

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



The RUF Trial Judgment is read out in Court. See additional photos in today's *'Special Court 'Supplement'*.

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:

Thursday, 26 February 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Special Court for Sierra Leone
Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 25 February 2009

Former RUF Leaders Found Guilty of War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity

Three former leaders of Sierra Leone's rebel Revolutionary United Front were found guilty today of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the country's decade-long civil war. Former RUF Interim Leader Issa Hassan Sesay and RUF commander Morris Kallon were each found guilty on 16 of the 18 counts in the indictment. Former RUF Chief of Security Augustine Gbao was found guilty on 14 counts.



Presiding Judge Justice Pierre Boutet of Canada reads out the judgment in court.

The Court found all three accused not guilty on count 16 (murder, a crime against humanity) and count 18 (the taking of hostages) in connection with the May 2000 abduction of United Nations peacekeepers. In addition, Gbao was found not guilty on count 12 (conscripting of child soldiers), and count 17 (murder, a war crime) in relation to the abduction of peacekeepers.

The Trial Chamber concluded that the three were not responsible for crimes committed in three districts and the Western Area. This included the bloody January 1999 attack on Freetown which left over 5,000 dead.

A sentencing judgment will take place in the coming weeks.

#END

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 25 February 2009

Special Court Prosecutor Hails RUF Convictions

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Stephen Rapp, today welcomed the convictions of three leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

RUF leaders Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon were convicted on 16 counts and Augustine Gbao was convicted on 14 counts of an 18-count Indictment charging them with atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's civil war.

"Today's judgement recognizes the terrible crimes committed against the innocent people of Sierra Leone," said Rapp. "It respects the suffering of the multitude of victims who were mutilated or enslaved, who were murdered or raped, and who were rendered homeless or destitute. It does this in a review of evidence that concludes that these individual leaders were responsible for some of most serious crimes known to humankind."

"Significantly, the judges convicted each of the three of the war crime of 'acts of terrorism' against the civilian population," said Rapp. "This recognizes that their targets were not military bases or enemy soldiers but innocent men, women, and children. It means that these men chose to commit acts so horrible against persons so innocent in order to frighten the population into submission."

"The Court also convicted two of these men for the use of child soldiers – the employment of those under 15 in a force where they would be ordered to maim and to murder. Abducted from their families, brutalized if they resisted, furnished with drugs and guns, they were turned into tools of terror at a horrible cost to their victims and to themselves," said Rapp.

"This Court today for first time in world history convicted each of these individuals of 'forced marriage' as a separate "crime against humanity." In doing so, it recognizes the very deep and long lasting suffering inflicted upon women through conscription as 'bush wives' during the Sierra Leone conflict," said Rapp.

"Of great significance in the conflict zones of the world, this Court also for the first time in history convicted individuals of the specific war crime of 'attack on peacekeepers,'" added Rapp. "This recognizes that peacekeepers were targeted during the Sierra Leone conflict. It sends a message that may deter such attacks against the men and women who are protecting individuals, restoring security, and keeping the peace across the globe."

The Special Court has now delivered judgements against the Accused in all of its Freetown-based trials, with all eight Accused persons convicted. The case against former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, is ongoing in The Hague, where it was moved for security reasons. The Prosecution's last witness, its 91st, completed testimony at the end of January 2009.

Following today's RUF judgement the parties will make submissions on sentencing, which is expected to be pronounced in March.

The final stage in the case will be the appeals phase. "We will closely examine today's judgement and decide whether and on what points to appeal," said Rapp.

END

PAGE 3 STANDARD TIMES Thursday February 26, 2009

Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon & Augustine Gbao found guilty of war crimes

BY EDWARD MARAH & MOHAMED KONNEH

The Presiding Judge of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Justice Pierre Boutet yesterday read out the judgment on the trial of the United Nations backed Special Court War Crimes indictees Mr. Issa Sesay, former interim leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and Mr. Morris Kallon, a former commander of the RUF.

Both of them were found guilty on sixteen counts out of the eighteen counts charge of war crimes and crimes against humanity while Mr. Augustine Gbao, former senior commander of the same organization was found guilty on fourteen counts out of the eighteen count charge indictment.

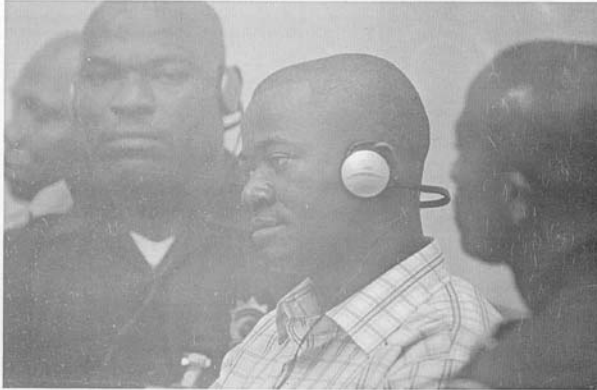
They were indicted in March 2003 for committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of International Humanitarian Law.

Mr. Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon were found guilty on crimes of terrorism, unlawful killing, rape, collective punishment, physical violence, use of child soldiers' abductions and forced labour, attacks on UNAMSIL, personal and other serious violations of International Humanitarian Law.

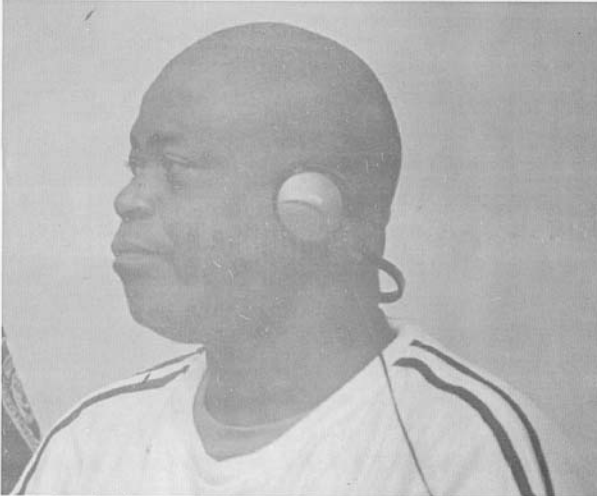
During the judgment, all three accused persons were smartly dressed but appeared sad; the same for families and friends who went to the Special Court to witness the judgment. The court house was packed full with relatives, friends, and victims of the war including members of the international community.

The Court will pronounce sentences in three weeks time, wherein the accused persons will either appeal or accept whatever sentences meted out by the Court.

As people will recall, Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao are standing trial for crimes committed against the people of this nation during the civil war.



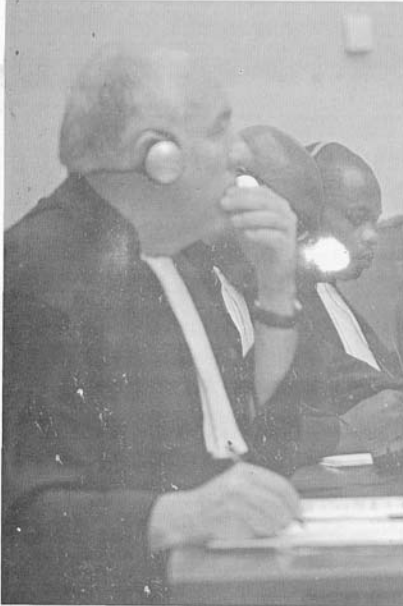
Issa Sesay



Augustine Gbao



Morris Kallon



Awoko

Thursday, 26 February 2009

QUOTING HIM



Capt. Thomas Sankara

“Our popular justice is a justice distinct from that of a society where the exploiters and oppressors control the state apparatus, in that it publicly bring to light and expose the entire hidden social and political side of the crimes perpetrated against the people?”

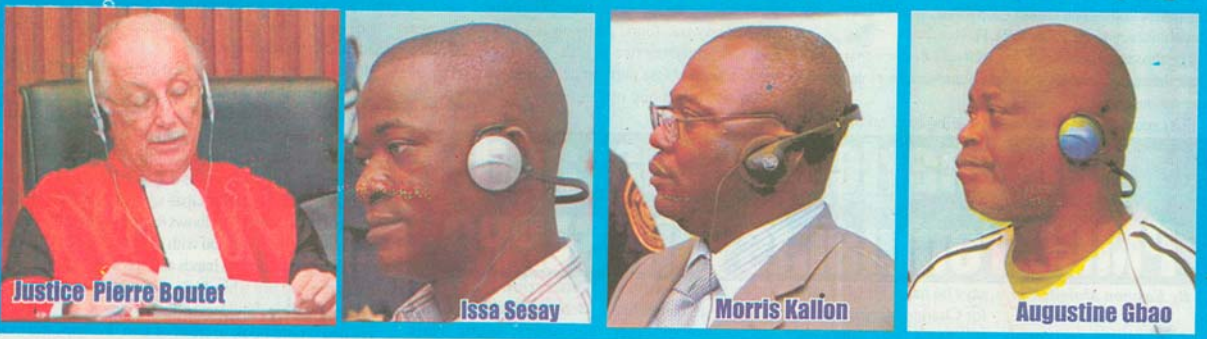


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As Judge dissents on 12 verdicts:
RUF Convicted



Justice Pierre Boutet **Issa Sesay** **Morris Kallon** **Augustine Gbao**

Inspirational Quote

"Be willing to make decisions. That's the most important quality in a good leader. Don't fall victim to what I call the 'ready-aim-aim-aim-aim-aim syndrome.' You must be willing to fire."
- T. Boone Pickens

As Judge dissents on 12 verdicts

RUF Convicted

By Kelvin Lewis

After a four hour delay the Presiding Judge of trial chamber one Justice Pierre Boutet yesterday delivered a one and a half hour summary of the Chambers findings on the three top former leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

The three had been standing trial on 18 count charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international law.

First accused Issa Sesay was wearing a cream coloured

shirt with dark crossed stripes tucked neatly into his trousers. What looked like a protruding stomach was clearly visible. He also had a notebook in front of him. He seemed to be listening attentively through his ear phones when the judgement was being read.

Issa Sesay was found guilty on 16 of the 18 charges and not guilty on two (16 & 18). Justice Boutet mentioned that Issa participated in the joint criminal enterprise by among others being a member of the supreme council.

He was also found guilty of enslavement of civilians in the diamond mines.

Second accused Morris Kallon was by far the best dressed in a light green coloured suit with a white and blue striped shirt and a light grey coloured tie.

He is now looking a bit on the plump side and looked a bit academic in his reading glasses.

He sat on the edge of his seat with his hands clasped together and resting on the table.

The eyes shifted from one end to the other as he heard his conviction being read out.

He too was judged to have committed enslavement and was found guilty on 16 counts and freed on two (16&18)

Third accused Augustine Gbao sat with his hands clasped in front of his face and his elbows resting on the table in what looked like a pensive mood with a slight frown on his face. Other times he folded his hands akimbo in front of his chest. He was dressed in a white Polo shirt with two black stripes running down his shoulders to his elbows.

He had a note book in front of him. Perhaps the most lucky of the three Gbao was convicted on 14 counts and freed on four (12,16,17,18).

What however was interesting was the fact that the Presiding Judge Pierre Boutet dissented on 12 (1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11,13,14) of the 14 guilty verdicts. For his defense counsel however a not guilty verdict on count 12 which was conscripting child soldiers was very significant. Counts 16, 17 and 18 had to do with attacks on UNAMSIL personnel - unlawful killing (16), violence to life, health and physical and mental well being of persons, in particular murder (17) and for the abductions and holding as hostage, taking as hostages (18).

Honourable Paul Kamara of Bo District after the trial said "it was a fair trial to my understanding" he however stated that actions needed to be taken beyond the judgement saying "if somebody is aggrieved and you don't go and talk to that individual or compensate him then he will still be aggrieved."

Amputee Mohamed Bah said "I feel so happy because the truth is coming out now, and those guys did more than what they wanted to do but justice is catching up on them and we appreciate that very much."

Family members declined to talk but Issa Sesay's lawyer Wayne Jordash said he was "deeply disappointed"

He stated that "many civilians of Sierra Leone came forward at great risk to themselves to attest to Mr Sesay's attempt to prevent or punish crimes and none of that appears to be reflected in the judgement.

We ran our defense case which lasted for over six months so it was somewhat surprising to be convicted in such a massive way." Mr Jordash however stated that they were going to examine the judgement and appeal.

Sentencing will take place in the next few weeks. The lightest sentence handed down by the court is 15 years and the strongest is 50 years.

Proceedings on this trial commenced on 5th July 2004 and concluded on 24th June 2008.

The trial chamber sat for 308 days and admitted 437 exhibits and also heard evidences from 85 prosecution witnesses, 59 witnesses for the Sesay defense, 22 witnesses for the Kallon defense and 8 witnesses for the Gbao defense. In all, the chamber heard evidence from 171 witnesses during this trial.

The casefile of the trial consists of 32,096 pages which does not include the transcripts recorded during the proceedings of the 308 trial days

Will Charles Margai and PMDC remnants join SLPP?

By Easmon Moiguah in Bo

Sidique Janneh formerly of the PMDC and a front runner for SLPP Southern Region Chairmanship Election due in the forthcoming National Convention in Keneba has spoken of plans to bring back into SLPP folds remnants of PMDC including Charles Margai whom he fell out with during the 2007 Presidential Run-Off.

Making this ambitious plan in an exclusive interview with Awoko News, he emphatically

says he has a lot of regard for Charles Margai and he still has a large following among the PMDC ranks who still look up to him as a formidable bridge.

Answering questions, Sidique Janneh referred to the main opposition SLPP as mature, rich in human resources and has immensely contributed to good governance. Asked whether he is not up to any political game, Sidique was quick to deny, saying he is SLPP today, tomorrow and forever. And as the process

leading to the Convention draws closer, names like Sidique Brima, Lawyer Mbrwa, Matthew Mannah Margao, are making the rounds with the long serving Chairman, Dr. Momodu Yillah set to say goodbye.

On the other hand, Adama Idriss was two weeks ago elected as the new Bo District SLPP Chairman. Other executive positions went to Mohamed Allie, elected District Scribe, Musa Moigua as Young

Generation Leader, Mohamed Jabbie, Publicity Secretary, while Haja Nancy Kondoh retains the position of District Women's Leader. Also, on the regional front, Francis Hindowa was elected Regional Scribe, Philip Nepor, Publicity Secretary, Kharday Zorokong, Women's Leader, Young Generation Leader is Ahmed Ken Kamara, Joseph Kendoh, Organizing Secretary, while Sam Goba becomes the new Regional Financial Secretary respectively.

Court inspects cocaine plane at Lungi

By William Freeman

The High Court of Sierra Leone has conducted an on sight visit at the Freetown international airport at Lungi on Wednesday 25th February. The visit was led by Justice Brown Mark the presiding judge in the ongoing cocaine trial. Other members of the delegation included prosecution and defense counsels, all the 17 accused persons, senior members of the Sierra Leone police and journalists.

When the delegation arrived at Lungi Air Port the Director of Public Prosecution, Olagipo Robin Mason led the court to a small air craft that was barricaded by security officers and vehicles. The air

craft with the numbers YV1647 boldly written on it was inspected.

Mr. Baimba Bockarie Mangoh a mechanic at the air port explained to the court that he off loaded the items in the air craft after it was apprehended by the police. Mr. John Brima General Manager of the air port also told the court that the air craft came with Red Cross symbols on both sides of the tail of the plane and the numbers YV1647 was covered with a paper that was carrying a white cross symbol.

After the inspection of the plane the judge then ordered the court to visit offices that were occupied by the

accused persons when the plane arrived at the air port. Mr. Sheku Kamara and Mr. Allie Nyelenkeh all testified to the court from their offices.

The Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of Crime Services Mr. Francis Munu (PW32) tendered in court a seven page forensic test report of samples of cocaine substance that was taken to England for examination before the court left for Lungi.

Mr Munu submitted the document on behalf of Mr. David Walker a forensic scientist that was attached to the Serious

Organized Crime Agency (SOCA). Mr. Munu told the court that Mr. Walker was unable to tender the report in person since he was held up by other pressing duties at home (England).

The report was sent to him via E-Mail and fax so that he could tender it on behalf of David Walker.

The document was handed over to the presiding judge for his perusal.

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Vol 9 N0.36 Thursday 26th February, 2009 Le 1000

All stories inside pages



Presiding Judge Justice Pierre Boutet of Canada reads out the judgment in court



Issa Hassan Sesay (First Accused)



Morris Kallon (Second Accused)



Augustine Gbao (Third Accused)

Former RUF Leaders Found Guilty

Sierra Leone's Lost Generation

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COMIUM

Former RUF Leaders Found Guilty

Three former leaders of Sierra Leone's rebel Revolutionary United Front were found guilty today of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the country's decade-long civil war. Former RUF Interim Leader Issa Hassan Sesay and RUF commander Morris Kallon were each found guilty on 16 of the 18 counts in the indictment. Former RUF Chief of Security Augustine Gbao was found guilty on 14 counts.

The Court found all three accused not guilty on count 16 (murder, a crime against humanity) and count 18 (the

taking of hostages) in connection with the May 2000 abduction of United Nations peacekeepers. In addition, Gbao was found not guilty on count 12 (conscripting of child soldiers), and count 17 (murder, a war crime) in relation to the abduction of peacekeepers.

The Trial Chamber concluded that the three were not responsible for crimes committed in three districts and the Western Area. This included the bloody January 1999 attack on Freetown which left over 5,000 dead.

A sentencing judgment will take place in the coming weeks.

Sierra Leone's Lost Generation

Ravaged by a decade-long civil war, the small West African country of Sierra Leone is finally emerging from a dark period in its history. Sierra Leone's domestic conflict erupted in 1991 after government corruption and mismanagement of diamond resources reached a head. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF), in the name of fighting political corruption, forced the recruitment of thousands of child soldiers. The conflict ended in January 2002, killing more than 50,000 people and displacing hundreds of thousands more. The country has since established a new government and in 2007, held presidential and parliamentary elections. Gradually, the war-torn country of Sierra Leone is beginning to make progress.

But for some, the nightmare of war isn't over. Ishmael Beah, a former child combatant and author of *A Long Way Gone*:

Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, remembers life before the war. "Sierra Leone had always been painted as a country of senseless violence," he said. But when he was growing up, Beah said Sierra Leone was a peaceful place to live. He said he used to read Shakespeare and listen to hip-hop music. He had a love for language and poetry - and most of all, learning. Civil war broke out in 1991 and changed the peaceful country Beah once knew. He was 11. Two years later at 13, Beah was enlisted into the war. His immediate family had been killed, and the other child soldiers he met became his new family.

With the RUF, Beah and others like him were instructed to shoot machine guns, take drugs and carry out atrocious crimes. Violence became normalized, Beah said. And it became a way to be a

part of his new family. "The group that we had feared became our family. It had replaced the community we had lost," he explained. But what kept Beah going, he said, was the hope that someday the war would stop. Beah fought in Sierra Leone's brutal civil war for nearly three years before he was rescued by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a permanent arm of the United Nations.

Beah fled his home country in 1998 and managed to take a plane to New York, where he attended school and was looked after by a foster mother. He went on to study at Oberlin College, where he began to write down his experiences from the war. Now 28, Beah works for Human Rights Watch in New York City. His memoir, *A Long Way Gone*, was published in 2007. But Beah's story is unique. Many child soldiers in Sierra Leone had

a much different fate. Murtala Mohamed Kamara, a reporter for AfricaNews in Freetown who has reported on child soldier issues, explained that former combatants went through a program called Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). Most of these fighters, said Kamara, were reintegrated in society while others underwent special skills training.

"A large number of these youths still remain unemployed roaming the streets of Freetown," Kamara said. "Some of the child soldiers lost both parents during the war and they are left to fend for themselves." Beah agreed that unemployment is a major concern for rehabilitation. Now in their 20s, many former child soldiers are still struggling to assimilate back into civilian life. "They don't have opportunities," Beah said of former child soldiers still living in Sierra Leone. "There are a lot of youth that are restless." And restlessness, he said, can be dangerous because it contributes to violence. Young people can be easily manipulated if they are unemployed or don't have much direction in their lives, Beah reasoned.

"There's a lot of rebuilding needed [in Sierra Leone]," Beah said. Beah and Kamara both said the government should take a more active role in the rehabilitation of former child soldiers. "The government, through the president, has the will to change the battered image of Sierra Leone but there is still much that needs to be done," said Kamara. Currently, non-governmental organizations like Children Associated with the War (CAW), are aiding in the rehabilitation process of former child soldiers. Established in 1993, CAW is a Catholic mission program that is still in operation. "Right from the beginning of the program, it was decided that the children has been hurt in Sierra Leone, and therefore they should be cured best by Sierra Leoneans," a CAW report states.

According to CAW's Web site, more than 4,000 war affected youth have been given support since the organization's inception. One of the biggest challenges the country still faces, Kamara said, is overcoming government corruption - which has been a prominent issue in Sierra Leonean politics since the outbreak of the civil war. "I, like many other Sierra Leoneans, think government officials and heads of parastatals must be transparent in their dealings," he said. As to the rehabilitation of former youth combatants, Kamara said that access to education is a major concern because a large segment of Sierra Leone's population is still illiterate. Beah agreed that education is the most important step on the path to recovery. Because of his own education, Beah was able to earn a college degree and write a novel of his memoirs. He now travels to universities world-wide to share his story.

"I learned about myself because of education," he said. "Before I was conditioned to think I was only capable of violence." Beah regularly visits Sierra Leone and said he hopes the government can further the rehabilitation of former child soldiers. "It is difficult to recover," Beah said. "It is long-term. But it is possible."

Cuban, Czech, Palestinian Envoys Present Credentials To President Koroma

President Ernest Bai Koroma today received letters of credence from three new ambassadors from Cuba, Czech Republic, and Palestine at separate but interconnected ceremonies at State House. Presenting his credentials, Cuban Ambassador Dr. Miguel Perez Cruz said he was "fully aware of the significance of such a high mission and the responsibility entrusted to me by my Government to further strengthen the historic ties of friendship and cooperation with the Republic of Sierra Leone."

He went on to say that, "For Cubans, Africa is an essential part of what we are and what we hope to build in the future. During the colonial times, one million three hundred thousand black slaves were uprooted from their homeland to work in the Spanish colonies at that time. The colonialists could not prevent them from handing over to us their languages, religious beliefs, music and temperament. In keeping with those historic links, we have materialized our selfless and solidaritarian [sic] cooperation with almost all countries in the region. Let's take advantage with creativity and political will of the possibilities forged through the history, culture and traditions that unite us with the brotherly people of Sierra Leone...Let's continue working in favour of the holding of the Sierra Leone-Cuba Joint Commission, which, undoubtedly, will represent a step forward in the cooperation between our two nations. Let's work tirelessly to promote initiatives that allow us to find mutually viable and beneficial ways in economic and commercial cooperation."

The envoy ended by expressing confidence that "this solemn ceremony will be the starting point to further strengthen the links that unite our people and governments, on the basis of mutual respect and the free exercise of the self-determination and sovereignty of our peoples." While accepting the ambassador's letter of credence, President Koroma said, "As you have rightly mentioned, our two countries share many common historical experiences. We believe there are many C-bans

who could trace their ancestors to persons captured on the shores of Sierra Leone during the era of slavery, and that these Cubans share many traditions with us. In addition, Cuba and Sierra Leone hold similar views on a number of continental and global issues. We have worked closely together, especially at the United Nations, to ensure that peace, security and stability prevail in all countries through peaceful negotiations and settlement of conflicts." The Head of State also welcomed "possibilities for improvement in the relationship between Cuba and the new administration in the United States."

On Cuba's practical support to Sierra Leone, President Koroma said, "One of the main concerns of my government is improving the living standards of my compatriots. In this vein, my Government's policies place great emphasis on the health sector, and the provision of standard medical equipment to meet the growing demands in the medical field. Let me commend the friendly government and people of Cuba for the kind support we have received in the health sector. My government is particularly grateful for the kind assistance of the Cuban doctors in Sierra Leone, and in the donation of high tech surgical equipment. These have greatly contributed to enhancing the gains we are making in the health sector."

While remaining committed to fostering initiatives that will yield economic and commercial dividends for both Sierra Leone and Cuba, President Koroma looked forward to greater exchanges in the cultural, educational and sporting sectors: "In this vein, my Government wishes to indicate its readiness to have a Sierra Leone-Cuba Joint Commission set up in order to fast-track cooperation between our two countries." He concluded on a personal note, hoping that the envoy "will find your assignment in Sierra Leone a rewarding and memorable one."

On his part, the Czech Ambassador

Mr. Miroslav Krenek, in his presentation, recalled that, "Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Sierra Leone and Czechoslovakia, of which the Czech Republic is a successor state, date back to 1962. The new chapter of bilateral relations [was] opened on January 1st 1993 when, after [the] dissolution of Czechoslovakia, the Czech Republic was immediately recognized by the Republic of Sierra Leone."

He further noted that, "The Government and people of the Czech Republic have, with a great deal of interest and appreciation, followed the relentless efforts of the Government and people of Sierra Leone aimed at [the] restoration of stability and rebuilding the country's economy after a long civil war. The Government of the Czech Republic joins the international community in support of their efforts. [The] 2007 elections through which Your Excellency has assumed the highest office was another important milestone on the way to stability and prosperity," while promising that he "shall do all in my power to further strengthen bilateral relations and co-operation between our two countries."

Responding, President Koroma said, "Our two countries have enjoyed good relations for many years, based on mutual respect and friendship. As a country in the heart of Europe, and a member of the European Union, we count on our friendship with the Czech Republic to keep alive support for our developmental aspirations within the European Union. We are very interested in expanding our trade with members of the European Union, and in developing cooperation in the fishing and tourist sectors." He further welcomed the diplomat's "determination to consolidate and strengthen the existing cordial relations and fruitful cooperation between our two countries and peoples," while assuring him of his personal support "as well as that of the Government and people of the Republic of Sierra Leone."

Continued page 7

RUF Trio Found Guilty

... Sentencing Soon

By Alpha Bedoh Kamara

Issa Hassan Sesay (First Accused), interim leader of the RUF, Moris Kallon (Second Accused), aka Bilai Karim, a former Commander of the RUF, and Augustine Gbao (Third Accused), a senior officer and Commander of the RUF, were facing 18 counts indictments for crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 of the Geneva Convention and Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of International Law.

The three were indicted and charged for the following, Acts of Terrorism, Collective Punishment, Extermination, Murder, Violence to Life, Health and Physical or Mental Well-being of Persons, Murder, Rape, Sexual Slavery and any other form of Sexual Violence, Other Inhuman Acts, Outrages upon Personal Dignity, Conscripting or Enlisting Children Underage into Armed Forces or Groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities, Enslavement, Pillage, Intentionally Directing Attacks Against Personnel in a Humanitarian Assistance or Peacekeeping Mission, Unlawful Killings, Abductions and Holding as Hostage.

Issa Sesay and Moris Kallon were found guilty on counts 1 to 15 and 17, and not guilty on counts 16 and 18, while Augustine Gbao was not found guilty on counts 12, 16 and 18, but guilty on all the other counts.

The sentencing of the three men will be heard at the Special Court for Sierra Leone in a month's time, when it is expected that the Defence Counsels for the accused persons will make their plea for mercy and the duration of the sentence.



Issa Hassan Sesay handing over his weapon to General Daniel Opande, during the disarmament process in Makeni

**Freetown
City Council**



Revolutionary United Front (RUF) indictees, Issa Hassan Sesay, Moris Kallon and Augustine Gbao were found guilty yesterday for war crimes against humanity and other serious violations of International Humanitarian Law.

Awareness Times
Thursday, 26 February 2009

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Vol. 21, No. 04 Giving knowledge to the People Le 1,000 Thursday February 26 2009

Guilty!

*of Murder, Rape, Enslavement, Terrorism,
Child Recruitment, Forced Marriage, etc...*

See Page 5

RUF Special Court Indictees Convicted

By Abdul Karim Kabia & Augustine Samba

The Trial Chamber of the United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone has handed down judgments against leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), convicting all accused persons.

RUF Leaders Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon, and Augustine Gbao were yesterday Wednesday 25th February 2009 convicted with war crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including murder, rape, enslavement, child recruitment and terrorizing the civilian population.

The pronouncement of sentences is expected to be done in March this year, by which time all parties concerned are expected to have made submissions on sentencing.

The final stage in the case will be the appeals phase.

Meanwhile, the prosecutor of Special Court for Sierra Leone, Stephen Rapp has welcomed the convictions of the three rebel leaders.

A press release issued yesterday by the Office of the Prosecutor quoted Stephen Rapp as saying that "today's judgment recognizes the terrible crimes committed against the innocent people of Sierra Leone. It respects the suffering of the multitude of victims who were mutilated or enslaved, murdered or raped, and those rendered homeless or destitutes. It does this in a review of evidence that concludes that these individual leaders were responsible for some of most serious crimes known to humankind". According to Rapp, the conviction of the rebel leaders on war crime of 'acts of terrorism' against the civilian population recognizes that their targets were not military based or enemy soldiers but innocent men, women and children. "It means that these men chose to commit acts so horrible against persons so innocent in order to frighten the population into submission".

The press release pointed out that the court also convicted two of the three leaders for the use of child soldiers – the employment of those under 15 in a force where they would be ordered to maim and to murder. "This court today for the first time in world history convicted each of these individuals of 'forced marriage' as a separate 'crime against humanity'. In doing so it recognizes the very deep and long lasting suffering inflicted upon women through conscription as 'bush wives' during the Sierra Leone conflict", the release quoted Rapp as saying.

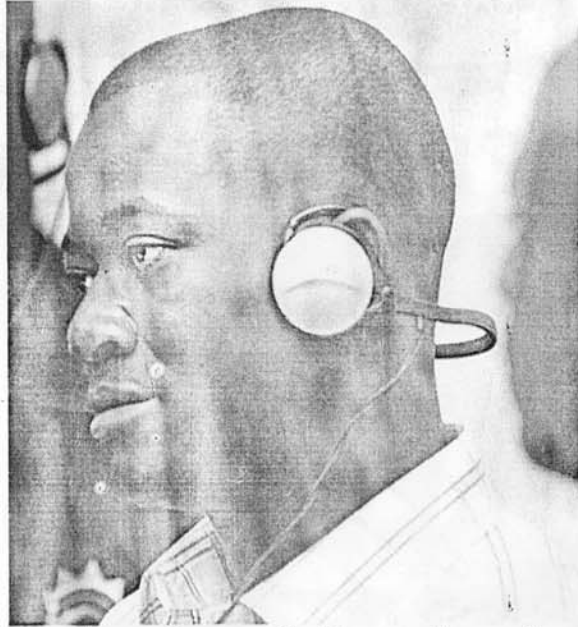
The release maintained further that "of great significance in the conflict zones of the world, this court also for the first time in history convicted individuals of a specific war crime of 'attack on peacekeepers. This recognizes that peacekeepers were targeted during the Sierra Leone conflict. It sends a message that may deter such attacks against the men and women who are protecting individuals, restoring security, and keeping the peace across the globe".

Meanwhile, another press release issued by Amnesty International has described the judgment as a positive, but still insufficient step in the fight against impunity in Sierra Leone. The release stated that "these guilty verdicts send a clear message to the international community in general and the perpetrators of crimes against Africans in particular, that those responsible for crimes under international law will not go unpunished".

The organization noted, however, that only a handful of those suspected of bearing the greatest responsibility in the armed conflict in Sierra Leone have been tried by the Special Court. Amnesty International said many others, numbering perhaps in several hundreds, must be investigated in Sierra Leone or in any other state willing to exercise universal jurisdiction and, if there is sufficient admissible evidence, prosecuted in fair trials without the possibility of the death penalty.

The release urged that "the Government of Sierra Leone must set aside the impunity provisions contained in the Lome Accord and make all crimes under international, criminal under national law. Otherwise, victims will be forced to file complaints in other states where extraterritorial jurisdiction, including universal jurisdiction, is permitted".

=PHOTO NEWS=



Isssa-Sesay: Guilty as charged



Morris-Kallon: Guilty as charged



Augustine-Gbao: Guilty as charged

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RUF leaders found guilty

... but not responsible for Freetown attack

By Ibrahim Tarawalle and Bryna Hallam
The Special Court for Sierra Leone has found three former leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity - but concluded that they are not responsible for the January-1999 attack on Freetown.
Former RUF interim leader Issa Hassan Sesay and RUF commander Morris Kallon were each found guilty on 16 of 18 of the counts in the indictment. Former RUF Chief of Security Augustine Gbao



Morris Kallon ... found guilty on 16 counts



Issa Sesay ... found guilty on 16 counts



Augustine Gbao ... found guilty on 14 counts

SLPP opens foreign account for 2012 elections

Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) chairman, North America chapter has said that his branch has opened a special foreign account to raise funds for the party ahead of the 2012 elections. Augustine Fallay disclosed in an interview that the North America chapter alone would raise hundreds of thousands of dollars to add to the party's electioneering campaign process. "This is in addition to supporting prospective SLPP candidates contesting in areas

Contd. page 4

Win De Life



Win a House AND a Car by using 150 COMIUM Units

*Prizes can be exchanged in monetary value of 100 Million Le



RUF leaders found guilty

Contd. page 4

was found guilty on 14 counts.

The three were charged with acts of terrorism and collective punishments, unlawful killings, sexual violence, physical violence, the use of child soldiers, abductions and forced labour, looting and burning houses, and attacks on UNAMSIL personnel.

All three were found not guilty of murder, a crime against humanity, and the taking of hostages in connection with the abduction of United Nations peacekeepers in May 2000.

Gbao was also found not guilty of conscripting child soldiers and murder, a war crime, in relation to the abduction of peacekeepers.

Reading the summary of the decision, presiding Judge Justice Pierre Boutet said the involvement of the RUF in the January 6, 1999, attack on Freetown was "insubstantial," and that the AFRC was responsible. More than 5,000 people were killed during the attack.

"It was difficult for civilians to distinguish between the two groups," Boutet said. "Many identified the AFRC as RUF."

Stephen Rapp, the Prosecutor for the Special Court, welcomed the convictions.

"Today's judgement recognizes the terrible crimes committed against the innocent people of Sierra Leone," he said. "It respects the suffering of the multitude of victims who were mutilated or enslaved, who were murdered or raped, and who were rendered homeless or destitute."

Rapp said it was significant that the judges convicted each of the three of "acts of terrorism" against civilians.

"This recognizes that their targets were not military bases or enemy soldiers but innocent men, women and children," he said. "It means that these men chose to commit acts so horrible against persons so innocent in order to frighten the population into submission."

He said he had hoped that there would be a conviction based on the Freetown attack, adding that the RUF was in the area and engaged in attacks. He said the prosecution would have to evaluate the judge's findings, but that an appeal is possible.

John Cammegh, the lead counsel for Gbao, said he was encouraged that Justice Boutet dissented with 13 of the 14 guilty counts against his client.

"The allegations

against Gbao were always on a far more limited basis," he said, noting that Gbao was not directly linked to the crimes, but found guilty of being involved with a "joint criminal enterprise." Cammegh said he expected that this should result in a lower sentence for Gbao.

Wayne Jordache, the lead counsel for Sesay, said they were a little bit disappointed with the summary judgement. He said they presented a strong case during the trial, but "the defense was disregarded in totality."

He said there is a possibility that they will appeal.

Following today's judgement, the prosecution and defense will make submissions on sentencing, which is expected to be pronounced in March. The appeals stage will follow that.

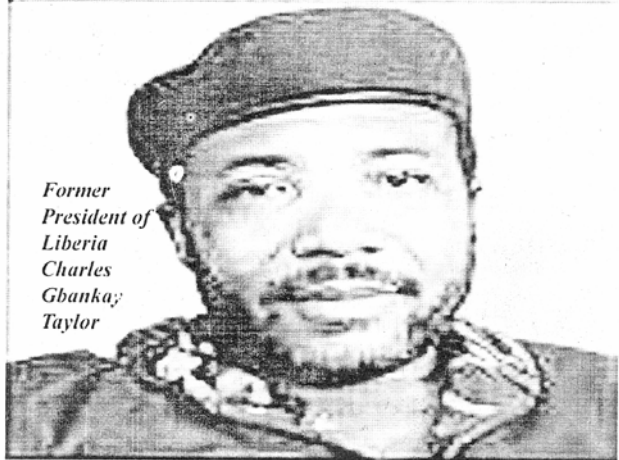
The RUF trial is the last judgement that will take place in Freetown. The trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor is continuing at The Hague. The mandate of the court is to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations to international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in the territory of Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996.

African Champion
Thursday, 26 February 2009

As Charles Taylor May Go Free...



*Eight month
old ampu-
tated by
rebels*



*Former
President of
Liberia
Charles
Gbankay
Taylor*

**Issa Sesay, Morrison Kallon and
Augustine Gbao Found Guilty**

As Charles Taylor May Go Free...

Special-Court-indicted Liberian President, Charles Taylor, may be set free. The UN-Sierra Leone hybrid court is currently cash-strapped, thanks to the global financial crisis. And that's just why Charles Taylor may be let go. Read the full story by the UK's Guardian newspaper below.

The former Liberian president Charles Taylor could be set free because of the effect of the global economic crisis on funding for the court trying him for war crimes, according to its chief prosecutor.

Stephen Rapp said the special court for Sierra Leone, which is prosecuting those responsible for the worst atrocities during the country's 1991-2002 civil wars, faced a

shortfall of more than \$5m from May due to cuts in donations from individual states. The UN-backed court is entirely reliant on voluntary contributions - the first international tribunal to be funded this way. "With the economic crisis continuing, to get funds is not easy ... If we run out; it is now possible the judges will have to release him [Taylor]. That's our real anxiety," Rapp told Reuters. Taylor is accused of closely backing Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, arming and training them in return for diamonds. The rebels were notorious for hacking off the

limbs of civilians and recruiting child soldiers. Although the court is based in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, Taylor is being tried in The Hague due to fears that his trial could affect regional stability. He was arrested on the Nigeria-Cameroon border in 2006 after escaping from his seaside villa in Nigeria, where he had been living in exile for three years. Charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, Taylor went on trial in 2007. His links with the RUF rebels were alleged to be so close that prosecutors have charged him as a "co-perpetrator" of acts including murder and rape. A verdict is expected next year. Rapp said that

even if Taylor was released, the indictments against him would remain. While it seems unlikely that leading donor governments will allow this to happen, the dire financial situation of the court does indicate how the worldwide financial difficulties have spread to unlikely areas. The court's bill for 2008-10 is \$68.4m, and it has now turned to the US and countries in the Middle East for the \$30m not yet secured. "A few important donors have so far not been able to provide financial support to the court or have provided less than in previous years," said Herman von Hebel, the court registrar. "These countries include Ireland, France and Germany, as these have al-



ways been important donors to us, but there are other donors as well." The UK saw its annual £3m contribution drop in value because of the pound's slide against the US dollar. The Freetown ses-

sion of the court is due to finish today with verdicts against three senior rebels, leaving Taylor as the only remaining defendant. The court has already convicted five people of war crimes.

Special Court Finds RUF Men Guilty

All the three RUF commanders were yesterday found guilty by the Special Court in Sierra Leone for bearing the greatest responsibility of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the use of child soldiers during the country's decade long war.

The first, rebel General Issa Sesay, aged 38, was found guilty of 16 out of the 18 count charges proffered against him. The second Mr. Morris Kallon, aged 45, was also found guilty in 16 out of 18 count charges leveled against him, while Mr. Augustine Gbao, at 60 years, was found guilty in 14 counts out of the 18. The trial started in 2004 after the establishment of the court by the UN, assisted by the United Kingdom and United State of



7-month old baby amputated by RUF fighters

America. The case of the three rebel leaders was the last to be held at the special court of Sierra Leone. The only trial still ongoing before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is that

of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, which because of the appalling security in the country, have been moved to The Hague where sittings are currently taking place. The three persons have

been found guilty of belonging into a joint criminal enterprise formed by the former Liberian President Charles Taylor in order to control the diamonds of Sierra Leone to finance his warfare. The trial has heard har-



RUF Leader, Late Foday Saybana Sankoh

rowing tales of over 75 confirmation of rape, torture, hacking of limbs, killings and use of children as combatants. The RUF was notorious for using the so-called 'Small Boys Units,' comprising only of underaged children who were conscripted as soldiers and issued with AK-47 assault rifles to fight

the rebel course. By the end of the 11 year old conflict, over 120,000 people were prematurely killed, while tens of thousands were left mutilated in different parts of their bodies. Meanwhile, sentences will be proffered on them in the next couple of weeks.

For di People

Thursday, 26 February 2009

S Leone trio guilty of war crimes

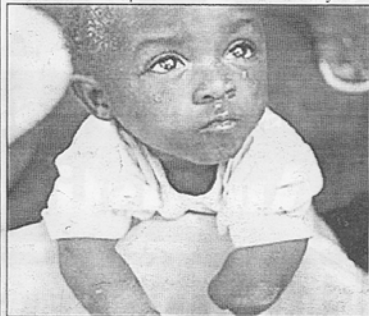
A WAR crimes court has found three Sierra Leone rebel commanders guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Issa Sesay, 38, Morris Kallon, 45, and Augustine Gbao, 60, had denied 18 charges at the court in Freetown. The trial of the RUF rebel leaders - related to Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war - began in mid-2004. The court had heard how the trio were involved in the rape, mutilation and murder of civilians. It was the last case to be held at the special court. The BBC's Umaru Fofana at the court in Freetown said as the verdicts were delivered Sesay looked very serious and Kallon, clad in a smart light green suit, could have been mistaken for one of the lawyers, while Gbao buried his face in his hands and looked very dejected.

The three committed atrocities during the 1991-2001 civil war as senior commanders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). According to the indictment, the rebel chiefs were involved in a joint criminal enterprise with former Liberian President Charles Taylor to control the diamond fields of Sierra Leone to finance their warfare.

The trial heard harrowing tales from 75 prosecution witnesses of rapes and killings at the hands of the RUF. Tactics favoured by the rebels included amputating hands and arms or carving the initials RUF into the bodies of their victims. The RUF was notorious for using the so-called Small Boys Units - child soldiers forcibly recruited and issued with AK-47 assault rifles - who had a reputation for particular cruelty among the civilian population.

By the time the conflict ended, some 120,000 people had been killed while tens of thousands were left mutilated, their arms, legs, noses or ears cut off. The only trial still ongoing before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is that of Mr Taylor, whose case has been moved to The Hague for security reasons. The Sierra Leone conflict was depicted in the 2006 film *Blood Diamond*, starring Djimon Hounsou, Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Connelly.



Tens of thousands of civilians had limbs, noses or ears chopped off

For di People
Thursday, 26 February 2009

SPECIAL COURT MAKES HISTORY

PROSECUTOR OF the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Mr Stephen Rapp yesterday welcomed the convictions of three leaders of the Revolutionary United Front while hailing other landmark decisions reached by the Court.

by **EDITAYO G
TEMPLE**

Issa Sesay and Morris Kallon were convicted on 16 counts while Augustine Gbao was convicted on 14 counts of an 18-count indictment for atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's civil war.

Rapp said that "today's judgement recognises the terrible crimes committed against the innocent people of Sierra Leone.

"It respects the suffering of the multitude of victims who were mutilated or enslaved, who were murdered or raped, and who were rendered homeless or destitute.

"It does this in a review of evidence that concludes that these individual leaders were responsible for some of the most serious crimes known to humankind," Rapp said.

He also said that significantly, the Judges convicted each of them for acts of terrorism against the civilian population and that this recognises that their targets were not on military basis or enemy soldiers but innocent men, women and children.

That it means that these men chose to commit acts so hor-

rible against persons so innocent in order to frighten the population into submission.

Rapp said the court also convicted two of

As Ruf Leaders Found Guilty

these men for the use of child soldiers—the employment of those under 15 years in a force where they would be ordered to maim and to murder, abducted from their families, brutalized if they re-

sisted, furnished with drugs and guns, they were turned into tools of terror at a horrible cost to their victims and themselves.

He also said the Special Court has made his-

tory and leaving a legacy in that for the first time in world history, convicted each of these individuals for forced marriage as a separate crime against humanity and in doing so, it recognises the very deep and long-lasting suffering inflicted upon women through conscription as bush wives during the Sierra Leone conflict.

"Also of great significance in the conflict zones of the world, this court also for the first time in history convicted individuals of the specific war crime of attack on peacekeepers.

"This recognises that peacekeepers were targeted during the Sierra Leone conflict. It sends a message that may deter such attacks against the men and women who are protecting individuals, restoring security and keeping the peace across the globe," Rapp said.

The judgement was read by Judge Peirar Boutet. Sesay the first accused was the alleged interim leader of the Ruf of Sierra Leone and was indicted on 7 March 2003 on a 17-count charge indictment for crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law and an 18th count charge was later added.

Sesay was arrested on 10 March and taken into the custody of the court. Kallon, the second ac-

cused aka Bilai Karim was a former commander of the Ruf indicted 7 March 2003 on a 17-count indictment for crimes against humanity and other serious violations of humanitarian law and an 18th count was later added.

Third accused Augustine Gbao was a senior officer of the Ruf and taken into custody on 10 March and subsequently indicted by the prosecutor on 16 April 2003 with 17 counts of crimes against humanity and other serious violations of humanitarian law.

In all, 85 witnesses testified for the defence, 59 including former president Kabbah, were called by Sesay, 22 were called by Kallon and eight by Gbao.

The charges include acts of terrorism, unlawful killings, murder, sexual violence, abductions and forced labour, enslavement, looting and burning, conscription or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups, etc.

The Special Court has now delivered judgements against eight accused persons while that of former Liberian president Charles Taylor is ongoing in The Hague.

4 docked for conspiracy

SORIE KAMARA, Foday Mansaray, Mohamed Casho Mansaray and Ishmael Bangura appeared on Wednesday before Magistrate Fidawi at Court No 2 on a two-count charge for conspiracy and larceny.

by **IBRAHIM
KALOKOH**

That on Wednesday 5 November 2008 along Bai Bureh Road-Freetown, the four conspired together with unknown persons to commit a felony. The accused pleaded guilty of the

offence and asked the Magistrate to have mercy upon them.

They were sentenced to three months imprisonment or pay a fine of Le 100,000.

In another development, Ibrahim Sesay, a mechanic at Ross Road was arraigned before the same court for allegedly convert-

ing a TV set worth Le 850,000, property belonging to Alusine Koroma.

He was granted bail and mandated to return the set or pay the above amount to the complainant on the next appearance date on 10 March 2009.

SLPMB To Be Revamped

From Page 4

the agricultural produce of the country to the international market and the government has established trade commissions in Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates," he said.

Koroma also said that these trade commissions' offices would serve as a hub that would attract investors into the country as the booming of the United Arab Emirates over the years was as a result of these trade commissions used by the Arab to attract Chinese

and other investors worldwide.

He said such moves have contributed to the development of that country, and that Sierra Leone is also aspiring to use that same method as the

country has a lot of investment potentials.

The minister assured the nation that things would soon be better as the government is desperate to work tirelessly for the development of the country.

BEING ASSERTIVE...FROM P-4

ies understand and agree. And make it clear that you don't want to see this happen again.

Here are some techniques you can use to be *expertly* assertive in almost any situation you'll encounter at work... or in your personal life: Always speak in a civil manner.

Be specific when asking for deadlines or clarification.

Be clear when voicing your opinion, and be prepared to explain your reasoning. Don't do anything you don't agree with just to avoid conflict. Disagree with ideas or suggestions, not people. Don't make it personal.

Associated Press

Tuesday, 24 February 2009

Sierra Leone war crimes court to issue verdicts

By CLARENCE ROY-MACAULAY

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP) — They chopped off hands, legs, lips, ears, breasts. In their decade-long battle to take control of Sierra Leone and its diamond fields, rebels of the Revolutionary United Front wielded their machetes to maim thousands of victims.

On Wednesday, a U.N.-sponsored war crimes court is to deliver verdicts for three of the rebels' commanders accused of crimes against humanity, marking an end to the special tribunal in Freetown, more than four years after their joint trial began.

"There is a great need for the activities of the Special Court, which is a chapter of the war, to be quickly concluded so that the nation can move on," Sierra Leone's president, Ernest Bai Koroma, said last week.

Former interim rebel leader Issa Sesay and battlefield commanders Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao each face an 18-count indictment and have pleaded not guilty to the charges against them, which include war crimes and crimes against humanity. If convicted, a sentencing hearing is expected in two weeks.

The special tribunal was set up following the end of the West African nation's 10-year conflict in 2002.

It is estimated that about a half-million people were victims of killings, systematic mutilation and other atrocities in Sierra Leone's war, during which illicit diamond sales fueled years of devastation. The conflict was depicted in the 2006 film "Blood Diamond," starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Jennifer Connelly and Djimon Hounsou.

Prosecutors say the three defendants facing verdicts Wednesday are criminally responsible for crimes committed by the rebels, including the mutilation of civilians, sexual violence and the use of child soldiers. The three also face charges in connection with rebel attacks on U.N. peacekeepers and aid workers.

The court says the trial has marked the first time that forced marriage has been prosecuted before an international criminal court as a crime against humanity.

Sesay, Kallon and Gbao were indicted in 2003 and their joint trial began in 2004. Closing arguments were heard in August and initially a judgment was expected in October, but no reason was given for the delay.

The rebels' founder and longtime leader — Foday Sankoh, known as 'Pa' to his often drugged and drunken child fighters — died of natural causes in U.N. custody in 2003. An indictment against a fifth battlefield commander, Sam Bockarie, also was withdrawn in 2003 due to his death.

Wednesday's verdicts are the last of the three Special Court trials to be held in Freetown.

The court's only unfinished business is with former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who is accused of training and backing the Sierra Leonean rebels.

Taylor is being tried in a special session of the Sierra Leonean court in The Hague, Netherlands, for war crimes and crimes against humanity. His trial is being held outside of Freetown because of fears the case could trigger fresh violence and that Taylor might escape from the court jail in Sierra Leone.

Chief Prosecutor Stephen Rapp said Tuesday that the final prosecution witness was completed in the Taylor trial last month and that the defense might begin presenting its case as early as April. A verdict could be reached sometime within the first half of 2010, he said.

The court relies on voluntary contributions from governments, a process which Rapp said has been complicated by the global economic crisis. The court currently faces a shortfall of about \$5 million, he said.

"We have to work very hard to convince them, find other states, or to try to get those states who have given us money in the past to increase or accelerate their contributions," he said.

"But we think this crisis will come in June or July, and that gives us three or four months to relieve it and certainly to show the world that we're doing great work, that the court has rendered these historic judgments in Sierra Leone," he added.

Associated Press Writer Krista Larson in Johannesburg contributed to this report.

Human Rights Watch

Wednesday, 25 February 2009

Press Release

Ruling in Revolutionary United Front Trial

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone, February 25, 2009/African Press Organization (APO)/ — The judgment by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in the case against leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) will be handed down today. The public proceedings will be at 10:30 a.m. at the Special Court in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon, and Augustine Gbao were charged with war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including murder, extermination, rape, enslavement, child recruitment, and terrorizing the civilian population. Human Rights Watch extensively documented abuses by the RUF and other warring factions during the decade-long Sierra Leone conflict that ended in 2002. Human Rights Watch maintained a Freetown office from 1999 to 2002.

“The Sierra Leone conflict was marked by unspeakable brutality and attacks against civilians committed by the RUF,” said Corinne Dufka, Human Rights Watch’s senior researcher on West Africa. “The trial of RUF leaders for these crimes is vital for victims and for building respect for the rule of law in Sierra Leone.”

Human Rights Watch has closely followed and assessed the work of the Special Court since it was established, including on key areas such as respect for international fair-trial rights, adequate witness protection, and efforts to inform the local population about its work.

“With the RUF verdict, the Special Court has completed trials of senior persons associated with the three main warring factions during the conflict,” said Elise Keppler, senior counsel with Human Rights Watch’s International Justice Program. “This is a major contribution to bringing justice for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone.”

The Special Court also is an important new model of international justice, Human Rights Watch said. Robust outreach to communities affected by the crimes and mixed international and domestic judge panels are just two of its significant features. As the Special Court relies on voluntary funding, further contributions are a priority for the court to complete its work, including the trial of the former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, on charges of providing support to Sierra Leonean rebels during the conflict.

BBC

Wednesday, 25 February 2009

S Leone trio guilty of war crimes

An international tribunal has found three Sierra Leone rebels guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

RUF leaders Issa Sesay, 38, and Morris Kallon, 45, were convicted of 16 of the 18 charges, while Augustine Gbao, 60, was found guilty on 14 of the counts.

The Freetown trial of the RUF rebel leaders, related to Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war, began in mid-2004.

Many RUF victims in the court sighed with relief at the verdicts. Sentences will be decided at a later date.

The BBC's Umaru Fofana at the court in Freetown said that as the verdicts were delivered, Sesay looked very serious and Kallon, clad in a smart light green suit, could have been mistaken for one of the lawyers, while Gbao buried his face in his hands and looked very dejected.

The last case to be held at the special court had heard how the rebel leaders were involved in the rape, mutilation and killings of civilians.

The three committed atrocities during the 1991-2001 civil war as senior commanders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

'Horrors'

On Wednesday the judges concluded the rebel chiefs "significantly contributed" to a joint criminal enterprise with former Liberian President Charles Taylor to control the diamond fields of Sierra Leone to finance their warfare.

They were also found guilty of forced marriage - the enslavement that countless young girls suffered when their villages were raided and they were forced to "marry" a rebel.

The convictions mark the first time the forced marriage charge has been successfully handed down in an international court of law.

The trial heard harrowing tales from 75 prosecution witnesses of rapes and killings at the hands of the RUF.



The RUF trio committed atrocities during the 1991-2001 civil war

The three rebels chiefs were initially indicted along with RUF founder Foday Sankoh, a close ally of Mr Taylor. But Sankoh died in custody before the case ever came to trial.

Tactics favoured by the rebels included amputating hands and arms or carving the initials RUF into the bodies of their victims.

The RUF was notorious for using the so-called Small Boys Units - child soldiers forcibly recruited and issued with AK-47 assault rifles - who had a reputation for particular cruelty among the civilian population.



Tens of thousands of civilians had limbs, noses or ears chopped off

By the time the conflict ended, some 120,000 people had been killed while tens of thousands were left mutilated, their arms, legs, noses or ears cut off.

Sierra Leone expert Gregory Gordon, a US law professor who has worked as a prosecutor in Africa, told the BBC's Network Africa programme: "When we think about blood diamonds, when we think about people having their hands chopped off, when we think about child soldiers and sexual slavery and forced marriages - all the horrors of the civil war in Sierra Leone, we think about the Revolutionary United Front."

The only trial still ongoing before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is that of Mr Taylor, whose case has been moved to The Hague for security reasons.

He faces 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Sierra Leone conflict was depicted in the 2006 film Blood Diamond, starring Djimon Hounsou, Leonardo DiCaprio and Jennifer Connelly.

New York Times

Thursday, 26 February 2009

Sierra Leone: Rebel Leaders Convicted

By LYDIA POLGREEN

An international court on Wednesday convicted three leaders of the rebel group that terrorized civilians in Sierra Leone during the country's decade-long civil war. The men were top leaders of the Revolutionary United Front, a group whose signature atrocity, amputation, became a symbol of the unfettered brutality of the war. The group also abducted children and turned them into soldiers, and forced young girls into servitude as "bush wives" to rebel commanders. Corinne Dufka, a senior researcher for Human Rights Watch, said, "These verdicts validate the suffering of countless civilians whose lives were brutally torn apart by the decade-long campaign of terror by the R.U.F." The war ended in 2002. The last defendant, Charles Taylor, the former president of neighboring Liberia, is accused of training and supporting the rebels. Mr. Taylor, above, is now on trial in The Hague.

ABC News

Thursday, 26 February 2009

'Blood diamond' rebels convicted of war crimes

By Africa Correspondent Andrew Geoghegan

Three former rebel leaders from Sierra Leone have been found guilty of crimes against humanity for their role in the country's decade-long civil war.

An international tribunal backed by the United Nations began hearing evidence against the Revolutionary United Front commanders almost five years ago.

The Freetown court found Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao guilty on multiple charges including murder, rape and mutilation.

Sierra Leone's civil war killed more than 120,000 people, while tens of thousands were mutilated by the rebels.

The groups also forced children to fight and kill.

The rebels financed their war machine by selling gems known as 'blood diamonds' found in mines they controlled.

Sentences will be decided at a later date.

Telegraph (UK)
Thursday, 26 February 2009

Sierra Leone 'blood diamond' rebels found guilty of war crimes

Three senior Sierra Leone rebel leaders notorious for ordering their troops to chop off opponents' hands were convicted on Wednesday of a litany of war crimes including murder, rape and sexual enslavement.

By Mike Pflanz, West Africa Correspondent



Sierra Leone rebel commanders Augustine Gbao (L) and Issa Sesay as they appear in court at the U.N. backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown Photo: AP

The UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone found Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao guilty of most of 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out during the country's brutal civil war.

The decade of fighting, fuelled by the trade in "blood diamonds", only ended when Britain sent 800 Paratroopers into the country to combat the Revolutionary United Front, the rebel group commanded by the three men.

The war killed more than 120,000 people and left tens of thousands maimed after their arms, legs, noses or ears were cut off by RUF rebels, who were largely bankrolled by Charles Taylor, then president of neighbouring Liberia, who paid in weapons for Sierra Leone's diamonds.

"Today's judgement (...) respects the suffering of the multitude of victims who were mutilated or enslaved, who were murdered or raped, and who were rendered homeless or destitute," said Stephen Rapp, the court's prosecutor.

The RUF was also notorious for its Small Boys Units, made up of child soldiers as young as eight who were forcibly recruited and then drugged and sent to fight with AK47 assault rifles.

They became among the most feared units in what was one of the world's most vicious civil wars.

The three RUF leaders were initially indicted along with RUF founder Foday Sankoh, a close ally of Taylor. But Sankoh died in custody before the case ever came to trial.

Taylor is currently on trial in The Hague, in a separate branch of the Special Court. Mr Rapp said on Tuesday that he may walk free because international donors hit by the global economic crisis have failed adequately to fund its functions.

Reuters

Wednesday, 25 February 2009

U.N. court convicts S. Leone rebels of war crimes

FREETOWN, Feb 25 (Reuters) - The United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone convicted three leaders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group of crimes against humanity and war crimes during the country's 1991-2002 civil war.

Issa Hassan Sesay, Morris Kallon, and Augustine Gbao are the most senior surviving RUF commanders. They were all found guilty of most of the 18 individual counts against them. (Reporting by Christo Johnson; Editing by David Lewis)

Aljazeera

Thursday, 26 February 2009

S Leone war crimes trio convicted

A Sierra Leonean court has convicted three former rebel leaders of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the country's 1991-2002 civil war.

The UN-backed court on Wednesday convicted Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a former rebel group, of ordering and undertaking killings, rapes and mutilations during the war.

The court in Freetown, the capital, handed down the first ever conviction for forced marriage and attacks on peacekeepers globally.

They were also convicted of recruiting child soldiers.

The trio are the most senior surviving members of the RUF and had pleaded not guilty to the 18 counts against them.

Stephen Rapp, the chief prosecutor, told Al Jazeera that the verdicts "respect the suffering of the multitude of victims who were murdered and enslaved or mutilated and raped or rendered homeless.

"It does so by holding individual leaders were responsible for some of most serious crimes known to humankind," Rapp said.

Earlier Rapp said in a statement: "[The court] recognizes the very deep and long lasting suffering inflicted upon women through conscription as 'bush wives' during the Sierra Leone conflict," he said.

"It sends a message that may deter such attacks against the men and women who are protecting individuals, restoring security, and keeping the peace across the globe," he said.

Sesay, 38, and Kallon, 45, were found guilty of 16 charges and Gbao, 60, was convicted of 14 counts against him.

They are expected to be sentenced in March.

More than 50,000 people died in the war in Sierra Leone



More than 50,000 people have died in the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone [AP]

Voice of America

Wednesday, 25 February 2009

Former Sierra Leone Court Prosecutor Reflects on Guilty Verdicts

By Joe DeCapua

Washington D.C

25 February 2009



David Crane

The former chief prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone welcomes the guilty verdicts handed down in Freetown Wednesday against former rebel leaders Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao on charges war crimes and crimes against humanity.

David Crane, now a professor at Syracuse University College of Law, says, "My reaction is I am so pleased for the victims of this horror story that took place in the 1990s in Sierra Leone and the surviving individuals of the infamous Revolutionary United Front have been justly found guilty in an open court for the people of Sierra Leone.... This allows them to put this behind them somewhat and to move forward

into the future."

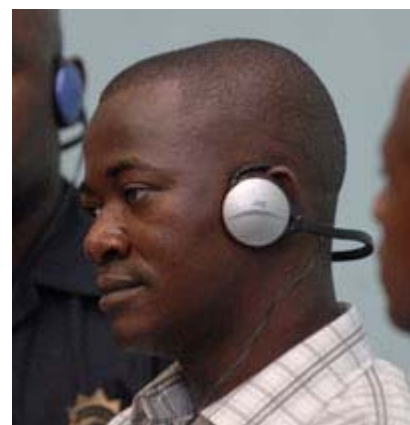
The reading of the verdicts took more than 90 minutes. Crane says the reason is "this is an open and fair trial. And both the individuals who have been found guilty have a right to hear those verdicts and as importantly, the people of Sierra Leone have a right to hear those verdicts. And so, yes, it seems to take a while, but it's absolutely appropriate and necessary."

The trial of the three men lasted four years. Closing arguments were heard last August and verdicts were originally expected in October. No official reason was given for the delay.

For Sierra Leoneans, Crane says, "It's important to know that those who destroyed their

country, those who had the entire country in the palm of their hand, those who felt they were above the law, now have been fairly found guilty of the crimes that they perpetrated against not only the people of Sierra Leone, but also (against) the people of Liberia and Guinea. This was a regional war.... Many, many people died in West Africa as a result of these individuals."

All those found guilty have a right to appeal. "So, this will take a little bit more time, but frankly...this ends the third of the three joint criminal trials that I signed the indictments for back in March of 2003 against all of the warring parties in the tragedy that was Sierra Leone – the Civil Defense Force, the Armed forces Revolutionary Council and the Revolutionary United Front," he says.



Issa Sesay

The trial of former Liberian leader Charles Taylor continues, however, at a courtroom at The Hague. Despite its location, the trial is under the jurisdiction of the special court.

Professor Crane says that while the proceedings of the special court are winding down, there are others he says were complicit in the war who have not been brought to justice.



Morris Kallon

"The lead person...is the current leader in Libya, Moammar Gadhafi, who was absolutely involved in this tragedy in West Africa, particularly in Sierra Leone, and who was a major backer of the (rebel) Revolutionary United Front.... Additionally, another head of state, Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, also was very, very much involved in the transfer and movement of guns, diamonds, cash, gold and timber.... These individuals...were not indicted by me back in 2003 but are certainly culpable," he says.

Crane says that others responsible died before they could be tried, including long-time RUF leader Foday Sankoh, Sam "Mosquito" Bockarie and Dennis Mingo, who was called "superman" because he allegedly threw his victims off high places.

The law professor says his experience as the chief prosecutor caused him to "develop a deep and abiding respect for the people of Sierra Leone."

Scotsman

Thursday, 26 February 2009

Rebels guilty of crimes against humanity

By Clarence Roy-Macaulay and Christo Johnson in Fr

THEY chopped off hands, legs, lips, ears, breasts. The rebels of the Revolutionary United Front wielded their machetes to maim thousands of victims in their decade-long battle to take control of Sierra Leone and its diamond fields.

Yesterday, a United Nations-sponsored war crimes court found three top rebel leaders guilty of multiple crimes against humanity in the West African nation's disastrous civil war.

The rebels left Sierra Leone with a population of amputees, as well as countless thousands of orphans and widows.

Issa Sesay, an interim leader of the Revolutionary United Front, and Morris Kallon, one of his battlefield commanders, were convicted on 16 of 18 charges. Another battlefield commander, Augustine Gbao, was found guilty of 14 of the 18 charges he had faced.

The charges against all three included amputation, murder, the enlistment of child soldiers and sexual slavery. They also included forced marriage, the enslavement that countless young girls suffered when their villages were raided and they were forced to "marry" a rebel.

The convictions marked the first time that the forced marriage charge had been successfully handed down in an international court of law.

"(The court] recognises the very deep and long-lasting suffering inflicted upon women through conscription as 'bush wives' during the Sierra Leone conflict," Stephen Rapp, the chief prosecutor, said.

"It sends a message that may deter such attacks against the men and women who are protecting individuals, restoring security and keeping the peace across the globe."

Sesay, Kallon and Gbao had all pleaded not guilty to the charges. They shook their heads as the verdict was read.

Corinne Dufka, an expert on Sierra Leone and Liberia for New York-based Human Rights Watch, said: "While the decision issued today cannot mend the broken lives and severed limbs, it goes a long way to validate the terrible suffering endured by countless Sierra Leoneans – and it puts current-day perpetrators on notice.

"The countryside is dotted with villages which endured massacres, mutilations, rape and pillage on an alarming scale. Today's important verdicts have validated this suffering, and will no doubt serve as a warning to current-day perpetrators the world over."

It is estimated that about half a million people were victims of killings, systematic mutilation and other atrocities in the 11-year civil war, which ended in 2002, partly as a result of British military intervention under the then foreign secretary, Robin Cook.

Illicit diamond sales had fuelled the conflict, as rebels controlled the diamond fields and used the sale of the gems to unscrupulous foreign traders, including some based in Europe, to buy guns.

While yesterday's verdicts marked the end of the tribunal in the capital, Freetown, the court still has unfinished business with Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president, who is being tried in a special session of the

Sierra Leonean court in The Hague, Netherlands, for war crimes and crimes against humanity. He is accused of training and backing the Sierra Leonean rebels.

His trial is being held outside of Freetown because of fears the case could trigger fresh violence and that Taylor might escape from the jail in Sierra Leone.

Mr Rapp said a verdict in Taylor's case could be reached sometime in the first half of 2010.

The rebels' founder and longtime leader – Foday Sankoh, known as "Pa" to his often drugged and drunken child fighters – died of natural causes in UN custody in 2003.

Sesay, Kallon and Gbao were second-tier leaders compared with Sankoh, and many Sierra Leoneans felt cheated out of justice when the main choreographer of the violence died unexpectedly behind bars.

The court relies on voluntary contributions from governments, a process that Mr Rapp said had been complicated by the global economic crisis. It currently faces a shortfall of about \$5 million (£3.5 million).

"We have to work very hard to convince them, find other states, or to try to get those states who have given us money in the past to increase or accelerate their contributions," he said.

"But we think this crisis will come in June or July, and that gives us three or four months to relieve it and certainly to show the world that we're doing great work, that the court has rendered these historic judgments in Sierra Leone."

Britain's contribution to the court of about £3 million a year has slipped by \$1.6 million in value due to depreciation.

The court is now turning to "a few countries in the Middle East" for funding, as well appealing to the US president Barack Obama's new administration for speedy help to raise a further \$30 million to see it through to the end of 2010.

SAVAGERY FUELLED BY DIAMONDS

SIERRA Leone's war began in 1991 when Foday Sankoh, a former army corporal, set up the RUF and took up arms against the then president, Joseph Momoh, seizing towns near Liberia's border.

Although the rebels found some popularity at first, they earned a reputation for murder, rape, mutilation and recruiting child soldiers.

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, a group of army officers allied to the RUF, overthrew Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, the president, in 1997. A Nigerian-led regional force reinstated him within a year. Some 50,000 people had been killed by the time the war was declared over in 2002 after Britain sent soldiers to help United Nations' peacekeepers.

The conflict was funded partly by diamonds mined in Sierra Leone. This helped lead to a global campaign against "blood diamonds" mined in conflict zones. The court in Freetown is an international body independent of any government or organisation. It is the first mixed tribunal of its kind, with judges appointed by the UN and Sierra Leone.

International Diamond Exchange (IDEX)

Thursday, 26 February 2009

Three Senior RUF Commander Convicted

Edahn Golan)

The Special Court for Sierra Leone on Wednesday convicted three commanders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The three financed their activities by trading in conflict diamonds.

According to Global Witness, Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao, were directly involved in a criminal enterprise with former Liberian president Charles Taylor to take control of the diamond fields in eastern Sierra Leone.

After they took control of the mines, the RUF forced kidnapped civilians to dig for diamonds, which its commanders then traded for military and financial support.

RUF is held responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands fellow Sierra Leoneans. It became infamous for its signature systematic amputation of victims' limbs.

Global Witness said it welcomes the conviction. "These verdicts are a chilling reminder of how the trade in diamonds and other natural resources has underwritten some of the worst war crimes of the past two decades," said Global Witness campaigner Mike Davis.

The organization took part in establishing and shaping the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme, formed to curtail the trade in conflict diamonds - diamonds mined in areas of conflict and traded to finance the continuation of the conflict.

Davis warned that natural resources continue to fuel conflict, pointing to eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, "where armed groups are financing themselves through the trade in minerals and committing atrocities against the civilian population."

"Diamond mining continues to finance rebel activities in northern Ivory Coast, and the trade in illicit diamonds ...is increasing globally," Davis claims. "Governments and the diamond industry must live up to their promise and make Kimberley Process controls more robust, if the scheme is to fulfill its mandate and curtail the threat of conflict diamonds."

Guardian

Wednesday, 25 February 2009

Civil war crimes tribunal under threat as donations dry up

The former Liberian president Charles Taylor could be set free because of the effect of the global economic crisis on funding for the court trying him for war crimes, according to its chief prosecutor.

Stephen Rapp said the special court for Sierra Leone, which is prosecuting those responsible for the worst atrocities during the country's 1991-2002 civil war, faced a shortfall of more than \$5m from May due to cuts in donations from individual states. The UN-backed court is entirely reliant on voluntary contributions - the first international tribunal to be funded this way. "With the economic crisis continuing, to get funds is not easy ... If we run out, it is now possible the judges will have to release him [Taylor]. That's our real anxiety," Rapp told Reuters.

Taylor is accused of closely backing Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebels, arming and training them in return for diamonds. The rebels were notorious for hacking off the limbs of civilians and recruiting child soldiers.

Although the court is based in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, Taylor is being tried in The Hague due to fears that his trial could affect regional stability. He was arrested on the Nigeria-Cameroon border in 2006 after escaping from his seaside villa in Nigeria, where he had been living in exile for three years.

Charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, Taylor went on trial in 2007. His links with the RUF rebels were alleged to be so close that prosecutors have charged him as a "co-perpetrator" of acts including murder and rape. A verdict is expected next year.

Rapp said that even if Taylor was released, the indictments against him would remain. While it seems unlikely that leading donor governments will allow this to happen, the dire financial situation of the court does indicate how the worldwide financial difficulties have spread to unlikely areas.

The court's bill for 2008-10 is \$68.4m, and it has now turned to the US and countries in the Middle East for the \$30m not yet secured. "A few important donors have so far not been able to provide financial support to the court or have provided less than in previous years," said Herman von Hebel, the court registrar.

"These countries include Ireland, France and Germany, as these have always been important donors to us, but there are other donors as well."

The UK saw its annual £3m contribution drop in value because of the pound's slide against the US dollar. The Freetown session of the court is due to finish today with verdicts against three senior rebels, leaving Taylor as the only remaining defendant. The court has already convicted five people of war crimes.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 24 February 2009

Prosecutor Says Former Liberian President Charles Taylor May Go Free

By VOA News

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor sits courtroom prior to hearing of witnesses in trial against Taylor in The Hague, 08 Jan 2008

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor sits in courtroom prior to hearing of witnesses in trial in The Hague, 08 Jan 2008

The chief prosecutor in the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor says Taylor may go free because of a funding shortage at the court trying him for war crimes.

Reuters news agency quotes prosecutor Stephen Rapp as saying donations to the Special Court for Sierra Leone are down because of the worldwide economic recession.

Rapp says if the court runs out of money, it is possible judges will have to release Taylor.

The former Liberian leader is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for alleged actions in Sierra Leone during that country's civil war.

Prosecutors say Taylor's forces murdered or mutilated thousands of civilians, and kidnapped children for use as soldiers and sex slaves.

Taylor has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

He is being tried at The Hague, in the Netherlands, because of fears that Taylor's presence in Sierra Leone could spark unrest in West Africa.

The prosecution concluded its case against Taylor last month.

The U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up to try alleged war criminals from Sierra Leone's 1991 to 2002 civil war.

The Reuters report quotes the tribunal's registrar, Herman von Hebel, as saying important donors such as Ireland, France and Germany have cut their contributions this year.

He says the court is seeking out other donors in the Middle East in hopes of raising \$30 million to continue operating through 2010.

Business Daily (Nairobi)

Thursday, 26 February 2009

Editorial: We should not dither on the Sierra Leone Tribunal

February 26, 2009: Justice costs money – lots of it. And even as we debate whether to take key suspects behind the killings and wanton property destruction that followed the December 2007 General Election, we must start to get worried at the turn of events in the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Reports published widely on Wednesday says that former Liberian President Charles Taylor may, after all, walk free because the international community has cut down the budget that supports his trial.

Taylor is facing trial for the role he played in helping the Sierra Leonean rebels associated with the late Foday Sankoh.

We are now informed that the court faced a budget shortfall of about \$5 million from May, last year and chief prosecutor, Stephen Rapp, says the judges might be forced to release the former president until they get money.

That is not right and it is not fair to the people of Sierra Leone.

The trials in Freetown are supposed to test our commitment to invoke international laws to try those who organise crimes against humanity.

The Taylor trial has been of interest.

While the Special Court for Sierra Leone is based in Freetown, Taylor was flown to The Hague due to fears that a local trial may jeopardise regional stability.

Taylor's trial is of utmost importance in international jurisprudence.

Whatever way it goes, it would set a precedent in law on whether or not presidents who finance wars abroad are liable to the atrocities that take place.

Secondly, it would debunk the myth of sovereignty of nations and make heads of state and governments liable for any misdeeds they do abroad. That is the importance of the Taylor trial.

When governments start dithering on whether or not to finance the final stages of the Sierra Leone trials, we sense lack of goodwill and enthusiasm in having presidents forced to stand trials for what they did while in office.

In a word, the global crunch might become a mere excuse to forestall justice for the thousands who died in the Sierra Leone civil war.

This is a route a civil people should not follow.

The Sierra Leone cases have recognised as crimes under international law forced marriages and attacks on peacekeepers.

The trial of Taylor was supposed to go beyond that and that is why it is being watched with interest by human rights groups.

The search for justice under international law is rigorous. But for the courts and the tribunals to make sense and to leave a lasting legacy they must get our support.

Kenya is hoping to send its batch of suspects either to The Hague or to a UN-backed Special Court. But our worry is that this might take longer if the international community invokes the global crunch as an excuse to delay the matter.

The Kenya trials will be of interest for they will address such issues as incitement to violence, which have been widely covered in the International Court Tribunal on Rwanda which listens to cases emanating from the 1990 Genocide.

Also, it will fortify the international law on forced uprooting of communities and ethnic cleansing.

Finally, it will test whether political chicanery is an excuse to cause crimes against humanity and also keep our politicians away from threatening communities and restricting their democratic rights.

That is the reason why we should watch the Special Court on Sierra Leone with keen interest for it will inform the destiny of our war merchants.

While we debate the question of funding, let us not forget that the initial complaints was that the ICTR was too expensive and that the process was dragging on for far too long. It had to happen. But reason prevailed. We hope it will once again.

Agence France-Presse

Wednesday, 25 February 2009

'Blood diamond' rebels face war crimes court verdict

FREETOWN (AFP) — Sierra Leone's war crimes tribunal is set to hand down a verdict Wednesday against three rebel RUF leaders accused of committing atrocities during the 1991-2001 civil war.

Prosecutors say the three senior commanders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao, ordered and carried out a spree killings, rapes and mutilations.

They face 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The accusations include murder, rape, sexual enslavement, cruel treatment, using child soldiers and attacks on UN soldiers during the civil war.

By the time the conflict ended, some 120,000 people were killed while tens of thousands were mutilated, their arms, legs, noses or ears cut off.

The three men have denied the charges against them.

Wednesday's verdict is eagerly awaited by the victims, who still bear the psychological and physical scars of the rebels' atrocities.

"My expectation is to see justice done," 25-year-old Isatu Sillah, who was gang raped by teenage RUF fighters in 2001, told AFP.

The judges are scheduled to start reading out the verdict at 10:30 am (1030 GMT) but they will only rule on whether the suspects are guilty or not. The sentences, if guilt is found, will be issued at separate hearings.

Sesay, Kallon and Gbao were among the "most senior members of the RUF" and involved in a joint criminal enterprise with former Liberian president Charles Taylor to control the diamond fields of Sierra Leone to finance their warfare, according to prosecutors.

RUF rebels terrorised the civilian population of Sierra Leone, killing and raping at will and forcing people to work in their diamond fields.

During the trial the 75 witnesses presented by the prosecution told harrowing tales of rapes and killings at the hands of the rebels.

Tactics favoured by the rebels included amputating hands and arms or carving the initials RUF into the bodies of their victims.

The RUF was notorious for using so-called Small Boys Units, boys forcibly recruited and issued with AK-47's. The child soldiers had a reputation of particular cruelty among the civilian population.

The three RUF leaders were initially indicted along with the RUF's founder and close Taylor ally Foday Sankoh, who died in custody before the case ever came to trial.

Charles Taylor is currently on trial in a separate case before the Special Court for Sierra Leone, sitting in The Hague for those proceedings. He faces 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Sesay, 38, Kallon, 45, and 60-year-old Gbao went on trial in June 2004. Their defence says they are not responsible for the atrocities and that there is no evidence they were directly involved.

Sesay's lawyers have tried to cast him as a peacemaker because he signed the Lome peace agreement which ended the war.

The RUF case is the last of the three special court trials held in Freetown. The only trial still ongoing before the Sierra Leone tribunal is Taylor's case, which was moved to The Hague for security reasons.

Agence France-Presse

Wednesday, 25 February 2009

Verdict in S.Leone rebels trial delayed

FREETOWN (AFP) — Sierra Leone's war crimes tribunal on Wednesday announced it had delayed by several hours the reading out of the verdict in the case of three former RUF rebel leaders accused of committing atrocities.

The judges had been due to start reading out the verdict at 10.30 am (1030 GMT) but will now start at 2 pm (1400 GMT), the court announced.

"We sincerely apologize for the delay which is due to unforeseen circumstances," the deputy registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone Binta Mansaray said.

No further explanation was given for the unexpected delay. The crowd of some 200 people who gathered outside the court to hear the verdict reacted to the delay with murmurs of disappointment and impatience.

The three senior commanders of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao, are accused of ordering and carrying out a spree of killings, rapes and mutilations.

Sesay, Kallon and Gbao were among the "most senior members of the RUF" and involved in a joint criminal enterprise with former Liberian president Charles Taylor to control the diamond fields of Sierra Leone to finance their warfare, according to prosecutors.

The trio face 18 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The accusations include murder, rape, sexual enslavement, cruelty, using child soldiers and attacks on UN soldiers during the civil war.

By the time the conflict ended, some 120,000 people had been killed and tens of thousands mutilated, their arms, legs, noses or ears cut off.

The three defendants deny the charges.

United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
25 February 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

Chief Prosecutor Says Special Court May Release Taylor owing to Financial Crisis

(Liberian Express and Heritage)

- The Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Stephen Rapp said former Liberian President Charles Taylor may walk free because the global financial crisis has cut donations to the court trying him for war crimes committed in neighbouring Sierra Leone.
- Mr. Rapp told journalists that the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is pursuing those held most responsible for atrocities during the country's 1991-2002 civil war, faces a budget shortfall of more than \$5 million from May.
- "With the economic crisis continuing, to get funds is not easy ... If we run out; it is now possible the judges will have to release him. That's our real anxiety," Rapp said.
- Taylor, a warlord in a civil war in Liberia and later president, faces 11 counts of crimes against humanity and other charges including rape, enslavement and conscripting child soldiers younger than 15.
- Taylor's trial, which began in June 2007, involves the same Special Court judges and prosecutors and he would stay indicted even if freed for lack of funds for his detention. Rapp had said earlier this month a verdict could be expected early next year.

Senate Fails to Confirm Monrovia's City Mayor-Designate

(The News, Daily Observer, The Inquirer, Heritage)

- The Liberian Senate Tuesday failed to confirm Monrovia City Mayor designate, Mary Broh.
- The Senator said the confirmation of the mayor designate will be delayed pending the passage of a law to repeal certain provision of the act or charter creating cities in the country.
- The Liberian Senate has introduce an act to repeal old acts that give the elected city mayor and council the right to enforce certain provisions including the right to levy taxes, duties and other revenues.

Minister Ngangana Spells out Pitfall of Jallah Town Road Project

(Public Agenda)

- [sic:] For months now, the public has been expressing concern regarding issues surrounding the rehabilitation of the Jallah Town Road, which was reconditioned in 2007 by the Ministry of Public Works. Since then, there have been calls for the road to be properly reconstructed or repaved. Concern about the Jallah Town Road also found expression in the Annual Message of the President of Liberia delivered to the Joint Session of the Liberian Legislature on January 26, 2009. As a result, the Liberian Senate recently summoned Public Works Minister Losine F. Dunzo, to probe circumstances surrounding the poor rehabilitation works carried out on the road, and to provide reasons regarding why the services of a new engineering firm to carry out a fresh rehabilitation of the same road were engaged. To the relief and delight of the public, rehabilitation works on the Jallah Town Road have started and are being done by CHICO, the Chinese Company contracted by Government through the Ministry of Public Works to pave the Tubman Boulevard and other road networks in Monrovia. The man, who spear-headed supervision works on the Jallah Town Road, is the Deputy Minister of Public Works for

Technical Services, Togba Ngangana. He has been explaining to our reporter issues surrounding the works done on the road. Minister Ngangana said the rehabilitation of the road, which was built in 1979, just before the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU), Summit that was held near Monrovia, in Virginia, started out of a dire need to speedily provide an alternative route from Monrovia to Sinkor, when CHICO planned to commence full scale rehabilitation work on the Tubman Boulevard

Radio Summary

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 1:30 pm)*

City Mayor's Confirmation Halted

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

Margibi Senator Kaine Back to Work Following his Acquittal

- Margibi County Senator Roland Kaine has for the first time since his acquittal on murder charges reported to work.
- The Senator was acquitted nearly two weeks and was subsequently released from detention.
- Senator Kaine and 15 others were accused in connection with the June 7, 2008 Kolleh Town massacre in which more than 14 men were killed following a dispute over a farmland in the border town of Timour District in Margibi and Grand Bassa.

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

Police Begins Reinforcement of Motorcycle Regulation

- Police in Monrovia have begun the reinforcement of motorcycle regulation issued by the Ministry of Transport.
- Transport Minister Jackson Doe said his Ministry and authorities of the Liberia National Police (LNP) and the UN Police have agreed that motorcycle violating the traffic regulation will have their bikes impounded for a three month period and a fine imposed.

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

Global Financial Crisis Hits Special Court – Says Taylor may go free

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

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United Nations  **Nations Unies**

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
24 February 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

Drawdown Will Not Affect Peace...SRSG Løj

(Daily Observer, The News, and The Informer)

- The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ellen Margrethe Løj has reassured Liberians that the current drawdown phase will not affect the peace as UNMIL will continue to work with Government to ensure the consolidation of peace and security in the country.
- Ms. Løj spoke when she decorated 700 Ghanaian peacekeepers with peacekeeping medals for their contribution to UN peace efforts in Liberia.

Saudi Arabia Agrees to Reschedule Liberia US\$29M Debt

(The Inquirer, The News and The Informer)

- A Finance Ministry release issued in Monrovia said the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has agreed to reschedule the US\$29 million debt Liberia owes that country in keeping with the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC).
- The agreement to reschedule the debt was announced by a Saudi Development Fund delegation that is visiting the country to finalize the rescheduling modalities with Government.

City Mayor Designate, Concern Women Launch Major Clean-Up Exercise *(The Parrot and Daily Observer)*

- The Daily Observer reports that the newly appointed City Mayor, Mary Tyounnoh Broh yesterday led hundreds of women to clear Monrovia city of stockpile of garbage and rising waste.
- The over two hundred Liberia women under the Banner "Concerned Women of Liberia" yesterday launched the clean-up campaign to give Monrovia a face lift ahead of the International Women Colloquium slated to take place in Monrovia next month.

Vice President Boakai Clarifies ADA/LAP Rice Project Ownership

(The News and The Inquirer)

- Vice President Joseph Boakai is encouraging Liberians to support the initiative of the Foundation for African Development Aid (ADA) in the production of rice on a large scale saying it will bolster the country's long term desire for self sufficiency in food.
- Speaking on Monday at the Freeport of Monrovia, Vice President Boakai clarified that ADA/Libya Investment Portfolio venture was purely a private undertaking as opposed to the perception that the arrangement was a bilateral one.

60,000 Liberian Refugees Refuse To Return

(The Inquirer)

- The Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) has disclosed that over 60,000 Liberian refugees residing outside the country have refused to return home due to several factors.
- Speaking in an interview, the Executive Director of the LRRRC, Cllr. Wheatonia Dixon Barnes said despite the institution's strive to ensure that Liberian refugees return and contribute to the recovery of the country a huge number have refused to return citing security concerns among other things.

U.S. Government Rehabilitates Sinoe Administration Building

(The News)

- The United States Government through the Agency of International Development (USAID) Liberia Community Infrastructure Project is expected to hand over the rehabilitated and refurbished Sinoe County administration building to the Government of Liberia today.
- The rehabilitation of the building began in April 2007 and is the ninth county seat rehabilitated by USAID-LCIP since 2005.

Radio Summary

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 1:30 pm)*

Saudi Arabia Agrees to Reschedule Liberia US\$29M Debt

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

Government, World Bank Sign US\$3.7 Million Grant

- The Government of Liberia and the World Bank have signed a 3.7 million grant agreement which will commence the integrated financial management information system.
- Finance Minister Augustine Ngafuan said Government has prioritized the installation of the system as part of efforts to improve public finance management.
- The Country Director of the World Bank, Mr. Ohene Nyanin said the bank was pleased to help the country improve its public finance management through improved systems.

Over 200 Women Gives Monrovia Face lift Ahead of International Women Colloquium

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

ECOWAS Wants Legislature Ratify Convention on Small Arms

- The regional body ECOWAS has called on the National Legislature of Liberia to ratify its convention on small arms.
- The head of the Liberian National Commission on Small Arms said ECOWAS made the call at a three-day meeting of national commissions held Burkina Faso.

Ministry of Commerce, ITC Formulate National Export Policy for Liberia

- The Ministry of Commerce in collaboration with the International Trade Centre (ITC) has begun efforts for the formulation of a national export policy in the country.
- The five day consultation is held under the theme: "National Export Strategy on Key Sectors Incorporating the Gender Dimension."
- Delivering the keynote address, Commerce Minister Miatta Beyslow said the exercise will help identify constraints and opportunities in the sectors with high export potentials.

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

Special Court Supplement
RUF Trial Judgment, in Pictures
Wednesday, 25 February 2009



