

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

Monday, 25 January 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Premier News
Monday, 25 January 2010

Taylor Was Not To Free Liberians - Prosecutors

Prosecutors on Thursday told former Liberian president Charles Taylor that he waged the civil war in Liberia not because he wanted to free the Liberian people but because he was desperate to capture political power.

Mr. Taylor dismissed however the claim.

In his direct-examination, Mr. Taylor had testified before the court that the controversial elections of 1985 in which the then Liberian president, Samuel Doe, apparently cheated his political rival, Jackson Doe, of victory had been a major contributor to the conflict in the country.

Mr. Taylor said his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group had aimed to oust Master Sergeant Doe and get Jackson Doe to power.

In his cross-examination, lead prosecutor, aiming to impeach Mr. Taylor's credibility as a witness, suggested that Mr. Taylor had just used Jackson Doe's name as a public relations stunt and that his aim was to capture power himself. The former Liberian president disagreed.

In putting her points to Mr. Taylor, Ms. Hollis asserted that the NPFL's "right and bounded duty to rid the people of Liberia of the despotism by whatever means at your disposal wasn't really a true statement," instead, the group's aim was to capture political power.

"You wanted to rid Liberia of Master Sergeant Doe because you wanted to be in power in Liberia," Mr. Hollis put to Mr. Taylor.

"You can draw your own conclusion but I disagree," Mr. Taylor responded.

"And Mr. Taylor had you,

after Master Sergeant Doe's death in 1991 made Jackson F Doe president, then your years of civil war wouldn't have occurred, would they?" Ms. Hollis enquired further.

"I don't know the basis of your conclusion, maybe from some expertise, but I disagree with your conclusion or your assumptions, or your speculations, I cannot comment on speculations. We have serious disagreements with that," Mr. Taylor responded.

The former president insisted that as a Liberian citizen, it was his duty to rid Liberia of Master Sergeant Doe, who by all indications had become a despot in the country. He, however, insisted that "we were not an army for Jackson Doe. We did not fight the revolution for Jackson Doe."

Ms. Hollis suggested to Mr. Taylor that using Jackson Doe's name as part of the reasons for fighting the war was a mere "public relations campaign."

In his response, Mr. Taylor said that "it is part of a public relations campaign but it is more than just that."

Asked whether this was a propaganda effort to win over the favors of Western powers like the United States, Mr. Taylor said that "that I totally reject. Did I want to win over the United States? Yes, but was I

beholding to any foreign power? No."

Ms. Hollis pointed out that Mr. Taylor received support from foreign powers such as Libya and Burkina Faso in pursuit of his war. While agreeing that he received support from these countries, Mr. Taylor insisted that "we were not beholding to them."

Prosecutors have been seeking to impeach Mr. Taylor's credibility as a witness testifying in his own defense. In his cross-examination, prosecutors have not only questioned Mr. Taylor about events occurring in Sierra Leone, for which he stands charged before the Special Court for Sierra Leone, but they have sought to question him about his activities in Liberia in order to establish that the actions of rebel forces in Sierra Leone were consistent with those of the NPFL in Liberia.

Prosecutors have also sought to establish that Mr. Taylor was not truthful on many issues that he discussed during his direct-examination. One of the issues covered today was to establish that Mr. Taylor was not truthful about his reasons for waging a war in Liberia. It will be for the judges to determine whether Mr. Taylor has been credible as a witness or not.

Also in court, lead prosecutor Ms. Hollis informed the court that she will need about 7-8 more days to conclude the cross-examination of Mr. Taylor. Mr. Taylor's cross-examination continues Today.

Global Times

Monday, 25 January 2010

Star Turns at Charles Taylor Trial

***By Marlise Simons
for the New York
Times***

Testimony in the case against the former warlord Charles G. Taylor sounded more like a Hollywood mystery than a war-crimes trial last week, with a cast of characters including Naomi Campbell and Mia Farrow and a plot involving plans to trade guns for a bag of diamonds.

Battles over diamonds have been at the heart of the trial of Mr. Taylor, the former Liberian

president who is accused of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity linked to conflicts in Sierra Leone in the 1990s.

The prosecution has charged that Mr. Taylor traveled to half a dozen African countries in 1997 carrying rough diamonds that he wanted to sell or exchange for weapons. What he did with those diamonds was the focus of the hearing on Thursday at a court in The Hague.

At the start of the 1997 trip, according

to the prosecution, Mr. Taylor gave one large rough-cut diamond to Ms. Campbell, a British model.

He sent her the gift hours after they met at a charity dinner hosted by President Nelson Mandela of South Africa. Prosecutors supported their claim with a signed declaration from Ms. Farrow, an American actress who was a guest at the same dinner.

The story of this gift may seem frivolous in a trial dealing with crimes in which tens

of thousands of people were killed or maimed, but prosecutors offered it in order to challenge Mr. Taylor's credibility. Mr. Taylor has repeatedly testified he never carried, owned, sold or traded diamonds for weapons, an issue that goes to the heart of the prosecution case. The only diamonds he ever owned, he told the court, were those set in a few pieces of personal jewelry.

In their cross-examination of Mr.

Taylor, prosecutors have sought to demonstrate that he lied on a number of issues while testifying under oath.

An international panel of four judges of the Special Court for Sierra Leone is trying Mr. Taylor, 61, on charges that he armed and controlled a rebel force in his quest for power and money, including a share of Sierra Leone's diamond fields. The indictment holds Mr. Taylor accountable for many of the rebels' atrocities. The journey discussed in court last week began in South Africa in September 1997, a month after Mr. Taylor took office as Liberia's president. On arrival in South Africa, Mr. Taylor has testified, he received \$500,000 in cash from the government of Libya. He said that sum was intended to pay for "medical expenses."

Prosecutors suggested the money was meant for buying weapons. The diamonds Mr. Taylor was carrying, given to him by the Sierra Leone rebels, were also meant for procuring weapons during his African trip, said Brenda Hollis, a former United States military lawyer and the lead prosecutor in the case.

At the hearing on Thursday, Ms. Hollis turned to the night of Mr. Mandela's charity dinner, whose guests included Mr. Taylor as well as several celebrities including the singer Quincy Jones, Ms. Farrow and Ms. Campbell. Afterward, Ms. Hollis said, Mr. Taylor sent his men to deliver the diamond to Ms. Campbell, who was asleep in her room. "After this dinner that you attended, you sent your men to Ms. Campbell's room to provide her with a large rough-cut diamond," Ms.

Hollis said. "That is correct, is it not, Mr. Taylor?"

"That is totally incorrect," Mr. Taylor replied.

"And indeed Mr. Taylor," Ms. Hollis went on, "your men awakened her and presented her with a large rough-cut diamond."

"Totally, totally incorrect," Mr. Taylor said.

Ms. Hollis said Mr. Taylor had received this diamond and others a month earlier, along with money, from the rebels in Sierra Leone to procure weapons for them. "Totally incorrect," Mr. Taylor persisted. According to the prosecution, Ms. Campbell told the story of being awakened by Mr. Taylor's men to Ms. Farrow the next morning. Ms. Farrow provided the prosecutors with a signed declaration of her account of Ms. Campbell's story.

Debora Cunha, a spokeswoman for Ms. Campbell, said she could not comment on the story or the fate of the diamond. "It's with the lawyers," she said. "Naomi has been assisting the special prosecutor where possible, but beyond that has nothing to add."

After visiting South Africa, Mr. Taylor, according to his presidential records, traveled to Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Niger, Tunisia and Libya.

Prosecutors said that at the end of that trip, a large drop of clandestine arms and ammunition was delivered to the rebels at a small airstrip in Sierra Leone. The smuggled goods were airlifted from Burkina Faso, a regular transshipment point for illegal weapons for Mr. Taylor's rebels, the prosecution said.

The Exclusive

Monday, 25 January 2010

Taylor denied seeking to overthrow Samuel Doe

The former Liberian president Charles Taylor has denied seeking to overthrow a predecessor, Samuel Doe, in a bid to facilitate his ambition to seize power in 1991. At his continuing trial in The Hague, he insisted that his intention was to pave the way for Jackson F. Doe to become president. But the prosecution accused him of peddling propa-

ganda. John Kollie transcribes reports from The Hague on the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor...

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said that the then president, Samuel Doe, had refused to stand down after being defeated by the opposition leader Jackson F. Doe.

Mr Taylor said that under his leadership, the NPFL then fought a long campaign to oust Samuel Doe with the aim of bringing Jackson Doe to power. But Ms Hollis said that Mr Taylor's real intention was to seize

the presidency for himself. Mr Taylor said it had been his duty as a Liberian citizen to remove Samuel Doe who had become a tyrant in Liberia. But Brenda Hollis insisted that his statement was a public relations and propaganda effort. Earlier she told the court that her cross-examination of Mr Taylor might end in about 7-8 days.

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court that her cross examination of Mr. Taylor might end in about 7-8 days.

Nigerian couple in court for fraud

By Zainab Ahmed
A Nigerian couple are facing fraud charges in court. The couple were accused of defrauding a company worth several million dollars. The couple are currently in court for their trial. The trial is expected to last several days. The couple are currently in court for their trial. The trial is expected to last several days. The couple are currently in court for their trial. The trial is expected to last several days.

Awoko

Monday, 25 January 2010

Another Bullet Removed from War Victim

By Saidu Bah

As the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) Reparations Program continues to provide emergency medical assistance to war victims around the country another war victim has received his treatment at the Connaught hospital in Freetown.

John Tappia a resident of Magbele Town Bombali District has suffered for 12 years with a bullet in his right arm inflicted during the war when RUF rebels shot and killed his father on their way out of the farm and later shot him on his right arm.

John has been suffering with the bullet because he

could not afford to pay for medical bills, until he met with NaCSA's reparations officers who registered him and also paid for his operation which was successfully carried out.

In an interview with our reporter he expressed thanks and appreciation to the Government of Sierra Leone through NaCSA for the assistance, adding that "I can now work and earn a living on my own without any assistance." He also said that he is now feeling fine because the bullet was causing him a lot of problems in carrying out his normal work at the farm in his village. He praised NaCSA staff for the good work.

The NaCSA Outreach Officer Ibrahim Siatty Kamara

also spoke to our reporter and assured all of their continued support to war victims of whom 51 have been treated at the Connaught Hospital since the program commenced last year.

He also explained that during the course of this year NaCSA will embark on the implementation of the skills training programs designed to empower war victims to be self-reliant.

The Outreach Officer assured those registered with NaCSA for the reparation program will surely benefit.

BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST

Thursday, 21 January 2010

John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

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BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 22 January 2010

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

International Clips on Liberia

Trial resumes in lawsuit against Taylor's son

MIAMI HERALD 22 January 2010-- A Miami federal judge will hear testimony about the physical and psychological harm suffered by five Liberians who claim they were tortured on orders of the son of former Liberian President Charles Taylor. The five are seeking millions of dollars each in damages from Charles McArthur Emmanuel, also known as Charles "Chuckie" Taylor Jr. Emmanuel is serving a 97-year prison sentence for a conviction last year of violating U.S. anti-torture laws. Emmanuel ran an elite paramilitary unit for his father. Testimony is scheduled Friday from an expert hired by attorneys for the Liberian victims to describe the long-term mental and physical harm they are suffering. Emmanuel refuses to testify because he is appealing the criminal conviction.

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea

Source: BBC Friday, 22 January 2010

Guinea's military junta has named a civilian prime minister to steer the country towards elections but the troubled country's future remains shrouded in uncertainty. Under intense international and domestic the army has agreed to leave power in six months but there are reports of division within the military. "The army has to be persuaded to back the road map and to return to barracks," says Richard Moncrieff of the International Crisis Group. If any part of Guinea's fractious armed forces does not accept the transition, things could go badly wrong. But already there are signs of change, according to residents of the capital, Conakry. "The soldiers are still around, but they're not patrolling like they were before; they've lost their swagger," said one man in the capital. In the end, the brutality of the military junta was its undoing. Despite being the world's largest exporter of bauxite, Guinea was not high on the international agenda. All that changed on 28 September when soldiers killed more than 150 opposition demonstrators. The world was outraged and called for the army to step down. Sanctions followed. Among those injured on 28 September was Jean-Marie Dore, a veteran opposition leader and the man named as the new prime minister.

Cote D'Ivoire

Ivory Coast electoral body admits errors

ABIDJAN, Jan 22 (Reuters) - Ivory Coast's electoral commission (CEI) has apologised for errors made in drawing up a voter list, saying thousands of names disputed by President Laurent Gbagbo were never intended to be on it. The row has raised fears that Ivory Coast's presidential poll, postponed several times since 2005, will miss another deadline, prolonging the instability and political limbo that has been the norm since a 2002-3 war cut the country in two. "(There has been) an evident malfunction in some services carried out by the independent electoral commission," CEI chief Robert Mambe said in a statement late on Thursday. Separately the U.N. special envoy to Ivory Coast estimated it would take six weeks to prepare polls from the time a final voter list was ready as

planned by February: two weeks to print identity and voter cards, two weeks to distribute them to 10,000 poll sites, and two weeks of campaigning. "This timetable would lead us to spring 2010,"

I. Coast court unfreezes Trafigura compensation

ABIDJAN, Jan 22 (AFP) – An Ivory Coast court on Friday ordered the unfreezing of 33 million euros' (47 million dollars) compensation owed to victims of toxic waste dumped from a cargo ship, according to a judicial source. Oil trading firm Trafigura agreed to pay the money to 31,000 people affected by the dumping of caustic soda and petroleum residues in Abidjan in 2006, while denying responsibility. A dispute between a victims' group and their British lawyers Leigh Day and Company over who should distribute the money has delayed payment since September. The Ivorian National Coordination of Toxic Waste Victims obtained a court order freezing the money in October. On Friday the appeal court in Abidjan ruled the money should be paid to the victims' group and not distributed via Leigh Day and Company.

Local Media – Newspaper

U.S. Government Donates US\$3.5M for School Feeding Programme

(The Inquirer and The Informer)

- The United States government has provided US\$3.5million in support of the school feeding programme in rural Liberia.
- The programme is implemented by Liberia's Education Ministry in partnership with the UN World Food Programme (WFP).
- Funds for the contribution were provided through a congressional supplemental approved last year to mitigate the impact of the Global Financial Crisis in developing countries.
- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been a major donor to WFP operations in Liberia, contributing more than US\$55 million since 2003.
- The USAID contribution will fund the distribution of an estimated three months of daily cooked meals to more than 300,000 rural primary school children in seven counties as well as take home food to girls attending schools with high gender disparities.

Several Inmates Break Jail at Sanniquellie Prison

(The Inquirer)

- [SIC] Reports from Nimba County say several criminals have broken jail at the Sanniquellie Prison and are currently on the run.
- Reports gathered suggest that the escapees forced their way through the ceiling of the prison to get-away.
- The General Supervisor of the prison said records available to them suggest that the escapees were nine in number.
- He said three of the prisoners have been rearrested while the remaining six are still at-large.

Senate Sets Up Committee to Review Proposed TRC Act

(The Inquirer and Public Agenda)

- The Liberian Senate has set up a committee to review the draft Act submitted to that body to amend certain provisions in the Act that established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).
- The Senate yesterday mandated its Judiciary Committee headed by Senator Joseph N. Nagbe to review the proposed Act and advise plenary on the draft Act which was crafted by Grand Gedeh County Senior Senator, Isaac Nyenabo.
- At the same time, Senator Nyenabo has advanced several suggestions to the committee on the review of the TRC proposed Act.

Government Moves to Prevent Checks Theft

(The Inquirer)

- The Liberian government through the Ministry of Finance has instituted a new measure that would prevent the theft of the checks of civil servants.
- The new measure code-name, "Direct Deposit Scheme," has already been launched in Montserrado, with a pilot project launched in Grand Bassa, Nimba and Margibi Counties.
- Launching the scheme in Grand Cape Mount County, the Chief Disbursing Officer of the Ministry of Finance, Udora Blay-Prichard informed the local people that the exercise is part of the government's reform agenda.
- Madam Prichard said the ministry initiated the exercise in other counties with the aim of exposing employees of the government to what she termed, "banking culture."

Assets Declaration Request Angers Senators, Term LACC Demand "Criminal, Illegal"

(The News and Daily Observer)

- Opposing views have emerged in the Senate over a letter by the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) reminding members of the Legislature to declare their assets.
- In the letter the LACC said the declaration of assets would demonstrate Liberia's commitment to the fight against corruption.
- The LACC said the assets declaration was part of the ratified United Nations Convention against Corruption, which recommends assets declarations as a preventive anti-corruption measure.
- During the debate, some Senators including Adolphus Dolo and John Ballout expressed support for the assets declaration but other Senators said they were not sure whether the LACC has the mandate to request assets declaration from the Legislature.
- The Senate has meanwhile asked its relevant committee to review the Commission's letter and advise it.

House Probes Passport "Hike"

(Daily Observer)

- Reports emanating from the House of Representatives say officials of the Foreign Ministry have allegedly violated the Budget Act when the Ministry admitted selling the new Liberian machine readable passports for US\$50.
- The Foreign Ministry officials made the disclosure when they appeared before the House of Representatives to provide clarifications on the new passports.
- Gbarpolu Representative Dickson Yarsiah told the House the current US\$50 being charged for a passport runs contrary to the Budget Act.
- According to him, the Legislature approved US\$35 as the projected price for a passport and not US\$50.
- Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry has dismissed the suggestion that there was price increment in the sale of Liberian passports in violation of the Budget Act.
- Acting Foreign Minister William Bull said the US\$50 charged for a Liberian passport was imposed to meet-up with the cost of production insisting the price for the passports remains irreversible.

US\$10M Hospital in Tappita, Nimba County Nearing Completion

(The News)

- Construction work on the China aided US\$10 million Tappita Hospital in Nimba County is progressing steadily.
- In an interview, Chinese engineers constructing the 100-bed hospital said the project will be ready for dedication in July this year.
- The hospital when completed, would serve as a referral health centre for counties in South-eastern Liberia as well as Nimba County.

PUL Gets Trade Union Status

(The Inquirer)

- The Press Union of Liberia (PUL) says it has formally been recognized by the Labor Ministry as a trade union organization.
- The PUL was early this week certificated in line with Section 34.2 of the Executive Laws of 1973.
- The new status of the PUL now paves the way and reinforces the standing of the Union to initiate talks with media employers on bettering the conditions of service and professional output of journalists.

'There Is No Gas Shortage'... GOL Warn Dealers against Hoarding Product

(Daily Observer and The Inquirer)

- Amidst public outcry over the recent increase in transportation fares around the country, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and the Liberia Petroleum Refining Company (LPRC) have clarified that there is no shortage of gasoline and fuel on the Liberian market.
- In separate interviews, Commerce Minister Miata Beysolow and Acting LPRC Managing Director T. Nelson Williams said gasoline and fuel were on the market but the company had to ration its reserve at the terminal due to the situation in the region.
- Mr. Williams said since the inception of the year, there has been a scarcity of petroleum product in the sub-region especially in the Ivory Coast where about 90% of Liberia's import comes from.
- Meanwhile, Government has warned petroleum dealers against hoarding the product.

Local Media – Star Radio *(culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Senate Debates LACC Assets Declaration Letter

House Says Foreign Ministry Violates Budget Act, But...

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Confirmation Of INHRC Nominees Fails To Take Place

- The confirmation of nominees of the Independent National Human Rights Commission (INHRC) Thursday failed to take place in the Senate.
- Senate Pro-tempore Cletus Wortorson said the confirmation could not proceed due to the lack of the required votes.
- Senator Wortorson said the Senate has resolved to take a vote on the nominees of the INHRC next Tuesday.
- The Senate has been debating the confirmation of the nominees of the INHRC since its last sitting in September 2009.
- Meanwhile, the Senate has relaxed sanctions against seven Senators who angrily walked out of Wednesday's Special session.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Local Rights Group, Australian Government Sign US\$80,000 Agreement

- The National Human Rights Centre of Liberia (NHRCL) and the Australian Government Thursday signed a project agreement worth nearly US\$80,000 intended to promote human rights, democracy, respect for the rule of law and social justice.
- The Centre's Executive Director Mr. Alfred Quajandi said the project takes effect in six counties and will be spread over a period of one year.
- Mr. Quajandi said the project will give priority to judicial advocacy and monitoring campaigns to ensure the rights and fair treatment of women and children.
- He disclosed that a total of three million Australian dollars would be provided to 36 projects in 33 African countries, the Asian Pacific and the Middle East.

US Government Provides US\$3.5 M To Boost Rural Education

- The United States Government has provided US\$3.5 million support to the school feeding Programme in rural Liberia, which is being implemented by the Ministry of Education in partnership with the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

- A release issued said the money was provided through a Congressional supplemental approved last year intended to mitigate the impact of the global financial crisis in developing countries.
- The USAID contribution will fund the distribution of an estimated three months of daily cooked meals to more than 300,000 rural primary school children.
- According to the release about half a million dollars will be used to purchase locally-produced rice from smallholder farmers under the Purchase-for-Progress initiative.
- The rice the release said will go towards the school feeding programme as take-home food for girls in grades four to six.

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

LRRRC Renews Commitment To Returnees

- The Executive Director of the Liberia Refugee, Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) has renewed commitment to working in the interest of returnees.
- Cllr. Wheatonia Dixon Barnes stressed she will ensure returnees are successfully reintegrated.
- Cllr. Barnes also vowed that returnees will be protected, provided skills training and given loans through donors or partners.

Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 09:45 am)*

Student Leaders Make Second Court Appearance

- The accused student leaders who were charged by the Liberian government with rioting, robbery and criminal mischief are expected to make their second appearance at the Monrovia City Court today.
- The students Monday appeared in court after they allegedly vandalized two police stations.
- The students were on Monday released on bail worth five thousand nine hundred Liberian dollars.

Truth F.M. *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

PUL Gets Trade Union Status (Truth FM)

Africa News

Thursday, 21 January 2010

Genocide suspect escapes to US

By International Justice Desk



Kigali, Rwanda

Rwandan officials have pursued their Malawian counterparts on the whereabouts of a 1994

Rwandese genocide suspect, Vincent Nzigiyimfura who was recently still leading a business in the country freely. Rwandan prosecutor General Martin Ngoga said the suspect was last reported in Malawi under the name Vincent Nzigiyiye.

He added that the Africa Rights, a non-governmental organisation and his country officials were convinced the man had sneaked out to the United States of America. "We do not know under what circumstances he managed to sneak out of Malawi and end up in the US," he said.

Malawian authorities said they were investigating the matter through the Malawi Police but that this issue was better handled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Security. Police chief, Inspector General Peter Mukhito said: "All refugee and asylum seekers movements are the responsibility of the ministry. That is beyond the police as we don't handle such matters." However, Mukhito added that he would act when a red alert was issued.

Nzigiyimfura was in the country in the Malawi's capital city Lilongwe running a business, Mzigiyi Shopping Centre in Area 2, situated just a few kilometres to the country's Area 3 Central Region Police headquarters.

In April 2009, Africa Rights produced a report that the former Rwandese businessman in Nyanza town, is suspected to be a key architect during the genocide against Ttusti Rwandans and moderate Hutu's.

Rakiya Omaar of Africa Rights said it was hard to understand how the suspect managed to fly to the US using a visa. "The good news, however, is that US authorities are aware of the allegations against him, and we have sent them a copy of our report, in addition, justice officials in Rwanda are actively following his case and working with US authorities."

Ngoga visited Malawi where he met with the Director of Public Prosecutions to discuss the matter and said it was a shared responsibility of all other civilized nations to take some action.

photo: EPA/RICKY GARE

Truth Dive

Monday, 25 January 2010

<http://truthdive.com/2010/01/25/>

Fonseka and Rajapakse to face trial for war crimes

The presidential election in Srilanka is a fight between two suspected war criminals who are due to be prosecuted before the international court of Justice.

Srilanka is an island where the two distinct nationalities exist, Tamils in the north and east, the original inhabitants of the Island and the Sinhalese in the west and south the migrants from Orissa India.

Tamils and Sinhalese were at war for many centuries to control or expand their traditional homeland. This must be the oldest ethnic conflict in the world history which remains unresolved. There was a battle between Tamil king Ellara and Sinhalese king Duttagamini in the year 145 BC. The pre colonial wars between the Tamil and Sinhalese kingdoms are well recorded in the history. Those were the times when no international rules on war, human rights and universal justice were evolved and the defeated party became slaves and prisoners of wars.

Only in the last century the Europeans unified the country and left the island after handing over the Sovereignty of Tamils in the hands of majority Sinhalese in 1948. That was the time when the United Nations was established, but the charters on the Sovereignty and rights of nationalities in different geographical regions were not yet fully explored in the process of establishing a new world order after the second world war.

Immediately after obtaining independence from the British, the Sinhalese took advantage of majoritarian authority in the parliamentary democracy and resorted to discrimination of Tamils. Through systematic colonization by the Sinhalese in the east, the Tamils became minorities in their own homeland. The Sinhalese politicians were free to enforce their own constitutional amendments later, to change to Executive Presidential system of Election and Governance only to restrict the voice of Tamils in the Parliament.



Sinhalese mob humiliate and torture Tamil Man in 1983 riots

In the later part of the last century the Sinhalese began to claim the whole island as belonging to them against which the Tamils engaged with a peaceful struggle to reclaim their rights. But the armed struggle of Tamils intensified after the massacre of thousands of Tamils by Sinhalese thugs in a Sinhalese state sponsored riot in 1983. The culprits of that state sponsored terrorism of 1983 are not yet punished.

At present, the armed struggle of Tamils for freedom has suffered a set back at the hands of a brutal Sinhalese army due to the genocidal war with no rules and witness. The Tamils have silenced their guns temporarily only to avoid further calamities.

This war has claimed more than 70000 lives - mostly Tamils and has scattered lakhs of Tamil population as refugees to India and distant lands. In the final assault of the Sri Lankan army 20,000 innocent people were massacred in a single day in 2009. At present about 300,000 Tamils are restricted in concentration camps in Sri Lanka still facing the excesses of military including sexual abuse on women and children.

This is the worst humanitarian tragedy of the new millennia which the world has turned a blind eye due to the planned blocking of access to the international agencies and media into the area of conflict. Even after the unilateral declaration of the end of war by the winning party, the whole of Srilanka is under undeclared military rule with no

press freedom and freedom of movement. The extra judicial killings, abductions and atrocities on woman and children continue under the authoritarian rule of Mr.Rajapakse and his family . But slowly the world is seeing through inhuman and uncivilized activities of the state of Sri Lanka and is taking steps to bring this rogue state in to the ambit of agreed rules and conventions of international order to reestablish civilization in Srilanka.



Injured people in the Srilankan Genocide 2009

Under these circumstances, Srilanka goes to Presidential election on January 26, 2010. The incumbent President Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse is fighting against his erstwhile friend and former army chief Mr.Sarath Fonseka. Both are asking for votes not for any progressive action they have performed. Each one of the candidates claims the sole responsibility for defeating LTTE, the minority Tamil rebels who fought a war of freedom against the undemocratic rule of majority Sinhalese. It is the division of the victors, among the Sinhalese in the so called war on terrorism and not the devolution of powers to Tamils that dominates this election. Therefore the election has no meaning to the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Both candidates wish to show that they have killed the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabakaran who was running a rebel Tamil government in the north and east of the island. Mr Prabakaran was dominating the war until the active interference of India and China favoring the Lankan army in a strategic competition to control the sea routes in Indian Ocean to protect their economic interests and investments.

Mr Rajapakse and Mr.Sarath Fonseka both share common ideas against the nationhood of Tamils. Both consider Sri Lanka as one nation enforcing a Sinhalese only policy, and are involved in a concerted propaganda of lies, whereas history has recorded two nations in one island.

In his first address to Parliament in 2005, **Mr Rajapakse** unequivocally mentioned:

“Instead of traditional homelands and self-determination that allow an ethnic group to breakaway from the Republic of Sri Lanka, steps will be taken to ensure for all communities, including Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim Burgher and Malay the freedom to exercise all the rights enshrined in the constitution, including the right to live in any part of Sri Lanka on the grounds that the entire territory is the homeland of all communities.”

Mr.Sarath Fonseka has expressed the same theory in his own words:

“The truth is that this country is ruled by Sinhalese for centuries and centuries. China is ruled by Chinese, England by the Englishmen and Germany by Germans. This is because these countries are ruled by the majorities..... What is wrong by saying that this country, which is historically ruled by Sinhalese will be ruled by the Sinhalese... I am not a historian, but according to what I have learnt, this country is ruled by the Sinhalese and the minorities are also part and parcel of this country”

Such denial of nationhood of Tamils shows that the Tamils have to carry forward their struggle against any one of these Sinhalese supremacists and racists who is set to win in the current election. In the immediate future it is not possible for the Tamils in Srilanka to intensify the struggle. Given the trend of history and the initiatives of world

Tamils to support Ealem Tamils, the war will continue towards favorable conditions until achieving a seperate state for Tamils.

The struggle for self determination or autonomy for regaining equality for Tamils within this island may not be taken seriously by the international community. But Tamils can very well expect this world to protect their right to live, basic human rights and justice which is existing or granted to any other race. Tamils should be hopeful that the civilized world shall extend the courtesy it has shown in similar conflicts in any other part of the world. In this direction the world has already waken up to expose , undertake trial and award punishment for the war crimes and genocide.

It is well known that both Rajapakse and Sarath Fonseka were very much united in committing war crimes although they are now fight against each other for gaining political power. Now, Rajapakse regime has been alleged of committing war crimes by not any outsiders but by Mr. Fonseka himself who executed the commands of Rajapakse. Fonseka alleged that the defence secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, brother of the President Mahinda Rajapakse had ordered the killing of Tamil Tiger leaders when they were trying to surrender in the last phase of the civil war in 2009. This uncivilized act deserves to be examined by the International court of Justice.

A vedio footage filmed during the final stages of war has also provided an evidence against the Sri Lankan army and the Government. The video showed Sri Lankan army men executing unarmed prisoners of war brutally at close range. The UN inquiry into the video's authenticity revealed that the vedio was not fabricated. UN human rights investigator Philip Alston declared that three independent experts confirmed it was authentic.

In a major development in this month, the Irish Forum for Peace in Srilanka (IFPS) has consulted the Permanent People's Tribunal based in Milan and has established a People's Tribunal on Srilanka for investigations the war crimes committed by the state of Srilanka. This tribunal will follow the methodology of Bertrand Russell Tribunal on Vietnam. The tribunal of international opinion is independent of state authorities or United Nations. It consists of 11 international judges and five interpreters including VR Krishna Aiyar and Aruntati Rai from India.

The IFPS has acknowledged the incidents in the last phase of war as below

“By April 2009 according to UN internal documents air raids and use of heavy weopons were resulting in the death of 116 people a day. During the last weeks of the war according to the reports in British and French Press over 20000 people were killed when the Srilankan armed forces used heavy artillery fire against hundreds and thousands of Tamils crowded in an extremely small area. According to human rights watch hospitals were bombed 30 times between 8th December 2008 to 2nd May 2009. According to French Medical team cluster munitions and white phosphorous has been used against these civilians. There has been media evidence of torture, summary executions, rape and sexual violence and of food and water being used as weapon of war against civilians by Srilankan Military”

The next step shall be the establishment of Special courts by United Nations in Srilanka itself for prosecuting those responsible for the atrocities perpetrated on the people in the east of Sri Lanka just like the line of action taken in Sierra Leone . If the Government of Sri Lanka turns down such proposal, alternately International Tribunals will be set up as was done in Yugoslavia and Rwanda outside Sri Lanka. After indictment of the culprits arrest warrants shall be issued through Interpol. It may take many years but both Rajapakse and Fonseka will have to answer to this world for a crime which no one would dare to defend.

A ruler inaccessible, un probing and unjust