

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



Aerial view of some parts of Murray Town.

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

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

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INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT TURNS TEN

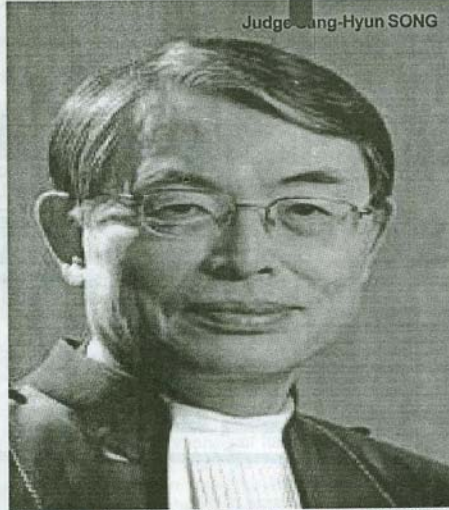
Story by Judge Sang-Hyun SONG, President of the International Criminal Court

On 1 July 2002, the first three staff members of the International Criminal Court (ICC) entered the ICC's building in The Hague, the Netherlands. On that day, the ICC's founding treaty, called the Rome Statute, entered into force. Ten years after that modest beginning, the ICC has turned into a major international institution, securing justice for victims when it cannot be delivered at the national level. 121 States have ratified the Rome Statute, and another 32 countries have signed it, indicating their intention to join the treaty.

The ICC is working in seven situation countries, and monitoring developments in seven others on several continents, turning the principles of the Rome Statute into reality. In March this year, the ICC delivered its first judgement in a case concerning the use of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Six cases are in the trial stage and nine others in pre-trial phase. These proceedings are testimony that impunity for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity is no longer tolerated by the international community.

The victims are a vital part of the ICC's work. Thousands of victims have been given a voice in the arena of international justice, where their rights are upheld and their suffering recognised. The ICC's proceedings have emphasized, on a global scale, that children cannot be used as soldiers during hostilities, that sexual violence as a weapon of war is an unacceptable international crime, and that those in positions of power must safeguard the fundamental human rights of people caught in conflict.

Support for international justice is growing around the world every year. Everywhere, people want peace, justice, rule of law and respect for human dignity. The ICC represents the voluntary gathering of nations in a community of values and aspirations for a more secure future for children, women and men around the world.



Judge Sang-Hyun SONG

However, rather than rejoice over our accomplishments, it is far more important that we recognise the shortcomings and the obstacles that remain, and redouble our commitment to further strengthen the Rome Statute system in order to move closer to our ultimate goals. If we act wisely, pulling our strength together, we can prevent terrible suffering before it takes place.

The ICC is the centrepiece of the evolving system of international criminal justice, but the most important aspect of the fight against impunity takes place in each country, society and community around the globe. Domestic justice systems must be strong enough to be able to act as the primary deterrent worldwide, while the ICC is a "court of

last resort", a safety net that ensures accountability when the national jurisdictions are unable for whatever reason to carry out this task. In a spirit of solidarity, the States Parties to the Rome Statute have expressed their commitment to work together to ensure that this principle of complementarity is effective.

Another crucial aspect of the ICC is the cooperation of states and the enforcement of the Court's orders. The ICC has no police force of its own. The Court relies entirely on states to execute our arrest warrants, to produce evidence, to facilitate the appearance of witnesses and so on. Unfortunately, several suspects subject to ICC arrest warrants have successfully evaded arrest for many years. Political will and international cooperation is crucial in order to bring these persons to justice.

While we work together to prevent impunity and to ensure accountability, we must remember that international criminal justice is one piece in a bigger framework for protecting human rights, suppressing conflict and working for peace and stabilisation. It is vital that other essential elements of conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery are present where needed, alongside international justice mechanisms. Only when accompanied by education, democracy and development, can justice truly help prevent the crimes of the future.

Let us cherish our spirit of solidarity as we look forward to the ICC's next decade, celebrating our achievements and acknowledging the challenges that remain ahead. We must be united in our resolve to defeat impunity and the lawlessness, brutality and disdain for human dignity that it represents. At this crucial juncture, we must continue the fight against impunity with renewed resolve and increased vigour. We cannot rest until every victim has received justice.

On the 10th anniversary of the International Criminal Court, I call on states, organisations and people everywhere to join this shared mission of humanity.

As Charles Taylor is found guilty of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against “Has international justice has b

Yes



Alpha Sesay is a human rights lawyer from Sierra Leone and was the monitor of the Charles Taylor trial for the Open Society Justice Initiative where he is the legal officer

Charles Taylor's journey from the Liberian presidency to convicted international war criminal was certainly dramatic. As the prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) unsealed an indictment against him in June 2003, with rebel forces closing in on the Liberian capital Monrovia, Taylor stepped down and sought asylum in Nigeria. Three years later, he was taken into custody of the SCSL where in April 2006 he entered a plea of "most definitely...not guilty". On April 26, 2012, the three-judge panel conclusively found otherwise.

Throughout Taylor maintained his innocence, telling judges that his only involvement in Sierra Leone was to help bring peace. However, the judges called Taylor a "two-headed Janus" who publicly proclaimed that he was pursuing peace in Sierra Leone while secretly arming rebels.

But has international justice been served with Taylor's conviction? For many victims of rape, amputations and the families of those killed by rebels in Sierra Leone, the answer is a resounding 'yes'. For years, victims have waited patiently; hundreds followed the process closely from Sierra Leone while more than 50 travelled to The Hague and shared stories of their experiences.

In December 2010, a victim from the capital Freetown told me what the process meant: "We feel like our cries are being heard... We feel like there are people who did not suffer like us but who want to make sure that those responsible for our sufferings are made to answer for their acts and that the same thing does not happen again."

For these survivors, this is the purpose of international justice—ensuring that there is redress for crimes committed against them. That is exactly what the Taylor judgement symbolises.

It is also significant that Taylor is the first former head of state whose trial has been completed since the Nuremberg trials after World War II. This is an important step towards ensuring respect for the rule of law and reinforces that a leadership position is no excuse for committing exceptionally serious crimes. Another argument, strongly articulated by Taylor, is that his trial is selective and politically motivated. However nobody can contest the magnitude of crimes committed during Sierra Leone's 11-year conflict.

While there is a strong case that several other individuals should have been charged, or that other senior officials in other countries have benefited from impunity, it is disingenuous to say that the SCSL charges are frivolous. The even application of international justice should be achieved by expanding the reach of accountability to all suspected perpetrators, not shrinking it.

True, the prosecution's theory that Taylor was in control of or was involved in a joint criminal enterprise with rebels in Sierra Leone failed, but that does not alter the significance of his conviction for all the crimes he was charged with. The judges noted that Taylor's support for the rebels was "critical" and "indispensable" to their activities in Sierra Leone and that he helped plan rebel attacks which were accompanied by atrocious crimes.

Indeed for many victims, this trial has never been about convicting Taylor. Rather, many were concerned about setting an accountability precedent against a former head of state. These victims gained satisfaction and some healing the moment Taylor was apprehended and made to answer before a credible judicial mechanism, in the presence of victims of atrocities.

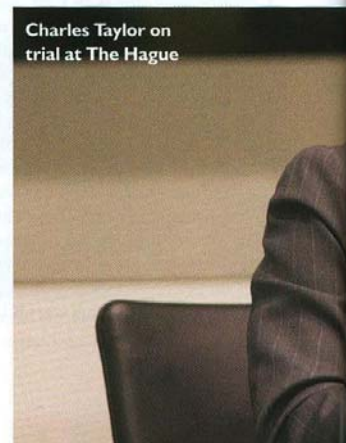
While the trial has not been perfect, it has been rated fair and credible by international standards. Such a process, irrespective of whether there was a finding of guilt or innocence, has served the purpose of international justice. The trial has faced its own share of challenges and it is noteworthy that on occasions when Taylor's fair trial rights were questioned, the judges ensured they were addressed.

At the opening of his trial in June 2007, when Taylor protested a lack of resources to conduct his defence, the judges swiftly addressed his concerns. His defence team would become the most funded in the history of all international and hybrid tribunals. When trial chamber judges refused his final trial brief in early 2011, the decision almost dented the credibility of the process. But the court's appeals chamber was swift to overturn this decision, ordering the trial judges to accept Taylor's final brief and allow his defence to make closing submissions. Taylor was given sufficient time to conduct his defence, including testifying as a witness for about seven months. He would go on to present 21 more witnesses.

Criminal trials never offer sufficient reprieve to victims of atrocities but they are an important step in ensuring accountability. They provide a measure of retribution and satisfaction for victims, serve as a deterrent and contribute towards the consolidation of peace in conflict situations. It is significant that during the entire trial, no incidents remotely linked with the case have been reported in the West African region. Taylor's trial and conviction constitute a significant milestone in the quest for justice.

What victims also want is an effective reparations regime, and lower-level perpetrators held to account. The government of Sierra Leone must therefore complement Taylor's conviction with reparations for victims as ordered by the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It should also consider domestic prosecutions for wartime atrocities despite the legally dubious Lome Amnesty for ex-combatants. The Taylor decision has shown what is possible in international justice, but its establishment in Sierra Leone should not end here.

Charles Taylor on trial at The Hague



ntst humanity, *Focus on Africa* magazine asks:

been served by the verdict?"

No



Chris Mahony is the deputy director for the New Zealand Centre for Human Rights Law, Policy and Practice and a consultant for the Institute for Security Studies in South Africa. He is the author of *The Justice Sector Afterthought: Witness Protection in Africa*

Most official examinations of the Special Court for Sierra Leone begin with a note about a June 2000 letter from Sierra Leone's government to the United Nations requesting the establishment of a special court.

This ignores the most important variable for the court's creation – a change in American foreign policy. A week before the letter was sent, a Republican senator, Judd Gregg, met the United States ambassador to the UN, Richard Holbrooke, in Washington. The issue was American policy towards Sierra Leone and Liberia. The Clinton administration at the time supported Charles Taylor, a policy led by the civil rights activist Jesse Jackson and Congressional Black Caucus leader Donald Payne.

The problem was that this policy opposed that of the United Kingdom, which supported Sierra Leone's then-President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah (who was fighting against rebels backed by Taylor). The British had coordinated with Gregg to change American policy in favour of Kabbah. Gregg, chair of the senate foreign affairs appropriations committee, duly blocked payments of \$1.7 billion the US owed the UN until the Clinton administration changed position.

At the meeting with Gregg, Holbrooke agreed to a four-pronged approach to remove Taylor from Liberia. The American government would finance an armed insurgency against Taylor, impose sanctions to limit his capacity to fight back, sponsor a war crimes court to indict and politically stigmatise Taylor and underwrite Liberian political opposition. Gregg then released the funds to the UN and Kabbah, in consultation with the British government, wrote to the UN.

The US also appointed a prosecutor for the Court, David Crane, a US defence department official who told me in an interview that he had a clear idea of who he was going to indict, even before setting foot in Sierra Leone.

He also said that the late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré were just as culpable for supporting the Revolutionary United Front rebels in Sierra Leone as Taylor.

Washington had warned him that the court would be shut down were he to indict Gaddafi, then coming in from 'the cold', or Compaoré, an ally in the US-led 'war on terror'.

In contrast, pursuit of Taylor was encouraged, and the US provided extra money to the prosecution to furnish material support and witness protection, even though the court already had an independent witness protection programme. A perceived prosecution use of resources to induce favourable witness testimony provides a less credible base of evidence

than at other international courts and tribunals.

The prosecution also resisted going after Kabbah who supported the pro-government Civil Defence Forces (CDF) that also committed crimes. The court, which was located in Sierra Leone, required Kabbah's cooperation to function. The prosecutor subsequently indicted Samuel Hinga Norman – Kabbah's field commander and potential party opponent. The Court's statute also specifically precluded prosecution of British support for the CDF.

Despite the creation of the court as a political instrument, and the selective nature of Taylor's prosecution, should we accept that international criminal justice is at its infancy? We need to start somewhere, so they say. The Taylor verdict is indeed important, because he has primarily been found guilty of 'aiding and abetting' – providing material support to the rebels while he knew or ought to have known that his support would enable crimes.

However, 'aiding and abetting' is a low threshold. The verdict suggests Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Rwandan President Paul Kagame should also be investigated for crimes committed by forces they allegedly support in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It might also suggest that American officials supporting rebels against Taylor also aided and abetted war crimes.

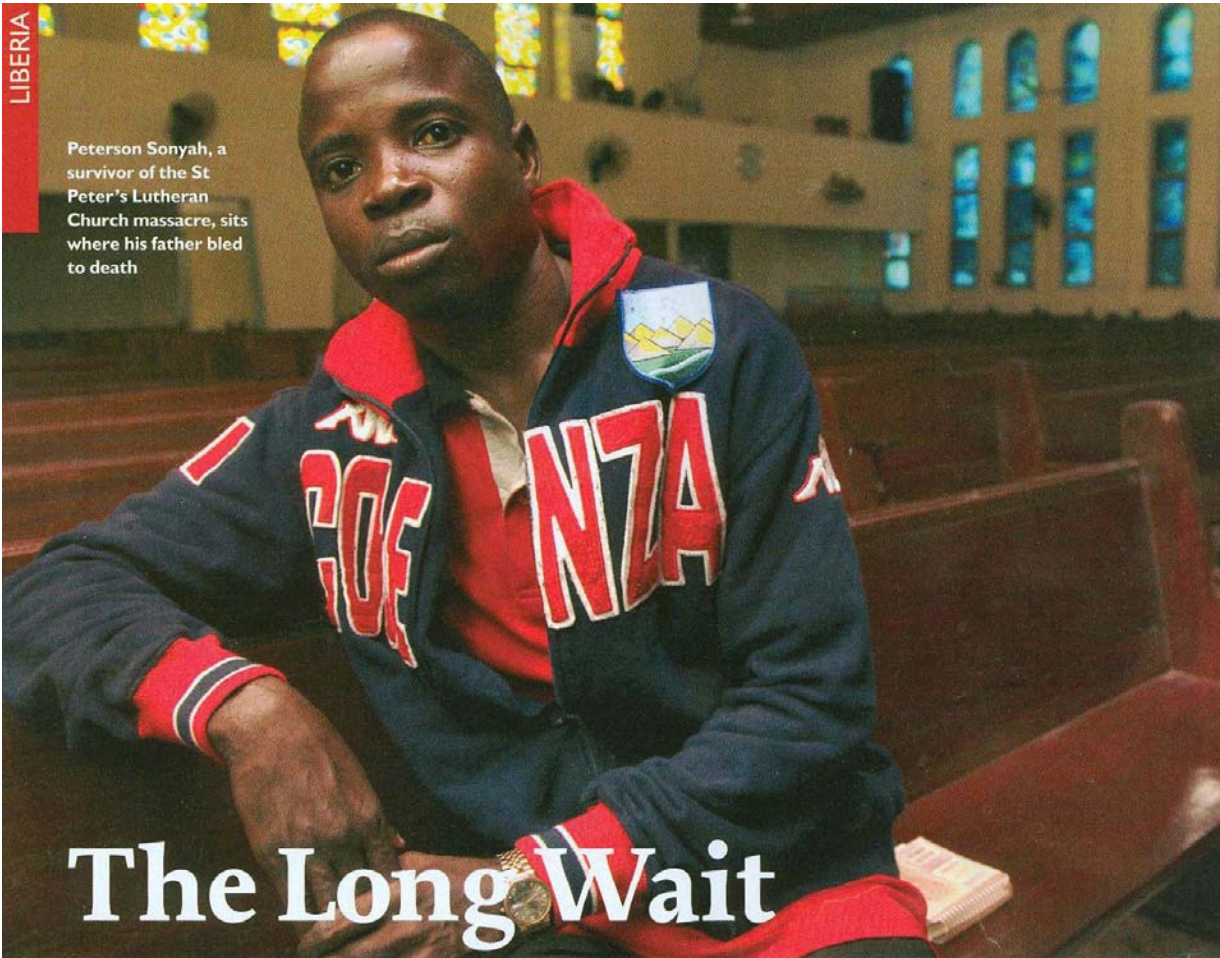
As it stands, this question is merely rhetorical: the International Criminal Court (ICC) has jurisdiction over Museveni and Kagame, but the US rejects any such assertion of jurisdiction over its own nationals. As for Museveni, he has been able to direct ICC investigations in his own country toward Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army and away from his own forces.

The reality is that the whole international criminal justice project is in its infancy. At this stage only the weak can be prosecuted as the project, incrementally, consolidates. To push too hard would be to diminish state cooperation in allowing investigations, access to witnesses and information and apprehension of accused. It would halt progress. We are seeing signs of this in African Union decisions not to cooperate with investigations and the apprehension of suspects relating to Sudan and Kenya. To this end, one could argue, the Taylor verdict serves international justice – but incrementally.

However, there remains an alternative: the domestic exercise of 'universal jurisdiction'. That is where domestic justice systems indict individuals on their territory for crimes committed elsewhere. This system, as evidenced by the German indictment of US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, and the arrest of the former Chilean leader Augusto Pinochet in London is less subordinate to politics. However the ICC – not domestic courts – now occupies the mainstream public consciousness for potential prosecution of international crimes, and this diminishes pressure on states to establish and enforce universal jurisdiction. The Taylor verdict further entrenches this perception, and thus does little to serve international justice.



EVERETT JAN DANIELS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



LIBERIA

Peterson Sonyah, a survivor of the St Peter's Lutheran Church massacre, sits where his father bled to death

The Long Wait

The guilty verdict passed on Charles Taylor in The Hague has ignited a debate in Liberia about dealing with its own demons, writes Clair MacDougall

A former president. Sitting in the dock in The Hague with his head slightly bowed. Few images associated with the pursuit of international justice could be more profound. When it was confirmed in April that the former Liberian President Charles Taylor was guilty of war crimes, many of those affected by Sierra Leone's brutal, decade-long civil war welcomed the verdict. This was a conflict that killed an estimated 50,000 people. Yet in neighbouring Liberia – a nation with its own brutal past – the response was mixed. Many complained that Taylor had been unfairly singled out for punishment. Others questioned why the international community was yet to turn its attention toward those responsible for fermenting Liberia's own civil war that lasted 14 years, killed 250,000 people and devastated the nation's infrastructure and the lives of many of its citizens.

In downtown Monrovia, on the day of the verdict, men sat in *atai* shops where they gather to drink, eat and discuss politics and crowded around portable radios as the three-

hour long verdict was read out. Eventually, the city heard that Taylor was guilty of aiding and abetting crimes including murder, terrorism, rape, sexual slavery and inhumane acts. These included mutilations and amputations, committed by the rebel Revolutionary United Front during neighbouring Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war that ended in 2002. Many Taylor supporters expressed sadness and disappointment at the verdict, while others were angered that those who played key roles in the war, some of whom occupy senior government positions, were yet to be brought to justice.

After the verdict, international human rights groups called on Liberia to follow the lead of Sierra Leone and prosecute key figures responsible for atrocities during Liberia's civil war.

Liberian newspapers have echoed that by running editorials critical of perceived impunity in Liberia, reigniting the debate about whether justice for the war should be retributive or reconciliatory. Some of the loudest arguments have been over the possi-

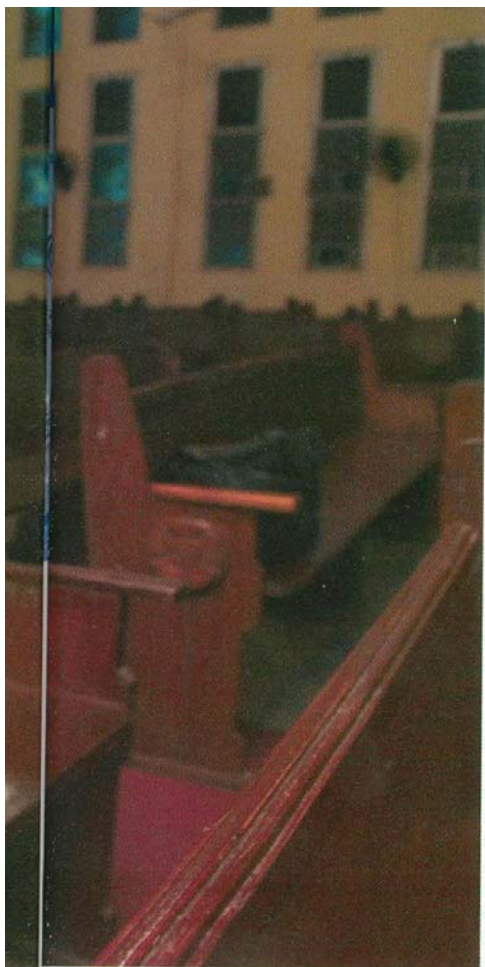
bility of a war crimes court in Liberia.

Advocates for such a court say that Taylor's guilty verdict could be a sign that prosecutions might be on the horizon. Tiawan Gongloe, a human rights lawyer who was tortured by Taylor's government in 2002, celebrated the verdict describing it as a victory for human rights in the region. He said a warning had been sent out to key players in Liberia's civil war that, like Taylor, their time in the dock would come.



Remnants of the looting and destruction during Liberia's civil war

SUPHAVA AGCHA (2)



"His conviction is the beginning of the end of impunity in Liberia because now the 'big man syndrome' is going to end and no one will feel that he or she is above the law," said Gongloe on the day of the verdict. But he added that prosecutions will only be forthcoming if there is a major push by civil society and members of the political establishment. "Sierra Leoneans got justice because they wanted justice," he said. "They put justice at the front line in the search for peace. Liberians did not. The majority of the outspoken people were not advocating for justice."

Gongloe said this is in part due to the outcome of the war and Taylor's rise to the presidency where he was able to influence public opinion through a system of patronage. That support is still alive today.

This clamour for a war crimes court in Liberia could, in part, also be a symptom of dissatisfaction with previous efforts to heal the scars of war—namely the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Such a body, based on South Africa's efforts at post-apartheid bridge-building, was born out of the 2003 Accra Peace Accords that saw an end to Liberia's civil war and Taylor's presidency.

The TRC released its final report in 2009 recommending 120 people for prosecution for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It further recommended that 49 people be barred from political office for 30 years because of their alleged associations with warring factions. Among those to be banned from politics was President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who supported Taylor in the early stages of the war "to challenge the brutality" of the late President Samuel Doe's regime. Liberia's supreme court stepped in here, however, deeming this unconstitutional because it denied those cited the right to due process.

Jerome Verdier, the former chairman of the TRC, who now lives in the United States and claims to have left as a result of death threats, says that prosecutions are fundamental to reconciliation in Liberia. "We cannot have reconciliation without justice and reconciliation shouldn't be politicised," he says.

This is a tricky one. Aaron Weah, a Liberian civil society activist, says the presence of those who were involved in the war in the executive and legislature branches of Liberia's government underlines the many challenges the nation will face in its pursuit of justice and reconciliation. Among them are ex-warlords like Prince Johnson, infamous for a film in which he appears sipping a can of beer as his men torture and mutilate Doe—who is later killed off camera.

Many analysts, like Weah, argue the indictment of powerful members of the political establishment has been the main reason why the report appears to have been shelved and its more punitive recommendations ignored. "If there is a change of regime, the conversation might change and the space could be opened up for prosecution and we could be involved in a new round of investigations," says Weah.

But not everyone agrees that prosecutions are the way forward for Liberia.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate and peace activist Leymah Gbowee has been appointed by the president to head the commission's successor—the Liberian Reconciliation Initiative. Gbowee has conducted consultations in three Liberian counties that were ethnic and political strongholds for the leaders of Liberia's factions during the civil war: Bong County, Nimba County and Grand Gedeh.

Gbowee maintains that prosecutions are not the way forward for Liberia. "If you decide to indict Johnson and use the retributive kind of justice for prosecution, especially in Liberia, you need to think about

how you will quell some of the riots and demonstrations that will come as a result of this," she says. "The question is should we allow him to go free because of fear of that? The answer is no. I do not support impunity. But the other question is when? Not now. We still see people being prosecuted for crimes they committed in World War II today."

An alternative to prosecutions is the so-called 'palaver hut programme'—the only TRC recommendation to have been implemented. These are spaces in traditional communities where people resolve disputes through discussion. Primarily the perpetrator admits the wrongful act and seeks pardon from the people of Liberia.

The programme is expected to commence in coming months, but it is unclear how it will be funded, how dialogue will be facilitated and what issues people will be able to discuss inside the huts.

Not everyone thinks the 'palaver hut programme' will help Liberians reconcile with the nation's brutal past. Peterson Sonyah, 36, is a survivor of the St Peter's Lutheran Church massacre that claimed over 600 lives, the majority of them from Gio and Mano ethnic groups. The killings were carried out by members of the Armed Forces of Liberia in 1990, under Doe's leadership. Sonyah now heads the Liberian Massacre Survivors Association.

On that day 22 years ago, Sonyah lay under a pew as soldiers sprayed the church with bullets; people were shot dead or hacked to pieces. His father, who was lying on top of the pew, was hit in the leg and later bled to death. Today Sonyah is gathering information from survivors of massacres committed during the war in anticipation of prosecutions. So far he has tallied up 268 massacres, 68 more

than what was documented in the TRC.

Sonyah supports the reconciliation effort but argues that Liberia cannot move forward without prosecutions. "Taylor deserved to be punished," he says. "But we are praying to God that there will be an international war crimes court here to bring to justice the warlords who are riding around in the best cars and living the best lives while their victims suffer. If they go scot-free Liberians will continue to grieve and the country will not move forward and people will think they can go into the bush and tear the country apart again."

Clair MacDougall is a journalist who is currently based in Monrovia, Liberia

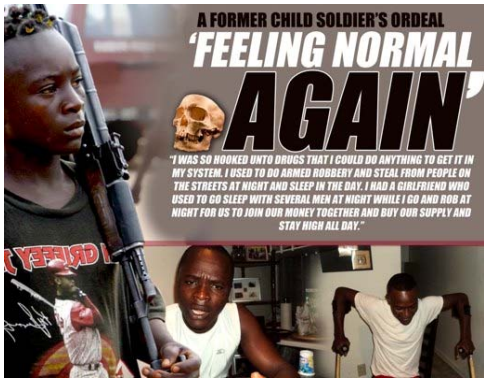
"Taylor's conviction is the beginning of the end of impunity in Liberia"

Front Page Africa

Monday, 2 July 2012

‘Feeling Normal Again’: All Grown Up, Former Liberian Child Soldiers Recall Ordeal

Richmond Virginia, USA It is usually said that a walk about child won't see his mother's grave because he is never at home. This was in the case of eleven year old Augustine who was playing football when his mother left him behind and ran away. But playing football is all too exciting for a child until he is forced to become a child soldier when rebels had captured his home town in Bong County.



. “I did not have any parent at the time and since I was born, I had never seen my father before, so I had no choice but to join the rebel group when my mother left me behind.” - Augustine Toe, now a rehabilitated ex-combatant visiting the United States

Augustine Toe, now a rehabilitated ex-combatant visiting the United States, joined the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) when he was 11 years old. He said he did not want to join the revolution as he calls it, but was forced to do so when the rebel

forces belonging to former warlord and President Charles Taylor hit his home town in Bong County when he was playing football.

Sitting in a nice and comfortable apartment and watching a big flat screen Television in Richmond Virginia, Augustine recalls a life of a child soldier.

“There was heavy gun firing in our town, so when I ran home I did not see my mother because she had run away with everybody who had left the town because of the rebel.” Says 25 years old Toe, who said he was captured by a soldier who forced him to join the rebel force of Charles Taylor NPFL. “I did not have any parent at the time and since I was born, I had never seen my father before, so I had no choice but to join the rebel group when my mother left me behind.”

Drugs can make you ‘kill your own ma’

The former child soldier recalls his life as a child soldier living on drugs when he was fighting for NPFL. “I started taking crack and heroin when I was eleven because my commander, General Bill used to supply us when our leader Charles Ghankay Taylor sent the general supplies for all of his soldiers. My commander would give me supply for one week but I used to consume it within three days and just stay high all day. When drugs is in your system, you can even kill your own ma without knowing it, so it used to make me brave in battle. “



Nickolas Roberts, 33, AKA “School Face” who is a handicap with his left leg amputated, says he started fighting for the revolution of NPFL when he was 12 years

Toe who says, he was known as Puskini on the warfront, disclosed that after the disarmament process in Liberia, he found himself back on the streets of Monrovia armed robbing and stealing to support his

bad habits.

Says Toe: “I was so hooked unto drugs that I could do anything to get it in my system. I used to do armed robbery and steal from people on the streets at night and sleep in the day. I had a girlfriend who used to go sleep with several men at night while I go and rob at night for us to join our money together and buy our supply and stay high all day.”

Taking a deep breath and thinking about the robbery he used to do in the past, Toe shamelessly explained how he once robbed a business man in Red light on one of the days he had gotten high and slept all day.

He said he went walking out in Red Light when he met a businessman who had just come from Nimba County, in the North of Liberia to buy goods. The business told him he had come to buy goods but was looking for his sister Annie and asked if he Toe knew any lady by that name.

“I lied to him and said I knew his sister Annie and she was living behind Hage Store. By the time he followed me, I threw signs to my men hiding in between the houses, and we robbed all of his money from his pockets and stripped his clothes and shoe and left him only in boxer and underwear.”

Narrating how he left the streets, Toe says he was always in a ghetto in Paynesville Red light, outside of Monrovia getting high until one day a white lady called sister Erica came to the ghetto to get him off the streets.

Says Toe: “I was getting high as usual when she came to me and said I was too young to be on drugs because it was not good for me. I told her it would not be easy for me to leave it because I started since I was eleven years old and it was used to my system by now.”



Augustine Toe, who says he was 11-years-old when joined the NPFL, says he was known as Puskini on the warfront.

He further explained that when she visited the ghetto the second time, it was how she convinced and took him to the recovery home.

“It was not easy for me to leave drugs, my head and stomach was hurting for over three days. I used to feel cold and sick. I would sometimes go and knock on Erica’s door and tell her it was not easy on me, but when she give me pain killer, it won’t” do anything until after three days before I started feeling normal again.”

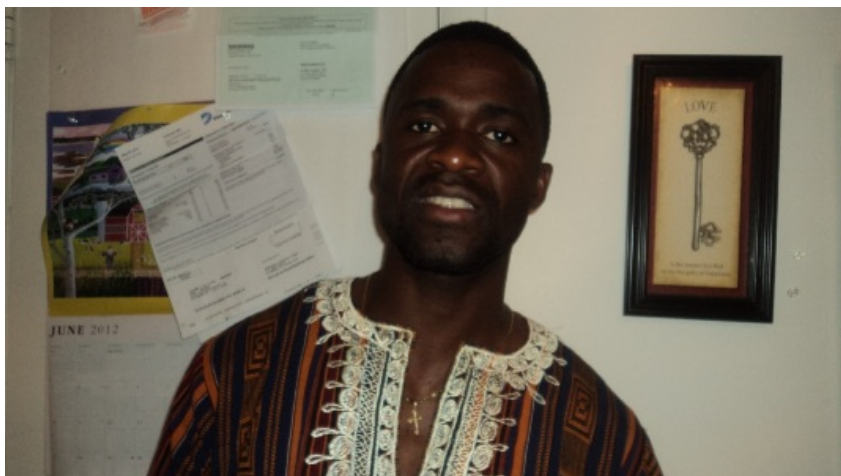
The young ex-combatant who said he would do business and go back to school stopped in the seventh grade. He has a four year old daughter by a prostitute, and said his daughter lives with his mother because the child’s mother dumped the child on him, at eight months Old.

The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel evasion of former President Charles Taylor, started in Liberia in 1989, when then rebel leader Charles Taylor recruited the little children called small boys Unit (SBU). Children as young as seven was recruited to carried heavy weapons that they could not carry themselves and the raffles at the same time, so the guns would be dragging on the ground while they walked.

‘Joined revolution to survive’

Nickolas Roberts, 33, AKA “School Face” who is a handicap with his left leg amputated, says he started fighting for the revolution of NPFL when he was 12 years old and got shot on his leg during the recent 2003 war in Monrovia between former President Taylor’s rebel group call Anti Terrorist Unit (ATU) and Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel forces belonging to Sekou Damate Conneh

“I joined the revolution to survive because I did not have food and my parents were starving and there was no way out.”



Rev. Monah Adam Kyne, who is hosting Toe and Roberts in the US, said the organization ‘Youth Assure’ established a recovery home in Congo Town, Monrovia Liberia in 2011.

Roberts says he was also introduced to drugs at an early age and could not live without it, so he used to snatch away cell phones and rob people to be able to buy the drugs.

Says Roberts: “When I was shot on my leg during the 2003 war in Monrovia, I was confused and frustrated because I felt I could not make it in life again, so I started taking drugs, smoking, drinking and stealing. I was on the streets with my wounded leg and no money to go to the hospital until I met Sister Erica, an American missionary who took me from the street and took me to the hospital. The cancer had taken over my legs since I was shot because I did not go to the hospital, so when we went to the hospital, my leg was amputated.”

A change man now

Roberts says since he was taken to the recovery home for over seven months, he is a change man now because it was the power of God that brought him to America with a short leg.

“I feel good because I really did not know how my life was going to be if God had not saved me. I know God is great, and there is nothing that would stop me from doing God’s work. I want to encourage my friends to leave the streets and stop taking drugs and be like me. If I can leave drugs today, and become a change man, who cannot do the same?”

Robert went through the Disarmament Demobilization Reintegration Resettlement (DDRR) process and was doing plumbing as a career but could not finish it because the money UN had given him was small, so he could not continue but jumped back on the streets.

The young ex-combatant who stopped in the 2nd grade has a twelve years old daughter and a girlfriend in Monrovia, said based on his condition, he would do business and go to night school and take the sixth grade because he has confidence in himself.

Rev. Monah Adam Kyne, who is hosting Toe and Roberts in the US, said the organization ‘Youth Assure’ established a recovery home in Congo Town, Monrovia Liberia in 2011. And the organization was

founded by a missionary from the USA called Erica Paulson, and she has been running that recovery home since then.



Nickolas Roberts, 33, AKA “School Face”, left with Augustine Toe have put their child soldiers days behind them.

“We have integrated four ex combatants who have stayed in the home for almost nine months. They are clean of drugs and have worked in other communities, so we decided to bring them to the US to attend a conference which would be held July 15th and to have some sort of exposure to the outside world. We want them to understand the prospective as to what goes on the outside of Liberia, in order to change their mind set, so when they go to Liberia, they would have a new approach of viewing life and also serve as an example to talk to their friends to have a change of mind.”

Kyne says the organization goes to a ghetto called Tutler Base in Red Light, Paynesville to recruit the ex-combatants. “These ex-combatants are usually gathered to smoke and do other things. We go every Saturday to have revival and feed over 100 of them after the revival “

Rev Kyne says the group is self-supported but they want to take it to the next level where they can have grants from other supporters and churches.

“We had to put on credit US\$6,000.00 to bring and lodge them in the US, so we have to raise that money to pay the debt and have money for some other people come next year. We have five ex-combatants and we intend to increase the number to 25. We have rented a four-bedroom apartment in Monrovia to host them as they come.”

Heritage (Monrovia)

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Liberia: Is Setting Up a War Crimes Court in Liberia Timely?

Editorial

Grand Bassa County Representative Byron Brown has added his voice to mounting calls for the establishment of a war crimes court in Liberia to prosecute persons who bear the greatest responsibility for committing heinous crimes during the civil conflict.

The call by Mr. Brown follows calls by a local rights group, Center for the Protection of Human Rights of Counselor Dempster Browne, as well as human rights lawyer Tiawon Gongloe and a member of the Independent National Human Rights Commission. A group calling itself "Survivors of Massacres" which had in the past advocated for the establishment of a war crimes court, has reawakened its call, apparently to pacify their wounded hearts.



Former warlord turn senator Prince Y. Johnson.

In a bill he submitted to the Lower House of the National Legislature last week, Lawmaker Browne indicated that the establishment of a war crimes court is the "ultimate means of sustaining peace and genuine reconciliation in a post-conflict country."

He observed that "Peace, security and national reconciliation will be hindered if people accused of aiding and abetting war atrocities in the country are not held accountable." The bill, according to media reports, was "overwhelmingly" accepted by the plenary of the House of Representatives and sent to the committee responsible to deliberate on it.

Human rights lawyer Tiawon Gongloe for his part said it was disheartening to see some warlords who committed heinous crimes during the civil conflict "riding in big cars and flashing dirty water on poor citizens who were victimized during the conflict." According to Counselor Gongloe, these former warlords did not show any remorse of conscience when they appeared before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and did not apologize to the Liberian people for their wrongdoing.

He called for concerted action by all Liberians for the setting up of the court, noting that it is only when the international community knows that majority of Liberians are in favor of the establishment of a war crimes court in their country that they will support it. He said the international community supported the setting up of the war crimes court in Sierra Leone because majority of Sierra Leoneans openly asked for it.

However, many level-headed Liberians are of the view that setting up a war crimes court in Liberia at this time seems to be a herculean task. In the first place, any bill seeking to enact the setting up of the court will have to meet the approval of the Chief Executive of Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who has also been listed among those to be tried. Even though President Sirleaf was not a warlord, she admitted

aiding and abetting the war launched by Charles Taylor's defunct NPFL by providing the amount of US\$10,000 to support its war effort.

As a matter of fact, because of her professed support to the NPFL, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended a 30 year ban from political activities for Madam Sirleaf and warlords in the Liberian conflict. The TRC also recommended criminal prosecution of former warlords and people like the President who aided and abetted the war.

Besides, the Liberian nation had initially resolved on a Truth and Reconciliation Commission fashioned after that of South Africa, and not a war crimes court. The TRC was in no way intended to settle scores, punish or get at warlords who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes during the Liberian conflict.

On the contrary, it was intended to bring together perpetrators and victims to the table so that they can iron out their differences. The South African TRC was intended to reconcile members of the White and Black races so that they can live in peace and harmony and move ahead with their development.

Imagine what would have been the fate of South Africa if President Nelson Mandela had adopted the posture of settling scores with the White minority race for the crimes they committed against the Black race. Definitely, South Africa would have been worse than Zimbabwe, which has squandered its clout as a sub-regional economic giant because it wanted to settle scores with the White minority race.

Indeed, conflict would have engulfed South Africa and the development that it has attained so far would have eluded it. Due to the reconciliatory posture adopted by blacks towards their White brothers who in the past treated them like mere slaves, South Africa today can boast of being one of the most peaceful and developed nations on the African Continent.

Let's pause a minute and reflect on the consequences of banning the likes of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Professor Alhaji Kromah, Dr. George Boley, Sekou Damate Konneh, among others, who currently live peaceful productive lives, from politics for 30 years, or as is being advocated, try them on war crimes charges. Will such a move enhance the peace we now enjoy? Will it impel our development agenda? Some Liberians feel definitely not. They say what it will do is to further divide us as a nation and stall the reconstruction and development process, because the victims and their followers will definitely want to fight back or resist.

During the TRC hearings, all the perpetrators, including Butt Naked and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, appeared before the TRC and not only admitted their wrongdoing, but begged for pardon. The fact that these people appeared before the TRC and apologized for whatever crimes they may have committed is sufficient grounds for pardon. They knew that they had wronged the people somehow, and would no longer engage in such acts.

Should we insist that Butt Naked, a former fighter of the defunct rebel ULIMO-J, who has transformed into an Evangelist or Prince Johnson of the defunct INPFL who is now a politician, be tried for crimes they committed in the past? Butt Naked and Prince Johnson who committed heinous crimes during war are now engaged in activities that are positively impacting the lives of their countrymen. Butt Naked currently runs a welfare program that provides support and empowerment for war victims including former child soldiers, while Prince Johnson has established an educational foundation that is catering to the educational needs of hundreds of youths from elementary to junior high school. Alhaji Kromah, a warlord is now a lecturer at the state-run University of Liberia, while Sekou Damate Conneh, founder of the defunct rebel LURD Movement is now a successful businessman. Can we undo what these people are doing simply because we must settle scores at all?

What some people have been arguing is that if Taylor who ruled Liberia should be tried for war crimes, why should other people who visited suffering on other Liberians go scot free? What these people fail to

realize however is that Taylor was not tried for crimes he committed in Liberia, but in another country. The argument that the only way peace can be sustained in Liberia is to try those who committed heinous crimes during the conflict are brought to book does not seem to hold water any longer. People who might be contemplating warfare should be reminded by what happened to Laurent Gbagbo who refused to cede power after he was defeated in the presidential poll, thus igniting a war in Cote d'Ivoire that left an estimated 3,000 persons dead. He is currently awaiting trial in The Hague for war crimes. The world has changed. What transpired in Liberia in 1980 when the military toppled a constitutionally elected government will never happen again without the intervention of ECOWAS, the United Nations and African Union. The days when might was right are now behind us. Nations of the world are now watching.

Nigerian Tribune

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Remembering the Liberian conflict and Ecomog intervention

Written by Haruna Yahaya Poloma

Since the attainment of independent state status in 1848, Liberia is being ruled by a succession of over 20 different America-Liberians. A minority ethnic group descended from slave ancestry that constituted less than five per cent of the country's entire population. Thus, for over 133 years, power oscillated within this ethnic group, resulting not only in hegemonic control of the country and its economy, but also the entrenchment of brutal repression and marginalisation against the indigenous ethnic groups, which constituted over 90 per cent of the Liberian population. A single political party, the True Whig Party (TWP), was the official political party in the country, and only property owners were eligible by law to vote. Thereby disenfranchising most of the native indigenes as economic power and property ownership were skewed in favour of the America-Liberian minority.

Despite their own slave ancestry from the deep American South, the Americo-Liberian ethnic group of Liberia ironically regarded the indigenous natives as inferior in racial status, and an international commission in 1931 found the senior government officials guilty of involvement in organised slavery against the indigenous population (Meredith, 2005).

Therefore, Liberia was a deeply divided society, characterised by sharp cleavages between the dominant minority Americo-Liberians and the larger indigenous population.

On 12th April 1980, Samuel Doe, a Master Sergeant in the Liberian Army from the Krahn indigenous ethnic group terminated the rule of the America-Liberians in a military coup. Many of the indigenous groups initially supported Doe, both on account of his indigenous ethnic affiliation and the promises, he made to introduce a new democratic constitution and redistribute national wealth equitably among the people. But in the event, Doe failed on both accounts. His regime became as autocratic as the government it replaced and he stifled the attempt at creating a new constitution that could usher democratic rule in the country.

Moreover, he perpetuated the same corrupt practices' by favouring only his native Krahn ethnic group to the disadvantage of the others. In 1985, he eliminated opposition groups and opponents were harassed and suppressed by his security forces. This led to a failed coup attempt against Samuel Doe by a former Liberian Army Commander, Thomas Quiwomkpa. The abortive coup elicited even greater brutality by the Doe regime, principally against the Gio and the Mano ethnic groups who he perceived were supportive of the abortive coup attempt.

On 24th December 1989, Charles Taylor an Americo-Liberian who was previously part of the Doe administration but fled to America in the wake of corruption charges against him, launched a group of rebel fighters known as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) from Nimba County - a traditional base of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups that were suffering intense repression under the Doe regime and began attacks against the Armed

Forces of Liberia (AFL) aimed at the overthrow of Samuel Doe. By April and May of that year, the rebel NPFL forces under Charles Taylor had occupied most of Liberian territory and was approaching the capital city of Monrovia, This rebel advance effectively meant the commencement of civil war in the country, characterised by severe reprisal massacres against the Krahn ethnic group of Doe and their

alleged collaborators, the Mandingos. As was to be expected, the ranks of the NPFL group also swelled as many ethnic Gios and Manos joined the rebel fighters as they advanced.

An initial perception that Taylor's NPFL was motivated by the altruistic objectives of removing Doe's tyranny and installing democracy vanished, as it soon became obvious that the true desire of Taylor was to occupy the Executive Mansion in Monrovia, the Liberian capital. This created a splinter within the rebel NPFL and the subsequent emergence of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), led by Prince Yormie Johnson. This factionalisation of the opposing rebel group intensified the conflict in Liberia and many members of the AFL (the official Army) also dissolved into the ranks of the NPFL and the INPFL along their ethnic affiliations.

The conflict by now had degenerated into chaos signalling the imminent collapse of the Liberian state. Internally displaced persons from conflict affected areas of the country came to inflate the population of the capital city Monrovia from 600,000 in 1991 to almost 1,000,000 at the peak of the conflict while refugee outflows to neighbouring countries were estimated at 700,000 people (Ero 1995). The escalating dimension of the Liberian conflict also amounted to a threat to peace and security in the ECOWAS sub region, which prompted a response by the member states of ECOWAS.

From inception, the ECOWAS had omitted to address peace and security issues in its initial Protocol on Non-Aggression (PNA), which merely urged refrain from the "threat and use of force" against each other, adopted by the member states on April 22, 1978 in Lagos, Nigeria. But increasing recognition that economic development could only take place within an environment of peace and stability led to a subsequent Protocol on Mutual Assistance and Defence (PMAD), signed in Sierra Leone on 25th May, 1981 that came into effect five years later. For the first time, this PMAD treaty accepted that armed threat or aggression against a member state amounted to a threat to the entire community, and therefore, provided for collective response where a member state was faced with internal armed conflict that could endanger the peace and security of the other member states as was now clearly the case with the Liberian conflict, in particular its trans-national dimension of refugee outflow to neighbouring States.

Recognising the very little interest initially shown by the international community in the Liberian crisis, member states of ECOWAS therefore, initiated a sub regional response through a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC). The SMC outlined and later adopted a peace plan which called for (a) immediate ceasefire by the conflicting parties, (b) establishment of ECOMOG to keep peace, restore law and order, and ensure respect for the ceasefire, (c) broad based interim government through a national conference of political parties and interest groups, (d) free and fair elections within twelve months leading to a democratically elected government, (e) exclusion of all leaders of the warring factions from the interim government and (f) creation of a special emergency fund for ECOMOG operations in Liberia (Era, 1995).