

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



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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, 5 November 2009

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

Thursday, 5 November 2009

Karadzic Defiant at Hague Hearing

EX-BOSNIAN Serb leader Radovan Karadzic has insisted he needs more time to prepare his defence, during his first appearance at his war crimes trial.

Mr Karadzic told a procedural hearing in The Hague that he had not been given the opportunity to go through vast amounts of prosecution documents.

He is representing himself, and last week boycotted the start of his trial.

The judge adjourned the latest hearing, saying he would rule in the coming days on how the trial is to proceed.

At the start of Tuesday's special hearing, Mr Karadzic said: "I do not want to boycott these proceedings, but I cannot take part in something that has been bad from the start and where my fundamental rights have been violated."

Presiding Judge O-Gon Kwon replied that the court had already determined the defendant had had ample time to prepare.

"Clearly you disagree with these decisions," the judge added. "However, as I previously stated to you, it is the trial chamber, not an accused person, which determines readiness for trial."

The trial opened on 26 October, but Mr Karadzic failed to attend.

When he again failed to appear the following day, the judge said the defendant had chosen not to exercise his right to be present and "must therefore accept the consequences", announcing that the court would proceed in his absence.

Judge Kwon said the court would consider imposing a lawyer to represent Mr Karadzic if he continued to boycott proceedings.

Mr Karadzic, who protests his innocence, has said he will refuse to accept this.

He argues that he wishes to represent himself during the proceedings but needs more time to prepare his defence, despite being indicted in 1995.

The BBC's Geraldine Coughlan, in The Hague, says it is now up to judges to decide how to balance the interests of Mr Karadzic against those of the prosecution and the victims.

The former president of Republika Srpska, head of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) and commander of the Bosnian Serb Army, faces two charges of genocide and nine more of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the 1992-1995 war, which left more than 100,000 people dead.

- Eleven counts of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and other atrocities

- Charged over shelling Sarajevo during the city's siege, in which some 12,000 civilians died

- Allegedly organised the massacre of up to 8,000 Bosniak men and youths in Srebrenica

- Targeted Bosniak and Croat political leaders, intellectuals and professionals

- Unlawfully deported and transferred civilians because of national or religious identity

- Destroyed homes, businesses and sacred sites

Prosecutors have branded him the leader of an ethnic cleansing campaign in the Bosnian War, calling him the "undisputed leader" of Serbs responsible for carrying out atrocities during the conflict.

In his opening statement, prosecutor Alan Tieger dwelt on the Srebrenica massacre, in which up to

8,000 Bosniak men and boys were killed. "The murder of these men and the expulsion of the women, children and elderly did not arise from nowhere," he said.

"These crimes were the culmination of the accused's determination to cleanse eastern Bosnia to ensure

the Serb state he envisioned." Mr Karadzic was taken to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague last year, after 13 years in hiding.

He faces a maximum sentence of life in prison if convicted.

BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST

Tuesday, 3 November 2009

By John Kollie

NEWS ITEM

Charles Taylor has been responding to two key Liberian witnesses, Hassan Bility and Moses Blah and a protected Sierra Leonean witness, all of who gave evidence supporting prosecution charges of Taylor having links with the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor denied the testimonies of Hassan Bility that he was arrested for writing about Taylor`s support to the RUF and tortured by government security operatives...John Kollie transcribes reports from the Hague on the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor....

Mr Taylor also dismissed the evidence of the protected Sierra Leonean witness who alleged that Taylor ordered his torture on suspicion of being a Kamajor fighter, resisting the RUF.

As for Former President Moses Blah, Mr Taylor agreed that Blah`s evidence was 95 percent true, except for three areas.

Charles Taylor condemned the testimony of Hassan Bility as an independent journalist and called him an unlawful combatant serving as a principal point of contact for Former ULIMO-K leader Alhaji Kromah and the LURD rebel Leader Sekou Damantee Konneh.

He rejected Hassan Bility allegations that he was tortured and electrocuted on his private parts.

As for the Sierra Leonean protected witness, he testified last year saying he and two other Sierra Leoneans were arrested accused of being Kamajors fighters and detained at the ATU Gbartala base.

The witness said at the ATU base they were tortured and melting plastic and candles dropped on their bodies. He said when they were brought before Taylor at his White Flower home in Monrovia they were flogged in the full view of the Former President.

Regarding Moses Blah`s evidence about the Taylor-Foday Sankoh acquaintance on the Libyan base of Tarjura as the beginning of the relationship between the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and the Revolutionary United Front, RUF, Mr. Taylor rejected that piece of evidence.

Taylor said he did not know Sankoh as the leader of the Sierra Leonean training group in Libya. He maintained Ali Kabba was the leader of the RUF and although he had relations with the rebel group, he cut all relations with the RUF in 1992.

BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST

Charlestaylortrial.org

Tuesday, 3 November 2009

Almost All Of Moses Blah's Testimony Is True; Journalist Hassan Bility Is A Liar, Charles Taylor Tells Special Court for Sierra Leone

By Alpha Sesay

In a surprising move, Charles Taylor today reinforced the truthfulness of his former vice president's testimony against him last year, but dismissed the evidence of a Liberian journalist as full of "lies" and "exaggeration."

"To a great extent, Moses [Blah] told the court the truth," Mr. Taylor said when asked by his defense counsel to give his view on his former vice president's testimony. "There were three areas where unfortunately, he was wrong but 90-95 percent of what he said is true."

Mr. Taylor's analysis of Mr. Blah's testimony came as part of his ongoing effort to respond to evidence provided by several prosecution witnesses, disputing their claims that he provided support for Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone after November 1996, amid the country's 11-years conflict. In May 2008, Mr. Taylor's former vice president Moses Blah, had testified for the prosecution against his former boss (Taylor), a testimony which covered Mr. Taylor's activities from the late 1980s when the two men were together in Libya and planning to invade Liberia, up to 2003 when Mr. Taylor handed the presidency of Liberia to Mr. Blah and sought asylum in Nigeria.

Mr. Taylor went through some aspects of Mr. Blah's testimony and agreed with him that as vice president, he had no knowledge that arms and ammunition were transported from Liberia to Sierra Leone for use by RUF rebels. Mr. Blah said in his May 2008 testimony that while Liberians fought as part of the RUF in Sierra Leone, this was not an official policy of the Liberian government, a point on which Mr. Taylor agreed with him today. Mr. Taylor also agreed with his former vice president's testimony that when the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) attacked Liberia in 1989, current Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was responsible for the NPFL's fund raising issues in the United States.

Mr. Taylor did disagree with his former vice-president on specific issues arising in his testimony.

"I can specify three areas where he lied," Mr. Taylor told the Special Court for Sierra Leone judges. "One is how he spoke about the Sam Bockarie issue was wrong. He was sent to handle the Sam Bockarie situation, he took the body to Monrovia and delivered it at the funeral home. Unfortunately, I don't know why he lied."

"The second thing is he said he did not know he'd become vice president. The third area he could have been more forthcoming was about the activities of Sam Lato. He knows that Sam Lato was tried by court martial before he was executed. Other than that, for whatever reason he came here, he was as factual as he could," he said.

Also in his testimony today, Mr. Taylor dismissed claims made by a previous prosecution witness, Liberian journalist Hassan Bility, as "lies."

In his 2008 testimony against Mr. Taylor, Mr. Bility told the court that he was arrested and tortured by Mr. Taylor's government in June 2002. He said that Mr. Taylor personally interrogated him, telling him to stop writing about Mr. Taylor's support for the RUF. Mr. Bility said Mr. Taylor accused him of

transporting arms and ammunition to Liberia and keeping them at the United States embassy in Monrovia, with the aim of unseating his government. Disputing the witness' claims, today Mr. Taylor said that he never accused Mr. Bility of transporting arms into Liberia and that he did not tell him anything about his association with the RUF.

Mr. Taylor today accused Mr. Bility of working as an agent for the United States government and an active member of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO) and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel groups.

Mr. Taylor described Mr. Bility as "an enemy combatant" because he was LURD's main contact in Monrovia. He explained that when the Liberian government's intelligence agents went to work, they discovered some emails that Mr. Bility had exchanged with various people who were trying to destabilize Liberia.

"He was an enemy combatant," Mr. Taylor said. "I told him that the only thing that will set him free is for him to confess. There was a plan made to attack my residence in Kongor Town and he was supposed to find the people to launch the attack. He worked as a combatant at a different level," he added.

Mr. Taylor denied Mr. Bility's assertion that Mr. Taylor had said he was not "going to allow anybody to arm twist the RUF."

Mr. Taylor further refuted Mr. Bility's testimony that on October 20, 1997, while visiting the headquarters of Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP) in Monrovia, he made handwritten notes of Mr. Taylor's comments in which he threatened to unseat Sierra Leone's president, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah.

"Taylor said that if I thought he would not unseat Kabbah's government, then I must be from an alien planet. He said that he had the best ground force in the country and Kabbah wanted to try him," Mr. Bility was quoted in his 2008 testimony in The Hague. Mr. Bility also said that RUF commander Sam Bockarie was present at the NPP office during his visit to the office.

Mr. Taylor dismissed Mr. Bility's statement as a "fabrication."

"The whole thing that you just read is just fabrication," he said. "I don't know how I'll remove Kabbah in October 1997 when he is already out of power. There was no Sam Bockarie at no NPP headquarters in 1997, that's a lie," he added.

In May 1997, President Kabbah was overthrown by soldiers of the Sierra Leone army, during which time Mr. Kabbah sought refuge in Guinea. The soldiers formed a merger with the RUF rebels and together, they ruled Sierra Leone until February 1998 when they were forcefully removed from the country's capital Freetown. They retreated to the country's hinterland and continued fighting the government and people of Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor is accused of supporting the rebel forces through the supply of arms and ammunition as well as planning military operations with the rebels, during which time war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law were committed. Mr. Taylor is accused of bearing responsibility for the crimes committed by rebel forces in Sierra Leone. He is presently testifying as a witness in his own defense.

Mr. Taylor's testimony continues today.

CharlesTaylorTrial.org (The Hague)

Wednesday, 4 November 2009

Liberia: Taylor Sent Moses Blah To Arrest Sierra Leone's Rebel Commander Sam Bockarie And Not To Execute Him, He Says

Alpha Sesay

Charles Taylor did not order the execution of Sierra Leonean rebel commander Sam Bockarie, but rather sent his former vice president Moses Blah to arrest him on the Liberian border with Ivory Coast, the accused former Liberian president told Special Court for Sierra Leone judges in The Hague today.

Mr. Taylor was revisiting an early position he maintained in his testimony yesterday: that his former vice president Mr. Blah told lies in his May 2008 testimony when, as a prosecution witness, Mr. Blah said that he was on a visit to his farm in Nimba County, Liberia, when he discovered that Mr. Bockarie had been killed. In his testimony today, Mr. Taylor reaffirmed his position, explaining that he gave specific orders to Mr. Blah to arrest Revolutionary United Front (RUF) commander, Mr. Bockarie, on his way back from Ivory Coast with armed men.

"Moses lied to this court when he said that he was just going to his farm. I dispatched him to go and effect Bockarie's arrest," Mr. Taylor told the judges today.

In his May 2008 testimony, Mr. Blah told the judges that he was in his village in Nimba on the night of May 5, 2002 when Mr. Taylor's Director of Special Security Service (SSS), Benjamin Yeaten, stopped by his house and greeted him in the company Mr. Bockarie, his wife and other Sierra Leoneans. At about 2-2:30AM, Mr. Blah said, he was woken up and told that fighting had erupted at the Liberian-Ivorian border. The following day, on his way back to Monrovia, he said he bumped into Mr. Yeaten who invited him to a Saw Mill Camp and told him they had gone on a special operation the previous night. He said that Mr. Yeaten then showed him the corpse of Mr. Bockarie, which he said was still dressed like he had seen him the previous night.

In response, Mr. Taylor disputed his former vice president's account, insisting that Mr. Bockarie's corpse was driven to Monrovia and delivered to the funeral home by Mr. Blah himself.

"Sam Bockarie's body, on anything under the sun, was taken to Monrovia by Blah. Nobody under this planet took the body to Monrovia other than Moses Blah. I don't know why he lied," Mr. Taylor said.

Mr. Taylor also disputed Mr. Blah's account that when he saw Mr. Bockarie's corpse at the Saw Mill Camp on the way to Monrovia, Mr. Yeaten had told him that Mr. Bockarie was executed because they wanted to "destroy evidence," not wanting "anything exposed." Mr. Blah told the court in May 2008 that he believed that if Mr. Bockarie had not been killed, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and Mr. Taylor's secret support to the RUF would have been exposed.

Mr. Taylor today dismissed Mr. Blah's account, insisting that there was no secret he feared to be exposed.

Daily Nation (Kenya)

Wednesday, 4 November 2009

Taylor admits aiding Sierra Leone rebels

By TAMBA JEAN-MATTHEW, NATION Correspondent

Former Liberia President Charles Taylor who is being tried by the UN-back court for Sierra Leone in The Hague for crimes he allegedly committed in the neighbouring country, has confessed to sending fighters to help rebels inflict mayhem on civilians during the 11-year war in the country.

The UN Special Court report said “in a surprising move, Charles Taylor reinforced the truthfulness of his former vice president’s testimony against him earlier in the trial.”

The report quoted Mr Taylor as testifying yesterday that “To a great extent, Moses Blah (Taylor’s former Vice President) told the court the truth.”

When asked by his defence counsel to give his view on his former vice president’s testimony, Mr Taylor said: “There were three areas where unfortunately, he (Blah) was wrong, but added that 90-95 per cent of what he (Blah) said is true.”

Mr Taylor’s analysis of Mr Blah’s testimony came as part of his ongoing effort to respond to evidence provided by several prosecution witnesses, disputing their claims that he provided support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone after November 1996 at the height of the civil war which left an estimated 250,000 dead.

In May 2008, Mr Blah had testified for the prosecution against his former boss a testimony which covered Mr Taylor’s activities from the late 1980s when the two men were together in Libya and planning to invade Liberia, up to 2003 when Mr Taylor handed the presidency of Liberia to Mr Blah and sought asylum in Nigeria under pressure from the then US government of George W. Bush.

Mr Taylor went through some aspects of Mr Blah’s testimony and agreed with him that as vice president, he had no knowledge that arms and ammunition were transported from Liberia to Sierra Leone for use by RUF rebels.

Transitions (ICTJ Newsletter)

November Edition

Sierra Leone

The appeals chamber of the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown upheld the convictions of three former leaders of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front on Oct. 26. The leaders were found guilty of attacks against UN peacekeepers, the use of child soldiers, and forced marriage as a crime against humanity during Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war. The trial of former president Charles Taylor at the court's auxiliary branch in The Hague continues.

- "Sierra Leone court renders rebel leaders judgment," *Radio Netherlands Worldwide* (<http://www.rnw.nl/int-justice/article/sierra-leonecourt-renders-rebel-leaders-judgement>)

United Nations  Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 4 November 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Liberian Company's Argument That Employment Dispute Is a Burden to N.Y. Courts Is Rejected

New York Law Journal

November 04, 2009

A New York court will preside over a \$15 million employment dispute between a Greek citizen and a Liberian company publicly traded in the United States, which allegedly raised funds in New York and retained a Manhattan-based law firm as its primary outside counsel, a state judge has ruled. Excel Maritime Carriers Ltd., which is based in Athens and incorporated in Liberia, argued that the breach of contract and libel action brought by Christopher I. Georgakis amounted to "a transparent case of forum shopping brought for harassment purposes" and claimed it would be unduly inconvenienced if the case remained in New York. However, citing the "increasingly global nature of our economy, where foreign countries are allowed to own our banks and even fund our national debt," Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Richard B. Lowe III (See Profile) held in *Georgakis v. Excel Maritime Carriers Ltd.*, 650322/08, that the burden of litigation in a foreign country was not too much to ask from a company extensively engaged in international trade.

Liberia's president vows to hunt down aide's killers

(AFP) – MONROVIA — Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf vowed Tuesday to bring the killers of one of her political aides, Keith Jubah, to justice. Jubah, the head of Liberia's Public Procurement and Concession Commission (PPCC), was shot as he returned to his home in Kakata, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) from Monrovia. He was a close confidant of the president and an influential member of the ruling Unity Party. Investigators have so far been unable to establish a motive for the attack. Sirleaf described him as "one of Liberia's most decent public servants." "I will ensure that those who killed Jubah will not go unpunished", Sirleaf said. Keith Jubah's son, Prince, told AFP on Tuesday that he believed his father was a close friend of his killer. Prince Jubah said his father had told him about receiving death threats from a friend over a disputed sale of land.

International Clips on West Africa

Sierra Leone

S Leone's health minister sacked

(BBC) 4 November 2009

Sierra Leone's president has sacked two of his ministers, one of whom has been indicted for corruption. Health Minister Sheku Tijan Koroma appeared in court on Wednesday charged with illegally awarding contracts. He is the first minister to be charged with corruption since President Ernest Bai Koroma came to power two years ago. No reason was given for the dismissal of the other official, Leonard Balogun Koroma, who is minister in the vice-president's office. Mr Koroma promised

to crack down on corruption when he won elections in 2007. Correspondents say corruption is seen as one of the reasons for the outbreak of civil war in the country in the 1990s.

Guinea

ECOWAS facilitator says Guinea situation still worrying

OUAGADOUGOU, Nov. 4 (Xinhua) -- The facilitator of the West African bloc ECOWAS says the situation in crisis plagued Guinea is still worrying despite his talks with the rival sides to find a way out. Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore, the mediator appointed by the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), made the comments on Tuesday after his first-day discussions with the opposition from Guinea. "It is important for the mediator to listen to pressure groups and do an evaluation of the current situation in Guinea," the president said. He had previously met with a delegation sent by the Guinean military junta leader, Moussa Dadis Camara, in Ouagadougou. The standoff has turned into a hard nut to crack following the Sept. 28 bloodshed in which many protestors died in the clash with soldiers deployed to ban their assembly at a stadium in Guinea's capital Conakry.

Cote d'Ivoire

Cote d'Ivoire president visits Ghana

ABIDJAN, Nov. 4 (Xinhua) -- Cote d'Ivoire's President, Laurent Gbagbo left Abidjan on Tuesday for a 48-hour working visit to Ghana at the invitation of his Ghanaian counterpart John Atta Mills, a communiqué from the presidential press service reported. Gbagbo was scheduled to pay a visit to the mausoleum of "the father of modern Ghana" Kwame Nkrumah, whose country is posthumously celebrating his 100th birthday. On Wednesday, Gbagbo will meet with the community of Cote d'Ivoire living in Ghana before the traditional bilateral summit meeting, which will come up with the final communiqué. Gbagbo had already in January visited Accra during the swearing-in ceremony of Atta Mills after his election as the head of state in Ghana. In return, the Ghanaian president had dedicated his first external visit to Cote d'Ivoire during a friendly and working visit to Yamoussoukro in April. The reunion between the two heads of state is expected to improve cooperation between the two neighboring West African countries and their people.

Local Media – Newspaper

The "Killer" of PPCC Chairman Confesses From Hideout

(Daily Observer, National Chronicle, Liberian Express)

- The man alleged to have assassinated the Chairman of the Public Procurement Concession Commission has broken silence.
- Mr. Prince Kollie said it was his brother Joseph Sackie who killed Keith Jubah in relation to a land dispute.
- He said his brother had informed him of a plan to eliminate Mr. Jubah and bring the land dispute to a close.
- In a telephone interview, Joseph Sackie admitted killing the PPCC Boss but begged for mercy.
- Meanwhile, the Bong County Legislative Caucus has condemned the brutal murder of Mr. Jubah and said the killing signals a fearful and worrisome situation for peace loving Liberians.

Senate President Pro-tempore say Upper House Won't Bow To Pressure over Passage of Threshold Bill

(National Chronicle)

- The Senate has warned that no amount of coercion or threats can compel it to pass the "controversial" population threshold bill into law.

- Speaking at a news conference, Senate President Pro-Tempore, Cletus Wortorson said it was wrong for anyone to think that without the threshold bill there can be no elections in 2011.
- However, the National Elections Commission (NEC) as well as international and local stakeholders has consistently called for the passage of the Threshold Bill deem crucial to the holding of the election in 2011.
- The NEC has warned that a delay in the passage of the bill could hamper the timetable of the elections.

Opposition Liberty Party Raises Concerns of Fraud Leading to Upcoming By-election

(Daily Observer, The Analyst, The Inquirer)

- The opposition Liberty Party (LP) has termed as 'fraudulent' the entire registration process for the replacement of voters' identification cards for the November 10 senatorial by-election for Montserrado County.
- Addressing a news conference in Monrovia, the party's National Chairman, Israel Akinsanya said the National Elections Commission (NEC) had not been operating in line with its guidelines for the by-election.
- Mr. Akinsanya said the party has officially complained to the National Elections Commission (NEC) but the Commission said it has not received any complaint concerning the by-election.
- Meanwhile, the Liberty Party Executive have accused the ruling Unity Party of buying voters' registration cards from voters and taking down voters series numbers from voters' registration cards with the intention to rig the elections. However, the Unity party has since debunked the allegations.

China Union Poised To Begin Operations Soon

(The Inquirer)

- China Union has assured Liberian authorities that it will honour the over US\$2.5 billion concession agreement signed with Government early this year.
- Presidential Press Secretary, Cyrus Wleh Badio says the company assured President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf that it will begin to step up its efforts to begin full scale operations in Liberia now that there are positive indications that it is overcoming the negative effects of the global financial crisis.
- There have been concerns over the delay in the implementation of the China Union Mineral Development Agreement.
- However, Chinese Ambassador to Liberia, Zhou Yuxio has consistently promised that the agreement remains on course and that the company is currently doing basic preparation to honor their contractual obligations
- The China Union agreement called for the exploration and mining of iron ore in the Bong Range in Bong Mines.

Sinkor Rotary Club Donates Equipment to Farmers

(The Inquirer)

- In complementing the government's effort towards the production of food and the reduction of poverty, the Rotary Club of Sinkor has in collaboration with its international partners (Britney Rotary Club and the California Rotary Club) donated farming equipment to farmers in the country.
- The donation worth over US\$40,000 was made on Tuesday through the Liberian Children Schooling Project and is intended to complement the manual labor applied by farmers while carrying out their farming activities in the country.
- The donation included a caterpillar tractor, truck and other assorted farming equipment.

President Sirleaf Declares Thursday National Holiday

(The Informer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has issued a proclamation declaring tomorrow Thursday November 5 as National Thanksgiving day.

- An Executive Mansion release said the proclamation is in consonance with an Act of the National Legislature 1883 which set aside the first Thursday in November of each year to be known as National Thanksgiving Day.

Lion Clubs Renovate United Blind Headquarters

(The Inquirer)

- The Greater Monrovia Lions Club and the Cape Mesurado Lions Club have jointly renovated the headquarters of the United Blind Association of Liberia (UBAL) in Gardnersville.
- Speaking during the hand over ceremony, the President of the Greater Monrovia Lion Club, D. Sheba Brown also donated fifty locally produced canes to assist the UBAL.

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

The “Killer” of PPCC Chairman Confesses From Hideout

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

Methodist Rights Group Blames Impunity For Wanton Killings

- The Human Rights Monitor of the United Methodist Church says impunity is largely responsible for the wave of mysterious killings in the country.
- The Methodist rights group said if people were regularly prosecuted for wrongs in society, crimes would be minimized.
- The group’s Programme Director Jefferson Knight said the killing of innocent people in the society demonstrates Government’s inability to protect its citizens.
- Mr. Knight named the killing of businessman, James Berry of Rivercess County and the gruesome murder of PPCC Chairman Keith Jubah and called on Government to immediately probe the killings to avoid a recurrence.

Criminal Court D Launches Probe into Bribery Allegation

- Criminal Court “D” has launched an investigation into allegation that jurors sold the last armed robbery case it tried.
- Chief Justice Johnnie Lewis ordered the investigation after the principal victim in the case, Mrs. Marie Shafi complained the jurors were bribed.
- According to Mrs. Shafi, the jurors also asked her several times for US\$1,200.00 to have brought a verdict in her favor.
- The investigation being presided over by Judge Boimah Kontoe is intended to establish whether the allegation is true.

Senate President Pro-tempore say Upper House Won’t Bow To Pressure over Passage of Threshold Bill

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

Senator Lasana’s “Witness” Turns Hostile

- There are claims and counter claims over the outcome of a reconciliation meeting between Bomi Senator Lahai Lassana and his long-time critic, Charles Brown.
- Last week, Senator Lassana alleged Mr. Brown confessed that he received money from two Bomi County lawmakers to tarnish his reputation.
- But Mr. Brown dismissed the confession claim and described said the Senator’s statements was an attempt to gain public support amidst his alleged link to the March 19 shootout at the Guthrie Rubber Plantation.

Another Suspected Killer Arrested In Motorcyclist’s Death

- Reports from Bong County say another person has been arrested in connection with the murder of motorcyclist Prince Nyan who was found dead on October 23 on the Kokoyah Road in Bong County.

- Philip Gbokolo was arrested by police on Monday. According to the reports, Philip admitted to the act during police preliminary investigation.
- Police earlier arrested one Sonnyboy Weyela, said to be a member of a criminal gang in lower Bong County in the Coca-cola Factory Community outside Monrovia.

Truth FM *(News monitored today at 10:00 am)*

President Sirleaf Declares Thursday National Holiday

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has issued a proclamation declaring Thursday November 5 as National Thanksgiving day.
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The Analyst (Monrovia)

Wednesday, 4 November 2009

Which Is Hampering TRC Report?

Editorial

The National Legislature voted unanimously recently to shelve the final but unedited report of Liberia's Truth & Reconciliation Commission pending the submission of the final edited version. The vote came amidst national debate regarding whether the report should be declared void, modified, or implemented "as is".

But the National Director of the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) of the Catholic Diocese of Liberia, Cllr. J. Augustine Toe, believes even the shelving of the report in the wake of the debate is a "disservice to Liberia and foreign financial contributors".

The Analyst has been looking at the counselor contentions and observers views.

JPC Director Cllr. Augustine Toe has described as a disservice to the Liberian people and the international community recent decision by the National Legislature to table the "Final Unedited Report" of the TRC pending the submission of an edited version.

Cllr. Toe made the assertion last Wednesday during a panel discussion on the "TRC Report from the Perspective of the Civil Society" held at the University of Pennsylvania Law School in Philadelphia, USA. The Catholic human and civil rights advocate discounted the unedited and therefore flawed alibi of the National Legislature for shelving the report and noted that the actual reason for suspending further discussions on the controversial report was "politics of fear".

In his view the shelving of the document was not only inimical to Liberia's postwar healing process but that it was also an act of ungratefulness to the international community that generously contributed financially to the whole process. He fear that with the current attitude toward the reconciliation process, the resources spent by the international community and the efforts exerted by TRC commissioners to chart a course for the future of Liberia where impunity will be history, will amount to zilch.

The JPC boss reduced the argument for and against the report to a scenario of two cardinal recommendations of contention taking precedence over 30 other recommendations from which the Liberian people stand to derive enormous benefits. This, he said, was unfair to both those who researched the facts and compiled the report and the people of Liberia who are the ultimate beneficiaries and who obviously see nothing wrong with the report as is.

"The Commissioners spent tireless efforts for over two years and thousands of dollars from the national coffers and international community was spent to facilitate a work that we all embraced from the beginning, but now we want to demonize the Commissioners and outcome of their invaluable time only because we disagree with two recommendations in the entire report; this is where I strongly disagree with our national leaders and others calling for us not to implement the report," Cllr. Toe told the university forum.

Incidentally, the forum was sponsored by the International Human Rights Advocates-student group and co-moderated by Sarah Paoletti, Clinical Supervisor and Lecturer and Director of the Transnational Legal Clinic and Sam Togba Slewion, former Secretary General of the Press Union of Liberia and Coordinator of the Technical Committee of the Liberia Media Support Initiative (LIMESI).

Cllr. Toe told his audience that policymakers and warlords, who were vigorously campaigning against the implementation of the report, as is, were basing their arguments mainly on the 'politics of fear', insisting that if the two recommendations of prosecution and barring of politicians were implemented 'Liberia will return to war'.

But he expressed doubt that such fears were grounded, arguing that the implementation of the report as is promises more benefits for Liberia than failing to implement it or tampering with it.

"I am not sure how the implementations of recommendations calling for the social and economic empowerment of minority groups in the country, including women and children, will bring war to Liberia; the empowerment of the media will bring war to Liberia; and even reparations for individuals and communities affected economically and psychologically by the conflict can bring war to our country," he observed making reference to other recommendations contained in report.

He said unless the report was implemented in its entirety, the nation's war against the culture of impunity would be difficult, if not impossible, to win.

"I am afraid that if we continue bicker and politic over this report without any concrete action towards its implementation, we as a nation have disappointed future generation and reinforced the culture of impunity and apathy that continue to exist in our country and the powers that be will go down in history as facilitators of this mentality," he noted.

Cllr. Toe capped his presentation by calling on the national government to hold a national event to appreciate the work of commissioners of the TRC for what he called their sacrifice and commitment to national service through their work at the TRC.

"We should decorate these Commissioners with the highest honor of national service for their patriotic duty to our country by being men and women of principle," the JPC boss said.

The longtime human rights advocate however conceded that the blanket implementation of the report may raise legal questions and that therefore the implementations of some so-called benefits promising recommendations do require the enactment of Laws and Statues.

This, he observed, was because these recommendations were in violation of the Constitution of the country. But in what observers described as an "ironic twist of logic, sequence, and correlation of implementation" the counselor said: "But these are observations that can be cited in the Status Report that the President of Liberia is expected to make every three months to the nation as mandated by the Act that created the TRC."

They wonder whether the counselor was implying that the report should be implemented as is and that it would suffice for the President of Liberia to simply announce in periodic status reports the legal and even security problems posed by the implementation of some of the recommendations.

"Will it then be a service to the people of Liberia and the international financial contributors to the TR process to halt the implementation in order to correct the problems? This is the question that faces Liberia and this why many are now saying that the report must be reviewed for these obvious obstacles," said political observer Moses D. Gourd of Colonel West on Bushrod Island in Monrovia .

Gourd, who is a lecturer at a local commercial school, said no Liberian would be against the report if it did not weigh disproportionately on exacting retributive justice over the simple process of truth-telling and forgiveness granting as originally envisioned by Liberian peace negotiators in Accra in 2003.

He said it would be reckless for Liberians to seek to fight impunity from the background of insecurity. "Before you prosecute, you must ensure that you can contain the accused, lest you become victim. If that is the politics of fear he is talking about, then he is right and such fear is not out of place. It is being a brother's keeping and being circumspect, something required of all those interested in the welfare of Liberia and its war dispossessed population."

Gourd said while Mr. Toe's position was well articulated and appropriate for his American university advocacy audience, his recognition of the fact that the report contains provisions that are not only illegal but confrontational to a large number of the country's political leaders and warlords who hold that the civil war of 1989 to 2003 was a war for democracy and human rights, indicated that it was foolhardy to rush into implementation, ignoring the warning signs on the wall.

Psychosocial service provider Tina Crawford of Logan Town , who said she lived through the war and saw how the peacekeepers reacted in circumstances in which civilians were in danger, agreed with Gourde: "Those who will pack their things and will jump on board planes provided by their foreign friends should not tell us about impunity.

They will not be around to see how the poor will suffer. We expect the TRC to find a way between open hostility and justice, not recommend that which it, or the government, has no power to enforce without further endangering the Liberian people."

Analysts summing up the debate regarding the implementation of the unedited final report of the TRC into the fear of encouraging impunity and the fear of open hostility say it is only a compromise that addresses the extremes of each fear that will set Liberia on the way to addressing the ills that plunged Liberia into a 14-year civil inferno.

"But who will initiate the dialogue when all are postural?" they say, is the key puzzle.

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Agence France Press
Thursday, November 05, 2009

Rwandan pleads for pardon at genocide tribunal

By International Justice Desk



Arusha, Netherlands

An ally of Rwanda's former president Juvenal Habyarimana asked the UN genocide tribunal for forgiveness for his role in the massacre on Wednesday.

Michel Bagaragaza, the former director of Rwanda's tea sector, pleaded guilty to the charge of complicity to commit genocide before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in September.

He confessed to storing arms to be used in the killings at a tea factory in northern Rwanda and giving beer, money and vehicles to the Hutu militia that carried out the massacre out of fear for his security and that of his family.

The 55-year-old is the ICTR's ninth suspect to plead guilty.

"I ask for forgiveness for all the wrong things I did," said Bagaragaza, a day before his sentencing.

"I made the wrong choice and took easy options at a difficult time," he added. "I am left with regret and scars that I cannot erase."

"I told the tribunal investigators that I undertake to tell them the truth about what they wanted to know, including my role. I did it," he said, adding that he did not regret cooperating with the court.

Bagaragaza also testified against other genocide suspects, including Habyarimana's brother-in-law. His lawyer said his cooperation had sparked threats against his family.

The prosecution however urged the tribunal to consider the gravity of Bagaragaza's offence despite confessing.

(Source: AFP)

Capital FM

Thursday, 5 November 2009

Kenya urged to assist ICC prosecutor



BY BERNARD MOMANYI and JUDIE KABERIA

NAIROBI, Kenya, - The European Union (EU) has called on the Kenyan government to cooperate with the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) who is scheduled to arrive in the country on Thursday.

The Swedish Embassy in Nairobi issued a statement on Wednesday saying the 27-nation EU bloc

expected total cooperation from the Kenya Government with the ICC in ensuring justice is done and seen to be done.

Swedish Ambassador to Kenya Ann Dismorr, whose country holds the EU presidency, said the visit was a crucial step towards ending impunity in Kenya and bringing to justice perpetrators of the post-election violence.

“The European Union expects and looks forward to full and effective cooperation of the Kenyan Government with the ICC,” she said in a statement ahead of the visit by the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC Luis Moreno Ocampo.

Officials from the Justice Ministry confirmed to Capital News that Mr Ocampo was expected to jet in the country at 7am on Thursday.

Justice Minister Mutula Kilonzo has previously said Mr Ocampo’s main agenda would involve talks with President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga to discuss means of ensuring justice for cases related to the 2007 post election violence which saw some 1,500 people killed and nearly half a million others displaced.

The civil society and victims of 2007/008 post election violence have also been holding a series of consultative meetings to come up with a joint petition they intend to present to the ICC prosecutor.

In a joint communique, they urged the Chief Prosecutor to secure the commitment of the government of Kenya to fully cooperate with the ICC and hand over all evidence, facilitate arrest of suspects and offer any other assistance required.

They also demanded the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Kenya that conforms and meets international standards. "If justice will be done by Mr Ocampo, the disbanded team that headed ECK and the Chief Justice should also be held accountable," Okoiti Omtatah an activist said in Nairobi.

"They must all have their feet held on fire."

Meanwhile, a Non Governmental Organisation also asked Mr Ocampo to also meet other stakeholders especially the post election violence victims apart from meeting the President and Prime Minister.

Centre for Justice and Crimes against Humanity Chairman Mbuthi Gathenji said victims of the poll violence were looking forward to meeting Mr Ocampo to give their side of story.

He said they wanted justice before the next general election since there was a possibility of violence recurring if no one was punished.

Mr Gathenji said he feared that the two principles would not represent the seriousness of those seeking for justice and the real picture on the ground.

He also urged the prosecutor to push for a Sierra Leone-type of tribunal saying there was no way Parliament would support the Bill seeking to establish a local tribunal.

"From the look of things our MPs are already showing signs of their non commitment to pass the Bill. We have no more time to waste, let us ask the UN to support us with form a special court, our MPs will not give us anything," he said.

Mr Gathenji also asked Mr Ocampo to ensure Mr Raila and Mr Kibaki assure him of self referral to make it possible for him to conduct his investigations.

He also appealed to him to look at other lists and not only those implicated in the Waki list saying all those responsible need to be punished.

Voice of America

Wednesday, 4 November 2009

ICC Prosecutor Faces Uphill Challenges in Kenya Case

By Alan Boswell
Nairobi

A group representing victims of Kenya's post-election violence is urging The Hague to intervene and prosecute those most responsible for the organized slaughters. The victims play just one part in the complex web of political realities facing the International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor as he arrives Thursday for a face-to-face meeting with Kenya's government leaders.



International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo in The Hague, Netherlands, 04 Mar 2009

ICC chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo's visit follows the Kenyan government's failure to meet a September 30 deadline agreed to by a Kenyan delegation to set up a process to prosecute the top suspects in post-election violence locally.

Under the deal, Kenya agreed to refer the matter to The Hague if it failed to create a special tribunal within the designated timeframe.

Kenya fell into a weeks-long crisis following a flawed December 2007 presidential election that supporters of the main rival to incumbent President Mwai Kibaki claim was "stolen."

The disputed poll results sparked an outburst of ethnically-targeted violence that killed at least 1,300 and displaced hundreds of thousands more, many of whom remain stranded in makeshift camps.

The brutal mayhem caught many Kenyans and outside observers by surprise. The most economically powerful nation in East Africa has historically been considered a stabilizing force in an often volatile region, but the 2008 political crisis blew open festering land and discrimination issues that had built up over decades of tribal-based power politics.

A group of lawyers told post-election victims Tuesday that they must collectively push Ocampo for justice, saying the government agenda is being run by those suspected of perpetrating the violence.

The head of an organization representing several victims, attorney Mbuti Gathenji, similarly called for urgency in carrying out the investigations. He joined other lawyers in urging the ICC prosecutor to meet directly with those who were hurt by the violence.

"If it is possible, the victims feel an engagement with Ocampo would be a very good step to build confidence in the ICC. Not only that, they would like him to his time off and visit the scenes of crimes," said Gathenji.

The looming intervention from The Hague puts Kenya's two power-sharing heads in a tough position politically. President Kibaki and his former election foe, Prime Minister Raila Odinga, are both allied politically to powerful politicians believed to sit at the top of Ocampo's target list.

But Kenyan politicians are not the only ones caught walking a political tightrope due to the special attention Kenya is receiving internationally. Analysts say Ocampo is proceeding cautiously towards Kenya because of pressure the prosecutor is feeling from critics who accuse the Court of being overly aggressive towards Africa.



From left: Kenya's Justice Minister Mutula Kilonzo, ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo, Kenya's Minister of Lands James Orengo sign an agreement in The Hague, Netherlands on 03 Jul 2009

AP Photo
The chief prosecutor hopes to convince Kenyan leaders to abide by the earlier agreement and now directly refer the cases to the Court, a scenario Godfrey Musila, a specialist on the ICC for the African-based Institute for Security Studies, says is highly unlikely.

"My own conclusion is that the Kenyan president and prime minister will not refer the situation to the ICC, so it will be up to Ocampo to invoke his powers for there to be any formal investigations. But he will be informed, not only by local developments in Kenya, but also by those concerns that have been expressed by many on the continent, that as some allege, that somehow the ICC process is skewed against the African continent," he said.

Gideon Maina, a Kenyan international law lecturer, says Ocampo is also under strong pressure from the West to do something about the Kenyan situation.

Kenya's next elections are scheduled for 2012, and many fear that if key reforms are not implemented and the culture of political impunity is not fundamentally shaken, the upcoming political cycle could prove much more damaging than the last.

"Much as the ICC ought to operate independently, there is a lot of international pressure and international consensus that Kenya needs to be fixed before 2012. And as much as Ocampo is a lawyer, he is not naive to the fact that the perceived success of the ICC will depend maybe on how he tackles Kenya," he said.

Kenyan civil society actors have also played a major role in calling for The Hague's intervention. Musila, who frequently meets with those Kenyan groups pushing for ICC investigations, sees these local players as the most powerful factor in pushing Ocampo to take action in Kenya.

"The drive until now in fact has been driven by local civil society, although the international community, in particular the diplomatic corps in Nairobi, tends to support the position of the civil society," he said.

Both Musila and Maina agreed that the earliest one could expect any indictments from the court would be late 2010, and only if the ICC's lengthy pre-trial process is began in earnest very soon.

Amnesty International
Wednesday, 4 November 2009

African governments must reaffirm commitment to International Criminal Court

Amnesty International on Wednesday urged African government representatives meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to reaffirm their support for the International Criminal Court (ICC).

In a memorandum published this week, *The International Criminal Court: The Contribution Africa Can Make to the Review Conference*, the organization called on African governments to clearly state they would prevent any officials accused of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes from seeking safe haven in their countries.

"Only justice can lay a firm foundation for lasting peace," said Kolawole Olaniyan, Africa Legal Adviser at Amnesty International.

"More than a decade ago, African states were amongst the strongest supporters of the proposal to establish a permanent international criminal court that would be able to investigate and prosecute those responsible for some of the worst crimes in the world – they must renew this commitment, as the survival of the ICC as an effective international body depends on this," said Kolawole Olaniyan.

"African victims of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes are some of the chief beneficiaries of the ICC – the ICC must be fully supported so that it can continue its important work on their behalf."

The call came after Sudanese President Omar al Bashir cancelled scheduled visits to South Africa, Uganda, Nigeria and Venezuela, when it became clear that he could face arrest and surrender to the ICC, particularly in light of African civil society protests to the visits.

In its memorandum, Amnesty International urged African states to strongly defend the provisions of the ICC that exclude any claimed immunity for state officials – regardless of rank, including heads of state – from prosecution for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

"Every single legal instrument adopted since the Second World War by the international community has rejected immunity from prosecution for any government official charged with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes," said Kolawole Olaniyan.

"In fact, every international court to consider the question of immunity since the establishment of the ICC has concluded that heads of state cannot successfully assert any purported immunity from prosecution for genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes."

Amnesty International said that to ensure the ICC is an effective complement to national courts, it must be able to exercise its jurisdiction without political interference.

"With the exception of Darfur, all situations under investigation by the ICC were referred to the Prosecutor by African states themselves – the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda," said Kolawole Olaniyan.

The organization also urged African governments to evaluate carefully the positive and negative aspects of establishing a regional criminal court, as suggested by the African Union in an Assembly meeting in July 2009, especially its costs.

Reuters

Thursday, 5 November 2009

UN debates Gaza war crimes probe

By International Justice Desk



*New York,
United States
of America*

The UN General Assembly debated on Wednesday a resolution that would call on

Israel and the Palestinians to investigate charges of war crimes during the Gaza war detailed in a report that has infuriated Israel.

The nonbinding resolution on the so-called Goldstone report, which looked certain to be approved by the 192-nation assembly, also requests UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to send the 575-page report to the Security Council.

The report, commissioned by the UN Human Rights Council, lambasted both sides in the December-January conflict, which killed more than 1,000 Palestinians and 13 Israelis, but was harsher towards Israel.

Diplomats say there is little chance that the report or the Arab-drafted resolution could lead to punishment of either side. But it has enraged Israel and galvanized American Jews.

In the assembly debate, Arab envoys praised the report by South African judge Richard Goldstone and demanded an end to what they called the Jewish state's impunity. But Israel damned the document as "conceived in hate and executed in sin."

There is no veto in the assembly and the resolution looked sure to win a majority. But with more than 40 envoys listed to speak, most of them from Arab and other Muslim countries, it was unclear whether the vote would take place on Wednesday.

Israel's ally the United States was one of a small number of countries expected to vote against the resolution. In a clear warning to the administration, the US House of Representatives on Tuesday urged President Barack Obama to oppose UN endorsement of Goldstone's findings.

(Source: Reuters)

Today's Zaman

Thursday, 5 November 2009

Report: UK doesn't recognize 'genocide' for 'practical' reasons

Britain was accused of "genocide denial" on Tuesday after the disclosure of Foreign Office documents revealing the government's refusal to recognize the killings of Anatolian Armenians during World War I, a leading UK daily reported.

The documents, dating back over the last 15 years, say Anglo-Turkish relations are too important to be jeopardized by the issue because "Turkey is neuralgic and defensive about the charge of genocide," the Guardian newspaper said.

Armenians say up to 1.5 million of their kin were systematically killed between 1915 and 1917 when Turkey's predecessor, the Ottoman Empire, was in decline. Turkey rejects the genocide label and argues that between 300,000 and 500,000 Armenians and at least as many Turks died in civil strife when Armenians took up arms against their Ottoman rulers and sided with invading Russian troops.

According to the Guardian report, one Foreign Office briefing for ministers conceded that the British government "is open to criticism in terms of the ethical dimension." Yet, the same briefing in 1999 went on to say: "The current line is the only feasible option" owing to "the importance of our relations (political, strategic and commercial) with Turkey." The briefing said: "Recognizing the genocide would provide no practical benefit to the UK."

The daily cited remarks by Geoffrey Robertson, the queen's counsel who served as an appeal judge at the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone. Robertson said Britain's stance, stretching back over Labor and Tory administrations, was a cynical "genocide denial."

Robertson, who was commissioned by Armenian expatriate groups in London to review the Foreign Office files, published a report on Tuesday.

"Parliament has been routinely misinformed by ministers who have recited FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office] briefs without questioning their accuracy," the report said. "There is no doubt that in 1915 the Ottoman government ordered the deportation of up to 2 million Armenians ... hundreds of thousands died en route from starvation, disease, and armed attack," it said. The fact that Britain is key supporter of Turkey's accession to the European Union is the main reason behind the UK administration's stance vis-à-vis the Armenian killings, the Guardian report indicated, but "the Armenian question has become a touchstone for critics, who argue that Turkey should not be allowed into the EU until it admits the truth about its past."

Back in March 2006, the UK Foreign Office, in a letter sent to the Committee for the Protection of Turkish Rights (CPTR) fighting against the claims of the Armenian genocide with the participation of various nongovernmental organizations, had clearly stated that the incidents of World War I do not fit the category of genocide. London at the time refuted the claims in the Blue Book, chosen by Armenians to prove their claims of genocide. Turkey argues that Armenian allegations in the book, formally titled "The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915-1916," are not factually supported and that the book as a whole was wartime propaganda by the British.

Robertson, meanwhile, also told the Guardian that Britain's official policy has merely been "to evade truthful answers, because the truth would discomfort the Turkish government."