

**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:

Tuesday, 24 March 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

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Concord Times
Tuesday, 24 March 2009

Local News

By Ibrahim
Tarawallie

and Bryna Hallam

Judges in the Special Court for Sierra Leone heard arguments yesterday regarding the sentencing of three former leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Prosecution has asked for sentences of 60 years for Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon, and 40 years for Augustine Gbao.

First accused Sesay and second accused Kallon were found guilty in February on 16 of 18 counts. Third accused Gbao was found guilty on 14 of 18 counts.

The three were charged with acts of terrorism and collective punishments, unlawful killings, sexual violence, physical violence, the use

of child soldiers, abductions and forced labour, looting and burning houses, and attacks on UNAMSIL personnel.

All three were found not guilty of murder, a crime against humanity, and the taking of hostages in connection with the abduction of United Nations peacekeepers in May 2000.

Gbao was also found not guilty of conscripting child soldiers and murder, a war crime, in relation to the abduction of peacekeepers.

Speaking for the prosecution, Vincent Wagona said the starting point for the length of the sentences was the AFRC conviction, which saw sentences of 50 years.

"The gravity and aggravating factors for the first and second accused

deserve higher sentences than those in the AFRC case," he said. "In regards to Gbao, we came to the conclusion that his contribution to the joint criminal enterprise (JCE) was not as significant as that relating to the first and second accused."

He urged the court to consider the gravity of the acts, and the gravity of the failure to prevent or punish those acts, as well as the duration of some of the crimes.

Wayne Jordash, defense counsel for Sesay, told the court the prosecution was not preaching justice during the trial.

"The request for 60 years continues the process of demonizing and seeks to hold Sesay responsible for the crimes

Prosecution seeks up to 60 yrs for RUF leaders



Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao

of all the RUF," he said. He suggested a sentence of 10 to 15 years instead.

He called on the court to balance Sesay's crimes with actions that saved thousands of lives, noting that civilians were willing to testify on Sesay's behalf.

"It is no small thing to take a life," Jordash said. "But it is also no small thing to go against the flow" to save lives and livelihoods. He also noted that Sesay was involved in disarming the RUF.

Sesay himself addressed the court, saying, "I extend my sincere sympathies to victims who suffered during the days of the war." He asked the chamber to consider the 256 civilians who came forward to testify on his behalf.

He also noted his involvement with disarmament and peace process. "Those who didn't want to return to peace benefited from the UN, while I who fought for peace to prevail, I am here on trial," he said.

"ECOWAS gave me responsibility to implement the Lome Accord," he said. "Until I was arrested, no one told me the Lome Accord was not valid."

Kennedy Ogeto, counsel for Morris Kallon, argued that the degree of participation in the crimes was of "extreme importance," and noted that his client was found not personally responsible for most of the crimes of which he was convicted.

He was directly involved in the attacks on UN peacekeepers, for which Kallon expressed deep remorse.

Kennedy asked the chamber to consider Kallon's good character and behaviour while in custody. He also urged them to consider his personal circumstances, and how a long sentence could negatively impact his large family and young children.

Addressing the court, Kallon asked for forgiveness from the victims of the conflict and apologized to UNAMSIL, ECOWAS and ECOMOG.

"I accept that crimes were committed by the RUF, and I acknowledge my own role and responsibility for those crimes," he said, adding, "The conflict has left a deep wound on my heart."

He asked for pardon, saying he is a totally reformed person now. "I ask the chamber to temper justice with mercy."

John Cammegh, counsel for Gbao, said his emotions ranged from "disdain to despair" when reading the prosecution brief and realizing that they wanted to sentence a 60-year-old man to 40 years in prison. He called the sentence "entirely unrealistic."

Cammegh said Gbao's chance of surviving a long sentence was not good, and alluded to a doctor's report included in his submission.

He said they were looking for a sentence of no more than 10 years. "For Gbao to be released at the end of these proceedings would not be inappropriate," he said.

Cammegh accused the prosecution of overplay Gbao's conviction and misrepresenting the chamber's findings by including him with Kallon and Sesay when he was found guilty on fewer charges.

He also noted that Gbao was never found to have fired a single shot or to have ordered a single shot to be fired.

Sentencing is expected to take place in the first half of April.

Awoko

Tuesday, 24 March 2009

Issa Sesay pleads for lesser sentence

By Betty Milton

The first accused in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) Special Court trial Issa Sesay has said that because he implemented the Lome Peace Accord he is being prosecuted.

Issa Sesay who was addressing Trial Chamber I yesterday, thanked the Judges Pierre Boutet, Bankole Thompson and Benjamin Itoe for their time to see the end of the trial and for the role they have played to ensure peace and justice in the country.

To the victims who suffered during the course of the war he said "I extend my sincere sympathy to you for the pains you went through during the war. I must also say thanks to the 260 civilians who came forward to aid in my case."

Issa Sesay also told the Chamber that before the

disarmament process he was told by Foday Sankoh that President Tejan Kabbah has said that the RUF will be regarded as a victim of the war. "But that notwithstanding I cooperated with the United Nations to see that they accomplish their mission. Even though I had the statement of Sankoh at the back of my mind."

Before his arrest he went on "those RUF who were disgruntled about the disarmament went and told the UNAMSIL that I was hiding some ammunition."

Sesay stated that the role he was given by the ECOWAS to do was what he did without any problem and that was to disarm the RUF "I played a role in implementing the peace accord and was never told that the Lome Peace Accord was not valid. And now I have been prosecuted and those who had not wanted the disarmament are enjoying in the hands of the United Nations while I who laid down my life on the table is being prosecuted. Even the prosecution had pointed fingers at me, that I was the one who disarmed the RUF when Sankoh was in jail."

He went on "I was not the one who put a cloth in the well for Sierra Leoneans to drink but I decided to remove it, should that be a problem?" he asked. "I am pleading to the people of Sierra Leone to forgive for the crimes committed by the RUF."

Morris Kallon second accused in addressing the Chamber also expressed sympathy to the nation "from the bottom of my heart" saying "I was kidnapped and was given the RUF ideology. I acknowledge my role I therefore regret the suffering of those affected by the war."

Morris Kallon also paid tribute "to all victims of this tragic incident. To those who lost their lives and those who lost their relatives and relations during the war. I therefore call on all the family of the victims in particular and Sierra Leoneans in general to forgive me. The conflict has left a deep wound in my heart and I don't want to take the pains of those who suffered in the war with me."

He also called on the UN, ECOWAS, and all other organizations that were here to bring peace in the country but have suffered to forgive him "I am also calling on all warring faction to respect UN."

He stated further that his six (6) years in detention has given him the opportunity to reflect on his role in war. He

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Issa Sesay pleads for lesser sentence

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also recommended the role of the Special Court in bringing peace to the country and also to the judges for their role and urged them [judges] to give him the opportunity to play in the peace process of the country.

The third convict Augustine Gbao who spoke through his lawyer John Cammaign said his regret is genuine and heartfelt. He also urged the court to exercise sentence with mercy and compassion. Earlier in their sentencing argument the prosecution submitted reasons for the 60, 60 40 years jail term they recommended. In his submission Vincent Wagona on behalf of the prosecution said that the number of crimes of which the accused stands convicted for is higher and this involves the use of conscripting child soldier and others which are particularly more grave in terms of its scale and duration.

He concluded that based on the aggravating factor and gravity of the offence especially Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon deserve higher sentences. On behalf of Issa Sesay, Wayne Jordash submitted to the Chamber that most of the crimes for which Sesay was convicted on were Joint Criminal Enterprises (JCE) and was not convicted personally on some major crimes. He said that 60 years sentence will not send a good message to other fighting forces but a lenient sentence as the one they recommend of 12-15 or 15 -20 will enable him return to his community and a lenient sentence will be accepted by Sierra Leoneans as just and fair The defence lawyer for Morris Kallon Kennedy Ogeto in his submission urged the court to see the role of their client and his good character as a mitigating factor in handing down their sentences and that he was never present during the commission of most of the crimes. John Cammigen in his submission on behalf of Augustine Gbao said that he never played a superior role in the conflict and that he did not even fire a shot or ordered the firing of any shot. He also stated that Gbao never played any superior role in the conflict as there were no findings on that. It is expected that sentencing by the judges of the Trial Chamber will take place in April.

Premier News

Tuesday, 24 March 2009

“Is This The Price For Bringing Peace?”... Issa Sesay Asks

The Trial Chamber I of the Special Court for Sierra Leone was yesterday a scene of emotion and sadness as the Interim Leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Issa Sesay lamented his present status.

By Alpha Bedoh Kamara

In response to the final statements by the prosecution and defence before sentencing, Issa Sesay asked if, with tears in his eyes, whether his current treatment was the price for the sacrifices he made to bring peace to the country.

The prosecution had submitted that according to the gravity of the offences committed during the war, Sesay is liable to a joint criminal enterprise and should be sentenced to 60 years.

The Court was extraordinarily quiet, with all ears listening to what the former RUF Commander had to say as he made his final statement of plea in a slow and sorrowful manner.

“I extend my sincere sympathy to the victims who suffered in the war, and I also thank the 260 people who came forward to help in my defense,” he said, adding, “I want the Chamber to know that the United Nations wanted an interim leader to help sustain peace without personal conditions, but the prosecution is saying today that if one does so he will be arrested and jailed.

He said Foday Sankoh told him that the RUF will become a victim of the peace

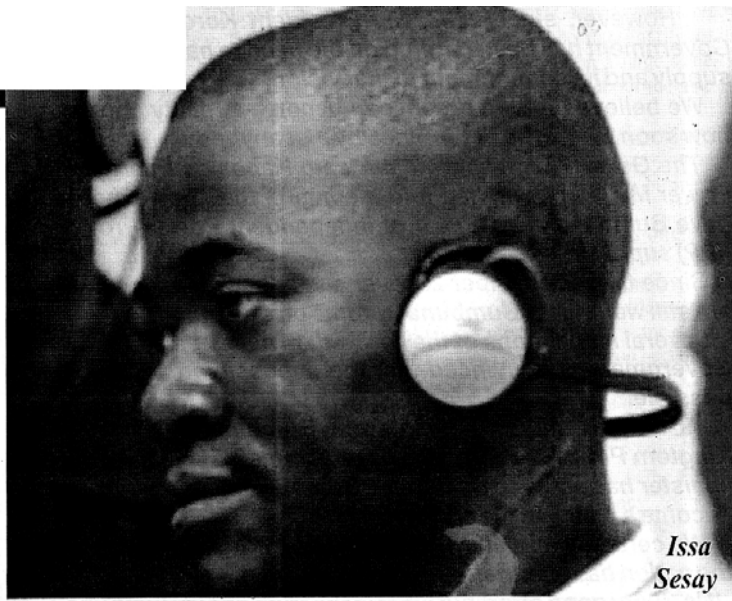
process, but when called upon by the ECOWAS he nevertheless agreed to commit to the process so that the United Nations Peace Mission in Sierra Leone will be successful.

“Many of my colleagues were disgruntled but today those who didn't want peace benefited from the UN while today I find myself in this condition,” he cried.

There was a sudden burst of wailing from a female observer but was quickly restrained, as the faces of the other observers, among them legal practitioners, remained gloomy and tense.

“It was the ECOWAS leader who proposed the Interim Leadership to me,” he said. If someone dropped a dirty linen in a well and another intervenes to remove it, does that mean he is

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IS This The Prize For Peace

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wrong?" he went on to ask.

He said it was ECOWAS that gave him the responsibility to implement the Lome Peace Accord.

"Until the day I was arrested, nobody told me the Accord was not valid," he said.

The three RUF accused, Issa Sesay and Moris Kallon are to be given a sentence of 60 years each, and Augustine Gbao to be given 40 years, according to the prosecution.

The prosecution argued that it has been a long search for the truth and that the accused are in court as convicts after been found guilty of crimes against humanity, terrorizing and inflicting punishment on the civilian population, extermination, killing by bundling-up and burning people in houses, forced marriages, violent multiple rapes and rapes that included slitting private parts of women, among others.

The prosecution further argued that children as young as 15 years old were given drugs to fight for the RUF and were used to carry out grave violations and amputations.

"The elderly, nursing mothers and pregnant women were not spared," the prosecution said, adding that peacekeepers were attacked and murdered, and some went missing.

"The crimes were indeed violent, sadistic and degrading. Many endured the consequences of the crimes to this day," the

prosecution stated.

According to the prosecution, the Trial Chamber should consider the gravity of Sesay's conduct in his failure to prevent, or punish perpetrators of the crimes, and that he is liable for the crimes committed.

The prosecution said the gravity of the offence is seen in the long duration of time the crimes are committed over the years, citing the attacks on civilians in Yengema and the Peacekeepers, among others.

The Prosecution also said Kallon participated actively in hostilities and that he made substantial contributions to the recruitment of children under 15 and forced marriages, and that he failed to prevent or punish crimes committed by his subordinates.

The prosecution cited the case of an 11 year-old girl and her mother who were captured and the girl forced into a forced marriage.

"She was forced into sex while she and her mother were held by other men for over a year," said the prosecution, stressing that Kallon was responsible for the enslavement of hundreds of other civilians in Kono from February to December 1998.

All three accused persons, according to the prosecution, are liable for the offences of forced marriages and enslavement in Kailahun District, and that the Trial Chamber should take into consideration the continuing action of the crime.

The Defence Counsel for Issa Sesay, Wayne Jodash argued that Sesay's action during the war saved the lives

of hundreds of Sierra Leoneans, and that he should not be looked at as a demon but as a man who helped to save the lives of Sierra Leoneans at his own personal risk.

"He showed kindness to civilians and protected many in areas of his operation," he said.

He said, the prosecution, using the AFRC as benchmark for the sentencing of the RUF, is rather unfortunate as both cases are in disparity.

"If Sesay had committed crimes as those committed by the AFRC, his reputation would have been destroyed. There should be a particular approach in evaluating the crimes for sentencing," he said.

He also said that it must be acknowledged that Sesay's authority did not extend to Bo, Kenema and Tongo, and that Mosquito, Bassy Kamara, Gullit and others were in direct command.

"He therefore did not directly contribute to the joint criminal enterprise," he said, adding that there was no suggestion that Sesay was in contact with any of them to influence their conducts.

Jodash said while the RUF as a group was rampaging, one commander stood-up to protect the civilians, and that Sesay and the two others are in court because they wanted peace.

"Sesay should receive a mitigating sentence for cooperating with the UN and government for the peace, and we submit that a lenient sentence be given that is just and fair," he said.

Premier News
Tuesday, 24 March 2009

The Trial Of Charles Taylor



Monitor: What does the Defense need to have a more equal balance between the Prosecution and the Defense?

Griffiths: Well, it would help to have more money, for example to enable our international investigators in particular to travel. And also for people like myself to travel, because there are individuals within Africa and elsewhere in the world whom I would like to go and meet. Not because my international investigators are not capable of going, but oftentimes it is the measure of respect you show to an individual who goes along to meet that individual for the first time. If for example you were Thabo Mbeki, you would be expecting Mr. Taylor's Lead Counsel to come and talk to you about his case. But because of a lack of resources 1) I can't afford the time to leave The Hague, 2) the travel costs involved would prove prohibitive given the limitations of our budget. So for a number of reasons our investigative possibilities are somewhat constrained.

Monitor: In Court you have recently informed us about the extra security measures imposed by the Dutch authorities on Mr. Taylor during transportation to and from the building of the ICC (International Criminal Court) in The Hague where this trial of the Special Court is located. As the judges have informed us, these extra security measures were not due to any misconduct or misbehavior on the side of Mr. Taylor, but were due to reasons beyond this Court's and Mr. Taylor's control. Can you tell us if these extra security measures have been lifted yet?

Griffiths: Those measures are still in place. And it is still the case that the measures were not imposed because of anything done by Mr. Taylor. It was very much to do with other detainees within the detention facility and as far as we are led to understand those detainees weren't even from the African continent.

Monitor: Have the Dutch authorities informed the Court what it will take or what needs to be changed before these extra security measures will be lifted?

Griffiths: Well, they haven't told us and it would be difficult for them to tell us given that it wasn't because of anything done by Mr. Taylor in the first place to justify this. So consequently it is apparent that changes have to take place which have nothing whatsoever to do with Mr. Taylor and that's what will dictate when the Dutch authorities would be

minded to lift these restrictions.

Monitor: What is the Registry doing for Mr. Taylor in this respect? And are they, in your opinion, doing enough?

Griffiths: Well, there could always be a greater effort. The registry have suggested to us that they are taking steps to try and solve the situation and I know for a fact that the Registrar has met with senior members of the Dutch Intelligence and Security Services to discuss the matter. But effectively now we are told that we have to take it to the President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone because effectively no one has power over the Dutch authorities to compel them to change the provisions in this particular respect.

Monitor: Recently prosecution witnesses have started to testify under Rule 92bis of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the SCSL, meaning that they can give their testimony in writing, so they will not be examined by the Prosecution, however they must be prepared to be cross-examined by the Defense, and when so called for, be questioned by the judges. Can you tell us if the Defense will be cross-examining all the prosecution witnesses who testify under this rule or will the Defense only cross-examine a certain number of these witnesses? I think last Wednesday your co-counsel Terry Munyard already lifted a little tip of the veil as he did this morning in regard to witness TF1-081, stating that this prosecution witness did not need to come to The Hague to be cross-examined. Can you tell us more?

Griffiths: Basically, Rule 92bis is a measure which is employed to increase the efficiency of the proceedings and basically the position is that where a witness's evidence is not in dispute and is capable of agreement between the parties that rather than transport that individual half way across the globe to give evidence, that evidence can be accepted by the Court as read in effect. Part of the difficulty we've had over the old 92bis issue is that my experience and practise was that where a Prosecutor wanted agreement on certain core facts which would be on dispute he or she would distil that witness's evidence to its core features, which

would then be presented to the other side for agreement. What has happened in this case is, the Prosecution that handed us reams of transcripts from previous proceedings where these witnesses had been cross-examined on behalf of other defendants and consequently what was being put in cross-examination was relevant to their cases and not in the case of Mr. Taylor. And effectively they wanted all of those transcripts to go in. Now that would have ended up with us agreeing not merely to the core fact "I was raped on this particular date on this particular location", but I would be agreeing to cross-examination on behalf of Issa Sesay's sake, relevant to him, which might prove, rather than being crime based evidence to being linkage evidence with Mr. Taylor. We were not prepared to do that. What I expected the Prosecution to do, was to be much more discriminate and to look at the transcripts and say to us: "These are the portions of the evidence of this witness that we're interested in, you can forget the rest", but they didn't do that. And consequently we, I think quite properly, objected to this indiscriminate introduction of transcripts from previous proceedings, where hidden amongst the detail might be material which they would later turn around and say: "We rely on this as linking Mr. Taylor with what happened in Sierra Leone". And then when you turn around and object and say: "Well, this was supposed to be crime based evidence", they would turn around and say: "Well, you agreed it". And that was the danger. As a consequence, because of their refusal to be more discriminate, we have this sad spectacle of agitated individuals and rape victims, being transported to The Hague to give evidence and the core aspects of their evidence are not being challenged by us. Which is why we were able to get through something like a dozen crime base witnesses in the space of four and a half days this week. Because the core of the accounts being given by these individuals for the most part can not be challenged by us. Because Mr. Taylor was not on the spot in Makeni when a particular individual was raped. So how can Mr. Taylor tell me, "Well Mr. Griffiths, you ought to be challenging that account given by that individual".

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Awareness Times
Monday, 23 March 2009

Issa Sesay's Family Are Apprehensive to Return to Sierra Leone

By Abdul Turay

The Sesay Family members of one of Sierra Leone's most notorious rebels of the Revolutionary United Front are now very apprehensive for their welfare in the country following the conviction of 'General' Issa Sesay by the Special Court for Sierra Leone of some of the most heinous crimes against humanity of the 21st Century. The Sesay family of Makeni and Bumbuna have been especially targeted for reprisals ever since their son, brother and uncle, Issa Sesay, emerged from the Bush as one of the RUF's leading Battlefield Commanders.

The RUF, which brought untold sufferings to the people of Sierra Leone, will go down in history as an infamous indiscriminate killer machine. A machine which ensured that many innocent Sierra Leoneans lost their properties as a result of the senseless RUF so-called civil war. By the end of the civil war, Issa Sesay had risen through the ranks to be the Leader of the fearsome bunch of brutal killers that ravaged Sierra Leone.

As a result of Issa Sesay's leadership role in the RUF, many of his family members have fled to neighbouring West African states. Issa Sesay's family houses were all burnt down to the ground by angry Sierra Leoneans who decided to destroy the properties because they could not lay hands on the loved relatives of Issa Sesay. This is because these angry Sierra Leoneans hold Issa Sesay fully responsible for the killings of their own loved relatives.

Many of Issa Sesay's own relatives now living overseas are apprehensive of coming back home. For example, according to local traditional chiefs in the Bumbuna and Makeni area, his brother N'fa Sesay in Spain and sister Jane Isatu Sesay in America who both actually funded the building of the destroyed family houses are still too frightened and in shock at the amount of anger they face simply because they are the siblings of the convicted rebel leader.

Meanwhile, in Sierra Leone, several religious groups are regularly offering prayers so that the mayhem of the RUF will never become repeated again in Sierra Leone.

Concord Times

Monday, 23 March 2009

Sierra Leone: Women's Right to Property Still a Challenge

by Mohamed Massaquoi

Freetown — In Small Bo chiefdom Kenema district, as in much of Sierra Leone, women are still deprived of inheriting property left behind by their husbands.

It is a burning issue even though the Devolution of Estate Act, which was passed in 2007, criminalizes the act of depriving a woman from inheriting her husband's property after his death. The act further states that it is an offence to eject a surviving spouse or child from the matrimonial home before the formal distribution of the estate.

Chapter three of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone states that the fundamental human rights and freedom of every individual in Sierra Leone must be recognized and protected.

Article 23 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights recognizes the right to equality in marriage. This means that men and women have the same rights and responsibilities during the marriage and at its dissolution.

Despite this, none of the women in Wiama village in the Small Bo chiefdom in Kenema district own land.

When Jatu Lansana's husband died some years back, her own family wanted to take her to another community. But her husband's family refused on the grounds that she has given birth to children in the family and it would be unfair to take all the children to another family.

"I was here for five years without a husband," Lansana said. "All the property my husband left behind was taken away from me. I was abandoned by both my husband's family and even my children."

One of her husband's brothers decided to marry her. She denied because of the difficulties she had undergone, but was forced to agree.

Mamie Kamoh said the vast cocoa and coffee plantations left behind by their father were claimed by her three younger brothers on the pretext that they are the head of the family and they take care of the home while she is away with her husband.

It is stated in the Devolution of Estate Act that where there are only children left, each child should get an equal share of the estate.

"Since my brothers started working in I have not received anything from them. I requested for Le 50,000 to pay the school fees for my son but there was no money," Kamoh said.

"The other time I attempted to enter the plantation I was sued to a native court in which I was fined Le 100,000. I felt dejected because the property by right belongs to all of us."

Tajoh Mamoh wanted to construct a two-room building on her family land, and told her family and the town chiefs about it.

"It was at that moment that my brother informed that chiefs that he wanted to construct a house on the same land," she said. "I was deprived because the land was given to my brother. Up till now he has not started the construction."

Being able to inherit and own property means women can be self reliant and provide for their children on their own.

Part of the problem is that many people do not know about the new Devolution of Estate Act, which was passed in 2007. To help address this, the Lawyer's Center for Legal Action (LAWCLA) has put the new laws into clear language that is easier to understand.

Doris Kalle, the regional coordinator for the Coalition of Women's Movement, said her organization has also embarked on a massive sensitization campaign in the district. They are educating women and traditional authorities on the new laws.

"A lot of women have been mainly complaining about the distribution of property especially plantations left behind by their husbands," she said.

"We are still faced with the situation where men feel their wives are property to them. We don't have proper bylaws that clearly define the rights of women in this community," she said, adding that it is imperative to explain the gender acts in local languages so that people will understand.

The Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), a non-governmental organization based in Kenema, is using radio programmes to educate people about the new laws.

Patrick Adu, who works with the MRD, said in the case of property devolution, the general practice in remote communities is that the widow herself is regarded as a property to be inherited together with the deceased husband's property.

If she does marry one of her late husband's brothers, she may enjoy whatever benefit he derives from the estate. In the event the wife refuses to be "inherited" by one of the husband's relations, only her personal belongings will be given her.

Adu said that when a woman decides not marry her husband's relations, traditional divorce laws may be invoked, keeping her from getting the property. "This is responsible for most of the problems in our villages," he said.

Generally under the customary law, the widow is not entitled to take out letters of administration; such rights are given to the eldest surviving male in the deceased's family. If the wife succeeds to get any property at all, she will only be given one-third of it.

Local bylaws are used in most parts of the country.

According to David Kallon, a court clerk of native administrative Court No. 4 in Kenema, the chiefdom committee drafts the laws and passes it on to the local chief administrator for approval.

But the bylaws currently in use were drafted in 1963 and have not been updated with any new laws, such as the gender acts.

He said the court only gets involved with disputes when someone makes a complaint. That means that people must understand the laws.

"We don't call on cases from either the woman or her husband's family but if there is any conflict among them it is the responsibility of the aggrieved to report to the court so that the court can make a ruling," he explained.

Another problem, he said, is that the local courts lack the support to adjudicate cases properly. This leads to delays.

"Court officers are not paid. Our bylaws are not properly written. These are all compounded in the delay in of justices in our communities," Kallon said.

Jannah Kandeh, the deputy minister of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs, expressed the government's commitment to ensure that the gender laws are properly implemented in the interest of women and society.

She said the law was instituted to put an end to impunity against women and children.

Kandeh said her ministry has established a committee that is devoted to the sensitization campaign so that women at grassroots communities and their local authorities understand the new laws.

"We know that women are going through a lot of difficulties but with the concerted efforts by women's organizations like the 50-50 Group and other partners in the fight, much will be achieved through community sensitization," she said.

This article is made possible by a grant from jhr (Journalists for Human Rights).

Africa News

Sunday, 22 March 2009

Rwanda signs agreement with UN court

Murtala Mohamed Kamara , AfricaNews reporter in Freetown, Sierra Leone

The Special Court For Sierra Leone trying those person's that is believed to bear the greatest responsibility in that country's eleven years barbaric and brutal civil conflict has signed an agreement between the government of Rwanda and the SCSL for 'convicts' to serve their sentences in Rwanda.

It could be recalled that Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma recently appealed to the SCSL to find ways that would be "convicts" will serve their sentences outside Sierra Leone.

Peter Anderson head of Public Affairs and Outreach confirmed to AfricaNews via SMS on Friday that "effort to secure enforcement agreement has been going on for sometime" but said in his response to an earlier question that the decision by the court to transfer SCSL prisoners is not "connected" with President Koroma's appeal.

Special Court Registrar Von Hebel was quoted to have said from Kigali that his team had visited the detention facilities "which have been dedicated for the purpose of enforcing sentences of those people" convicted by the SCSL and was also impressed after touring the state-of the art prison in Mpanga, Southern Rwanda.

Von Hebel said "I was very much impressed by the quality of the facilities. They meet international standards, or better put, they exceed international standards."

On her part Rosemary Museminali Rwanda Foreign minister assured the visiting delegation from Sierra Leone that "I want to express our positive sentiments towards this cooperation and tell you that this is in our view, part of our constant search for cooperation on the delivery of international justice."

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up by an agreement between the government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations after the war to try those that bear the greatest responsibilities in Sierra Leone civil war after the war.

Various factions' leaders were implicated by the court including leaders of the Revolutionary United Front, Africa's most feared rebel group, pro-government militia, and former members of the Sierra Leone Army.

The court is trying and convicted a total of eight persons apart from the former Liberian President Charles G. Taylor who is also standing trial in the same court on eleven counts for his alleged role in the Sierra Leone conflict. Special Court sources say Taylor will possibly serve his sentencing if convicted somewhere in Europe.

His trail was transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague citing security reasons.

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
23 March 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

US Extends Temporary Immigration Status of Liberians

(The Monitor, The News, The Inquirer, New Democrat, Liberian Express, Daily Observer)

- US President Barack Obama has granted a 12-month extension to the 31 March deportation deadline for the roughly 3,600 Liberians living in the United States legally on a temporary immigration status.
- Temporary Protected Status is an immigration status given to nationals of countries or parts of countries that are deemed by the U.S. Government to be too unsafe for nationals to return. That status can be granted for reasons like an armed conflict or environmental disaster.
- The US Government had wanted the Liberians to return home on 31 March on the basis that the quality of life in Liberia has improved. However the Liberian Government lobbied with the US Congress saying deporting the Liberians would have caused new sets of social problems that the Government is not in the position to solve.
- Information Minister, Laurence Bropleh said as part of the new principle set by the U.S. Government any request for further extension would signal that Liberia is not safe.

UN Envoy Points to Liberia's Progress - Outlines Challenges in Security and Rule of law Institutions

(The Informer, New Democrat)

- Briefing the UN Security Council on the 18th Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Liberia, Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, described Liberia's security situation as relatively stable, but still characterized by underlying fragility and needing to be monitored closely.
- She stated that small skirmishes or disputes often develop into serious mob violence with the population taking justice into their own hands – to a large extent, a consequence of the limited public trust in the national security agencies and the rule of law institutions.
- SRSG Løj noted that through commitment and dedication, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and her cabinet have been able to achieve significant gains, especially considering the immense capacity constraints prevailing at all levels in Liberia, Ms. Løj however cautioned: "It is still clear that peace has not yet taken root, and it is too early to declare victory."
- Despite the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process, the UN Envoy said, "tremendous challenges remain in relation to national reconciliation, which still needs to be embraced by all Liberian leaders".
- The Presidential and Legislative elections scheduled for 2011 will be a crucial test of the progress that Liberians have made towards peace and democracy, the UN Envoy remarked.

Vice President Boakai Launches 2008 MDG's Report on Liberia

(Public Agenda, Heritage, Daily Observer, The Monitor)

- Vice President Joseph Boakai has launched the 2008 Millennium Development Goals Report for Liberia. In his keynote address, Vice President Boakai said the MDG's are derivatives of the Millennium, which was unanimously adopted in 2000 by 189 countries and it spells out values like freedom, equality, solidarity tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibilities.
- The Liberian Vice President noted that though the Government was not a part of the Millennium summit, but endorsed it and has committed itself to the achievement of those objectives which have become the defining global framework for development and are serving as the clarion call on governments around the

world for their citizens. The launch of the MDG's Report was under the theme "Liberia's Progress towards the Millennium Development Goals".

Natural Resources must be accounted for - Stake holders comment on ETTI Report

(The News, The Inquirer, Heritage)

- More than sixty Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (LEITI) stakeholders representing the mining, logging and oil companies as well as the Government of Liberia, civil society and Liberia's development partners have committed themselves to expeditiously resolving all discrepancies contained in a recently published first Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative report on Liberia. The stakeholders said they would work to ensure that the forest and mining revenues of Liberia are properly accounted for and equitably used for the benefits of Liberians. The commitment was made at a two-day capacity building retreat for members of the LEITI Multi-stakeholders group and other LEITI stakeholders.

Presidential Spokesperson Thrashes allegations of Backing Senator Findley

(Daily Observer)

- [sic:] There are fresh reports emerging on Capitol Hill that President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has reportedly thrown her support behind Grand Bassa County Senior Senator Gbehzohngar Findley for the vacant post of President Pro-Tempore of the Liberian Senate. The Liberian leader is said to have met Senators from Western, Central and Northern Liberia at her Foreign Ministry Office to garner support for Findley. "That is absurd," said Cyrus Badio, President Sirleaf's spokesperson, when asked about the President's reported backing of the Grand Bassa Senator. Badio confirmed that the President held meetings with Senators over the week but those were regular meetings, which he said, she usually held to discuss legislative matters.

Radio Summary

Star Radio (News monitored today at 9:00 am)

Committee to Probe Industrial Unrest at Guthrie and Sinoe Rubber Plantations Set up

- The Executive Mansion has constituted an inter-ministerial committee to probe the wave of industrial unrest at the Guthrie and Sinoe Rubber plantations.
- The special Presidential Committee headed by Labour Minister Samuel Kofi Woods and members include the Ministers of Justice, Information, Internal Affairs, Agriculture and Education.
- Information Minister, Laurence Bropleh said the committee will investigate circumstances in the troubled areas and report to the President.
- Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education has been instructed to take over the Guthrie School System until the situation at the plantation normalizes.

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

SRC Manager, Deputy Labour Minister in "Harsh" Verbal Exchanges

- A "war of words" reportedly broke out Saturday between the Manager of the Salala Rubber Corporation (SRC) Gerben Harringsman and Deputy Labour Minister, John Josiah.
- The verbal exchanges started when Harringsman reportedly accused the Government of not doing enough to protect the company's interest.
- Speaking at the induction ceremony of the SRC Staff Association, the General Manager said despite efforts by his company to invest in road rehabilitation in Maryland County, the Government remains insensitive to their plight and was planning to re-open the Liberian-Ivorian border via Maryland County for the transport of Rubber to Ivory Coast saying this could greatly endanger the future of the company.
- But Minister Josiah said Government's policies were not tailored at the will and pleasure of investors.

Truth F.M. (News monitored today at 9:00 am)

Liberians under the TPS Programme in the U.S. Get Twelve Months Extension

BBC Online

Tuesday, 24 March 2009

Rwandan Found Guilty of Murder

A court in the Netherlands has found a Rwandan Hutu, Joseph Mpambara, guilty of torture during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 but not of war crimes. He was given 20 years in prison for, the judges said, robbing "two women and at least four children of their most valuable possession: their lives". He had ordered them to be pulled out of an ambulance and hacked to death.

But he was acquitted of the murder of Tutsis sheltering at a church, due to inconsistencies in the testimonies.



Some 800,000 people died in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda

Complex judgement

Mpambara was also found guilty on a second torture charge: threatening the lives of a German doctor, his Tutsi wife and their two-month-old son after detaining them at a roadblock as they tried to flee Rwanda.

In a complex judgment the judges cleared Mpambara of war crimes because he was not part of the Rwandan government army fighting Tutsis.

Some 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered by Hutu militias in just 100 days in 1994.

Mpambara's case came to the attention of Dutch authorities after his 1998 application for asylum was turned down. Dutch law allows the prosecution of war crimes committed overseas.

The UN-backed International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was set up in 1997 to try the most high-profile genocide cases.

Voice of America
Monday, 23 March 2009

Rwandan Documentary Remembers Genocide

By Thompson, Fid
Ougadougou

A new documentary by Rwandan filmmaker, Eric Kabera, is being shown in Ougadougou at the Pan African Film Festival. The film takes a unique and brutal approach to memorializing the 1994 genocide.

Next month marks the 15th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide - a killing campaign that claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi and moderate Hutu.

The documentary, *Iseta, The Story Behind the Roadblock*, tells the personal stories behind the only film footage of actual killings during the 1994 genocide.

British cameraman Nick Hughes, returns 15 years later with the footage to the community where the murders took place to find the victims' relatives, the survivors, and the perpetrators.

From an audio clip of the film, this: "there was just quiet massacres, family by family, road by road, roadblock by roadblock people were being exterminated."

"They just killed the mother and left the baby crying," a man says. Another viewer says, "Look he's going to hit the baby!" A woman covering her eyes asks, "Who filmed this?"

Cameraman Nick Hughes says the footage is an essential tool to understanding what really happened.

"People do not realize what the Rwandan genocide was and that is the power of a picture - you cannot deny what you are seeing," Hughes said.

Eric Kabera is the film's producer and co-director.

"This film is about memory. This documentary practically observes and depicts the men and women who were killed on the famous roadblock, which many people did not know where it was, who were the killers and who were the victims. So the documentary's intention is really to reveal that and to bring family members to come to a closure to the death of their families," Kabera said.

Kabera says the footage, which shows the beating and killing of Tutsis on a dirt road, is a microcosm of what happened in the larger genocide.

"It is gruesome, it is brutal, it is vivid, it is present. So it sort of revives and brings back the memory quite vividly because of that footage. But it was very very important at this particular moment of time to actually go back 15 years later and to bring a certain closure to the victims and bring to life the perpetrators of the genocide," he said.

The film interviews witnesses, survivors and relatives of those killed at the roadblock and shows them watching the footage of the killings.

Albert is a roadblock survivor.

Albert says what hurt the most was his friend Gabriel's death. The others had already been killed when Albert got there, but he saw the death of Gabriel. He says Gabriel knelt down like a good Christian, raised his hands and asked, 'What have I done to deserve this?'

The film then cuts to the footage of Gabriel praying with his arms in the air, the bodies of his loved ones on the ground around him.

Kabera is aware that the film will be upsetting for many Rwandan viewers.

"We have to find a way to show it in a very respectful way and in a less traumatic way because the film is very disturbing emotionally. It is not very graphic, but I think that the emotion around it and the psychology of the memories are just too gruesome," Kabera said.

On the other hand, he says, the film is important as a way to keep the memory alive and to expose people to the realities of the atrocities committed.

Rwanda's National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide will mark the 15th anniversary on April 6. Kabera's film has been chosen to commemorate the genocide and will be screened widely in Europe, America and Rwanda.