

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



War memorial at Talia Yawbeko

**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 July 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.  
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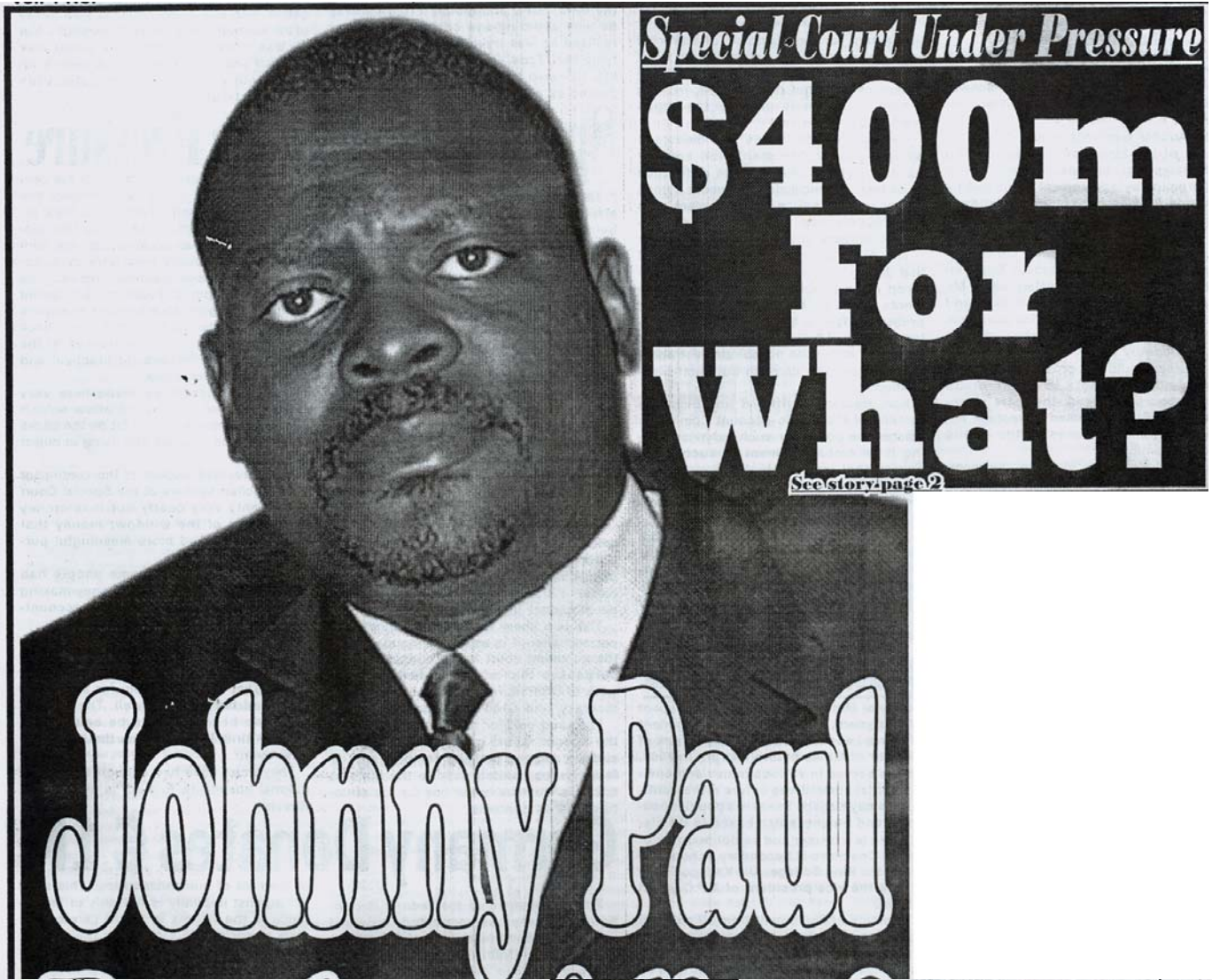
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The Exclusive  
Monday, 26 July 2010



*Special Court Under Pressure*

**\$400m  
For  
What?**

*See story page 2*

**Johnny Paul**

## Johnny Paul Dead or Alive?

War crimes indictee and former leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), Johnny Paul Koroma, has been reportedly seen between the border of Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. He now sports an Afro hairstyle and bushy beard coupled with peasant clothing to mix with

villagers.

A former "Honourable" in the AFRC, George Adams who is now residing in The Gambia, confided in a friend who was in The Gambia recently that "Our Chairman is very powerful as he is still able to escape the almighty Special Court with all their so-called sophisticated intelligence

personnel."

That in itself does not amount to the war crimes indictee being alive as George Adams is reportedly unclear about the whereabouts of his former boss. But what made this press to carry this story is because a middle-age woman who arrived from Burkina Faso via Ivory Coast told us last Saturday that while she was crossing over to Ivory Coast from Burkina Faso she saw the former AFRC leader at a border village.

"I cannot miss him, because I was very close to his wife. Though he is now having Afro and bushy beard, I cannot miss the eyes, nose, and mouth. From the way he was avoiding eye contact with me, I realized he was trying to avoid me identifying him. From the clothes he was wearing, I believe he is now either a farmer or posing as a farmer", she told us.

Though we could not verify the authenticity of the middle-age woman's story, what is certain is that whether Johnny Paul Koroma is alive or dead is still debatable because as far back as February 2009 there were reports that he was regularly communicating with members of his family and those who helped him escape the clutch of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. But other reports were that he was killed by current war crimes indictee and former President Charles Taylor of Liberia after he had reportedly hosted the fugitive for a while.

It could be recalled that Johnny Paul Koroma, who was former Chairman of the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (CPP) and leader of the People's Liberation Party (PLP) was indicted together with war crimes convict Issa Sesay of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). But he was tipped off before his arrest was effected and since then he has been a fugitive with conflicting reports about his present status.

# Special Court Under Pressure

The United Nations Special Court for Sierra Leone has become a public eyesore because it has long outlived its usefulness; at least in this country with Foday Sankoh and Hinga Norman long dead and Charles Taylor, Issa Sesay, Alieu Kondowa, Moinina Fofana and others securely behind bars in Rwanda.

In fact, what the Special Court and its continued presence here poses is the wrong perception that Sierra Leone is still unsafe. And this is not the case at all because Sierra Leone is totally safe and secure as the whole world can attest.

This country is politically stable to say the least. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, visited here a couple of months ago and told the entire world that this post-conflict nation is now a haven of peace and stability.

Why did the United Nations spend the whopping sum of four hundred million US dollars to prosecute only a handful of people when this money could have been better utilized to promote badly needed development in the country?

This is a sheer waste of vital funds, especially when it is established already that the so-called court has a budget that far surpasses that of the more beneficial work of UNIPSIL in the areas of peace, democracy, and good governance.

The loud call for the shutting down of the Special Court is very much in place and we demand that the complex and its facilities be handed over to the state at once, as we have better use for the structure and its contents.

There is no justification at all for the continued presence of the court despite the fact that some self-seeking people's efforts in and out of Sierra Leone to maintain the status quo because they are benefitting enormously from this arrangement. As one commentator argued, the work of the Special Court can be carried on in The Hague. Also that the prisoners held in Rwandan jails could be sent back home to continue their sentences at the Pademba Road Prisons for practical and money saving reasons.

The point has to be made here very clearly that we should not allow selfish people to continue to feed fat on the backs of war victims who are still living in abject poverty.

The continued upkeep of the contingent of Mongolian soldiers at the Special Court is not only very costly but it is money thrown out of the window; money that could have served more meaningful purposes.

It is no secret that some people had seen the court as a huge money-making outfit, where transparency and accountability are very questionable.

So we are calling on government to impress on the United Nations that we no longer need the operations of the Special Court. That we thank them for a job well done and bid them farewell. The Mongolians, we believe, would be better back home with their families as the holiday is now over.

They must have had enough of our traditional hospitality. Enough is enough. Au Revoir.

# €1million for Special Court from German Govt.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has committed, on short notice, additional resources of € 1 million to the Special Court for Sierra Leone from bilateral German development cooperation funds.

The Special Court proved to be a successful model of international jurisdiction in the field of humanitarian law. This symbol against impunity is not only of importance to the victims in Sierra Leone, it is also a worldwide signal for the peace-

*Turn to page 2*

## German Government rescues Special Court

*from front page*

keeping efforts. By providing funds for the final phase of the court, Germany underlines its recognition of the Special Court's great significance. Germany has provided over € 7 million in total since 2002.

## At Special Court...

# Maomi Campbell to testify against Charles Taylor

Despite recent news that the testimony of British supermodel Naomi Campbell is going to be delayed as the special court in the Hague following the court's week long judicial recess latest news have it that she would still make it to the witness stand early next month.

According to prosecution counsel, Nicholas Koumjian, Ms. Campbell planned to ask the judges to reschedule her appearance and would soon

*Contd. Page 2*



Naomi Campbell



Charles Taylor (L) in his hey days in the jungle

## Maomi Campbell to testify against Charles Taylor

### From Front Page

put her request in writing. The judges, however, could not rule on her request until after the judicial break.

Mr. Koumjian assured the court that Ms. Campbell's preferred date of testimony is close to the one indicated in her subpoena (July 29) - and will likely take place before the current witness - former Sierra Leonean rebel leader, Issa Sesay - leaves the witness stand.

The testimonies of actress Mia Farrow and Ms. Campbell's former agent, Carole White, will likely follow that of the British supermodel. The three high profile women are set to testify about allegations that in 1997, while on a visit to South Africa and after a star studded dinner hosted by former South African president Nelson Mandela, Mr. Taylor sent men to

deliver rough diamonds to Ms. Campbell.

Prosecutors suggest that the rough diamonds were given to Mr. Taylor by Sierra Leonean rebels in the hope that the former Liberian president would exchange them during his travels for arms and ammunition, which helped to fuel the rebels' crimes during the conflict. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations.

In Mr. Sesay's testimony as a witness for Mr. Taylor, the former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) leader has denied that the RUF gave diamonds to Mr. Taylor, and dismissed as false allegations that Mr. Taylor bought weapons and ammunition for RUF rebels.

Mr. Taylor's trial resumes on Monday, July 26, with Mr. Sesay again taking the witness stand.

## AUGUST 5 FOR NAOMI CAMPBELL AT THE HAGUE

Supermodel Naomi Campbell will testify in the ongoing war crimes trial against former Liberian president Charles Taylor in August after postponing her original court date.

The British beauty became embroiled in the high profile case in The Hague after it was alleged Taylor had given her a blood diamond as a gift at a party in 1997. She has previously refused to comment on the allegations and, during a recent televised chat with Oprah Winfrey, she insisted she had no idea who Taylor was when she met him at a gathering hosted by then-South African president Nelson Mandela, her friend.

Campbell has also voiced her fears for her own safety and that of her family if she appears as a witness and testifies against Taylor, who has pleaded not guilty to 11 charges, including murder, torture, rape, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers and terrorism during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

Prosecutors subpoenaed Campbell, claiming her testimony would provide "direct evidence of



*Naomi Campbell*

the accused's possession of rough diamonds". She was initially due to testify in the Netherlands on July 29 but the model recently requested a later hearing and a new date has now been set for August 5. The model faces jail time if she fails to appear in court.

## Cotton Tree News

Friday, 23 July 2010

### **Evidence phase of Taylor trial 'ends later this year'**

Written by Mohamed Mansaray



The evidence phase in the trial of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor will end later this year, the new prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone has said. Speaking at a news conference in Freetown on Tuesday, Brenda Hollis said both the prosecution and the defense in the trial would have been able to freely and vigorously put forward their arguments by the end of the year. She said the judgment and appeal's phase would follow in 2011

The prosecutor said the prosecution had presented the full weight of their argument. She said she was "confident that international justice would succeed." The Special Court prosecutor stressed that one legacy of the court would show that there would be no impunity for those who commit atrocities against their fellow human beings, irrespective of their status. Charles Taylor is charged with eleven counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his alleged role in the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone.



## Concord Times (Freetown)

Saturday, 24 July 2010

### **Sierra Leone: Special Court Prosecutor Impressed By Sierra Leoneans' Courage**

By Ibrahim Tarawallie

Freetown — On her second visit to Sierra Leone as the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Ms. Brenda J. Hollis expressed pleasure in the courage displayed by Sierra Leoneans in demanding justice for the wrongs done to them during the country's decade-long civil war.

Ms. Hollis told journalists at the Sierra Leone News Agency SLENA that she was overwhelmed. "I am awed by the spirit of the Sierra Leonean people," she said. "They rightly demanded justice for the wrongs done to them and also searched their hearts and found the power to forgive in order to move forward with life."

Despite the terrible crimes perpetrated during the war and the subsequent trial process at the Special Court, courageous men, women and children took to the stand as both prosecution and defence witnesses to tell their experiences, she said.

"We are impressed by their courage. In the case of Charles Taylor trial, we are very grateful for their willingness to travel thousands of miles to bear witness. They have made justice possible," Ms. Hollis added.

Speaking further on the Taylor trial, she said it has been conducted under the strictest standards of international justice and that both the prosecution and the defence teams have been able to freely and vigorously put forward their cases as part of a free and fair trial.

"We expect the end of the evidence phase of the Taylor case later this year. A trial judgment and then appeal phase will follow over the coming year. The prosecution has confronted Charles Taylor with the full weight of our case and we are confident that international justice will succeed," she explained.

The Special Court prosecutor maintained that the most important legacy of the court would be to show that there can be no impunity for those who abuse power to commit atrocities against fellow human beings.

Brenda J. Hollis was appointed prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone by the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon in February this year.

Reuters

Monday, 26 July 2010

### **Khmer Rouge chief found guilty by war crimes court**



**GUILTY VERDICT:** Khmer Rouge regime member Kaing Guek Eav, also known as Duch, sits in court at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia on the outskirts of Phnom Penh today.

The sentence given to the Khmer Rouge henchman who headed the prison where New Zealander Kerry Hamill was tortured and killed is not enough, his brother says.

New Zealand champion rower Rob Hamill was in court today when Kaing Guek Eav, better known as Duch, was sentenced to 35 years in prison by a UN-backed tribunal on Monday in its first verdict three decades after the Maoist "Killing Fields" revolution tore Cambodia apart.

He was found guilty of murder and torture, and crimes against humanity for running Tuol Sleng prison, a converted school that symbolized the horrors of the ultra-communist regime blamed for 1.7 million deaths between 1975 and 79.

Duch admitted to overseeing the torture and killing of more than 14,000 people in his prison, also known as S-21 but said he was only carrying out orders. His case is the first heard by the joint UN-Cambodian court set up to prosecute the Khmer Rouge.

Kerry Hamill ended up at the prison when the yacht he and friends were sailing strayed into Cambodian waters on August 13, 1978.

One crewman, Canadian Stuart Glass, was shot while Mr Hamill and Briton John Dewhirst were taken for interrogation and torture for two months before being killed.

Duch, a 67-year-old former schoolteacher, will only serve 30 years of his sentence because the court ruled he was held illegally for five years by the Cambodian military.

The verdict was short of the maximum 40 years sought by the prosecution and of the life behind bars demanded by many Cambodians who have struggled to find closure for one of the darkest chapters of the 20th century.

Hamill said he was initially pleased.

"And I thought yep that's good he'll probably be there for the rest of his days."

But then he realised Duch would only be behind bars 19 more years and would be about 86 when released.

"Definitely not appropriate. The possibility of this guy walking free at any point in the future I just don't believe is appropriate," he told Radio New Zealand.

He said 35 years was acceptable given a maximum 40 was allowed under international law.

"I was initially pleased because the judges only mitigated five years of that 40 and that is a reasonably pleasing outcome considering, but at the end of the day he could be a free man."

Duch is the first Khmer Rouge cadre to be convicted by an international tribunal over the deaths of up to two million people through starvation, overwork and execution at the hands of the regime.

The case was seen as a critical test for a multimillion dollar tribunal that has struggled to end decades of silence on the darkest chapter of Cambodia's modern history.

Thousands huddled around televisions in cafes and homes to watch live broadcasts of the verdict.

Now a born-again Christian, Duch has expressed "excruciating remorse" for the S-21 victims, most of them tortured and forced to confess to spying and other crimes before they were bludgeoned at the "Killing Fields" execution sites during the agrarian revolution, which ended with a 1979 invasion by Vietnam.

Mr Hamill testified at the Extraordinary Chamber of the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) on July 26 last year - the 31st anniversary of his brother's abduction. The ECCC is a joint Cambodia-United Nations court and former New Zealand Governor-General Dame Silvia Cartwright is one of the judges.

Led by Pol Pot, who died in 1998, the Khmer Rouge sought to set up a communist utopia. Up to two million people died from starvation, overwork, torture or execution during the 1975-1979 regime.

## BBC Online

Friday, 23 July 2010

### **ICC suspends release of DR Congo's Lubanga**

The International Criminal Court has suspended the release of the accused in its first case, Thomas Lubanga from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Prosecutors have appealed against the court's decision to release him after his trial was suspended last week.

Mr Lubanga has pleaded not guilty to charges of recruiting child soldiers in eastern Congo in 2002-03.

He will remain in custody until judges rule on his appeal, the court said.

Mr Lubanga's trial was suspended two weeks ago after judges cited procedural irregularities.

The judges ruled that it was "no longer fair" to keep Mr Lubanga in detention.

Prosecutors appealed against that decision.

Leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots, an ethnic Hema militia Accused of recruiting children under 15 as soldiers Arrested in Kinshasa in March 2005 Held by the ICC at The Hague since 2006 Born in 1960, has a degree in psychology Congo trial starts road to justice Profile: Thomas Lubanga The trial of Mr Lubanga, which opened in 2009 after a seven-month delay over disputed confidential evidence, has been plagued by legal challenges.

The first witness at the trial retracted his testimony after first saying he had been recruited by Mr Lubanga's fighters on his way home from school.

One of the problems facing the court is that Bunia - the capital of the Ituri region where Mr Lubanga was a rebel leader - is still unstable.

This means the safety of potential witnesses cannot be guaranteed.

Mr Lubanga led the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC), an ethnic Hema militia - one of six groups that fought for control of the gold-rich Ituri region from 1999 until 2003.

The land struggle turned into an inter-ethnic war in which an estimated 50,000 people were killed and hundreds of thousands were left homeless.

## The Guardian (UK)

Monday, 26 July 2010

### ICC's call to arrest Bashir is futile

It is evident that the international criminal court will only be as effective as African countries want it to be. But does the ICC know that?

If it doesn't, it had better learn quickly. For instance, the ex-leader of Liberia, Charles Taylor, was only handed over to the court because Nigeria, Taylor's host, decided to play a fast one on him and organised both Taylor's temporary "escape" and recapture according to a script that could be entitled Double-Cross.

African co-operation, then, is extremely important to the ICC. And yet its officials do not seem to take African sensibilities into account when making pronouncements about pursuing culprits. The most damnable of those indicted by the ICC in Africa, is, of course, the Sudanese president, Omar al-Bashir.

Bashir and his "janjaweed" marauders have committed unmentionable crimes in Darfur – and southern Sudan – that need to be punished. But without African co-operation, it can't be done. This is because realpolitik operates in Africa as much as it does anywhere else.

Just before Bashir travelled to the Sahara-Sahel summit that has been going on in Chad, the ICC drew attention to his case by adding genocide to the charges levelled against Bashir. And two of the ICC's stalwart champions in Africa, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, issued statements calling on Chad to arrest Bashir if he visited Chad.

This was bad timing. Drought and other difficulties are the current concerns of many of the countries in the region, and to "obsessively" hijack their agenda and replace it with that of the ICC is hardly diplomatic.

In any case, Chad is not the only country that has signed the Rome statute that established the ICC. Sudan, too, has signed it. It has not, however, ratified the treaty. But for argument's sake, had Sudan ratified the treaty, would it be expected that Bashir should arrest himself and hand himself in to the ICC?

Taking an attitude to inter-African relations that is purely legalistic and almost theoretical, is quite naive. Certainly, as far as Chad and Sudan are concerned, ignoring their dynamic internal political realities and calling on them to observe a "higher loyalty" to international law – in the form of the ICC treaty – is an exercise in futility.

The two countries have actually been fighting each other "by proxy" – through dissidents from each other's countries – for years.

Things came to a climax in February 2008 when thousands of fighters from the Chad dissident group, United Front for Democracy and Change (who were closely allied to the Sudanese government) fought their way into the Chad capital, N'Djamena, arriving in 300 vehicles and spreading through the city.

These dissidents laid siege to the palace of Chad's president, Idriss Déby, and took the Chadian state radio off the air. Déby's survival was only assured by the 1,400 French troops stationed in Chad, though he claimed unconvincingly that it was all the work of his own troops.

Three months later, Chad repaid Sudan the compliment by sponsoring (but denying it had done so) an attack by rebels against Sudan that rocked the suburbs of the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. Sudan immediately cut off diplomatic ties with Chad. That Bashir now feels able to visit Chad is the result of

patient work by African mediators, and calling on Chad to arrest Bashir, as a matter of form, is like slapping them in the face. Each flare up of conflict between the two countries and their proxies costs many lives. Do the ICC and its allies not care about that?

Indeed, the African Union (AU), taking account of the incessant bloodshed, has called on African countries not to ruin the precarious peace in the region by acceding to the ICC's call and arresting Bashir.

The climate of opinion in Africa against the ICC will worsen if the ICC calls the British supermodel Naomi Campbell to give evidence at the Hague about a diamond that Charles Taylor is alleged to have given to her.

The allegation came from the actress Mia Farrow and the ICC will be reduced to a media circus if the two women are cross-examined by each other's counsel. The none-too-placid Campbell could provide the media with a series of "expletives deleted" that would only enhance the ICC's discomfiture – in the eyes of black people, at any rate.

## The Daily Star (Lebanon)

Monday, 26 July 2010

### International justice helps us recall Srebrenica's dead

By Chuck Sudetic

In 1993, atrocities committed against Slavic Muslims near the Bosnian silver-mining town of Srebrenica catalyzed demands to establish a tribunal to try political and military leaders accused of war crimes in the former Yugoslavia.

The new United Nations tribunal that was formed – nearly five decades after the final judgments were rendered at Nuremberg and Tokyo – became the forerunner of ad hoc courts to prosecute perpetrators of Rwanda's genocide, Charles Taylor and his blood-diamond butchers in Sierra Leone, and the Khmer Rouge killers in Cambodia. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) also gave rise to the permanent International Criminal Court to try war criminals worldwide.

Undeterred by the still-untested ICTY's reach, Serb soldiers finally overran Srebrenica itself – despite its status as a “safe area” under UN protection – 15 years ago last July 11, 1995, and proceeded to expel the town's people and execute 7,600 captives. Out of this massacre, however, the tribunal and foreign-backed war-crimes courts in Bosnia and Serbia have delivered the international justice effort's most significant achievement to date.

With no media fanfare and limited arrest and investigative powers, these judicial institutions have brought justice to Srebrenica's dead and their survivors, and have demonstrated that justice can be delivered to victims in other conflict areas. It is an imperfect, unsatisfying justice, to be sure, but no more imperfect or unsatisfying than that dispensed by national courts.

The ICTY ruled the Srebrenica massacre to be an act of genocide. The tribunal and the local courts imprisoned 13 of those who gave the orders, as well as 17 execution-squad members; 11 more men, four of them leaders, are facing their reckoning. On trial now are Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb political leader, and Jovica Stanisic, the police minister in Slobodan Milosevic's Serbia.

Of course, the Bosnian Serb commander, Ratko Mladic remains a fugitive. But Serbia's authorities, facing economic turmoil, cannot harbor him much longer if the United States and the European Union exert adequate pressure. Serbia recently surrendered Mladic's war-time diaries.

The Srebrenica trials also yielded a soul-testing record of a crime whose gravity Serb political leaders, former UN officials, and others once shamefully denied. Thanks to the ICTY, anyone can read the transcripts of intercepted calls to deliver more “packages” to the killing fields. A Serb district president, Miroslav Deronjic, testified that Karadzic told him: “Miroslav, those people there must be killed.”

We know when, where, and to whom Mladic issued the kill order. The tribunal's website has video of an execution. We know that a Serb truck driver rescued a boy who survived a firing squad and, crying for his father, crawled from a twisted scrum of bodies. We know that a Serb officer defied Mladic and refused to order his men to partake in mass murder.

The ICTY is flawed, of course. Judges and attorneys have treated too many witnesses with condescension, as if the tribunal were doing them a favor. Judges have sentenced too many killers to absurdly lenient prison terms, diminishing any deterrent effect that the tribunal might generate. And they threw the book at one of Mladic's men who pled guilty and gave damning insider testimony, eliminating the prosecution's leverage to obtain similar admissions. Prosecution officials also negligently incinerated personal effects of

Srebrenica victims, as well as items discovered in Albania and other evidence, and then obfuscated to dodge a scandal. New rules and procedures, as well as better training, can minimize such failings.

But without the ICTY, impunity would have reigned for the murderers of Srebrenica and of less-renowned scenes of war crimes. Karadzic would still be flogging love potions in Belgrade. The retired generals would be tanning beside the Adriatic. Overwhelming proof of Croatia's complicity with Serbia in the dismemberment of Bosnia – something media have also ignored – would never have emerged.

And, following this anniversary of the massacre, it is safe to say that, without international justice, all of Srebrenica's victims – including my brother-in-law's father, Huso Celik, and the others who are still missing – would still be moldering anonymously in mass graves. Their loved ones would be waiting still to gather at the town's memorial cemetery, where, on this anniversary, they dropped to their knees, drew their hands over their eyes, and recited the funeral prayer to Allah for forgiveness of the living and the dead.

*Chuck Sudetic, a former analyst at the ICTY, authored a book on the Srebrenica massacre and is making a film on the trials. He works for the Open Society Institute. THE DAILY STAR publishes this commentary in collaboration with Project Syndicate © ([www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org)).*



Naharnet

Monday, 26 July 2010

### **French Official Rules Out End to International Financial Backing for Tribunal**

A high-ranking French official ruled out that countries which supported Lebanon's demand to establish the Special Tribunal for Lebanon would stop financing the court.

The official told pan-Arab daily al-Hayat the international tribunal that would try ex-Premier Rafik Hariri's suspected assassins should operate in a calm atmosphere, stressing that Paris does not have the right to ask the court about the advances made in the investigation into the Feb. 2005 bombing.

The tension in Lebanon could be the result of developments in the investigation, the source said, stressing, however, on the need to remain calm and await the findings of the STL.

"Doubting the court before the announcement of decisions leads to a counter result," the official told al-Hayat.

Asked if Paris asked Israeli chief of staff Gabi Ashkenazi last week not to launch an aggression on Lebanon, the source said France is against violation of the U.N.-drawn Blue Line and condemns any violation of Security Council resolution 1701.

About the alleged Syrian transfer of Scud missiles to Hizbullah, the official said: "The case collapsed and no one is talking about it because no one has any proof about the existence of these missiles."

## Aljazeera

Saturday, 24 July 2010

### **UN names flotilla inquiry panel**

The United Nations Human Rights Council has appointed a team to investigate Israel's deadly raid on a Gaza-bound aid flotilla in May.

The team will consist of three independent experts: Sir Desmond de Silva of Britain, Karl Hudson-Phillips of Trinidad and Tobago, and Mary Shanth Dairiam of Malaysia, the UN body said on Friday.

The council voted to establish the inquiry in June, after nine Turkish activists were killed when Israeli troops boarded the Mavi Marmara, the largest ship in the flotilla.

"The expertise, independence and impartiality of the members of the mission will be devoted to clarifying the events which took place that day and their legality," Sihasak Phuangketkeow, the Thai ambassador to the UN, said.

Thailand currently holds the presidency of the human rights council.

De Silva is a former chief war crimes prosecutor at the UN-backed special court for Sierra Leone. Hudson-Phillips is a former judge at the International Criminal Court and Shanthi Dairiam is a women's rights activist.

### **Israeli co-operation**

The team is expected to travel to Israel, Turkey and Gaza next month to interview witnesses and gather information. It will report its findings in September.

It is unclear whether Israel will co-operate with the inquiry; Israel has said that its soldiers acted in self-defence, and has rejected calls for an international investigation.

An internal Israeli army inquiry completed earlier this month recommended no disciplinary action against senior officers, and concluded that "the use of live fire was justified" on board the Mavi Marmara.

A separate civilian panel, chaired by former Israeli supreme court judge Jacob Turkel, is also investigating the raid.

Israel's defence ministry announced on Friday that it would return seven ships from the flotilla to Turkey, including the Mavi Marmara.

The ships have been sitting in Israel's Ashdod and Haifa ports for more than a month, despite repeated requests from the Turkish embassy that the ships be returned.

The ministry said it will co-ordinate with Turkey to arrange for the return of the ships, a process which could take several weeks.