

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 of:

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The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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Local News

Story: Ibrahim Seibure

Erstwhile Deputy Minister of Defence, Civil Defence Force (CDF) Coordinator now war crimes inditee, Chief Sam Hinga Norman Friday testified at the Special Court that President Kabbah requested that the size of the CDF should be increased.

"Kabbah requested to increase CDF number"

...Norman tells Special Court

Norman said on 29th January 1999, President Kabbah in a letter written by one Sheka Mansaray, National Security Adviser established the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) of Civil Defence Forces.

He explained that former Vice President Albert Joe Demby who was to coordinate activities related to the CDF chaired the NCC.

Norman said Demby's terms of reference included increasing the

size of the CDF, review of the logistics, finance and to determine and constantly review the manpower of the CDF.

Norman testified when the President established the NCC, he never received the letter until after the first meeting held at the Presidential Lodge.

He said that at the second meeting, which he attended, it was

chaired by erstwhile Vice President Demby.

The defence team as exhibit 120 tendered the two-page document.

The names of members of the NCC include **Albert Joe Demby, Minister of Finance, Minister of Presidential Affairs, Minister of Information, CDF, Resident Ministers North, East and South and Deputy Minister of Agriculture.**

Kamajors received Le103 million from government



Hinga Norman

By Alex T. Paila

At the ongoing trials of CDF accused persons at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the first accused, former Deputy Minister and Coordinator of CDF, chief Samuel Hinga Norman has explained how fighters were supplied logistics during the war.

He said initially, the CDF fighters were receiving monthly supplies of five hundred bags of rice and fifty-one million Leones.

According to him, the National coordinating committee,

(NCC) an organization that was responsible for coordinating the affairs of CDF carried out an investigation into the feeding of the fighters. The investigation according to Chief continued page 2

Kamajors received Le103 million from gov't.

from front page

Norman, found out that the logistics given to the CDF fighters was not equal to that of the Soldiers. In that regard, the supply of rice to CDF fighters was reduced from 500 bags to 3500 per month. Later on the

money was increased from 51 million Leones to 103 million and the bags of rice from 5, 00 to 2000. The quantity of rice was reduced to 3,000 bags. Specifically rice and money

went to the hunters, every month from July 1998 to January 2002 Chief Norman explained. "All that logistics and support given to the CDF by government could not have been provided by me," the indicted Chief Samuel Hinga said.

At Special Court, letter implicates gov't ministers

By Alex T. Paila

A letter exhibited dated 29th January from the Office of the President as regards the National Coordinating Committee has implicated notable Ministers of Government. This was revealed during the on going testimonies delivered by Chief Sam Hinga Norma at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. According to the letter, the President sets up the NCC to in order to handle all matters pertaining to the Civil Defence

Force. Members of the Committee included the Vice President who is the chairman, the Finance, Agriculture, the Presidential Affairs, Information, Deputy Defence Ministers, the Chief of Defence Staff, the Resident Minister, North and South, Okere Adams, representative from the West, Brigadier Kargbo, the National Security Adviser.

The letter adds that the terms of reference of the organization (NCC) and to take care of the Organizational Structure of the CDF to review the financing and the recruiting of the Militia.

The letter was signed by the then National Security Adviser, Mr. Sheika Mansaray. The NCC organised a meeting at the Presidential lodge, on Saturday 30th January 1999, which Chief Norman said he could not attend.

Taylor Under Pressure

By Sheikh Sulaiman
Campaign Against Impunity, comprises some three African and International Civil Society groups formed to press for Charles

Taylor's extradition and subsequent surrender to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to face trial for alleged war crimes and

crimes against humanity and to curb impunity in the sub region. In an open letter to the newly elected Liberian President

Eleen Johnson Sirleaf, the coalition called on Mrs Sirleaf to act now on Taylor's extradition. The Campaign Against Impunity

Coalition urged President Sirleaf to use her good office and request Nigeria to surrender Charles Taylor to the Special Court.

It would be recalled that the Special Court for Sierra Leone was established in 2002 by the government of Sierra Leone
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Taylor Under Pressure

From front page

and the United Nations to try all those who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes and other grave breaches of international humanitarian laws during Sierra Leone armed conflict.

Mr. Charles Taylor stands indicted for 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

However, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has refused to surrender Taylor to the Special Court the latter was granted asylum status in the Nigerian state of Calabar in 2003. Nevertheless, Obasanjo has indicated earlier that he would consider surrendering Charles Taylor upon a request from a duly elected Liberian government.

Pressure is being mounted on the new Liberian president to demonstrate leadership qualities.

Reacting, the Liberian President Johnson Sirleaf assured that she would ask for Taylor's surrender to the Special Court, but in consultation with regional leaders. "The victims of war crimes in Sierra Leone deserve nothing less," the Coalition Against Impunity concluded.

At Special Court...

Norman Spits Fire

***'Kabbah Requested for More Kamajor-Initiates'**

By Musa Sesay

Led in evidence by Counsel Buakie Jabbie, War Crime Indicttee, Sam Hinga Norman last Friday told the Special Court that His Excellency the President Alhaji Dr Ahmad Tejan Kabbah

and the government of Sierra Leone at the peak of the war, requested the recruitment of more kamajors to prosecute the war.

Chief Norman who be-

came a member of the kamajor out fit in October 1995, in Bo, told the court that there are documentary evidence to prove his assertions of the SLPP government's green light

at the time for a necessary beefing up of the CDF, a task that he said was entrusted on him to become the chairman of the Coordinating Committee

Contd. page 2

Norman Spits Fire

From front page

whose name he did not mention.

Explaining the involvement of the kamajor militias in the 10-year-old war, the former Deputy Defence Minister stated that it was as a result of suggestions by various community elders to their chiefs for hunters to protect them and their property against those referred to as "Rebels" and because of the limited number of the kamajors at the time, agreement was made to expand their defence through manpower initiation.

He recalled that before the rebel war and during the NPRC rule, the military decided to co-opt hunters by way of using them as vigilantes and made mention of the days of the famous 'Ndogbor Wishui' in the early 80s when hunters from the North were requested to assist government in bringing the said incident under control.

Dilating further on the sacred involvement by the Kamajors in the war, while also drawing the attention of the court on the book of Esther Chapter: 2 which deals with the purification and right of woman to womanhood, Mr Norman illustrated that initiates went through training for which a period of time is allocated and they later came out as to what was referred to in English as, "soldiers".

He added that certain things were thought including "immunisation" which makes someone to become bolder in the battle field. Immunisation he continued, is the bullet proof or the iron shield of an initiate kamajor which ensures that nothing happens to them from head to sole.

"It has always been a taboo to every living person at a moment, when "initiation and immunisation" have applied rules and regulations that were laid down which should not be contravened" He continued: "this is one major reason why kamajors were always afraid of women, innocent people and looting"

Chief Norman ended that he always admonished his commanders to strictly abide by the rules as violators received their punishment in the battle field.

Hinga Norman spits more fire

.... As he reveals Government's support for CDF

By Tom E. Tommy &
Saffia S. Kabbah
Chief Sam Hinga Norman
continued his defense past
Friday, 27th January 2006
at the Special Court for Si-
erra Leone with revelations

on the organogram of the
Civil Defense Force
(CDF).

He started by stating that
the Civil Defense Force had
one principal component,
the CDF-National Public

and Coordinating Commit-
tee (CDF-NPCC) which
he said was established
principally to support the
activities of the CDF
throughout the country.
To substantiate this asser-

tion, Chief Norman ten-
dered a letter which he
stated could attest how this
was brought about, was
tendered as 'Exhibit 120'.
According to him, the
CDF-NPCC was formed

on the 29th of January 1999
by the following parties, His
Excellency the President,
Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan
Kabbah, the then Minister
of Agriculture, the then
Chief of Defense Staff

(CDS), the then Resident
Ministers of the East and
South, the then Deputy
Minister of Defense, and
the then National Security
Adviser. These people, he

Contd: page 2

Hinga Norman spits more fire

From front page
said, formed part of the CDF organogram with the President right at the top. He said, the functions of the Committee among others, was to ensure the promotion of the welfare of the CDF militia. Secondly, he said, it was part of the Committee's responsibility to initiate actions for the recruitment of members into the militia.

He also said that he formally received an invitation letter from the then National Security Adviser to attend a meeting with him which was held at the residence of the President.

On how the CDF were getting their funding, he said it never went into his hands, rather, he maintained, they get their logistics from government through the Ministry of Finance and that from where it flows to the Chief of Defense Staff and to the Director of CDF Logistics. As for other logistic support such as rice, he said, it came from the Ministry of Agriculture.

On the area of initiation and immunization, he said initiation was part of the training that could make the difference between a member of the hunters' group and a non-member.

Immunization, he also said, was the means to strengthen the confidence of the initiates. He indicated further

that immunization, was also done on request and that it does not apply to initiates alone.

This immunization, he said, is mainly performed on male initiates, and pointed out that it was not necessarily part of the war plan but that it was a necessity as a means of prevention for the body against danger in terms of war.

Immunization, Chief Norman went on to explain, restricted members of the CDF from engaging in acts that were against certain established norms and conventions. According to him, if an initiate ignores or goes contrary to those norms and conventions, his protection becomes nullified, thereby exposing him to the dangers of war.

After an initiate has gone through the immunization rites Chief Norman went on, a public testing is conducted in a village square for the people to see and believe, after which the initiates are deployed in the war front. The hunters, he maintained, were mainly to defend and not to offend.

Reflecting back on the initial days of formation of the CDF, he said, when he was at Base Zero, he was given a satellite phone to be informing the President about activities at the base, and also whenever the militia

troops needed logistic supplies.

According to Chief Norman, the CDF operational organogram was drawn with the President at the top. The hunters, he said, were under the direct command of the ECOMOG forces in their various deployment bases and also under the command of their various hunter Commanders.

As a combatant, he disclosed that he was only active before his appointment as National Coordinator during which period, he stated, he was caught only once in 1995. He went on to assert that after his appointment, it became forbidden for him to go to the war front.

To prove his innocence in the matter, Chief Norman submitted that considering the massive nature of the CDF movement, one man alone cannot fund it. He therefore posed the question, "Where could I have got that kind of money to facilitate the movements and activities of the CDF since its formation to the time the "War Don-Don" pronouncement was made when they all returned to their various villages? He went on to charge therefore that, "This is a clear indication that government was fully supporting the CDF movement in terms of finance and logistics among other supports," he said. The testimony continues.

HINGA NORMAN

FROM LAST ISSUE

ALSO IN the War Council was Chief George Gambawai representing Sallay Gendemeh. Kandeh Samai later became administrator for CDF Kailahun. There was no representation for Kono and the entire western area, Norman said.

by SU THORONKA

Chief Norman told the Special Court set up to try the ring leaders of impunity during Sierra Leone's 11 year rebel war that he was not a member of the War Council but that he received advice from them and he was grateful for that.

That at one time he wanted to execute a fighter Vandi Vangawai who had become violent but the Council did not authorise him to carry out the execution because the State did not give them the power to pass a death sentence.

He said the trial was presided by Chief Quee, Daramy Rogers, Chief Caulker and Shebora.

Norman said the Ruf was using conventional weapons and thus asked government for conventional weapons to forestall any attack from the rebels.

He said General Maxwell Khobe visited Base Zero to discuss the arrangement but was informed by Khobe that arrangements have been made for the supply of weapons but that himself, Khobe and president Kabbah will have to meet and talk.

Norman was later picked up by helicopter to Lungi where Kabbah assured he would be supplied with weapons and when the weapons finally arrived, he was invited to Lungi by Khobe sometime that October and he saw a large consignment of assorted weapons in conventional warfare, boxes of ammunition and explosives meant for the use of local hunters all in a store.

He returned to Base Zero and called a general meeting about a delivery of weapons at Lungi for their use and their director of logistics prepared a list of all request from the various commanders and the distribution of the weapons was authorised by General Victor Mulu in Liberia. Norman said he did not issue the arms and ammunition over and above what Ecomog recommended.

Norman said he knew Khobe as a colonel before he became a General and head of the military in Sierra Leone when Kabbah was reinstated and the Sierra Leone army had changed beyond the control of government.

He said Khobe was authorised by government to take control of all security responsibility including the military, police, fire force, civil society etc and his rank as General in Ecomog was transferred to him as head of the Sierra Leone army and that he was custodian of weapons and sometimes issue weapons without informing the co-ordinator.

And that at this time there was less interaction between himself, the president and Khobe before he finally came down to Freetown as deputy minister of defence and Khobe as army chief of staff that they started discussing issues of military importance.

Revealed: Le103m for the Kamajors

By Betty Milton

Giving evidence at the Special Court, defence witness Chief Sam Hinga Norman last Friday explained that a total of one hundred and three million two hundred thousand Leones together with three

hundred bags of rice were given to the Kamajors for logistics and feeding.

Narrating his role as the Deputy Defence Minister and Coordinator of the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), Chief Norman

said after the reinstatement of President Kabbah and his government, he received a letter signed by the President informing him that he had formed a National Coordinating Committee (NCC) aimed at determining the structural organization of

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Revealed: Le103m for the Kamajors

From Front Page

the CDF. And that it would also seek to constantly review the manpower of the CDF and to give logistical and other requirement of the militia.

Chief Norman maintained that the Chairman of the NCC, according to the letter, was the then Vice President Dr. Albert Joe Demby. Other members of the Committee included: the Deputy Minister of Defence, Ministers of Finance, Agriculture, Information, Presidential Affairs and Representatives East, Northern and Southern Provinces and others. Later, some members of the CDF were co-opted to perform specific functions and they later became Public Relations Officers (PROs).

At a Committee meeting, Chief Norman disclosed, he was told to perform the duty of National Coordinator of

the CDF. Since then, he stressed, the militia's support was channelled through the NCC until it reached the men on the ground.

The witness said logistics specifically were rice and money which was sent to them every month from July 1998 to January 2002; during that time the militia were receiving 5,000 bags and fifty one million six hundred thousand Leones. Later, after an NCC investigation, it was discovered that lots of monies were being spent on the Kamajors, so the feeding of the CDF militia was changed and some of the supplies diverted to Government soldiers.

Chief Norman said Paramount Chiefs of 149 Chiefdoms also received a bag of rice together with twenty five thousand Leones, and that members of the NCC also received

their own rice and money.

He explained that before the Kamajors were trained in conventional weapons, they first had their Masonic temples but that children were not allowed in them. As the number increased, arrangements were made by various community elders for the initiation of their members. "I was initiated in October 1995 and I got my immunization in Bo. The immunization is a bullet proof sort of and iron shield worn by Kamajors for preventions," he disclosed, adding that "there are taboos when once one has been initiated, one has to go by them very strictly. These were some of the reasons why the Kamajors were afraid to harm women or touch them when they were preparing to go to war. They were also cautioned to be careful of killing innocent people or even looting. Most hunters did not return when they went against those rules," he said.

COMMENTARY

By John Abu

Hinga Norman's issue must not be politicised (Part I)

Chief Sam Hinga Norman has spent nearly three years in detention at the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

At this particular moment, he might have a tortured mind. From September 2004, I wrote series of articles published in The Democrat newspaper questioning the credibility of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. During that period, letters from Chief Norman himself were published. Nobody at that time even cared about him or to even comment on those publications. They were all as voiceless as the tomb. I mean the so-called politicians and even the Civil Society including the now celebrated Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ).

Why only now? Where were they? Only for them to sit by watching the International Community investing money in an incredible Justice System to which some of them approved is nonsense!

I do not want to comment much on the recent meeting between Hinga Norman and the APC opposition leader. What perhaps is notable is the fact that they were in this country when the Special court was established, with the ratification by Parliament of which the opposition leader was a party to.

I have expressed in series of articles that the establishment of the Special Court for Sierra Leone is a total violation of the Lome Peace Agreement of July 7, 1999 (Article 1X). Why all this time nobody considered talking to Hinga Norman or call a Bintumani Conference only at the expiration of the mandate of the Court?

Most people in Sierra Leone including myself do sympathize with Chief Norman deeply, but would not like his present predicament to be politicized by few people for their own egos.

As I have said interalia, of all the articles I wrote and published on the Special Court's credibility, serializing the pitfalls of the court and Hinga Norma's predicament, no one dare at that moment care about what was going on. Is it because 2007 is fast approaching that some people want to be heard or caused a lot of noise about the Hinga Norman issue?

For the APC at this moment to raise concern over what it termed "the security implications in the existence of the Special Court and its operation" means, they have failed to do their homework. Were they not in parliament when the Special Court agreement ratification was passed?

Do we need any Bintumani conference at this time to discuss the Special Court and Hinga Norman?

In my opinion, the most appropriate time anyone could have made lots of noise about Chief Norman and the Special Court would have been at the time of those publications. When at some points the Special Court denied him the right to self-defense, I halted the publications with the view that someone may re-echo my views but it is rather too late.

At this moment some people want to gain prominence and therefore feel this is the appropriate time, as 2007 is getting closer, to show sympathy to Chief Norman.

Talking Point

What is the President hiding and why is the Special Court protecting him?

On December 16th 2005, a motion was filed on behalf of Hinga Norman for the issuance of a Subpoena ad Testificandum to President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. The defence requested the Trial Chamber at the Court to invoke its powers under the Rules of Evidence and Procedure to compel the President to appear before the Court to give evidence on behalf of Sam Hinga Norman, after the President refused to appear.

The Norman defence team believes that the evidence of President Kabbah would materially assist the accused. For example, the indictment against Norman states in paragraph 13 that Norman was "the principal force in establishing, organizing, supporting, providing logistical support and promoting the CDF". It is stated in paragraph 755 of the TRC report however, that "President Kabbah controlled the institutional workings of the CDF and the purse strings on the money it received from the central government". Paragraph 756 of the TRC report details that the President ensured that he maintained intimacy with the operations of the CDF during his period of exile, speaking regularly with Norman two or three times a week.

The Defence further believes that the President is a relevant and important witness to the defence as he is constitutionally the Minister of Defence who appointed the accused as his Deputy Minister as the Coordinator of the CDF and, who at all material times was answerable to the President throughout the conflict. Surely a proper and fair defence requires that the role of the President in supporting the CDF throughout the conflict be examined?

Most curiously both the President and the Prosecution have objected to the appearance of Kabbah as a witness.

Firstly on what basis can the Prosecution object to the defence seeking to have a witness testify before the Court? The prosecution has argued vigorously that the President should not be subpoenaed stating that the appearance of the President lacks a "legitimate forensic purpose", questioning how the evidence of the President could materially assist the accused.

What is the Defence's...

Why is the Prosecution opposed to the President's appearance? Counsels for the Office of the Prosecutor are not the legal representatives of the President, who was served with a copy of the Motion, and is at liberty to take whatever action he feels necessary. Why the objection and interference into a matter that simply does not concern the prosecution at this stage? Why are they protecting the President?

Perhaps more troubling is the objections of the Attorney General and Minister of Justice. He states that it was the result of the activities of the CDF and the RUF that the President was obliged for security reasons to remove himself from Freetown to Guinea. It would appear that the government is now attempting to engineer some revisionist historical account of the role of the CDF and conveniently not recognize that the CDF's mandate and reason for existing was the restoration of the democratically elected government of Kabbah.

The President also appears to think that he is above the law – that the application for the issuance of a subpoena is an attempt to embarrass the President and cause mischief. What is the President embarrassed about or more importantly afraid of?

New VP For Special Court

Justice Renate Winter, who previously served as Acting President of the Special Court from March to May 2004, will serve as its new Vice-President for the next four months effective 27 January, 2006. She succeeds Justice Geoffrey Robertson, QC, while Justice Emmanuel Ayoola will assume the Vice-Presidency next May.

The Special Court's Vice-President Winter served as international judge of the Supreme Court in the former Yugoslavian province of Kosovo, as part of the United Nations interim civilian administration. He also worked on projects relating to youth and child soldiers for the United Nations in countries around the world, including Nigeria and Senegal, as well as in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, and Tunisia.

Judge Winter is an expert in family law, as well as on juvenile justice systems, gender issues, paedophilia, child labour and the role of the media in advocacy. In 1981, she served as judge at the Vienna Youth Court where she undertook projects to help rehabilitate youths with problems of drug addiction and mental disability. Throughout the 1990s, Justice Winter chaired numerous international conferences on matters relating to juvenile justice and gender. She is currently Vice-President of the International Association of Youth and Family Court Judges.

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly in the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice, all those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted eleven persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

Golley, others appear in court today

By Abayomi Tejan

OMRIE Golley and two others appear today in Magistrate Court No 1 on charges of Conspiracy and Treason.

Following police investigations into the circumstances that led to their arrest, the burden now rests on the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt the case they have against the accused persons.

Treason is a capital offence punishable by death or life imprisonment.

Omrie Golley was one time spokesperson for the

RUF, whose leaders now face charges of Crimes against Humanity at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. *Contd. Back Page*

Golley, others appear in court

From Front Page

Lawyer Charles Francis Margai, who defected from the SLPP when he lost the leadership of that party to Solomon Berewa, defends Omrie Golley. Mr. Margai has now registered his own party, the People's Movement for Democratic Change. Observers have questioned Margai's wisdom in defending Golley in the light of his ambition to lead a nation still struggling with the aftermath of a brutal war—some see Golley as closely associated with the former enemy, a circumstantially relevant piece of evidence for the prosecution.

Others have deviated from this perception; they posit that Margai's stance in the matter is likely borne out of a genuine suspicion that the government is jittery, and his personal indulgence in the case is the best way to ensure a politically dispassionate trial, not that Margai is not averse to a coup, or would rather see this country in ashes than Berewa win the presidency.

Against the backdrop of a pending matter between Berewa and Charles Margai, concerns are heightened along lines of a grand conspiracy against the former, whom the opposition constantly portray as an 'enemy' of the people, a pathetic fallacy that has no place in the present dispensation. There are no permanent friends or enemies in politics.

TRC Launch Senior Secondary Version Report

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was established by the Government of Sierra Leone early 2000 in partnership with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology, on the 20th December 2005, launched its Senior Secondary School Version of the TRC Report at the GGEM Service in Freetown.

According to section 6(1) of the TRC Act, the commission was established to create an impartial historical record of violations or abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law related to the armed conflict to address impunity, respond to the needs of victims, promote reconciliation and prevent a repetition of the violence and abuses suffered.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, the Chairman of the occasion Mr. John Caulker said that the reasons for the launching was to review the past historical civil war event in Sierra Leone. He also said that the commission discovered that the seeds of discontent of the late 1980s and early 1990s could be traced to the colonial strategies of divide and rule and the undermining of the traditional system by the colonial power and successive governments. Mr. John Caulker further said that the war in Sierra Leone was waged largely by Sierra Leoneans against Sierra Leoneans. All sections specifically targeted civilians

In his contribution, the Minister of Education, Science and Technology Dr. Alpha Wurie in his final declaration of the Senior Secondary Schools Version Report of the TRC launched said among the main causes of the war were, wide spread greed, corruption and nepotism that deprived the nation of its dignity and reduced most people to a state of poverty. Many Sierra Leoneans, particularly the youth, lost all sense of hope in the future. Youths became easy prey for unscrupulous forces who exploited their dissatisfaction leading them to take revenge on their leaders and eventually turn against the people. Dr. Alpha T. Wurie also said that Sierra Leone's Civil War was characterised by indiscriminate violence. It broke long-standing rules, defiled cherished traditions, degraded human respect and tore apart, the very fabric of society and called on all Sierra Leonean to work hard to promote good governance and to forget the pains and atrocities of the war.

Cocorioko website

http://www.cocorioko.com/news_feature

SIRLEAF HAS TO MAKE TAYLOR'S TRIAL A PRIORITY

Saturday January 29, 2006

By Rev. Wilfred Leeroy Kabs-Kanu , Editor-In -Chief

There is no way that Ellen Johnson -Sirleaf will consider herself a true democrat or Rule of Law and human rights upholder if she continues to double-speak on the Charles Taylor fiasco. No President in Africa in recent times has come to power with the kind of pomp, pageantry and high expectations Ellen Johnson -Sirleaf did ..

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf's ascendancy to power stirred all kinds of positive passions and high expectations all over the world mainly because people know that she has the capacity and moral will to transform not only Liberia but the troubled West African region. Thus, it is not only Liberians who look forward to Sirleaf's rule with high hopes and fascinating dreams. West Africans know that behind any successful man, organization , nation and region , there is a woman. Therefore, people in West Africa hope to benefit one way or the other from the expected astute leadership of Mrs. Sirleaf.

However, if West Africans too must benefit from Ellen's rule, she must incline her ears to the millions of people crying for justice . Mrs. Sirleaf , as somebody who had been at the forefront of the campaign against injustice and bad leadership in Liberia , knows too well that there will no peace anywhere if there is no justice.

The cries of millions of West Africans for justice have to be heard. Right now, thousands of people in Liberia , Sierra Leone and Guinea are hurting because Charles Taylor imported his war machine from his own country, Liberia, into their nations. But for Charles Taylor, Sierra Leone in particular would not have been lying in ruins today.

Before Taylor unleashed his demons of terror into Sierra Leone, the nation was making an impressive stride into multi-party democracy after the then President, Late Gen. Joseph Saidu Momoh, caved in to pressure from the international community to allow the country to transform into a multi-party democracy. Many political parties had been formed and there was hope in the political future of the country.

Sierra Leone still had economic problems but certainly not as worse as it is today after the war destroyed the economy completely. The standard of living of Sierra Leoneans would have been much improved today if Taylor had not maliciously and vengefully imported war into the diamond-rich country. Taylor deserves blame as much as Foday Sankoh because he provided the arms and ammunition and initial economic clout which Sankoh used to invade Sierra Leone.

Because of Charles Taylor, thousands of Sierra Leoneans are still mourning. The tears have still not been wiped out of their eyes after they lost their sons, daughter, brothers, cousins, fathers, mothers, aunts, uncles, neighbours, townsmates and the like during the Taylor-sponsored war.

Sierra Leoneans therefore do not like to hear Mrs Sirleaf saying that the prosecution of Taylor is not her priority now. These words sound insensitive and selfish in their ears. Does Mrs. Sirleaf want to tell Sierra Leoneans that what she deems her priority is more important than the lives that were wasted needlessly by Charles Taylor? Is her priority more important than the thousands of amputees hobbling around the nation in excruciating suffering? Is her priority more important than International Rule of Law and justice?

We do not want to believe it. We think that whatever goals Mrs. Sirleaf has set for herself and Liberia will not be undermined by Charles Taylor's prosecution. Infact, we think that not expediting Taylor's prosecution will erode not only Mrs. Sirleaf's support base at home, but her international credibility and acceptability. We think that Mrs. Sirleaf has a moral duty here to her nation, to Sierra Leone and other West African countries hurt by Taylor, and she must do the moral thing to ask Olusegun Obasanjo to hand over Taylor to the Special Court.

We are waiting on Mrs. Sirleaf to stop her double-speaking and procrastination on this Taylor issue.

VOA ENGLISH SERVICE

January 27, 2006

Liberia's New President Faces Pressure Over Predecessor

Abidjan

Liberia's new president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, is facing increased pressure to make sure her predecessor Charles Taylor is surrendered to the war crimes court in Sierra Leone. The deposed former warlord turned president is still living in exile in Nigeria, despite mounting demands to have him go on trial.

A coalition of civil society groups calling itself "Campaign against Impunity" released a statement in Monrovia Friday asking Mrs. Sirleaf to seize on her new leadership and request Nigeria surrender Taylor to the U.N.-backed special court in Sierra Leone. Members of the group said such a position could tip the balance and show she stands for accountability and the rule of law.

Mrs. Sirleaf has said she would ask for Taylor's handover in due course of consultations with regional leaders. During the campaign, she said she regretted her past support for the warlord, at one point saying he should level Liberia so it could be rebuilt.

When it was clear she had won the election, the top European Union vote observer, Max van der Berg, told journalists he was expecting a clearer signal on the Taylor issue. "When it comes to ex-President Charles Taylor, you need cooperation," said Max van der Berg. "We all know where he is now, today. We all know the complexity of that situation. At least it needs a government, a new government here, who says, yes, he should face court. And that already, with the Senate and the House of Representatives, would be a fairly positive step."

But Liberia's new legislature is filled with former warlords and allies of Taylor. Calling for Taylor to face charges would also expose them.

When asked whether the Taylor question should be put to a referendum, the European observer dismissed the idea.

"It's not up to us as individuals, neither as people, just simply to say if somebody has done crimes against mankind, at least that he is alleged of it, let's put it very carefully, if he is alleged of that, then it's not up to somebody to say, well we could make a referendum to do it a different way," he said. "There are international laws, rules, and they are set by the international community. Liberia is part of that international community and wants to be a part of it and come out of the dark of the past into this new area of light. And having that light, it means being part of it. And there's no way to [mess] around with these things in another way. You need to cooperate, there's no other way."

Liberia's long civil war ended when Taylor fled into exile in Nigeria in late 2003. President Olusegun Obasanjo said he would allow him to remain in Nigeria, as long as he didn't meddle in regional affairs. He has also said he would allow Taylor's handover to the war crimes court in Sierra Leone, if that was the request of Liberia's newly-elected government.

Liberian civil society leaders would prefer that Taylor be tried in Sierra Leone, since a court already exists there, even though Taylor used many of the same methods in Liberia he is accused of spreading to Sierra Leone - such as trading weapons for diamonds, and abducting and drugging children to turn them into looters and killers.

Liberian journalist Philip Wesseh believes Mrs. Sirleaf has enough to deal with in her new presidency. He also says it's more of an international issue than a Liberian one. "Taylor is not being charged for crimes committed in Liberia," said Wesseh. "He's being charged for crimes allegedly committed in Sierra Leone. He was indicted by a court outside Liberia so it's an outside situation, so I believe they need to give the person a chance. There should be no pressure on Madam Sirleaf for the Taylor factor. She has too much to do, too much to think about."

He fears the international community could sanction Mrs. Sirleaf if she is seen as doing too little on the Taylor issue. "There might be certain measures by the international community against Mrs. Sirleaf's government because of Charles Taylor," said the journalist. "[But] she doesn't have control, it's the international community. If Taylor were indicted by a court in Liberia, [then] as president of Liberia, [Mrs. Sirleaf] would have jurisdiction, but with that she doesn't have the jurisdiction, so Mrs. Sirleaf should be left alone. Let the international community handle the Charles Taylor factor."

Liberian and Nigerian newspapers have been reporting that U.S. and European pressure on Nigeria to send Taylor to Sierra Leone is building, but so far such reports have not changed the situation - Taylor remains free, living in a luxurious villa, in Calabar, southeastern Nigeria, while his cell at the detention center on the grounds of the Freetown court remains empty.

Taylor 'not priority' for Liberia

Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf says prosecuting her predecessor Charles Taylor is "secondary" to her agenda.

Her comments came after more than 300 Liberian and international rights bodies wrote to her, calling for Mr Taylor to be tried in Sierra Leone.

Mr Taylor is accused of backing the notorious RUF rebels in Sierra Leone's 1990s civil war.

Mr Taylor is in exile in Nigeria after leaving power in 2003.

Addressing her first news conference since taking office on 16 January, President Johnson-Sirleaf said her post-war government does not want "the Mr Taylor issue to be the issue that constraints us or the issue that causes us not to be able to do what we have to do here for the Liberian people.

"So we want to see it as a secondary issue, even though it may be of utmost concern to the international community," she said.

'Rule of law'

On Thursday, the Campaign Against Impunity - a coalition of about 300 African and international civil society groups - said in an open letter to Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf that the new president should take prompt action to ensure that Mr Taylor faces trial in Sierra Leone.

"President Johnson-Sirleaf said her presidency will stand for accountability and the rule of law," said Ezekial Pajibo, executive director of Liberia's Centre for Democratic Empowerment, in a statement circulated by US-based Human Rights Watch.

"Now she has a major opportunity to do just that. We hope she will seize this chance by requesting Nigeria to surrender Charles Taylor to the [UN-backed] Special Court for Sierra Leone."

Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf said she had discussed Mr Taylor with Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo but declined to reveal any details of their conversation.

Mr Obasanjo has rejected previous calls to send Mr Taylor to Sierra Leone but has said he would be willing to hand Mr Taylor over to an elected Liberian government.

Mr Taylor stood down as rebels threatened to seize the capital, Monrovia. His departure into exile was part of a deal backed by African and Western powers, which ultimately led to last year's elections, won by Mrs Johnson-Sirleaf.

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Signs that Taylor may be transferred

Published in: Legalbrief Today

Date: Mon 30 January 2006

Category: General

Issue No: 1510

Security has been beefed up at the Special Court in Sierra Leone, a move which observers say could mean that former Liberian leader Charles Taylor may be extradited from Nigeria to Freetown.

The security at the court, reports *The Inquirer*, includes UN-trained contingents from the Irish and Swedish battalions on a Quick Reaction Operations. The Special Court has indicted 13 persons, of which nine are in its custody. Taylor, and Johnny Paul Koroma are still at large. Two indictees, Sam Bokarie and Foday Sankoh are said to be dead.

Full report in The Inquirer

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Liberia: New President Must Act Now On Taylor

Human Rights Watch (Washington, DC)

PRESS RELEASE

January 27, 2006

Posted to the web January 27, 2006

Liberia's new president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, should take prompt action to ensure that former Liberian President Charles Taylor is surrendered to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Campaign Against Impunity said today in an open letter to President Johnson-Sirleaf, who was inaugurated on January 16.

The Campaign Against Impunity is a coalition of some 300 African and international civil society groups that was formed to press for Charles Taylor's surrender to the Special Court. Liberian partners in the Campaign are holding a press conference today in Monrovia at 2 p.m. GMT to further demonstrate their support in the fight against impunity in the sub-region.

"President Johnson-Sirleaf said her presidency will stand for accountability and the rule of law," said Ezekial Pajibo, executive director of Centre for Democratic Empowerment, a Liberian organization that is part of the Campaign. "Now she has a major opportunity to do just that. We hope she will seize this chance by requesting Nigeria to surrender Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone."

The Special Court was set up in 2002 to try those most responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during Sierra Leone's armed conflict. Charles Taylor has been accused of 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity against the people of Sierra Leone by the Special Court. The crimes include killings, mutilations, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, abduction, and the use of forced labor by Sierra Leonean armed opposition groups.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo has thus far refused to surrender Charles Taylor to the Special Court since 2003 when Taylor went to Nigeria. However, President Obasanjo has indicated since then that he would consider surrendering Charles Taylor upon a request from a duly-elected Liberian government.

The Campaign Against Impunity welcomed President Johnson-Sirleaf's comments to reporters on January 20 that she would ask for Charles Taylor's surrender to the Special Court. Liberia's new president said she would ask for Taylor's handover in due course in consultation with regional leaders.

President Sirleaf-Johnson urgently needs to demonstrate leadership on this issue now. The Special Court indicted Charles Taylor almost three years ago, and it is already advanced in its operations, faces major funding difficulties, and will confront increasing international pressure to complete operations.


"A request from the new Liberian president for Charles Taylor's surrender to the Special Court should not be needed given Taylor's outstanding indictment," said Aloysius Toe, founder and director of the Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy, a Liberian organization that is part of the Campaign. "But it could prove determinative. We are looking to President Johnson-Sirleaf to manifest the leadership needed to ensure that justice is done."

The Campaign stressed that Charles Taylor's trial must take place in accordance with international law and international standards for fair trial, including the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

"The Special Court won't be around forever," said Sulaiman Jabati, executive secretary of the Coalition for Justice and Accountability, a Sierra Leonean organization that is part of the Campaign. "Time is of the essence for President Johnson-Sirleaf to act. The victims of war crimes in Sierra Leone deserve nothing less."

For a copy of the letter sent to President Johnson-Sirleaf, please go to:
<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/26/liberi12538.htm>

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Tired of Taylor, Liberia leader focuses on rebuilding

Fri Jan 27, 2006 12:20 PM ET

By Alphonso Toweh

MONROVIA (Reuters) - Liberians should concentrate on rebuilding their wrecked country rather than chasing war criminals, its new president said on Friday, adding she was tired of talking about her exiled predecessor Charles Taylor.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, a Harvard-trained economist sworn in as Africa's first elected woman president on January 16, faces foreign pressure to ask Nigeria to extradite Taylor to be tried for war crimes before a U.N.-backed court in Sierra Leone.

Human rights campaigners insist Taylor must face trial for killings, mutilations and rape committed during more than a decade of conflict in Liberia and neighboring Sierra Leone.

But some fear trying the former warlord could upset Liberia's fragile peace established since he left in 2003.

"When it comes to Mr. Taylor I am not embarrassed, I am just tired of it," Johnson-Sirleaf told reporters at the Executive Mansion in Liberia's capital Monrovia, a war-shattered city lacking mains electricity and safe running water.

"We just want to get on with our national development agenda. We do not want Mr. Taylor's issue to be the issue that constrained us ... to be (the) issue that causes us not to be able to do what we have to do here for Liberian people."

Even as Johnson-Sirleaf appealed for people to focus on rebuilding the country, a coalition of local and international human rights groups sent her a letter renewing their call for her to ensure Taylor was brought to trial.

TWIN WARS

The 17 war crimes charges have been lodged against Taylor in a special U.N.-backed court probing Sierra Leone's brutal war, which stemmed from Liberia's own civil war that Taylor started in 1989 and which killed an estimated 250,000 people.

Some 50,000 more died in Sierra Leone, where Taylor is accused of supplying guns to rebel fighters in return for rough diamonds dug from muddy pits near the border between the two countries.

"While a request from you for Taylor's surrender to the Special Court should not be needed given his outstanding indictment, it could prove determinative," said the letter sent to Johnson-Sirleaf by the "Campaign Against Impunity", which said it represented some 300 human rights and other groups.

Nigeria, which offered Taylor refuge in 2003 as part of an internationally brokered deal to end another bout of fighting in Liberia, has said it will only hand him over to an elected Liberian government and will not send him to a third country.

Johnson-Sirleaf said she had discussed Taylor with Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo at this week's African Union summit in Sudan but declined to give details of what was said.

The Campaign Against Impunity said the window of opportunity to try Taylor in Sierra Leone was rapidly closing as the Special Court would come under international pressure to conclude its work. The group urged Johnson-Sirleaf to ensure Taylor was brought to justice.

"We believe the victims of the crimes committed in Sierra Leone -- including murder, rape and other sexual violence,

mutilation and widespread use of child soldiers -- deserve nothing less," it said in its letter.

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**UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 27 Jan 2006**

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International Clips on Liberia**Taylor's indictment not immediate priority: Sirleaf**

MONROVIA, Jan 27, 2006 (AFP) - Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Friday said handing over former strongman Charles Taylor to a war crimes court in Sierra Leone was not an urgent priority for Liberia. She said she was fed up with the international community's preoccupation with the issue of the warlord turned president, now in exile in Nigeria, when her country's faces more pressing developmental needs.

"We want to see it as a secondary issue," she told her first news conference since her inauguration 12 days ago. "Even though it may be an utmost concern to the international community, for us in Liberia we want to get on with our agenda," she said.

Liberia: New President Must Act Now on Taylor

Source: Human Rights Watch

(Monrovia, January 27, 2006) - Liberia's new president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, should take prompt action to ensure that former Liberian President Charles Taylor is surrendered to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Campaign Against Impunity said today in an open letter to President Johnson-Sirleaf, who was inaugurated on January 16. The Campaign Against Impunity is a coalition of some 300 African and international civil society groups that was formed to press for Charles Taylor's surrender to the Special Court.

Liberia's New President Says Education a Top Priority

By Cole Mallard
Washington
26 January 2006

A commission that works on behalf of women and children says Liberia's new president is committed to education -- and is willing to do what it takes to achieve it. Members of the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children recently traveled to Liberia and met with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. The commission, based in New York, wanted to see how well the country is educating its children. The leader of the delegation, Lori Heninger, met with Ms. Sirleaf to talk about Liberia's needs.

International Clips on West Africa**UN withdraws 400 civilian staffers from Cote d'Ivoire**

ABIDJAN, Jan 26, 2006 (Xinhua via COMTEX) -- A group of 400 non-essential civilian staffers of the UN mission in **Cote d'Ivoire** withdrew to Gambia and Senegal Thursday for fear of fresh violence against UN personnel.

The mission said in a statement that this was a temporary evacuation, which left another 800 UN civilian workers in the country along with some 11,000 UN and French peacekeepers. An official of the UN mission, who asked to remain anonymous, told Xinhua that about 400 civilian staffers and policemen would fly to Gambia and Senegal, amid fears of fresh violence against UN agencies because the Security Council might slap sanctions soon on people blocking the peace process.

Local Media – Newspapers

President Makes Additional Cabinet Nominations

(Daily Observer and The Analyst)

- An Executive Mansion press statement said yesterday that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf had appointed William Bull as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marcus Dahn as Deputy Foreign Minister for Administration and Morris Saytumah as Minister of State for Finance and Economic Affairs. President Johnson-Sirleaf also appointed Jackson E. Doe as Minister of Post and Telecommunications, Bankie King Akerele as Minister of Commerce and Commany Wesseh as Deputy Foreign Minister for International Economic Cooperation and Integration.
- The statement added that the President appointed Francis Karpeh as Deputy Finance Minister for Administration, Dew Mason as Advisor to the President and Special Envoy and Luseni Donzo as Deputy Minister of Public Works for Technical Services and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation. She also nominated former Margibi Senator David Menyongar as Minister of State for Legislative Affairs and El Mohammed Sheriff as Advisor to the President and Special Envoy, Marbue Richards as Deputy Minister for Sports and Krubo Kollie as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Legal Counsel at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

President Declares Assets

(New Democrat)

- In fulfillment of her pledge that all government officials will declare their assets before assuming office, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf yesterday declared her assets, which are the same as presented to the National Elections Commission as part of qualification requirements to participate in the 11 October presidential and legislative elections.

Finance Minister-Designate Faces Senate Scrutiny Today

(The Analyst and Heritage)

- The Senate Committee on Budget and Finance said yesterday that it will today conduct confirmation hearing for Finance Minister-designate Antoinette Sayeh—the first cabinet nominee to face legislative scrutiny.

UN Secretary-General Names New Sanctions Monitoring Team

(The Analyst and New Democrat)

- United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan yesterday appointed a five-member Panel of Experts to monitor the renewed sanctions regime the Security Council imposed on Liberia after receiving reports that Liberia's natural resources were not being used to benefit its people. The new Panel of Experts is comprised of Arthur Blundell of Canada, who will be the chairman, Damien Callamand of France, Casper Fithen of the United Kingdom, Tommy Garnett of Sierra Leone and Raiva Bhushan Sinha of India, Mr Annan said in a letter to the Security Council.

Peacekeepers Identify with Orphans

(The Analyst and Heritage)

- In continuation of its humanitarian activities, the UNMIL Sector One Nigerian Contingent (NIGCON) recently donated food items and beverages to the Alfred Agnes Orphanage in Brewerville outside Monrovia and Our Lady of Fatima Rehabilitation Center on Somalia Drive to enable them cater for children under their care, a NIGCON press release said yesterday.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored yesterday at 18:45 pm)*

President Makes Additional Cabinet Nominations

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

United States Technical Experts Arrive Tomorrow

- Speaking at a special reception for US State Department Culture Exchange Program Alumni, United States Ambassador Donald Booth said that a team of United States experts would arrive in Liberia shortly with funds to train people in the rule of law. He said that the funds would also go toward rehabilitating roads. He said that the United States would remain engaged in restructuring the security sector.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

House Speaker Constitutes Statutory Committees

- In a press statement issued in Monrovia, the Speaker of the House of Representatives Edwin Snowe has constituted seven statutory committees and named their chairpersons.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

World Bank will Give More Money to Liberia if it Remains Transparent

- In an interview yesterday, World Bank Country Director for Liberia Mats Karlsson said that the institution would commit more money to Liberia if it improves its record of mismanagement and unaccountability.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

ELBS RADIO *(News monitored yesterday at 19:00 pm)*

Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment Donates over US\$30,000 to complete a Rural School Block

- The Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment has donated more than US\$30 million to help complete and furnish a primary school block in Mamba Kaba District in Margibi County, the Agency's Executive Director Ramsses Kumanyan said yesterday.

STAR RADIO *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Police Inspector-General Denies Misusing Salary Checks for Newly Trained Officers

- Briefing journalists yesterday, Liberia National Police Inspector-General Joseph Kerkula denied that he had received the salary checks for December intended for the newly trained officers but confirmed that the National Transitional Government had paid up the salaries for November.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Jeddi Armah at armahj@un.org.

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International Clips on Liberia

The Hartford Courant
EDITORIAL, 27 January 2006

WOMEN IN CHARGE: FROM PRISONERS TO PRESIDENTS

Two big steps for womankind just took place. Liberia's Ellen Johnson Sirleaf this month became the first woman inaugurated as president of an African country. And pediatrician Michelle Bachelet, also this month, won the Chilean presidency by a wide margin, becoming the first female president in Latin America elected on her own merits (not to fill the spot of her late husband).

Liberia and Chile are considered Third World. The irony is inescapable. While women become presidents in underdeveloped countries, the U.S. president cannot manage to nominate a qualified woman to replace Sandra Day O'Connor on the U.S. Supreme Court. Two steps forward for the Third World, a major step backward for the United States.

Johnson Sirleaf was imprisoned in the 1980s by the junta of Samuel Doe and exiled. During her exile in Africa, she worked in banking and as director of the U.N. Development Program Regional Bureau for Africa. She also collaborated with groups in exile trying to bring peace to her war-torn country. In her youth, Bachelet was also the victim of a totalitarian regime. Her father, a general who had supported President Salvador Allende, was tortured by the U.S.-supported dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet and died in prison of a heart attack. Both Bachelet and her mother were later imprisoned at the Chilean torture center known as Villa Grimaldi. In another ironic twist, ex-dictator Pinochet is now fighting to avoid prison for human rights abuses committed at that torture center during his administration.

27 Jan 2006 Business Day (South Africa)**Light arms make for fragile truces.**

Ernest Harsch

Light arms make for fragile truces more than two years after the official end of Liberia's civil war, its weapons still fuel instability. The new Liberian national police, often aided by peacekeepers from the United Nations (UN) mission in Liberia, sweep through Monrovia neighbourhoods or descend on villages to seize arms.

So far, there is not a serious threat of armed criminal activity or a resumption of political violence, given the overwhelming dominance of the peacekeeping mission, says Napoleon Abdullahi, a small-arms adviser with the UN Development Programme (UNDP). But unless many of these arms are gathered and destroyed, once the UN mission begins to scale down, the problem of armed violence and criminality will come up.

No free flight home for Liberia troops

Source: IRISH INDEPENDENT Date: January 28, 2006

Tom Brady

FREE holiday flights home for Irish peacekeepers on duty in Liberia have been ruled out by Defence Minister Willie O'Dea. The average cost of a return commercial scheduled flight from Dublin to the Liberian capital, Monrovia, via Brussels, is more than 2,000 and involves a 16-hour journey. But special arrangements ordered by former Defence Minister Michael Smith allows the soldiers to fly home for three weeks' leave at a cost of 500.

01/27/2006 15:27:41

Conservatives attack Panama and Liberia over oil spill funds

Flags branded 'freeloaders' in parliamentary debate, writes David Osler

Source: LLOYDS LIST

BRITAIN'S opposition Conservative Party has launched an attack on flags of convenience, repeatedly branding Liberia and Panama as 'nothing more than freeloaders' on new oil spill compensation arrangements.

International Clips on West Africa

UN, residents prepare for more Ivory Coast unrest

By Peter Murphy

ABIDJAN, Jan 27 (Reuters) - The U.N. mission in Ivory Coast reinforced walls around its main base on Friday after it was attacked by rioters last week, and France warned citizens in its former colony there could be more unrest in the coming days.

The U.N. Security Council has said it is ready to impose long-delayed sanctions against people seen as obstructing Ivory Coast's peace process.

Diplomats say Charles Ble Goude, leader of the Young Patriots group loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo behind last week's riots, was likely to top the list of sanctions targets. There are fears his organisation, which can put thousands of supporters onto the streets in a few hours, could cause further mayhem.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored yesterday at 18:45 pm)*

President Wants Public Properties Retained

- At a press conference in Monrovia yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf appealed to former officials in possession of government property, especially vehicles, to return them and avoid embarrassment.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Rights Groups Urge President to Surrender Taylor to Special Court

- A consortium of human rights organizations comprised of the Center for Democratic Empowerment, Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy and the Association of Environmental Lawyers of Liberia or Green Advocates yesterday called on President Johnson-Sirleaf to ensure that former President Charles Taylor is handed over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone for prosecution.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

STAR RADIO (*News culled from website today at 09:00 am*)

President Says Liberian Passport Is Devolved by Criminal Activities

- President Johnson-Sirleaf told journalists in Monrovia yesterday that five countries, including the United Kingdom and Spain had resolved not to issue visas to holders of Liberian Passport because it has been "criminalized."

Finance Minister-Designate Urges Financial Management System

- Appearing for confirmation hearing yesterday, Finance Minister-designate Antoinette Sayeh said that Liberia needed to put into place a financial management system to revive the shattered economy.

Liberia-Sierra Leone Border Remains Closed

- Sierra Leone Police Inspector-General Brima Acha Kamara warned yesterday that Sierra Leone's border with Liberia remains officially closed, saying that any travel over the border must be cleared by the police.

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Saddam walks out in trial uproar

Former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein walked out of court amid uproar within minutes of the resumption of his murder trial under a new presiding judge.

He left in protest after his defence team walked out, and was followed by two more of his co-defendants.

The walkouts came after the new chief judge, Raouf Abdul Rahman, had Saddam's half brother and co-defendant Barzan al-Tikriti removed from the courtroom.

Saddam and seven others are on trial for the 1982 killing of 148 villagers.

They could face the death penalty if convicted of the killings, which followed an assassination attempt on Saddam Hussein in the village of Dujail.

The trial continued for some time with half of the defendants missing until the judge adjourned it until Wednesday.

New court rules

The court proceedings started with the new chief judge saying that he would not tolerate any defendants making political speeches or disobeying his authority.

His predecessor, Judge Rizgar Amin, had resigned earlier this month after criticism that he had been too lenient towards the defendants.

Mr Tikriti, a former Iraqi intelligence chief who is suffering from cancer, launched into a lengthy complaint about his medical condition and treatment.

Judge Rahman ordered the forcible removal of Mr Tikriti, who shouted that the court was "the daughter of a whore" as he was dragged away.

The judge then rounded on the defence lawyers, saying that they had contributed to the atmosphere that allowed defendants to think they could make lengthy speeches and disrespect the authority of the court.

Next, a defence lawyer was ejected from the court, and as a result the rest of Saddam's defence team stormed out, despite the judge warning "any lawyer who walks out will not be allowed back into this courtroom".

Heated exchange

The former Iraqi leader then launched into a vigorous exchange with the judge, telling him that he wanted to leave and be tried in absentia.

I am the judge, you are the defendant - you have to obey me
Judge Raouf Abdul Rahman

"I want to leave the court," Saddam Hussein demanded of the judge, who in turn ordered the former leader out.

"I led you for 35 years and you order me out of the court?" the former Iraqi president responded angrily.

"I am the judge, you are the defendant. You have to obey me," the judge hit back.

He accused Judge Rahman of abusing his rights as a defendant who was "innocent until proven guilty".

As the argument became more heated Saddam Hussein banged his hands on the dock and hurled insults at the judge.

Eventually, the judge said that the defendant should also be removed and he was led from the court too, shouting "Down with the traitors!" as he went.

'Justice undermined'

Judge Rahman then appointed four new defence lawyers, but two more of the defendants, Taha Yassin Ramadan and Awad Hamed al-Bandar, said they did not approve of their appointment and they also left the court.

HAVE YOUR SAY

This trial seems to be a real disaster and absolute chaos

Monika, Slovakia

The trial then resumed with an anonymous female witness giving evidence about events in Dujail from behind a curtain until it was adjourned until Wednesday.

Saad Djebbar, an international lawyer and commentator on Middle East politics, told the BBC that the chaotic scenes meant that the whole trial was being undermined:

"I think it was a big mistake that this trial was held in Iraq because the judge, you cannot find a person, one individual today in Iraq - judge, lawyer, prosecutor who is impartial vis-a-vis Saddam Hussein. Either they are with him or against him."

Story from BBC NEWS:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/middle_east/4659274.stm

Published: 2006/01/29 12:57:10 GMT

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