

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Tuesday, 29 January 2008

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

Local News

Appeals Motion Against Justice Thompson Dismissed / <i>Awoko</i>	Page 3
Raped Woman Cries for Help / <i>The News</i>	Page 4
“Human Rights Should Go With Responsibilities” / <i>The News</i>	Page 5
Human Rights Organisations Taken to Task / <i>The News</i>	Page 6
Charles Taylor Trials / <i>Cotton Tree News</i>	Page 7

International News

(Untitled) / <i>BBC World Service Trust</i>	Page 8
Charles Taylor to Testify in Arms Smuggling Case / <i>Reuters</i>	Page 9
Charles Taylor Evidence Sought in Arms Smuggling Case / <i>Reuters</i>	Page 10
Charles Taylor Called to Testify in Appeal of Dutch... / <i>AFP</i>	Page 11
Charles Taylor, the Fruits of Africa and... / <i>U.S. Politics Today</i>	Pages 12-13
'Historic' Importance of Taylor Trial Stressed / <i>Legalbrief Africa</i>	Page 14
UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries / <i>UNMIL</i>	Pages 15-16
Gruesome Murder Of Catholic Nuns / <i>The Analyst</i>	Pages 17-18

Awoko

Tuesday, 29 January 2008



Justice Bankole Thompson

Appeals motion against Justice Thompson dismissed

Appeals motion against Justice Thompson dismissed

By Betty Milton

The Appeals Chamber of the Special Court has dismissed the motion filed by the three accused persons of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of the voluntary dismissal of Justice Bankole Thompson, a sitting judge of the trial chamber. In their argument, the three appellants submitted that the trial chamber erred in law with regards its interpretation and application in the standard of review for refusal of application. It was also submitted by the three appellants that "the trial chamber

erred in law and fact in finding that despite findings some indicia of an appearance of bias existed, it did not merit disqualification."

In the response filed by the prosecution, it was submitted that the appellants failed to demonstrate that the trial chamber committed an error, of law, misapplied law or fact or otherwise abused or exceeded its discretion in making its findings.

The appellants further submitted that their right to be tried by an independent and impartial tribunal was integral to their right to a fair trial guaranteed under Article 17 of the statute, which also provides that the judges of the court

shall be persons of high moral character, impartiality and integrated and so a judge who sits at a trial or appeal chamber in any case in which his partiality might reasonably be doubted on any substantial ground must be disqualified so it is against this background that the appellant filed a motion of voluntarily or dismissal of Justice Bankole Thompson. In their judgment, the Appeals Judges submitted the standard of review on appeal is than when an appeal is brought on the basis of an error of law, the Appeals Chamber has the final arbiter of the law; must determine whether such an error was in fact made and

whether the error renders the decision invalid.

"The trial chamber therefore does not invalidate its decision because a reasonable and informed observer reading Justice Thompson's opinion would not apprehend bias against the appellant."

The Appeals made by the three, Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao, came as a result of the Trial Chamber's decision for the voluntarily withdrawal or disqualification of Justice Bankole Thompson from the RUF case.

Raped woman cries for help

A woman who was sexually abused by 15 rebels during the war is now crying for assistance. The middle aged woman, known as A S lives in Manowa village, Peje Bongre chiefdom in the Kaliahun district.

Explaining her ordeal to this press, she said when the rebels entered her village during the war, she was abducted. Lamenting that while in the custody of her captures, she was

sexually abused on a daily basis by 15 strong men. She said she felt serious pain and was constantly bleeding.

Cont. page 2

Raped woman cries for help

From front page

Speaking in tears, AS said abductees especially women were used as sex slaves adding that the constant abuse on her had left her with an everlasting pain adding that she could not even dream of marrying as what makes her a woman can no loner

attract any man

She said she was always rejected by men because of her appalling situation adding that her husband was killed during the war. A. S is therefore appealing to humanitarian organisations to assist her as she has no means of sustaining her life.

Note:

If you want to render assistance to her, please contact the following numbers 033-841-151, 030 201-828, or The News Newspaper 29 Rawdon Street, Freetown.

The News

Tuesday, 29 January 2008

“Human Rights should go with responsibilities”

Paramount chief Samba Bindi Hindowa V has lashed at human rights organisations in the country for failing to tell the people their responsibilities.

According to Chief Hindowa, a number of human rights groups have been going from place to

place teaching people about their rights but failed to equally tell them their responsibilities. He said

because of such sensitization most people are not doing what they are supposed to render as they

-Bo chief
always say they have their human rights.

Cont. page 2

“Human Rights should go with responsibilities”

From front page

Chief Hindowa said they as traditional leaders respect human rights but those rights should go with responsibilities. “People are not paying taxes or doing community work because of human

rights” Chief Hindowa said adding “we respect human rights but they should go with responsibilities. He said people should also know that even though their rights should be respected, they too should reciprocate by

rendering services to their communities.

Chief Hindowa continued by saying that “if those teaching people about their rights are failing to tell them their responsibilities then they are not doing any good job.

The News

Tuesday, 29 January 2008

Editorial

Human rights organisations taken to task

The proliferation of human rights organisations in the country has become a worrying factor. This is because some of them are not making any positive impact in Sierra Leone.

Last week P.C. Samba Bindi Hindowa of Bo district lashed at human rights organisations stating that they are not doing their work at all. According to the chief a lot of human rights organisations have visited his chiefdom over the years but the unfortunate thing is that they only taught people about their rights and did nothing to tell them their responsibilities.

The Chief said this has caused a lot of problems as young people are always talking about human rights forgetting that those rights go with responsibilities.

Anyway Motuba wants these organisations to equally teach people their responsibilities when embarking on sensitization programmes next time. Many thanks to Chief Hindowa for reminding them!

Cotton Tree News

Thursday, 24 January 2008

Charles Taylor trials

Written by Ndeamoh Mansaray

Thursday, 24 January 2008

Abu Keita a Liberian witness Wednesday testified in the Charles Taylor trial in The Hague. The former member of the Armed Forces of Liberia said Charles Taylor sent him to work with the RUF in Sierra Leone. He was imprisoned after a fight broke out in Camp Johnson road in Liberia. On his release from prison his boss was Mosquito. He said RUF mined and farmed in the areas they controlled. He said civilians used to work on the farms in which they planted cocoa, and coffee. He said people caught with diamonds were hung on a tree and beaten to death. The witness said the RUF made transactions with different nationals for the sale of their diamonds, cocoa and coffee. The trial continues

BBC World Service Trust

Tuesday, 28 January 2008

CHEESEMAN: As the trial of Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor progresses in The Hague, three of the protected witnesses had already waved their protection and testified in open court.

But it appears the threat on the family of Vamuyan Sheriff, the first protected witness to wave his protection, is causing other protected witnesses to have a change of mind. In the open court session of the court, the parties are all present, and the accused is allowed to confront his accusers. But what happens in the closed session? Solomon Moriba is the Press Outreach Officer is the Special Court in The Hague. I asked what's him what happens in the closed session?

MORIBA: Well, the only difference with the closed session is members of the public and press are not really able to follow the proceedings as has been the case when the trial started in the first few weeks when we had witnesses testifying in the open. We also had the opportunity to stream the proceedings live on the internet and journalists moved into the public gallery and listened to what was going on. In this case we have witness who feel that their security is threatened by testifying in the open and would really want to be in closed session, and the Prosecution has made an application for that and it's been the case at the moment

CHEESEMAN: Information from the closed session – will it be shared with the public in any way or in any form?

MORIBA: Well normally, according to international standards of criminal procedures, testimony given in closed session cannot be made public, cannot be made available to the press as well.

CHEESEMAN: How many of these closed sessions can we expect?

MORIBA: Well, it is very difficult to say how many people will testify in closed session. At times we've seen a situation where certain witnesses can testifying in the open, and at some stage of the testimony either of the parties can apply for the session to be closed for certain reasons because of the disclosure, really. So it would be very difficult at this stage to say 'this witness will testify in the open' or 'this will testify in closed session.' According to the Prosecution, most of their witnesses are linkage witnesses – people who according to them were close allies to Mr. Taylor, the accused. And for such people, the Prosecution would want to put in place all the measures that would really have them testify and not get themselves in danger. One thing we should be aware of is, according to what the Prosecution said, all these people are not really obliged to give evidence in this trial, so if they feel their lives are in danger they can even refuse to testify, according to what we were told recently.

CHEESEMAN: Now what do you say too about people back home in Freetown and in Monrovia who do not understand the legal procedure taking place here and saying the Court is trying to manipulate the trial through this closed session?

MORIBA: Well this is where we are constrained, especially in Public Information, because we would very much want people out there to know what is going on, to follow the day-to-day proceedings, but at this stage it's very difficult for that to happen. However, they should know that all the parties are represented. The Defence is represented in their full force. Of course the Prosecution, and the accused himself is in court and has the right to confront those who are giving evidence against him.

CHEESEMAN: Is there anything else you would like to share with the people of Sierra Leone and the people of Liberia that I didn't touch?

MORIBA: Well I would just want everybody to be rest assured that this trial will be conducted in a free and fair manner and according to international standards, and as best as possible we would want to keep our people very well informed about the happenings here. And we will continue to ensure that there is information flow at every level of this trial, even with the closed session

Reuters

Monday, 28 January 2008

Charles Taylor to testify in arms smuggling case

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - Former Liberian President Charles Taylor will testify in the appeals case of a Dutch businessman convicted in 2006 of arms smuggling to Liberia, a spokeswoman for the Dutch public prosecutor said on Monday.

Taylor, himself on trial in The Hague on war crimes charges relating to the conflict in Sierra Leone, will give evidence on February 8 to a judge investigating the case of Guus Kouwenhoven in a closed session, the spokeswoman added.



A Dutch court sentenced Kouwenhoven, a business associate of Taylor, to eight years in prison for arms smuggling but acquitted him of war crimes due to lack of evidence.

Both the prosecution and defence are appealing the ruling, with defence lawyers calling Taylor as a witness.

Known as "Big Gus" in Liberia, the former executive of the Oriental Timber Corp. and the Royal Timber Co. was accused of selling arms in exchange for timber concessions in Liberia, in direct violation of a U.N. weapons embargo.

The embargo came into force during Liberia's civil war that spilled across borders, killed a quarter of a million people and spawned a generation of

Taylor's trial by a U.N. court on charges of orchestrating atrocities in Sierra Leone began in January.

His trial is being held in The Hague after fears it could stoke unrest in Sierra Leone.

Reuters

Monday, 28 January 2008

Charles Taylor evidence sought in arms smuggling case

AMSTERDAM, Jan 28 (Reuters) - Lawyers have called former Liberian President Charles Taylor to testify in the appeals case of a businessman convicted in 2006 of arms smuggling to Liberia, a spokeswoman for the Dutch public prosecutor said on Monday.

Taylor, himself on trial in The Hague on war crimes charges relating to the conflict in Sierra Leone, will give evidence on Feb. 8 to a judge investigating the case of Dutchman Guus Kouwenhoven in a closed session, the spokeswoman added.

A spokesman for the U.N. Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is conducting Taylor's trial, said a final decision had not yet been made on whether to allow Taylor to participate.

A Dutch court sentenced Kouwenhoven, a business associate of Taylor, to eight years in prison for arms smuggling but acquitted him of war crimes because of lack of evidence.

Both the prosecution and the defence are appealing the ruling, and defence lawyers are calling Taylor as a witness.

Known as "Big Gus" in Liberia, the former executive of the Oriental Timber Corp. and the Royal Timber Co. was accused of selling arms in exchange for timber concessions in Liberia, in direct violation of a U.N. weapons embargo.

The embargo came into force during Liberia's civil war, which spilled across borders, killed a quarter of a million people and spawned a generation of child soldiers.

Taylor's trial by a U.N. court on charges of orchestrating atrocities in Sierra Leone began in January.

His trial is being held in The Hague after fears it could stoke unrest in west Africa. (Reporting by Alexandra Hudson; Editing by Tim Pearce)

Agence France-Presse

Monday, 28 January 2008

Charles Taylor called to testify in appeal of Dutch 'blood timber' trader

THE HAGUE, Jan 28, 2008 (AFP) - A Dutch appeals court on Monday set a date for former Liberian president Charles Taylor to testify in the appeal of a Dutch timber trader convicted for selling arms to Taylor, a prosecution spokeswoman told AFP.

"The court said Monday that the cross examination has been planned for February 8 by a Dutch examining magistrate in closed session," prosecution spokeswoman Thea Tjeerdema said.

Guus Kouwenhoven, the former president of the Oriental Timber Corporation, was sentenced in June 2006 to eight years in jail for supplying AK-47 machine guns and anti-tank weapons to Taylor between 2000 and 2003, in violation of an UN arms embargo against Liberia. According to the court he exchanged the weapons for lucrative timber concessions. Kouwenhoven has always maintained he is innocent.

Kouwenhoven's lawyers called repeatedly for Taylor to testify during the initial trial but the former Liberian strongman was in prison in Sierra Leone at the time and requests to interview him were denied.

By a twist of faith Taylor is now being held in a prison in The Hague after his trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone was moved to the Netherlands amid fears that Taylor's presence in Freetown could threaten security in the region.

It is not known if Taylor has agreed to testify in the case or if the Special Court for Sierra Leone will allow him to. Both Taylor's defence team and the court could not be reached for comment.

In March Kouwenhoven, a Dutch businessman in his sixties, was released pending his appeals case because judges said the appeals procedure was taking too long. Monday was the first day of hearings in the appeals case in The Hague.

Taylor is currently also on trial at a nearby international court where the Special Court for Sierra Leone has rented a courtroom. The former Liberian president faces 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for allegedly controlling armed militias in neighbouring Sierra Leone that murdered, raped and tortured civilians during the country's 1991-2001 civil war.

U.S. Politics Today

Monday, 28 January 2008

<http://uspolitics.einnews.com/article.php?nid=408346>

Charles Taylor, the Fruits of Africa and the Bad News Media

By Tracy Dove, Ph.D

Editor, The Russia News Service

The Hague has been a busy place so far this century, attracting journalists, politicians and celebrity criminals to spend some quality time facing off on opposite sides of the aisle. Currently the only guest is Liberia's Charles Taylor, but with Milosevic's room cleaned and redecorated, some new arrivals from Serbia are expected soon in exchange for fast-track membership in the EU. But the international media is unimpressed with Taylor- who lacks the antics and brutality of Milosevic- and it took some saber rattling back in Monrovia to return Taylor to the headlines. Witnesses for the prosecution were complaining that Taylor's minions back in Monrovia were harassing their families, and so the case in Holland is taking new proportions, although for all the wrong reasons. For the most part, Liberia itself is off the radar screen thanks to the irony that once the violent images stop and the rebuilding begins, the cameras usually get turned off and pens clicked closed.

Managing the healing process in Liberia right now is a remarkable woman who deserves the media attention more than the warmed-over testimony of sadism during the Taylor regime. The President of Liberia since 2005 has been Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who ran in fair elections and has done an admirable job in sewing the pieces back together. Upon taking office she implemented a Truth and Reconciliation Committee on Mandela's model in South African model and was recently feted in the White House when she was awarded the Medal of Freedom. She is an economist by education and a World Bank professional by experience. A mother and grandmother, she is the maternal backbone in an otherwise broken country that respectfully refers to her as the "iron lady". This doesn't translate into video as well as images of gun-toting children do, and ethnic reconciliation is intrinsically hard to film- hence the silence.

Liberia's history is one of the oddest on the continent but it still shares many commonalties with the other post-colonial nations of Africa. If we fast-forward to the 1980's we see Liberian government suffering from tribal domination of one group over the other. Ironically, the faction in charge in Monrovia since the 19th century was the same caste of American slaves who had escaped bondage in the United States and went back to Africa in search of freedom. From this class of freed slaves Liberia had always drawn its governing elite, but by 1980, one master sergeant in the Liberian army had had enough.

Samuel Doe led a coup in Monrovia and killed the president. The United States didn't miss a beat in responding- sending \$500 million to Doe with instructions to throw the Soviet Union out of the country and let America fly its aircraft over the country to spy on Libya's Muammar Qaddafi. The regime that Doe led was "socialist" on paper but mainly oppressive in nature. He legally lost the 1984 presidential elections and then had them annulled and recounted in his favor. After he restored himself in power, the country disintegrated into an ugly civil war along ethnic lines that made the conflict all but incomprehensible to the western world.

Doe's government turned out to be an historical blip; after the capital changed hands a few times in the late 1980's, the ethnic Americo-Liberian faction made a comeback at the military command of Charles Taylor. In 1990, they killed Doe and set up their own repressive regime that went on to commit the atrocities of which Taylor is now accused and waiting trial on in the Hague. Among others the list of crimes includes crimes against humanity, war crimes, conscripting child soldiers and sexual slavery.

One of the most effective foreign policy moves of the Nigerian government next door was to intervene in 2003. Within a few months, Taylor's forces were essentially defeated, but the Nigerians prevented death to the finish by offering Taylor exile in their country. Strangely enough, the international community was conspicuously silent at this prospect, since it was assumed that justice would be done along the lines of the Milosevic trial. Taylor put an end to speculation surrounding his fate when he was caught trying to return to fight in Liberia in 2006. Luckily he was caught and sent to The Hague, leaving the Liberians to their own means to pick up the pieces after 23 years of war.

In 2005, Liberians stood in line peacefully to vote for a new government. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf won the election, and since then Liberia has prospered under a leader who represents the best of what the Liberian people have to offer. She has been successful in creating an economically-healthy Liberia, although tribal and post-civil war tensions divide the country. She has been exceptionally welcoming of the Nigerians; she has worked hard at attracting investment from the region's businessmen, and the Chinese are currently negotiating the construction of a factory outside Monrovia.

All that Charles Taylor has to offer now is another case study for future students of international law, but his perverted cause does return to make an occasional headline. Last week it was Taylor's henchmen back in Liberia intimidating witness' families. Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf's efforts unfortunately don't qualify as news, but her conviction to rebuild the country have been successful in at least preventing the return of ugly headlines from Liberia.

Tracy Dove, editor of The Russia News Service, is a Professor of History and the Department Chair of International Relations at the University of New York in Prague.

Legalbrief Africa

Monday, 28 January 2008

'Historic' importance of Taylor trial stressed

Published in: Legalbrief Africa

Date: Mon 28 January 2008

Category: Sierra Leone

Issue No: 265

The Chief Prosecutor of the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone has stressed the 'historic' importance of the war crimes trial of former Liberian leader Charles Taylor in signalling an end to impunity, even at the highest level.

According to a **UN News Service** report, Taylor is facing 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law – including mass murder, mutilations, rape, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers – for his role in the decade-long civil war that engulfed Sierra Leone, which borders Liberia. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges against him. Chief Prosecutor Stephen Rapp said the arrest and transfer of Taylor 'after he had been permitted to go into what was anticipated to be a safe and comfortable exile was precedent shattering.'

[Full UN News Service report](#)

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

**UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries
28 January 2008**

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

Newspaper Summary

SRSB Re-echoes Commitment to punishing misconduct of SEA involving UNMIL Personnel

(The Star, Public Agenda, Liberian Express, The Inquirer, Daily Observer)

- The new Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSB), Ellen Margrethe Løj has emphasized that staff of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), be they civilian, police or military personnel, must observe the highest standard of behavior in line with the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. Ms. Løj made the remarks during her first weekly press briefing with the Liberian media.
- She stressed that zero tolerance meant "zero acceptance and zero impunity". Touching on rape and gender-based violence, Ms. Løj said the most commonly committed crime in the country today is rape. She warned that violence against women and girls, in particular minors was wrong.
- She admitted that a lot of progress has so far been made in Liberia's drive for the attainment of sustainable peace but said there still remains a lot to be done. "We need to pay attention to development and the provision of livelihood opportunities plus the empowerment of women", she said.

President Sirleaf Addresses National Legislature Today

(The Analyst, Liberian Express)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will today, Monday, deliver her 3rd "Annual Message" to the National Legislature. The Constitution requires that the President on the fourth working Monday in January each year present the administration's legislative program for the ensuing session and report on the current state of the nation.
- Legislative sources said highlights of the President's address will touch on her government's projected deliverables over the last year, her stance on tackling corruption and advances in the security sector reform in light of UNMIL's planned drawdown schedule among other things.
- Unlike last year, the President will deliver her State of the Nation Address to a united Legislature at the refurbished Joint Chamber of the National Legislature. Last year, the message was overshadowed by crisis in the Legislature over the venue and the removal of former House Speaker Edwin Snowe.

President Sirleaf tours operation sites of two new companies

(The Inquirer, Daily Observer, Plain Truth, Heritage, The Informer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has toured facilities and operation sites of two new companies operating in the country. The President toured the facilities of Mittal Steel and the Buchanan Renewable Energies, based in Grand Bassa County.
- An Executive Mansion release quotes Mittal Steel's Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Joe Matthews as saying that the company's operations in Liberia are on schedule with the first consignment of iron ore slated to be shipped by April next year.

Radio Summary

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

President Johnson Sirleaf Delivers Annual Message Today

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf will today, Monday, deliver her 3rd “Annual Message” to the National Legislature.
- The Constitution requires that the President on the fourth working Monday in January each year present the administration’s legislative program for the ensuing session and report on the current state of the Nation.
- Legislative sources say highlights of the President address will touch on her government’s projected deliverables over the last year, her stance on tackling corruption and advances in the security sector reform in the light of UNMIL’s planned drawdown schedule among other things.
- Unlike last year, the President will deliver her “State of the Nation” Address to a united Legislature at the refurbished Joint Chamber of the National Legislature.
- Last year the message was overshadowed by crisis in the Legislature over the venue and the impeachment of former House Speaker Edwin Snowe.

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

World Bank President Zoëlick Visits Liberia Tomorrow

- The President of the World Bank (WB) Group, Mr. Robert Zoëlick, begins a two-day visit to Liberia on Tuesday, 29th January as part of his first official week long visit to Africa.
- During his visit to Liberia, Mr. Zoëlick will meet Liberia’s President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to discuss recent progress in World Bank program implementation and possible improvements.
- The follows the December 2007 agreement on Liberia’s arrears clearance and the continued urgent need for capacity building will also be discussed.
- Mr. Zoëlick is also expected to meet with the leadership of the national legislature including the president pro tempore of the Senate, the speaker of the House of Representatives and members of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank. The group will be a mix of government and opposition party representatives.

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

Final Arguments in Ongoing Treason Trial Today

- Final arguments in the treason trial involving former Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) General Charles Julu and Col. Andrew Dorbor are expected to begin today Monday at the Criminal Court “A”.
- Both Defense and Prosecution lawyers have agreed to abandon the torture allegation by defendant Dorbor after a series of consultations to proceed with the treason charge.
- The trial was stalled for nearly two weeks following several attempts by “Criminal Court “A” to ascertain whether or not he had been tortured while at the Nation Security Agency (NSA).
- Dorbor’s alleged that while in detention at the National Security Agency (NSA) he was severely tortured leaving him impotent.
- Defendants Julu and Dorbor are charged with allegedly plotting to overthrow the government something they have since denied.

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

Former Supreme Court Justice Wants Judges Call Pre-trial Conference

- Speaking at a one-day roundtable conference for circuit court judges, former Associate Justice, Counselor Wilkins Wright call on Judges to make use of pre-trial conferences in cases before them.
- Counselor Wright said if these conferences are conducted this will enable the court to avoid many of the legal hurdles and reduce the number of cases on the docket.
- The one-day roundtable was organized by the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL) and focused on gender sentencing under the amended rape law and judges own experiences during trial.

The Analyst (Liberia)

Thursday, 24 January 2008

Gruesome Murder Of Catholic Nuns

Witness says NPFL rebels used spears & sticks to killed them
Christopher 'Gen. Mosquito' Vambo led the squad

Five Catholic nuns that were rendering humanitarian services were victims of the senseless civil crises. The impact of their labors was widely acknowledged but like other unfortunate citizens without firepower, theirs was the unfortunate fate of falling victims to death beyond the ordinary.

But following those deaths, have been enough upheavals in the country, with many individuals pointing accusing fingers at the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), whose leader, Charles Taylor, dismissed the claims as none of their doings, using the same discursive arguments of casuistry to exonerate the NPFL.

Almost 16 years after their gruesome killing, what appears to be the truth as to how and who killed the Catholic Nuns has emerged with apparent fascinating precision.

The Analyst's J. Edwood Dennis was at the TRC public hearings yesterday and compiled this report.

It is nearly 16 years since five Catholic Nuns rendering humanitarian services to thousands of Liberians were raped and murdered.

Sr. Barbara Ann Muttra, ASC, Sr. Shirley Kolmer, ASC, Sr. Joel Kolmer, ASC, Sr. Agnes Mueller, ASC and Kachleen McGuire, ASC, lost their lives in the 1992 "Operation Octopus" launched by disbanded National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).

Following their gruesome murder the leader of the defunct NPFL Charles Taylor dismissed the claims that his men who had then besieged Monrovia committed the act.

He blamed the incident on the ECOMOG peacekeeping forces that were helping the Liberian government to repel the Operation Octopus attack.

But a man who confessed of being a former general of the rebel faction, Morris Padmore, has told the TRC hearing yesterday that NPFL rebel forces, under the command and supervision of Gen. Christopher "Mosquito" Vambo were responsible for the killing of the Catholic nuns in the Barnerville Junction.

The former NPFL General Morris Padmore alias 'Vision 38', said upon capturing Barnesville junction in the Garnerville area, all women were rounded up within that terrain by the first batch of NPFL fighters.

He said the fighters conducted house to house searches following a period of fierce fighting between the NPFL and ECOMOG aided by the defunct 'Black Berets', a unit of the Armed Forces of Liberia trained and constituted during the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) presided over by Dr. Amos Sawyer.

The NPFL ex-fighter, who claimed he was recruited in Kakata by the NPFL at the tender age of 15 in 1990 Morris Padmore disclosed that the NPFL fighters who arrived in the Barnerville, Gardnersville Junction area brought three white women, who were without clothes to the rest of the fighters.

He told the TRC public hearings saying the three white women were ordered to be raped on the command of Gen. Christopher “Mosquito” Vambo, who was in charge of the octopus operation in 1992.

Those martyrs, according to Morris Padmore, were later killed with many fighters, thrusting sticks and other objects into their private parts and stomachs.

When quizzed by the commissioners on what was the women dress code of the women, Gen. ‘Vision 38’ said the women were brought to his position naked as a result he could not identify them by any dress code.

It can be recalled, that in the month of October 1992 five nuns were trapped in the NPFL control area of Bardnerville Junction in the Gardnerville area during the ‘octopus’ on Monrovia. The operation began in Johnsonville, Diggsville and Bardnersville and Gardnersville.

During the incident, the Catholic Church of Liberia through Archbishop Michael K. Francis complained the killing of the nuns to the international community stating that five Catholic nuns had been inevitably trapped in that area that was under the control of NPFL forces for about two months.

Padmore said the three white women were rounded up from a white building but in the same area but did not provide the reason why they were arrested and killed by the NPFL forces.

He also claimed that he contributed to Carter camp and Duport road massacres as a commander of a battalion of 300 men in the Marine Forces of the NPFL, and stated that he physically participated in a massacre of which there was no survivor in Division 11 of the Firestone Plantation company.

Another witness, Joseph Kamara, 48, told the hearings that he lost his left eye as a result of an ECOMOG soldier only identified as CPC. Thompson of the Sierra Leonean contingent at the time.

Kamara said about six ECOMOG soldiers from the Sierra Leone contingent went at his Soul Clinic residence on the 5th of April 1995 and demanded him to provide a tape which he had no knowledge of.

He indicated that following a moment of intensive pressure from the ECOMOG soldiers, CPC Thompson struck his (Kamara’s) left eye with the trunk of the gun thereby leaving him disabled, with a pain he now bears throughout his life.

For her part, Sarah Quaye blamed fighters of INPFL for her being blind and the death for the deaths of her husband and son.

Morris who claims to be a former ATU officer stated that it was former President Charles Taylor who invited Sam ‘Mosquito’ Bockarie along with 600 fighters of the RUF from Sierra Leone to stay in Liberia.

He said Gen. Sam ‘Mosquito’ Bockarie and his 600 RUF fighters were brought to Liberia because of internal conflict that existed between Bockarie and Isa Sesay.

The fighters of RUF, he indicated that while in Liberia, they were stationed at the Gbatala base and were providing VIP protection to Charles Taylor in the Anti Terrorist Unit (ATU).

Besides, Gen. Padmore, who claimed to be converted to Christianity through the radio program of Pastor Ivor Wilson, told the hearings that he could provide any information on the causes of the death of Sam Bockarie. He said that since then he began seeking refuge in Ghana following Bockarie’s death.