

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



The Youyi (Ministerial) Building in Brookfields

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:

Thursday, 25 January 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Salone Times
Thursday, 25 January 2007

RUF, AFRC INDICTEES BACK PMDC

Charles Margai Tells Supporters...

By Bockarie Allieu

Interim Leader of Peoples Movement for Democratic Change, (PMDC), Charles Margai, has disclosed that RUF

and AFRC Special Court indictees in detention are supportive of his party.

Mr. Margai was addressing a mammoth crowd in a football field at the Malama/

Lumley community west of Freetown on Monday

SEE PAGE 2

PMDC

this week.

Hew informed his audience that he had received information that the RUF and AFRC Special Court indictees in detention at the court at New England in Freetown, had held a meeting among themselves. Mr. Margai told his supporters that at the meeting, the indictees demanded that there should not be any more bloodshed in this country. According to Mr. Margai, the RUF and AFRC Special Court indictees have agreed to tell all their sympathisers to not support any party besides the PMDC. "They will soon come out with a press release to the effect," Mr. Margai said,

Earlier, the interim PMDC leader said, "I earlier told you that I decided to leave the SLPP party and form my own party on the advice of my people because the SLPP government is corrupt and they are not ready to change," Mr. Margai told his supporters.

He went on to say that the only way to wipe out the SLPP is through the ballot "which will be our only weapon to shoot them out of power." He added that he hasn't come to campaign to the people but to sensitize them about the voters' registration exercise and to tell them about the motives of the PMDC party. The interim leader told his audience that gone are the days when arms was used to drive out a corrupt government. "The only peaceful way is through the ballot. Only through the ballot can a government be legitimate", he said.

He informed his supporters that he has filed an appeal against the SLPP in the Supreme Court contesting that Solomon Berewa is not eligible to be the SLPP leader whilst holding the position of Vice President of Sierra Leone, a matter he said that was also taken to court by Chief Sam Hinga Norman.

He said he wants his supporters to witness the matter in their thousands whenever it comes up for hearing so that the Judiciary would know how serious the matter is. Mr. Margai assured his supporters that he would never turn his back on them and rejoin the SLPP party.

Awareness Times

Thursday, 25 January 2007

Norman cross carpets to PMDC

The former Head of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) and former Deputy Defence Minister, Chief Sam Hinga Norman, is reported to have pledged his support to Charles Margai's People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC). According to reports, this was disclosed by Mr. Margai last Monday at a ceremony organized by the Malama Amateur Football Association (MAFA) in the far west of Freetown.

Standard Times
Thursday, 25 January 2007

From the Special Court...

Hinga Norman, 8 others join PMDC

BY EDWARD MARAH

The Former Coordinator of the Civil Defence Force and Special Court indictee, Chief Sam Hinga Norman and eight other indictees, namely Moinina Fofana, Alieu Musa Kondewa, Issa Hassan Sesay, Augustine Gbow, Morris Kallon, Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara and Santigie Bobor Kanu have joined the newly formed Peoples Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) party.

A press release issued out by the indictees dated Thursday 11th January, 2007, states among other things, "we have put all our individual differences aside in order to support a single political party

of our choice in the forthcoming elections".

The indictees further urged their supporters, sympathizers, friends, relations and well-wishers to support The People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), which they consider as the only political party they jointly and individually believe in to save the country and bring peace, reconciliation, unity, love and stability.

According to the same release, they fully noted and appreciated all efforts by the international community to bring peace, stability and security to the country

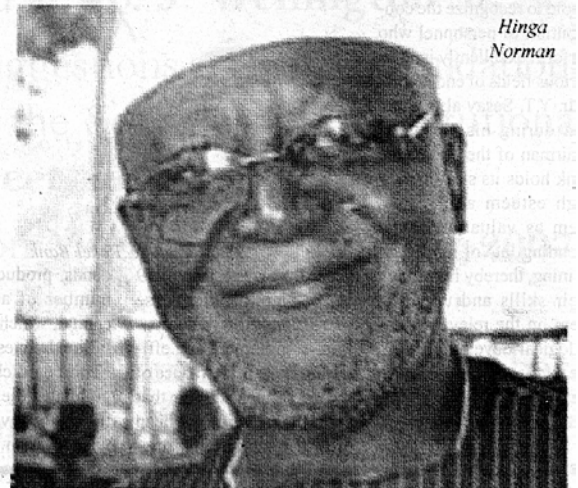
through the efforts of the various warring factions in Sierra Leone.

The indictees further state that they fully appreciated the unwavering and consistent support shown to them by their various supporters, friends, sympathizers and well-wishes both at home and abroad.

They urged the PMDC Party to spread the message that they are now members of the party while hoping that the party will accept their membership.

However, political observers have viewed the indictees' decision as another political pressure on the part of the Sierra Leone People's Party.

SEE PAGE 15 FOR DOCUMENT



Hinga Norman

FROM PAGE 1

PRESS STATEMENT

This Press Statement is from us, the under mentioned and undersigned individuals detainees and member of the former Civil Defence Force Sierra Leone (CDF) the former Revolutionary United Front -Sierra Leone (RUF) and the former Armed Forces Revolutionary Council - Sierra Leone (AFRC)

We are fully aware of the current political dispensation and trends in the affairs of our beloved country, Sierra Leone.

We are also fully aware of our current plight as detainees of the Special Court for Sierra Leone who have been accused of bearing 'the greatest responsibility' for various war crimes alleged to have been committed in Sierra Leone.

We fully note appreciate the unwavering and consistent support shown to us by our various supporters, friends, sympathizers and well-wishers both at home here in Sierra Leone and abroad.

We also fully note and appreciate efforts by the international community to bring peace, stability and security to Sierra Leone through our various collaborative efforts as former combatants and members of the various warring factions in Sierra Leone.

We have each been held in confinement and pain for the past several years by the Special Court for Sierra Leone regardless of our efforts to bring peace, unity, stability and security to our country, Sierra Leone, whilst those who we believe bear greatest responsibility for events of the civil war in our country, are either dead or still out there with you.

We have also continued in confinement and pain notwithstanding provisions of the Lome Peace Agreement of 1999 granting absolute pardon to all combatants and their collaborators in the civil of our country; and we are also aware that the said Lome Peace Agreement

was passed into law by our present Parliament.

Because we love our country; because we love peace, unity and stability for our country's because we believe in the development of our country and the welfare of our people; and above all, because we believe that the present SLPP Government does not stand for peace, reconciliation, unity, stability and the development of our country and our people, we hereby unite and state as follows.

1. That we have put of our individual differences aside to support a single Political Party of our choice in the forthcoming elections.
2. that we know that the only dividing force that bears greatest responsibility for the current problems in our country, Sierra Leone, is the Government of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP).
3. That like us, we urge our supporters, sympathizers, friends, relations and well-wisher to support the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), which is the only Political Party we jointly and individuals believes in to save our country, Sierra Leone, and bring peace, reconciliation, unity, love and stability to our nation.
4. That we are unanimously sending this message to the office of the PMDC through our wives and next of -kin, hoping that the Party will accept our membership, wishes and desires for our beloved country Sierra Leone.
5. We urge the PMDC Party to spread this message far and wide within Sierra Leone and beyond to the international community, our friends well-wishes, sympathizers, relations and supporters.
6. We are open to any visits, questions and comments about this united friendly and God-inspiring decision we have taken. We thank God for our lives so far and sign accordingly:

Civil Defence Force – Sierra Leone (also called CDF):

a. Sam Hinga Norman.....

b. Moinina Fofana.....

c. Alieu Musa Kondewa.....

Revolutionary United Front – Sierra Leone (also called R.U.F.):

a. Issa Hassan Sesay.....

d. Augustine Gbow.....

e. Morris Kallon.....

Armed Forces Revolutionary Council – Sierra Leone (also called AFRC):

a. Ibrahim Bassy Kamara.....

b. Santigie Bobor Kanu.....

c. Santigie Bobor Kanu.....

Dated this Thursday, 11th January, 2007

Standard Times
Thursday, 25 January 2007

Guinea crisis hits Sierra Leone's economy

BY MOHAMED ISSA

The ongoing crisis in Guinea has created a spill-over effect on the Sierra Leone economy.

As a neighbour sharing the same boarder, the two countries have very good trading relationship contributing a great deal to the economy of the two countries.

Most petty traders in Sierra Leone highly depend on goods coming from Guinea with specific reference to the Guinea Madina Market.

Since the political crisis sparked off in the country, this interdependent trade transaction between the two countries has degenerated,

and as a result the prices of certain goods in the market have increased greatly.

Before the Guinea crisis, there was a combined trading transaction that has been going between petty traders from Guinea and Sierra Leone who usually meet in Kambia district in Sierra Leone on a weekly basis.

This popular trade fair day was named "Loma" by the petty traders, where a good number of traders from all of Sierra Leone and Guinea met to transact business.

Since last week, prices of food and cloths from Guinea have escalated dramatically. This is as a

result of scarcity of these commodities in the market, emanating from the increase in population of consumers and the cut-off in the supply of these commodities.

Since the crisis erupted a good number of Guinean nationals have sought refuge in Sierra Leone while at the same time most traders from both countries have ceased operations.

This ugly development in Conakry Guinea has hit the Salone economy so badly the most traders are now calling on the international communities to intervene to save the sub region from.

The New Citizen
Thursday, 25 January 2007

COMMENTARY

GUINEA SPILL OVER EFFECT

The temporary state of instability in neighbouring Guinea has suddenly created a state of shortages of food and other items in many parts of the

Contd. back page

COMMENTARY

From page 1

Northern Province where most retailers in the major townships in that part of the country have suddenly discovered that access to Guinea is becoming more and more difficult and that goods barely trickle across the border from Guinea.

To a large extent, over the years, Guinea had become an entre-pot port from where manufactured goods stored in warehouses in Conakry are exported into Sierra Leone.

Although Sierra Leone has one of the best natural harbors in the world more merchant ships visit the Port of Conakry than Freetown.

Most of the Guineans who import goods into that country do so with the understanding that some of the goods will be later trans-shipped into Sierra Leone.

Even Sierra Leonean businessmen who import goods from Europe and Asia prefer to use the Conakry port from where they utilize the services of trailers to transport goods into Sierra Leone.

The National Revenue Authority records prove very eloquently that there has always been a brisk importation of goods by road from Guinea into Sierra Leone.

The question has been asked-why do more goods enter into Guinea than Sierra Leone or better still, how come the Sierra Leonean retailers, especially those in the provinces, prefer to purchase their goods in Conakry and not in Freetown?

The answer to this question has always been left open to debate as government authorities argue that the ordinary businessman in Sierra Leone has always been accustomed to under invoicing and one such under invoicing was terminated the same businessmen resorted to smuggling from neighbouring Guinea.

But the accusation of smuggling itself cannot be totally correct because most of the businessmen who purchase their goods and wares from Conakry always argue that they pay customs duty to the NRA.

The sudden escalation in the cost of goods, especially onions, from Le 90,000 to Le 150,000 in Makeni and Port Loko has been attributed to the state of insecurity in Guinea, especially since most businessmen have temporarily halted their trading activities between Sierra Leone and Guinea.

But apart from onions alone there are other shortages. For example, cigarettes are becoming a little bit more expensive than they used to be some two weeks ago and most of the cigarettes retail in Sierra Leone are brought into the country from neighbouring Guinea.

The National Revenue Authority in Sierra Leone argues that the importation and tax systems in Guinea are in no way different from those that obtain in Sierra Leone but the question remains – how come more goods find their way into the Guinea port than the Sierra Leone seaport?

It is even true that Sierra Leonean businessmen who import goods for their business houses in Freetown prefer to divert such goods through Guinea.

It is not surprising therefore that shortages have started hitting some parts of the country as a result of the state of political instability that is gradually engulfing the neighbouring country.

Daily Monitor (online edition, Uganda)

Monday, 22 January 2007

Ugandan Judge to Preside Over Liberian ex-President Taylor's Trial

Excerpt from report by Solomon Muyita and Angelo Izama entitled "Sebutinde to head Taylor tribunal" published by Ugandan newspaper Daily Monitor website on 22 January.

Ugandan High Court Judge Julia Sebutinde has been handed the high profile trial of former warlord and ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor.

Ms Sebutinde is currently attached to the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL). Mr Taylor is facing charges of crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law including murder, rape and the recruitment and use of child soldiers during the war in Sierra Leone. His indictment for war crimes is the first for a former African head of state.

In a statement last week, the SCSL said Sebutinde was elected presiding judge of Trial Chamber II which will try Taylor in The Hague.

Principal Judge James Ogoola said he had not known about Ms Sebutinde's appointment but described it as exciting. "As head of the High Court, I am very excited that one of our own has been found capable to head this high-powered court set to try a head of state of one of our friendly countries. Ugandans should be happy as this speaks volumes about the capability and independence of our High Court. We will give her our support," he said.

Justice Sebutinde, a British-trained lawyer, has had an illustrious career in Uganda since she was called to the bar in 1979. She was appointed judge of the High Court in 1996. However, she is better known as the head of three high-level commissions of inquiry she conducted on behalf of the Uganda government between 1999 and 2001.

She courted controversy with her tough handling of witnesses during investigations into corruption in the Uganda Police Force, the purchase of junk helicopters by the Ministry of Defence as well as graft in the Uganda Revenue Authority (URA).

During the URA inquiry, armed gunmen attacked Justice Sebutinde's residence at night, and a 30-minute gun battle ensued with her guards. Another group of gunmen attacked her convoy in eastern Uganda. The URA inquiry fell on tough times when her two co-commissioners refused to sign the final report, accusing her of having written the biggest part of it alone.

Justice Sebutinde was seconded by the government to the UN in 2005. [Passage omitted]

Source: Daily Monitor website, Kampala, in English 22 Jan 07

BBC Monitoring

Xinhua

Thursday, 25 January 2007

Mongolia rotates peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone

Written by Ulaanbaatar correspondent

Thursday, 25 January 2007

ULAN BATOR, Jan 23, 2007 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- Mongolia has finished the rotation of its 200-strong peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone.

The Mongolian peacekeeping troops returned to Ulan Bator on Tuesday, just a few days after their replacements joined the peacekeeping mission in the battered Western African country, Mongolian military officials told local media.

In January 2006, Mongolia sent its first batch of peacekeeping troops to Sierra Leone, carrying out tasks such as patrols as well as ensuring the security of the activities of a U.N. tribunal and its personnel.

In recent years, Mongolia has played an active role in international peacekeeping operations, deploying nearly 900 soldiers to war-plagued countries, including Iraq, Afghanistan and Sierra Leone.

Cocorioko website

Wednesday, 24 January 2007

<http://www.cocorioko.net/Leighsreportonhinganormanbogus.html>

John Leigh's report on Hinga Norman is bogus: Sam Foray

Former Regent Chief, Sam Hinga Norman, is not "in the VIP wing...of a military hospital in Dakar..." as claimed by former Ambassador, John Leigh. Neither has Mr. Leigh spoken to Chief Norman and has no independent confirmation other than what the parasites in Freetown are telling him about Chief Norman's condition. Common sense also would indicate that the detainees would not be accommodated in a VIP hospital for two or more weeks prior to medical treatment especially by a court which claims to have no money to fly any family members to Dakar to be with Mr. Norman.

We accept and have stated very clearly that Mr. Norman's situation in Dakar has improved since his arrival last Wednesday. We are also cognizant of the fact that Mr. Norman is still in the custody of the so-called special court for Sierra Leone. As such, we expect him to be a prisoner regardless of where he is. But the reports being parroted around that he is in a VIP wing is bogus regardless of who or what Ambassador Leigh's sources are. Over the past 24 hours, family and friends have been unable to contact Chief Norman as the previously crisp and clear telephone line now plays French recordings without ringing. Although this is a step back from last week, we are confident that Mr. Norman is fairing well and proceeding with preparations for his surgery. We, however, appeal to detention officials to check into the breakdown of the telephone communications with the detainees in concert with relevant international rules of conduct regarding prisoners, especially those who have not been convicted of any offences. In this regard, we appeal to international human rights organizations to keep a close watch on this very volatile situation.

So again, unless you have independent confirmation that Mr. Norman is in a VIP wing of some hospital, do not repeat these lies in an attempt to mislead the international community about the real conditions in Senegal.

Kind Regards,

A. SamForay,
CDF Defence Fund.

Cocorioko website forum

Wednesday, 24 January 2007

<http://www.hwforums.com/2179/messages/20382.html>

Norman Was Never Worse Off in Dakar

Posted by former Ambassador John E. Leigh in response to the article above (Excerpt)

Below is my rebuttal to two front page personal attacks on me in today's issue of cocorioko.net, in response to my earlier posting about the situation in Dakar about the Special Court detainees and my earlier decision to support Mr. Berewa for our next president in succession to Prez. Kabbah.

First, I hereby restate that Chief Norman and Mr. Issa Sesay are each in the same individual accommodation in the VIP Wing of Senegal's Military Hospital - Hospital Aristide La Dantec (HALD) - in Dakar that was originally assigned them. Their accommodations have not been changed, upgraded or degraded since their first arrival in Dakar for any reason whatsoever.

Nor were they ever deposited in any jail or dungeon populated by violent common criminals at any time despite repeated, wild and false claims by political harlots and self-appointed provocateurs, needlessly soiling Chief Norman's name.

Further, at no time was their detention situation in Dakar any worse off than their detention situation in Freetown. International standards will not permit this discrepancy. These gentlemen are not PaDemba Road prisoners. They are protected by international law.

Please bear in mind also that, all the same, those two gentlemen are defendant-detainees subject to restrictions on their liberty at all times in Dakar just as they were in Freetown. Merely because their liberty is restrained does not mean they are not in a hospital. Nor does it mean that because they in a hospital, their liberties will be increased.

I make this statement and my previous statement in this matter freely on my own behalf and on no one else's. Again, the responsibility for the said statement is entirely mine.

-SNIP-

Next, people may not be aware that the fellow who persists in exploiting the unfortunate plight of the CDF detainees and, in the process, damaging public support for them is a wild, self-appointed opportunist. Interjecting himself on other people's business and on his own motion has been his usual modus operandi.

I was once asked by one of the CDF defendant-principals this question: WHO THE HELL IS THAT FELLOW purporting to raise money for their defense? Years, earlier, this same individual has been the self-appointed, busy-body 'spokesman' in Chicago for the NPRC junta. On this man's own say-so, he advocated NPRC retaining coup power no matter their failures. At the same time, he vehemently condemned ALL Sierra Leone's politicians as rogues. He carried an air of officiousness!

When the SLPP came into power in 1996, this same man quickly switched sides and pretended to be a staunch SLPP loyalist. He swiftly and loudly condemned the NPRC junta. And because no one paid him much attention, when the CDF indictments became public, he grabbed at the chance to appoint himself 'the CDF spokesman' – without the prior knowledge of Chief Norman but exploiting the widespread mistaken belief that he acted with Norman's blessing.

Finally, let us keep in mind that both Chief Norman and Mr. Issa Sesay are detainees of the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. They are thus never going to be held in detention facilities substantially below international standards – as falsely peddled by that self-appointed charlatan. Nor is the Special Court or any government liable to finance family or provocateurs' visits to the defendants in Dakar.

IRIN

Tuesday, 23 January 2007

http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=57169&SelectRegion=West_Africa,%20&SelectCountry=Guinea

GUINEA: More trouble in Guinea could shake region

[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations]

CONAKRY, 23 Jan 2007 (IRIN) - Guinea's long borders and central position mean analysts view it as a regional lynchpin, saying serious domestic instability could easily spill over, ending tenuous progress towards the consolidation of peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which both experienced devastating civil wars in the 1990s.



© Maseco Conde/IRIN

Bram Posthumus, an independent West Africa analyst with 10 years of experience studying Guinea, said although he does not believe enough of a critical mass of demonstrators has been reached to seriously threaten the Guinean government, which is reinforced with a thus-far loyal 8,000 strong army, he does think Monday's uprising marks a major change in the country's mindset.

"What these strikes tell me is that people in Guinea have been tipped over the edge. The strike will continue," Posthumus predicted. He said it "remains to be seen" how much Monday's violent response from the government has affected people.

Protests in Conakry, January 2007

"People have been scared [of the government] for a long time, and for them to go out on the street like this is an enormous change in attitude," he said.

West Africa expert Mike McGovern at Yale University attributes the country's previous stability to its socialist past, which he said bequeathed a sense of "Guinea first" among the half-dozen ethnic groups there. He said decades of ruthless dictatorship in the 26 years after independence from France in 1958 drummed popular protest out of the national psyche.

However, McGovern also said in an interview on Friday that Guineans have reached a breaking point. "People seem to be recognising if thousands of people face hundreds or dozens of security forces, even if a few people die they have the capability to take power into their own hands," McGovern said.

Posthumus said it is Guinea's army, not the people, that will decide whether Conte stays in power or goes. "If they say they're not prepared to keep supporting a corrupt government then that might be the tipping point," Posthumus said. "The army is the only agency able to decide."

Monday was the bloodiest day in over a decade in Guinea and was the first time people have risen up in such numbers against Conte. Rough estimates put 30,000 people on the streets in Conakry, and tens of thousands of others in towns across the country.

The day's death toll meant at least 45 people have been killed during protests and riots in Conakry and provincial towns since the strike began, according to witnesses and hospital sources.

Apart from eruptions of violence in 1977 when market women briefly protested in Conakry, and in 1991 when some 1,000 people were killed in 36 hours of inter-communal violence during mayoral elections,

Guinea has previously been spared the internal instability and conflict that have dogged its neighbours in the Mano River region: Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

On Tuesday, soldiers quickly quashed early morning protests in Conakry's restive suburbs, after which light traffic circulated in the city amid heavy army patrols, IRIN correspondents said.

Shops, including those in the country's vast informal sector, schools, and government offices remained shut as part of the "indefinite" nationwide strike, called by the country's powerful unions to protest the rising cost of living, which union leaders blame on government mismanagement and corruption.

Ibrahima Fofana, leader of the Guinean Workers Union, who said he was arrested and beaten on Monday, told IRIN on Tuesday that the strike would go on, and unions were sticking to their demand that President Lansana Conte hand over all his powers to a newly appointed prime minister.

"The strike will continue until the final victory. Almost no solutions have been found to the problems we have posed," he said. Union leaders entered a meeting with Conte at 6pm on Tuesday.

BBC Online

Thursday, 25 January 2007

Guinea leader 'cedes key demand'

Guinea's President Lansana Conte has agreed to name a new prime minister - one of the key demands of trade unions to end a general strike, mediators say.

They say he made the concession at talks attended by trade union leaders, members of the Supreme Court and religious leaders.

But the trade unions say the strike, that began on 10 January, will continue until all their demands are met.

On Monday at least 33 people died in clashes between police and protestors.

Etienne Leno, one of the religious leaders who met Mr Conte on Wednesday, told Reuters news agency that the president was ready to listen to the people.

"He is even in agreement that, if the people want one, there should be a new prime minister," Mr Leno said.

"Now we must find a credible candidate."

But the trade unions said they wanted first to see concrete action from President Conte before ending the strike.

"The people of Guinea do not want any more promises. They want something concrete," said Abdoulaye Sow, one of the leaders of the Syndicated Union of Workers of Guinea (USTG).

"It is an agreement in principle. Now it is necessary to put it into practice," he said.

There is no word from the government on the outcome of the talks.

Mr Conte seized power in a 1984 coup but has since won three elections.

The strikers accuse Mr Conte, who is in his 70s and suffers from diabetes, of mismanaging the economy and personally securing the release from prison of two men accused of corruption.

This is the third general strike in a year.



Monday's clashes left at least 33 people dead



United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 24 January 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

VOA 24 January 2007

Liberia: Renegade Lawmakers to Ignore High Court Injunction

By James Butty, Washington, D.C.

Last week, 46 members of the Liberian House of Representatives signed a resolution removing Edwin Snowe as speaker of the House. Snowe took his case to the Supreme Court on the grounds that the process to remove him was flawed. Now the court has issued a Writ of Prohibition against the 46 members, ordering them to return to the status quo with Snowe as Speaker pending examination of the matter. The Court has also ordered the 46 members to respond to the writ of prohibition by Thursday.

Liberia's central bank to auction 400,000 U.S. dollars

MONROVIA, Jan 23, 2007 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- The central bank of Liberia will on Wednesday auction 400,000 U.S. dollars, an official with the bank told Xinhua Tuesday. "The auction is intended to help stabilize the foreign exchange rate and to make more U.S. dollars available to the public as well as to adhere to an IMF (International Monetary Fund) benchmark," the official said.

Gov't Reviews GSM Contracts

Jan 23, 2007 (The Inquirer/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --Information Minister Lawrence Bropleh has disclosed that the Liberian government is at the moment reviewing all contracts entered into with GSM companies operating in the country. The Information Minister said contracts signed between these companies and the Liberian government were not clear by the various government ministries responsible before they were signed.

International Clips on West Africa

Mongolia rotates 200-strong peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone

ULAN BATOR, Jan 23, 2007 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- Mongolia has finished the rotation of its 200-strong peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone. The Mongolian peacekeeping troops returned to Ulan Bator on Tuesday, just a few days after their replacements joined the peacekeeping mission in the battered Western African country, Mongolian military officials told local media.

Local Media – Newspaper

“Majority” Lawmakers Defy Supreme Court’s Stay Order

(The News, The Analyst, Heritage, New Democrat, Daily Observer, The Inquirer, The Informer, The New Liberia, Public Agenda and Liberian Diaspora)

- The “majority group” of lawmakers meeting at the Unity Conference Center in Virginia held session yesterday despite the Supreme Court’s Writ of Prohibition placed on all activities regarding the removal of Speaker Edwin Snowe.
- The group, presided over by the House Judiciary Committee Chairman, Armah Sarnoh, among other things heard a motion to suspend Mr. Snowe if he misses three more sessions without a valid excuse. The motion was tabled and would be voted on Thursday if it is reintroduced.
- Meanwhile the House Judiciary Committee has been mandated by the Plenary to effect an immediate probe into allegations by Mr. Snowe that some lawmakers received bribe to sign the resolution calling for his removal as Speaker.

Representative Murray Goes into “Hiding” After “FBI Wanted Notice”

(Heritage, New Democrat, Heritage and National Chronicle)

- The House Committee Chairman on Executive, Dr. Kettehkumehn Murray, who has been presiding over the affairs of majority wing of the House sitting in Virginia, was absent from proceedings on Tuesday.
- There was no reason for his absence but House sources said it could be linked to media reports that agents of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) want him for alleged attempted rape.
- Representative Murray, who is likely to become the next Speaker if Mr. Snowe is successfully removed, is wanted by the FBI for his alleged involvement in sexual activities with a minor in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1996. Murray was charged with indecent liberties with a child, and attempted rape.

House Majority Bloc Criticizes Media for Bias

(The Analyst, Public Agenda, New Democrat and Heritage)

- Members of the majority bloc of the House of Representatives sitting at the Unity Conference Center have criticized some media institutions in the country for what they called “irresponsible reporting” in the ongoing saga within the House.
- They claimed that instead of reporting the issue with objectivity, some media organs took side and referred to them as “rebels” and renegade” lawmakers. They accused *Radio Veritas*, *Star Radio* and *Truth FM* as being the media institutions that are exercising bias in their reportages on the crisis.

TRC Begins Statement Taking in the United States

(The Inquirer, The New Liberia, Public Agenda and The Analyst)

- [sic:] More than 200 pro bono lawyers and volunteers from the Liberian community in the State of Minnesota, United States of America, have begun taking statements from Liberians, mainly refugees residing in Minnesota. Liberians living in the greater Twin Cities metro areas have commenced giving their stories to the TRC ahead of the hearings which would begin at the end of January.

All-Female Indian Police Chief Arrives Ahead of “Landmark” Deployment

(The News and The Analyst)

- The commander of an all-female Indian United Nations Police Unit has arrived in Liberia as part of an advance team that will pave the way for the landmark deployment of a 125-strong force later this month. This is the first time that the UN has sent an all-women specialized police unit to a peacekeeping operation.

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

Majority Lawmakers Held Session Regardless of Court Prohibition

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Majority Lawmakers Differ with Media on Negative Nomenclature

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Rights Defender Wants President Exercise Neutrality on House Leadership

- Human Rights Defender, Cllr. Dempster Brown has urged President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to remain neutral in the saga over leadership at the House of Representatives and that the President should not deliver her State of the Nation Address in the midst of the roar.
- Cllr. Brown stressed that addressing the Joint Session of the National Legislature in Virginia would confirm notions that the Presidency was a key instigator in the confusion. But the Press Secretary to President Johnson-Sirleaf, Mr. Cyrus Badio declared that the Liberian leader would deliver her address where the majority is.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

UN Dismisses Rumor of Ending Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia

- The Spokesman of the United Nations Mission in Liberia, Mr. Ben Dotsi Malor dismissed rumours that the UN was ending its Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia in March, 2007 but that the Mission's tenure would be renewed as of said month.
- He added that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Alan Doss was consulting with the Government of Liberia to extend the Mission's mandate as long as necessary based on the security situation in the country and other benchmarks.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

UNHCR Halts Repatriation of Liberian Refugees from Crises-Guinea

- Report from Nimba County says the repatriation of over 300 Liberian refugees from Guinea was abruptly halted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees due to the present political unrest in that Country which has incapacitated UNHCR staff and partners in Nzerekore to access the refugee camps.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

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

The Analyst (Monrovia)

Wednesday, 24 January 2007

TRC Statement Taking Starts in the U.S.

More than 200 pro bono lawyers and volunteers from the Liberian community in the State of Minnesota, United States of America, have begun taking statements from Liberians mainly refugees residing in Minnesota.

Liberians living in the greater twin cities metro area this week have commenced giving their stories to the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) ahead of this month's hearings that begins on January 30 in Montserrado County, Liberia.

Minnesota advocates for human rights, which is coordinating and implementing the Diaspora project with the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, this week, opened Statement Taking Sites for Liberians in that State.

The group is TRC implementing partner in the U.S. Mirroring the TRC's work in Liberia, Minnesota Advocates is coordinating an effort to collect statements from thousands of Liberians throughout the United States. Statement-Taking in other U.S. Cities will begin later in 2007.

This groundbreaking project will for the first time give members of a diaspora community a voice in the peace and reconciliation process. TRC is the first Truth and Reconciliation Commission to systematically involve a diaspora community, especially in the United States in its proceedings.

Minnesota Advocates has recruited and trained more than 200 pro bono lawyers and Liberian community volunteers to help the TRC gather testimonies for Liberians in Minnesota. The trained volunteer statement takers are being deployed at sites throughout the metro area.

Along with the statement taking volunteers, volunteer immigration attorneys and mental health counselors will be available at the sites to provide counseling support and answer questions of those recounting their stories.

With the support of Faegre and Benson, LLP, Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights has established a phone line for Liberians to call and make an appointment to give their statements. Liberians and other West Africans who were affected by the Liberian conflict may call 612-766-7788 or 1-800-799-3688 to schedule an appointment.

An estimated 25,000 Liberians live in Minnesota, one of the largest Liberian communities outside of West Africa.

Statement givers are scheduled to go to the Park Avenue Walk-in Legal Clinic at the Park Avenue Methodist Church on Thursday, January 11, 18 and 25, others will be telling their stories at Our Savior's Church on Saturday, Jan. 20, and at the Osseo Enrollment Centre in Brooklyn Park, MN, on Saturday, January 27, 2007.

The statement takers will work with Liberians who prefer to give statements from the privacy of their homes or other venues convenient to them. The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) project was launched by Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights on June 22, 2006.

The project is designed to give Liberian refugees in the U.S. a role in promoting international justice and human rights as part of the truth and reconciliation process for national healing, unity and peace in Liberia.

The project will also raise awareness of transitional justice mechanisms and the Liberian reconciliation process in the United States. Minnesota Advocates is coordinating the project at the request of the Liberian TRC which is supervising the project.

The mission of the Minnesota Advocate for Human Rights is to implement international human rights standards to promote civil society and reinforce the rule of law.

The Minnesota Advocates was founded in 1983 by a group of Minnesota lawyers who recognize the community's unique spirit of social justice as an opportunity to promote and protect human rights in the United States, in Liberia and worldwide.

It is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that investigates, and exposes human rights violations; represents immigrants and refugees in the community who are victims of human rights abuses; trains and assists groups that protect human rights; and work through education and advocacy in Minnesota to engage the public, policy-makers and children about human rights and cultural understanding.

Minnesota Advocate holds special consultative Status with the UN, said a press release issued by TRC Commissioner for Diaspora Relations, Massa A. Washington

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PRESS RELEASE NO.08/2007
ON THE SITUATION IN GUINEA

The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Alpha Oumar Konare, follows with concern developments in Guinea. He is particularly worried over the deteriorating situation in the last few days and condemns the clamp down on the demonstrations, which resulted in the death of several people, as well as the arrest of many others.

The Chairperson of the Commission calls on the Guinean authorities and all stakeholders to exercise restraint. He urges the Guinean authorities to open an independent inquiry without delay, to identify those responsible and punish the perpetrators of the violence that has engulfed Guinea for several days.

The Chairperson of the Commission stresses that the deep crisis facing Guinea can only be resolved through dialogue and consultation among all the players. He once again calls upon the Guinean authorities to promote dialogue in order to put an end to the current tension and create the necessary conditions for a lasting solution to the crisis in the supreme interest of the country. He calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all detainees, particularly political and trade union leaders. In this connection, he urges the Guinean authorities to cooperate fully and unreservedly with ECOWAS and to receive without delay the delegation that ECOWAS plans to dispatch to Guinea.

The Chairperson of the Commission has initiated consultations with African leaders to examine possible ways and means of helping to find a speedy and lasting solution to the crisis.

Addis Ababa, 23 January 2007

AllGambian.net

Monday, 22 January 2007

Immunity From Jurisdiction - Ruling And Former Heads of States

Immunity to ruling and former heads of states has become a heated debate in the modern dispensation of international law as they had always enjoyed total impunity for crimes against humanity. However with the robust transformation of International law, head of state immunity has begun to take a u-turn. In upholding and respecting the universal norms of human rights and making leaders accountable to their own people, it is my contention that both former and ruling heads of states be stripped of immunity for gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity.

As a fundamental doctrine of international law immunity allows an accused to avoid prosecution for criminal offences. The first type of immunity is functional immunity, or immunity ration material which arises from customary international and treaty law conferring immunities on those performing specific functions of states. Under this immunity, any person who whiles performing a state function commits a criminal offence is immune from persecution. This is so even if the person no longer performs function of states. It is also limited in the acts attached and unlimited in time. However recent events in the dispensation of international law has shown that functional immunity, even available as a defense to persecution for local or domestic crimes or civil liberty, does not serve as a defense to an international crime (crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide). These proceedings has developed in the jurisprudence of the international criminal court in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo versus Belgium, in former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and most recently in Sierra-Leone.

In the case of the prosecutor of the special courts of Sierra-Leone versus Charles Taylor (Former President of Liberia), such a jurisprudence was adopted after a warrant of arrest was issued to the Ghanaian authorities whiles the later was in Accra (Ghana) for a peace meeting. The special court for Sierra-Leone indicted Charles Taylor in March 2003 whiles in office. On 17 counts Taylor was accused of planning, preparing, instigating, ordering and committing or otherwise aiding and abetting in the planning, preparation or execution of crimes such as terrorizing the civilian population and collective punishments, unlawful killings, physical and in particular sexual violence, use of child soldiers, abductions and forced labor, looting, burning and attacks on peacekeepers. However the arrest warrant issued to Ghanaian authorities brought a lot of legal wrangling in the case of incumbent Heads of States indicted by such international criminal tribunals. The reasoning of the court in this particular case was based on two consecutive arguments. First, the special Court is an international criminal court and second consequences of the legal nature is that "a provision in its statute denying immunity can be opposed to Taylor".

The entire analysis of the court's legal nature, national or international, would not have been necessary if the question of whether immunity applies to an incumbent official depended on factors other than the nature of the special Court, for example, the nature of the crime. Taking a close look at the various provisions in the statutes of other international criminal courts (Nuremberg, ICTY, ICTR, ICC) that deny immunity to officials, the special court seemed to hint at this by stating: "The nature of the offences for which jurisdiction was vested in those various tribunals was instructive as to the circumstances in which immunity is withheld". The court further declared that the nature of the tribunals has always been a relevant consideration in the question whether there is an exception to the principles of immunity. It became certain that the prosecutor was poised by the nature of the court to issue the arrest warrant for an incumbent Head of State. Although such a consideration was inspired by gravity of crimes committed, the court referred to the paragraph in which the ICJ held that an 'incumbent or former Minister for Foreign Affairs' may be subject to criminal proceedings before international criminal courts, where they have jurisdiction. The special court admits that the reason for the distinction between national and international

courts is 'not immediately evident' but it 'would appear due to the fact that the principle that one sovereign state does not adjudicate on the conduct of another state; the principle of state immunity derives from the equality of sovereign state and therefore has no relevance to international criminal tribunals which are not organs of a state but derive their mandate from the international community. In this case the court further referred to the judgment of the Pinochet trial, where the lord judges argued that 'there is no doubt that states have been moving towards recognition of some crimes as those which should not be covered by claims of state or Head of State or other official or diplomatic immunity when charges are brought before an international tribunal. The Court reached a conclusion that Taylor's official position at that moment he made the application was not a bar to prosecution by the Court.

TO BE CONTINUED

This paper was written with references from :

SCSL-2003-01-I, The Prosecutor Against Charles Ghankey Taylor also known as Charles Ghankey MacArthur Dapkpana Taylor, Indictment, 7 March 2003

Sarah M. Nouwen "The Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Immunity of Taylor: The Arrest Warrant Case"

Nawaiwaqt Group of News Papers (Pakistan)

Monday, 22 January 2007

Execution of Saddam Hussein

By SARDAR QASIM AHMAD ALI

The indispensable legal principle that Justice should not only be done but must be seen to have been done, is palpably missing in the trial of Saddam Hussein. The much propagated American claim to ideals like liberty and justice are simply smeared away, on examination of the role she played from invasion of Iraq up to execution of Saddam Hussein. To add insult to the injury, Saddam was executed on the day of Eid-ul-Fitr, presumably with express knowledge of CENTCOM in contravention to the Iraqi law and violating sacred Islamic customs.

It is appalling that the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) as well as the present regime of Iraq, oversaw the trial culminating into the inconsequential and controversial execution of Saddam Hussein. Any right thinking or reasonable person may well comprehend that the Shaiites and Kurds of Iraq being victims of Saddams tyranny were pernicious to Saddam the accused, hence biased. As the illegality speaks for it self, Saddams trial under the tutelage and caresses of Americas protg and Saddams foes looses its meaning and the concept of justice also seems to blur away.

In retrospect when confronted with the question that what has been achieved and importantly what was sought to be achieved, no plausible reply is forthcoming. Unfortunately upon examination per contra, the entire process of invasion, creation of a tribunal and conduct of trial seems like a futility.

This brings one back to the events that took place after annexation, starting from constitution of the Special Iraqi Criminal Tribunal by the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), after it adopted the Interim Constitution which along with the IGC derived authority from the Provisional Governing Authority ie Occupying forces lead by the US. The Statute where under the tribunal was constituted was granted jurisdiction over genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by Iraqis from July 17, 1968, until May 1, 2003, and was setup days before Saddam Hussein was captured.

Whereas the UN Charter grants protection to Iraq being a Member State of the United Nations Organisation, from being invaded. The only way for any country to invade a Member country, albeit, in exceptional circumstances, is to obtain express permission from the United Nations Security Council, which America is guilty of defying. In order to justify the illegal invasion US falsely propagated that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and that she was actively supporting Al-Qaida.

The following Articles of the UN Charter clarify the position: use of force among States is clearly forbidden (Article 2 of the UN Charter) and the exception to the rule is that it can be authorised by the UN Security Council under the Chapter VII of the UN Charter (Article 42 of the UN Charter); The invasion was, therefore, a breach of Articles 2 and 42, hence, illegal. Furthermore, Article 51 of Chapter VII expressly allows a Member State, which is attacked to defend itself. The US along with the Allied forces violated the UN Charter, specifically, Chapter VII, hence, an appropriate action may be taken by the United Nations against the transgressions, breaches and mockery of law made by them.

Proceeding on the same premise, the inevitable, tantalizing and recurring question that ought to be answered is that whether Saddam received a fair trial.

The tribunal was thoroughly incompetent to prosecute Saddam whose fate should have been grant of a POW status and consequently he should have been ultimately tried by a war crimes tribunal under International law or laws of wars by an independent international court. Furthermore, following criteria was not met: Firstly, Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) requires experienced judges and prosecutors. Secondly, under Article 28 of the Statute where under Saddam was tried, there was a limited exception for, experienced, non-Iraqi judges or advisors to participate in the trial. Thirdly, it seems that the Statute does not fully ensure that guilt must be proven beyond reasonable doubt. Fourthly, and more importantly, under Article 13 of the Third Geneva Convention, the United States could not have handed over Saddam to a party that lacked neutrality and independence.

There also remain several anomalies of the gravest nature. In a straightjacket and fair trial, the presiding officer cannot be just transferred and such an eventuality is almost next to impossible. Similarly, in sensitive trials the security of lawyers is ensured and the accused is granted full opportunity to rebut charges through a process of, inter alia, production of witnesses. In Saddams trial all these *in qua non* of a trial which merits fairness are missing as the mandatory requirement of being satisfied were not met.

Being satisfied is being referred to here in the context that the presiding judge and in case of transfer the highest judicial authority has to be satisfied before a judge is being transferred or production of witnesses not allowed. However, the important thing to note is that any judicial order on any of the aforementioned issues must be reasonable and speaking, otherwise it is prone to being challenged before and set-aside by a higher forum.

In so far higher forum, there is no evidence to suggest that any administrative or judicial order passed by the presiding judge was challenged or importantly challengeable before the Appellate forum. This is a fundamental breach of law and morality. Furthermore, the actual Appeal which was filed within 30 days of the conviction was also *prima facie* not heard at length, at all, and none of the issues like jurisdiction, impartiality and procedural fairness were addressed.

No wonder Saddams lawyers protested against the fairness of the trial in the strongest possible manner. Dilating upon the issue of fairness, intellectuals like Professor Noam Chomsky have even argued that a fair trial would mean that the defence attorney could quite rightly call to the stand Colin Powell, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, George Bush I and other high officials who provided significant support for the Defendant, even through his worst atrocities, for at-least some of which he has been tried. What Chomsky did not specify is that Saddams gravest crime was invasion of Iran, however, unsurprisingly, the Iraqi tribunal did not even frame this charge against Saddam, evidently, on instructions from the wily Americans.

It is a foregone conclusion that the Bush administration would have acted responsibly and most importantly lawfully should Saddam have received a trial under the international laws by an international tribunal. Even the United Nations team that studied the Iraqi criminal system warned the administration not to try him in Iraq.

A trial by an International tribunal like those for Yugoslavia and Rwanda or at least a hybrid domestic-international body, along the lines of the Special Court for Sierra Leone would have provided the essential guarantee of a fair trial. This *ad hoc* criminal court is created jointly by the United Nations and Sierra Leone to prosecute those allegedly responsible for atrocities committed in the civil war of 1991.

Irrefutably, Saddams trial was a trial of the victors, more about politics than about

justice, like the Tokyo and Nuremberg Trials. The crimes of Japanese officials in the Tokyo Trials were fully documented, but the actions of the victors such as the systematic fire-bombing raids and the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were ignored.

The perception today is that the arbitrary actions of US has damaged the cause of democracy and justice and has made the world a far dangerous place. On the one hand she supports dictatorships and on the other hand dethrones and executes them, practically, at will.

An unfair trial would inevitably incriminate the governing authority under whose patronage, it is understood that, the trial took place. This principle has been uniform regardless of whether the trial is that of Jesus Christ under Pontius Pilate or that of Saddam under Bush. This is even truer in case of a leader being tried.

The Western image as a whole is being tarnished in the Muslim World and acting as a catalyst in creating a perception that the West is bent upon saber-rattling, damaging and subjugating Muslims. The situation is growing dangerous. The only course to prevent a possible cataclysmic West versus East conflict seems to be a swift change in the western policy towards the Islamic world and adherence to International Laws in general and Muslim values, customs and laws in particular.