

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Monday, 26 January 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

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Independent Observer

Monday, 26 January 2009

Witnesses Afraid to Testify in Favour of Charles Taylor

The Defense team of former Liberian President Charles Taylor says fear harboured by many of its potential witnesses is the greatest challenge facing the former Liberian President's legal interest.

Lead Defense lawyer Courtenay Griffiths told the BBC World Service Trust in The Hague that a lot of people are reluctant to come forward to testify for Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Griffiths said many people are afraid of being added to the travel ban or assets freeze list of the United Nations.

The Defense lawyer also attributed the fear of potential witnesses to what he called the adverse media reports against the former Liberian leader.

Mr. Griffiths said a lot of people didn't want to be seen associating with Mr. Taylor because of the negative publicity against him.

He also said the second challenge the Defense is likely to face is that it has not got enough time to prepare its case.

Mr. Griffiths said the Prosecution started the preparation of its case in 2003, but according to him, the Defense has had less than a year to adequately plan its side of the case. In an interview on Wednesday, the lead Defense lawyer spoke of inadequate resources as another challenge facing the Defense. Mr. Griffiths said his team did not have money to pay witnesses as the Prosecution reportedly did to convince witnesses to come forth and testify against Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Griffiths, the Queen's Counsel, said as a matter of principle he was opposed to paying people to testify no matter how important the evidence may be.

He accused the Prosecution witnesses of testifying to protect themselves or they were being paid to testify.

Meanwhile another Prosecution insider witness has taken the stand against Charles Taylor.

For fear of his or her personal security, the witness is testifying in closed session.

There is absolutely no information from a closed session to the public or to journalists covering the trial. It is not known how long the closed session will last.

The Prosecution has four more witnesses to put on the stand and then it will conclude its side of the case against Charles Taylor.

As the Prosecution is drawing close to the end of their own side of the case, the Prosecution has presented a witness who is in charge of all documents of evidence.

The legal team representing former Liberian President Charles Taylor has consistently denied any involvement of their client in the decade-long Sierra Leone conflict. Mr. Malik Tuesday testified to documents presented to the Prosecution by the Liberian judiciary. But the Defense of Charles Taylor objected to the admission of all of the Prosecution documents testified to in court on Tuesday. The BBC WST Mariama Khai Fornah has the details.

FORNAH: According to the Prosecution, the documents testified to on Tuesday were obtained from Mr. Taylor's White Flower residence after a search led by a sheriff from the Liberian Judiciary.

The Prosecution witness, Tariq Malik, said Sheriff Fofie Kamara of the Liberian judiciary led a search at Mr. Taylor's residence on March 5, 2004.

He said the Sheriff seized six sets of documents during their search.

Mr. Malik told the Judges the documents seized from Taylor's residence by Sheriff Fofie Kamara included a letter from former Sierra Leonean President Tejan Kabbah.

The witness said the letter is requesting the then President Taylor to surrender former RUF leader Sam Bockarie to the Sierra Leone Government.

Mr. Malik, who is the Chief of the Evidence and Archive Section of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, also testified to a colour identification card.

The witness told the Judges the card was issued to Mr. Taylor by Burkina Faso in January 1989.

The prosecution witness also testified to a letter head of the Junta-RUF, a document on Mr. Taylor's trip to Libya to sign an agreement on March 2, 2001.

The Prosecution witness also testified to news articles carried in the Inquirer and The



News newspapers about Liberian soldiers captured in Sierra Leone, and thousands trapped in Freetown.

Defense lawyer Terry Munyard started his cross-examination by launching into the credibility of the witness.

Mr. Munyard also questioned the witness on the identification of the remains of Sam Bockarie's body when it was turned over to the Sierra Leone Government.

Mr. Malik admitted that he identified the remains of Bockarie's body on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone after the post-mortem.

At the end of the Defense cross-examination of Mr. Malik, the Prosecution identified 45 documents for admission, but the Defense objected to the admission of the documents and said the witness could not testify to the contents of the documents.

Mr. Munyard said that the Defense never had the time to do a thorough cross-examination of the documents because they were presented to them late.

After legal arguments by the Prosecutions and the Defense, Presiding Judge Richard Lussick announced the court's decision.

JUSTICE LUSSICK: Now Mr. Rapp, we fully appreciate the motive behind bringing this witness and the documents before the Court. We realise you're trying to save some time. But we've given the matter some thought and we think that we would rather rule on the formal arguments presented by the motions. So the order we're going to make is that we will defer your present application for admission of these documents pending our rulings on the motions that are presently before us.

According to the Prosecutor, there are five more witnesses to be put on the stand then the Prosecution will end its case.

For the BBC World Service Trust, this is Mariama Khai Fornah reporting from The Hague.

Independent Observer
Monday, 26 January 2009

4 more witnesses to go as over 80 now testify against Charles Taylor

The Prosecution of the Special Court for Sierra Leone has presented over 80 witnesses to testify against the former President of Liberia Charles Taylor in The Hague.

Most of these witnesses earlier testified in the AFRC and RUF trials in Freetown and they testified using protective measures. But as the Prosecution brought them in The Hague, most of the crime base witnesses ended testifying in open session. Some of these witnesses are facing problems as they returned to their communities. What plans does the Prosecution have for their personal security? The Prosecutor of the Special Court, Mr. Stephen Rapp, is in The Hague. BBC Service Trust reporter Mariama Khai Fornah first asked him what's the greatest challenge faced by the Prosecution.

RAPP: Well, the greatest challenge is just the logistic one of bringing people 10,000 km. from Liberia, from Sierra Leone, making sure they're protected in Sierra Leone, that they're protected in Liberia, that they're protected here when they arrive, and bringing them to a setting that's certainly alien to most of them, and to be able to present their testimony and to get the story out, clearly, and to make sure that it's told. That's been, at the end of the day, the biggest challenge. But then, additionally, just in terms of meeting our burden of proof, we have a case that is not based upon Charles Taylor's alleged conduct in Liberia; we have no jurisdiction over that. Our case has to deal with his responsibility for what happened, for the atrocities committed, in Sierra Leone, and that's required us to present a great deal of linkage testimony in an environment where there was not a lot of written orders, where there is not documents like say there was in World War II with the Nazis or something. I mean, we've had to rely upon oral testimony of people that were involved in these events ten, twelve, sometimes fourteen years ago. And that is a very challenging thing to do. And particularly to convince people who were formerly allied with Taylor to testify and assure them that they're going to be protected after their testimony because they might face retribution for it. And we're very pleased that we're in the end able to present 30 insiders, linkage witnesses.

FORNAH: So since you started bringing them in The Hague, did you ever encounter anybody complaining to you that he or she is facing trouble in the community that he's coming from?

RAPP: Oh yes. I mean we've had some witnesses - five or six witnesses that we had hoped to have testify - that in the end basically indicated for one reason or another because they feared retribution and they feared economic loss, loss of business, sometimes violence, they couldn't and wouldn't come. And so that's been a concern. And we've had other people that after their testimony have reported to us of threats that they receive. There was one assault on the child of one of the witnesses. There've

been stones thrown at a brother's house - those kinds of things. But fortunately none of the witnesses themselves has been attacked or injured and we're pleased by that, but it's an ongoing process with each of these people after they've finished testifying. The neutral body of the Court, the WVS, the Witness and Victim Section, that section is working with each of these people to develop a plan to make sure that they have a safe future.

FORNAH: So what are some of the plans you developed for them, because it's risky now that they are back in their communities and they are not welcome by their people.

RAPP: Well, it varies. It obviously depends upon each witnesses' circumstances. Of course some of these witnesses came here and testified under pseudonyms. They were known as TF-1-159 or something like that, and people back there may not know that they testified. It may be possible for them to go back in their community and for people not to know and for them not to face any kind of retribution. There are certainly situations with victims who come and in some cases have told their true names that when they go home, particularly to Sierra Leone, that the animosities that were there in the past aren't there, and that they may not face in some communities any real retribution or threats. The greatest risks are often to people who testified to the involvement of neighbours or certainly the involvement of people in the support of Charles Taylor. Those folks can eventually face some retribution and some anger and some difficulty. In those situations, the Court works to ensure that they have a safe place to go. That sometimes involves relocating them outside their home community, preferably in their home country not too far from where they lived beforehand and in familiar settings that they can take up the kind of work or farming, or fishing, or whatever they did beforehand. But in a few cases it has involved relocation outside their home country, sometimes Liberians to Sierra Leone, sometimes people a little further away. And in fewer than I think about six cases it's actually involved relocation of people outside the region.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

The legal team of Mr. Taylor is now preparing its side of the case. But what is the biggest challenge the Defense team is likely to face? That was the question Joseph Cheeseman posed to Mr. Courtenay Griffiths, the lead lawyer for Mr. Taylor

GRIFFITHS: I think the biggest challenge is fear. Because of the adverse press which Mr. Taylor has received over the years, and because of the consequences which have been suffered by anyone who appears to the West to be supporting Mr. Taylor - that is, the fear that they might be added to asset freeze and travel ban list - a lot of people are very reluctant to come forward and give evidence on Mr. Taylor's behalf. A lot of people, for whatever reason, do not want to be seen associated with Mr. Taylor, and that is a major problem which we are [indistinct] to overcome.

CHEESEMAN: The Prosecution faced a similar challenge. Mr. Rapp, the Prosecutor, said that most witnesses were threatened or discouraged by some group of people in Liberia and other places. I mean, it's not unique to the Defence.

GRIFFITHS: Well I think it is unique to the Defence because in the first place there's a vast disparity in the resources available to the Prosecution. They were giving large sums of money to witnesses to come and give evidence. We don't have that kind of money to persuade people to attend.

CHEESEMAN: I spoke with the Registrar some time ago, before the Court closed for the holidays, and he said he will be giving you US \$10,000 per month to augment your financial strength for your case.

GRIFFITHS: We have been given additional resources, but those resources are not for the payment of witnesses. And in any event, I am totally opposed to paying someone to give evidence. I don't think the truth is enhanced by payment. People should be willing to come to court and give evidence because they are convinced of the need to tell the truth because that's what justice requires. And I am totally against, on a matter of principle, paying people to attend court to give evidence, however important that evidence might potentially be.

CHEESEMAN: So you think that fear is the only challenge you might face?

GRIFFITHS: Fear is the biggest challenge we face. The second challenge we face is that, necessarily, we have not had as long as the Prosecution to prepare. The Prosecution have been preparing their case against Mr. Taylor since 2003, so they've had some six years in which to get their case together. We came on board last July. Consequently, we've had less than a year so far to get our case together. So again, that is a difficulty we face which demonstrates the inequality between our position and that of the Prosecution.

CHEESEMAN: How are you planning your side of the case?

GRIFFITHS: Our side of the case will revolve primarily around the testimony of the former President, Charles Taylor. He is the main actor so far as the allegations are concerned. He was in many ways, according to the Prosecution, at the centre of this maelstrom which engulfed that part of West Africa. And so consequently it is for him, in the main, to provide an explanation for the case which the Prosecution have brought, flimsy as we say that case is.

CHEESEMAN: Why do you describe it that way?

GRIFFITHS: The reason why I describe it that way is for these reasons: firstly, when the Prosecution served upon us their pre-trial brief, that brief anticipated calling a number of important witnesses who, twelve months after the Prosecution case has begun, have not been called by the Prosecution to give evidence. That's point number one. And one wonders why they chose to say they would be relying on such evidence and then in due course didn't call it. Now as far as that evidence which they have called is concerned, we believe that the credibility of the vast majority of their linkage witnesses have been called into serious question, for a number of reasons. One, because many of those witnesses, it's quite clear, have patently lied and lied again. Not just before this tribunal, but before previous tribunals in the RUF trial and the AFRC trial in particular.

CHEESEMAN: How did you make the determination that they lied?

GRIFFITHS: Well if you take for example Hassan Bility, the most recent witness, it's quite clear that his account is contradictory internally. Given what he said in the RUF trial, given what he said in the trial of Gus Kouwenhoven, and given what he's asking these Judges here to believe. There were blatant inconsistencies and downright lies in his testimony. Hanging behind much of this evidence is a [cloud] that many of these witnesses gave evidence either to protect themselves or because they were being paid by the Prosecution and consequently they felt that they had to give the Prosecution what they wanted. And much of that account, when one contrasts it with the historically known facts, is totally contradictory.

Concord Times
Monday, 26 January 2009

Mogbindi Echo

By PEL Koroma

The people of Kono have opined that their land will never be peaceful until their dead are properly laid to rest. The chiefdom speaker of Kamaa chiefdom in Kono district, Aiah Raymond Komba together with his people are restless because it is unaccustomed to their culture to keep the remains of their dear ones that were brutally burnt alive in a house by the fighting forces during the war.

Tears rolled down the cheeks of Konos any time they see the bones and skulls of their people who they think deserve a respectful burial. According to Chief Komba, the monument in Tombodu was built by the International Red Cross (IRC) and Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL). But since the death of their people, no traditional ceremony has taken place such as the 3, 7 and 40 days for the souls of those innocent people killed in the fire on that fate day. To the native Kono, the skeletons in the said museum in Kono is a disgrace to the dead especially the way those people met their death.

Widow of the man who owns the house that was lit told me that she feels sad any day she sees her husband's bones together with the hundreds that were burnt in their house. She said she has never had proper sleep because of the kind of manner her husband's remains are exposed.

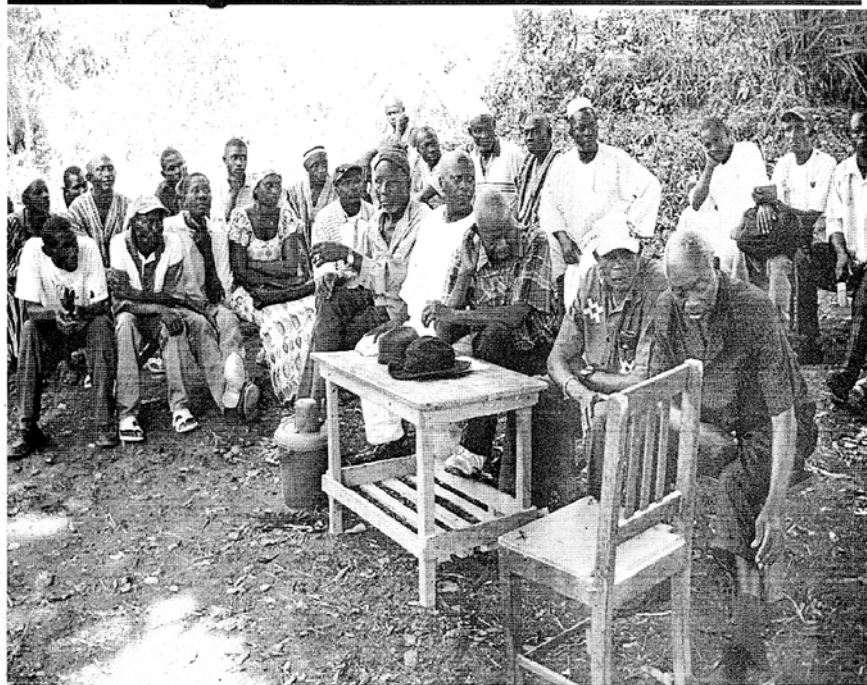
The calamity that the people of Kono experienced is unprintable. They said they will never forget their past even though they are ready to reconcile and embrace the perpetrators of such carnage.

It is strongly believed among the Konos that life has turned out to be militant with them because they have failed to honor their dead. The women and children have not stopped crying for their love ones that were burnt alive in the presence of some of them, while others testified that they were in hiding in the hills watching while one Commander Savage butchered their people. There is a particular area in Tombodu called 'Savage Pit'. Chief Komba was in tears as he explained that over eight bags of skulls and bones which are the remains of those slaughtered in cold blood and dumped in the pit now called Savage Pit, were removed and buried. He said Chiefs have a traditional role of preserving the customs and traditions of their chiefdoms.

Tamba Mansaray, the man in charge of the museum told me that it is because the bones of their dead are nakedly exposed, that is why they are suffering. He said their ancestors are angry with them because of that. He said there are particular bones and skulls left after the inferno in Tombodu that does not look like Africans. He is of the strongest belief that those bones in question must belong to Asians, Europeans or Americans. That was as a result of the role foreign forces played in our eleven year war.

Currently, the community reconciliation project spear headed by Forum of Conscience and director of Fambul Tok John Caulker, has had positive impact on the people of Kono. Konos are willing to reconcile and forgive one another so that they would all live in peace. There is a belief amongst

Konos want to bury their dead



Kono's in consultation with Fambul Tok Kono district during the civil war.

them that most atrocities inflicted by some people were never out of their own volition. Some of their children were forcefully conscripted by the rebels and others took revenge after parents and relatives were humiliated, killed gruesomely and the only option at that time was to collaborate for the survival of relatives and the protection of family property.

Caulker told the people of Kono to forget about the past and open a new page so that the Kono community will work again as a unit for their own development. He impressed on the people with Fambul Tok as a project belongs to the people as peace building is a process. He reiterated to the Konos that there is a need to stay together in peace in their communities even though the Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not do much to appease the aggrieved people in their localities. He appealed to them to be each others' keeper as it used to be in the past. Family dialogue for common understanding is what the people of Kono need now. It is only when these communities reconcile and work together to overcome their social problems before real progress would prevail.

Fambul Tok and its partners in community reconciliation, Catalyst for Peace based in the United States of America were in Kono to give courage to the Konos that all is not lost. The President of the US based Foundation on community reconciliation in post conflict countries, Libby Hoffman

and her delegation visited Tombodu over the weekend to elate the spirit of the people of Kono after all what they have suffered. She said she was impressed that Konos are ready to forgive and reconcile after a short period of time. She said she is sure people will pick up the pieces and make their lives whole again. One of the delegates Amy Potter, who lectures Peace and Conflict Resolution in a US university, said man has always manifested cruelty since creation and that what happened in Sierra Leone was not a new phenomenon but that man has the ability to resolve and say enough is enough to violence.

In this regard, the people of Kono want to revisit their ancestral practices that created avenues for reconciliation through dialogue with the help of Fambul Tok. Fambul Tok gives premium to the exploration of traditional means in fostering reconciliation through the performance of traditional ceremonies as a way of appeasing the spirits of their ancestors for perfect peace and bumper agricultural yields. Konos will not stop crying until their people are giving a befitting burial.

The Donsos, a traditional Kono militia, participated in the war and all Donsos who lost their lives also deserve proper burial and traditional ceremonies performed on their behalf. Until these ceremonies are performed, the Konos believe they will not get respite.

Cocorioko

Friday, 23 January 2009

Prosecution has presented 80 witnesses against Charles Taylor

Written by Mariama Khai Fornah

The Prosecution of the Special Court for Sierra Leone has presented over eighty witnesses to testify against the former President of Liberia Charles Taylor in The Hague. Most of these witnesses earlier testified in the AFRC and RUF trials in Freetown and they testified using protective measures. But as the Prosecution brought them in The Hague, most of the crime base witnesses ended testifying in open session.

Some of these witnesses are facing problems as they returned to their communities. What plans does the Prosecution have for their personal security? The Prosecutor of the Special Court, Mr. Stephen Rapp, is in The Hague. BBC Service Trust reporter Mariama Khai Fornah first asked him what's the greatest challenge faced by the Prosecution.

RAPP: Well, the greatest challenge is just the logistic one of bringing people 10,000 km. from Liberia, from Sierra Leone, making sure they're protected in Sierra Leone, that they're protected in Liberia, that they're protected here when they arrive, and bringing them to a setting that's certainly alien to most of them, and to be able to present their testimony and to get the story out, clearly, and to make sure that it's told. That's been, at the end of the day, the biggest challenge. But then, additionally, just in terms of meeting our burden of proof, we have a case that is not based upon Charles Taylor's alleged conduct in Liberia; we have no jurisdiction over that. Our case has to deal with his responsibility for what happened, for the atrocities committed, in Sierra Leone, and that's required us to present a great deal of linkage testimony in an environment where there was not a lot of written orders, where there is not documents like say there was in World War II with the Nazis or something. I mean, we've had to rely upon oral testimony of people that were involved in these events ten, twelve, sometimes fourteen years ago. And that is a very challenging thing to do. And particularly to convince people who were formerly allied with Taylor to testify and assure them that they're going to be protected after their testimony because they might face retribution for it. And we're very pleased that we're in the end able to present 30 insiders, linkage witnesses.

FORNAH: So since you started bringing them in The Hague, did you ever encounter anybody complaining to you that he or she is facing trouble in the community that he's coming from?

RAPP: Oh yes. I mean we've had some witnesses – five or six witnesses that we had hoped to have testify – that in the end basically indicated for one reason or another because they feared retribution and they feared economic loss, loss of business, sometimes violence, they couldn't and wouldn't come. And so that's been a concern. And we've had other people that after their testimony have reported to us of threats that they receive. There was one assault on the child of one of the witnesses. There've been stones thrown at a brother's house – those kinds of things. But fortunately none of the witnesses themselves has been attacked or injured and we're pleased by that, but it's an ongoing

process with each of these people after they've finished testifying. The neutral body of the Court, the WVS, the Witness and Victim Section, that section is working with each of these people to develop a plan to make sure that they have a safe future.

FORNAH: So what are some of the plans you developed for them, because it's risky now that they are back in their communities and they are not welcome by their people.

RAPP: Well, it varies. It obviously depends upon each witnesses' circumstances. Of course some of these witnesses came here and testified under pseudonyms. They were known as TF1-159 or something like that, and people back there may not know that they testified. It may be possible for them to go back in their community and for people not to know and for them not to face any kind of retribution. There are certainly situations with victims who come and in some cases have told their true names that when they go home, particularly to Sierra Leone, that the animosities that were there in the past aren't there, and that they may not face in some communities any real retribution or threats. The greatest risks are often to people who testified to the involvement of neighbours or certainly the involvement of people in the support of Charles Taylor. Those folks can eventually face some retribution and some anger and some difficulty. In those situations, the Court works to ensure that they have a safe place to go. That sometimes involves relocating them outside their home community, preferably in their home country not too far from where they lived beforehand and in familiar settings that they can take up the kind of work or farming, or fishing, or whatever they did beforehand. But in a few cases it has involved relocation outside their home country, sometimes Liberians to Sierra Leone, sometimes people a little further away. And in fewer than I think about six cases it's actually involved relocation of people outside the region.

FORNAH: That was the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Stephen Rapp.

Meanwhile, the trial of former President of Liberia Charles Taylor still continues in The Hague in closed session.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
23 January 2009**

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

Newspaper Summary

Hordes of Caterpillars Threaten Liberia - Render Several Villagers Homeless
(Heritage, National Chronicle, New Democrat)

- [sic:] Huge hordes of ravenous caterpillars have appeared in northern Liberia, destroying crops and vegetation, sending terrified villagers fleeing from their homes, and raising the specter of a food, health and environmental emergency in the country. The situation in Liberia is a national emergency and is likely to escalate into a regional crisis involving neighbouring Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, according to the Representative of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Liberia, Winfred Hammond. FAO has created a task force including experts from Ghana and Sierra Leone to assess the situation, prepare an immediate action plan and devise medium and long-term measures, said Mr. Hammond. For its part, Liberia has set up three emergency committees to provide planning, resources mobilization and communication and information. The country lacks the financial resources and technical expertise to combat the emergency on its own and will require international assistance, Mr. Hammond said.

World Bank Donates 14 Vehicles to Government

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

- The World Bank and the Economic Governance and Institutional Reform Project have provided fourteen pick-ups and one Jeep for use by public agencies.
- The World Bank Country Manager, Mr. Ohene Nyanin said the Finance Ministry is implementing the project with funding of over US\$11 million from the World Bank.
- Receiving the vehicles, Deputy Finance Minister for Administration, Tarnue Mawolo thanked the World Bank for the donation and said government inherited a broken system that needs to be rebuilt.

Opposition Liberty Party Alarms over Government's Advertisement at main Airport- Government Concedes but Clarifies

(The News, National Chronicle)

- The opposition Liberty Party has expressed concern over an act by government to advertise commercial businesses on official documents.
- The party in a release observed there are new immigration forms carrying advertisement for the International Bank and Money Gram.

- Liberty Party described the act as provision of unfair commercial advantage to the International Bank and Money Gram over other businesses engaged in similar ventures.
- Government acknowledged it was wrong but said actions were taken to replace the forms a month ago.

Senate Studies Option to Investigate E-mail Scandal

(The Inquirer, National Chronicle, Public Agenda)

- The Senate has ordered an investigation into the merits of setting-up an independent legislative committee to further probe the email scandal.
- During its session Thursday, the Senate instructed its Judiciary Committee to advise it on the recommendation by Representative Vinicius Hodges for additional probe into the email scandal involving the Executive.
- The Dunn Commission which investigated the email scandal said it did not see an act of corruption but rather impropriety and suggested further probe of Willis Knuckles and Estrada Bernard, two associates of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

Japan Agency Resumes Activities - Promises More Assistance

(The News, The Inquirer)

- Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) says it has started two programmes since the resumption of cooperation to Liberia in 2007. JICA is the Japanese Government agency responsible for undertaking bilateral assistance such as technical cooperation, concessionary loans and grant aid between Japan and other countries. The organization, in a release Thursday said it had initiated measures to enhance the function of the Liberian-Japanese Friendship Maternity Hospital at the John F. Kennedy Centre, the Urban Facilities Restoration and the Improvement of Monrovia.

Liberia Resumes Telecommunications Operation following decade-long civil war

(The Inquirer)

- The state-owned Liberia Telecommunications Corporation (LTC) says it would begin administrative operations from its 18th Street office today.
- In a release, the LTC said the completion of its infrastructure throughout Monrovia and its environs signifies the revitalization of the entity.
- The company indicated its network infrastructure is deployed with coverage in Monrovia, Bushrod Island, Paynesville, the Roberts International Airport and Firestone.

Radio Summary

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

Liberty Party Alarms over Advertisement on official Airport form but Government Clarifies

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

Government Receives 14 Cars from World Bank Donates

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

Don Bosco Homes Releases Report on Liberia, Sierra Leone

- The Catholic-run Don Bosco Homes has released a comprehensive report on gender inequalities in Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- The Executive Director of Don Bosco Homes-Liberia, Mr. David Konneh said the report took into consideration the different aspects of gender in the two countries.
- Mr. Konneh said the report indicates that children and young people in general are still been marginalized.
- Launching the report, Gender Minister Varbah Gayflor commended the Don Bosco Homes for the report and assured it would be looked at.

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

Star Radio *(News monitored today at 9:00 am)*

Senate Studies Option to Investigate E-mail Scandal

LTC to Resume Operation Today

Armyworms Occupy 75% of Zota District

- The Commissioner of Zota District in Bong County has disclosed that up to seventy -five percent of the land area has been taken over by the armyworms.
- Commissioner Joseph Urey disclosed that between ten and fifteen thousand people in Zota District have been affected by the pest invasion.
- According to Commissioner Urey, the impact of the caterpillar invasion could be felt in about thirty-five communities in Zota District.
- Meanwhile, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) says it is closely monitoring the situation in Zota District and surrounding towns.
- The Emergency Coordinator of the FAO, Tim Vaesen said his organization was studying the situation in order to make a determination for a possible proposal to donors for assistance.

GAC Moves to Audit County Authorities

- A five-man delegation from the General Auditing Commission (GAC) has begun the audit of county authorities in the southeast of the country.
- In an interview, the Forensic Audit Manager at the GAC, Mr. Philip Massaquoi said the audit being carried out in the Southeast is a routine of the commission and is intended to counter check the general operation of the county administrations.

Human Rights Tribune

Saturday, 24 January 2009

DRC: ICC's First Trial Focuses on Child Soldiers

Release from Human Rights Watch - The International Criminal Court's (ICC) trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, scheduled to begin on January 26, 2009 in The Hague, marks an important stage in efforts to establish responsibility for the use of children in military operations, Human Rights Watch said today. Another Congolese warlord sought by the ICC, Bosco Ntaganda, remains at large.

Lubanga, the former leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) militia who operated in the district of Ituri in northeastern Congo, is charged with enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 as soldiers and using them to participate actively in combat between September 2002 and August 2003. Lubanga's UPC forces also carried out widespread killing, rape, and torture of thousands of civilians throughout Ituri, though to date the ICC has not charged him or any other member of the UPC with such crimes.

"This first ICC trial makes it clear that the use of children in armed combat is a war crime that can and will be prosecuted at the international level," said Param-Preet Singh, counsel in Human Rights Watch's International Justice Program. "Lubanga's UPC also slaughtered thousands, and those responsible should be held accountable for these crimes as well."

Lubanga's trial was originally scheduled to begin in June 2008. However, the judges of the trial chamber unanimously decided to stay the proceedings - suspending the trial - because the prosecution could not disclose a number of documents collected confidentially from information providers as permitted under the Rome Statute, causing concerns that Lubanga would not receive a fair trial. The prosecution worked with these information providers to address the judges' concerns, and in November 2008 the trial chamber allowed proceedings to resume.

The Ituri conflict and other conflicts in eastern Congo highlight the participation of non-Congolese forces. Ituri in particular became a battleground involving the governments of Uganda, Rwanda, and Congo. These governments provided political and military support to Congolese armed groups despite abundant evidence of their widespread violations of international humanitarian law. The ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo, has repeatedly stated that he will bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious crimes.

"Getting to the root of the conflict in Ituri means that the ICC must go beyond local war lords like Lubanga," said Singh. "We look to the prosecutor to investigate those who supported Lubanga and other militias operating in Ituri, including senior officials in Kinshasa, Kigali, and Kampala."

The ICC is faced with the challenge of making sure that the proceedings are meaningful for the communities most affected by the crimes in Congo. Human Rights Watch said that the Lubanga trial is a unique opportunity that the ICC cannot afford to miss and

should make every possible effort to communicate with people in Congo about important legal proceedings in The Hague. To be effective, justice must not only be done but also must be seen to be done. Human Rights Watch will be looking very closely at the court's performance to this end.

Bosco Ntaganda Still Sought by the ICC

Bosco Ntaganda, who collaborated with Lubanga as chief of military operations for the UPC, has also been charged with war crimes by the ICC but remains at large. He currently serves as the military chief of staff of the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), a rebel group that is now collaborating with the Congolese and Rwandan national armies in military operations against a Rwandan armed group in eastern Congo.

On November 4 and 5, 2008, CNDP troops under Ntaganda's command killed an estimated 150 people in the town of Kiwanja, one of the worst massacres in North Kivu in the past two years.

In early January, Ntaganda claimed he was taking over leadership of the CNDP from its former head Laurent Nkunda, and on January 16 he declared that instead of making war on the Congolese national army, he would join its troops in fighting the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Rwandan armed group some of whose leaders participated in the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.

"Bosco Ntaganda is not a viable partner for the Congolese or any other government," said Singh. "He is a war crimes suspect sought by the ICC, and he should be immediately arrested, not celebrated as a partner for peace."

The Congolese government, a state party to the Rome Statute, which established the ICC, is obligated to arrest Ntaganda. Yet no such attempt was made last week when Ntaganda was in Goma alongside the Congolese minister of the interior and other senior Congolese military officers.

Background

In addition to crimes related to child soldiers, Thomas Lubanga's UPC, which purported to further the interests of the Hema ethnic group in the Ituri region of northeastern Congo, has also been involved in ethnic massacres, torture, and rape during the Ituri conflict.

In March 2006, Lubanga was arrested and transferred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague on charges involving child soldiers. In January 2007, the judges of the ICC determined that there was sufficient evidence to move forward with a trial.

This trial is the first in which victims will be allowed to participate in international criminal proceedings. More than 90 victims who have been found eligible will participate through their legal representatives. While not parties, victims have certain rights in proceedings, provided their exercise is consistent with the rights of the accused and a fair trial. This may include the right to submit evidence pertaining to Lubanga's guilt or innocence and thus contribute to the search for truth.

The ICC has charged three other Congolese warlords with crimes related to child soldiers, including Bosco Ntaganda, mentioned above. Two others, leaders of militias of ethnic groups allied with each other but rivals of Lubanga's, are in custody. They are Germain Katanga of the Ituri Patriotic Resistance Forces (FRPI), a Ngiti-based group, and Mathieu Ngudjolo, of the Nationalist and Integrationist Front (FNI), a Lendu-based militia. Both are accused of using child soldiers in attacking civilians in Bogoro village in early 2003, among other war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, sexual slavery, and rape.

Children are currently recruited and used in armed conflict in at least 15 countries and territories: Afghanistan, Burma (Myanmar), Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), India, Iraq, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Philippines, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, and Uganda. In the DRC, at least five parties to the armed conflict are known to use child soldiers. These include the Congolese army (FARDC), the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, the National Congress for the Defense of the People, pro-government Mai Mai groups, and the Lord's Resistance Army.

In addition to the ICC's cases, the Special Court for Sierra Leone has charged all nine of its original defendants, including former Liberian president Charles Taylor, with the crime of recruiting and using children under the age of 15 as soldiers. To date, the Special Court has convicted four defendants of this crime; those convicted are serving prison terms ranging from seven to 50 years. The Special Court's trial of Taylor is ongoing.

Ituri is one of the areas worst-affected by Congo's devastating wars. A local armed conflict between Hema and Lendu ethnic groups that began in 1999 was exacerbated by Ugandan military forces and through linkages to the broader conflict in the Great Lakes region. As the conflict spiraled and armed groups multiplied, more than 60,000 civilians were slaughtered in Ituri, according to the United Nations. Competition for the region's lucrative gold mines and trading routes was a major contributing factor to the fighting. Foreign armies and local militia groups - seeing control of the gold mines as a way to money, guns, and power - fought each other ruthlessly, often targeting civilians in the process. In their battles for gold, armed groups such as Lubanga's UPC were implicated in widespread ethnic slaughter, torture, and rape.

Human Rights Watch has been documenting human rights abuses committed in Ituri since 1999. Human Rights Watch published detailed reports in 2001, 2003, and 2005, as well as dozens of news releases and briefing papers detailing the widespread atrocities by all armed groups.

Brussels, January 23 2009

BBC Online

Monday, 26 January 2009

Congo warlord denies war crimes

Former Congolese militia leader Thomas Lubanga has pleaded not guilty to charges of using child soldiers at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

He faces six charges of recruiting and using hundreds of children aged under 15 to fight in DR Congo's brutal five-year conflict, which ended in 2003.

Opening the prosecution, Luis Moreno-Ocampo said Mr Lubanga had used the children to "kill, pillage and rape".

The case is the first to come to trial before the ICC in The Hague.

Its opening follows a seven-month delay, as judges and prosecutors at the world's first permanent war crimes court disputed confidential evidence.

Prosecutors say child soldiers were used to kill members of a rival ethnic group, or as Mr Lubanga's bodyguards.

Giving his opening statement, Mr Moreno-Ocampo said the prosecution would prove that between 1 September 2002 and 13 August 2003, Mr Lubanga "systematically" recruited children under 15 as soldiers.

He said: "Lubanga's militia recruited, trained and used hundreds of young children to kill, pillage and rape.

"The children still suffer the consequences of Lubanga's crimes. They cannot forget what they suffered, what they saw, what they did. They were nine, 11, 13 years old."

Mr Moreno-Ocampo said some of the children were now using drugs to survive and some had become prostitutes.

The prosecution plans to call 34 witnesses - among them former child soldiers and ex-militia group members - in the course of the trial, which is expected to last several months.



Thomas Lubanga insists he was trying to bring peace to the Ituri region

THOMAS LUBANGA
 Leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots, an ethnic Hema militia
 Accused of recruiting children under 15 as soldiers
 Says he was trying to bring peace to Congo's eastern Ituri region
 Arrested in Kinshasa in March 2005
 Held by the ICC at The Hague since 2006

[Trial starts road to justice](#)
[Profile: Thomas Lubanga](#)

It also plans to submit video footage allegedly showing Mr Lubanga in training camps in the company of recruits who appear to be under 15.

Mr Lubanga insists he was trying to bring peace to Ituri, a region in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo wracked by years of conflict between rival groups seeking to control its vast mineral wealth.

He was the leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) and its armed wing at the time of the alleged crimes in 2002-2003, and still has strong support among his Hema community in Ituri.

The proceedings of the ICC trial are being given wide media coverage across the Ituri region.

Abuses and atrocities

A total of 93 alleged victims are being represented by eight lawyers in court.

The prosecution says children were snatched as they walked to school and forced to fight for Mr Lubanga's Hema militia against their Lendu rivals.

Many were plied with marijuana and told they were protected by witchcraft, according to human rights groups.

More than 30,000 children were recruited during the fighting, which saw some 60,000 people lose their lives.

The ICC trial sends a clear signal to rebel leaders and army commanders around the world who have frequently been able to commit atrocities on the battlefield with impunity, says the BBC's Africa analyst Martin Plaut.

Separately, judges at the court are expected to decide soon whether to issue an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who is accused of genocide in Darfur.

ICC FACTS

Permanent war crimes tribunal
 Founded in 2002 in The Hague
 Has issued 12 arrest warrants
 Supported by 108 states, not
 including the US or China

[Q&A: International Criminal Court](#)

Naharnet Newsdesk International

Friday, 23 January 2009

<http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/NewsDesk.nsf>

International Tribunal to be Launched March 1, No Specific Charges Made Yet

The Registrar of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon Robin Vincent has said no one has been charged yet in the assassination of ex-Premier Rafik Hariri, stressing that the court would start operating on March 1.

"No specific charges against any person have been made yet," Vincent told a gathering at the (Beit al Muhami) Attorney's Home in Beirut on Thursday evening via a live close circuit televised address.

The meeting was attended by Interior Minister Ziad Baroud, Head of the State Consultative Council Judge Shukri Sader, former minister Elias Hanna, British Ambassador Frances Guy, Head of the Beirut Bar Association Ramzi Jreij and others.

"Court logistics preparations at the Hague are still ongoing," Vincent said. He added that investigations into the Hariri crime would continue throughout 2009.

He explained that an agreement was signed with the Dutch government for the court to have its headquarters in The Hague. The tribunal will start operations on Sunday March 1, he said.

"On that date, Special Commissioner Daniel Bellemare becomes an international prosecutor. He and his team would gradually move from Lebanon to the Hague," Vincent said. He added that once Bellemare is in the Hague, a special meeting would be held to establish the rules, governing procedures and proof, adding that this would be completed at the appropriate time, while respecting the specified time schedule for placing information systems.

Vincent assured his audience "the tribunal will be clear and transparent, meaning every citizen has the right to learn about the tribunal's progress."

From 2002 to 2005, Vincent served as Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Since then, his work has included temporary service as Deputy Registrar of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and advising on the establishment of other international tribunals, including the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

Judge Sader said the tribunal's mission is to uncover all international terror cases in Lebanon and not just that of Hariri.

"This means uncovering all assassination crimes from the attempt on Marwan Hamadeh to that of Gebran Tueni," Sader said, adding that all victims are equal in the eyes of the international community.

"The tribunal also has the power to look for possible future terror attacks that could take place following the court's establishment," Sader said.

He explained that the Security Council adopted the tribunal under Article 7 of the U.N. Charter to avoid going through the Lebanese parliament "out of respect for Lebanon."

U.N. Secretary-General at the time Kofi Annan and his legal assistant Nicolas Michel both failed to obtain the approval of the Lebanese parliament, he said.

He pointed to one issue that will need to be cleared under article seven, that the court does not have the right to force a third party to cooperate in the case.

The Sunday Morning Herald

Friday, 23 January 2009

War crimes: talk but not much action

Since July 1, 2002, the International Criminal Court in The Hague has been responsible for prosecuting war crimes. War crimes committed before that year are dealt with by ad hoc tribunals set by the United Nations Security Council - for instance, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, the ICT for Rwanda and the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

To get anything before the ICC is a tortuous process.

The hilarious television drama *The Trial Of Tony Blair*, about the prosecution of Blair for war crimes, may have given a slightly rosy impression about how easy it is to get a politician into one of those bullet-proof glass cages in The Hague.

It's not easy. The case has to have "sufficient gravity", and you can argue forever about that. The United States is not a party to the Rome Statute, which created the ICC, nor is Israel. They don't accept its jurisdiction to try their citizens for war crimes. A state or country has to accept the jurisdiction of the tribunal before the court can start the machinery of justice.

In Gaza, there are more than 1200 Palestinians dead, of whom more than 400 were children, and thousands more injured. According to Human Rights Watch, the Israelis exploded white phosphorous shells over Gaza which left victims horribly burnt. UN relief supplies were destroyed and last weekend an Israeli tank killed two boys in a UN school.

About 30 members of the one Palestinian clan were killed by shells or missiles in the Zeitun area after they were all gathered together by Israeli forces. Palestinian paramedics were prevented from attending to the wounded for two days. About 40 people were also killed on January 6 at a UN school compound housing refugees.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, the United Nations and Amnesty International all had people in the Gaza strip, and all condemned Israel's disproportionate aggression.

The Western media is only now being allowed into Gaza to report on the devastation. The Haaretz newspaper said that Israel was acting like a steamroller.

In the beginning, Israel said it was defending itself against "terror attacks". By the time of the ceasefire it certainly didn't look that way and quite soon the words "war crimes" started to appear.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, said in relation to the January 6 attack on the UN school compound that independent investigations should be carried out into possible war crimes.

And after last weekend's school attack the head of the UN relief and works agency in Gaza, John Ging, asked: "Is this [the killing of two small boys] and the killing of other innocent civilians in Gaza a war crime?"

Yigal Palmor, a spokesman for the Israeli Foreign Ministry, was asked whether there was any chance of a case being brought against Israel in the International Criminal Court. He thought there was not "the slightest piece of evidence". Further, he said, the army had a legal department that "advises it and gives its opinions on measures that are taken".

Like all legal departments, it rather depends on the sort of lawyers who are dishing out the advice.

Gaza has long been a tragedy, and no more so in the latest bombings and invasion. Does that make what happened a war crime? The answer is more bound up with politics than law.

The UN Security Council could, if it felt like it, dispense with that state-based acquiescence and just refer relevant Israeli ministers and military commanders for investigation by the ICC.

How likely do you think that would be with Israel's great and powerful ally the United States holding a veto vote at the Security Council?

Even before a determination can be made about whether to have a formal investigation, the Office of the Prosecutor has to carry out years of analysis and overcome resistance from the people being investigated.

More than a year after a referral to prosecute was made in the Dafur situation, there were still no arrest warrants. While that is no longer the situation, the Dafur defendants have not progressed beyond the pre-trial chamber.

Apart from the Dafur case, the ICC has on its books alleged war crimes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and the Central African Republic. As The Economist recently pointed out, all these atrocities involved "low-tech mass killings at close quarters", and these are the sort of war crimes where the ICC seems most at home.

It is pointed out that civilians are frequently hit by NATO aircraft in Afghanistan and never is it suggested that whoever is responsible should wind up in The Hague.

When it comes to high-tech Western-style air campaigns, the rights and wrongs become far too difficult for the International Criminal Court.