

**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:

Wednesday, 27 January 2010

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Concord Times
Wednesday, 27 January 2010

Prosecutors question Taylor's crimes in Liberia

By Alpha Sesay

Prosecutors yesterday questioned former Liberian president Charles Taylor about crimes committed by his rebel forces during his country's civil conflict.

This formed part of a broader effort by prosecutors to show consistent crime patterns with those of neighboring rebels in Sierra Leone, whom Mr. Taylor is accused of supporting during the country's bloody 11-year civil war. The aim is to show rebels in both countries had the same command structure, with Taylor at the top. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations.

As she questioned the accused about crimes committed by his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebels, lead prosecutor Brenda Hollis reminded Taylor of his November 19, 2009 statement under cross-examination that certain types of crimes committed by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel forces in Sierra Leone (such as amputations) were of a surprise because they did not occur in Liberia. In doing so, she sought to demonstrate that while the specific types of crimes committed in each country may have differed, the approach used by both sets of rebels were the same in that they involved widespread and systematic attacks against civilians.

Mr. Taylor has consistently denied he was in control of the RUF

rebels, and sought to show in his direct testimony that in Liberia, he held his own rebels to account for any crimes, and that those crimes were not, he argues, widespread in nature.

"Crimes committed by all factions in Liberia including your NPFL were widespread and systematic in nature," Ms. Hollis told the accused at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"I'll say it's incorrect," Taylor responded.

Ms. Hollis also pointed that "the NPFL did not put in place the minimum standards to mitigate these widespread abuses" in the NPFL.

In his response, the former president said that "the NPFL had military tribunals to mitigate abuses."

He also dismissed as "totally not correct" prosecution claims that his "NPFL targeted women as victims of crimes such as rape, sexual slavery and other forms of violence."

In response to Hollis's assertion that the "NPFL were responsible for burning of entire villages," Taylor said "that is not to my knowledge."

Demonstrating that crimes are committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilians is important in this case because it is one of the elements needed to prove that crimes committed by rebels in Sierra Leone, such as murder, torture or rape,



rose to the level of crimes against humanity.

The former Liberian leader is charged with five counts of crimes against humanity for crimes committed in Sierra Leone. One of the ways he can be held responsible for these crimes is by evidence indicating that he was in effective control of Sierra Leonean rebels and was in a position to prevent or punish their crimes. Showing that crimes against humanity were committed in both countries is a way of demonstrating a pattern between the two conflicts; prosecutors are also trying to show a consistency in command structure.

However, Mr. Taylor has denied

the allegations, asserting that his involvement in Sierra Leone was purely for peaceful purposes in the West African country.

Meanwhile, as prosecutors tried to submit new evidence in the form of documents or reports which point at crimes committed by Taylor's NPFL, the judges rejected the use of most of the documents on grounds that they were prejudicial to the guilt of the accused and that the prosecution had not established that it was in the interest of justice to use them and that they would not affect the fair trial rights of the accused.

Taylor's cross-examination continues tomorrow.

Awoko

Wednesday, 27 January 2010

Taylor denies targeting certain ethnic groups

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has denied allegations that his former NPFL fighters targeted certain ethnic groups during the Liberian conflict.

At his trial in The Hague, Mr. Taylor tried to present his NPFL as a well disciplined organisation. But the prosecution accused his fighters of using women as sex slaves during the conflict.

Even when Charles Taylor denied allegations that his NPFL rebel group did not commit massacre in Liberia, the lead prosecution lawyer Brenda Hollis asked Mr Taylor whether, as leader of the group he was aware of the atrocities committed by the NPFL rebels in Liberia.

Brenda Hollis accused Mr. Taylor's NPFL fighters of mainly targeting the Krahn and the Mandingo ethnic groups in Liberia.

Ms. Hollis said the NPFL murdered over 30 civilians in Kakata, 45 kilometres North East of the Liberian capital, Monrovia and that one of the commanders ate the hearts of five of the victims. But Taylor said this never happened.

The prosecutor also questioned Charles Taylor about the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission report which accused Mr. Taylor's NPFL fighters of raping, looting, recruiting child soldiers and use women as sex slaves during the Liberian conflict.

But Mr. Taylor challenged the credibility of the TRC report. According to him the report is full of errors and has been criticised by many Liberians. Mr. Taylor's lead defence council Courtenay Griffiths also objected to the use of the TRC report in the cross examination of Taylor. According to Mr. Griffiths the prosecution should not use the report because they failed to disclose it to the defence.

Prosecutors Question Charles about Crimes Committed by His NPFL Rebels in Liberia

Prosecutors today questioned former Liberian president Charles Taylor about crimes committed by his rebel forces during his country's civil conflict. This formed part of a broader effort by prosecutors to show consistent crime patterns with those of neighboring rebels in Sierra Leone, whom Mr. Taylor is accused of supporting during the West African country's bloody 11-year civil war. The aim is to show rebels in both countries had the same command structure, with Mr. Taylor at the top. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations.

As she questioned Mr. Taylor today about crimes committed by his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebels, lead prosecutor Brenda Hollis reminded Mr. Taylor of his November 19, 2009 statement under cross-examination that certain types of crimes committed by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel forces in Sierra Leone (such as amputations) were of a surprise because they did not occur in Liberia. In doing so, she sought to

demonstrate that while the specific types of crimes committed in each country may have differed, the approach used by both sets of rebels were the same in that they involved widespread and systematic attacks against civilians. Mr. Taylor has consistently denied he was in control of the RUF rebels, and sought to show in his direct testimony that in Liberia, he held his own rebels to account for any crimes, and that those crimes were not, he argues, widespread in nature.

"Crimes committed by all factions in Liberia including your NPFL were widespread and systematic in nature," Ms. Hollis told Mr. Taylor today at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"I'll say it's incorrect," Mr. Taylor responded.

Ms. Hollis also pointed that "the NPFL did not put in place the minimum standards to mitigate against these widespread abuses" in the NPFL. In his response, the former president said that "the NPFL had military tribunals to mitigate abuses." Mr. Taylor also dismissed as "totally not correct" prosecution claims that his "NPFL targeted women as victims of crimes such

as rape, sexual slavery and other forms of violence.

In response to Ms. Hollis's assertion that the "NPFL were responsible for burning of entire villages," Mr. Taylor said that "that is not to my knowledge."

Demonstrating that crimes are committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against civilians is important in this case because it is one of the elements needed to prove that crimes committed by rebels in Sierra Leone, such as murder, torture or rape, rose to the level of crimes against humanity. Mr. Taylor is charged with five counts of crimes against humanity for crimes committed in Sierra Leone. One of the ways he can be held responsible for these crimes is by evidence indicating that he was in effective control of Sierra Leonean rebels and was in a position to prevent or punish their crimes. Showing that crimes against humanity were committed in both countries is a way of demonstrating a pattern between the two conflicts, prosecutors are also trying to show a consistency in command structure. Mr. Taylor has denied the allegations, asserting that his involvement in Sierra Leone was purely for peaceful purposes in the West African country.

Meanwhile, as prosecutors tried

to submit new evidence today in the form of documents or reports which point at crimes committed by Mr. Taylor's NPFL, the judges rejected the use of most of the documents on grounds that they were prejudicial to the guilt of the accused and that the prosecution had not established that it was in the interest of justice to use them and that they would not affect the fair trial rights of the accused. While she was not allowed to use the documents, that did not stop Ms. Hollis from pointing out to Mr. Taylor the crimes committed by his NPFL rebels. The former president continued to dismiss Ms. Hollis's assertions as incorrect.

Referencing the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report, Ms. Hollis told Mr. Taylor that "it is correct that your NPFL recruited and used child soldiers during the conflict and you continued to use child soldiers during your presidency."

"Incorrect," the former president said. "The factual nature of the TRC report is a subject of challenges in the courts of Liberia right now," he added.

As Ms. Hollis attempted to read the relevant portion of the TRC report, Mr. Taylor's defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths objected to the use of the report on grounds that it

was prejudicial to Mr. Taylor's guilt and since the requirements of it being in the interest of justice and the fair trial rights of the accused were not met, it should not be allowed. The judges upheld the defense objection and Ms. Hollis was not allowed to read the relevant text.

Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor about the Liberian TRC's account that the NPFL committed the largest percentage of abuses during Liberia's conflict. She also pointed at reports which alleged that the NPFL massacred civilians in various villages, some on the basis that they belonged to the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups, that the NPFL killed foreign nationals of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries because of the actions of ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)- a sub-regional peacekeeping force that was put together by West African countries to stop the conflict in Liberia. Also discussed in court today was the killing of five American nuns, allegedly by NPFL rebels in Liberia. Mr. Taylor dismissed Ms. Hollis's accounts as untrue.

Responding to the issue of the alleged killing of the nuns, Mr. Taylor denied that his NPFL rebels had deliberately killed the nuns. He called the situation a "tragic situation" which had taken place by accident.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Tuesday, 26 January 2010

Liberia: Prosecutors Question Charles about Crimes Committed By His NPFL Rebels in Liberia

Alpha Sesay

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CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Wednesday, 27 January 2010

Liberia: Prosecutors Accuse Charles Taylor Of Using Child Soldiers In Liberia

Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor recruited and used children for military purposes in Liberia and it was therefore no surprise to him to learn that Sierra Leonean rebel forces were also using child soldiers during the West African country's 11-year conflict, prosecutors said today during the former Liberian president's cross-examination.

Lead prosecutor Brenda Hollis who is conducting Mr. Taylor's cross-examination went through evidence that Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group used child soldiers during the Liberian conflict. Mr. Taylor denied Ms. Hollis assertions. Ms. Hollis further suggested that because of Mr. Taylor's actions in using child soldiers in Liberia, it came as no surprise to him to know that child soldiers were being used by Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), an illegal junta regime that overthrew the elected government of Sierra Leone in 1997. Mr. Taylor said that he had no idea of what the RUF and AFRC did in Sierra Leone.

"You yourself had armed children, some as young as eight years old," Ms. Hollis accused Mr. Taylor today.

"That is total nonsense. Every child that I held I put in an orphanage," Mr. Taylor responded.

Mr. Taylor denied that his forces had child soldiers who patrolled the Liberian border with Ivory Coast in the early 1990s. He also said that it was not to his knowledge that children were acting as bodyguards to his NPFL commanders.

In response to prosecution allegation that he "used children as young as 10 to man check-points," Mr. Taylor said that "I did not use any children as young as 10 to man check-points. There were soldiers and some of them had their relatives around them but I did not use any children to man check-points."

As Ms. Hollis asserted that "use of child soldiers by the RUF and AFRC was no surprise to you," Mr. Taylor responded that "I have no knowledge of what the AFRC and RUF did in Sierra Leone."

In pointing out the activities of Mr. Taylor's NPFL in Liberia, Ms. Hollis has been trying to convince the judges that Mr. Taylor knew of similar activities by Sierra Leonean rebel forces but could do nothing to stop them because he was doing the same things in Liberia. Referencing what the RUF rebels did in Sierra Leone, Mr. Taylor responded that "what they did in those areas was not in consistent pattern with me. That is not correct."

"No surprise to you of what they (RUF) did in Sierra Leone because it is the same that you did in Liberia," Ms. Hollis persisted. "You were not truthful when you said that crimes committed in Sierra Leone were of surprise to you because they did not happen in Liberia," she added.

In his response, Mr. Taylor said that "I had no knowledge of the inner workings of the RUF and AFRC." He added that crimes such as amputations were not committed in Liberia and cases of rape were severely dealt with.

"Your forces committed amputations," Ms. Hollis said.

"You know that is not true because there are no records of amputations in Liberia," Ms. Taylor responded.

On the crime of rape, Mr. Taylor said that "I was surprised at rape because people in the NPFL who committed rape in Liberia were executed."

Ms. Hollis also told Mr. Taylor that "the crimes in Sierra Leone were a reflection of the crimes your troops committed in Liberia. Using children in combat was a reflection of what your forces did in Liberia."

"That is totally erroneous and incorrect," Mr. Taylor responded.

Mr. Taylor also today denied prosecution allegations that his forces massacred civilians in Liberia and that he failed to take action against them. Ms. Hollis pointed that NPFL commanders such as Mark Guan, Melvin Sogbandi, Momoh Gibba and Mr. Taylor's son Chuckie Taylor, all at one point or the other led forces to kill civilians in various towns and villages including Bomi County, Lofa County and Gbatalla. He said that he never received reports that any of these commanders had killed civilians. As Ms. Hollis tried to present documents in support of her assertion, such as the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report, the judges ruled that such evidence was probative to the guilt of the accused, and since the prosecution had not proved that the use of such new documents will be in the interest of justice or that it will not affect the fair trial rights of the accused, they could not be used in the cross-examination of Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor's cross-examination continues tomorrow.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 26 January 2010

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberia President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to stand again

Source: BBC 26 January 2010

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is Africa's first elected female head of state. Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has said she intends to seek a second term of office, despite promises to only serve one six-year term. The 71-year-old president said she wanted to end the speculation about her intentions in 2011. Her spokesman Cyrus Badio said she had not realized before the 2005 poll how much work needed to be done in Liberia, which is recovering from years of war. She became Africa's first elected female head of state. She won 59% of the vote in a run-off against football star George Weah. Mr Weah gained most votes in the first round of the poll which followed the end of the war in 2003. "I know where we are today, I know where we ought to be tomorrow and I know how we will get there," she told a joint assembly of MPs gathered for her annual message.

USAID Telling Our Story: Liberia - First Post-War Teachers Graduate

Source: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 25 Jan 2010

A new approach to teaching and to training teachers revives Liberia's education system. While assessing the status of teacher training in Liberia, USAID found three badly war-damaged Rural Teacher Training Institutes in Kakata, Zorzor, and Webbo. None were fully operational and the number of staff was virtually non-existent. None had functioned as operational institutions delivering "C" certificates for elementary school teacher training for almost two decades. In 2007, USAID infrastructure renovation activities began at the three campuses. USAID also worked with the Ministry of Education to develop a set of professional standards for the Liberian teacher and to guide curriculum development in teacher education. By mid- 2008, USAID and the Liberian Ministry of Education had developed a national certificate curriculum for primary teachers that would serve both pre- and in-service teachers. Recruitment and training of staff and students for the 2008-2009 academic-year residential programs began. Sixteen of the more than 400 candidates were found in a refugee camp in Ghana. All faculty received up to eight intensive weeks of training in the new curriculum.

International Clips on West Africa

Cote D'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire: Banana Producers Turn To Regional Markets

Abidjan, **Ivory Coast** ...All Africa.com 26 January 2010— Twelve thousand people working on **Côte d'Ivoire's** banana plantations face uncertainty as the European Union begins implementing a new agreement governing tariffs on bananas. An agreement finalised in mid-December aims to comply with regulations governing non-discrimination between member states of the World Trade Organisation. The agreement provides for lower European tariffs on bananas from Latin America. The tariffs will drop from the present 176 euros per tonne to 114 euros per tonne by 2017. This will make bananas from Latin American producers - mostly grown and exported by powerful

multinationals like Dole and Chiquita - more competitive against bananas from growers in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Mathias N'Goan Aka, president of the country's association of banana producers, expects banana exports - presently 230,000 tonnes a year - to fall by 14 percent. But on the large banana plantations around Azaguié, in southern **Côte d'Ivoire**, role players in the banana sector are not waiting with their arms crossed to see what happens next.

Local Media – Newspaper

President Sirleaf Delivers State Of The Nation Address...Announces Intention To Run In 2011

(New Democrat, Daily Observer, The Inquirer, The News, FrontPage, The Informer and National Chronicle)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has declared she will be a formidable candidate in the 2011 General and Presidential Elections.
- President Sirleaf said the pronouncement was intended to bring an end to speculations about her candidacy during the forthcoming election in 2011.
- The President made the declaration when she delivered her State of the Nation Address to the 5th session of the Legislature Monday.
- Meanwhile, some opposition lawmakers have expressed disappointment over President Sirleaf's decision to declare her candidacy for the next election during the delivery of the "state of the nation" address.
- The Senators said the announcement by the President was tantamount to political campaigning.
- However, a lawmaker of the ruling Unity Party, Daniel Naatehn said the declaration by the President was a right, dismissing the suggestion that it amounted to premature campaigning.

BIN Announces Deportation of 24 Liberians from The United States

(The News)

- The Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization (BIN) has announced the deportation of 24 Liberians from the United States between the ages 20 to 48 years old.
- A BIN statement issued Monday said the deportees will be received Wednesday at the Roberts International Airport.
- The Liberians, all males are being deported on various charges including robbery, forgery, probation violation, indecent exposure and sexual assault.

First Defense Witness Testifies In Angel Togba Case

(The News and The Inquirer)

- The principal co-defendant in the ongoing Angel Togbah murder case, Hans Williams today took the stand to disprove the prosecution's testimonies that little Angel died by strangulation.
- The trial was recessed yesterday when the defense asked the court to grant it a day to confer with its witnesses in preparation for their testimonies" which began today.
- Criminal court "B" yesterday qualified Mr. Williams and John T. Richardson who is called as an expert witness to testify to the dimension and measurements of the bathroom where the incident "occurred".
- The deceased was in late 2007 found hanging in the bathroom of the suspects who claimed she committed suicide. Despite the claims, the prosecution has maintained that the accused created the bathroom scene to hide the truth

FDA Deposits over US\$5M into Government Coffers...Threatens Terminating Delinquent Contractors

(Daily Observer)

- Outgoing Managing Director of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), John T. Woods, has disclosed that over US\$5 million has been deposited into government chest from the awarding of forest concessions and timber sales contracts.

- Mr. Woods said the amount represents payment against annual contract administration, area and land rental fees as required by the 2006 National Forestry Reform Law.
- According to the outgoing FDA boss, Alpha Logging and Wood Processing Company, holder of Forest Management Contract (FMC) Area 'A', and Atlantic Resource Ltd, holder of FMC Area 'P,' have paid to the Government through the FDA US\$1,497,462 and US\$1,361,521.60 respectively in total clearance of the required fees.

Gasoline Shortage Hits Monrovia

(Daily Observer)

- Barely a week after the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Corporation (LPRC) announced the arrival of a consignment of petroleum products to offset the shortage on the market, reports of yet another shortage of the commodity have prompted a sharp rise in transportation fares.
- Well-placed LPRC sources blame the latest shortage of the product mainly on technical problems with the corporation's major supplier in neighbouring Ivory Coast.
- Early this week, the LPRC's Acting Managing Director, T. Nelson Williams, said there would be a shortage of petroleum products in Liberia owing to technical problems being encountered in the Ivory Coast by LPRC's major supplier.

US Ambassador Signs Grant Agreement for Community Projects Tomorrow

(The News, New Democrat, the Inquirer and The Informer)

- United States Ambassador to Liberia, Linda Thomas-Greenfield will tomorrow sign a grant agreement to provide assistance to several community groups across the country.
- The grant would be provided under the Ambassador's Self Help Fund to implement several development initiatives in the areas of health, education, income generation projects among others.

Nimba County Senator Prince Johnson To Contest 2011 Presidential Elections

(National Chronicle)

- Minutes after President Sirleaf announces her candidacy for the forthcoming 2011 Presidential election, Nimba County Senator Prince Johnson has also declared his intention to contest the Presidency.
- The Nimba lawmaker said his team would raise US\$5 to US\$10 million dollars to contest the Presidential elections.
- Senator Johnson believes Liberians would elect him as President because of the support given him in the 2005 elections.
- Senator Johnson, a former rebel leader turned politician has in the past opposed military rule saying "the gun that liberates must not rule".

Local Media – Star Radio *(culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

President Sirleaf Delivers State Of The Nation Address...Announces Intention To Run In 2011

(Also reported on Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Nimba County Senator Prince Johnson To Contest 2011 Presidential Elections

"Inappropriate" Opposition Describes President Sirleaf's Declaration

- The Chairman of the opposition Congress for Democratic Change (CDC) has described as a sad day in Liberia the public declaration by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf that she will run in 2011 General and Presidential Elections.
- Mrs. Geraldine Doe Sheriff who is also Senator of Montserrado County said the President used her address to the National Legislature for political campaign.
- Senator Sheriff however said the CDC is not deterred by the President's declaration.

- At the same time, Liberty Party's National Chairman, Mr. Israel Arkinsanya says the party was not surprised at the declaration noting that a second term for President Sirleaf has been an open secret.
 - The opposition politician also frowned on the President on making the declaration during the annual address saying it has overshadowed serious national issues in the address.
- (Also reported on Radio Veritas, Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)*

Defense Team Asks for Delay in Angel Togba's Murder Case

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Truth FM, Sky FM, and ELBC)

Tragic Motor Accident Leaves Five Dead, Eight More In Critical Condition

- At least five persons are reported dead after a tragic motor accident along the Gbarnga-Kakata Highway.
- According to reports, eight others are in critical condition and taking treatment at the Rennie Hospital in Kakata.
- Police have meanwhile launched an investigation into the cause of the accident.

BIN Announces Deportation Of 24 Liberians from The United States

Sime Darby Speaks Out...Dismisses Reports Of Employing More Foreigners

- The Management of Sime Darby says it has employed a little over 1,600 former Guthrie employees which amounts to more than 50 percent of former employees of the Guthrie Rubber Plantation.
- Sime Darby's Senior Manager, Mr. Boimah Sonnie said the company inherited 2,225 employees from Guthrie.
- Mr. Sonnie also dismissed reports that people from Bomi and Grand Cape Mount were not being employed.
- He said more than 60 percent of the current workforce is from the two counties but said only those qualified are being employed.

Agence France Presse
Wednesday, 27 January 2010

Survivors, liberators, gather for Auschwitz commemoration

By International Justice Desk



Krakow, Poland

Auschwitz survivors, Soviet veterans and leaders including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

gather Wednesday for emotionally charged ceremonies marking the 65th anniversary of the notorious Nazi death camp's liberation.

Ahead of a commemoration Wednesday afternoon at the site of the World War II camp in German-occupied Poland, 700 participants assemble in the southern city of Krakow for a morning memorial event organised by the European Jewish Congress.

"The Holocaust is the tragedy which unites Europe," European Jewish Congress leader Moshe Kantor said on the eve of the Krakow ceremony, which US President Barack Obama was due to address by video.

Auschwitz, liberated by the Soviet Red Army on January 27, 1945, is an enduring symbol of Nazi German genocide. In 2005 the United Nations declared the date International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

A total of 1.1 million people perished at the camp - one million of them Jews from across occupied Europe - mostly killed in gas chambers but also by shootings, hangings, starvation, disease, slave labour and medical "experiments".

In the Polish capital Warsaw Tuesday, Netanyahu honoured the victims and those who risked their lives to save Jews from the Nazis.

"We encounter the worst evil in the history of mankind together with the greatest courage in the history of humanity," Netanyahu said at a former railhead where the Nazis sent more than 300,000 Jews to die.

Memories of Holocaust

"This is not an easy encounter but it gives us hope and direction for our future. May God avenge the victims," said the Israeli leader alongside his wife Sara, whose father was the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust in which some six million Jews were murdered.

Netanyahu was to deliver a speech Wednesday at the Auschwitz ceremony, after survivors and Poland's President Lech Kaczynski.

Tel Aviv's Polish-born Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, a Holocaust orphan who survived as a child in Nazi camps, was to recite the Kaddish, or prayer of mourning.

Poland invited Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to attend, but he declined citing "other obligations", according to Warsaw.

The Nazis initially set up the camp to hold Polish political prisoners in 1940, a year after invading Poland. They chose a former barracks in the southern town of Oswiecim, Germanised as Auschwitz.

It became a site primarily for murdering Jews from 1942 as the Nazis expanded it at Birkenau, three kilometres away.

In addition to Jews, and 70-75,000 non-Jewish Poles, they killed 21,000 Roma there, 15,000 Soviet POWs and 10-15,000 others, including resistance members arrested across Europe, according to the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial and Museum.

There were only around 7,000 survivors in the camp at the liberation. The Nazis had evacuated some 60,000 others only days earlier in the notorious "Death March" as they fled the Soviet advance.

With their numbers dwindling year by year, about one hundred survivors were set to attend Wednesday's ceremony in sub-zero temperatures similar to the weather 65 years ago.

Handful of survivors

Only a handful of the liberators are still alive. Two, Ivan Martynushkin, 86, and Yakov Vinnochenko, 83, were scheduled to attend.

In Krakow, Martynushkin told AFP he was marked by that fateful day.

"We started meeting huddles of people. They came towards us, in prison stripes. Some had covers over their heads. We could only see their eyes. And in those eyes, we could see what they were feeling," he said.

"But we didn't know what it was. We only understood after the war," he added.

Kantor, 56, who is from Russia, said he feels extra emotion when he thinks of 1945.

"The majority of my family was murdered," he said.

"My father was in the Red Army. I always remember his feelings, his attitude being a soldier of the Red Army whose family disappeared in the Shoah. Those feelings created mine," he said.

Source: AFP

The Hague Portal

Tuesday, 26 January 2010

Trial of Katanga and Chui resumes at the ICC 26 Jan 2010

The trial of Germaine Katanga and Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui has resumed at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

On 26 January 2010, the trial of two Congolese rebels, Germaine Katanga and Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui, resumed before Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Court in The Hague.



The trial began on 24 November 2009, yet proceedings were suspended on 2 December 2009 after one of the judges was injured in a car accident. The Prosecution will continue to present its case, with testimony from witness DRC-OTP-P-0419.

The two accused are charged with seven counts of war crimes and three counts of crimes against humanity. The Prosecution alleges that Katanga and Chui are responsible for crimes committed during an attack on the village of Bogoro in DRC's mineral-rich Ituri region. It alleges that on 24 February 2003, the accused led an attack on the village, as part of a widespread and systematic attack on the civilian population of Ituri. The attack resulted in the large-scale killing of civilians from the Hema ethnic group, committed by the FNI and FRPI forces, largely composed of the Lendu and Ngiti groups. The attack also involved widespread sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery.

The trial is the second before the International Criminal Court, both of which arise from the Situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, who faces charges of conscripting and using child soldiers, began on 26 January 2009. The Defence case is expected to begin this week.

BBC Online

Tuesday, 26 January 2010

ICC worried over Kenya post-election riots witnesses

International prosecutors have written to the Kenyan government over concerns that witnesses to deadly riots in 2007 and 2008 have been intimidated.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) asked the Kenya authorities to make sure witnesses were properly protected.

The ICC has promised to prosecute suspected organisers of the violence, which swept the country for weeks after the 2007 election, killing hundreds.

Western leaders have accused Kenya of doing little to track down suspects.

Prominent politicians, including cabinet ministers, are believed to be among the suspects.



Thousands were left homeless after weeks of ethnic violence

The clashes between December 2007 and February 2008 left some 1,300 people dead and forced 300,000 from their homes.

'Betrayed our leader'

In a letter published by Kenyan newspaper the Standard, ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo said his office was aware of "a growing number of reports" that potential ICC witnesses "had been threatened and intimidated".

"The primary responsibility to protect persons at risk lies first and foremost with Kenyan authority," the letter stated.

Several witnesses who testified at the Kenyan government's inquiry into the violence, the Waki Commission, told how they had been intimidated and suffered death threats.

One witness told the BBC's Network Africa programme he received threats verbally and by text message after he spoke to the commission.

"The first message said: 'You are still a young man and you are not supposed to die, but you betrayed our leader, so what we shall do to you is just to kill you,'" he said.

The witness said he had been forced to leave his home and go into hiding, but promised to testify despite believing both he and his family were in danger.

The international community had urged Kenya to move swiftly in punishing perpetrators of the violence, but no-one has yet been charged.

President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga agreed to share power to end the clashes that followed the December 2007 election. Mr Kibaki won the election, but Mr Odinga's supporters alleged fraud.

Clashes between their supporters snowballed into large-scale ethnic violence that engulfed large parts of the country for weeks.

New Vision (Uganda)

Tuesday, 26 January 2010

Foreign judges to be on war crimes court

By Taddeo Bwambale

PRINCIPAL Judge James Ogoola has said the judiciary is considering recruiting some foreign judges for the war crimes court to help in dealing with crimes of international nature.

“We are considering the idea of introducing foreign judges in our court. Since we are handling cases of international nature, we think it will improve the quality of judgment and create a good perception about our work,” he said.

Ogoola said in case the court fails to find judges, experts or advisers on the crimes under investigation will be hired.

He was speaking at a public dialogue at Kampala Serena Hotel on Monday, organised by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

He said Uganda has put in place an appropriate legal framework in which to charge the Lord’s Resistance Army leader, Joseph Kony, if he were to come out of the bush.

Ogoola said the war crimes court had done sufficient ground work and consultations to handle international crime.

“If Kony were to appear at our doorstep tomorrow, we are confident that justice will be done,” he said.

He described some international laws as being “very formalistic and western oriented,” adding that they only aim at punishing culprits without addressing the pain of the affected communities.

He appealed to all Ugandans to support the passing of the ICC Bill, which is currently before Parliament, saying that it has appropriate provisions to deliver justice to victims of rights abuse.

The Bill defines war crimes, regulates trial proceedings and recommends punishment for those found guilty.

Ogoola said under the bill, only top LRA commanders will be punished, adding that traditional justice systems such as mato oput, will be used to help offenders reform and be reintegrated into society.

A truth-telling commission, he noted, will also be set up to facilitate a healing process and examine the causes of the crimes.

At the dialogue, the president of the assembly of state parties to the ICC, Christian Wenaweser, hailed Uganda’s efforts to domesticate the provisions of the court.

Ogoola said the ICC review conference, which takes place in Kampala in May, will handle amendments to key provisions of the court.

He added that the conference will also discuss new crimes such as aggression and the principle in which the ICC handles crimes that member states are not able to prosecute on their own.