

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Tuesday, 25 November 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Total News

Tuesday, 25 November 2008

Special Court Justice Dies

Justice Raja N. Fernando of the Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone is dead. The Special Court Judge died past Saturday in Sri Lanka after a short illness.

Justice Renate Winter, President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, yesterday conveyed heart felt condolences to the deceased's family.

"On behalf of the Judges, officials and staff of the special court, I have conveyed condolences to Justice Fernando's family.

Justice Fernando, who was also a Justice of Supreme Court of Sri Lanka, was buried yesterday at the Roman Catholic Burial Ground Divulapitiya, Sri Lanka.



Justice Raja N. Fernando

The Exclusive

Tuesday, 25 November 2008

We Must Abolish Death Penalty

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The Exclusive

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2008

'We Must Abolish Death Penalty'***Amnesty International***

As the UN General Assembly reinforces call for moratorium on executions, Amnesty

International has welcomed the adoption by the UN General Assembly's Third Com-

mittee of a second resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

More countries voted for the resolution and less voted against it this year compared to last year, and the resolution attracted more co-sponsors.

"The increased support for this year's resolution is very important. It demonstrates once again that the world is on steady path towards, abolishing the death penalty", said Yvonne Terlingen, Head of Amnesty International's Office at the UN.

She said it is significant that in the League of Arab States, one country voted in favour, ten abstained or were absent and ten voted against. "This is a remarkably better result than last year (when one country voted in

favour, five abstained or were absent and 15 voted against the resolution".

Compared to last year, Yvonne Terlingen explained, no less than five countries in the League changed their position from voting against to abstaining or being absent. In total, 105 countries voted in favour of the resolution, 48 against and 31 abstained.

Last year's figures were 104-54-29-89 countries co-sponsored resolution, two more than last year. A range of amendments proposed by a small minority of pro-death penalty countries were all, overwhelmingly defeated.

"We applaud those states that have imposed a moratorium or taken steps to restrict the death penalty. We urge all states that still carry out executions, including Japan that actually increased the rate of executions last

year, to take immediate steps to implement the resolution and establish a moratorium on executions," Yvonne Terlingen went on.

Amnesty International oppose the death penalty because it is irrevocable and there is always a chance that innocent men and women will be executed in any country that maintains this punishment. The death penalty is inherently arbitrary and discriminates against those who are poor, marginalized or belonging to minority communities.

137 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, as of November 2008. During 2007, at least 1,252 people were executed in 24 countries.

At least 3,347 people were sentenced to death in 51 countries.

The decrease in countries carrying out executions is dramatic.

'We Must Abolish Death Penalty'***From front page***

In 1989, executions were carried out in 200 states.

In 2007 Amnesty International recorded executions in 24 countries.

In December 2007 the UN General Assembly adopted its first resolution "Moratorium on the

use of the death penalty" (62/149), reaffirming the UN's commitment towards abolition of the death penalty. That resolution was adopted by 104 votes in favour, 54 against and 29 absentees

To coincide with the death penalty debate, Amnesty International

organized a panel discussion with judges and prosecutors from Japan, Jordan, Nigeria and the USA. The panelists told UN Delegates why judicial systems, even the most developed ones, fail to prevent fatal mistakes in death penalty cases and why they now oppose the death penalty.

The Patriotic Vanguard

Tuesday, 25 November 2008

Special Court's Raja Fernando has passed away

According to a press release from the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Justice A. Raja N. Fernando, a Judge of the Appeals Chamber and former President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, passed away Saturday in Colombo, Sri Lanka after a short illness.



Special Court President Justice Renate Winter has expressed condolences on behalf of the Special Court Judges and staff to Justice Fernando's family. She praised Justice Fernando as an outstanding colleague and a good friend.

"On behalf of the Judges and the staff of the Special Court, I wish to express our deep regret on the death of Justice Fernando," Justice Winter said. "By his presence on the Appeals Chamber he helped to strengthen the Special Court and to enrich the jurisprudence of international criminw

"He served with great distinction, competence and efficiency, and always with complete modesty. He was not only an exceptional colleague, but also a genuine friend to each Justice Winter added.

Justice Fernando (photo) had served as a judge in Sri Lanka since 1992, and had been appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court. From 1995 to 1996 he served as Director of Public Prosecutions in Belize. 1995 to 1996 Prior to 1992 he served as Senior State Counsel in the Attorney-General's Department in Sri Lanka, and as Judge Advocate of the Sri Lanka Navy at the rank of Commodore. Justice Fernando was sworn in as a Justice of the Special Court on 10 March 2004. In May 2005 he was elected to a one-year term as Presiding Judge of the Appeals Chamber and President of the Special Court.

African Press Organisation

Tuesday, 25 November 2008

<http://appablog.wordpress.com/2008/11/25/tanzania-forum-of-prosecutors-of-un-tribunals-and-national>

Forum of Prosecutors of UN Tribunals and National Authorities

A Roundtable Discussion between international and national prosecutors will be taking place in Arusha, Tanzania from 26 to 28 November 2008,

The forum brings together Prosecutors of the UN International Criminal Tribunals for Rwanda and for the former Yugoslavia, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia and the International Criminal Court, with national prosecutors from Africa, Europe and North America.

The forum, whose theme is “International Cooperation and the Struggle against Impunity” will largely focus on the challenges of national and international cooperation in the apprehension, prosecution or extradition of fugitives and will include a session on the role of NGOs and civil society in the struggle against impunity.

SOURCE : International Criminal Court (ICC)

Metro News

Thursday, 20 November 2008

Former child soldiers reach out to victims

SUSAN MCCLELLAND

Kabba Williams sits quietly, his hands folded in his lap. The 24-year-old's wide smile belies the horrors he has inflicted on others and of which he is also a victim. Sitting beside Williams is Mariatu Kamara, now a 22-year-old college student in Toronto. Kamara is an all too emotional reminder for Williams of his past. She was only 12 in 1999 when rebels in Sierra Leone's 11-year-long civil war invaded her village. Child soldiers held the young girl hostage for nearly a day and then amputated her hands before setting her free.

"I did this," Williams, looking briefly at Kamara, told the audience at the University of Alberta last week. "I did terrible things. Rape, murder, cutting off people's hands."

Williams was not the child combatant that tortured Kamara. But for nearly three years, Williams was a boy soldier — in fact, he's one of the youngest child soldiers ever recruited in an African conflict, having been abducted by rebel forces at the start of the Sierra Leone war in 1991 when he was only six years old.

Last week at the University of Alberta's Festival of Ideas, Kamara and Williams, now an outspoken human-rights advocate in Sierra Leone who speaks on the use and victimization of child soldiers, came together for the first time.

"It was scary at first," says Kamara, whose memoir *The Bite of the Mango*, which I wrote, was released last month. "But what can I do to him ... to the boys who did this to me? My hatred toward them is only hurting me, so I have to forgive."

I have been involved now with the Sierra Leonean community for several years. I am struck by their inherent ability to tell their stories, hold one another and build community. I was by far more nervous of the meeting between Kamara and Williams than they were. When they first saw each other, they embraced. To anyone looking on, they appeared like old friends.

But they're not. Sierra Leone saw children commit some of the worst atrocities in the war that ended in 2002. Tens of thousands of young people were killed, maimed, raped and recruited by various rebel groups, including the Revolutionary United Front. Worldwide, the United Nations estimates that there are 300,000 child soldiers at any given time.

Williams has been very active in Sierra Leone's peace building process. His newest project involves former child soldiers reaching out to the villages in Sierra Leone. "It would be an apology, a way we can say we take responsibility for what we did, and how do we move forward together," says Williams.

"It will be challenging," Kamara concludes. "There are many amputees from the war still suffering with their health and with poverty. But we need to do whatever it takes to make sure war doesn't happen again."

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 24 November 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

Ghanaian President Kufour Regrets “Humiliation” Of Liberian Refugees

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

- The President of Ghana, John Kufour has described the “controversial” repatriation of Liberian refugees from his country as an unfortunate situation.
- Hundred of Liberian refugees were repatriated following a protest action which led to the arrest and detention of several Liberians in Ghana.
- President Kufour said the incident leading to the repatriation was isolated and should not be used to define Liberia-Ghana relations.
- He said he regretted the situation because it caused misfortune to the refugees but said the Ghana Police Service was carrying out its duty.
- Meanwhile, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said Ghana remains a true partner to Liberia’s recovery programme.
- She was speaking at an investiture programme where President Kufour was decorated with Liberia’s highest honour.

Chief Justice Apologizes to Media, Returns Confiscated Camera

(New Democrat, The Independent, The Inquirer, The Parrot, The Informer, Daily Observer)

- Chief Justice Johnnie Lewis has returned the camera of journalist Sando Moore which he ordered confiscated last Thursday.
- In an interview, journalist Moore said the Chief Justice apologized and returned the camera following three hours of negotiations.
- He said the negotiations took place between the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) and the Management of the Daily Observer on the one hand and Justice Lewis on the other hand.
- The apology and return of the camera came a day after the union’s ultimatum to the Chief Justice expired.
- On Friday, the Press Union gave the Head of the Judiciary a 48-hour ultimatum to return the camera which he confiscated Thursday from journalist Sando Moore or face the wrath of the media.

Senator Taylor Frowns on Alarming Rate of Corruption in Government

(The News, Liberian Express, New Democrat)

- Bong County Senator Jewel Howard Taylor has frowned on the alarming rise of corruption in the country
- Addressing journalists at the weekend, Senator Taylor called on the President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to muster the political will to ensure that individuals who are accused of corrupt acts are forwarded to the Ministry of Justice for prosecution no matter their status or affiliation.
- She said the wave of corruption in Government has risen to such uncontrollable level to the extent that it has even claimed the attention of our international partners, especially our biggest donor and long time friend, the United States of America.
- It can be recalled that US Ambassador Linda Thomas- Greenfield warned that the US and other donor countries and institutions were getting wearied of news of high level rampant corruption.

- Ambassador Greenfield made the assertion when she announced a US\$52 million assistance to Liberia.

Police Nabs Two Nigerians for US\$42,000 Theft

(The Monitor, Daily Observer, The Independent, The Informer)

- Police in Monrovia have arrested and detained two Nigerians in connection with a dubious transaction in which they alleged duped Ting Jie Cao a Chinese National studying in Canada of US\$42,000 under the pretext that they were suppliers of electronic equipment in Liberia.
- Augustine Ohakwe and another Nigerian only identified as Lie Paul and their accomplice, Eric Coffee a teller at the Liberia Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI) are currently undergoing interrogation at the headquarters at the Liberia National Police.

ECOBANK Teller "Steals" US\$500,000

(National Chronicle, New Democrat)

- [SIC:] A Senior Employee in charge of the vault at ECOBANK-Liberia, Alice Roberts have reportedly stolen over US\$500,000 from the banks vault and walked away undetected.
- Reports say the money was taken in two installments before it was discovered last Wednesday following a tip-off.
- The National Chronicle reports that Madam Roberts have admitted to the theft during interrogation at the National Security Agency (NSA).

Radio Summary

Local Media-Radio VERITAS (News monitored today at 1:30 pm)

Chief Justice Apologizes to Media, Returns Confiscated Camera

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

Ghanaian President Kufour Regrets "Humiliation" Of Liberian Refugees

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

STAR RADIO (News monitored today at 9:00 am)

Renew Tension in Nimba County Land Dispute

- The people of Zuaplay in Nimba County have reported renewed tension in the Doe Clan area following a day of gunfire there.
- At a news conference yesterday, the Zuaplay Development Association reported that people were still scattered in nearby bushes.
- The President of the association, James Weh said people were being treated at various hospitals following Wednesday's bloody land dispute.
- The President of the Doe Clan Development Association, Johnson Zorleh also alleged Nimba County, Superintendent Robert Kamei was fuelling the conflict a claim the Superintendent dismissed as untrue.
- Residents of Doumpa in Saclapea District and Zuaplay in Tappita are claiming ownership to the land which is situated between them.
- The dispute has left one person dead and several rice barns burnt down.

Man Arrested for Forging President Sirleaf's Signature

- A 34-year-old man has been arrested for forging President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's signature.
- Varney Brown, who was seeking employment with the Firestone Rubber Company, forged the president's signature in a letter of recommendation.
- Police charged Varney with forgery in violation of section 15 point 70 of the Penal Law and sent him to court Friday.
- The suspect a sophomore student of the University of Liberia said hardship forced him to commit the act. His case is pending court trial.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Tuesday, 25 November 2008

Taylor's men fail to appear

Written by Julius Kanubah

Public hearings at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Monday failed to take place due to a boycott by several key witnesses.

The witnesses include former aides and frontline commanders of Charles Taylor.

No reason has been given why they boycotted the hearings.

They are Momo Gebah, Cocoo Dennis, Roland Duore Christopher Vambo, Siafa Norman, Kofi Zah, William Toe, Austin Clarke and Prince Seo.

Others are Marcus High-Gray, Emmet Gray, Montgomery Dolo, Varney Gagama and Moses Ghoan.

A spokesman of the TRC said witness Marcus Davies alias Sundaygar Dearboy took an excuse because he was out of the Country.

Mr. James Kpargoi said TRC commissioners were meeting to discuss the next course of action for witnesses who refused to attend.

Guardian

Sunday, 23 November 2008

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/23/liberia-war-crimes-chucky-taylor>

The all-American warlord

He grew up in suburban Florida, just a few miles from Disney World. But by his early twenties, Chucky Taylor had become a brutal drug-crazed torturer. Johnny Dwyer charts his journey from ordinary jock to the most feared man in Liberia Johnny Dwyer

guardian.co.uk, Sunday November 23 2008 00.01 GMT

The Observer, Sunday November 23 2008

Chucky Taylor's trial in Miami was the first time a US court has tried an American citizen for war crimes overseas. Photograph: Shirley Henderson/AP

Chucky Taylor stood in the garage of a villa on the outskirts of Liberia's capital, gun in hand. Outside, crimson puddles of rain pocked the red-clay road to Monrovia. By Chucky's side was a spectral figure named Benjamin Yeaten, known as '50' to the legion of mercenaries and former child soldiers he and Chucky commanded. In front of the two men, bleeding and terrified, was a university student accused of aiding a rebel army that was working its way through the jungle towards the capital.

It was July 2002, and civil war had been rampaging through Liberia for 13 years, transforming one of Africa's oldest democracies into a ghoulish landscape. Drugged-out militias manned checkpoints decorated with human intestines and severed heads. Small children were forced into battle by the thousands. Women were raped and turned into sex slaves known as 'bush wives'. Enemies were disembowelled, cooked and cannibalised. All told, human rights groups estimate, more than 600,000 Liberians were murdered, raped, maimed or mutilated in the conflict.

In the midst of this reign of terror, Chucky was among the most feared men in the country. Only 25, he created and commanded the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU), the president's personal security force - a source of such pride that Chucky had the group's emblem, a crest of a hissing cobra and a scorpion, tattooed on his chest. In the capital, he cut a terrifying figure, scattering crowds as he raced through traffic in a Land Cruiser with a licence plate that read 'demon'. When he appeared in public, he was almost always fitted out in black or camouflage fatigues, a well-built figure strapped with a 9mm, a cigar in hand. His face - the dark eyes, the round cheeks, the neatly trimmed beard - was immediately familiar to Liberians who had endured the long civil war. Not only because of his menacing reputation but because of the man he so closely resembled: his father, Charles Taylor, the president of Liberia, who had set the region ablaze with four devastating wars over the span of two decades.

As the son of the president, Chucky was among the most powerful leaders in his father's military. But standing in the villa outside Monrovia, brandishing his weapon over his prisoner, he was a long way from home. Only a decade earlier, Chucky had been an American teenager growing up in a modest, two-storey brick house with his mother and stepfather on a parched plot of land in Orlando, a short drive from Disney World. He had come of age in a strip-mall landscape of payday loan shops and an endless parade of fast-food joints. He attended Evans High School, a squat structure with the motto 'A Place of High Achievement'. He loved hip-hop and spent countless hours in his bedroom rapping, spinning records, preparing for the day he would enter the studio and become an MC. Like most American teens, he knew almost nothing about Africa, let alone its brutal and divisive politics.

Now, standing in the villa outside Monrovia, Chucky levelled his gun at the helpless student before him. He wanted information.

His father's opponents were closing in on the capital, on the brink of overthrowing the government. Where were the rebels? Who was providing them with weapons? Were the Americans involved? There was little to keep Chucky from extracting the information any way he wanted. After all, he was a US citizen. His father was president of the country. No one could touch him. 'Chucky was very much like Hussein's sons,' says David Crane, the founding chief prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. 'He was completely above the law, protected by his father and his henchmen.'

Chucky tried threatening the student with his gun. Then, as dawn approached, he and Yeaten began to torture the man. According to a 17-page federal indictment brought by the US Attorney's Office in Miami, Yeaten, who is referred to as 'co-conspirator B', burned the student with a hot iron and doused him with scalding water. Chucky shocked the victim's genitals repeatedly with an electrical device. It was the kind of interrogation those closest to Chucky had seen him conduct many times before. 'Chucky Taylor executed a lot of people,' says retired Brigadier General John Tarnue, who served under Chucky in the ATU. 'In my presence he tortured people. He tied them. He called it tabay. Elbow to elbow. And twine went into the flesh. He sit there, cross his legs, and smoke cigars. He didn't touch them, but he gave them the order. He said, "I want to see blood."'

Today, his father is standing trial for war crimes at the UN's court in the Hague, while Chucky Taylor, currently held in the Federal Detention Centre in Miami, is being tried as the first civilian in American history to be charged with committing torture abroad. In phone calls and letters to me over the past two years, he has repeatedly denied the charges, implying that he is a victim of an American policy targeting his father. His conversations, like his letters, ramble, alternating between swaggering defiance and confused despair. At the very least, he suggests, he is a victim of a bizarre double standard, prosecuted by a US government that itself has engaged in torture.

'Innocence is not my dilemma,' he wrote in March 2007 in a letter that covered five handwritten pages torn from a yellow legal pad, punctuated with the occasional smiley face. 'It is how do I prove my innocence, and not make this intelligence-gathering exercise for these cocksuckers in Washington - that's the challenge presented... They say absolute power corrupts absolutely [but] there is no other government in the world that operates with [more] impunity than Washington, and those that operated with its covert support.'

Chucky's mother, Bernice Emmanuel, first saw Charles Taylor in the mid-Seventies in the Dorchester neighbourhood of Boston, when he was an economics student at nearby Bentley College. 'I met him through one of his neighbours,' she recalls. 'I was coming out of the building, and he asked for my number.' She quickly fell for the handsome young man, the son of an elite Liberian family. Taylor belonged to a close-knit community of expat students who had been sent to Boston to receive an American education. At the time, revolution was sweeping across Africa, and the Liberian students were agitating for a seismic change in their nation, from the rule of the traditional elite to political power for the tribal disenfranchised.

Emmanuel and Taylor eventually moved into a cosy apartment together. They soon had a son, Michael, who passed away at seven months, and a daughter, Zoe. On 12 February 1977, Emmanuel gave birth to Chucky - he weighed 12lb 14oz. He had grey eyes and a ghostly pale complexion, a vestige of Emmanuel's white grandfather. When Charles Taylor arrived at the hospital 'he didn't believe the boy was his kid,' says Emmanuel. 'He didn't look like he was a black baby.' They named their son Charles McArthur Emmanuel. They never married, but they enjoyed several idyllic years in their Dorchester apartment. 'We lived together for eight years. I was considered his common-law wife.'

During Chucky's first year, Emmanuel was the breadwinner, though Taylor juggled jobs at Sears and the insurance company Mutual of Omaha. Chucky, Emmanuel says, 'was the happiest baby'. One day, around

his first birthday, Taylor saw his son drinking from a baby bottle. He plucked it from his son's hands and threw it out the window. 'You're too grown-up for bottles,' he declared.

Despite moments of domesticity, Taylor led a separate life outside the home. He partied and protested with other Liberian activists living along the East Coast. In 1980, he travelled back to Liberia just in time for a coup by a small band of army officers. In a volatile political climate, Taylor quickly proved to be a canny opportunist: he married the niece of a general, ingratiating himself with the new government. He called Emmanuel, asking her to move to Liberia, but she refused. 'We weren't educated enough to know that Africa wasn't backward,' she says.

From then on, Chucky's father became a transient presence in his childhood. Put in charge of the General Services Agency, Liberia's main procurement office, Taylor ran it as his own private kingdom. He proudly displayed his newfound wealth, chauffeured around Monrovia, surrounded by bodyguards, grasping a small dog. Within a few years, accusations that he had pilfered nearly \$1m in state money forced Taylor to flee to America, where he shuttled between New Jersey, Staten Island and Boston. 'Every year he came back twice to visit the kids,' says Emmanuel. 'He gave the kids everything they wanted.' In 1984, when Chucky was seven, US marshals arrested Taylor on an extradition request from the Liberian government. But Taylor conned a car thief into arranging his escape, breaking out of the Plymouth County Jail in Massachusetts and fleeing the country, never to return to the US or his children again. 'It destroyed our family,' Emmanuel says.

Emmanuel moved on with her life. In the mid-Eighties, she married Roy Belfast and relocated the family to a two-storey brick home on the corner of a quiet street in Orlando. Chucky slept in a small bedroom, barely big enough for his bed and dresser, but he made room for a turntable, a mixer and a massive set of speakers. As he grew into a teenager, his light complexion darkened. He began to strongly resemble his father, who was drifting in and out of prisons in Ghana and Sierra Leone, and into Gaddafi's paramilitary training camps in Libya. In 1989, on Christmas Eve, Taylor re-emerged as a self-styled revolutionary leader, invading Liberia with a small band of guerrillas. A month later, Chucky went with his mother to the Orange County Clerk's Office and changed his name to that of his stepfather, becoming Roy Belfast Jr. 'I was his father at the time,' Chucky's stepfather says simply.

A few years later, around Christmas, Chucky answered the phone at home. Now in his early teens, he was a quiet kid, awkward and shy. The man on the line asked to speak to his mother. Emmanuel wasn't home, but before Chucky hung up the stranger explained he was the boy's father. 'My dad called,' Chucky announced when Emmanuel returned home. 'I didn't want to talk to him.'

Emmanuel was stunned. It had been so long since she'd heard from Taylor, she couldn't understand what Chucky was telling her at first. 'Who's your dad?' she asked, bewildered.

Taylor began to call frequently, eventually inviting the family to join him in Liberia. He seemed hurt by the separation and eager to reunite with his children. The next summer, Chucky travelled to Africa, where he, his mother and sister were reconciled with Taylor after nearly a decade apart. The family arrived in Gbarnga, a small city in the Liberian bush outside Monrovia. From there, Taylor ruled over 'Greater Liberia', the bush empire he had built over years of fighting in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Taylor arranged for Emmanuel and their daughter to stay at a separate residence, but insisted Chucky stay with him.

At first, the boy from Orlando had trouble grasping that this imposing African warlord was his father. Taylor was surrounded by soldiers from his army, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), some of whom went into battle in a sort of macabre burlesque, often cross-dressing in wigs and women's underwear, wearing amulets believed to make them impervious to bullets. The child soldiers called Chucky's dad 'Papay' - Liberian slang for 'Father'.

The country that Taylor was fighting to control was conceived in America on 21 December 1816, at the Davis Hotel in Washington. A group of judges, congressional leaders and clergymen had gathered to address what they saw as a growing problem: what to do with the increasing number of freed slaves. The group, which came to be called the American Colonization Society, engineered a novel solution: send the free blacks back to Africa, in the hope they'd build their own country in the image of the new American republic. It became America's first experiment in nation building.

What followed remains an object lesson in the perils of US intervention. After securing a spit of land under the guns of an American naval escort, the settlers set about recreating a replica of the society they had left behind. The freed slaves quickly assumed the role of master, exploiting the new nation's wealth in rubber, timber and iron ore, and even selling the natives into slavery. After the Second World War, the US began plying the small African nation with military aid and developing its infrastructure, even as Liberia's leaders became increasingly criminal in their activities.

By the time Charles Taylor emerged from the bush in the early Nineties, he was able to take advantage of long-festering tribal animosities, building his empire from the ashes of civil war. Unencumbered by ideology, Taylor took whatever position served him best. To curry favour with tribal elders, he became a shaman. To win the sympathies of American religious leaders such as Jesse Jackson and Pat Robertson, he became a Baptist minister. As his troops closed in on Monrovia, he also briefly gained acceptance from the US government, in the words of the former ambassador to Ghana and the Ivory Coast Kenneth Brown, as the 'lesser evil for the greater good'.

'He was calm,' recalls Brown, who slipped across the border of the Ivory Coast to meet Taylor in June 1990. 'He was impressive. He had lived in the US. He looked like he was someone who was in control.' Never mind that his bodyguards wore pearl necklaces and had painted nails - he seemed like the kind of warlord America could work with.

Chucky couldn't help but be impressed by his father's power and by the brutality of the civil war raging around him. After their reunion in Liberia, Chucky returned home changed. He was defiant; he began to drink, smoke pot and carry weapons, getting into confrontations with the police. In letters from prison, he dismisses the impact that exposure to Liberia's civil war had on him. 'My story is a deep and complex one that encompasses different regions of this globe,' he says. 'My childhood is but a fraction of my make-up.'

Lynn Henderson, Chucky's high school sweetheart, recalls him as 'mean-looking' and 'intimidating', even as a teenager. Around her, Chucky had a serious manner, and he rarely partied to excess. But with his friends, he became a different person. 'He was a bad boy,' she says. 'But he was always nice to me. I was totally, totally in love with him.'

At 16, Chucky was arrested for obstruction of justice after he interfered with an arrest of one of his friends, but no charges were filed. Then, on 25 February 1994, Chucky and two accomplices attempted to mug another teenager. When the victim ran home, the crew followed. There, according to police, Chucky pointed a pistol in the face of the boy's father. 'Shoot him!' one of his friends urged. The boys fled but were soon arrested; Chucky was charged with four serious crimes. If convicted, he faced a minimum of three years in prison.

Following the arrest, a mental-health assessment suggested Chucky had problems with drugs and alcohol and noted his difficulty controlling his anger. His stepfather says Chucky was 'tough' but insists he was a 'normal kid'. His mother blames Chucky's behaviour on running with the wrong crowd. But one afternoon, Chucky did something that stunned his parents: he climbed into a bathtub and slit his wrist.

With her son facing years in jail, Emmanuel called Taylor in Liberia. 'I've had him until he's 17,' she told Taylor. 'Now it's your turn.'

Emmanuel sent her son to live with Taylor. Like the founding fathers of the American Colonization Society, she saw a solution in Africa. And in 1994, as his father had a decade before him, Chucky Taylor fled the United States, a fugitive from justice.

'It's hard to explain the situation over here,' Chucky wrote to his girlfriend Lynn Henderson after his arrival. 'All I can say is this, I'm in a place called Gbarnga, Bong County, Liberia, on the West African side of the continent. There are several warring factions in the country. It's a complex issue that needs a lot of research which I want you to do, because I want you to know what's going on over here, you look up L.I.B.E.R.I.A, and N.P.F.L. Leader Charles Ghankay Taylor, my father, it will shed light on what the fuck I'm going through.'

By the time Chucky arrived, the civil war in Liberia had metastasized into half a dozen warring ethnic factions, among whom Taylor's NPFL remained the most powerful. Chucky's father had also launched a war in neighbouring Sierra Leone. The Revolutionary United Front, the rebel group in Sierra Leone that Taylor armed and traded diamonds with, soon became known for its signature act of terror: the amputation of hands and feet. What united both conflicts was Taylor's ambition to become the region's reigning power. 'Everybody is scared of my father,' Chucky wrote to Henderson. 'They say he wants to destabilise the whole of West Africa.'

Chucky's reunion with his father was not always a happy one. Taylor enrolled Chucky in Accra Academy, an elite boarding school in Ghana. But before long, Chucky was arrested by the authorities and expelled from school, reportedly for possessing drugs and weapons. Chucky explained the incident differently to Henderson. 'Yea muthafuckers for no reason arrested me a locked my ass up for 5 days not knowing it was a plot to kill me for political reasons,' he wrote. 'When they set me free I bounced. I guess they thought I wanted to overthrow the country or something.'

A few years into his exile, homesick and eager for companionship, Chucky invited Henderson to visit Liberia. She accepted, but when she landed in Monrovia in 1997, it was nothing like the fairy tale she'd envisioned. 'They'd just gotten out of war,' she recalls. 'There was no electricity. No running water. You had to bathe out of a bucket. Even living with the president's son was never extravagant.'

After eight years of fighting, Taylor had finally been elected president, sweeping into power with 75 per cent of the vote. His campaign slogan was a bizarre mixture of honesty and thinly veiled threat: 'He Killed My Ma, He Killed My Pa, But I Will Vote for Him'.

The Taylors moved to Monrovia, and Chucky began attending the College of West Africa, a sort of prep school in the capital. When he accompanied his father, Chucky donned traditional dress and adopted the distinct syntax of Liberian English. 'Nobody would notice he was an American,' says Koisee Garmo, a cousin of Chucky's who attended school with him. 'He was a very kind person. He was generous.' Yet Chucky also held on to the gangsta swagger from his Orlando days, twisting his hair into cornrows, suiting up in Kevlar, and moving nowhere without his walkie-talkie and pistol. Not long after Chucky enrolled, the principal asked him to leave.

Henderson celebrated her 18th birthday in Monrovia, and two years later she became pregnant with Chucky's child. In January 2000, the president hosted a lavish state wedding for the couple. 'My people shall be your people,' he told Henderson. The newlyweds went to Trinidad for their honeymoon and then settled in an oceanfront home in Monrovia. President Taylor helped out with expenses at first, but he expected his son to make his own living.

Initially, Chucky pursued a career in the timber trade, but he didn't show much of a knack for business. Before long, though, the 23-year-old found something he wanted to pursue. 'Security,' says Garmo. 'The protection and well-being of himself and his father.' Despite their fractious relationship, Taylor and his

son now found a common cause. A fresh insurgency, intent on unseating Taylor, had crossed over the Guinean border. The threat focused Chucky's attention on the family business: war.

Chucky set up the training facility for the ATU in Gbatala, a small town several hours outside of Monrovia in Bong County, which had served as a base of operations for his father during the long civil war that brought him to power. The facility, also known as Cobra Base, was among the most feared locations in Liberia. Today it sits vacant, slowly disintegrating as the jungle reclaims it. On a nearby hilltop stands the 'College of Knowledge', a roofless, five-room cinder-block structure painted in a cartoonish camouflage pattern, which once served as a training centre and interrogation facility. On a ridge below are a handful of similar buildings; on one, where Chucky slept when he stayed at the base, faded, hand-painted letters read 'executive mansion'. The site had been a gravel quarry, and several deep pits are dug into the rock. Conscripts once filed through the base for training, many of them illiterate teenagers who'd served in Taylor's Small Boys Unit throughout their adolescence.

Jackson Mulbah, a former conscript in the ATU, remembers Chucky from the base. 'He was the chief of staff,' says Mulbah. 'He was bad, I will tell you that.' The ATU trainers were mercenaries from the Gambia, Burkina Faso, Ukraine and Libya - some had been recruited by Taylor from Gadaffi's camps in the Eighties. Like other former child soldiers, Mulbah was put through 'Zero Week', a brutal regime that combined intense physical training with starvation. Trainees were sometimes mowed down in live-fire exercises; others were burned alive during rope drills over flaming barrels of gasoline. Mulbah recites a grim list of a few of the conscripts who didn't survive the training: 'Moses Sumo. Roland Garwein. Sengbe Mulbah.'

When Chucky appeared on the base, Mulbah recalls, a commander would ring a bell and shout, 'Movement, cease!' Chucky would then address the recruits. 'Gentlemen, this is training base,' he warned. 'When you come here, you abide by our own law. When you go above the law, the law will lay hand on you.' Recruits were disciplined by being beaten as they carried massive logs. Mulbah received 25 lashes from his own best friend on Chucky's orders after failing to hit a bottle during target practice. At one point, he says, Taylor removed Chucky from the base 'because of his wickedness'.

The ATU soon became the best-equipped - and ultimately the most powerful - outfit in Taylor's security apparatus. In April 1999, a rebel group attacked the town of Voinjama, near the border with Guinea. As described in the federal indictment, Chucky travelled to a checkpoint near the site of the attack with members of the ATU. Civilians fleeing the town streamed over the St Paul River Bridge, deeper into Liberia. Chucky stopped a group passing through the checkpoint. He asked whether there were rebels among them. According to the indictment, he then 'selected three persons from the group and summarily shot them in front of the others'. The ATU detained several survivors and brought them to the base at Gbatala; by that time the prisoners had been pistol-whipped by Chucky and several ATU officers. The prisoners were then tossed into pits, which were covered with iron bars and barbed wire, and tortured, including being burned by cigarettes and having plastic melted on their genitals. At one point, according to the indictment, Chucky ordered the execution of a prisoner, but when an ATU officer raised his gun, Chucky instructed him to cut off the man's head instead. Several officers held the man down, forcing his head over a bucket. 'The soldiers then severed [the victim's] head by cutting his throat from back to front as blood dripped into the bucket, while he screamed and begged for his life,' the indictment states.

Some close to Chucky claim he had little to do with the ATU. 'He was a military adviser,' says Samuel Nimley, a former ATU commander. 'As a military adviser, he could assume leadership of any unit.' Nimley is especially dismissive of those accusing Chucky. 'If you get bitten by a snake once,' he says, 'even if you see a worm, you will get frightened.'

Yet many others insist Chucky directed the ATU. 'He started doing the Anti-Terrorist Unit, and he was really proud of it,' Henderson says. Tarnue, the general who served under Chucky, says he witnessed the president's son ordering executions at Gbatala. When he confronted Taylor about the abuses, however, the

president refused to hear any criticism of his son. Ultimately, Chucky had Tarnue arrested and brought to the holding cell near Chucky's office behind the Executive Mansion. There, ATU officers tied Tarnue's arms behind his back, slammed a rifle butt into his eye, gouged his face with a bottle cap and yanked on his genitals with a rope.

Tarnue is no stranger to war atrocities. As a general in the NPFL, Taylor's fighting force, he trained an army notorious for murder, rape, torture and mutilation, though he denies any direct involvement in human rights violations. Today he works as a security guard in Baltimore and serves as a witness for the Special Court for Sierra Leone, recasting himself as a victim of the same human rights abuses the forces he commanded have been accused of. 'Chucky, he knew that he was a US citizen,' Tarnue says. 'But the atrocities that he committed were because his father was the president. He feel that he become lawless. He became the commander of the ATU and had all the authoritativeness to do anything to anybody. And the father couldn't do anything about it.'

Before long, Chucky's ambition spilled over Liberia's borders. Following his father's lead, he began providing arms and personnel to Sierra Leone. He became involved in smuggling gems, a trade that drew all brands of international criminals to Liberia, including operatives for al-Qaeda. Chucky worked with Israeli arms dealer Leonid Minin and South African mercenary Fred Rindle to orchestrate diamond deals that would in turn fuel weapons purchases. His trade in 'blood diamonds' earned him a dubious honour also bestowed on his father: a travel ban issued by the UN Security Council.

In August 2000, Chucky's name turned up when Italian police stormed a hotel room outside Milan and found Minin passing the evening with four prostitutes and 58g of cocaine. Minin's personal effects included more than \$25,000 in cash, \$500,000 in diamonds and 1,500 pages of documents. Several faxes mentioned Chucky. One detailed a 'special package for JUNIOR' of 100 'units' (what Italian officials believed to be missiles). After Minin's arrest, according to documents seized by the Italian police, Chucky faxed a final message signed 'Charles McArthur Taylor Junior' that read: 'And from this day forward never in your life ever contact me again.'

Chucky's personal life also began to suffer. His young wife had undergone the jarring transition from an American high school to being the wife of one of Liberia's most notorious warlords. She rarely ventured beyond the couple's oceanfront villa, where she cared for their young son. Although she insists she had little inkling of the terror her husband inspired, their marriage started to fall apart. The president took notice and counselled Henderson to stand by Chucky. 'The patient dog gets the biggest bone,' he told her.

But Chucky's personality was taking on what Henderson calls a 'Dr Jekyll/Mr Hyde' turn. One day Chucky came home with his hand in a cast; Henderson believed he'd broken it punching someone. The deeper he became involved in the ATU, the less she recognised the sweet, shy boy she'd known from Orlando. 'One day he decided he just didn't want to be in a relationship,' Henderson says. 'He couldn't deal with being a husband and a father.' She filed for divorce in 2002 and returned to Orlando. Chucky rarely contacted his wife and child, and provided no support for his family.

In the years they were apart, Chucky's violence spun out of control, encompassing even those closest to him. On the streets of Monrovia, average Liberians still recite the enduring legend that Chucky murdered his own driver, Isaac Gono, for hitting a dog and denting his BMW. One human rights report quotes Chucky as ordering his bodyguards to beat Gono 'till you see his bones and shit'. The Justice and Peace Coalition, another human rights group, received a letter from Gono's family indicating that he was beaten to death by ATU officers 'allegedly acting upon the instructions of Charles Taylor Jr on 18 September 2002, at about 4am.' According to the report, the Liberian Ministry of Defence denied Chucky's involvement, attributing Gono's death to 'manhandling' by two ATU officers.

George Wortuah, Gono's brother-in-law, lives on the outskirts of Monrovia, not far from Chucky's beachfront home. As Wortuah tells it, Gono had grown close to Chucky, a relationship that made the other

officers jealous. 'The bodyguards beat Isaac because of Chucky gave order to punish Isaac,' he says in Liberian English. When the guards finished, they drove Gono's body to the JFK Medical Centre. Wortuah viewed the corpse there. The body was mutilated, Gono's clothes torn to shreds by the ferocity of the attack.

Soon afterwards, Chucky summoned the family. 'He apologised,' Wortuah recalls. 'He assured us he ordered his bodyguard to punish Isaac. He don't say you should beat him to kill him. That was mistake.' At the meeting, Chucky gave the family \$1,000 in cash for Gono's two children. Eventually, Wortuah says, the family received \$16,000 to pay for the funeral and provide for the children. The money came directly from President Taylor.

Taylor may have tolerated and even encouraged the abuses Chucky carried out against helpless civilians and his enemies, but he couldn't stomach the senseless murder of an ATU officer. Soon after Gono's death, Taylor revoked Chucky's command. By this point, Taylor's regime was under siege. A rebel faction had beaten back his forces to Monrovia, and Taylor ineptly tried to tamp down the insurgency by ordering the ATU to arrest enemies of the state. In March 2003, the Special Court for Sierra Leone indicted Taylor on 17 counts of crimes against humanity - including murder, rape and enslavement - making him the first African head of state to face such charges.

As his father's empire collapsed, Chucky reconnected with his estranged wife after a year of silence. Chucky's mother begged Henderson to help rein in his increasingly erratic behaviour. 'Even though he was a shitty father and a shitty husband, I didn't want him to die,' Henderson says. 'I felt like he was just going to kill himself.' Henderson returned to Monrovia with her son and found Chucky wasting away. 'He now had a heavy drug problem,' she says. 'I think it was cocaine.' His father's indictment had left Chucky rattled and paranoid. 'He was just not all there,' she says. 'He probably knew it was over.' Though Chucky and his father had been reconciled, Gono's death had driven a wedge between them.

As fighting outside the capital intensified, the mood at Taylor's mansion grew sombre. Sitting with the president one day, Henderson began to sob quietly. When Taylor asked her what was wrong, she gave her father-in-law a hug, unable to explain her emotions. Taylor was taken aback. 'He's not the type of guy used to getting hugs,' Henderson says.

By that point, Chucky had retreated to his villa. One afternoon, Henderson recalls, an ATU officer ran to the door, frantically reporting that 'the rebels had breached the city'. Mortars sounded in the distance. Chucky rushed his wife and three-year-old son into the back seat of his truck and threw a Kevlar vest over them. Henderson was terrified.

'OK, we're going to die,' she said.

'It's OK, Mama,' her tiny son replied.

The ATU officer shattered the truck's rear window to give him a line of fire, and the group raced to the president's residence. When they arrived, they found Taylor sitting calmly among some of the mothers of his other children. Chucky's father laughed at his son for overreacting.

At home, Henderson could do little to control Chucky's drug use. One day she opened the bathroom to discover Chucky with what she thought was cocaine. When she knocked the drugs out of his hands, he leapt on her, wrapping his hands around her neck. Chucky had never laid a hand on Henderson before. Soon after, Henderson returned home to Orlando. 'That's my son's last memory of his dad,' she says. 'Him strangling me.'

If Chucky had bottomed out, so had the Taylor presidency. By the summer of 2003, a ferocious battle known locally as 'World War Three' engulfed Monrovia. The fighting was savage, even by Liberian

standards. Desperate for intervention from the United States, citizens stacked the dead in front of the US Embassy. World leaders united in their call for Taylor to resign. On 18 July 2003, Chucky fled Liberia. The following month, his father stepped down and accepted exile in Calabar, Nigeria.

Chucky followed him there, and over the next few years his life took a nomadic turn. He ventured to South Africa, Libya, Paris and London. In 2005, he spent several weeks at a studio in Trinidad, recording 20 hip-hop tracks. 'I grew up in the era of hip-hop,' he says. 'Obviously, my evolution has taken place at a rapid pace.' Federal agents confiscated a notebook of his lyrics, which included the lines 'We ain't takin' no slack/Y'all try to tackle mine/Layin' bodies in stacks' and 'Take this for free/Six feet under is where you gonna be.'

In March 2006, when Nigerian authorities arrested Taylor to face extradition to the Hague, Chucky boarded a flight for Miami. He had just had tattoo of a phoenix, a symbol of his hope to restart his life in America. But when he arrived, immigration agents met him at the plane and placed him under arrest. As they read Chucky his rights, he recited along.

The Justice Department, which had stood by while the Bush administration renounced the Geneva Conventions and authorised the use of torture on detainees in its War on Terror, was nonetheless eager to prosecute Chucky on charges of violating the Geneva Conventions. The normal procedure in such cases, to avoid the political expense of a trial, is either to ignore the offenses or to extradite those charged with torture back to the country where the abuses were committed. But immigration officials made the case a priority, co-ordinating agents from the FBI to fly all over the world to gather evidence against Chucky. If convicted, he faces up to life in prison.

Human rights groups hailed his indictment as a milestone. 'The Chucky Taylor case is a dramatic step forward in support of holding torturers criminally accountable,' says Morton Sklar, executive director of the World Organization for Human Rights USA.

The US government refuses to allow a face-to-face interview with Chucky. In his letters and phone calls to me, however, Chucky criticises everyone involved in his case: his public defenders (whom he wants to fire), the federal investigators ('What experience do they have in Liberia?'), even the judge ('There's a great deal of political pressure on her. She's one of the youngest on the circuit. She's a female'). Chucky is a convert to Islam; he sprinkles his conversations with Arabic phrases and now goes by the name Hamza Abdul Aziz. He remains cagey about his father, whom he refers to alternately as 'my father' or simply 'Taylor'. Chucky insists he should be extradited, and that any trial should take place in Monrovia. 'I am a Liberian first and foremost,' he says. 'The US has no right to prosecute me. If I am going to do a day under conviction, it should be in Liberia.' All of his actions, he insists, fall within the Geneva Conventions. He holds out hope that the CIA's destruction of videotapes of its interrogations of al-Qaeda detainees will somehow unravel the government's case. His attorneys have requested access to the classified Department of Justice memo that approved the use of torture, and presented a side-by-side comparison between the acts Chucky is accused of and those committed by American agents in the War on Terror.

But Chucky makes few attempts to explain his own actions, and when he does, they come across as little more than incoherent ravings. 'Clearly this indictment is meant to smoke me out,' he writes at one point. 'For me to talk or to create a clearer picture, there is intense anger due to my declines, based upon there Several request, thru what is called queen for a day letter aka use of immunity, a five day debrief, before this indictment was ever pursued.' He closes the letter: 'Now the question arises, am I a big fish in Liberia, and among panafricanists in the region, my response is, I'm a mere tadpole in a vast ocean, filled w/ sharks, scavengers, and whales, pounded by hurricanes.'

The closest he gets to a direct statement on war crimes comes in an opinion he offers about a US Marine accused of executing two prisoners of war during the battle of Fallujah. Chucky says he can empathise with the accused soldier: 'I know that in conflict, men, particularly brave men, can see their actions

blurred by circumstance.' In simple terms, Chucky views himself as a victim, not a perpetrator. 'The average human rights group thinks about the little man,' he tells me. 'Well, I am the little man.'

Were it not for his arrest, Chucky would be nothing more than an asterisk on his father's legacy: the destruction of an entire country. Monrovia today remains a shell of a city. Only the wealthiest live with power or running water. Mountains of steaming rubbish tower over rusted tin shacks. UN peacekeepers man machine-gun nests along roads with billboards reminding Liberians that rape is a crime. The nation that Charles Taylor and his son left behind is broke, unemployed and prone to maudlin binges of self-destruction. Chucky's path in life has always mirrored that of his father, from beloved son to American fugitive to African warlord. Now the arc of their shared biography has terminated with their respective court dates: Charles Sr at the Hague, Charles Jr before a federal court in Miami. Their trials will seek to answer fundamental questions of guilt and innocence and to provide a measure of justice for the millions in Liberia and Sierra Leone whose lives have been destroyed by civil war. But Chucky's story also serves as a reminder of the way in which the pull of family can transmit violence across the generations like a virus, oblivious to national boundaries. One of the most tragic crimes a father can commit, in the end, lies in the lessons he imparts to his son.

Last November, as he awaited trial, Chucky wrote a letter to his own son. 'Daddie has some things to take care of before you see him,' it read. 'Sorry for the times when you came to visit, I was not a better man, and father.'

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Are you still buying a blood diamond?

MUMBAI : In diamond industry, blood diamond — aka converted diamond, conflict diamond, hot diamond or a war diamond — refers to a diamond mined in a war zone, usually in Africa, and sold to finance an insurgency, invading army's war efforts, or a warlord's activity.

But the word has never been so popular till the release of Leonardo DiCaprio's Hollywood movie 'Blood Diamond' in 2006. After the movie became a box office hit across the world, it hit the diamond industry hard. Diamond buyers started looking at the sparklers with suspicious eyes.

India's diamond market also earned a bad name with the movie depicting India as a hub for trading blood diamonds. There are umpteen movies in the West which have caused social changes. 'Blood Diamonds', directed by Edward Zwick, helped the world know there is an other side to the glittering stones people don.

In the movie, DiCaprio plays an ex-mercenary who sells arms to Sierra Leone rebels in exchange of diamonds. Though this illicit trade has been active for many years and allegedly funded African civil wars, actions were far from satisfactory.

After the movie made an impact among buyers, diamond lobby had to spend huge money in PR exercise to clear its name. The World Diamond Council, representing De Beers among others, also hired Sitrick and Co, a leading Hollywood image consultant, to run an image building campaign for diamonds.

In African countries like Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone, where diamonds are aplenty but mining technology is poor, armed rebel militias used force on locals to gain access to both alluvial and mined diamond roughs. These stones were later named "blood diamonds".

In Sierra Leone, where Revolutionary United Front, a rebel group backed by then Liberian president Charles Taylor, controls the diamond fields. The civilian population in that country is tortured and most often killed to make them work as diamond extractors.

The money from the diamond fields is used for rebel wars in the region. DiCaprio's dialogue in the film which mentions India as the final destination of these conflict diamonds made the world take note. Though Indians deny any role in blood diamond trade, a few people like K K Sharma, executive director of Indian Diamond Institute, says it is not possible to differentiate between a conflict and non-conflict diamond.

"It is impossible to differentiate it except that the KPCS certificate is attached from the place of origin. If by any means this certificate is lost, the roughs can easily be classified as blood diamonds," he says.

Kimberly Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) is a joint initiative of governments of diamond producing and trading countries, diamond sector and social groups and is backed by the UN.

Although the United Nations first identified the conflict diamond issue in 1998 as a source of funding for war, it was the diamond industry that took steps to address the issue by convening a meeting to plan a process by which diamond origin could be certified. In May 2000, diamond producing countries of southern Africa met in Kimberley, South Africa, to plan a method by which the trade in conflict diamonds

could be halted, and buyers of diamonds could be assured that their diamonds have not contributed to violence.

On July 19, 2000, the World Diamond Congress adopted at Antwerp a resolution to strengthen the diamond industry's ability to block sales of conflict diamonds. The resolution called for an international certification system on the export and import of diamonds, legislation in all countries to accept only officially sealed packages of diamonds, for countries to impose criminal charges on anyone trafficking in conflict diamonds, and instituted a ban on any individual found trading in conflict diamonds from the diamond bourses of the World Federation of Diamond Bourses.

The KPCS was given approval by the UN on March 13, 2002, and in November, after two years of negotiation between governments, diamond producers, and non-government organizations, the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme was created.

Recently, two citizens of Guena and Lebanon were held for 'smuggling' diamonds worth Rs.3.85 crore. Both were known to have imported diamonds to India via Dubai, without KPCS and they are languishing in Surat jail now. Locals say there are hundreds of such cases which go unreported.

Even the KPCS is not a foolproof scheme but it created the impact for which it was made. From a huge 4 to 5 per cent of conflict diamonds before the KPCS, the number of dubious sparklers has come down to 0.5 per cent now. Before the blood diamond scenario emerged, it was known that Burma's military junta survived by trading in rubies. And it is not a mean figure. More than 90 per cent of world's rubies come from Burma, a relatively poor country with worst human rights record.

In 2004, Amnesty International and Global Witness conducted a survey of diamond jewellers to see if they were living up to their promises to stop the trade in conflict diamonds. It was discovered that while some efforts have been made, many retailers were not doing enough.

Only 18% of stores surveyed could provide a copy of their conflict diamond policy and 22% said they had no policy at all. As the public face of the industry, diamond jewellery retailers must do more to implement the system of guarantees and make sure their suppliers are only dealing in conflict-free diamonds.

Global Witness, an organisation working to eradicate conflict diamonds from the market, says that as a buyer you can help ensure diamonds never again fund conflict. When shopping for diamond jewellery, ask the salesperson four questions to find out what they are doing to help prevent the trade in conflict diamonds. Only consumers, Global Witness believes, can help change the situation and prevent wars which have cost an estimated 3.7 million lives.