

**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:

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

Wednesday, 25 September 2013

Taylor's Last Hope



By Boima J.V. Boima

With the court in The Hague meeting this week to determine

his final fate, convicted former President Charles Taylor's farewell

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remark, "God's willing, I shall be back," continue to linger in the minds of family members and key allies who flocked a church in Congo Town over the weekend invoking the Divine Intervention for his return.

"We are convinced that with the intervention of God, Dr. Charles Taylor would come back to Liberia," said Sen. Sando Johnson, spokesman for the Taylor family.

The convicted former Liberian leader, sentenced to 50 years' imprisonment for his role in the Sierra Leone civil war, is set to hear his final judgment in an appeal case filed against his conviction at the Sierra Leone Special Court.

Analysts say if the court grants his requests, Mr. Taylor could escape the trauma of spending his entire life in a London Prison while a refusal would see the reversal. Though Mr. Taylor had chosen the appeal court to seek his freedom, members of his family and key loyalists believe that the only hope left for the once feared President's return to Liberia is God. After being cornered in Monrovia in a ferocious military attack by a little known rebel movement, President Taylor hesitantly accepted an offer by African leaders to camp for an asylum. At a brief airport ceremony, the reluctant President was heard telling Liberians, "God's willing, I shall be back."

He spent more than two years of asylum in Nigeria's Calabar State only to be chased and arrested later near the border with Cameroon and brought back to stand trial in The Hague for war crimes and crimes against humanity. He has since appealed against his conviction and sentencing to 50 years of imprisonment. The verdict of his appeal this week is expected to determine his final fate.

In a sermon at the Dominion Church, Bishop Isaac S. Winker, President and Founder of the church, who derived his message from the Scriptures of 2 Chronicles and Daniel, described Taylor as an "anointed leader for Liberia."

He said Taylor as a leader "had Liberians in mind" in whatever he wanted to do but that Liberians do not however treat their leaders with respect.

"May God bring our leader back to us in Jesus name!" prayed the charismatic clergyman as his congregation roared "Amen" in response.

Bishop Winker emphasized that the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is trying Taylor, the first former African leader to stand before the court, was established to silence African leaders. He said those who conspired against Taylor did so for the oil reserve in the country.

He called on those who conspired against the former Liberian leader to repent or face the wrath of God.

"You have to repent otherwise, God would teach you a lesson," he stressed.

At the Church also, where several other Taylor loyalists including, Cyril Allen, Benoni Urey, Cocoo Denis and John T. Richardson converged to pray for a man who was once seen to have milked their breads with honey, Mostserrado District 6 Rep. Edwin Melvin Snowe, told journalists that he prayed for God's divine mercy and healing to rest upon the former leader.

"Taylor was my former father-in-law; I offered prayer that God would grant him healing, that God would bring him back. I definitely want to see him back to Liberia," Rep. Snowe said.

Another Taylor fanatic, former Margibi County Rep. Richard Sahr Gbollie told the New Democrat that he was full of hopes that Mr. Taylor would be freed by God's grace.

He noted that to allow the will of God in the country, Liberians must begin to respect their leaders.

In spite of all the huge turnout of Mr. Taylor's loyalists and family members, Sen. Jewel Howard Taylor, Mr. Taylor's former wife was conspicuously absent throughout the special service. She however turned out later at the end of the prayer, making clarifications that she had just returned home from "out of the country."

"I was not here, I went out of the country," Sen. Taylor told journalists upon arrival at the Church premise.

Charles Taylor's Appeal Judgement Tomorrow

The Special Court for Sierra Leone has invited the media to witness the Court's last major judgment tomorrow when the Court's President, Justice George Gelag-King, is expected to read out the judgment in the case of The Prosecutor v. Charles Ghankay Taylor.

The proceedings will be streamed live from the STL courtroom in The Hague beginning at 9:00 a.m. Following the judgment, members of the media will be invited to attend a press confer-

ence by video link with The Hague. Prosecutor Brenda Hollis and Defence Lead Counsel

Morris Anyah will each make a statement and answer questions.

It could be recalled that

the Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the

Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest

responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996.

Human Rights Watch
Wednesday, 25 September 2013

Press Release

Appeals Judgment in Landmark Charles Taylor Trial

Special Court for Sierra Leone Makes Major Contribution to Justice

(Brussels, September 25, 2013) – The United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone will deliver an appeals judgment in the landmark trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor on September 26, 2013. The ruling could have broader implications for the prosecution of high-level officials by international tribunals.

Taylor is the first former head of state to be convicted by an international or hybrid international-national criminal tribunal since the Nuremberg trials. On April 26, 2012, Taylor was convicted of 11 counts of participating in the planning of, and aiding and abetting, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by rebel groups during Sierra Leone’s civil armed conflict, which lasted from 1991 to 2002.

On May 30, 2012, Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in prison. With the appeals judgment, the Special Court for Sierra Leone will complete its trials and judgments. The court tried and convicted eight other people associated with all warring factions during the conflict for “bearing the greatest responsibility” for atrocities committed.

A controversial appeals ruling by the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia in February 2013 limited liability for aiding and abetting in a way that makes responsibility for high-level officials implicated in grave crimes more difficult to establish, Human Rights Watch said. That ruling is not binding on the Special Court for Sierra Leone, but may be considered.

“The trial and judgment of Charles Taylor sets out a clear marker that even those at the highest levels of power can be held to account,” said Elise Keppler, associate international justice director at Human Rights Watch. “The Taylor trial, and the Sierra Leone Special Court’s work overall, have made a major contribution to justice for brutal crimes committed during Sierra Leone’s conflict.”

Voice of America

Wednesday, 25 September 2013

UN Court to Rule on Charles Taylor's Appeal

A United Nations-backed special court will rule Wednesday on former Liberian President Charles Taylor's appeal of his conviction on war crimes during the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone.

Taylor was convicted and sentenced to 50 years in prison last year on 11 counts of crimes against humanity, including acts of terrorism, murder, rape and the conscription of child soldiers.

Prosecutors accused Taylor of supporting the rebels in Sierra Leone with weapons and other supplies in exchange for so-called "blood diamonds." The former president has maintained his innocence throughout the trial.



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor appears in court at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. January 22, 2013

His lawyers say there was no evidence that Taylor was directly involved with assisting the rebels, who have been accused of killing and mutilating thousands of civilians during the 11-year war. Taylor launched an appeal against

his conviction in January this year, with his defense calling for it to be overturned because of his lack of direct criminal involvement.

The court hearings were delayed by the former leader's refusal to cooperate and efforts to fight its jurisdiction. Taylor denied all allegations of wrongdoing.

"Never, ever did I receive, whether it is mayonnaise or coffee or whatever jar, never received any diamonds from the RUF. It's a lie, it's a diabolical lie. Never," said Taylor during the trial.

In August 2010, supermodel Naomi Campbell testified at the trial. Prosecutors said that during a visit to South Africa in 1997, Taylor gave Campbell a large rough cut diamond after a dinner hosted by Nelson Mandela. Campbell said she had been given "dirty looking pebbles" after the dinner in South Africa, but did not know if they were diamonds from Taylor. She gave the diamonds to Jeremy Ratcliffe, then-head of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

"I asked him to take them and do something good with them. He is someone that I trust and I know for a while and I believed that's what he would do," said the British supermodel.

Taylor was first indicted in 2003, along with 12 other suspects. He was arrested in March 2006 during exile in Nigeria, and then moved to The Hague in June 2006 due to fears that a trial in Sierra Leone could kindle unrest in the country or neighboring Liberia.

During the trial, prosecutors called 91 witnesses to support their charges that child soldiers under Taylor's command were sent to battle drugged with amphetamines and marijuana.

The tribunal, which has no death penalty, was established by Sierra Leone and the United Nations to punish those responsible for serious human rights abuses in the African nation since 1996. It has completed cases against 8 of the 13 suspects, who have received sentences of up to 51 years in prison.

Taylor is the first head of state since the end of WWII to face charges of crimes against humanity before an international tribunal.

The New Dawn

Monday, 23 September 2013

Clergy Warns Special Court

Ahead of Thursday's final judgment in the appeal filed by ex-Liberian president Charles G. Taylor in The Hague, a Liberian Clergyman, Bishop Isaac S. Winker has warned Liberians, 'Super Powers' and those sitting on the judgment throne that God would prove them wrong one day, if they don't repent their sins, but continue to set their eyes on those they considered the worst sinners.

Delivering a sermon last Saturday at a one-day intercessory prayer service held in Monrovia for imprisoned former President Taylor, Bishop Winker contended that crimes were not transferable, arguing that Taylor did not physically commit the killing and atrocities for which he was prosecuted.

Instead, the clergyman said in his mind, one of the reasons that led to former President Taylor's arrest by the super power countries serving as policemen, was because Taylor was one of the smartest Liberians that could not be pulled by the nose.

Secondly, Bishop Winker said Taylor was also arrested and confined by the super powers was due to his consistent refusal to hastily approve and put pen to paper in the oil business here- only because the former Liberian Leader had Liberians in mind.

"One reason for super power arresting and have him confined today is because of the oil business. Taylor was not thinking to hastily put his pen to paper to approve it, but he had you Liberians in mind," he said.

But Bishop Winker noted that Africans are not animals to be treated by western powers in the manner they do, warning them to be careful as they were all God's creatures.

"Africans are not animals; I want to warn the super powers to be careful; we are God's creatures- they should be careful how they handle us. The same God that made them is the same God that made us," he warned amidst cheering multitude.

Speaking on the theme "Repentance and God's Mercy" from 2nd Chronicles 33:1 and Daniel 4, Bishop Winker urged those looking down on Taylor for his sins to take their eyes from him and let his sin be between him and his God.

"There are multitudes of sins you have committed; you are not working on them, and you are concentrating on Taylor. You better be careful- at the end of the day, don't be surprised to see Taylor in Heaven, and you are gnawing your teeth in hell fire," he assured.

Portraying the ICC as a medium used by Western powers to subject African leaders to "yes sir" governance and lack of control of their resources, Bishop Winker said with the conditions Taylor placed before the western powers in their quest to have their share of the oil here, they saw him as being too smart to deal with, but to teach him a lesson that landed him in jail.

Comparing the issue of Liberia with that of Ivory Coast when some 300 citizens reportedly protested in Cote d'Ivoire over the manner in which ex-President Laurent Gbagbo was being treated while being taken to The Hague, Bishop Winker wondered what mattered with Liberians for showing no patriotism, as there was no show of love for their leaders.

“Those Ivorian protested on behalf of their leader; but what happened to Liberians? Crucify him, so Taylor is considered the worst sinner in Liberia; then he deserves the love that brought Jesus Christ to die on the cross. Liberians need to repent; we need to work on our attitudes- the way we treat leaders,” he said.

The preacher, however, told the gathering: “Don’t be surprised, as Taylor said ‘God willing, I will be back’. Taylor had no factory to manufacture guns. The same nations that sold guns to him, the same nations that turned to policemen and arrested him, and then they turned around because he couldn’t bow.”

Nehandaradio.Com

Tuesday, 24 September 2013

<http://nehandaradio.com>

Africa and the International Criminal Court: A drag net that catches only small fish?

By William Muchayi

The appearance of William Ruto, Kenya's Vice President before the ICC and only to be followed by his boss Uhuru Kenyatta in November at the Hague , has once again reignited the debate on Africa's relationship with the court.

Not only has it worsened the already fragile marriage between the two, but, it has also given ammunition to critics who for long, have resented the alleged partiality of the institution. Since its birth in 2002, all cases so far launched have been against Africans, with notable figures on the list including Omar Al Bashir [Sudan], Jean Pierre Bemba [DRC], Joseph Kony [Uganda], Muammar Gaddafi [Libya], Laurent Gbagbo [Ivory Coast] and many others.

Rather than being viewed as an instrument to fight impunity and human rights abuses globally, critics of the court are quick to label it as a colonialist tool that is biased specifically against Africans. In this mindset, the ICC is viewed as nothing else but just an extension of the West's imperialistic desire to control former colonies and those in Africa in particular.

Professor William Schabas queries:

“Why prosecute post-election violence in Kenya or recruitment of child soldiers in the DRC, but not murder and torture of prisoners in Iraq or illegal settlements in the West Bank?” Tony Blair, the former British prime minister and George W. Bush [jnr], the former American president, the chief architects of the botched Iraq invasion were never indicted by the ICC nor were they referred to it by the United Nations Security Council [UNSC], in spite of the ample evidence available to justify legal proceedings against the two.



“In the eyes of African critics, the court's focus on Africa just perpetuates the old and tired perception of the continent and its people as brutal, barbaric, chaotic, monstrous, savages and the theatre of ICC crimes. Rather than being viewed as an international criminal court, its critics laugh at the idea as they would want to call a spade by its name, hence the preferred name the ‘International Criminal Court for Africa.’”

Echoing the same sentiments, Chairperson of the African Union Assembly,

Ethiopia's prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn, at the recent AU Summit voiced his concerns: “African leaders came to the consensus that the ICC process conducted in Africa has a flaw. The intention was to

avoid any kind of impunity but now the process has degenerated to some kind of race-hunting rather than fight against impunity.”

African leaders object to the UN Security Council’s powers to refer cases to the ICC, as in the case of Omar Al Bashir of Sudan in relation to the Darfur crisis, lack of transparency in the ICC proceedings, the need for clarification on the immunities of officials whose states are not party to the Rome Statute which gave birth to the court as well as the lack of regional input in determining whether or not to proceed with prosecutions.

Not only that, Africans are of the view that the ICC’s approach which tends to focus more on prosecutions than resolution of disputes between warring factions limits discussion within the domestic sphere, hence the approach becoming counterproductive. To back this argument, Uganda and Darfur crisis come into the fore.

The indictment of Joseph Kony of the Lord’s Resistance Army [LRA] in Uganda[2005] by the ICC is seen as an impediment to the peace process in the country as Kony refuses to enter into peace negotiations with the Ugandan government unless the ICC revokes its indictment. That also applies to the Darfur region where the indictment of Omar Al Bashir is viewed by African leaders as counterproductive as it stalls the peace process since the Sudanese strongman is seen as part of the solution to the crisis.

That being said, accusations levelled against the ICC by its staunch critics appear hollow more so when one considers the fact that most cases investigated by the court are self-referred. Out of the 18 cases that the ICC is currently handling, 12 were initiated upon the request of countries concerned while six were launched based on the referral of the United Nations Security Council [UNSC].

It is the Ugandan government that referred Joseph Kony to the ICC and not the other way round. In the same token, the ICC never requested the indictment of Jean Pierre Bemba, but, the warlord was referred to it by the DRC government just like Laurent Gbagbo by the Ivorian government. In any case, the ICC encourages self-referrals as opposed to it taking the initiative in prosecutions.

As John Washburn reiterates, ‘This is not a question of picking on Africa. The UNSC referred Darfur; and the other countries came forward voluntarily.’

The ICC does not have a mandate to prosecute the USA or Israel in spite of their appalling human rights records as the two fall out of the ICC’S jurisdiction. Referral of any of the above two countries to the ICC by the UNSC is almost impossible as the move is guaranteed of being vetoed by one of the five permanent members of the Security Council of which the US is one of them.

The ICC will only intervene as and when a national government lacks either the will or capacity or both to prosecute a crime committed within its jurisdiction. The Kenyan government failed to prosecute perpetrators of the 2007-8 politically motivated violence that left about 1200 people dead hence the need for the ICC’S intervention.

In Cambodia, the government set up the Cambodia Tribunal [officially known as the Extraordinary Chambers] to prosecute perpetrators of the 1975-1979 atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge regime. In the same way, Bangladesh and Guatemala set up tribunals to try perpetrators of war crimes, genocide and other human rights abuses with or without the assistance of the United Nations.

In the former state of Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic was tried by a tribunal set up in the country and not by the ICC. Africa lacks the will and capacity to try perpetrators of war crimes and genocide, hence the need by the ICC to intervene. Hundreds of innocent victims perished in Zimbabwe during the 2008 atrocities but none of the perpetrators of the crimes was ever held accountable up to today.

Where is the justice for the wronged? Africa's failure to establish strong, viable and credible institutions that address cases relating to crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes is the main reason she has become the focal point of the ICC and this has nothing to do with race. In any case, the ICC does not supersede the authority of national courts; rather it is a 'court of last resort.'

The African court, established in January 2004 should have enabled African states to address human rights issues within the continent, thereby, avoiding being the target of the ICC. Unfortunately, like other countless dysfunctional African institutions, it has failed to carry out or implement its mandate to monitor states' compliance with the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

As if that is enough, the court lacks funding, leaving it an elephant institution. The cost of a single international criminal trial is estimated at nearly US\$20 million and this astronomical figure is almost double the combined approved 2009 budgets of the AU Commission and the African Court. Until when African nations are mature enough to be able to fund their own institutions and establish credible and vibrant infrastructure necessary to successfully prosecute international crimes, the ICC will always have a central role in the continent.

Inaction by Africans is no substitute for action. If African national and regional courts fail victims, international courts like the International Court of Justice [ICJ] or the ICC will always have a role to play. As the current ICC Prosecutor Fetou Bensouda remarked, "The office of the prosecutor will go where the victims need us.....As Africans we know that impunity is not an academic abstract notion."

African leaders who mourn about the ICC's intervention in the continent must realise that the only viable solution for the continent to evade the wrath of the court is by establishing credible institutions that address human rights abuses backed by the will to fight impunity. Kenya's attempt to pull out of the ICC is both ill-informed and unfortunate for she is to blame for failing to prosecute known murderers as she lacks the will to do so.

As one critic pointed out, there is a popular outrage 'throughout Africa against the impunity with which a growing number of regimes have been resorting to slaughter and brutalise their population.' In this context, the ICC is more than welcome by the defenceless who happen to be the majority.

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