

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



The Principal Defender and the Deputy Prosecutor took part in a Special Court training of paramount chiefs, parliamentarians and local officials in Kono District on Saturday.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Monday, 27 October 2008

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Awoko

Monday, 27 October 2008

Former girl rebel tells ordeal

A former member of the Smalls Girl Unit of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) has testified in the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor on how civilians, among them children, were trained and used as attendants by rebel commanders.

Edna Bangura told the court that in April 1994 three RUF rebels raped her when she was 10 years old as the rebels attacked the northern town of Masingbi, in Tonkolili District. The 66th prosecution witness said her primary

school was hosting their annual athletics meet when the rebels struck rudely interrupting it.

She said she was raped by the rebels who abandoned her in the bush and was later discovered by the then RUF patrol commander OC Blood who took her along with him.

He gave her a very heavy load which she carried walking several days from Masingbi to Buedu in Kailahun District.

Edna said she underwent a 2-week training in a camp around Buedu together with

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Former girl rebel tells ordeal

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50 other captives trained by training instructor Monica Pearson whom the witness alleged spoke Liberian English. He explained how she used to carry a gun even though she was very young. "Because I was very small, the gun had a belt and at any time I wanted to use the gun I would just take the gun, put it somewhere higher than my height and then I would go underneath it and put it round me. I would put the gun somewhere that is taller than me and then I would go underneath it and put my head through the belt

and then put it round me."

After her training she went on, she was enlisted in the Small Girls Unit (SGU) which together with the Small Boys Unit (SBU) comprised young girls and boys aged between 10 and 13 years, captured and conscripted by the rebels.

Edna said the rebel commanders used the SBUs as security guards who carried guns wherever their bosses went, and the SGUs as house help to the wives of the rebels. She said that life was only "safe" for women and girls in the jungle when they had a rebel they would point to as their "husband"

She said women in the jungle without rebel husbands were treated far worse. Responding to a cross-examination by prosecution lawyer Courtenay Griffiths the witness admitted that there were some errors in her previous interview. She testified in court that

three rebels raped her, but she had previously told investigators that four rebels did.

She attributed the inconsistency to the fact that she was meeting "such people" for the first time, saying she was not of a 'steady mind'.

Courtesy: BBC World Service Trust

For di People
Monday, 27 October 2008

Rwandans jailed for priest deaths

A MILITARY court in Rwanda has sentenced two army captains to eight years in prison over the murder of 13 Catholic clerics in the 1994 genocide.

The killings were carried out by soldiers from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the ex-rebel mainly Tutsi group which put an end to the genocide. Many of the murdered clerics were Hutus - among them were three bishops, including the archbishop of Kigali.

Some 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered in 1994 in 100 days. The killing by Hutu militias came to an end when the RPF under Paul Kagame, now president, took control of the country.

The convicted captains, John Butera and Dieudonne Rukeba, said they had killed the Catholic clerics on the grounds that they were collaborating with mass murderers, the AFP news agency reports.

They pleaded guilty but were given reduced sentences when it was ruled that their crimes were not premeditated and were committed by soldiers under their command.

Two of the captains' military superiors were acquitted. The military tribunal co-operated in the case with the UN-backed International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which was set up in 1997 to try the most high-profile genocide cases.

The BBC's Geoffrey Mutagoma reports from Kigali that it is not the first time high-ranking military officers have gone on trial, but the case

has drawn attention because it involves the murder of top clerics. Trying officers who contributed to the RPF victory may be seen as a message to Rwanda's critics that it intends to leave no crime committed during the genocide untried, he says.



The captains' superiors (left and 2nd left) were acquitted

**CREDIT:
BBC NEWS**

BBC World Service Trust

Friday, 24 October 2008

Report from The Hague

The Prosecution has announced that accused former Liberian President Charles Taylor can testify in his case if he wishes to do so. The Prosecutor of the Special Court however said the English Criminal Rule adopted by the Special Court would be applied if Mr. Taylor wants to testify. So what does the English law say about a criminal defendant wishing to testify in own case, was the question Joseph Cheeseman asked The Prosecutor of the Special Court, Stephen Rapp?

RAPP: Under our Rules, however, it is important to note that if the Accused testifies, he must testify as the first witness in his case...

CHEESEMAN: He must testify first.

RAPP: Yes

CHEESEMAN: Why is that important?

RAPP: Well this is a Rule that the Court has. It's a Rule that actually is the same as that in the English system in which Mr. Griffiths practices, but to some extent it's to make sure that the Accused doesn't mould his story depending on what others have said in his Defence case. He has to put it on himself first. But it's the Rule, we follow the Rules, and we're looking forward to seeing Mr. Taylor in the box if that's his decision.

CHEESEMAN: Mr. Griffiths estimated that you brought ten crime base witnesses here at the rate of \$20,000 United States dollars. How true is this information?

RAPP: Well certainly, it may be more than that. I mean when you deal with the fact that some of these people are injured and have serious health problems and sometimes have to have a family escort with them. The Court, however, has negotiated a very reasonable fare with an airline that brings these people to Europe, so we do it on a cost-efficient basis. And there is a safe house where there are beds and staffing and everything else. But it certainly costs money to the Court to present this kind of testimony. At one point we moved to allow witnesses to appear by video link, but the Defence objected to that. So we're doing it because we have to, and it's our obligation, it's the mandate, it's my sworn duty to prove this case with the best evidence that I can and prove it according to the Rules.

CHEESEMAN: You described your evidence as compelling, as convincing. Mr. Griffiths has described your evidence as rubbish.

RAPP: It's hard to respond to that kind of language. This evidence of these human beings and what they went through, and the evidence that we presented from one end to the other of the link between Charles Taylor and the war in Sierra Leone is the absolute opposite of rubbish. Now Mr. Griffiths may be familiar with cases in London where police come in with a neatly-typed report and everything is detailed and on closed-circuit cameras, and there's a certain quality of evidence sometimes in those cases, but you get into a situation that I've dealt with in Sierra Leone, and before in Rwanda, in situations where thousands of people are murdered, where millions of people are displaced, where whole communities and institutions are torn apart, in societies that already suffer from underdevelopment, where witnesses don't wear watches, they don't tell time by calendars, and obviously there's going to be some inconsistencies in their

testimony. That's maybe what he's talking about – that sometimes a person says it was three men and other they say it's four men. But essentially their evidence, as we have said, is extremely compelling, and when you add it all up and look at all the ways in which it's corroborated and the network and the pattern that exists here, this is certainly in my experience at the international level, the most compelling case that I've ever seen – at least three times stronger than cases that I've seen presented in other international tribunals. But obviously it's going to be up to the Judges in terms of guilt or innocence and that'll follow the presentation of Mr. Taylor's own defence.

CHEESEMAN: Then Mr. Griffiths also said that the money spent to bring these people here, you should have used that money as a reparation to the poor people of Sierra Leone.

RAPP: Well we care a lot about reparation, and we're looking for ways that we hope to be able to pursue Mr. Taylor's assets to provide reparation to victims. The money that the Court has used is money that has been obtained from justice funds from countries that want to see international justice succeed. These aren't funds that go to development projects; indeed there are wide development projects in Sierra Leone that deal with victims. Recently the UN Peacebuilding Commission donated three million dollars to the Victim Reparation Fund. Not enough has been done in that area, but it's our position always that it's important that justice be done.

News Story

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone says Accused Former Liberian President Charles Taylor would testify before any of his witnesses if he wishes to take the stand.

Mr. Stephen Rapp said the English Rule adopted by the Special Court requires that the Criminal Defendant take the witness stand first.

Mr. Rapp told the BBC World Service Trust the presumption is that the Criminal Defendant would not build his case on what his witnesses had previously said.

He however said no conclusion would be drawn against Mr. Taylor if he decided not to testify.

The Special Court Prosecutor reiterated that the case against the Former Liberian Leader was three times stronger than any other cases he had seen in other international tribunals.

Mr. Rapp said there would be some inconsistencies on the part of the prosecution witnesses because it had been too long since the events that affected their lives took place.

Mr. Rapp however said these inconsistencies would not have any negative effects on the truthfulness of their testimonies.

The Prosecutor confirmed Defence Lawyer, Courtney's Griffiths allegation that the prosecution spent more than 20-thousands United States Dollars to transport 10 crime base witnesses to The Hague. Mr. Rapp said the prosecution initially suggested that these crime base witnesses testify through video link to The Hague but he said the defence team refused.

United Nations Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 24 October 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

Liberia Observes 63rd Anniversary of UN Day

(The Inquirer, New Vision and the Public Agenda)

- Liberia today joined other member states worldwide to commemorate the 63rd Anniversary of the United Nations Day across the country. The day is in recognition of the invaluable contributions made by the United Nations to universal peace and security.
- United Nations Day is an international observance to mark the anniversary of the founding of the United Nations on October 24, 1945. In Liberia, the Day was observed throughout the country with the holding of appropriate programmes. There was a debate among students in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County about the relevance of the UN in Liberia.
- In his UN Day message, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said "This is a crucial year in the life of our United Nations. We have just passed the midpoint in the struggle to reach the Millennium Development Goals -- our common vision for building a better world in the 21st century. We can see more clearly than ever that the threats of the 21st century spare no one. Climate change, the spread of disease and deadly weapons, and the scourge of terrorism all cross borders. If we want to advance the global common good, we must secure global public goods."

US Promises to Remove Sunken Vessel at Freeport

(Daily Observer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf who returned from the United States yesterday disclosed that U.S Defense Department, through the Afro Command, has agreed to clear the sunken vessel at the Free Port of Monrovia.

Nine Ghanaians Found Guilty in US\$500M Drugs Trafficking Case

(Daily Observer, The News, The Inquirer, Public Agenda, The Informer)

- A 12-member empanelled jury at Criminal Court "C" at the Temple of Justice in Monrovia on Thursday, October 23, 2008 brought down a unanimous verdict of guilty against nine Ghanaian nationals.
- The men were arrested on board a vessel, the "Blue Atlantic" and charged with cocaine trafficking.
- The unanimous jury verdict was announced Thursday at the Criminal Court "C" following final argument between state and defense lawyers. Crew members of the vessel found guilty are Oteng Akraasi Osei, Robert Adjei, James Addy and Joseph Agbo. Others include John Amewa Kofi, Mamah Dramaui, Gibrill Ayoub, Henry Coleman and Richard Mensah. Following the verdict, defense lawyers led by Cllr. Charles Abdullah took exception and announced an appeal to the Supreme Court of Liberia.
- In January, the French naval vessel intercepted the Blue Atlantic on high sea and forced it to berth at the Freeport of Monrovia. A search on the vessel led to the discovery of 2.4 tons of cocaine with a street value of US\$500 million.

Cabinet Heads to Kakata for Retreat

(New Vision)

- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and cabinet leave for Kakata, Margibi County this weekend for a retreat. The retreat will focus on accelerating the implementation of the Poverty reduction strategy, a four pillar document put together by government. President Sirleaf told reporters the meeting is very important and all ministers and assistants must attend. On Thursday, government ministers were seen at the Foreign Ministry taking ID cards for accreditation, the first for a cabinet retreat. Reports indicate say any minister not attending the retreat would be considered to have resigned.

Radio Summary

Star Radio *(News culled today from website at 9:00 pm)*

Liberia Celebrates UN Day

Government Reconsiders Eviction Threat

- Government has reconsidered its deadline to evict residents of the Wroto Town community near the James Spring Payne Airfield.
- Speaking at a news conference, Information Minister Lawrence Bropleh said government would hold consultations with the residents on their eviction.
- The government's decision comes after the Wroto Town residents reportedly threatened to use their children as human shields if any attempt was made to evict them.
- Government set October 24 to evict the Wroto Town residents including those residing in public buildings.
- Dr. Bropleh however, said the reconsideration decision does not apply to those residing in public buildings.

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

Crisis Deepens at Liberian Senate

- The Acting President Pro Tempore of the Senate, Lahai Lassana has warned that no one has the right to recognize Isaac Nyenabo as Pro Temp.
- Acting Pro-Temp Lassanah said Senator Nyenabo is a senior impersonator and should not be regarded as a leader of the Senate.
- The warning comes a day after the "embattled" pro-temp met a delegation from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in his capacity as Pro Temp.
- Senator Lassanah emphasized that even President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has no authority to recognize Senator Nyenabo as Pro Temp.
- The Senate has been rocked by a bitter leadership dispute which now being heard by the full bench Supreme Court.

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

Opposition Congress For Democratic Change in "Disarray"

- The Geraldine Doe-Sheriff faction of the opposition Congress for Democratic Change says it has constituted a convention committee which is Chaired by Nathaniel Patray and Co-chaired by Dr. Matthew Simpson who also heads the USA branch.
- The statement said the National Executive Committee of the CDC constituted the convention committee nearly a month ago.
- Last week, the "embattled" Chairman of the CDC, Joshua Sackie constituted a convention committee headed by Representative Kettehkumeh Murray.
- Meanwhile, the National Youth League of the Congress for Democratic Change has cautioned partisans of the party to remain resolute while reaffirming its support for the Geraldine Doe-Sheriff Chairmanship of the party.
- At the same time, the youth league council of the CDC has disassociated itself from the planned Kakata Convention led by Joshua Sackie and asked him to close ranks with Madame Sheriff in executing the vision of the party.

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

Transitional justice Experts Stress Reparation

- Four international experts on transitional justice have stressed the importance of reparation and justice in the TRC process.
- The experts said the issue of reparation for victims of conflict must be taken seriously with apologies from the perpetrators.
- The experts from the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Uganda, South Africa and Kenyan made the statement before the TRC when addressing the Truth and Reconciliation on the issue of reparations for victims of the civil war.
- The Executive Director of the ICC Trust Fund for victims, Andre Laperriere said a legal justice system must also be set-up to avoid a recurrence of conflict.
- Also, a transitional justice expert from Uganda Dani Nabudere called on the TRC to consult the community on the issue of reparation while an activist and victim of South Africa's apartheid system, Shirley Gunn advised the TRC to arrange the victims to decide the type of reparation.
- An official of the Nairobi Peace Initiative in Kenya, George Wachira said the reparation process of the TRC must target the communities.

NPA Announces "Whistleblower" Fund

- The Board of Directors of the National Port Authority has announced the establishment of what it called whistleblower fund.
- In a statement issued, the Chairman of the NPA Board, William Allen said the decision is intended to fight corruption at the Free Port of Monrovia and other ports around the country.
- Dr. Allen said he would suggest to the NPA Board for ten thousand U.S. to reward persons who disclose credible information about corruption at the ports.
- The NPA Board Chairman spoke Thursday at the close of a two-day National Workshop on Cargo Shipping and Clearing at Liberia's Seaports.
- However, observers say Dr. Allen is being political as a worker who alarmed about corruption at the port was dismissed by the management.
- The dismissed staff recently staged a one man peaceful demonstration in Monrovia in demand of justice.

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

Monday, 27 October 2008

<http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?>

More than 'just' peacekeeping: 60 ways in which the United Nations makes a difference

12. Prosecuting war criminals

By prosecuting and convicting war criminals, the UN tribunals established for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda have helped to expand international humanitarian and international criminal law dealing with genocide and other violations of international law. Both tribunals have contributed to restoring peace and justice in the affected countries and in the region. The International Criminal Court is an independent, permanent court that investigates and prosecutes persons accused of the most serious international crimes - genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes - if national authorities are unwilling or unable to do so. Situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Uganda, Sudan's Darfur region and the Central African Republic have been referred to the Court, which has already established itself as the centerpiece of the system of international criminal justice. UN-backed courts in Sierra Leone and Cambodia are prosecuting those responsible for serious violations of international law, including mass killings and war crimes.

The Analyst (Monrovia)

Friday, 25 October 2008

TRCs in Africa Are Soft On Perpetrators, Hard On Victims

Monrovia

A Kenyan Human Rights Expert says lessons from countries that have had truth commissions indicate that the concept and objectives are noble, but the process of implementation is often compromised by political imperatives and the need to sidestep costly reparations.

Mr. George Wachira said the experiences of Truth Commissions in Africa show them as soft on perpetrators and hard on victims. He said perpetrators tend to stay away or are granted amnesty while victim-friendly recommendations are ignored.

Mr. Wachira of NPI-Africa in Nairobi, Kenya was speaking Wednesday at the ongoing Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia three days hearings on Reparations at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in Monrovia.

He said Truth Commissions have not addressed socio-economic and legal historical distributive justice questions such as poverty, inequality and marginalization.

Mr. Wachira said all of these not only make reconciliation more difficult, but also obscure for any real success to be achieved by the TRC in the long term. He said Liberia needs to examine and learn from these lessons to avoid deferment of the stated objectives of recovering the truth, achieving justice and opening the way of reconciliation.

"The abrupt conclusions of TRCs at the end of their mandate leave many loose ends and unfinished business, especially the handling of information; follow up of incomplete cases and implementation of recommendations."

National Commission on Human Rights, he said, such as the National Commission on Human Rights should be strengthened to take the post-TRC mandate as part of the process. He said nevertheless, civil society groups must be encouraged to organize and pursue implementation of recommendations.

Mr. Wachira said to avoid the appearance of preferential treatment of perpetrators, individual reparations should be given within a reasonable time, especially if amnesty is granted to offenders at the time of the hearings. But he said alternatively, verdicts on amnesty should be delayed until after reparations are paid.

"Material reparations are affordable, more in some societies than others, but we should also not assume that the costs are inconsequential. It is important for us to explore all possible sources of funds for reparations."

When applicable, he said, the responsibility for reparations should go beyond government, particularly to the complicity of local and foreign corporations and foreign government in the violations. He however said that unfortunately, identification of possible sources does not guarantee implementation, as demonstrated in the South African experience.

"We should therefore prepare claimants for the long wait and battle, probably involving complicated international litigations," he said.

Beyond these reparations, Mr. Wachira said broader elements of rebuilding society should not be neglected. He added that these would include efforts at land and property restitution, poverty alleviation and affirmative action for victimized or neglected groups.

He said if reparations are to take the form of symbolic tokens rather than calculated restitution, victims need to be educated in advance to stem disappointment should the package turn out to be far below expectations.

The overriding objective of the hearing under the theme "Charting the Course of the TRC Reparations Agenda" which was arranged in partnership with the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation of the United States of America is to know and understand the value, cost and consequence of reparations on the TRC process, and to generate public opinion.

The hearing was expected to broaden the scope of the TRC Reparation Policy as stated in the Commission's Public Information Bulletin # 4. The objective of the hearing was to also add public opinion to what has been developed by the commission and other institutions on reparations.

Two years into the work of the TRC, the commission's Inquiry Unit (IU) in collaboration with the Program Unit has been reviewing the practical realities of addressing the reparations needs of victims, witnesses, and perpetrators of the Liberian Civil Conflict during the TRC process and in the context of the commission's thinking on reparations.

Several attempts by the TRC field workers to explain the issue of reparations to victims, witnesses, and perpetrators have led to request for more clarity. This is evidence by the number of individuals who appeal for restoration during the public hearings.

During these interactions, issues that stand out as major components for clarity are the value of the reparations in terms of damage done, the qualification of beneficiaries who are being heard during the TRC Public Hearings process over those who will not be heard due to time space. Other issues are the capacity of the Government of Liberia to pay out reparations and the future prospects of the TRC and Government to implement and or enforce transitional justice in terms of reparations.

The HFG Foundation facilitated the travel cost of some experts from Kenya, Uganda, South Africa and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to share with the commissioners and other participants their experiences on reparations.

The TRC was agreed upon in the August 2003 peace agreement and created by the TRC Act of 2005. The TRC was established to "promote national peace, security, unity and reconciliation," and at the same time make it possible to hold perpetrators accountable for gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law that occurred in Liberia between January 1979 and October 2003.