

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Thursday, 4 February 2010

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

Thursday, 4 February 2010

Taylor Denies Repression Of Press Freedom

Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor has denied reports of the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) that his government was repressive of press freedom. A report of the CPJ read in court by the Prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of harassment and imprisonment of several Journalists. The Prosecution also alleged that Mr. Taylor closed down several media institutions during his presidency. John Kollie transcribes the Hague reports

for the BBC World Service Trust...

Based on the account of the CPJ, the Prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of operating a government that was repressive and intolerant of press freedom.

The Prosecution recalled that Taylor's government arrested and charged Journalists Joseph Bartuah, Bobby Tapson, Abdulai Dukuly and Jerome Dalieh, all of The News Newspaper with espionage in 2001.

The Prosecution quoted the



CPJ, saying the Journalists were imprisoned for reporting that the Taylor government wasted money repairing a helicopter and producing Christmas Cards.

Lead Prosecution Lawyer, Brenda Hollis reminded Mr. Taylor of his alleged unfriendly attitude towards the press when he was President of Liberia.

But Mr. Taylor told the court that some media institutions were closed because they failed to pay taxes. He said some religious stations that deviated from their religious broadcast were also warned not to engage in politics.

Meanwhile, the International

Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone have begun alternating the use of courtroom number two between Congolese Rebel Leader, Thomas Lubanga and Former Liberian Leader Charles Taylor.

The ICC used courtroom two Monday from 9:30a.m to 1:30pm for the Lubanga trial, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone heard Mr. Taylor's testimonies from 3pm to 7:30pm Netherlands' time.

According to a release from the Special Court, this rotational use of courtroom two would continue vice versus until early April.

Premier News
Thursday, 4 February 2010

Taylor Accused Of Helping Rebels Consolidate Gains

When former Liberian president Charles Taylor helped secure the release of United Nations peacekeepers held hostage by Sierra Leonean rebels ten years ago, he was really trying to help the rebels gain more control over his neighboring country, prosecutors alleged today. Mr. Taylor disagreed: the safety of the hostages was forefront on his mind, he said.

Prosecutors further questioned Mr. Taylor's motives in calling for a ceasefire during the hostage crisis, arguing that it would have helped the rebels consolidate control over a key town, Masiaka. Such a ceasefire, prosecutors argued, would have placed the rebels closer to the capital, Freetown, and also provided a bigger buffer zone between the rebel-held diamond mining fields and government-controlled areas. Mr. Taylor denied being motivated by the enlargement of rebel control in Sierra Leone.

"I don't know the different positions in Sierra Leone where they (the Revolutionary United Front) were," Mr. Taylor said during his cross-examination at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Lead prosecution counsel, Brenda Hollis, today focused her questioning of Mr. Taylor on the May 2000 hostage-taking by RUF rebels, who captured hundreds of UN peacekeepers in Sierra Leone — an action that provoked international outrage. Mr. Taylor, who was sitting president of Liberia at the time, negotiated with the RUF rebels and secured the release of the UN peacekeepers. Prosecutors have long alleged that Mr. Taylor was able to secure the release of the UN hostages because he had some special control over the RUF rebel commanders. Mr. Taylor has denied these suggestions, saying that his involvement in the release of the peacekeepers was done mainly because he was asked by the international community to intervene and get the rebels to release the hostages, which he did.

During today's testimony, the court heard that when the RUF rebels released the first set of 139 UN peacekeepers, Mr. Taylor told the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) in Sierra Leone at the time, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, that he wanted an "immediate cessation of hostilities" in Sierra Leone in order to facilitate the release of the remaining hostages.

In doing so, he was concerned that "the lives of the remaining hostages would be at risk if the pro-government forces continued pushing the rebels out of the areas that they had taken," according to Mr. Taylor.

Ms. Hollis noted that at the time of the release of the UN hostages, the RUF rebels had occupied the town of Masiaka, a strategic position that was in proximity to both the country's capital Freetown and the diamond mining areas.

"And also Mr. Taylor, had the RUF been left in place in Masiaka, that would have put them much closer to the capital of Freetown, wouldn't it?" Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor.

"I disagree with your proposition," Mr. Taylor responded.

"And it would have given a larger buffer zone between the diamond areas and the government held-territories. Isn't that correct, Mr. Taylor?" Ms. Hollis enquired further.

In his response, the former president said that "your proposition, maybe you could very well be correct, but I disagree that that was foremost on my mind. I was mostly concerned about the lives of the hostages."

In response to Ms. Hollis's suggestion that while requesting an immediate ceasefire he had actually mentioned the town Masiaka to the SRSG, Mr. Taylor said that "I could have based on his

statements to me and the issue was we have people in captivity, there is no point attacking, you could even kill them. And if I mentioned it at that time, it was based on maybe his explanation. My answer to you is that I don't know the geography of Sierra Leone to determine as to whether it was an important junction."

Also in his cross-examination today, Mr. Taylor agreed with Ms. Hollis that he paid about 1.8 million United States dollars to US firms to do public relations work for his government, which aimed at improving the image of Liberia to the international community. Asked by Ms. Hollis whether that money was not too much of taxpayers' money of a war-ravaged country to be spent on public relations work, Mr. Taylor said that "it's subjective. For me, that was not enough because I know other governments that pay up to five million US dollars to firms in Washington DC, so that was not enough for me."

Mr. Taylor maintained that he was justified to spend such amount of money because "most little governments, if you don't lobby in Washington, you really get smashed."

Mr. Taylor again today dismissed prosecution suggestions that the Liberian government under his presidency did not respect fundamental human rights. When Ms. Hollis pointed out reports of police brutality in Liberia under his presidency, Mr. Taylor maintained that he was not informed of such actions by the Liberian police force.

Proceedings in the Taylor trial will not be held tomorrow as the judges will be using the day to attend to other matters.

Mr. Taylor's cross-examination continues on today.

Credit charlestaylortrial.org

Premier News

Thursday, 4 February 2010

Prison Receives UN Officials

The Prisons Department received on Sunday a three-man team of officials from the United Nations Department for Peacekeeping (UNDPK).



Director of Prisons, Moses A. Showers

The team, which is led by Gen. Orit Adato, Vice Chairman International Correction and Prison Association, will be in Sierra Leone for seven days, during which they will discuss with government and non-governmental organizations the state of the nation's prisons.

The other members of the team are Rtd. Lt. Col. Zur Kredo and Alexander McLean, a former magistrate.

They will assess the needs of the Prison Department with regard measures in place to facilitate the Control and Restraint of inmates as well as the application of the Rule of Law in the prisons.

The visitors began their tour of the nation's prisons facilities on Monday, with a visit to the Minister of Internal Affairs, Local Government and Rural

Development followed by another session with the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

Among other things the team discussed with their partners, the main problems, goals and aims of the project.

General Orit Adato and team also visited the Chief Justice and Consultant Master and Registrar of the High Court, as well as the Human Rights and Rule of Law Section of UNIPSIL on the same day.

On Tuesday, the team visited the maximum security prison at Pademba Road in Freetown, following which they went to the Detention Centre at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which is now being prepared to host female inmates.

They are also scheduled to

visit provincial prisons at Makeni, Magburaka, Mafanta Central Prison and the Kenema Male and Female Prisons.

According to the Deputy Director of Prisons, Alhaji Ibrahim Fofanah, all officers in charge of district prisons are supposed to assemble at their various headquarters on Thursday for an address on needs assessment by the members of the team.

Fofanah said the team will also visit the Prisons Training School at Waterloo, to assess infrastructural and capacity building needs.

The Assistant Director of Prisons, Denis K. Herman said the visit was a result of an appeal by the Director of Prisons, Moses A. Showers, to a senior UN officer for assistance towards the reform and development of the prison system.

"The Director attended the last International Correction and Prisons Association Annual General Meeting (11th) in Barbados in February 2009," said Herman.

"During the meeting, the Director highlighted the problems of the Sierra Leone Prison Service to Richard Kourie, the Correctional Adviser at the UNDPK and he promised to send a team of security officials for an assessment," he went on.

The team will depart from Sierra Leone on Sunday, February 7.

Awoko

Thursday, 4 February 2010

109 RSLAF depart for Dafur on peace keeping

By William Freeman

As the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces continues to contribute meaningfully to peace keeping operations around the world they are now also making their presence felt in the turbulent Somali Town of Dafur.

An advance party of 50 soldiers left for Dafur in December to prepare the ground after they were given an inspiring farewell message by President Koroma who is Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

Just a month later, the main body of 109 RSLAF personnel yesterday departed for Somalia to join the advance team in flying the green white and blue flag of Sierra Leone as the contribution to world peace.

With this representation Sierra Leone's contingent has now become part of the United Nation's Peace Keeping Mission in Dafur.

The advanced party which left in December mainly comprised of technical personnel who went to set up the camp before the main body of Peace Keepers arrive.

Speaking to the Head of the Communications Unit in the Military, Col. Milton disclosed that the contingent was led by Lt. Col. S.E.T Marrah.

Soldiers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces are presently engaged in peace keeping operations in several countries around the world including Lebanon and East Timor where they have been commended for their professionalism.

BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST

Tuesday, 2 February 2010

John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

The Prosecution of the Special Court said Mr. Charles Taylor had hidden motive for keeping Former Sierra Leone Rebel Leader, Sam Bockarie and hundreds of his fighters in Monrovia. But Mr. Taylor said Bockarie was not a threat to the Security of Sierra Leone. The Prosecution, in its cross-examination of the Former Liberian Leader Tuesday disclosed that Mr. Taylor as President of Liberia spent millions of dollars on international Public Relations firms to clean up the bad image of his government. Mr. Taylor admitted and said the millions spent was inadequate. John Kollie transcribes reports from The Hague for the BBC World Service Trust...

Prosecution Lawyer, Brenda Hollis said Mr. Taylor refused to surrender the Sierra Leone Rebel Leader after several appeals from the Sierra Leone Government. Miss Hollis told the court Mr. Taylor kept the Sierra Leone Rebels in Monrovia for reasons other than peace in that West African Country.

The Former Liberian President said he refused to repatriate Bockarie to Sierra Leone because the Former Rebel Leader posed no danger to the peace of that country in 1999. Several Leaders of the Revolutionary United Front which Sam Bockarie headed were tried and convicted for amputating and murdering thousands of civilians during the Sierra Leone decade long civil war.

The Prosecution also disclosed to the court on Tuesday that Mr. Taylor spent more than one million dollars from the national coffer of impoverished Liberia to fight the bad image of his government in the international Community.

The Prosecution told the court Mr. Taylor hired the services of Former U.S Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, and several public relations firms to improve his image. The Former Liberian Leader admitted spending this amount and further said the amount spent by him was insignificant.

Mean while, the Special Court in The Hague has announced that there would be no sitting on Wednesday for Mr. Taylor's trial. Court room number two where Mr. Taylor is being tried would be used for other trials.

The war crimes trial of Mr. Taylor resumes on Thursday.

BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST

Cocorioko

Thursday, 4 February 2010

Sierra Leone should not abandon Special Court detainees

By Alfred Munda SamForay

Email: asamforay@aol.com This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it * Tel: 232-78-601593 / 232-33-935024

Whether they are former rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), or people's heroes of the Sierra Leone Civil Defence Forces (CDF), the eight men serving prison sentences in the Republic of Rwanda for war crimes and crimes against humanity are citizens of the Republic of Sierra Leone who were sent to Rwanda on Sierra Leone passports. Unlike the United States detainees at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, the three AFRC, three RUF and two CDF detainees at Mpanga Prison in Rwanda are by no means beasts of no nation and should never be left to the goodwill and hospitality of the international community or the soon to dissolve Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The men in Rwanda are our prisoners held at our request by the international community for crimes allegedly committed by Sierra Leoneans against Sierra Leoneans in Sierra Leone. The body that sent these men to Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, is also the brainchild of the government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations. Of course, a more sensible government and a less hypocritical international community of nations would have chosen genuine reconciliation through the much ignored Truth & Reconciliation Commission. But then, no one has ever accused our world leaders of being the best and brightest outcome of the evolutionary process, if there was such a thing as human evolution.

Be that as it may, it is my judgment that it is morally indefensible, socially abhorrent and politically suicidal (for those who have ears to hear) to simply dump these men on the international community. History recalls that this was the same way Pontius Pilate tried to wash his hands of the execution of Jesus Christ as though it was simply a Jewish affair when in fact it was Rome which sentenced Jesus to death for alleged crimes against the Roman Empire. Rather than peace through reconciliation, we as a nation chose to selectively prosecute a rather inconsequential minority of the warring factions. The resulting prisoners of such an ill-conceived judicial process are our national responsibility, regardless of which country actually holds these prisoners on our behalf. Though the task of incarceration has been delegated to Rwanda, the responsibility for these men has not and cannot be delegated. Responsibility, I was told in one of my graduate management classes, can never be delegated.

To start with, His Excellency, President Ernest Koroma, though he had no hands in the creation of the Special Court and probably wished that both the court and its problematic prisoners simply vanished – but they won't – has a moral and constitutional responsibility to be properly informed of the whereabouts and well being of these our brethren and to assure the nation that they are serving their sentences honorably wherever they are presently. We are, however, reliably informed that since their arrival in Rwanda, our citizens have never been visited by the Sierra Leone Ambassador to Ethiopia who is also accredited to Rwanda to ascertain their well being. We, therefore, implore His Excellency both as Chief Magistrate of the Republic and Father of the Nation to ensure as our glorious National Anthem instructs us that "No harm on thy children may fall. That blessing and peace may descend on us all."

It is also my understanding that there is a body in the Sierra Leone House of Representatives called the Parliamentary Oversight Committee on Human Rights whose role it is to make sure that all Sierra Leoneans – even those judged to be the least among us – are accorded the same basic human rights accorded to all our citizens at home and abroad. One would expect then that with respect to the Special Court detainees the Speaker of the House and both the Majority and Minority Leaders should as a matter of urgency get together and send a member of the Human Rights Committee to Rwanda to ensure that our citizens there are accorded the same rights accorded to all international prisoners.

For their part as the loyal opposition, the SLPP, I am told, made a half-hearted appeal to the Registrar of the Special Court to keep these men from being taken from Sierra Leone. As they say in America, the Opposition was a day late and a dollar short. What the SLPP should have done was not to have established the Special Court in the first place. Having established the tribunal in concert with the United Nations, the former SLPP government should have done everything possible to exempt the CDF which they themselves created and armed after their own soldiers connived with the RUF to twice remove them from power from prosecution. Having failed to exempt the CDF from prosecution, the SLPP should have at the very least provided moral and humanitarian support in cash and kind to the families of the CDF detainees. Having failed to do all of the above and having been evicted from power by the people for neglect of duty, what the SLPP parliamentarians should now do is to seek some form of collective redemption by working with the ruling APC government to ensure that not only they CDF they betrayed but the rest of our citizens presently incarcerated in Rwanda are in good hands.

Next, the citizens of Sierra Leone, although ordinarily nonchalant and pre-occupied with their perpetual poverty, should take a break from their usual falling down and getting up and demand of both the government and the Special Court to account for these men presently incarcerated in a country most of us only know for war and genocide rather than as the final arbiter of international justice. Where is Rwanda, anyway? And who decided to take our citizens to a place most of us have never been to or have any desire to go to? I know that Guinea has always been a place of refuge for our deposed heads of state – Siaka Stevens and Tejan Kabbah, to be sure – but why was Rwanda so eager to rid us of eight of our less desirable citizens? These are some of the questions an enlightened citizenry should ask its leaders.

Finally, there are also various civil society and student human rights groups in this country who should demand both from government and the Special Court how our citizens are doing in Rwanda. That at least is one way some of these groups can justify their existence. I am strangely amused by one such group known as the Child Rights Constitution World which claims that it is cruel for boys ten years and below to join the Poro Society. I was nine years old when I was joined and I would rather prevail on this group to inquire about the welfare of our citizens incarcerated in Rwanda as a far more appropriate utilization of their idle time.

For the sake of transparency, I must state that I have spoken to some of the detainees in Rwanda including members of the CDF and RUF. I am also informed that efforts are underway at the Special Court to send members of the immediate families designated by the detainees to Rwanda for a visit. I am personally convinced that the men are faring well considering in the case of the CDF they are serving sentences for offences I don't believe they should have been charged with, in the first place. As it is written, "If it were not so, I would have told you."

As many of you well know by now, I will not allow people in government or the Special Court to sleep well if the CDF detainees are not sleeping well. After all, the CDF came into being by an Act of Parliament which hired, armed and mobilized them to go to war on our behalf when our own national army rebelled against the constitutional government and a less than honorable international community abandoned our people and fled the country en masse. We were all fully aware that the main purpose for arming the CDF was to kill since the main purpose of war is to kill or be killed; and that's why we deployed the CDF. But no one should accept my word as fact that the detainees are fairing well. I am not a representative of the Special Court, the Government of Sierra Leone or the UN both of which created the Special Court and its never ending saga.

In short, Sierra Leone should never abandon any of our citizens abroad, whether saints or sinners. History will judge both the government and the people of Sierra Leone very harshly if we abandon our collective and individual civic and constitutional responsibilities to the international community. Posterity will hold us in very low esteem if we fail to stand up for the rights of our own citizens whether we like them or not. It was a profound national shame to allow Chief Sam Hinga Norman to die in a foreign prison. Now we have another opportunity to prove ourselves worthy of the freedoms for which Mr. Norman and his colleagues of the CDF fought and died. As the one hundredth member of the United Nations, Sierra Leoneans should not allow others to fight for our freedom, usurp our system of justice and assign to others the responsibility for our own citizens and still maintain our national pride among the community of nations.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org

Tuesday, 2 February 2010

Liberia: As Charles Taylor Ensured The Release Of UN Hostages In Sierra Leone, His Request For A Cease Fire Was Aimed At Helping Sierra Leonean Rebel Forces To Establish More Control In The Country, Prosecutors Say

Alpha Sesay

When former Liberian president Charles Taylor helped secure the release of United Nations peacekeepers held hostage by Sierra Leonean rebels ten years ago, he was really trying to help the rebels gain more control over his neighboring country, prosecutors alleged today. Mr. Taylor disagreed: the safety of the hostages was forefront on his mind, he said.

Prosecutors further questioned Mr. Taylor's motives in calling for a ceasefire during the hostage crisis, arguing that it would have helped the rebels consolidate control over a key town, Masiaka. Such a ceasefire, prosecutors argued, would have placed the rebels closer to the capital, Freetown, and also provided a bigger buffer zone between the rebel-held diamond mining fields and government-controlled areas. Mr. Taylor denied being motivated by the enlargement of rebel control in Sierra Leone.

"I don't know the different positions in Sierra Leone where they (the Revolutionary United Front) were," Mr. Taylor said during his cross-examination at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Lead prosecution counsel, Brenda Hollis, today focused her questioning of Mr. Taylor on the May 2000 hostage-taking by RUF rebels, who captured hundreds of UN peacekeepers in Sierra Leone — an action that provoked international outrage. Mr. Taylor, who was sitting president of Liberia at the time, negotiated with the RUF rebels and secured the release of the UN peacekeepers. Prosecutors have long alleged that Mr. Taylor was able to secure the release of the UN hostages because he had some special control over the RUF rebel commanders. Mr. Taylor has denied these suggestions, saying that his involvement in the release of the peacekeepers was done mainly because he was asked by the international community to intervene and get the rebels to release the hostages, which he did.

During today's testimony, the court heard that when the RUF rebels released the first set of 139 UN peacekeepers, Mr. Taylor told the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) in Sierra Leone at the time, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, that he wanted an "immediate cessation of hostilities" in Sierra Leone in order to facilitate the release of the remaining hostages.

In doing so, he was concerned that "the lives of the remaining hostages would be at risk if the pro-government forces continued pushing the rebels out of the areas that they had taken," according to Mr. Taylor.

Ms. Hollis noted that at the time of the release of the UN hostages, the RUF rebels had occupied the town of Masiaka, a strategic position that was in proximity to both the country's capital Freetown and the diamond mining areas.

"And also Mr. Taylor, had the RUF been left in place in Masiaka, that would have put them much closer to the capital of Freetown, wouldn't it?" Ms. Hollis asked Mr. Taylor.

"I disagree with your proposition," Mr. Taylor responded.

"And it would have given a larger buffer zone between the diamond areas and the government held-territories. Isn't that correct, Mr. Taylor?" Ms. Hollis enquired further.

In his response, the former president said that "your proposition, maybe you could very well be correct, but I disagree that that was foremost on my mind. I was mostly concerned about the lives of the hostages."

Awoko Online

Wednesday, 3 February 2010

Charles Taylor denies CPJ report of repressive Press Freedom

Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor has denied reports by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ) that his government was repressive of press freedom.

A report by the CPJ read in court by the Prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of harassment and imprisonment of several journalists. The Prosecution also alleged that Mr. Taylor closed down several media institutions during his Presidency.

Based on the account of the CPJ, the Prosecution accused Mr. Taylor of operating a government that was repressive and intolerant of press freedom.

The Prosecution recalled that Taylor's government arrested and charged Journalists Joseph Bartuah, Bobby Tapson, Abdulai Dukuly and Jerome Dalieh, all of The News Newspaper with espionage in 2001. The Prosecution quoted the CPJ, saying the Journalists were imprisoned for reporting that the Taylor government wasted money repairing a helicopter and producing Christmas cards.

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But Mr. Taylor told the court that some media institutions were closed because they failed to pay taxes. He said some religious stations that deviated from their religious broadcasts were also warned not to engage in politics.

Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court and the Special Court for Sierra Leone have begun alternating the use of court room number two between Congolese rebel leader, Thomas Lubanga and former Liberian leader Charles Taylor.

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Star Radio (Liberia)

Tuesday, 2 February 2010

Prosecution heaps more charges on Taylor

Written by Matthias Daffah

The Prosecution in The Hague has accused former President Charles Taylor of hidden motive.

Mr. Taylor was accused of keeping former Sierra Leone rebel leader, Sam Bockarie and fighters in Monrovia.

Prosecution Lawyer, Brenda Hollis said Mr. Taylor refused to surrender Bockarie after several appeals from the Sierra Leone Government.

Miss Hollis told the court Mr. Taylor kept the Sierra Leone rebels in Monrovia for reasons other than peace in that West African Country.

Mr. Taylor told the court he refused to repatriate Bockarie to Sierra Leone because the former rebel leader posed no danger to the peace in 1999.

The Prosecution also disclosed Mr. Taylor spent more than one million dollars from the national coffers of impoverished Liberian

The prosecution said the money was spent to fight the bad image of his government in the international Community.

According to the prosecution Mr. Taylor hired the services of Former U.S Secretary of State for African Affairs, Herman Cohen, and several public relations firms to improve his image.

The Former Liberian Leader admitted spending the money but said the amount was insignificant.

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 3 February 2010

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

International Clips on Liberia

Johnson-Sirleaf lauds Nigeria's role in Liberia

Vanguard Feb 3, 2010

ADDIS-ABABA, ETHIOPIA—The Liberian President, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has praised Nigeria's role in rebuilding Liberia. The Liberian leader made this remark while addressing newsmen yesterday in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia. She described Nigeria as the biggest partner in the area of peace support operations, training of its soldiers and policemen and also providing doctors and teachers for its hospitals and schools. She also stated that Liberia is considering ending the peace support operations in 2011, adding that peacekeepers had been reduced from 15,000 to 8,000 as Liberia's police and soldiers had been trained to take over. Sirleaf in response to a question on the challenges faced by Liberian rebuilding the country said in all four pillars of development in Liberia, there is a strong African presence.

3 Million Bail Set for Liberian in Bucks "Facebook" Party Shooting

www.kyw1060.com

A Liberian national is being held in Bucks County, Pa. in lieu of \$3 million bail, charged with two counts of attempted murder in connection with a shooting at a party last month in Bensalem that critically injured another man. Police say that SWAT teams moved in on Monday afternoon and arrested 20-year-old Daniel ("Rush") Potepa as he was leaving his girlfriend's house in the 1000 block of Bensalem Boulevard. Potepa was wanted for shooting a 23-year-old man during a party at an upscale home on Palton Road the weekend before last (January 23rd). Hundreds of people showed up at the party that was advertised through Facebook. Bensalem public safety director Fred Harran says the suspect was already known to police: "This guy's a member of the 'Bloods' street gang. He's been arrested numerous times, and I think he's in this country on a visa, and I'm hoping after the criminal charges they'll deport him."

International Clips on West Africa

Guinea

Guinea Brutality Set Stage for Surprising Calm

The New York Times 2010-02-03

CONAKRY, Guinea - Something rare has happened in a region often given to brutal autocracy: power has been peacefully transferred to a civilian, just four months after an army massacre that recalled the worst of Africa's past. On Sept. 28, at least 150 demonstrators died in this city's main stadium. More than 100 women were raped or sexually abused, a United Nations panel found, while many other protesters were beaten - including the man who is now Guinea's prime minister. Now, the swift and unexpected turn of events has surprised Guineans, who wonder warily if the new prime minister, Now, the swift and unexpected turn of events has surprised Guineans, who wonder warily if the new prime minister, Jean-Marie Doré, a gaunt and wily opposition leader who left the stadium bleeding, can actually deliver democracy in a country that has never truly known it. The omnipresent military,

arbiter of power for decades, hovers in the background, a potential foot on the fragile plant of civilian rule.

Guinean commission report casts blame for massacre

CONAKRY, Guinea (examiner.com 3 February 2010) - A Guinean investigative commission on Tuesday blamed the man who tried to assassinate the country's now-exiled junta leader for a September massacre during which human rights groups say at least 156 people were killed. The report, however, said the junta leader now living in Burkina Faso was not responsible for the violence. That finding contrasts sharply with a U.N. commission report that said Moussa "Dadis" Camara likely bore "individual criminal responsibility" for the soccer stadium massacre. "Lieutenant (Abubakar) Toumba Diakite and a group of red berets from the presidential guard were responsible for the rapes, murders, injuries and mysterious disappearance of bodies recorded Sept. 28 at the stadium," said Siriman Kouyate, president of the Guinean commission. The commission recommended that Diakite and all the soldiers who committed the acts be arrested and brought before **Guinean** courts.

Cote D'Ivoire

Ivory Coast delays voter list deadline

Wed Feb 3, 2010 3:25pm GMT

ABIDJAN (Reuters) - Ivory Coast has extended until February 14 a deadline for finalizing voter lists, a step which observers said on Wednesday made it all but impossible to stick to a March schedule for a presidential election. The divisive issue of voter eligibility is the latest obstacle to long-delayed polls aimed at ending instability in the world's No. 1 cocoa grower, split by a 2002-2003 civil war. "This decision ... is in response to concerns expressed by the political class and civil society, who want more time to clear up questions over the election lists," the election commission and prime minister's office said in a statement dated February 2 but sent to media on Wednesday. No target date for the election was given. The vote was first set for 2005, but has slipped repeatedly, and most recently was informally set for sometime in March. The United Nations has said it will take at least six weeks to organize a poll once the final voter list has been agreed on.

Local Media – Newspaper

Senate Suspends Further Deliberations on TRC Report

(Heritage, The Informer and Daily Observer)

- The Senate has voted to suspend deliberations on the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).
- In its vote Tuesday, the Senate said the decision is to afford President Sirleaf the time to take effective control of the TRC report and
- The Senate said the vote means President Sirleaf was under obligation to present her three-month progress report on the full implementation of report.

Opposition Lawmakers Demand Apology from President Sirleaf

(Daily Observer, The Inquirer, Heritage and The News)

- Opposition lawmakers in the House of Representatives have demanded an apology from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf for what they called her insulting comments to the Legislature.
- The lawmakers said it was an affront for President Sirleaf to suggest that the Legislature acted irresponsibly by passing the threshold bill at 40,000.
- They also described as reckless and an affront to the House for the President to use her annual message to declare her presidential intention and expressed concern about her comments on the issue of dual citizenship, retirement bill and the county development funds.

- The opposition lawmakers chaired by Bong County Representative George Mulbah warned that they would seek action against the President if she does not offer an apology.

Senior Indian Government Minister Due in the Country Today

(The News, Daily Observer, The Inquirer and Heritage)

- The Minister of Overseas Indian Affairs, Vayalar Ravi, arrives in the Country today, on a two-day visit to the country.
- Mr. Ravi's visit to Liberia is part of an African tour, which took him to a number of African countries before coming to Liberia.
- While in the country, the Indian government official will meet with some senior Liberian government officials, including the Vice President of Liberia, Joseph N. Boakai. He is also expected to meet with Indian citizens residing in Liberia.
- Mr. Ravi is the second senior Indian Government Minister to visit Liberia in four months.
- In September last year, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Dr. Shashi Tharoor paid an official visit to Liberia, the first in 40 years by a senior official of the Indian Government.

Press Union of Liberia Re-constitutes Grievance and Ethics Committee

(The Inquirer, Heritage and Public Agenda)

- The Press Union of Liberia has announced the re-constitution of its grievance and ethic committee.
- The re-constituted committee is mandated to monitor and investigate the performance of journalists and media institutions.
- A PUL release issued in Monrovia named Ledgerhood Rennie as Chairman of the committee and University of Liberia Instructor, Weade Kobbah Wureh as Secretary.
- Other members of the committee are Dr. Jonathan Refell, Spencer Brown and Mary Laurene Browne as members.

American Pathologist Supports Defense Position on Angel Togba's Death

(Daily Observer, New Democrat, Heritage and The Inquirer)

- An American Pathologist, Dr. Thomas Bennett has backed defense position that Angel Togba's death was suicidal.
- Dr. Bennett said there were no bruises in the neck of the 13-year-old to prove that she died from strangulation and no broken bones found in the deceased's neck.
- The American Pathologist was the head of a three-man team the defense brought in to find the cause of Angel Togba's death.
- He stated the cause of death was hanging, contrary to the Cuban Pathologist's finding.

Former President Charles Taylor Denies That he Was Intolerant to Press Freedom

(New Democrat, Daily Observer, Liberian Express, The News and Heritage)

- Former Liberian president Charles Taylor has denied prosecutors' assertion that he did not tolerate press freedom in Liberia while he served as president from 1997 to 2003.
- Lead prosecution counsel Brenda Hollis told Mr. Taylor that during his tenure as president of Liberia, several radio stations were closed down and several journalists were harassed and imprisoned.
- Reading from a report on press freedom in Liberia by the Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), Ms. Hollis said Mr. Taylor's government was "repressive and intolerant to press freedom."

UNDP Foster Fiscal Discipline at Internal Affairs

(In-profile)

- In continuation of its effort to see that Liberia is finally disciplined, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through its Liberia Decentralization and Local Development has begun sponsoring activities aimed at building the capacity of financial, procurement and budget officers at the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

- Against this background, a one-day orientation training was held yesterday in Monrovia bringing together financial and procurement officers as well as budget officers assigned in the 15 counties.

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

Senate Suspends Further Deliberations On TRC Report

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Opposition Lawmakers Demand Apology From President Sirleaf

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky F.M., and ELBC)

American Pathologist Supports Defense Position On Angel Togba's Death

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky F.M., and ELBC)

India Offers Liberian Rural Women Ten Scholarships

- Indian Ambassador to Liberia Shamma Jain says her government has offered ten scholarships to the Liberian government for illiterate and semi-literate rural women to pursue a six-month course in rural solar electrification in India.
- Ambassador Jain said the Indian government initially trained seven rural women from Sierra Leone in the same technology in 2005 and 2007 who are currently involved in the electrification of rural homes in their country.
- The Indian envoy spoke when she paid a courtesy call on Vice President Joseph Boakai at his Capitol Building office.

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(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky F.M. and ELBC)

Catholic Justice and Peace Commission Releases 2009 Report on Liberia

- The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission today released its annual situation report for 2009.
- The report highlighted the political, social, economic and religious conditions of Liberia.

Four Health Ministry 'Employees' Arrested For Forgery, Eleven For Theft In Rivercess

- Police in Monrovia have arrested and sent to court four persons on allegations of forgery and criminal facilitation against the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare Ministry.
- Robert Wesseh, Archie Dennis, John Reeves and Ben Brown were charged and sent to the West Point Magisterial Court.
- According to court documents, the three men posed as employees of the Health Ministry from 2001 to 2009 taking away LD\$250,000.
- The men were picked up at a local bank while attempting to process some salary checks, the Health Ministry said.

Star Radio

Wednesday, 3 February 2010

JPC releases 2009 situation report: cautions individuals indicted by TRC not to venture in politics

Written by Matthias Daffah

The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission has released its 2009 Situation Report calling on all individuals indicted by the TRC report to wait.

The National Director of the JPC Cllr. Augustine Toe told a news conference Wednesday, declaration for public office in 2011 would be the wrong thing to do for now.

Cllr. Toe believes the TRC document first needs to be thoroughly debated and a national consensus reached.

He said the class action suit filed by the indicted individuals remains one of the best means by which the TRC issue can be approached.

According to Cllr. Toe anyone who feels injured by the action or conduct of another person or institution should seek remedy to law.

The JPC also called for a comprehensive audit of the General Auditing Commission including all the three branches of Government.

In its nearly fifteen-page Situation Report, the JPC noted that corruption has been institutionalized with individuals taking advantage of the Come, Grab and Go syndrome.

Under its Access to Justice Column, the JPC reported that prolong detention of accused persons beyond forty-eight hours without formal charges still exists throughout Liberia.

The report disclosed, over 600 persons are in pre-trial detention at the Monrovia Central Prison and described prison facilities outside Monrovia as devastating.

Star Radio (Liberia)

Monday, 1 February 2010

Ex-rebel leader Sekou Conneh, others sue TRC

Written by Moses Wenyoun

A group of individuals implicated in the TRC final report has filed what it calls a class action suit against the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Some of the individuals include Thomas Woewiyu, Sekou Damate Conneh, Weade Kobbah Wureh, Sando Johnson, Dopoe Menkazohn and John T. Richardson.

In a thirty-one page petition, the individuals prayed the Six Judicial Circuit Court at the Temple of Justice for what they referred to as declaratory judgment.

The Petitioners are seeking relief on behalf of themselves and others named by the TRC without what they termed due process.

According to them, the TRC lacks the jurisdiction to make binding determinations and levy public sanctions on any person, group of persons or organizations.

The petitioners argued the TRC violated article 21 of the constitution which calls for individuals accused of committing crimes to be acquainted with their charges.

They further argued that the TRC lured them into reconciliation forums only to use their testimonies as evidence against them.

The Civil Law Court is yet to assign the case for hearing.

Radio Netherlands Worldwide

Wednesday, 3 February 2010

ICC must review genocide charges against Sudan's Bashir

By Thijs Bouwknegt

Appeals judges at the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Wednesday reversed a decision that prosecutors had not provided sufficient evidence to charge Sudanese President Omar al Bashir with genocide.

"The pre-trial chamber is directed to decide anew," presiding judge Erkki Kourula said, upholding an appeal by ICC Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo.

The Hague-based court's pre-trial chamber will now have to rule on whether to add genocide to Bashir's charge sheet, which already includes seven counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes, including murder, extermination, torture and rape.



three counts of genocide he had asked for.

Ocampo says the Sudanese leader is responsible for the deaths of 35,000 people, and appealed against the court's decision to withhold

Darfur

A violent conflict has been raging in Darfur since 2003 and, according to the United Nations, has resulted in over 300,000 deaths. Ocampo says he has "proof" that genocide had taken place in Darfur and that Bashir was responsible for these mass-killings.

"Al-Bashir's motives were political, but his aim was genocide. The decision to start the genocide was taken by Bashir personally. In March 2003, Bashir set out to destroy in part the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa [ethnic groups]. Bashir publicly instructed the army to quell the rebellion and not to bring back any prisoners or wounded."

Ocampo welcomed the decision and warned Bashir he needed to "get a lawyer", adding he would present fresh evidence to the court in a second bid to have Bashir charged with genocide. "Expelling humanitarian assistance is a great element of his genocidal intentions," he said. "When he expelled these people who were providing the water and the food he confirmed his intention to destroy his people. So I would like to present this new aspect of the case."

Genocide?

In 2004, the United Nations carried out its own investigation into the events in Darfur and concluded that there had been serious human rights violations but that these did not constitute genocide. In view of the report's conclusions, the UN handed over its research material to the ICC in 2005.

Ocampo accepts that there was no indication of a tightly-organised military campaign of annihilation in the first few years. But, when there are camps full of refugees, he has argued, there are other ways of committing genocide.

"Three weapons: rape, starvation and fear. These are the most efficient methods these days of committing genocide in plain view of the whole world and under international supervision. Bashir is carrying out this genocide without bullets or machetes."

Human Rights Watch welcomed Wednesday's decision. "Today's decision is a strong reminder that President al-Bashir is wanted for heinous crimes committed in Darfur," says Elise Keppler, International Justice Program senior counsel at HRW. "President al Bashir is a fugitive from justice who needs to appear in The Hague to answer to the allegations against him."

African resistance

Ocampo issued the first two charges of war crimes against Sudanese nationals in 2007. The former minister of humanitarian affairs in Darfur, Ahmad Haroun, was accused of arming the militia in the knowledge that they would commit serious crimes. However, Sudan refused to extradite him or his fellow-accused, Ali Kushayb, the so-called "colonel of colonels" and leader of the Janjaweed militia.

Sudan's opposition to the ICC has been echoed throughout Africa since Bashir was indicted. Although Africans were once the most passionate supporters of the court, now most of the 30 African countries who have ratified the Rome Statute are having second thoughts, saying the ICC is unfairly targeting Africans while ignoring human rights abuses elsewhere.



The African Union - until last week led by Muammar Gaddafi - has been lobbying its members to withdraw from the ICC, with Gaddafi labelling the court a "terrorist organisation."

Bashir

Omar Hassan al-Bashir (1944) was unheard of in Sudan until the morning of 30 June 1989. He then appeared on television to report that he had staged a coup to restore order and appointed

himself chairman of Sudan's Revolutionary Command Council.

In 1993 he held presidential elections, which he won with ease due to the absence of any serious opposition candidates. Since then, Bashir has been president, supreme commander of the Sudanese army and minister of defence all at the same time.

Voice of America

Thursday, 4 February 2010

Groups Welcome Appeal of Genocide Charges against Sudan's Bashir

Howard Lesser

Reactions to Wednesday's International Criminal Court (ICC) appeal of genocide charges against Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir range from a broadside against the U.S. government by Sudan's foreign ministry, to measured comments from members of the American anti-genocide community.

In Khartoum, foreign ministry spokesman Ambassador Mu'awiya Uthman Khalid blamed Washington for slowing the peace process by sending "negative signals at all times." He singled out the Save Darfur alliance of American anti-genocide organizations, which he accused of directly hampering the peace process.

In Washington, the president of the largest organization in the alliance, Jerry Fowler of the Save Darfur Coalition, said that Wednesday's ruling rectifies legal errors that will provide hope to Darfur victims and rebel groups, but will not likely alter the pace of current peace talks in Doha, Qatar or influence the conduct of April presidential elections in Sudan.

"For victims of attacks in Darfur, most of who believe that they are victims of genocide, it gets a reconsideration of that particular charge. I think in the broader scheme of things, it underscores, though, that regardless of the ultimate outcome on this charge, President Bashir remains a fugitive internationally, and his ability to travel is very limited, and the prospects that he will ultimately face justice continue to be strong," said Fowler.

Last March, Sudan's President became the first sitting head of state to be indicted by the International Criminal Court. In their original ruling, the judges of the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber issued an arrest warrant against Mr. Bashir for a total of five counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, but the panel threw out charges of genocide that had also been requested by Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo. Justices said last year that there were insufficient grounds to charge the president with genocide. Save Darfur's Jerry Fowler says that Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo advanced his appeal of that ruling on Wednesday by convincing the appeals panel that President Bashir should be held accountable for masterminding a campaign of rape, murder, and other crimes against civilians in Darfur.

"The statute of the International Criminal Court is pretty clear in saying that at the arrest warrant stage, you just have to establish a reasonable basis that the crime was committed. And the Pre-Trial Chamber kind of twisted that standard, and they basically insisted that the only reasonable inference from the evidence would be genocide, which made it that the Prosecutor had to show beyond a reasonable doubt. And I think what the Appeals Chamber did was put it back into perspective that at this stage, you have to establish a reasonable basis to believe that the crime was committed," he explained.

If President Bashir goes on to face trial, Fowler suggests, that is when the standard of proving genocide charges beyond a reasonable doubt will apply. Moreno-Ocampo indicated after Wednesday's ruling that he would seek permission to furnish additional evidence of what he calls Mr. Bashir's "genocidal intention."

The Prosecutor indicated that last year's eviction of international humanitarian groups from Sudan following the issue of the arrest warrant could constitute part of his new submission.

African countries ranging from neighboring Uganda, to South Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana have told Sudan's president that as nations abiding by governing ICC statutes, they would have to honor an international arrest warrant if he travels to their territories. Mr. Bashir is visiting Doha, Qatar this week to take part in peace talks between Sudanese government officials and members of selected Darfur rebel groups. Qatar and other countries visited by President Bashir during the past year are not parties to the ICC, and are not under legal obligations to arrest him.

Toward Monday's close of the African Union summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, delegates drafted a resolution voicing the A.U.'s regret that the U.N. Security Council has not called on the Criminal Court to have all charges dropped against the Sudanese president. Since last year, the A.U. has rejected the Bashir indictments on grounds that they would upset peace efforts in Darfur and in southern Sudan. But Save Darfur's Fowler says that the evidence does not bear out that argument.

"The experience of the last year and a half since the Prosecutor first requested the arrest warrant, which happened in July of 2008, is that it's not affecting peace negotiations. They're being driven by their own political dynamics, and in fact, peace negotiations picked up steam after the Prosecutor first requested the arrest warrants. So to that extent, they seem to have a positive impact," he argued.

Following the March, 2009 ICC indictments, President Bashir's eviction of dozens of humanitarian NGO's alarmed western governments concerned about the violence in Darfur and the displaced civilians of southern Sudan. Fowler says that the Obama administration and other governments need to make it clear that the international community will not tolerate a similar expulsion in retaliation for the genocide charges being considered against Sudan's president.

"I certainly hope that they don't retaliate, and I think that it's very important that the United States government and other governments make clear that a retaliation is unacceptable. For the danger that civilians were put into by the expulsions last year was averted only by the heroic efforts by the United Nations and by aid agencies that were left behind. And even now, the civilians are much more vulnerable than they were. So it's very important that the United States and African governments and other governments make clear to President Bashir that further endangering civilians will not be tolerated," he said.

The International Criminal Court at the Hague is an independent judicial institution with judges from all over the world. It operates by statute that is signed onto more than 110 countries, including 31 African countries.