

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Friday, 22 February 2008

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

Local News

Appeals Chamber Upholds Sentences of Convicted AFRC Leaders / <i>PAO</i>	Pages 3-4
Special Court Prosecutor Welcomes Final Judgement in AFRC Case / <i>OTP</i>	Page 5
AFRC Loses Appeal / <i>Awoko</i>	Page 6
Gullit, Bazy and 55 to Serve Big Jail! / <i>For di People</i>	Page 7
55, Others Lose Appeal Case / <i>Exclusive</i>	Page 8
AFRC Indictees Sentenced to 45 & 50 / <i>Premier News</i>	Pages 9-10

International News

Sierra Leone Tribunal Rejects Appeal / <i>Radio Netherlands</i>	Page 11
War Crimes Court Confirms Jail terms for Sierra Leone Rebels / <i>AFP</i>	Page 12
Sierra Leone Court Upholds War Crimes Sentences for Rebel Leaders / <i>VOA</i>	Page 13
S. Leone Court Upholds Sentences on Militia Chiefs / <i>Reuters</i>	Pages 14-15
Sierra Leone War Crimes Court Upholds Rebel Leaders' Convictions / <i>AP</i>	Page 16
UN-Backed Court Upholds Jail Sentences for Rebel Leaders / <i>UN News Service</i>	Page 17
Sierra Leone Convictions Upheld / <i>London Free Press</i>	Page 18
(Untitled) / <i>BBC World Service Trust</i>	Pages 19-20
Taylor's Defense Team Pleased With Trial / <i>The Inquirer</i>	Page 2
The Scourge of Child Soldiers / <i>Toronto Star</i>	Pages 22-23
Former Liberian Combatant Makes Admissions, Tries to Move On / <i>VOA</i>	Pages 24-25
The Diamond Heist That's Mass Murder / <i>The Independent</i>	Pages 26-27
Pro-War Crimes Court Activist Speaks After Release / <i>Star Radio</i>	Page 28
Three Judicial Staff Bag UN Appointment / <i>The Daily Observer</i>	Page 29
UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 30-31
UN Envoy Urges Liberians to Take a Stand Against All Forms of Violence / <i>UNMIL</i>	Page 32
Uganda Rebels Walk Out of Talks / <i>BBC</i>	Page 33

Special Court Supplement

Delivery of AFRC Appeal Judgment, in Pictures	Pages 34-36
---	-------------



Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 22 February 2008

Appeals Chamber Upholds Sentences of Convicted AFRC Leaders

The Special Court's Appeals Chamber today upheld long sentences for three former leaders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara, and Santigie Borbor Kanu were each convicted last June on 11 of 14 counts for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Brima and Kanu each received sentences of 50 years, while Kamara received a 45 year sentence.

All three defendants appealed their convictions, with Brima appealing on 12 grounds, Kamara on 13, and Kanu on 19. In a Appeal Judgment summary read out in Court by Presiding Judge Justice George Gelaga King, the Court dismissed all of the Defendants' appeals.

The Prosecution also entered nine grounds of appeal against the Trial Court judgment, including appeals against the Trial Chamber's dismissal of the count of forced marriage and the Prosecution's pleading of Joint Criminal Enterprise in the indictment.

In its judgment, the Trial Chamber dismissed the count of forced marriage as an "other inhumane act", ruling by a majority that it was not significantly different from other counts of rape and sexual slavery. The Appeals Chamber upheld the Prosecution's appeal in part.

The Appeals Chamber found that acts of forced marriage amount to a separate crime under international law. This is the first such finding by any international court. The Appeals Chamber, however, declined to enter new convictions.

The Appeals Chamber also reversed a Trial Chamber decision that the Prosecution had not properly pleaded the issue of Joint Criminal Enterprise. The Appeals Chamber found that the common criminal purpose of the Joint Criminal Enterprise was properly pleaded in the indictment, but it did not enter additional convictions.

The Appeals Chamber rejected an appeal by the appellants for a reduction in their sentences. Justice Gelaga King read from the Trial Chamber record a list of crimes found to have been committed by the accused to underscore the gravity of the offences.

"The Trial Chamber found Brima, Kamara and Kanu responsible 'for some of the most heinous, brutal and atrocious crimes ever recorded in human history. Innocent civilians – babies, children, men and women of all ages – were murdered by being shot, hacked to death, burned alive, beaten to death. Women and young girls were gang raped to death...Hacking off the limbs of innocent civilians was commonplace. The victims were babies, young children and men and women of all ages...Children were forcibly taken away from their families, often drugged and used as child soldiers who were trained to kill and commit

other brutal crimes against the civilian population’.”

“The Appeals Chamber is, therefore, satisfied that having regard to that finding the Trial Chamber was justified in imposing a prison sentence of 50 years on the Appellant Alex Tamba Brima, 45 years on the Appellant Brima Bazzy Kamara, and 50 years on Santigie Borbor Kanu,” Justice Gelaga King said.

“The Appeal Chamber therefore finds no reason to interfere with the quanta of the sentences of imprisonment passed on the appellants.”

#END

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, 22 February 2008

Special Court Prosecutor Welcomes Final Judgement in AFRC Case

Special Court Prosecutor Stephen Rapp today welcomed the judgement of the Appeals Chamber upholding the Trial Chamber convictions of the three AFRC Defendants for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

“This final decision closes a violent chapter in the history of Sierra Leone,” said Rapp. “It establishes forever that ‘some of the most heinous, vicious, and brutal crimes in human history’ were committed; it recognizes the great suffering inflicted on the people of Sierra Leone, particularly in the invasion of Freetown in January 1999; it judges these men as legally responsible for these grave crimes and this great suffering; and upholds the severe sentences pronounced by the Trial Chamber.”

“On Wednesday morning President Koroma spoke here of the work of this Special Court, and the “magnificent and imposing legacy” that it will leave to posterity. This is a legacy to this country, and also to the region and the entire world, because in this appeals judgement, for the first time in history, a court has pronounced final convictions for the crimes of recruitment and use of child soldiers, for acts of terrorism in a civil war, and for sexual slavery as an outrage against human dignity. Additionally, while declining to enter convictions at the appeals level, the Court established that forced marriage is a crime under international law.”

In its decision the Appeals Chamber upheld the convictions of each of the accused, Alex Tamba Brima, aka “Gullit,” Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu, aka “55,” for eleven Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes, and other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, and upheld prison terms ranging from 45 to 50 years.

The Prosecutor gave credit for the verdict to the people of the Sierra Leone. “Those who came forward to tell their stories as witnesses are nothing short of heroic. These men, women and even children took great risks so that the world would know the horrors that the people of this country suffered. Their bravery has ensured that the men responsible for these atrocious crimes would not escape justice.”

Rapp also praised the work of the Prosecution staff, drawn from Sierra Leone and around the world. “I would like to acknowledge the dedication and skill of our lawyers and investigators. Their commitment never wavered, from the very beginning of the case to this final chapter. I am very proud of our team and of what they have done for the cause of national and international justice.”

With this final appeals judgement, the cases of three accused are at end. “Today’s judgement resulted from the courage of the people of Sierra Leone.” Mr. Rapp said. “It is this courage that gives us all great hope of a future of justice and progress in this country. And above all, of peace.”

#END

Awoko

Monday, 25 February 2008

AFRC Loses Appeal



Alex Tamba Brima



Brima Bazzy Kamara



Santigie Borbor Kanu

AFRC loses appeal

By Betty Milton

The case of the three appellants and former leaders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara, and Santigie Borbor Kanu has been finally laid to rest after the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court dismissed their appeals.

The three will continue their 50 for Alex Tamba Brima, 45 for Brima Bazzy Kamara and 50 years for Santigie Borbor Kanu which are going to be served concurrently as handed down by the Trial Chamber.

Giving his judgment the court's president, Justice George Gelaga-King, said both the prosecution and the three defendants appealed in certain grounds of the judgment handed down by the Trial Chamber, stating that the Trial Chamber erred in certain parts of their judgment.

The president stated that the prosecution entered nine grounds of appeal which included the dismissal of the count of forced marriage but the Trial Chamber and the prosecution's pleading of Joint Criminal Enterprise in the indictment.

The Trial Chamber dismissed the count of forced marriage as another inhumane act, ruling by a majority that it was not significantly different from other counts of rape and sexual

slavery; this part of the appeal was held in part by the Chamber.

Justice George Gelaga stated that, "the Appeals Chamber found that acts of forced marriage amount to a separate crime under international law. This is the first such finding by any international court. The Appeals Chamber, however, declined to enter new convictions."

The Appeals Chamber also reversed the decision of the Trial Chamber on the issue of Joint Criminal Enterprise which they said the prosecution did not properly plead the issue of Joint Criminal Enterprise, Criminal Enterprise.

"The Appeals Chamber found that the common criminal purpose of the Joint Criminal Enterprise was properly pleaded in the indictment, but it did not enter additional convictions," the president said.

In the Appeal submission, the first Appellant Alex Tamba Brima entered 12 grounds among which was the equality of arms as they stated that there was vast difference in their part to get witnesses and access to other areas.

The second appellant, Brima Bazzy Kamara, entered 13 grounds of appeal where as the third Santigie Borbor Kanu entered 19 grounds of appeal. But their appeals were rejected by the Appeals Chamber.

The president also read a particular portion of the judgment

of the Trial Chamber which stated that the "Trial Chamber found Brima, Kamara and Kanu responsible for some of the most heinous, brutal and atrocious crimes ever recorded in human history."

"Innocent civilians, babies, children, men, and women of all ages were murdered, hacked to death, burnt alive, and beaten to death. Women and young girls were gang raped to death...Hack off the limbs of innocent civilians was commonplace. The victims were babies, young children and men and women of all ages...Children were forcibly taken away from their families, often drugged and used as child soldiers who were trained to kill and commit other brutal crimes against the civilian population," he noted.

Reading the unanimous judgment president Gelaga-King said, "The Appeals Chamber is, therefore, satisfied that having regard to that finding the Trial Chamber was justified in imposing a prison sentence of 50 years on the Appellant Alex Tamba Brima, 45 years on the Appellant Brima Bazzy Kamara, and 50 years on Santigie Borbor Kanu. The Appeal Chamber therefore finds no reason to interfere with the quanta of the sentences of imprisonment passed on the appellants."

For di People
Monday, 25 February 2008

Gullit, Bazy And 55 To Serve Big Jail!

THE APPEAL Chamber of the Special Court upheld the judgement of the Trial Chamber that three key members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council are guilty of war crimes against humanity on 22 February.

by **MAMOUD S BANGURA**
They are Alex Tamba Brima aka "Gullit," Brima Bazy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu aka "55." Following the judgment, Special Court prosecutor, Stephen Rapp welcomed the judgment of the Appeal Chamber upholding the Trial Chamber convictions of the

great sufferings inflicted on the people of Sierra Leone particularly in the invasion of Freetown in January 1999. He
Continued Page 2

**YAYAH KALOKO
FOR MAYOR!**

See Page 8

Gullit, Bazy And 55

From Front Page

said that this final decision would judge these men as legally responsible for these grave crimes. The three indictees were convicted on 11 counts for crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law and were given prison terms ranging from 45 to 50 years.

However, Rapp gave credit for the verdict to the people of Sierra Leone especially those who came forward to tell their stories as witnesses. He said these men, women and even children took great risk so that the world would know the horrors that the people of this country suffered and also praised the work of the prosecution staff drawn from Sierra Leone and around the world.

Rapp said that today, judgment resulted from the courage of the people of Sierra Leone and it is this courage that gave us all great hope of a furtherance of justice and progress in the country and that the three accused would surely serve 45-50 years in jail for the crimes committed.

Exclusive

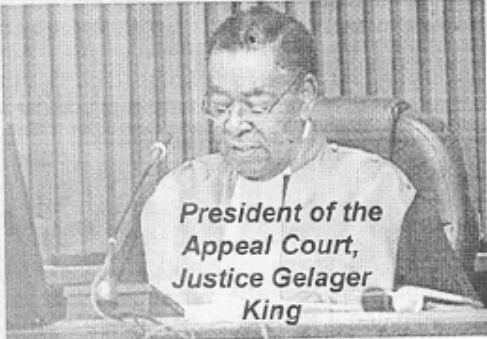
Monday, 25 February 2008

Special Court


55, Others

Lose Appeal


Case




*President of the
Appeal Court,
Justice Gelager
King*



*Santigie
Kanu, Alias 55*



Bazzy



Gullit

Three accused persons in the former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) who appealed against their sentences by the Special Court last July have, last Friday, lost their appeal.

Santigie Borbor Kamara and Alex Tamba Brima were sentenced to fifty years imprisonment

Contd. page 2

[Not continued]

AFRC Indictees Sentenced to 45 & 50

The Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone has upheld the decision of the Trial Chamber's convictions of Alex Tamba Brima, aka 'Gullit', Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu on 50 and 45 years jail term respectively at the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Friday, February 22, 2008.

By Alpha B. Kamara

While addressing the Court, the Appeals Court Judge, Justice Gelaga King, said having considered the sentence and judgment of the Trial Chamber, the Appeal Court was satisfied with the findings and that the judgment fell within the jurisdiction of the Special Court.

He said Brima Bazzy Kamara and the two others are found responsible for the worst crimes against

humanity ever recorded in human history.

"Innocent people were murdered, hacked to death and burnt alive. Women were gang-raped, genitals mutilated, sons forced to rape their mothers, sisters and pregnant women's fetus were open to know the gender of the child," he said. The Judge also said, that the heads of humans were placed on sticks to mark areas of occupation.

The Judge said for those victims who suffered amputation, their lives will forever be dependent on others. He said children were forcefully taken away from their families, drugged and enlisted as child soldiers.

"Those children were robbed of their right to childhood," he said.

Judge Gelaga King cited among others, that Kamara's grounds of appeal on the charge of 'ordering the murder of five civilians' in Karina, Bombali District, as a miscarriage of justice, did not distort the findings of the Trial Chamber and that the appeal failed.

On the charge of 'aiding

Cont. P4



Santigie Borbor Kanu of Alex 45 yrs



Brima Bazzy Kamara 50 yrs



Tamba Brima, aka 'Gullit' 50yrs

AFRC Indictees

From P2

And abetting', Justice Gelaga King said as Deputy Commander of AFRC Troops, Kamara was present during the attack at Fourah Bay and that the Trial Chamber was correct to conclude that he aided and abetted despite having argued that his presence at Fourah Bay was not proved beyond all reasonable doubt.

Having argued that the Trial Chamber erred in finding him guilty of crimes committed in Tubunda, Kono District, and also in Bombali District, as he was not in effective control of the action of AFRC troops in Kono, Justice Gelaga King said that the Appeal Chamber founded no merit in his argument and thus upheld the findings.

On the Charge of 'those bearing the greatest responsibilities', Justice Gelaga King said that it was a desperate attempt on the part of Santigie Borbor Kama to avoid responsibility with the argument that the Special Court for Sierra Leone had no jurisdiction to charge him for the offence and that he was not one of those who bear the greatest responsibilities.

"Kama's argument is therefore without merit," he said.

Justice Gelaga King also said that there was sufficient evidence in the findings of the Trial Chamber that Kama was responsible for planning and causing sexual slavery, abductions and forced labour. He said Kama was not only responsible but also using those abducted to participate actively in hostilities and that the Appeal Chamber finds that the evidence led by the Trial Chamber warrants the indictment.

"Kama was responsible for the recruitment of women and girls at



Justice Gelaga-King

Newton. He was aware that his action will assist in the system of sexual slavery," he said.

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Stephen Rapp, said at a press conference after the trial session, that he welcomed the judgment of the Appeals Chamber in upholding the Trial Chamber convictions of the three AFRC Defendants for war crimes and crimes against humanity," he said.

He said this final decision closes a violent chapter in the history of Sierra Leone and that it establishes forever the most heinous, vicious, and brutal crimes in human history, as the court recognizes the great suffering inflicted on the people of Sierra Leone, particularly in the invasion of Freetown in January 1999.

"This is a legacy to this country and also to the region and the entire world, because in this appeals judgment, for the first time in history, a court has pronounced final convictions for the crimes of recruitment and use of child soldiers, for acts of terrorism in a civil war, and for sexual slavery as an outrage against human dignity. Additionally, while declining to enter convictions at the appeals level, the Court established that forced marriage is a crime under International

Law," he stated.

Mr. Rapp also stated that in its decision, the Appeals Chamber upheld the conviction of each of the accused for eleven crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, and thus upheld prison terms of 45 to 50 years.

Mr. Rapp gave credit for the verdict to the people of Sierra Leone. He said those who tell their stories as witnesses are nothing short of heroes.

"These men and women and even children took great risks so that the world would know the horrors that the people of this country suffered. Their bravery has ensured that the men responsible for these atrocious crimes would not escape justice," he said.

When asked whether the three convicted men would be jailed in Sierra Leone or within the sub-region, Mr. Rapp said they will be taken to a prison that meets international standards. He said there are consultations with countries that will agree to accept them in their prisons. The Prosecutor sighted Sweden and Austria, among countries abroad under consideration.

The three were convicted on June 11, 2007 of 14 counts of war crimes against humanity.

Radio Netherlands

Friday, 22 February 2008

Sierra Leone tribunal rejects appeal

Freetown - Sierra Leone's war crimes court has rejected appeals by three militia leaders against long sentences handed down for atrocities committed during the country's civil war. The judge said that given the brutality of their crimes, he saw no reason to reduce their sentences. In July, the Special Court for Sierra Leone sentenced Alex Tamba Brima and Santigie Kanu to 50 years in jail and Brima Bizzy Kamara to 45 years behind bars. They had been found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the 1991 to 2002 war.

All three were commanders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, a group that attempted to overthrow the government in Freetown in 1997. The AFRC went on the rampage across the country, raping women and young girls to death, disembowelling and murdering men and forcing children under 15 to become soldiers.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up with UN support in 2002. The court has been the target of frequent criticism for carrying out its work too slowly.

Agence France-Presse

Friday, 22 February 2008

War crimes court confirms jail terms for Sierra Leone rebels

FREETOWN (AFP) — A special UN-backed court for Sierra Leone on Friday confirmed jail terms of up to 50 years for three feared rebel leaders found guilty of crimes against humanity during the country's civil war.

Alex Tamba Brima and Santigie Borbor Kanu were jailed for 50 years by the court last year while Brima Bazy Kamara was sentenced to 45 years.

Supporters of former Liberian president Charles Taylor, the three were accused of carrying out murders, mutilations of civilians, rapes and enlisting child soldiers.

"The appeals chamber is satisfied that the trial chamber was justified in imposing the sentences of 50 years for Brima and Kanu and 45 years for Kamara," said presiding judge George Gelaga King.

"We find no reason to interfere with the sentences," the judge added.

Lawyers for the three members of the feared Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) left the hearing without making a comment. The trio seemed stunned by the setback but sat calmly waiting to be led away.

Lawyers had said the sentences imposed in July last year were "disproportionate". The prosecutors demanded at the start of the appeal hearing that the sentences be made tougher -- up to 60 years.

The ARFC was blamed for atrocities carried out against the civilian population in the West African country's diamond zones and took a leading role in the murderous storming of the capital, Freetown, in January 1999 when the government was toppled.

By the time the decade-long war ended in 2001, about 120,000 people had been killed and tens of thousands had their arms, legs, ears or noses chopped off.

The original convictions in July last year were hailed as a symbol of the new international fight against the atrocities committed in Africa's wars. They were the first made by the special court.

Two other former pro-government militia leaders have since also been found guilty and sentenced to up to eight years in jail while three other rebel leaders are still being tried.

Prosecutor Stephen Rapp said in a statement Friday that "This final decision closes a violent chapter in the history of Sierra Leone.

"It establishes forever that some of the most heinous, vicious, and brutal crimes in human history' were committed; it recognizes the great suffering inflicted on the people of Sierra Leone, particularly in the invasion of Freetown in January 1999."

The trial of Taylor being held in The Hague will be the next test of the legal system set up to handle the rebel leaders and warlords who devastated Sierra Leone.

The former Liberian leader faces charges of murder, rape and using child soldiers.

Voice of America

Friday, 22 February 2008

Sierra Leone Court Upholds War Crimes Sentences for Rebel Leaders

Sierra Leone's war crimes court has upheld prison sentences of up to 50 years for three former rebel leaders convicted of crimes against humanity during the country's civil war.

The presiding judge at the Special Court for Sierra Leone Friday rejected appeals from Alex Tamba Brima, Santigie Borbor Kanu and Brima Bazzy Kamara to reduce their lengthy sentences. He said he saw no reason to interfere with the sentences.

The U.N.-backed tribunal gave jail terms of 50 years each to Brima and Kanu last July, and sentenced Kamara to 45 years in prison.

The court had convicted the three men on charges including murder, rape, enslavement and using child soldiers during Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war, which ended in 2002.

The Special Court prosecutor welcomed Friday's decision, saying it renders the men legally responsible for great suffering inflicted on the people of Sierra Leone.

The men led the Armed Forces Revolution Council, a rebel faction that toppled Sierra Leone's elected government in 1997 and set up a junta with another rebel group.

The court also is trying former Liberian President Charles Taylor for allegedly backing Sierra Leone rebels during the civil war. His trial is being held at The Hague, in the Netherlands, because of fears that holding the trial in Sierra Leone could cause unrest both there and in neighboring Liberia.

Taylor faces 11 counts of murder, rape and recruiting child soldiers. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Reuters

Friday, 22 February 2008

S. Leone court upholds sentences on militia chiefs

By Katrina Manson

FREETOWN, Feb 22 (Reuters) - Sierra Leone's war crimes court on Friday rejected an appeal by three former militia leaders against long jail sentences handed down last July for atrocities committed during the former British colony's civil war.

Presiding Judge George Gelaga King told the Special Court for Sierra Leone he saw no reason to reduce the jail terms given to the three commanders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) because of the brutality of their crimes.

"Women and young girls were gang raped to death. ... Sons were forced to rape mothers, brothers were forced to rape sisters," King said in his concluding remarks.

"Men were disembowelled and their intestines stretched across a road to form a barrier. Human heads were placed on sticks on either side of the road to mark such barriers."

The U.N.-backed tribunal last year jailed Alex Tamba Brima and Santigie Borbor Kanu for 50 years each and Brima Bazzy Kamara for 45 years for crimes committed during the country's diamond-fuelled 1991-2002 conflict.

All three were convicted on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including terrorising civilians, unlawful killings, rape, abductions and forced labour.

They were also convicted of forcing children under 15 to become soldiers, a verdict hailed by rights campaigners as the first ruling by an international tribunal on the practice.

The judge at the time said the men had committed "some of the most heinous, brutal and atrocious crimes ever recorded in human history".

All three sat quietly as the appeal against their sentences was rejected, Brima and Kamara wearing gold jewellery and short dreadlocks, Kanu in a sombre suit and tie.

COUP

Sierra Leone's civil war was one of the most brutal in modern African history. It was brought to an end with the help of soldiers from former colonial power Britain and what was then the world's biggest United Nations peacekeeping force.

The AFRC staged a coup on May 25, 1997, ousting President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah just six months after he signed a peace deal.

It then sided with Corporal Foday Sankoh's rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in a bid to gain control of the West African country and its diamond mines.

In its indictment against the three AFRC leaders, the prosecution said fighters carved the initials 'AFRC' and 'RUF' into the bodies of captured men, women and children.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up jointly by the country's government and the United Nations in 2002 to try those most responsible for human rights violations during the later stages of the civil war.

It initially issued 13 indictments against leaders from all three main warring factions but three suspects have since died and the whereabouts of another is unknown.

The court's most high-profile defendant, the former president of neighbouring Liberia, Charles Taylor, is on trial for war crimes for backing the rebels in Sierra Leone's war, in which an estimated 50,000 people were killed.

Taylor is being tried in The Hague due to fears that holding the trial in Freetown could endanger regional security. (Writing by Nick Tattersall; Editing by Alistair Thomson and Mary Gabriel)

Associated Press

Friday, 22 February 2008

Sierra Leone war crimes court upholds rebel leaders' convictions

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP) - A U.N.-backed court on Friday upheld the convictions of three ex-rebel leaders who were sentenced to half-century prison terms last year for rape, murder and other war crimes committed during Sierra Leone's decade-long conflict.

The three were leaders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, a junta that overthrew an elected government in 1997 and was ousted by a Nigerian-led peacekeeping force the following year.

Defense lawyers had appealed the July verdicts. The prison sentences were the first punishments handed down by the war crimes tribunal since it was set up.

«This final decision closes a violent chapter in the history of Sierra Leone,» said prosecutor Stephen Rapp.

The West African nation's war lasted from 1991 to 2002.

Indicted in 2003, the three men's joint trial began in Freetown two years later. On Friday, a five-judge appeals chamber of the court dismissed the appeal, saying in a statement it was «without merit.

Presiding Judge Justice George Gelaga-King said the judging panel «took into consideration the gravity of the crimes committed, as being the most heinous, brutal and atrocious crimes ever recorded in human history.

The three are Alex Tamba Brima, Santigie Borbor Kanu and Brima Bazzy Kamara. They were convicted of 11 war crimes charges, including terrorism, enslavement, rape and murder. The July ruling marked the first time an international court issued a conviction on the conscription of child soldiers, who in Sierra Leone were often drugged and forced into battle.

«Those who came forward to tell their stories as witnesses are nothing short of heroic,» Rapp said. «These men, women and even children took great risks so that the world would know the horrors that the people of this country suffered. Their bravery has ensured that the men responsible for these atrocious crimes would not escape justice.

«Today's judgment resulted from the courage of the people of Sierra Leone,» Rapp said. «It is this courage that gives us all great hope of a future of justice and progress in this country. And above all, of peace.

As each of the ex-rebel leaders left the court, they waved to their relatives and friends who had come to watch the public hearing.

UN News Service
Friday, 22 February 2008

UN-Backed Court Upholds Jail Sentences for Rebel Leaders

The United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) today upheld the long jail sentences it handed down last year to three former rebel leaders convicted of multiple counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the country's brutal civil war in the 1990s.

Alex Tamba Brima and Santigie Borbor Kanu are each serving 50-year prison terms and Brima Bazzy Kamara is serving 45 years after each being found guilty of 11 charges, including committing acts of terrorism, murder, rape and enslavement and conscripting children under the age of 15 into armed groups.

The three men, former leaders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), a group of Sierra Leonean soldiers who allied themselves with the notorious rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during the civil war, had each appealed against their convictions and the length of their sentences.

The prosecution, in addition, appealed against the men's acquittal at the trial on several other charges.

The appeals chamber upheld the prosecution's appeal in part on questions concerning the criminality of the act of forced marriage and the issue of joint criminal enterprise, but declined to enter new convictions for the men.

After today's judgment, SCSL Prosecutor Stephen Rapp issued a statement welcoming the ruling.

"This final decision closes a violent chapter in the history of Sierra Leone. It establishes forever that 'some of the most heinous, vicious and brutal crimes in human history' were committed," he said, quoting from the appeal ruling.

Mr. Rapp paid tribute to the people of Sierra Leone who came forward at the trial as witnesses to tell their stories, describing them as "nothing short of heroic. These men, women and even children took great risks so that the world would know the horrors that the people of this country suffered. Their bravery has ensured that the men responsible for these atrocious crimes would not escape justice."

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

London Free Press (Canada)

Saturday, 23 February 2008

Sierra Leone convictions upheld

By FREE PRESS NEWS SERVICES

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE -- A UN-backed court yesterday upheld the convictions of three former rebel leaders sentenced last year to half-century prison terms for rape, murder and other war crimes committed during Sierra Leone's decade-long conflict.

The three were leaders of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, a junta that overthrew an elected government in 1997 and was ousted by Nigerian-led peacekeepers the following year. Their convictions in July were the first handed down by Sierra Leone's war crimes tribunal -- and the first by any international court on the conscription of child soldiers.

BBC World Service Trust

Thursday, 21 February 2008

By Joseph Cheeseman, at The Hague

CHEESEMAN: The third Liberian witness has testified to the alleged link between former President Charles Taylor and the Sierra Leonean rebel group RUF.

Foday Lansana, popularly known as CO Nyan, said he joined Charles Taylor's defunct National Patriotic Front of Liberia in 1990, and was trained by one Emmanuel Zor as a high frequency radio operator in Saclepea, Nimba County.

Nyan told the Special Court Charles Taylor first mentioned Sierra Leone's aggression against Liberia at a meeting held in the compound of the Coca Cola factory in Paynesville, outside Monrovia, in 1990. Nyan said at the Coca Cola factory meeting attended by NPFL Special Forces, including Isaac Musa, Francis Menwon, Dopoe Menkazon and Anthony Menkoagbeh, the then-NPFL leader, Charles Taylor announced that Alpha jets from Lungi Airport in Sierra Leone were killing Liberians.

LANSANA: And at the end of the meeting he said that, he said he would inform the world that Sierra Leone has been used as a base to kill his people. Isaac Musa he did say that on several occasions he had been informing the Chief, in brackets Mr Charles Ghankay Taylor, for proper action into the issue of the killing of the civilians by the Alpha jet from Sierra Leone.

CHEESEMAN: The Prosecution Liberian witness said he was later seconded to the RUF leader Foday Sankoh in 1992 as the overall signal commander in the Sierra Leonean town of Pendembu in Kailahun District. Nyan said he installed the first high frequency radio for the RUF. The 18th Prosecution witness described the first conversation between Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh after the installation of the RUF Pendembu high frequency radio.

LANSANA: The installation took place. I tested the communication. I confirmed it with Treetop and Butterfly and he requested that he wanted to talk to Mr Charles Ghankay Taylor. I made all the necessary arrangements... Mr Charles Ghankay Taylor this time round spoke with Mr Sankoh and asked him a few questions about the situation in Sierra Leone after the NPFL were evacuated back to Liberia.

CHEESEMAN: During Nyan's testimony, the accused former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, was seen busy writing on yellow pieces of paper and passing them to Defence lawyer, Morris Anyah, who is expected to conduct the cross-examination after Nyan concludes his direct examination.

Nyan, who said he's a member of the Mano Ethnic group from Nimba County, also told the Court that Charles Taylor told Foday Sankoh through radio communication to travel to Gbarnga for some discussions about the trading of arms and ammunitions captured from Nigerian and Guinean troops in 1992.

LANSANA: Mr Sankoh left Pendembu to Gbarnga. Upon his return Mr Mohamed Tarawalli, Sam Bockarie, Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon were instructed to go to Koidu, a diamond rich area in Sierra Leone, for a fresh operation, or attack, on the government troops.

CHEESEMAN: Nyan explained that he put in place a monitoring system in Kangari Hills where he monitored communications from the African Peacekeeping Force, ECOMOG; NPFL and RUF. He said the RUF national frequency was 70110, and Foday Sankoh's code was Smile. The former NPFL radio operator testified that Charles Taylor's high frequency radio was code named Butterfly, and Mr. Taylor's own code was Ebony.

CHEESEMAN: CO Nyan brings to three the number of Liberians who have testified against their former President, Charles Taylor. The first two Liberians to testify against Taylor were Vamuyan Sheriff and Abu Keita. Chief Prosecutor Stephen Rapp told journalists in Monrovia that the Prosecution had identified twenty Liberians to testify to Taylor's role in the Sierra Leonean conflict.

This is Joseph Cheeseman reporting for the BBC World Service Trust and Search for Common Ground, from The Hague.

The Inquirer (Liberia)

Thursday, 21 February 2008

Taylor's Defense Team Pleased With Trial

Six weeks into the trial of the former President of Liberia, Mr. Charles Taylor, his defense team says it is pleased with the progress of the proceedings so far.

According to a release, the prosecution will call its fourteenth witness today, and the defense would continue its cross-examination of witnesses, challenging them effectively on the basis of bias, relevance, credibility and the receipt of benefits from the prosecution in exchange for information.

Mr. Taylor is being tried in the Hague, the Netherlands, despite being charged for offenses that took place in Sierra Leone between 1996 and 2002.

Mr. Taylor's lead counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, QC, recently spoke to United Nations Radio in Liberia and Sierra Leone and stressed that despite the fact that the trial was moved from West Africa, he considers the people of West Africa to be Mr. Taylor's "jury."

"The public may have convicted Mr. Taylor long ago, but the evidence currently being put forth in the courtroom is not sufficient to secure a conviction," the Taylor defense team said.

Mr. Griffiths stated, "We want the public in West Africa to follow this trial so that at the end of it, if he is convicted and they have had the opportunity of following the evidence they can say hands up high the former president received a fair trial. But equally, if the public in West Africa followed the proceedings and are in the position to follow these proceedings, they will say at the end of the day that there is no way that this man can be convicted with this kind of evidence."

The defense said it is deeply concerned that key evidence in the case may be given in "closed session," meaning Mr. Taylor could be convicted on evidence which no one outside the courtroom has heard. Closed sessions make the case difficult for the defense to investigate and difficult for West Africans to evaluate.

The defense is also disturbed that a number of crime-based witnesses have been shipped half-way across the world to give traumatic testimony about events that the defense does not dispute their evidence is not contested on cross-examination because it does not relate to the nature of the allegations against Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Griffiths believes that calling such individuals "demonstrates the paucity of the prosecution case-the fact that they have to appeal to emotion by parading limbless individuals and rape victims before a global audience."

"Keeping the people of West Africa involved in and informed about the facts and evidence that come to light during the trial is consequently an important issue for the defense-not only because the conflict itself impacted West Africans, but because West Africans are in the best position to evaluate what did and did not happen during the conflict. Thus open, transparent and accessible proceedings, with witnesses who can actually comment on any alleged link between Mr. Taylor and atrocities in Sierra Leone, will ensure that Mr. Taylor's statutory rights to a "fair and public" hearing are protected," the release issued by the Taylor defense concluded.

Toronto Star

Friday, 22 February 2008

The scourge of child soldiers

Lost generations of children around the world are victims of warlords and tyrants

David M. Crane

They stood in the warm sun of the dry season. Seasoned combat veterans of years of conflict, their eyes darted nervously back and forth, glancing at me from time to time, not sure what to make of the situation they found themselves in. The breeze stirred the lush green trees of the bush upcountry in Sierra Leone, near Kabalah. United Nations peacekeepers fanned out around the perimeter nervously holding their weapons at high port.

The Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone was about to hold a town hall meeting with several hundred child soldiers who were now back in school trying to make some sense of their ruined lives. Standing before the prosecutor were murderers, rapists, mutilators and pillagers of all kinds, their average age around 15.

I took the bullhorn from one of the peacekeepers and asked them in Krio how they were all doing. They all mumbled "body fine." I stepped among them and for almost two hours talked to them and listened to them, developing a sense of what it must be like to be a member of what I call the lost generation of children in West Africa; children forced to kill their parents and then rip their way across the countryside in a whirlwind of terror the likes of which civilization rarely has seen, if at all.

They were afraid of me, and frankly I of them. These young men were clearly concerned that I was going to have them all arrested for war crimes and crimes against humanity. They knew what they had done and they also knew that I was well aware of the pain they had caused.

On that November day in 2002, I stood before them and told them I would not prosecute any child for what they may have done in the horror story that was Sierra Leone over those many years. I called them victims not criminals. Many wept, others stood open-mouthed, disbelieving what they were hearing. To many this was the only positive development in their lives. They were being given a chance to live, to make something better for themselves.

Though mandated within the tribunal's statute to prosecute a child who committed a war crime between 15 and 18 years of age, I chose not to as I felt that no child had the mental capacity to commit mankind's most serious crimes. These truly were victims of cynical warlords, tyrants and thugs exploiting their childhood for their own personal criminal gain.

I felt that international law was clearly on my side. Children found in these internal conflicts are as much the victims as the victims they abused. What needed to be done was to hold accountable the leadership that created the policy to recruit and enlist children as young as 6 years old into the various militia groups that fought in West Africa. This we did and for the first time in history, African warlords were tried and convicted of creating a lost generation of children, the child soldiers of West Africa.

The scourge of child soldiers is not a new phenomenon, however; in the past 20 years millions have been recruited and millions have been casualties of war. The United Nations has recognized this and has begun to take corrective action. The International Criminal Court has followed our example and is actively investigating and charging individuals for what they are doing to children in times of armed conflict. The trend is generally positive, yet there are wrinkles.

It is important to understand that child soldiers are found around the globe, not just in Africa. Children are recruited and brainwashed into fighting where instinctively they recoil. This is taking place in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

The "global war on terror," as the United States characterizes its fight against various jihadist factions, has netted children found in combat. Like their cousins in West Africa, they were enlisted or recruited under duress and forced to fight or be killed themselves. The net has them detained far from home in an infamous place called Guantanamo.

This year we will see the trial of the first child ever to be prosecuted as a war criminal by the United States in Guantanamo. The child, now a young man, was 15 at the time of the alleged crime he is charged with committing, yet the facts show that he had no choice after being taken by his family from Canada to Afghanistan several years ago. The child was very young and he had little option but to go with members of his family.

That child was Omar Khadr, a Canadian citizen. At 15 he was no more legally responsible for any crimes committed in combat than the children of Sierra Leone, which I chose not to prosecute. Omar Khadr is a victim of war.

The charges against him should be dropped and he should be sent home where he can be rehabilitated, not punished. Defence counsel alleges he is mentally years behind his now 20 years of age, as he has been incarcerated in a detention camp since 2002. One asks where is the outrage in all of this by right-thinking people? France has called for Khadr's release. Where is Canada?

On Feb. 12, the United Nations Security Council held an open debate on what type of harsher measures need to be used to discourage the use of children as soldiers, like Omar Khadr. This is an important discussion to be sure. The United Nations has reported that 58 parties to armed conflict in 13 countries are in violation of international standards that prohibit the use of children in combat. These countries can be found in several continents.

Just think of the suffering of children whose lives have forever been changed, even ruined. These lost generations of children will come back to haunt us all as they grow into dangerous adults, unable to read, write, having no sense of right or wrong, and in many instances don't even know who they really are or where they came from.

Have you ever looked into the eyes of a child who has no hope? I have and it will stay with me the rest of my life. I'll bet if I looked into the eyes of a young Canadian named Omar Khadr, I'd see the same sad look of a child who has no hope.

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

Voice of America

Saturday, 23 February 2008

Former Liberian Combatant Makes Admissions, Tries to Move On

By Nico Colombant
Monrovia

Former fighters in Liberia's civil war are making statements before the country's ongoing Truth And Reconciliation Commission, trying to move on by admitting what they did. VOA's Nico Colombant caught up in Monrovia with a former child soldier turned commander and now a family man.



Former Taylor fighter Joseph Duo with his son

With roosters crowing in the background in the Old Matadi Estate neighborhood, Joseph Duo, 31, explains how he joined Liberia's brutal civil war, 17 years ago, when he was a 14-year-old high school student in Liberia's capital.

"When I went to go see the fighters, they arrested one of my best friends and then right before me, they cut his head off and then that hurt me a lot," he said. "I just felt bad for that whole time. I told my mother we have to move from here, you are not safe. So we left the place, but then while we were traveling from area to area, I used to dream. In my dreams, I was always a military man, a big fighter in my dreams, and I was commanding a lot of people so I told my mother, 'I cannot stand here, I have to go.'"

Duo is small but fearless, and he became the commander of a so-called "small boys unit" of pre-teens and teenagers fighting for Charles Taylor, the former warlord turned Liberian president, now on trial in The Hague for crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Taylor says he is the victim of an international conspiracy. Duo says he believed in what he calls Taylor's revolution for a free Liberia, and he says he joined so he could discipline other fighters.

"So, people have to go in the mix of them to educate them on how to fight a civil war," he added. "Because the people that were fighting, they were according to themselves at the time, they said they were freedom fighters, [but] you cannot cut the citizens' head and rape the whatever of the citizens, and burn down the towns and villages and then you say you are freedom fighters."

He denies killing any civilians, but he says he regrets fighting brutally against Liberians from other fighting groups, which he calls by their acronyms.



Former LURD rebels in Barclayville, Liberia

"Everything I did, I feel bad because the LURD were fighting, and the ULIMO were fighting and they are all Liberians," he explained. "So if you stand back there and as you might say... I fire, I kill you, I feel bad. I feel bad for what happened."

Making a statement before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, known as the TRC, is one the best things he says he has done.

"I feel better because it was something like a disease that was in me," he said. "Once I give it all, I express it all, I mean it can be a cure. So I was so happy to tell the whole world and through TRC it was one of the areas to do so."

Duo says he still feels the weight of war both mentally and physically.

"I feel hurt a lot. I received 78 bullet wounds all over my body, so every time I feel bad, anytime my mind goes under," he said.

Duo is now a theology student and a family man with three children, including an energetic boy who resembles him.

He says he wants his son to become a soccer player.

The Independent

Monday, 25 February 2008

The diamond heist that's mass murder

Almost unnoticed in the rich world, a trial for Crimes Against Humanity is taking place in the Hague. From a shiny modern courthouse, a medieval story is emerging – one where the poorest people in the world were invaded, raped and mutilated, just to seize some shiny stones for the richest people in the world to wear. The evidence and testimony at the trial of the former Liberian dictator Charles Taylor over the past few months has stretched beyond the court's tight remit to determine his own personal cruelty. Instead, the witnesses are finally revealing the inside story of the biggest diamond heist in history – one that killed 75,000 innocent people, crippled an entire country, and left a trail of blood that runs right to your local jewellery store.

This story begins and ends with diamonds. Sierra Leone is a tiny West African country blessed with four and a half million people and cursed with hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of diamonds. As soon as the glistening chunks of carbon were discovered by the British imperial occupiers in the 1930s, they became a locus of conflict as the desperate locals swarmed with picks and hammers to chip away their own fraction of the fortune. By the 1950s, De Beers – who had been granted exclusive rights to exploit the diamonds by the British – were paying private companies to litter the country with landmines to keep the natives out.

But it was in the early 1990s that the most ambitious – and apocalyptic – plan to grab the diamonds was hatched. A man called Foday Sankoh was at its centre. He had once been a soldier in the Sierra Leonean army, but he was by then biding his time as a television cameraman. With several of his Liberian friends – including Sam Bockarie, a hairdresser and nightclub dancer – he decided to launch a wildly ambitious, wildly violent attempt to seize Sierra Leone's diamond fields and run them as a private criminal empire. He scrambled around for support from a string of dictators: Libya's Muammar Gaddafi provided training, while Liberia's Taylor provided arms and some of his own battalions.

With this, Sankoh raised a private militia, giving it the grand-sounding name of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). He clothed it with the bare minimum of revolutionary rhetoric, plagiarising a few phrases from Mao. This was enough to begin recruiting men from the ghettos of West Africa, promising them a job, food and "liberation". He decided to recruit children: a nine-year old with an AK47 was more use to him than a 40- year-old.

Everything was now in place to mount a "rebellion" – a de facto invasion – in eastern Sierra Leone, where the diamonds waited. The RUF's policy was simple, and summarised in the name that Sankoh gave to one of his military manoeuvres: Operation Kill Everything. The aim was to impose maximum terror on the civilian population immediately, to drive them out and make sure nobody ever tried to come back.

They soon developed a trademark tactic: they would chop off the hands of any civilian they stumbled across. Helen K was a typical young woman found by Human Rights Watch in the RUF's wake. She explained she had lost her two children after an RUF attack and had no idea where they were. "They captured me and said to lie on the floor," she said. "I was reluctant; they cut me on the neck with a machete. I was cut by a small boy. Then they put my hand on a stone and cut [it off]... I had to bury my own hand."

The child soldiers were hyped-up with drugs before being sent out to slay. Douglas Farah's account of the war, *Blood from Stones*, says: "One thing the children do remember vividly is the preparation for what they called 'mayhem days', sprees of killing and raping that lasted until the participants collapsed from

exhaustion. They said they were given coloured pills, most likely amphetamines, and razor blade slits near their temples, where cocaine was put directly into their bloodstreams. The ensuing days were a blur."

It worked. Soon, two million people were homeless and the RUF had its diamonds.

And here is where we come in. The international diamond industry was waiting with its chequebook open. Charles Taylor was the middleman, taking a cut from the cutting. The diamonds were shipped via Liberia to Antwerp in Belgium, where they were snapped up by the diamond companies. A few saw a PR disaster looming – De Beers wouldn't touch them. But many others handed cash to the RUF, and the stones were soon on sale across Europe and the US.

Ian Smillie, a diamond expert who served on the UN panel investigating the pillage, explains: "There is no way the war could have happened the way it did, and carried on for 10 years, without rich Westerners buying the diamonds. The RUF had very little support anywhere. It had no tribal base in the country, it had no other governments supporting them apart from Taylor."

The RUF soon stepped up the supply, to the diamond industry's delight. It was a simple causal relationship: so rich Westerners could have a glistening choker, poor children were choked.

We are getting somewhat better at arresting state criminals: we got (albeit briefly) Slobodan Milosevic, Augusto Pinochet, and Charles Taylor, and in time we'll get Henry Kissinger, Robert Mugabe and more. But corporate criminals routinely get away with murder. Literally.

Taylor is alone in the dock. The diamond dealers who knowingly paid him for his services are free and fat on the profits. If you or I paid a known murderer to go and rob somebody for us, we'd go to prison. But if a corporation does it on a massive scale, there is no punishment. This is almost invariably the case with corporate human rights abuses: Union Carbide has paid no price for killing 5,000 people in Bhopal, Shell has paid no price for its role in the decimation of the Niger Delta, and on, and on.

The diamond industry has been allowed to act as though rape and mutilation are an acceptable part of its supply chain. Sure, it eventually developed a system for certifying diamonds as the slaughter was ending anyway (and even that is filled with holes). But for the hundreds of thousands of handless women like Helen K, diamonds are for ever. For them, at the very least, there needs now to be an international diamond tax, with the proceeds providing reparations for Sierra Leone, and the other countries raped for their diamonds: Angola and the Congo.

But we need more. If corporate criminals are not charged and jailed, they will carry on committing crimes against humanity. It is glorious to see Charles Taylor in the dock. But this should be merely the first sentence of justice for the people of Sierra Leone – and the victims of profit-driven slaughter everywhere.

j.hari@independent.co.uk

Star Radio (Liberia)

Thursday, 21 February 2008

Pro-war crimes court activist speaks after release

Written by Wellington Geevon Smith

The Chairman of the Forum for the Establishment of a War Crimes Court in Liberia says government violated his fundamental rights by arresting and detaining him.

Police in Monrovia Thursday arrested and detained Mr. Mulbah Morlu.

Mr. Morlu said Police authorities informed him that he was arrested for what they called sabotage.

According to him, the Police also said he violated the code of ethics governing President Bush visit to Liberia.

Mr. Morlu told Star Radio the group was successful in sending to the international community the need to establish a war crimes court in Liberia.

He said by six o'clock Thursday morning, over five hundred people gathered before the University of Liberia as an expression of the wish for a war crimes court.

Mr. Morlu assured that the debate for the establishment of a war crimes court in the country reaches the UN Security Council, British Parliament and U.S. Congress.

The Daily Observer (Gambia)

Wednesday, 20 February 2008

Three Judicial Staff Bag UN Appointment

Reports reaching the Daily Observer revealed that three staff of the Gambian judiciary have been appointed to the UN-backed International Court for Sierra Leone in the Hague, the Netherlands.

The three Gambians are Malan Badjie, a court registrar, Baba Saidykhan and Almamy Sabally, both senior court interpreters.

The trio, who received their appointment letters at the beginning of February, had already left Banjul for the Hague.

Confirming the story in an interview with the Daily Observer, Haruna Jaiteh, the acting judicial secretary, said the appointments came after a successful rounds of trainings for court interpreters, delivered by personnel of the Special Court.

Commenting on the functions of the three Gambians appointees, Jaiteh said the three men will help facilitate the court proceedings and also assist in the interpretation of witness testimonies in the languages spoken in The Gambia.

He described the appointments as a clear indication of the quality of interpretation services in the Gambian courts.

"They were told to execute their functions effectively as expected of them with discipline, integrity and professionalism", he said.

Although Jaiteh could not ascertain how long appointments will last, he said they would be determined by the number of cases lodged at the court and the court system at the Hague.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
22 February 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

America Pledges one million textbooks for Liberian schoolchildren – Gets rousing welcome

(The Inquirer, The Informer, The Analyst, New Vision, New Democrat, Daily Observer, The News)

- On the final leg of his five-nation Africa tour, President Bush told the Liberian people that the United States stands with them and will help them recover from decades of civil war. As part of that effort, he pledged one million textbooks for Liberian schools and locally made school desks and seating for 10,000 Liberian schoolchildren.
- Thousands of school children, government workers, market women, and street peddlers lined the streets to welcome President Bush and his entourage to Liberia. President Bush said that the United States will continue to support the training of the army of Liberia to be a "source of security instead of a source of terror."
- Key among significant development during the visit was President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's plea, urging the U.S. Government not to sharply reduce funding for the UN peacekeeping force until Liberia's own security forces were ready.

Laura Bush Stresses Youth Education

(The News)

- The First Lady of the United States of America Laura Bush has urged the youths of Liberia to acquire education which she described as the bedrock of a successful nation.
- She said the future of Liberia depends on the youth, and as such, it was important for them to acquire education in order to prepare for the task ahead.
- Mrs. Bush spoke Thursday at a roundtable meeting on education for the youth of Liberia with the wife of Vice President Joseph Boakai, Mrs. Katumu Boakai. The meeting was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- The U.S. first lady encouraged Liberian women to also pursue education in order to compete with their male counterparts.
- Mrs. Bush said if women are going to do the jobs men can do, they need to be educated.
- "I urge you to seek training that would make you productive citizens for your country thereby contributing towards the growth and development of your nation," Mrs. Bush told the women.

"I Feel Safer In Liberia than Anywhere," President Bush Tells Liberians

(The News)

- [sic:] When the U. S. State Department declared a little over two years ago that Liberia was a no-go zone for American citizens, there were mixed feelings across Liberia especially Monrovia. However, little did Liberians know that the very United States would have said otherwise in times to come.
- President George W. Bush leading high power U.S. delegation told Liberians at the Barclay Training Centre Thursday that he feels safer and at home in Liberia than anywhere.
- Mr. Bush, wearing a blue coat suit, white shirt and maroon neck tie while beaming with smiles said: "I feel at home and there is no place I feel more welcome than a place where freedom reigns."
- He recalled that freed black slaves who were denied freedom in the United States founded Liberia as the first black independent African state.
- Mr. Bush, accompanied by his wife Laura, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and other senior officials of his delegation, noted that although civil war took the lives of hundreds and

thousands of the citizens, but Liberians did not give up to reclaim their country when they went to the poll to elect the first female African leader, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

Radio Summary

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

President Bush Assures Assistance to Liberia's Reconstruction

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

Health Authorities Alarm Over Increase in Maternal Mortality

- A recent medical survey conducted by health authorities shows that there is an increase in maternal mortality in the country.
- The Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Liberia, Dr. Moses Pewee described the increase as alarming saying the survey shows that out of 100,000 pregnant women over 900 would die during birth.
- Dr. Pewee however said the survey shows a decrease in the infant mortality rate in the country showing a 72 percent decrease in every 100, 000 live birth.

UN Envoy urges Liberians to take a stand against all forms of violence

Tappita, Liberia – The UN Envoy in Liberia, Ms. Ellen Margrethe Løj, has made a strong appeal to all Liberians not to resort to mob violence and the destruction of public property, but to allow justice to take its course.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) was speaking at a town hall meeting with the chiefs, elders and people of Tappita, in Nimba County, where the recent murder of a 38-year-old woman led to a violent mob action, resulting in the murder of another woman when the mob set the new UN-constructed police station on fire.



SRSG Løj inspects the burnt out police station in Tappita

"What happened here just a few days ago is unacceptable. We are helping the Liberia National Police (LNP) to investigate the circumstances surrounding this murder. And we condemn this murder and the mob violence in the strongest possible terms," she stated.

"The people of Tappita, and indeed the whole of Liberia, must take a stand against violence and give peace a chance," the SRSG urged. "The wheels of justice may turn slowly, but we cannot rush in anger and start practising mob violence. You must let the police and the courts to do their work," she emphasized.

Several murder suspects being detained at the burning police station had to be rescued from the mob and the fire by troops from the Bangladesh Battalion in the UN Mission in Liberia, UNMIL. The suspects, several UNMIL troops and other law enforcement officers were injured as the mob attacked them with stones, sticks and other missiles.

Ms. Løj's address was preceded by apologies on behalf of the community from the local mayor and some leaders, who promised to help bring the leaders of the mob to justice. Nimba County Senator Adolphus Saye Dolo called on chiefs, local leaders and spiritual heads in the area to help create an environment that eschews violence. He cited the presence of several marijuana farms in the area as one reason for the violent behaviour of some unemployed youth. And he called for the assistance of UN Police in support of LNP officers to destroy and eradicate the drug farms in the area. Local leaders also appealed for UNMIL's assistance in rebuilding the severely damaged police station.

The UN Envoy also used the occasion to call on chiefs, elders and community leaders to take the lead in the campaign to stop violence against women. "We need you to speak out against Sexual and Gender Based Violence, especially rape," she appealed. "Rape is the most common serious crime in Liberia today. You should get involved in stopping these grave crimes that affect our mothers, aunties, our sisters, daughters and nieces? So I urge you to take some action to stop this."

During the visit, the SRSG inspected the burnt out police station and commended Bangladeshi troops based in the district who, following a request from the LNP, had intervened and brought the situation under control without further loss of life.

Among UNMIL officials accompanying SRSG Løj were the UNMIL Director of Mission Support, Mr. Stephen Lieberman and Sector III Commander, Brig.-Gen. Monawar Hossain.

BBC

Thursday, 2 February 2008

Uganda rebels walk out of talks

Negotiators for the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army rebel movement have walked out of peace talks with the Ugandan government in south Sudan.

Talks broke down after the government refused the rebels' demands for cash and positions in government as a condition for disarming.



Millions have been displaced in the conflict

The government has given the LRA until 28 February to end the war.

Around 20 years of fighting with the LRA has killed tens of thousands of people and uprooted some two million.

"We flatly rejected LRA's demands for cabinet posts and cash rewards," government spokesman Captain Chris Magezi told Reuters on Thursday.

"When they saw they were not getting anything out of their tall orders, they walked out of the talks this evening."

LRA negotiator James Obita said the rebel delegates were "extremely angered", AFP reports.

"The government does not want to talk about the issue of inclusiveness and participation of the LRA in the national politics yet," Mr Obita told the news agency by telephone from Juba.

Earlier this week a government spokesman said he expected a deal "soon", after an agreement on a special court to try war crimes cases removed one of the previous obstacles to a settlement.

Three LRA leaders are wanted by the International Criminal Court.

Special Court Supplement
Delivery of AFRC Appeal Judgment
Friday, 22 February 2008





