

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



A. Lisk-Carew photo showing Howe Street about a century ago

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Tuesday, 27 January 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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The Exclusive
Tuesday, 27 January 2009

80 Witnesses Against Taylor

*By Mariama Khai Fornah
reporting from The Hague*

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.

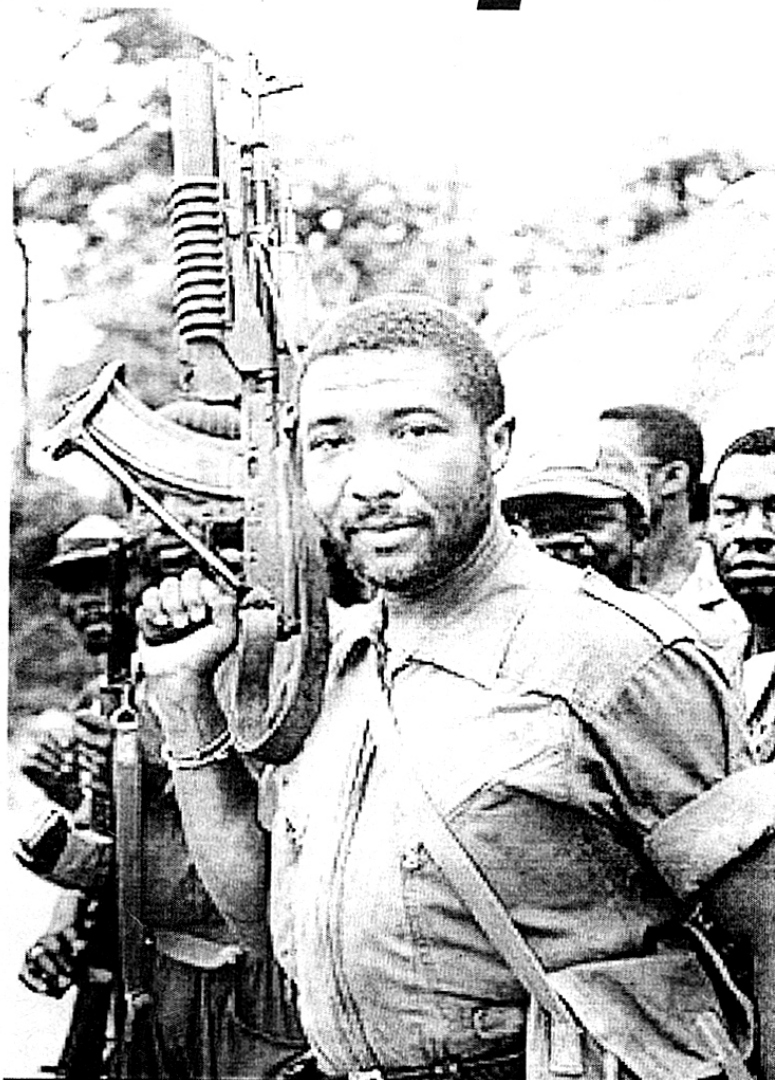
Most of these witnesses earlier testified in the AFRC and RUF trials in Freetown and they testified using protective measures.

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

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80 Witnesses Against Taylor

From front page

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

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.

vice Trust).

For more than a year, the Prosecution of the Special Court for Sierra Leone has given the Judges of the Court a barrage of documentary and circumstantial evidence that former Liberian President Charles Taylor gave financial, material and moral support to the Sierra Leone rebel group RUF in exchange for diamonds. Well, the team prosecuting Mr. Taylor is about to end its side of the war crimes trial. 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 associ-

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

mosities 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.

Other reports on the Taylor trial from the same source (BBC World Ser-

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.

CHEESEMAM: 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.

CHEESEMAM: 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.

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80 Witnesses Against Taylor

From page 6

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.

News Story

The Defense team of former Liberian President Charles Taylor says fear harboured by many 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 assess 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 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's 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.

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

Double efforts to exonerate Taylor

The legal team defending Charles Taylor in The Hague has gathered a group of investigators from Liberia, Sierra Leone and others outside of West Africa to comb every nook and corner for evidence that may exonerate the former Liberian leader.

BBC World Service Trust reporter Joseph Cheeseman caught up with the head of Taylor's Defense team, Courtenay Griffiths, and asked him exactly what the investigators would be looking for?

GRIFFITHS: Well, our investigators come from, in the main, Liberia and Sierra Leone, assisted by our international investigators, who are pursuing witnesses and evidence globally. So we're trying to scour all relevant sources for evidence which we feel might be of assistance to these Judges in coming to a true verdict.

CHEESEMEN: So what will be the obligation of these investigators? What are they looking for?

GRIFFITHS: Well, they're looking for, by way of example, records of meetings of ECOWAS, records of meetings of the UN Security Council and other United Nations bodies which may throw light on, for example, Mr. Taylor's - we say - genuine efforts to bring peace to Sierra Leone. That's the kind of documentary evidence they're looking for, and they're also looking for individuals who can speak to those events

who were directly involved in brokering peace in Sierra Leone at the time.

CHEESEMEN: The Prosecution is about to close its case and you are planning. How much time do you need to plan your case?

GRIFFITHS: It's difficult to say, because the practical considerations are these: yes, I've been provided by my investigators with a list of potential witnesses. But as lead counsel, I'd be failing in my responsibilities and duties to the Court and to my lay client if I were not to go down to West Africa and make an assessment of those witnesses myself, because we want to avoid the expense...

CHEESEMEN: You will be going to West Africa?

GRIFFITHS: Yes I will be going to West...

CHEESEMEN: To evaluate the...

GRIFFITHS: To evaluate the witnesses myself.

CHEESEMEN: Why is this important?

GRIFFITHS: It's important because the last thing I want to do is to be transporting someone all the way from West Africa to The Hague, seeing that person for the first time in The Hague, and then deciding for whatever reason that we don't want to call that individual. That would be a complete waste of time and money. I think



Charles Taylor in The Hague

it's much more cost effective for me to go down to West Africa, line up these witnesses, look at them, make my assessment, and then I will have a clearer idea whether it's worthwhile to undergo the expense of transporting them all the way to The Hague. So there are things like that to do. We've also got to finalise our 98bis submission. So there are a number of practical logistical steps we need to take which could take some time. So it's very difficult to say how much time we will need.

CHEESEMEN: How many witnesses have you identified so far?

GRIFFITHS: Well, we've identified a number of witnesses, but I'm anxious to cut down the number to what I feel is absolutely necessary. I don't believe that quantity in this kind of situation is more important than quality. I think it's the quality of the evidence that we can place before the Court which is important. And we need to bear another fact in mind. We won't be in a position to know precisely what aspects of evidence may be relevant in the Defence case until the Judges have ruled on our 98bis motion. Say for example the Judges decide, just by way of argument, to throw out half of the counts on the indictment. Then our needs for witnesses will drastically change. So we're very much in the Court's hands as to what areas of evidence we will need for our Defence case.

CHEESEMEN: Your colleague Morris Anyah told some Sierra Leone Civil Society people who visited the Netherlands that the distance of the trial from West Africa is a disadvantage to Mr. Taylor's trial rights. Do you agree?

GRIFFITHS: Yes I do agree, and it disadvantages him in a number of ways, because the local population are unable to follow what is going on in the trial. And often times, for our case, what is important is for people to actually see what is going on in the courtroom. And in the past, by way of example, we've received emails during the course of the testimony of certain witnesses from others who were involved in the same events saying, "That person is lying. I was there.

That's not what went on." And because of the distance, and because of the lack of an infrastructure in that part of West Africa which allows everyone to follow the live feed on computer, it means that that kind of information gathering resource is extremely limited. We feel - this trial has no jury - but we feel the people of West Africa are Mr. Taylor's jury.

In another development the Defense Team of Indicted Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has mandated its investigators to search the records of all ECOWAS and UN meetings held on Sierra Leone during the presidency of their client.

The head of the Defense team, Courtenay Griffiths, believes the ECOWAS and UN meetings reflected the genuine efforts of the then Liberian president to broker peace in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Griffiths told the BBC World Service Trust their investigators would also speak to people who were part of efforts to bring peace to war torn Sierra Leone at the time.

He said a number of witnesses have been identified in Liberia and Sierra Leone, but he wouldn't say how many.

Mr. Griffiths said he would travel to West Africa to evaluate the number of witnesses identified so far because he does not believe in quantity but quality.

The lead Defense lawyer said he would be failing his duty to Mr. Taylor if he didn't go to West Africa to determine which witnesses would be important to their case.

Mr. Griffiths said he could not state how much time the Defense team needed to prepare for its case.

He said the preparation for their case was depended on the ruling of the Judges on the indictment drew up by the prosecution against Charles Taylor.

In an interview with the BBC World Trust, Mr. Griffiths, the Queen's Counsel, said if the Judges threw out half of the counts in the indictment, then the Defense need for a large number of witnesses would drastically change.

Meanwhile the Court continues in closed session.

Cocorioko

Monday, 26 January 2009

Charles Taylor defence team looks for evidence to exonerate him

Written by Joseph Cheeseman from The Hague

The legal team defending Charles Taylor in The Hague has gathered a group of investigators from Liberia, Sierra Leone and others outside of West Africa to comb every nook and corner for evidence that may exonerate the former Liberian leader. BBC World Service Trust reporter Joseph Cheeseman caught up with the head of Taylor's Defense team, Courtenay Griffiths, and asked him exactly what the investigators would be looking for?

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CHEESEMAN: The Prosecution is about to close its case and you are planning. How much time do you need to plan your case?

GRIFFITHS: It's difficult to say, because the practical considerations are these: yes, I've been provided by my investigators with a list of potential witnesses. But as lead counsel, I'd be failing in my responsibilities and duties to the Court and to my lay client if I were not to go down to West Africa and make an assessment of those witnesses myself, because we want to avoid the expense...

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WRITE UP

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BBC World Service Trust

Monday, 26 January 2009

Report from The Hague

The family of former Liberian President Charles Taylor is facing two distressful situations. Early this month an American criminal court sentenced Chuckie Taylor, the heir apparent of the indicted former Liberian leader, to a 97 year prison term. Charles Taylor, the father of Chuckie Taylor, is facing trial on an eleven count charges for war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Netherlands. So, how is the former Liberian president reacting to the 97 year sentence of his son? This was the question Joseph Cheeseman asked Charles Taylor's Lead Defense Lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths.

GRIFFITHS: Well of course as a father it's a matter of great concern to him, and a matter of great distress. And one has to wonder what the sense is in giving a young man a sentence of that nature, almost a century behind bars. Any objective individual looking at that sentence must ask themselves about the sanity of the United States justice system.

CHEESEMAN: So what has he said to you regarding this?

GRIFFITHS: Well as I say, he's concerned about the sentence, but beyond that I'm not really prepared to divulge what has passed between me and my lay client.

CHEESEMAN: Now the Prosecutor told me that some unidentified persons threatened some of discouraged some of their witnesses and discouraged them from testifying against Mr. Taylor. You wouldn't be surprised if you should face similar threats.

GRIFFITHS: Well it wouldn't surprise me at all, because that part of the world is still riven by a degree of factionalism which one hopes would have diminished by now, but sadly hasn't. And it may well be that people still feel strongly about that episode in their history and might feel moved to intervene and interview with witnesses in this way. One thing I can say to you hand on heart is that Mr. Taylor is not behind any orchestration of interference with witnesses. He's certainly not behind that. Everybody knows his telephone calls from the prison are monitored. If he was giving out orders to that effect, the authorities would have known and would have refused him access to the telephone. That has not happened, precisely because he is not doing that.

CHEESEMAN: I spoke with the Prosecutor in December, and he told me that at the end of the trial, if Mr. Taylor is found guilty, the Prosecution will be applying for what he called a "supplementary hearing" for Mr. Taylor to account for Sierra Leone's diamonds. Would this be tantamount to double jeopardy?

GRIFFITHS: Well it's not a question of double jeopardy. I must say the Prosecution and indeed the Western media are being fairly consistent in this regard. They've constantly claimed that Mr. Taylor benefited enormously from the diamond wealth of Sierra Leone. They've had many years in which to investigate this, and they still haven't come up with a single stone. So one wonders whether or not there is any truth in their claim which they've pursued vigorously all these years, that he's sitting on diamond wealth somewhere.

CHEESEMAN: Some of the witnesses who allegedly worked with Mr. Taylor in Monrovia testified here that indeed they transported diamonds from Sierra Leone to Monrovia to Mr. Taylor.

GRIFFITHS: Nobody's denying that diamonds may well have been transported to Monrovia, but what is quite clear is the RUF had their own contacts within the worldwide market for diamonds, whereby they themselves were capable of selling those diamonds for their own benefit. And one wonders why, given that they had such contacts with Lebanese merchants and others, why they would need to pay some sort of a

commission to Mr. Taylor to enable those transactions to go ahead. Why do you need a middleman when historically you always have those links? So I have real doubts about this Prosecution claim that Mr. Taylor is sitting on all these resources which he illegally obtained from Sierra Leone. I just don't believe it's true.

News Story

Lead Defense Lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths says the 97 year prison sentence of Liberia Former Anti-terrorist Unit Commander Chuckie Taylor is a matter of great distress to the father, Charles Taylor.

Mr. Griffiths said he was not prepared to disclose what Mr. Taylor told him about the nearly 100-year prison term of his son, Chuckie Taylor.

Mr. Griffiths, the head of Mr. Taylor's legal team, wondered what the sense was in giving a young man a sentence of that nature.

He told the BBC World Service Trust that any objective individual looking at that sentence would ask himself about what he called the sanity of the American justice system.

Mr. Griffiths also denied that Mr. Taylor or his associates in Monrovia were behind an alleged threat issued out to Prosecution witnesses.

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Stephen Rapp, told the BBC Trust last month that some unidentified persons in Liberia threatened some of his witnesses from testifying against Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Griffiths also denied that his client, Mr. Taylor, was restoring diamonds looted from Sierra Leone by the rebels.

He said the RUF rebels had their own business contacts so they did not have to use the then Liberian President, Charles Taylor, as a middle man.

The Defense lawyer declared that the Prosecution case against the former Liberian leader was what he referred to as riddled with holes and inconsistencies.

Meanwhile the court continues in closed session.

BBC World Service Trust

Friday, 23 January 2008

Report from The Hague

The legal team defending Charles Taylor in The Hague has gathered a group of investigators from Liberia, Sierra Leone and others outside of West Africa to comb every nook and corner for evidence that may exonerate the former Liberian leader. BBC World Service Trust reporter Joseph Cheeseman caught up with the head of Taylor's Defense team, Courtenay Griffiths, and asked him exactly what the investigators would be looking for?

GRIFFITHS: Well, our investigators come from, in the main, Liberia and Sierra Leone, assisted by our international investigators, who are pursuing witnesses and evidence globally. So we're trying to scour all relevant sources for evidence which we feel might be of assistance to these Judges in coming to a true verdict.

CHEESEMAN: So what will be the obligation of these investigators? What are they looking for?

GRIFFITHS: Well, they're looking for, by way of example, records of meetings of ECOWAS, records of meetings of the UN Security Council and other United Nations bodies which may throw light on, for example, Mr. Taylor's – we say – genuine efforts to bring peace to Sierra Leone. That's the kind of documentary evidence they're looking for, and they're also looking for individuals who can speak to those events who were directly involved in brokering peace in Sierra Leone at the time.

CHEESEMAN: The Prosecution is about to close its case and you are planning. How much time do you need to plan your case?

GRIFFITHS: It's difficult to say, because the practical considerations are these: yes, I've been provided by my investigators with a list of potential witnesses. But as lead counsel, I'd be failing in my responsibilities and duties to the Court and to my lay client if I were not to go down to West Africa and make an assessment of those witnesses myself, because we want to avoid the expense...

CHEESEMAN: You will be going to West Africa?

GRIFFITHS: Yes I will be going to West...

CHEESEMAN: To evaluate the...

GRIFFITHS: To evaluate the witnesses myself.

CHEESEMAN: Why is this important?

GRIFFITHS: It's important because the last thing I want to do is to be transporting someone all the way from West Africa to The Hague, seeing that person for the first time in The Hague, and then deciding for whatever reason that we don't want to call that individual. That would be a complete waste of time and money. I think it's much more cost effective for me to go down to West Africa, line up these witnesses, look at them, make my assessment, and then I will have a clearer idea whether it's worthwhile to undergo the expense of transporting them all the way to The Hague. So there's things like that to do. We've also got to finalise our 98bis submission. So there are a number of practical logistical steps we need to take which could take some time. So it's very difficult to say how much time we will need.

CHEESEMAN: How many witnesses have you identified so far?

GRIFFITHS: Well, we've identified a number of witnesses, but I'm anxious to cut down the number to what I feel is absolutely necessary. I don't believe that quantity in this kind of situation is more important than quality. I think it's the quality of the evidence that we can place before the Court which is important. And we need to bear another fact in mind. We won't be in a position to know precisely what aspects of evidence may be relevant in the Defence case until the Judges have ruled on our 98bis motion. Say for example the Judges decide, just by way of argument, to throw out half of the counts on the indictment. Then our needs for witnesses will drastically change. So we're very much in the Court's hands as to what areas of evidence we will need for our Defence case.

CHEESEMAN: Your colleague Morris Anyah told some Sierra Leone Civil Society people who visited the Netherlands that the distance of the trial from West Africa is a disadvantage to Mr. Taylor's trial rights. Do you agree?

GRIFFITHS: Yes I do agree, and it disadvantages him in a number of ways, because the local population are unable to follow what is going on in the trial. And often times, for our case, what is important is for people to actually see what is going on in the courtroom. And in the past, by way of example, we've received emails during the course of the testimony of certain witnesses from others who were involved in the same events saying, "That person is lying. I was there. That's not what went on." And because of the distance, and because of the lack of an infrastructure in that part of West Africa which allows everyone to follow the live feed on computer, it means that that kind of information gathering resource is extremely limited. We feel – this trial has no jury – but we feel the people of West Africa are Mr. Taylor's jury.

WRITEUP

The Defense Team of Indicted Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has mandated its investigators to search the records of all ECOWAS and UN meetings held on Sierra Leone during the presidency of their client.

The head of the Defense team, Courtenay Griffiths, believes the ECOWAS and UN meetings reflected the genuine efforts of the then Liberian president to broker peace in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Griffiths told the BBC World Service Trust their investigators would also speak to people who were part of efforts to bring peace to war torn Sierra Leone at the time.

He said a number of witnesses have been identified in Liberia and Sierra Leone, but he wouldn't say how many.

Mr. Griffiths said he would travel to West Africa to evaluate the number of witnesses identified so far because he does not believe in quantity but quality.

The lead Defense lawyer said he would be failing his duty to Mr. Taylor if he didn't go to West Africa to determine which witnesses would be important to their case.

Mr. Griffiths said he could not state how much time the Defense team needed to prepare for its case.

He said the preparation for their case was depended on the ruling of the Judges on the indictment drew up by the prosecution against Charles Taylor.

In an interview with the BBC World Trust, Mr. Griffiths, the Queen's Counsel, said if the Judges threw out half of the counts in the indictment, then the Defense need for a large number of witnesses would drastically change.

Meanwhile the Court continues in closed session.

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 26 January 2009

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

Newspaper Summary

President Sirleaf Wants Judicial System Overhauled

(Public Agenda, Daily Observer, The Inquirer, Liberian Express, Heritage, The Informer and The Monitor)

- Members of the Liberian National Bar Association have been challenged to practice their profession in a manner that brings dignity to the profession promote and protect the integrity of judicial proceedings.
- Delivering the keynote address Friday at the installation of officers of the Liberian National Bar Association, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said the assurance that the courts of Liberia provide justice for all without fear or sale is the biggest testimony to the quality of the rule of law.
- The newly-elected President, Cllr. M. Wilkins Wright, in his induction address, promised to work to ensure the legal profession is restored to its dignity, honour and respect.
- Cllr. Wright promised to ensure that the profession regains the respect of the Liberian people.

Two Forestry Concession Agreements Signed

(Daily Observer)

- Two forestry agreements covering a total area of more than 100,000 hectares have been signed by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.
- The Forestry Management Contracts were awarded to two Liberian owned and operated companies, BJ&J and the Liberia Tree and Trading Company.
- The agreements are estimated at an aggregate investment of USD\$20 million.
- Initially, more than 500 jobs are expected to be created from the concession agreements which will now be sent to the National Legislature for ratification.

Amnesty International Backs Warlords' Trial

(New Democrat, The Informer, The News, Liberian Express and The Monitor)

- The Liberian Express newspaper reports that Amnesty International has welcomed the preliminary recommendation by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC) for the establishment of a criminal court with jurisdiction over "egregious domestic crimes, gross violations of human rights and serious humanitarian law violations" committed by former warring factions and other between January 1979 and October 2003.

Police Force At 14 Percent Women Inclusion

(The News)

- The Liberian Government's effort to have at least 20 percent women in the police force seems to be paying off.
- According to the Commandant of the Liberia National Police Training Academy, James Hallowanger out of a total of 3,800 police personnel 400 are women representing 14 percent of the total force strength.

US Envoy Wants Child Traffickers Prosecuted

(Daily Observer)

- The News newspaper reports that United States Ambassador to Liberia, Linda Thomas-Greenfield has called for the prosecution of child traffickers in Liberia.
- Speaking when she paid a courtesy call on Labour Minister, Samuel Kofi Woods last Friday, Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield said there was a need to get children off the street and get them in school.
- For his part, Minister Woods commended the US government for the level of support the Ministry continues to receive from the U.S.

Liberia Gets First Commercial Microfinance Bank

(Daily Observer, National Chronicle, The Inquirer, The News, The Monitor, Daily Graphics, The Informer)

- AccessBank-Liberia Ltd has formally begun operations in the country.
- Making remarks at the ceremony Friday, Madam Mary Odong, Chief Executive Officer and General Manager of AccessBank-Liberia said the bank's mission was to be the leading provider of financial services to privately owned micro-small and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs) in the country.
- Madam Odong disclosed the bank intends to create one hundred jobs in the first year of its operation but would gradually reach its target of 450 jobs in five years.

Radio Summary

Star Radio *(News culled today from website at 8:35 am)*

President Sirleaf Delivers State of Nation Address

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf today addressed the joint session of the National Legislature on the state of the nation.
- Article 58 of the Constitution mandates the President to address the Legislature on the fourth working Monday in January each year.
- In her address, President Sirleaf reported on the economy, security, infrastructure among other things.

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

Armed Men Attack Home of Margibi County Senator

- Men armed with cutlasses and pistols over the weekend attacked the home of Margibi Senator, Clarice Jah.
- The armed men also attacked and wounded four other persons in the ELWA community.
- In an interview, Senator Jah said the robbers made away with nearly US\$4,000, cell phones and other valuables
- Police later arrested one of the suspects.

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

Government Dismisses News of "Army Worms" Attack Near Monrovia

- The Ministry of Agriculture has described news that the army worms have reached Careysburg District near Monrovia as false.
- Agriculture Minister Dr. Chris Toe said caterpillars found in Careysburg are feeding or living on dead materials as oppose to the army worms which are feeding on plants.
- Giving an update of the caterpillar invasion to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, he urged the public not to panic as the pests have only being reported in Bong, Gbarpolu and Lofa Counties.

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

Fire Engulfs Major Rubber Plantation

- A huge fire has engulfed the Salala Rubber Plantation in Margibi County.
- Eyewitnesses said the fire started in a town called Kweeta town and spread to other parts of the plantation damaging tree crops.
- The management is yet to establish the extent of damage done to the plantation by the fire.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Monday, 26 January 2009

Cornomia differs with TRC on venue of proposed court

Written by Onesimus Leigh

An opposition politician says the recommendation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to establish a Special Court in Liberia would not be prudent.

Mr. Joseph Cornomia said it would be wise if the court would be established outside of Liberia for transparency to prevail.

He said the judges would be Liberians, impeding justice because their lives would be threatened.

According to him, some of the judges may have one way or the other supported some of these warring factions.

Mr. Cornomia told Star Radio to get the blame out of Liberia and the judges; it would be expedient to transfer the court to a different country for the sake of neutrality.

He said some of those that brought mayhem on the people are still capable of sponsoring a renew war in the country.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Monday, 26 January 2009

Son's prison sentence distresses Taylor

Written by Vivian Gartyn

Lead defense lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths says Charles Taylor is distressed over the 97-year jail sentence given his son, Chuckie Taylor.

Mr. Griffiths however, declined to disclose Taylor's exact words in reaction to the sentence.

Chuckie was sentenced to 97 years in prison early this year in a US court for atrocities committed when he headed his father's elite guard ATU.

The head of Mr. Taylor's Legal Team wondered what sense it makes to give a young man a sentence of that nature.

Mr. Griffiths believes any objective individual looking at the sentence would question the sanity of the American Justice System.

The lead defense lawyer has meanwhile, declared the Prosecution's case against Charles Taylor as riddle with holes and inconsistencies.

CNN

Monday, 26 January 2009

Ex-militia Leader Denies Forcing Children to Fight in Congo War

The new International Criminal Court launched its first trial Monday at The Hague in the Netherlands -- the prosecution of a former militia leader charged with using child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo's brutal civil war.

Thomas Lubanga Dyilo is accused of forcing children under the age of 15 to fight in the military wing of the Union of Congolese Patriots.

"Lubanga's armed group 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 saw, what they suffered, what they did," ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo said as the trial opened on Monday morning.

Lubanga pleaded not guilty. His defense will not begin its opening statement until Tuesday. He sat largely impassively, in suit and tie, as the prosecution opened its case.

The prosecution claims to have video of Lubanga in training camps with what appear to be child soldiers, and will call former child soldiers as witnesses to testify against him.

Nineteen of the 34 witnesses will testify anonymously, with their faces hidden and their voices distorted, the court said.

Lubanga used children to "participate actively in hostilities in (the eastern) Ituri (region of the DR Congo), from September 2002 to August 2003," the prosecution alleges.

"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.

The group urged the ICC to bring to trial Bosco Ntaganda, another UCP leader who has been charged but remains at large. It also called for the court to consider charging political leaders from Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.

"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."

Lubanga was arrested and surrendered to the ICC in March 2006.

The trial, the first since the ICC launched, was delayed for months as prosecutors and defense battled over access to evidence.

The prosecution phase of the trial is expected to last for months. It is not clear how long the defense will take, since it has not said.

The International Criminal Court, which was launched in 2002, was formed to try "persons accused of the most serious crimes of international concern," namely genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It is based on a treaty signed by 108 countries.

The United States does not recognize the court for fear U.S. citizens could be brought before it. Washington signed the treaty in 2000, under then-President Bill Clinton, but Congress never ratified it, so the U.S. is not a participant.

Former President George W. Bush's administration announced in 2002 it would neither support nor obstruct the ICC, which Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Marc Grossman said was "an institution of unchecked power."

The Lubanga trial comes as the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court recently said his office is paying serious attention to reports of war crimes in the country.

Moreno-Ocampo said his office has jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute war crimes in Congo. Along with the Democratic Republic of Congo, the court is investigating war crimes in Uganda, the Central African Republic and the Sudanese region of Darfur.

Voice of America

Monday, 26 January 2009

Brigitte Kitenge Moved From Killing Fields of Rwanda to Mission of Forgiveness

By Mike Osborne

Brentwood, Tennessee

It's an unusually cold January evening for middle Tennessee, but the mood is warm and inviting inside the Holy Family Catholic Church as the ladies of the congregation gather to hear a special speaker.

Once Brigitte Kitenge begins her story, however, the carefree mood quickly evaporates. Her audience sits in rapt silence and more than a few are wiping at tear-stained eyes.

In the spring of 1994, Kitenge tells them, she was 23 years old, living in Kigale, Rwanda's capital, working toward a law degree, and nursing her newborn second child.

Then the killing began.

After years of simmering ethnic tension and growing militancy, Hutu extremists massacred an estimated 800 thousand Tutsis and Hutu moderates over the course of just three months. Kitenge's five sisters and a brother were among the first to die.

"I lost all my siblings, aunties, cousins, numbers of nephews and nieces, friends, coworkers, neighbors," she says, her voice breaking with the memory. "I mean, I lost everybody."

Struggle for survival

A member of the Tutsi ethnic group, Kitenge survived the initial slaughter with the help of a Hutu friend. She hid under the man's garbage pile for 10 days. Her Congolese husband was beaten repeatedly by the Hutu militias for not revealing his wife's location. Finally, they decided the family's only hope was to make a run for the Congo border.

"So we had to make our way through road blocks and barriers, dead bodies to reach Congo," Kitenge says.

A trip that usually took five hours stretched to two months. "It took us two months because we walked at night and we were hiding in the daytime," Kitenge explains.

On two occasions, the family was captured and Kitenge was placed in a lineup to be shot. Both times, her life was spared at the last moment. Once safely across the border, the Kitenges and their two daughters spent six years in refugee camps before immigrating to the United States in 2000.

Learning to let go of hatred



Brigitte Kitenge speaks about forgiveness to audiences around the country



Kitenge (right) visited women in a Rwandan village last May

Courtesy Future Hope for Women
But even though her circumstances were greatly improved, Kitenge says she continued to suffer from panic attacks, depression and sleepless nights.

"There was nothing that could really, really bring a smile in my face. I was a prisoner of hatred and anger for many years. So I sat down in my darkness," she says.

The darkness began to recede when Kitenge read the life story of a survivor of an earlier genocide, the Nazi Holocaust. Psychiatrist **Viktor Frankl**, an Austrian Jew, worked to help his fellow prisoners in the concentration camps, and it was a quote from his book about that experience which finally put Kitenge on the road to recovery: When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.

"So I told myself that there will be no way to change everything that I went through. There will not be a way to become the happy woman I used to be - ambitious, with dreams - unless I change the way I have seen my past and everything that happened to me."

As she re-examined her terrible ordeal, Kitenge began to believe she could see God's hand behind her survival - that she'd been spared for a purpose.

Teaching others to forgive

Today, Kitenge shares her experience with groups like the women of Holy Family Church nearly every week.



Kitenge's foundation provided sewing machines for Rwandan women

"When I began talking to people about the love of God, about forgiveness, I feel like it's my calling," she says. "Now, instead of being a prisoner of hatred and anger, I am a prisoner of love. I am a prisoner of forgiveness. I learned that you are the loser if you can't forgive."



Kitenge gets a standing ovation after her talk at Brentwood's Holy Family Church

VOA Photo - M. Osborne
She tells audiences all across America, the journey to forgiveness is long and difficult, but worth every painful mile.

It's a message well received by those who come to hear her, and this night she gets a standing ovation. But Kitenge has learned that behind the applause and happy smiles hide broken hearts. Experience suggests one or two of these women will seek her out later to ask for help getting past their own personal tragedies.

After attaining U.S. citizenship this past year, Kitenge returned to her native Africa, opening counseling and job training centers for women in both Rwanda and Congo. The centers serve both Hutu and Tutsi

Associated Press
Monday, 26 January 2009

A look at other ongoing war crimes trials

A glance at the workings of other international tribunals:

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia: Set up in 1993 and headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands, has convicted 57 suspects of involvement in atrocities during wars sparked by the collapse of Yugoslavia. Top suspects: Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic died in mid-trial. Former Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic is in custody awaiting trial on genocide and war crimes charges.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda: Set up in 1994 and headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania, has convicted 28 people of involvement in Rwanda's 1994 genocide. Top suspect: Col. Theoneste Bagosora, was convicted of genocide in December and jailed for life. He is appealing. Judges ruled he used his power as director of Rwanda's Ministry of Defense to direct Hutu soldiers to kill Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

International Criminal Court: The world's first permanent war crimes tribunal. Set up in 2002 and headquartered in The Hague, its first trial starts on Jan. 26 against Thomas Lubanga, a former Congolese militia leader charged with using child soldiers. The court has four suspects in custody, all of them from Congo. Separately, ICC prosecutors have filed genocide charges against Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir over mass killings and rapes in Darfur province. Judges at the court are expected to decide shortly whether evidence merits a warrant for his arrest.

Special Court for Sierra Leone: Set up in 2002 and headquartered in Freetown, Sierra Leone, has convicted several rebel leaders for involvement in atrocities during the country's 1991-2002 civil war. Top suspect: former Liberian President Charles Taylor. Prosecutors are close to wrapping up their case that he masterminded atrocities in Sierra Leone. Taylor is being tried in The Hague because of fears that holding the trial in Freetown could re-ignite violence there.

Special Tribunal for Lebanon: Set up in 2006 to prosecute those responsible for the Feb. 14, 2005, murder of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The court, headquartered in the village of Leidschendam, just outside The Hague, is expected to start work later this year.

Associated Press writer Mike Corder, based at The Hague, compiled this summary.

UNHCHR

Monday, 26 January 2009

**Statement by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay
on the International Day in memory of the victims of the Holocaust.**

"Sixty-four years ago, on 27 January 1945, Soviet troops liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest of the Nazi death camps. The images from Auschwitz and the other camps, and the incontrovertible evidence that subsequently emerged to reveal the full scale and horror of the Holocaust is no less shocking with the passing of time.

On this day, which marks the fourth International Day in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, we must not forget the lives of those millions of children, women and men that were brutally cut short by an ideology of hatred which was embraced so ruthlessly by the Nazis and their allies.

This day of remembrance is about the past, but it is also about present and future challenges. The threat of genocide still remains. It is the ultimate and most terrible expression of intolerance, xenophobia and racism – and of the cynical politics that seek to exploit those darker sides of human nature. The International Day in memory of the victims of the Holocaust is an annual reminder that in the future we must act more decisively at the first signs that a climate conducive to genocide is starting to develop.

The world has witnessed other acts of genocide since the end of World War II. As a former judge and president of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, I will remember for the rest of my life the ghastly testimonies of survivors of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, and the terrible ability of human beings to inflict vast suffering on one another.

The international tribunals set up to deal with genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia owe a debt to the precedents set by the Nuremberg trials, and several subsequent tribunals, which resulted in successful prosecutions of individuals who took part in the Holocaust.

With the International Criminal Court (ICC), we now have an international judicial mechanism, ratified by 108 States, that is built on a clear commitment to put an end to impunity for crimes of this gravity, and in so doing provide a measure of deterrence. For the ICC to reach its full potential, its Statute needs to be ratified by all States.

But justice for crimes already committed is only one aspect of deterrence. It is only by understanding how acts of genocide develop that we can learn to read the warning signs and take decisive preventive action. As long as there are manifestations of racism, xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination against any group – including contemporary acts of anti-Semitism – the insidious cancer that leads to hate-fuelled violence will never be definitively defeated.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is actively engaged in helping governments and civil society to use the full force of the law to confront intolerance, bigotry, prejudice, ignorance and hatred. Ultimately, the only way to truly honour the victims of the Holocaust is to ensure effective protection for all those who are still, in the 21st Century, threatened by the same currents of hatred that coalesced during World War II into one of the single greatest premeditated crimes this planet has ever witnessed."