ammunition to rebel forces in Sierra Leone during the country's civil conflict. He accused ULIMO soldiers of traveling to Sierra Leone with their arms and ammunition, which he said could have found their way into rebel hands. "We were receiving reports that ULIMO fighters were going back and joining their friends in Sierra Leone with their arms and ammunition," Taylor said.

Mr. Taylor also told the court that his election as president of Liberia in 1997 was free and fair. He said that when he became president of Liberia in 1997, the country was at "rock bottom" and so much work needed to be done to improve the country's infrastructure and economy. Taylor said that he set up a broad based government of national unity in which members of all the former armed groups were represented.

Asked by his defense counsel what was on his mind when he became president, Mr. Taylor said "Liberia, Liberia, Liberia. That's what is on my mind, to get this country started. How do we get this country forward? I am occupied with Liberia, Liberia and Liberia. That's my preoccupation."

There will be no trial session on Friday. Taylor's testimony continues on Monday.

Daily Observer (Liberia)

Friday, 23 July 2009

Arms-for-Diamonds Trade

Amidst claims that he was involved in exchanging weapons for diamonds with rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone, former Liberian president Charles Taylor has admitted that while he maintained a relationship with RUF between 1991 and 1992, there were exchange of arms and ammunition as gifts between his NPFL and Foday Sankoh's RUF, but diamonds were never part of those gifts. The prosecution has alleged that diamonds mined in Kono by the RUF were given to Taylor in exchange for arms and ammunition. While denying this allegation, Taylor admitted that there was an exchange of arms and ammunition between the NPFL and the RUF, such as Sankoh's gift to him of a 155 millimeter Howitzer gun, which, he said, was captured from enemy forces in Sierra Leone.



UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 23 July 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Taylor Was Too Busy With Issues In Liberia and Could Not Pay Attention to Events

Jul 23, 2009 (CharlesTaylorTrial.org/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Charles Taylor was occupied with events in Liberia in the early 1990s and could not have had time to support rebel forces and regulate what was happening in Sierra Leone, he told judges today during his testimony at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor said that when rebels attacked Sierra Leone in March 1991, he was busy holding discussions with West African leaders in Senegal geared towards the cessation of hostilities in Liberia and therefore could not have been planning an attack on Sierra Leone. "At the time of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) invasion of Sierra Leone, I was busy with peace meetings but the prosecution has me busy planning and supporting the RUF in Sierra Leone," Taylor told the judges. The prosecution has alleged that Mr. Taylor was involved in planning the invasion of Sierra Leone in 1991 and that in subsequent years, he supported the rebels through the supply of arms and ammunition, and that by his acts or omissions, he bears responsibility for crimes committed by the RUF in Sierra Leone.

All Set for July 26 Independence Celebrations

Jul 22, 2009 (Liberia Government/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Members of the Press: All is now set for the observance of the 162nd Independence anniversary of Liberia, being hosted by the people of Bong County. The celebrations kicked off in Monrovia on Wednesday July 22, with an investiture ceremony hosted by the President, HE Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The ceremony will take place at the Cecil Dennis Auditorium beginning at 4:00 O'clock in the afternoon. Among those to be honored include a market woman, a youth, a journalists an educator, social worker. On Monday, July 27th, the President will also confer distinctions on Paramount Chief, Flomo Togbah Barworor - this year's national orator; and the President of the Economic Community of West African States Commission, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas. The distinction of Knight Grand Commander in the Humane Order of African Redemption will be conferred on the two personalities. The President will also confer on the visiting President of Equatorial Guinea, HE Teodora Oviang Nguema Mbasogo, the distinction of Grand Cordon in the most Order of the Pioneers.

International Clips on West Africa

We Are Ready, Rwanda Tells UN - Sierra Leone Court Officials

Edwin Musoni

Nyarugenge, Jul 23, 2009 (The New Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- A team from the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (SC-SL) is currently on a country tour to assess the state of Rwandan prisons in anticipation of hosting the court's convicts here. The team comprises of specialists from the SC-SL detention centre. The visit comes after Rwanda signed an agreement with the tribunal to host some of the convicts. Speaking to The New Times after the group's tour of Kigali Central Prison transit centre, the Director of Prisons Steven Balinda said that Rwanda has put in place several requirements that meet international standards of prisons. "The new exotic holding cells built for several convicts who are yet to be transferred to Rwanda are well equipped and can

hold eight prisoners who are in transit to the main prison," Balinda said. The new cells have been put up at Kigali Central Prison, commonly known as 1930.

India funds telecom project in Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, July 22, 2009 (AFP) - Indian engineers began work in Freetown Wednesday in the first stage of an 18-month project to improve telecommunications links in the West African state, the information minister told AFP. When completed the project will allow tertiary institutions in Sierra Leone online access to courses and lectures at colleges in India and other African nations. "There will also be a tele-medicine project linking the main referral Connaught Hospital here in a medical exchange programme," Minister Ibrahim Ben Kargbo said. He said the Indian government initiative will help modernize Sierra Leone's education system and allow doctors to seek help and advice from Indian medical professors. The president's office will also be able to hold tele-conferences with other African heads of state, he said.

Local Media – Newspaper

President Sirleaf Indicted Again, Named Int'l Coordinator of NPFL

(Daily Observer, News Democrat, Heritage, The Monitor)

- Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has described as rubbish, the command structure of the defunct NPFL which showed Foday Sankoh as the Military Advisor to him.
- In a very harsh tone, he said he had 168 Special Forces and could not take advice from Sankoh.
- The former President also denied the existence of a group called SBU Ghangay Tiger as indicated in the Prosecution's chart.
- Meanwhile, Mr. Taylor has presented a new command structure to the Special Court naming President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the International Coordinator of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) from 1986 to 1994.
- Government has since rubbished the claim that President Sirleaf was a member of the NPFL as is portrayed by Taylor.

Ex-NTGL officials in Buchanan Iron Ore Sale Fight Back

(Heritage, National Chronicle, The Inquirer, The News)

- Key players to the sale of the Buchanan iron ore have dismissed the audit report of the General Auditing Commission indicting them of a dubious transaction.
- The key players include Ciapha Gbollie, Jonathan Mayson, Tugbeh Doe of the former NTGL and Lebanese businessman George Haddad.
- In its forensic audit, the GAC said the sale of the Buchanan iron ore in 2003 was full of financial irregularities to the detriment of government.
- The GAC said over US\$7 million of proceeds from the sale of the iron ore was disbursed in a manner not consistent with accountability, transparency and probity.
- However the former NTGL officials and Mr. Haddad condemned the GAC audit report and termed it as bogus.

Sweden and Liberia sign US\$100M Agreement

(The News)

- The Governments of Sweden and Liberia have signed a US\$100 million agreement.
- The five year development agreement will strengthen peace, human rights, agriculture, trade and commerce and will also support democracy, and the Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- Planning Minister Amara Konneh signed for government while the Swedish Counsel accredited to Monrovia, Anders Ostman signed for his government.

Aggrieved Women and Cutlass Wielding Men Seize Liberia-Sierra Leone Highway

(The Inquirer)

- Reports say dozens of aggrieved women backed by cutlass wielding men yesterday seized the main highway leading to the Liberia-Sierra Leone border.

- Correspondents say the striking Guthrie workers are demanding two months salary arrears allegedly owed them by the management.
- According to the report, relief and commercial vehicles from both sides of the highway are being turned back by the aggrieved workers.
- Meanwhile, striking workers have temporarily suspended their demonstration following the intervention of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

AFL, UNMIL Rehabilitates Major Roads in Gbarnga, Bong County Ahead of July 26 Celebration

(The Informer, The Inquirer, New Democrat)

- As the provincial capital of Gbarnga in Bong County gears up for the hosting of Liberia's 162nd Independence celebration, the Armed Forces of Liberia engineering unit in collaboration with the UNMIL Bangladeshi Military Engineering Contingent is rehabilitating several major streets and infrastructures in that part of the country.
- The Contingent Commander of BANENGR12, Lt. Colonel Md. Abdul Hamid Shadar said the collaboration was intended to build the capacity of the new Liberian army in the reconstruction of post-war Liberia.
- Meanwhile, the Bangladeshi Engineering battalion is also involved with a pilot agriculture project at the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) and has cultivated over 12 different types of food crops [Bangladeshi] on the three-acre land.

Mittal Steel Sets 2011 as New Date for First Iron Ore Shipment

(Heritage)

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Global Steel Giant, ArcelorMittal says his company is far behind schedule to make its first shipment of iron ore out of Liberia.
- Mr. Joseph Matthew said the economic meltdown has greatly affected the company operations globally and as such its original plan has been altered.
- The company has earlier announced that its first shipment of iron ore would have been done this year.
- ArcelorMittal, with a mineral concession agreement of US\$1.5 billion operates in Grand Bassa, Nimba and Bong Counties.

Several Unexploded Bombs Discarded

(New Democrat)

- The engineering battalion of Bangladesh serving in UNMIL has detonated several unexploded bombs discovered in recent times.
- Authorities of BANENGR12 said over the past four months they have carried out 19 bomb disposal operations and demolished 90 unexploded grenades, rockets, mortars and small arms ammunition effected.

MTA Begins Inter-County Transportation

(Heritage, The Inquirer)

- The Monrovia Transit Authority (MTA) says it would this Friday begin an inter-county transportation programme.
- The Managing Director of the MTA, Senwah Weah told a news conference that the launch of the rural transport service is the kick-off to the work of the newly organized National Transit Authority.
- Mr. Weah disclosed the MTA was serving as an implementing partner for the National Transit Authority.

Local Media – Truth F.M. (monitored today at 09:00 am)

Aggrieved Women and Cutlass Wielding Men Seize Liberia-Sierra Leone Highway

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

President Sirleaf Indicted Again, Named Int'l Coordinator of NPFL

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

Ex-NTGL officials in Buchanan Iron Ore Sale Fight Back

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

Former Solicitor General Speaks on Rejection by Senate

- Former Solicitor General Tiawan Gongloe says the law of any nation can only be respected if it is used to prosecute powerful people.
- Cllr. Gongloe said he believes people who take oath to defend the constitution of a country must themselves obey the law.
- The Labour Minister-Designate statements were in reaction to his rejection by the Senate for the post of Labor Minister for reasons yet to be explained.
- He said the Senate treated him unfairly, even though it has the vetting power when the president appoints.

Sweden and Liberia sign US\$100M Agreement

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

PUL Holds Interactive Forum on Media Bills Before Legislature

- The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) has held a one-day interactive forum on the three bills submitted to the Legislature for passage.
- The bills include the Freedom of Information Act, the Bill to transform the Liberia Broadcasting System into a Public service Broadcaster and the Independent Broadcast Regulator.
- The dialogue brought together media personnel and representatives of political parties in the country.
- The political party representatives and media personnel commended the PUL for the initiative and called on the body to create more awareness on the bills.

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

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The Analyst (Liberia)

Thursday, 23 July 2009

Prosecute Warlords, Others, Cllr. Frances Johnson-Morris Says

While the controversies surrounding the final report of the TRC are simmering and spilling over in some quarters, representatives of the government of Liberia and human and civil rights institutions have begun taking proactive steps for soft landing.



At a stakeholders forum held this week, they looked not only at the role of Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) in ensuring peace and human rights protection in post-war Liberia.

Some speakers actually jolted the iceberg that is before the TRC report, calling for prosecution of warlords as a peace legacy to bequeath to the Liberian people.

One proponent of such legacy is Cllr. Frances Johnson-Morris, Liberia's former chief justice and justice minister.

Daily Observer

Friday, 24 July 2009

Group Wants Blanket Amnesty for All

The secretary of a civil society group in Monrovia has called for a blanket amnesty for all those recommended in the TRC report for prosecution and banning from elective and appointive offices for 30 years. Williams Anderson of the Civil Society for Reconciliation and Peace said his group made the call in the wake of the failure of the TRC to include all those foreign leaders who provided financial and material support to warlords in the prosecution of the Liberian war.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Thursday, 23 July 2009

'No plan to run away', Prince Johnson declares

Written by Julius Kanubah

Nimba County Senator Prince Johnson says he has no plan to escape the Country as is being rumored.

Senator Johnson told Star Radio it is totally rubbish for some people to link his pending medical travel to Nigeria is an attempt to flee Liberia.

According to Senator Johnson he has huge investment in Liberia and would not run away.

The report of Senator Johnson's alleged plan to escape the country came after he wrote the Senate requesting a medical trip to Nigeria very soon.

Senator Johnson requested the Senate to excuse him to seek medication attention because he was suffering from hypertension which makes his blood pressure to rise.

The Nimba County Senator said attempts by some people to link the rise of his blood pressure to the release of the TRC report was illogical.

Senator Johnson who is highly critical of the TRC report is listed as one of the most notorious perpetrators of the civil war.

He said the rise in his blood pressure has been a longtime illness.

Daily Nation (Kenya)

Thursday, 23 July 2009

Kenya must set up tribunal to try post-poll violence suspects

Kenya must prosecute suspected perpetrators at home.

Differences over how to pursue justice for post-election violence victims obscure the reality that Kenya does not enjoy political discretion on how to try the suspects.

The impasse in the Cabinet demonstrates the difficulty of enforcing international law at the national level.

Setting up an impartial national tribunal is the only way Kenya can safeguard the values of human dignity. Such a step would help Kenya to avoid the humiliation of its present and former public officials facing trial outside the country, an eventuality that would offend national pride.

Kenya must heed the reality that effective national proceedings can offer victims an international standard of justice.

This feature of the ICC is designed to assuage those for whom sovereignty is an absolute dogma.

The Cabinet's current paralysis constitutes a profound moral failure and is an affront to the memory of those who died and the suffering of those who survived.

By holding individuals to account, Kenya will affirm that the future use of force should be curtailed, and insure against violence.

Notwithstanding popular demand that trials take place at The Hague, the ICC is not a substitute for efficient national courts. It is intended as an incentive for Kenya to start its own proceedings.

It is most perplexing that Kenya, which in 2005 stood up to America for non-surrender of American officials to The Hague, now has to wait for the ICC prosecutor to bludgeon it into meeting its obligations to its own citizens.

The preference by Kenyans for the ICC shows that national mechanisms have deficiencies, if only because our courts often tend to protect State agents responsible for serious crimes.

Effective national trials on their own may not provide a definitive answer to the innumerable problems Kenya faces.

AllAfrica.com

Thursday, 23 July 2009

Liberia: Memory And Politics - The TRC Report

Lansana Gberie

opinion

As Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) moves to address the country's troubled past, Lansana Gberie is entirely confused by the commission's direction and intent. With some US\$8 million plus spent on the TRC over a two-year period, considerably more would have been expected from the commission's report than mere woolly, dull assertions. The report's dismissal of the views informing its findings undermines its relevance, Gberie argues, and is only saved from complete insignificance by the sheer outrageousness of its recommendations.

James Joyce was right that history is a nightmare, the African-American writer James Baldwin wrote, reflecting in a somnolent Swiss village on the racial tensions in his country: 'But it is a nightmare from which there is no awakening. People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them.' The words were written about 40 years ago, and were issued out of a specific context. But they seem to have a particular resonance for post-war Liberia.

Over five years after its brutal insurgencies ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) in 2003 and the deployment of thousands of UN troops (at a cost of over US\$600 million per year), Liberia is enmeshed in another conflict altogether, a contest over its past and soul. The outline of the story is jarringly seductive, and there were tantalising hints of it at the 15-20 June 2009 National Conference of Reconciliation organised by the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). It was held at the Unity Conference Center in Virginia, just outside Monrovia; the centre was built for the jinxed Organisation of African Unity (OAU) - the precursor of the more robust Africa Union (AU) - in Liberia in 1979 by President William Tolbert, who would be murdered in his bedroom by his own soldiers less than a year later.

Part of the once-famous Hotel Africa, the hall's main structure - a massive high-rise building - is now a monstrous ruin, making the conference centre, still intact and even elegant, something of a minor wonder. On the walls of the annex, which the casual visitor is likely to miss, there is a very telling mural of a group of confident black people dressed in Western-style clothing getting off a boat to be greeted by apparently dissolute and benighted Africans in their 'native' attire. This is not an accurate historical representation, of course, but this is exactly the point. And that point is also captured in the flowering communiqué issued at the end of the conference, the delegates of which, 'representing citizens of Liberia from all 15 counties and from all walks of life, background, race, clan [sic] and tribe [sic]', were still able to recall, with no hint of irony, 'the spirit of all our great ancestors, who through love of unity, freedom, justice and liberty founded this great nation'. This is the standard, vainglorious narrative of Liberia's history, and here we are told that it is shared by 'perpetrators and victims of crimes of all forms and degrees against our fellow brothers and sisters' during the country's recent wars.

Surely the presence of perpetrators and victims imply contest - and so an unruly voice among the drafters asserts itself - calling for 'a historical review commission [to] be established to review Liberia's history and produce a version of it that reflects the lives of the people met here by the settlers in 1822'. It continues to point 24 of the communiqué, declaring that 'the motto in the seal of Liberia should be changed from its current form, 'The love of liberty brought us here', to instead read 'The love of liberty unites us here'. In this same revisionist mood, the communiqué also called for 'a national culture center [to] be established to promote Liberia's diverse culture[s]', as well as for 'a national consultation process

[to] be set-up to determine a single indigenous dialect to be spoken throughout the country and taught in Liberian schools'.

You now get the basic idea. In its modern form, Liberia was established by the American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1827 as a colony for American freed slaves. The condition of freed blacks in the United States at the time was both pressing and complex for America's (racist) white masters like Thomas Jefferson, for they amounted to hundreds of thousands, if not millions. Jefferson and his revolutionary colleagues clearly did not envisage that their ideas of independence and liberty, which had led them to revolt against British colonial rule, should extend to their own black population. These leaders thought that the chief solution would be to repatriate the blacks to Africa, where they would live in liberty with themselves. This point has been much stressed by various writers - from the English novelist and travel writer Graham Greene to the Liberian (indigenous) nationalist and academic George Boley, who later emerged as a factional leader during Liberia's recent civil wars, but it surely had been settled over a century ago by that erudite pan-Africanist Edward Blyden. Noting the influential African voices in America who were yearning at the time for a return to Africa, Blyden wrote that while the whites clearly wanted to expel the freed slaves, the Liberian project 'was in harmony with the instincts and desires of the Africans in America'.

Institute for War and Peace Reporting

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Sudan: Divisions Emerge Over Arrest of Bashir

Rosebell Kagumire

Kampala — Uganda is both member of ICC and African Union, which opposes court's indictment of Sudanese leader.

Divisions have surfaced in the Ugandan government over whether to press for the arrest of Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir, who has been indicted by the International Criminal Court, ICC, for war crimes.

Bashir had been invited to attend the Smart Partnership Dialogue conference, which opens in Uganda on July 27. The annual conference, now in its 19th year, seeks to promote economic cooperation between African nations.

However, Ali al-Sadiq, Sudan's foreign office spokesman, confirmed that Bashir would now not be travelling to Uganda at the end of the month. He declined to give a reason, or say whether anyone else would be travelling in his place.

But a source close to the government, who spoke to IWPR on condition of anonymity, said that Bashir cancelled the trip at the suggestion of Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, who wanted to avoid an internationally prickly situation.

In all probability, Bashir will now send a low-key official, said the source.

Uganda's situation is particularly difficult because it is both a signatory to the ICC's Rome Statute and a member of the African Union, which has refused to cooperate with the ICC's decision over the indictment of Bashir.

Moreover, Uganda was the first country to take a case before the war crimes tribunal in the Hague: that of Joseph Kony, head of Ugandan rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army, who was indicted by the ICC in 2005 but has not yet been caught.

On July 13, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, head prosecutor of the ICC, was in Uganda for what many think was a move to remind the country of its obligations under the ICC.

At a press conference during Moreno-Ocampo's visit, the foreign affairs minister, Okello Oryem, suggested that Bashir could be arrested if he set foot in the country.

But Museveni was quick to head off a diplomatic row, by placing a call to Bashir, saying that Oryem was not authorised to make such comments, according to state media.

The disagreement about whether to press for the arrest of Bashir is played out in lower levels of government, too.

"Uganda must stand by its international obligations," Steven Tashobya, chairman of the Parliamentary Legal Affairs Committee, said. "We must be reliable partners. We cannot expect to tell other countries to arrest Kony if we are unwilling to execute arrest warrants for another person indicted for war crimes."

Not everyone in the Ugandan parliament agrees, though. James Akena, a member of parliament from northern Uganda, says that if Uganda were to take action against Bashir "it would throw the region into instability".

Uganda and Sudan have suffered a somewhat acrimonious relationship over the years, with each side allegedly funding the rebel insurgencies in the other country.

Uganda has accused Sudan for years of providing money and weapons to the Kony's LRA. At the same time, Sudan has accused Uganda of backing the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army, SPLA, during the bloody north-south war.

Akena is critical of what he sees as the government's double-standards towards the ICC, insisting that Kampala has been pushing for the arrest of Kony simply for "political reasons" and to get a potential opponent out of the way.

"If they believed in justice as a guiding principle, then they wouldn't have taken their case to the court and consequently they wouldn't be in this position," he said.

The situation is made even more delicate by the fact that, in 2010, Uganda will host the first review discussion of the Rome Statute, which set up the ICC.

"If Uganda is seen to be too supportive of the African Union's position, then it is quite possible that this might provoke a change of venue," said William Schabas, director of the Irish Centre for Human Rights.

Schabas says that Uganda is under no legal obligation to press for the arrest of Bashir, even if he was to make a visit to the country.

Article 98 of the Rome Statute stipulates that a country does not have to proceed with a request from the ICC if doing so would be inconsistent "with its obligations under international law with respect to the State or diplomatic immunity of a person or property of a third State, unless the Court can first obtain the cooperation of that third State for the waiver of the immunity".

Since Uganda is a member of the AU, Schabas argues that this takes precedence over the ICC.

But Schabas does think that the AU position is a worrying one, and that it significantly undermines the ICC's authority.

Lina Zedriga, an advocate for peace and security in Kampala, says that the AU's stance over the indictment of Bashir is not universally accepted by its members.

On July 6, the government issued a statement criticising the AU's position and reaffirming its own willingness to cooperate with the ICC.

"In some circles, the latest AU position has been perceived as Libya's," said Zedriga. "I believe it is a deliberate measure to set protective precedents for any other possible arrests [of heads of state]." Zedriga thinks Uganda should side with the ICC over the arrest of Bashir.

"Uganda should not be driven to take positions that do not advance issues of impunity, human security and conflict," she said. "Uganda will not suffer any fatal backlash if it arrests Bashir. Rather it will go down in history as having zero tolerance for injustice."

Last May, Bashir did not attend the inauguration of Jacob Zuma as president of South Africa, because Pretoria had indicated that they had their ICC obligations.

So far, 109 countries have ratified the Rome Statute, 29 of which are also members of the AU.

Rosebell Kagumire is an IWPR-trained journalist.

Institute for War and Peace Reporting

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Growing Demand for IWPR International Justice Radio Programme in CAR

IWPR's Facing Justice radio programme has found new listeners in the Central African Republic where it is now being carried by the country's leading station.

Radio Ndeke Luka, based in the capital Bangui, has been broadcasting the French-language episodes of Facing Justice, IWPR's programme about the International Criminal Court, ICC, for over a month.

Though Facing Justice was originally intended for a Congolese audience, it also explores issues of interest to people in CAR, including the upcoming trial of Jean-Pierre Bemba who is accused of crimes in the country. Each episode looks into a different theme relating to local and international justice, including arrest warrants, issues surrounding victim participation and protection, and the difficulty the court has experienced in making arrests.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC, it is also broadcast in Swahili and Lingala - the local languages.

Sylvie Panika, an editor at Radio Ndeke Luka said that listeners are already calling for Facing Justice to be rebroadcast once the current run of 14 episodes is finished.

"The programmes are very clear in content and they permit listeners to understand what is happening in The Hague," said Panika, adding that the show has helped her to understand how the ICC works not only in theory but also in practice.

She praised the journalists who produce the show, describing them as "neutral and impartial". "The information provided is information that listeners here want to hear," she said. "It can only strengthen their [listeners] knowledge of international justice issues."

She added that whilst the shows focus heavily on the ICC, this could open up discussions into other areas relating to national and transitional justice.

The show is also garnering a large audience in DRC where listener numbers have been steadily rising since the first episode was aired in October 2008.

A recent audience survey revealed that more than 1.6 million people listen to the show in the capital Kinshasa alone. And the survey suggested a wide audience throughout the country with stations in each of DRC's 11 provinces broadcasting the programme on a regular basis.

Listeners praised Facing Justice's impartiality and expressed their interest in receiving more information on the ICC.

IWPR's local partner Search for Common Ground assembles listener questions, many of which focused on the former CNDP militia leader Laurent Nkunda.

"Why is everyone always hunting down Bosco Ntaganda?" asked one resident of Goma. "It is thanks to him that hostilities have gone down in North Kivu. Instead of Bosco I propose that Nkunda be arrested."

An Uvira listener had a different point of view, questioning why Ntaganda is not in ICC custody for the crimes he is alleged to have committed in the province of Ituri. "The testimony I have just heard from a child soldier in Facing Justice confirms that Ntaganda was the head of the FPI (an Ituri militia group). My question is why he's not arrested and why the government treats him like a hero?"

The arrest of Ntaganda, charged by the ICC but still at large in North Kivu province, is the subject of the latest edition of Facing Justice, scheduled for broadcast in the DRC this month. This is good and useful information, according to one listener. "To well inform the population about the functioning of the ICC is a way of preventing conflicts that can emerge from the rumours surrounding the ICC," said the Kinshasa resident.

B-92 News

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<http://www.b92.net/eng/news/>

MPs debate law on Hague cooperation

BELGRADE -- Serbian MPs are today debating a draft law on cooperation with the International Criminal Court, to which 37 amendments have been proposed.

Normatively speaking, the draft law comprehensively governs the sector of cooperation between Serbia and the International Criminal Court.

The draft calls for a ban on parallel court proceedings, meaning that a person cannot be tried for the same crime before a domestic and international court.

The need to adopt the law stems from the Rome Statute, adopted on July 17, 1998, which obliges member-states to normatively regulate cooperation in national legislation.

Parliament finished its debate on draft laws on public information and culture on Wednesday.