

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Wednesday, 9 January 2008

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

Wednesday, 9 January 2008

Prosecution witness explains life as captive

At the ongoing trial at The Hague of Charles Taylor the second prosecuting witness, Alex Tamba Teh, yesterday told the court how captives were treated during the war.

The 47-year-old man residing in Sandor in Kono District disclosed that in 1998 they were in Koidu when some Kamajors went there and informed them that they were there for the people's protection against the rebels.

The witness added that it was in April that they were captured in the Tongoro Bush by five men some of whom were in military uniforms and that all of the captives were civilians totaling about 250 including children.

Mr Teh, who is also a reverend, narrated further that they were taken to another village called

Kanya and that during the journey a man called Aiah Abu was shot by a gunman.

From Kanya town, the witness continued, they were taken to Sunna Mosque where they were welcomed by other gunmen clad in military uniforms with ECOMOG badges affixed on them.

"These men started greeting us like Nigerians and some of these captives started clapping and thanking them and telling them that they were happy because ECOMOG had come and rescued them from those 'dogs'", he stated.

The reverend went on to explain that, "I did not say anything because I was not satisfied so I took out my ordination card and showed it to the Brigade Commander who was Rambo. Rambo then ordered that the captives should be taken to the 'Igbaleh' at Kamachenda Street." "On our way I counted about 50 corpses all of them civilians although there were others but I could not count any longer because

I was not in the mood anymore," he disclosed.

Alex Tamba Teh revealed that he met Major Rocky who "told me that his actual name was Emmanuel Williams and that he was from Liberia and from the Bassa tribe. Rocky ordered that they should separate the men from the women and children, and that since I was the pastor I should pray for the civilians and then Rocky took his gun and shot all the elderly men. He again gave orders to the Small Boys to chop off the heads of these men."

The witness revealed that they returned to Sunna Mosque where Major Rocky reported that he had killed a total of 101 men with the exception of the reverend. Further narrating his ordeal, the witness said while they were held captives, the civilians were sent to find food while the women were forced to have sex with the rebels.

Taylor's trial starts in earnest

After several adjourned dates the trial of the former president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, yesterday finally commenced in earnest with the first prosecution witness taking the stand.

A former volunteer of the Canadian University Service, Ian Smillie who is an expert in diamonds, said he taught English and French for one school year in a secondary school in Koidu, Kono District.

On why he became interested in diamonds, the witness explained that “one cannot live in that area without concerning yourself with diamonds as the town was the centre of diamonds in Sierra Leone.”

Mr Smillie further stated in his evidence that Koidu town was similar to that of any rush town as thousands of people went there to mine diamonds.

The witness told the court that in 2000 the government of South Africa held a meeting for countries with diamonds and that after several meetings the Kimberlite process was initiated.

“The Kimberlite process requires that all rough diamonds traded internationally should have a government’s certificate... that is the government should know where every diamond is coming from and also the government will be able to trace a particular diamond,” he noted.

Speaking about the year diamonds was discovered in Sierra Leone, the prosecution witness said it was around 1930 and that mining was controlled by the Sierra Leone Selection Trust.

Sierra Leone’s diamonds, Mr Smillie revealed, had the highest value as compared to other countries like Canada as they cost over \$200 a carat.

The witness added that even though the Sierra Leone Selection Trust was in charge of mining there were about 500 illicit miners but that they were chased by the police as the only organization that had authority to mine was the Sierra Leone Selection Trust.

The witness added that Liberia also had diamonds but that it had a reputation of low level value as their diamonds cost between \$25-30 per carat.

During the war, he stressed, miners were engaged in artisanal mining and that the RUF was the sole controller of mining areas especially the one in Koidu.

Lots of evidence were submitted to substantiate his evidence about the role diamond played during the war.

Awoko

Tuesday, 8 January 2008

Amnesty calls for Taylor's trial to be publicized in Salone

Amnesty International has stated that it is important that the landmark trial of Charles Taylor be communicated to victims of the crimes being prosecuted and more generally to the people of Sierra Leone where the crime being prosecuted were committed against Sierra Leoneans and in Liberia where Charles Taylor served as president at the time the crimes took place.

Amnesty International noted that however, in the days leading up to the opening of the trial, observers in Liberia and Sierra Leone revealed that many people were unaware that the trial was about to start, and did not understand the reasons for removing the trial from Freetown where the Special Court had its premises to The Hague.

Amnesty International said the greatest challenge "Special Court is faced with will be to ensure the trial is accessible and known to the victims".

"With the trial taking place in The Hague it will be crucial that the day's developments of the trial be communicated promptly and accurately through a range of media such as radio, television, local newspapers and community outreach programmes.

Amnesty international also stated that it was concerned that following the government's decision to grant amnesties to the vast majority of persons who committed crimes during the conflict that many victims continue to suffer without justice and reparation.

It pointed out that by prosecuting a small number of cases, Amnesty International believed that the Special Court could play an important role to deliver some level of Justice to the people of Sierra Leone and to highlight the need to review the injustice imposed by the government by adopting an amnesty.

First Witness Testifies against Charles Taylor

By Teddy Foday-Musa, at
The Hague, Holland

The International Criminal Court's location at Maanweg 174 in The Hague, was on the 7th January 2008, the scene of another Taylor trial. Charles Dahkpannah Ghankay Taylor, who was dressed in a dark suit with a grey tie, was for the first time in court before the arrival of the trial judge. He looked not only healthy, but also very confident with members of his defence team surrounding him.

Mr. Taylor was frequently seen engaging members of his defence in a tete- á-tete, whispering close to their ears and often writing something on a piece of paper for their attention. That underscores his confidence in them.

Mr. Taylor's body language was one that speaks volumes of how adequately the court registrar team has responded to his demand for a good defence team. His daughter Charen Taylor was also in attendance. Upon entering the court room at 8:58, Mr. Taylor was seen blowing kisses to his daughter who was seated in the press gallery. Charen, who had wanted to conceal her identity from journalists, responded to her father's gestures with a quick flash and then comported herself. Yet the act did not go unnoticed by journalists.

This court session was dedicated to the prosecutor in order to present and cross-examine his first expert witness. Nick Konmjian, the prosecutor presented Mr. Ian Simillies, as his first expert witness.

Mr Simillies claims to be an expert in the diamond industry with regards to diamonds from troubled regions in Africa. He was cross-examined by the prosecutor, all geared towards asserting that Mr. Simillies was indeed a true expert in the diamond industry. Mr. Simillies carefully navigated his way around the questions thrown at him by the prosecutor. At the end of the day, he successfully established himself as an expert and an authority in the

diamond industry, more so in Sierra Leone.

Therefore, it was no surprise when Terry Munyard the defence for Taylor set himself the task to undermine the credibility of Mr. Simillies. During the cross examination, all questions directed at Mr. Simillies by him had the tendency to disprove Mr. Simillies being an expert in the diamond industry.

The cross -examination became a tense interlude of give and take between the two men. It went on to 16:25 p.m. Trial Judge Sebutinde was then left with no option but to call for an end of the cross-examination. She then asked the defence to kindly hold on to his cross-examination at that point for an adjournment. She further advised Mr. Simillies to refrain from making any comment about his cross-examination as he was yet to round up the exercise.

Court was adjourned to today 8th January, 9:00 am at the ICC building in The Hague.



Security Threat

Many Sierra Leoneans have expressed concern over the present security situation in the capital Freetown.

A senior diplomat confided to this press that the way and manner in which people are being attacked and robbed by armed men in the city pose a serious security threat.

He recalled the spate of attacks on the lives of innocent and defenceless people within the last three months, which led to the loss of lives and properties worth millions of leones.

The diplomat lamented that little is being done by the police and the judiciary to stem these attacks and armed robbery that appears to have literally placed the under siege.

A civil society activist, who this press spoke to on the issue, cited the killing of a baker Dr. Yeroh Boi Bah last Saturday night at the east end of the city by armed robbers.

The armed men according to reports broke into

the residence of Mr. Bah and ordered him to come out, and despite several pleas for mercy, shot him down.

Similar incidents was also reported during the festive season when criminals attacked people in broad day light, dispossessing them of money and other valuable items including mobile phones etc.

"I was attacked at 3:pm along Mountain Cut and everything I had in my possession was taken away by the robbers who were armed with knives, pistol etc," another victim Foday Conteh stated yesterday.

Several other people who fell victim of armed robbers also made similar complaints.

Dr. Conteh revealed that the situation has even worsened with taxi drivers and 'Okada' Riders now being involved in this criminal act.

Because of this ugly development, many people are now afraid to go out at

night for fear of being attacked.

One of the major obligations of any government is to protect lives and property and it is expected that the APC government will do everything in their power to stem this tide of raids and attacks by ensuring that any one caught is prosecuted and jailed.

" Unless something is done by the Judiciary, by ensuring that stiffer punishment is inflicted on these criminals, they may end up putting the whole city in constant fear," another concerned man Mohamed Kamara remarked.

He however expressed doubts with regard the capacity of the courts to stem this tide of violent attacks because according to him, even when these criminals are caught and charged to court, they are more often than not being released after sufficiently bribing the law officers.

Windfall for amputees in Freetown

By Rachel Horner

Two German based Sierra Leonean organizations yesterday donated rice, salts, oil, magi cubes, onions and toys to amputees at the Jui, Fawe, Hastings, Rokel, Benguma, Grafton and Newton camps in the outskirts of Freetown.

Mamila in Scheimbech and Panhecs in Dusseldorf have been giving aid to Sierra Leoneans for over ten years now.

Representative of Mamila, Gudrun Gerwin said the donation was to show that Sierra

Contd. page 4

Windfall for amputees in Freetown

From page 1

Leoneans in Germany are thinking about their brothers back home, especially the amputees.

"This gift will definitely not solve your problems but it will show that the world is a global village," she noted.

Financial Secretary for Panhecs, Osman Abu

Bakarr Turay said though his organization is just ten years old, it has been helping Sierra Leoneans both locally and internationally.

"We are here to help the people with the little resources we have and will continue to do more," he promised and disclosed that items donated worth

Le10 Million.

Chairman of the national amputee association, Alhaji Jusu Jaka thanked the benefactors for their gesture.

He said they are happy that people in Germany could think of Sierra Leoneans who are disadvantaged.

BBC Online

Tuesday, 9 January 2008

Taylor's trial hears of massacre

Ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor's war crimes trial has heard how Sierra Leone rebels killed some 101 men before ordering the mutilation of a child.

Sierra Leone churchman Alex Tamba Teh testified at The Hague that he was part of a group of 250 civilians seized by rebel forces in April 1998.

He said a rebel leader massacred some of the captives with a machine gun.



Charles Taylor denies responsibility for atrocities

Prosecutors are trying to prove a link between Mr Taylor and war crimes. He has pleaded not guilty to 11 charges.

Mr Taylor, 59, is Africa's first former head of state to face an international war crimes court. He is accused of stoking the civil war in Sierra Leone in 1991-2001 so that he could gain control over its mineral resources.

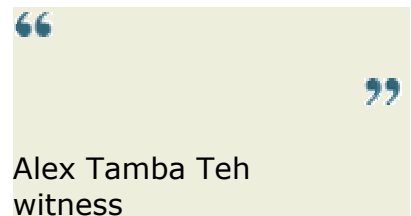
Mr Tamba Teh told the trial in the Netherlands he was among a group of 250 civilians captured a decade ago in Sierra Leone's diamond mining district of Kono by rebel forces.

Decapitations

The men were separated from the women and children and a rebel commander, known as Rocky, told the clergyman to pray for them before opening fire with a machine gun, the court heard.

Mr Tamba Teh, 47, told the trial that Rocky had later told another commander, called Rambo, he had killed 101 men.

After that, a group of child soldiers, known as the "small boys' unit" was ordered by Rocky to cut the heads off the corpses.



Alex Tamba Teh
witness

The clergyman said some of the boys were too small to lift the guns they were dragging around.

Later, a captured child was dragged to a log by some child soldiers and had his hands and feet hacked off with machetes, the trial heard.

'Emotional distraction'

Mr Tamba Teh told the court: "He was crying, screaming, asking: 'What have I done?'"

He said the child soldiers then grabbed the boy by the stumps of his limbs and swung him into a toilet pit.

The witness did not draw any link between the events he described and Mr Taylor, who sat taking notes throughout the testimony.

The BBC's Mark Doyle in The Hague says Mr Taylor's defence team believes the testimony of victims is an emotional distraction that seeks to portray Mr Taylor as a monster.

Rather, the court should be trying to establish whether Mr Taylor backed the rebels, the defence says.



**Test for justice
Charles Taylor: Profile**

Mutilated

Mr Tamba Teh told the trial that he later narrowly survived a split vote among the commanders on whether he should live or die.

The clergyman told the court he ended up in a rebel camp, where women were repeatedly raped.

Captives had the acronyms of the rebel groups, such as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), carved on their chests and backs with razors or knives, Mr Tamba Teh said.

Mr Taylor denies responsibility for atrocities committed by rebels during the civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

The trial opened in June last year but proceedings were postponed after Mr Taylor fired his defence lawyer and boycotted the opening of the trial.

The ex-Liberian President is accused of responsibility for the actions of RUF rebels during the 1991-2001 civil war in Sierra Leone, which included unlawful killings, sexual slavery, use of child soldiers and looting.

The Patriotic Vanguard

Tuesday, 8 January 2008

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Photo: Charles Taylor.

Agence France Presse

Tuesday, 8 January 2008

Victim tells court RUF rebels called Liberia's Taylor 'boss'

THE HAGUE (AFP) — A churchman who was held captive by rebels in Sierra Leone testified Tuesday in the trial of Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor that his captors referred to Taylor as "boss".

Taylor is accused of arming, training and controlling the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone in exchange for still-unknown amounts of diamonds.

The former Liberian leader has pleaded not guilty to 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity including terrorising the civilian population, murder, rape and the use of child soldiers.

Alex Tamba Teh, 47, a clergyman in the diamond-rich Kono district of Sierra Leone, was the first victim of atrocities to take the stand in the trial which resumed this week after a six month delay.

After a harrowing story of surviving a massacre at the hands of AFRC/RUF rebels and being held captive by them Tamba Teh recounted meeting with infamous RUF leader Sam Bockarie, also known as Mosquito, in 1998.

Mosquito wanted to appoint him as a pastor to the RUF troops but the witness said he refused, asking instead to be made a field marshall.

"My boss (Charles) Gankay Taylor is not yet a five star general, how can I make you a field marshall?" the witness quoted Bockarie as saying.

According to the prosecution Bockarie, who was murdered in 2003, had "the lead role in the link between Taylor and the AFRC/RUF alliance".

According to the prosecution of the Special Court for Sierra Leone Taylor controlled rebel forces in neighbouring Sierra Leone who went on a blood diamond-funded rampage of killing, mutilation and rape during the 1991-2001 civil war.

Around 120,000 people were killed in the conflict, with rebels mutilating thousands more, cutting off arms, legs, ears or noses.

Prosecutors said Taylor, who was the president of Liberia during most of the time covered in the charges, supported the rebels in order to get his hands on the abundant natural resources of Sierra Leone like diamonds and timber.

The witness Tuesday testified that he had witnessed a host of atrocities including a massacre of civilians, rape and mutilations carried out by the rebel troops.

He recalled seeing the rebels' so-called Small Boys Unit of child soldiers.

"They were small, small boys below the age of 15, some could not even lift their guns, they were dragging them," Tamba Teh said.

He described a harrowing incident where some of the child soldiers killed another boy by chopping off his limbs.

"He was crying, screaming, asking: What have I done? They put his right arm on a log and with a machete, amputated it at the wrist," Tamba Teh described.

After cutting off his other hand and both feet, the child soldiers took the boy who was still screaming and threw him into a toilet pit, he added.

After being spared from the killings by the rebels because he was a clergyman Tamba Teh was taken to another rebel base where he was held with other civilian men and women.

The captives were forced to find food for the rebels and at night the women were raped, he told the court. Tamba Teh also said the civilians were sent with other civilians to pick up arms.

According to the witness the ammunition they were brought in a helicopter that had writing saying Liberia Airways.

On Tuesday the defence tried to cast doubt on the testimony of the witness asking him why some of his earlier statements to the prosecution seemed to differ from what he was saying in court. Tamba Teh was insistent that he had told everything he told the court to the prosecution before.

Taylor's trial before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone was moved from Freetown to The Hague because there were fears his presence there could destabilize the region.

Voice of America

Tuesday, 8 January 2008

Taylor War Crimes Court Hears Tales of Horror

By Lauren Comiteau
Amsterdam

The trial of former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, resumed with the harrowing testimony of a clergyman - the first alleged victim of Sierra Leone's rebels to appear in court. Prosecutors say Mr. Taylor supported the rebels in terrorizing Sierra Leone's people so he could get control of the country's diamond wealth. Lauren Comiteau is following court proceedings and files this report for VOA from Amsterdam.

Alex Tamba Teh, 47, is a clergyman from the diamond district of Kono in Sierra Leone. He spoke calmly, but the stories he told are horrific.

He was captured in 1998 by rebels belonging to the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and the Revolutionary United Front and posing as Nigerian peacekeepers. These are the rebel groups that Charles Taylor is charged with supporting and funding.

They marched Tamba Teh, along with 249 other civilians, to a mosque. The men were separated from the women and children. Then the rebel commander calling himself "Rocky" learned that Tamba Teh was a pastor, he told him to pray for everybody. He then pulled the pastor from the line and opened fire on the men.

He killed all 101 of them. Rocky then gave instructions to a group of young boys known as SBU's, or Small Boys Unit - child soldiers younger than 15 years old, many too small to lift up their own guns, some with machetes. He ordered them to decapitate all the men he had just shot.

Tamba Teh then told judges about another boy, about 16 years old, who was taken screaming from the rebels. The witness used his own arms and legs to describe what happened to the boy next, with an interpreter translating his Creole.

"I saw another group of SBU boys with a small boy," said Teh. "He was screaming, what have I done. They didn't say anything. But the boy was screaming. At first, they put his right arm on a log. They took a machete and amputated it at the wrist. The boy was screaming and shouting, asking them, 'What have I done that you are doing this to me?' They took the left arm again and put it on the same log and sliced it off. He was still screaming and shouting. They took the left leg, put it on the same log and cut it off at the ankle. At last, they took the right leg again and put it on the log and cut it off with a machete."

In the end, they took the screaming and mutilated boy and threw him into a toilet pit.

Tamba Teh, whose own life was spared by a random vote of rebel commanders, then described women being used as sexual slaves, men who had to walk sometimes 80 kilometers to get food for the soldiers that they themselves were not allowed to eat, and prisoners who had the rebel groups' initials carved into their skin so they would not escape.



Charles Taylor is seen in court as his trial reopens in The Hague, 07 Jan 2008

Mr. Taylor's lawyers do not deny that atrocities took place in Sierra Leone, but dispute his involvement in them.

Tamba Teh did not directly link Charles Taylor to the crimes, but he told the tribunal how he and other prisoners retrieved weapons and ammunition from a helicopter with Liberian writing on it. Mr. Taylor was president of Liberia at the time. He also testified one of the rebel commanders was from Liberia and another one took orders from Monrovia.

Mr. Taylor took refuge in Nigeria after he was forced to step down in 2003, but, after intense diplomatic pressure, was handed over to the war crimes tribunal.

UN Observer

Tuesday, 8 January 2008

<http://www.unobserver.com/layout4.php?id=4251&blz=1>

Israel Rafalovich: Taylor Trial Day 2; Judges Hear of Massacre



2008-01-08 | The Hague

Tuesday was an emotional day for the judges and audience at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. Should this be an indication for the other testimonies, then are many heart breaking days expected in the court.

The Court listened to the harrowing testimony of Alex Tamba Teh, a Christian pastor, who recounted his experiences in his country, Sierra Leone. He told how, in April 1998, he and another 250 were captured by rebel forces.

The men were separated from the women and children before a rebel commander known by the name “Rocky”, from Libena, opened fire with a machine gun upon the men. He also told the court that Rocky told another commander, by the name “Rambo”, that he killed 101 men.

Hirondelle News Agency (Lausanne)

Wednesday, 9 January 2008

Expert Testifies Charles Taylor Diamond Deals

The Hague

A Canadian expert in the diamond trade, Ian Smilie, called by the prosecution of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL,) claimed that he met accused former Liberian President Charles Taylor twice, once being in the presidential office in Monrovia.

The prosecution alleges Taylor of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during the civil war in Sierra Leone with the objective of seizing its diamond riches in return for arms for his rebel group.

Named, with other experts, by the United Nations to inquire into the links between the traffic of weapons and diamonds, and which led to a resolution prohibiting the diamond trade coming from Liberia, the first prosecution witness testified: "I had asked Taylor to explain to me how he could export so many diamonds from Liberia to Belgium? and he answered me: "It is highly probable that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) has diamonds deals and that some passed through Liberia, but not officially.' "

For the prosecution, the rebels of RUF provided diamonds to Taylor in exchange of weapons and ammunition.

From the very start of the civil war, in 1991, Freetown could no longer export its diamonds and thus they passed through Monrovia.

But in Antwerp in Belgium, where 90% of the diamonds were sold, more diamonds arrived only from Liberia, which, besides, does not have serious diamond resources.

Until the putting in place of the Kimberley process, in January 2003, in which the witness took part, the actors of the diamond industry maintained the secrecy on the source of the precious stones.

The expert cited his investigations into the traffic of weapons paid in thousands of carats.

He even named in the Court notorious traffickers: Tajik Victor Tajik, Ukrainian Leonid Minin, Kenyan of Indian origin Sanjivan Ruprah, and Mohammed Jamil Derbah, suspected by the United Nations of having links with Al-Qaida and Hezbollah, and who had become "the provider of weapons to Taylor and resold diamonds."

Vainly Taylor's defence tried to reject this report as well as films showing victims conscripted by force by RUF to work in the mines.

"It is not a Hollywood movie. He will live without his hands, for the remainder of his days", pled the prosecutor Nicholas Koumjiam, about one of the protagonists in the films mutilated by the rebels.

Already before the trial, the defence had accused the prosecution of wanting to create sensationalism and estimated that the testimony of the victims of a war to which Taylor had not been involved and was not justified.

After the testimony of the expert, the prosecutor called his second witness, Alex Temba Teh, a pastor of the mining region of Kono.

The third witness, expected to testify on Friday, is an "insider" who would allegedly will expose how the former president in Sierra Leone provided weapons to the rebels.

The trial of Taylor, which began on 4 June 2007, had been deferred for seven months, after the defendant boycotted the opening, asking for time and resources.

Associated Press

Wednesday, 9 January 2008

TAYLOR DENIES DIAMONDS SMUGGLING

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) -- Prosecutors launched their war crimes case against former Liberian President Charles Taylor on Monday, taking testimony from an expert on blood diamonds and showing video of a Sierra Leone miner whose hands had been hacked off.

The 11 charges against him include murder, rape, enslavement and conscripting child soldiers. Taylor, the first former African head of state to appear before an international tribunal, has pleaded innocent.

The 59-year-old former leader is accused of terrorizing the people of Sierra Leone by orchestrating atrocities by militias known for slicing off their victims' limbs during the country's 10-year civil war, which ended in 2003.

His trial started in June but was immediately adjourned when he boycotted the hearing and fired his lawyer, claiming he would not get a fair trial.

Ian Smillie, a Canadian expert on the international trade in blood diamonds, testified that the militias, using captives for labor, took over Sierra Leonean diamond fields producing gems that were among the world's most valuable per carat.

The illicit diamond trade was likely one source of funds for smuggled arms shipments by suspected weapons dealers including Leonid Minin and Viktor Bout, the prosecution suggested.

Smillie showed the three-judge panel photos of a jet formerly used by the Seattle Supersonics NBA team that smuggled 68 tons of Ukrainian weapons and ammunition -- strapped into leather seats -- into Liberia through Burkina Faso in March 1999.

Prosecutor Nick Koumjian also showed a documentary about conflict diamonds to give judges background on the trade and the history of Sierra Leone, although defense attorneys objected to Smillie being portrayed as a history expert.

One part of the documentary showed a Sierra Leonean miner whose hands were hacked off and whose wife and children burned to death in 1998 by militias allegedly backed by Taylor. Another clip featured a boy who said he was kidnapped by the militia, the Revolutionary United Front or RUF, and forced to work as a slave in diamond mines.

Defense attorneys objected the video was "prejudicial material over which he has no expertise whatsoever," and judges agreed Smillie should not be allowed to testify about atrocities.

Prosecutors say Taylor's desire to get diamonds from Sierra Leone was one of the causes of his alleged involvement in that country's civil war. Smillie said Taylor denied involvement in diamond smuggling when Smillie interviewed him in October 2000 as part of a U.N. investigation.

"He said it was possible -- highly probable -- that there were RUF diamonds coming through Liberia, but he didn't know anything about it," Smillie said.

Taylor, wearing a gray suit and tie and gold-rimmed glasses, listened carefully to proceedings but showed no emotion. He carefully studied prosecution documents and photos with his defense team.

Smillie was the first of 144 prosecution witnesses, although attorneys expect only half of them to appear in person. The complex case was expected to last nearly two years. An appeal would likely carry the legal process into 2010.



● Ex- Pres. Charles Taylor in court

The second witness scheduled to testify was a victim of the militias. Taylor's defense team does not deny the atrocities happened in Sierra Leone, and has argued that calling victims is an unnecessary appeal to the emotions of judges.

Later in the week, a former member of Taylor's inner circle is expected to testify about how the ex-president allegedly controlled and encouraged militias in Sierra Leone.

The trial is being held in The Hague because of concerns that holding it in the Sierra Leone capital, Freetown, could spark new unrest. But the trial is being beamed to Freetown, where the public can watch at the court's headquarters.

In Monrovia, the Liberian capital, hundreds of Taylor supporters attended a prayer service Sunday night, gathering before a mammoth poster of him.

Baptist preacher Joseph Johnson told the congregation: "We strongly believe in the innocence of the accused."

Taylor's support in his home country is led by his family, who say he was not in control of those that carried out the crimes. Some also argue it is unfair to single out Taylor when other Liberians linked to war crimes during civil conflict in Liberia from 1989 to 2003 have escaped trial, and even gone on to political careers.

After the war, Liberians established a truth and reconciliation process, which has no punitive powers, rather than embark

In 2006, the Security Council authorized the staging of Mr. Taylor's trial at The Hague, citing reasons of security and expediency. Although the trial will be held at the premises of the International Criminal Court (ICC), it will remain under the exclusive jurisdiction of the SCSL.

The Special Court, established in January 2002 by an agreement between the Sierra Leonean Government and the UN, is mandated to try "those who bear greatest responsibility" for war crimes and crimes against community committed in the country after 30 November 1996.

Last July, it reached an agreement with the British government whereby Mr. Taylor will serve out his sentence in the United Kingdom if he is convicted.

Shocking Footage At Taylor Trial

Video footage of mutilated victims of Sierra Leone rebels has been shown at the war crimes trial of Liberia's former President Charles Taylor. Mr. Taylor - who is accused of trading weapons for diamonds - showed no emotion as the first witness, an expert on "blood diamonds", gave evidence.

The delayed trial has resumed at The Hague after a six-month delay. Mr Taylor is the first African former head of state to face an international war crimes court and faces 11 charges. He denies responsibility for atrocities committed by rebels during the civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

Video of a Sierra Leonean diamond miner was shown to the court, in which he described how his hands were hacked off by laughing Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels who later burned down his house, killing his wife and children.

The case against Mr Taylor centres on allegations that diamonds illegally mined by rebels in Sierra Leone were exported from Liberia with Mr Taylor's co-operation, and the proceeds from their sale used to buy weapons for the rebels.

“

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**Ian Smillie
witness**

Witness Ian Smillie, who wrote a report for the United Nations on conflict - or "blood" - diamonds, said the former RUF rebels used brutality to frighten people away from diamond fields that earned them up to \$125m (£63m) a year.

He said figures showed that during the war in Sierra Leone, Liberia exported far more diamonds than it could have produced itself.

He said that when he met Mr Taylor in 2000, the former president had told him it was "highly probable" that the former RUF rebels were dealing in diamonds, and that some of them might have been going through Liberia.

"But, he said this was not official, and he didn't know anything about it," Mr Smillie told the court. "He said the borders were very porous and he had no control over this."

Mr Taylor's defence objected to some of Mr Smillie's testimony as hearsay, but most of it was accepted by the court.

Funded defence

The trial opened in June last year but proceedings were postponed after Mr Taylor fired his defence lawyer and boycotted the opening of the trial. He now has a new defence team - a senior British lawyer, who is being paid for by the court, as Mr Taylor says he cannot afford it himself.

The BBC's Mark Doyle in The Hague says this will surprise many people in Liberia, who claim he made lots of money by selling timber and diamonds.

Mr Taylor is accused of responsibility for the actions of Revolutionary United Front rebels during the 1991-2001 civil war in Sierra Leone, which included unlawful killings, sexual slavery, use of child soldiers and looting.

RUF fighters were also notorious for hacking off the arms and legs of the civilian population with machetes. As the first international criminal prosecution against a former African ruler accused of misdeeds, the case is of crucial importance, our correspondent says.



Mr Taylor has pleaded not guilty to all 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The prosecution will also be calling a Liberian witness who is said to have belonged to Mr Taylor's inner circle.

Both witnesses are protected, which means their names have not been revealed. In all, the prosecution intends to call 144 witnesses, though only half are likely to appear in person.

The trial is expected to last about 18 months. It is being held in The Hague for fear that staging it in Sierra Leone might lead to fresh unrest there. If convicted, the UK has offered to jail him - again in case his presence in West Africa led to instability.

UNMIL Public Information Office Complete Media Summaries 8 January 2008

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

Newspaper Summary

Trial of Ex-Liberian President gets underway in The Hague

(New Democrat, The Inquirer, The News, The Informer, Liberian Diaspora, The Independent, Heritage, The Analyst, and Daily Observer)

- The war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor finally got under way at The Hague in the Netherlands on Monday.
- Taylor is appearing before the Special Court for Sierra Leone, a tribunal set up jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. He is charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes arising out of his alleged involvement in the civil war in Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2001. The charges relate to killings, mutilations, rape, other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, recruiting and using child soldiers, abduction and using forced labour. The trial first opened last June but was delayed by Taylor's initial refusal to appear in court, and wrangles over his legal representation.
- Meanwhile, a video footage of amputees in Sierra Leone was shown in court following the presiding judge, Uganda's Julia Sebutinde overhauling of the defence's objection.

State-owned Electricity Company Signs Agreement to restore Hydro Plant

(The News, Heritage and The Informer)

- The Liberia Electricity Corporation and an American firm, Stanley Consultants Incorporated, have signed a contractual agreement to conduct a feasibility study intended to restore the Mount Coffee hydro plant in Montserrado County to its pre-war status. The value of the agreement is put at more than US\$500,000. The plant was the main source for electricity to Monrovia and surrounding communities but was damaged during the civil war. Most newspapers generally portrayed the development as a major leap in the efforts to restore electricity to Monrovia.

New World Bank President due to visit Liberia

(Daily Observer, The Informer and The Analyst)

- World Bank President Robert Zoellick is expected to pay a three-day working visit to the country beginning January 29 to 31, Presidential Press Secretary Cyrus Badio has announced in Monrovia.
- The visit, according to Mr. Badio, is a follow-up trip aimed at reassuring the Bank's commitment towards the development initiatives taken under the administration of President Ellen Jonsen Sirleaf.

Presidency Welcomes Truth Commission Public Hearings

(The Informer)

- The Executive Mansion says it welcomes the start of the first public hearings conducted by Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The TRC on Tuesday began public hearings in Monrovia aimed at examining alleged violations committed during the country's civil war that ended in 2003.

- Many Liberians oppose the commission saying it is too soon to reopen still-fresh war memories, while others, among them President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, believe it is key to the achievement of lasting peace.
- The seven-member commission will not have judicial power to try cases but will investigate crimes and human rights violations including murders, extra-judicial killings, economic crimes and sexual abuses committed during Liberia's violent conflict covering the period 1979 to 2003.
- Public sentiments regarding the TRC continued to be mixed with most supporters believing that it is crucial to the achievement of lasting peace in the country. They perceived that it is through the TRC process that the divide created by the war could potentially be bridged. However, some critics doubt that the TRC will promote reconciliation and restore dignity to victims.
- It can be recalled that the TRC conducted "symbolic" hearings in October 2006 but the Commission was highly criticized in the media for openly extracting statements from victims and perpetrators. Several individuals including President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at the time disagreed with the holding of symbolic testimonies in public and urged the Commission to rethink on the approach.

Radio Summary

Truth Commission Begins Hearing Today

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Justice Ministry Says it's Uneasy to Arm Police

- Speaking to journalists, Justice Minister Philip Banks conceived that arming the Liberia National Police is not as simple as earlier thought in that those to be armed must be carefully vetted. Upon taking office as Minister of Justice, Cllr. Banks had vowed to arm the Police without delay in order to combat armed robbers and other criminals.

(Also reported on Star Radio, Truth FM, SKY FM and ELBS)

Gulf Times

Wednesday, 9 January 2008

<http://www.gulftimes.com/site/topics/article.asp>

Liberian 'truth' panel begins public hearings

Charles Taylor holding his Soviet-made AK-47 assault rifle in Buchanan as he continues his march on the capital Monrovia to oust President Samuel Doe in this 1990 photo

MONROVIA: Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf yesterday appealed for honesty as her war-racked west African country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) began its public hearings.

"I call upon all Liberians to respond to the TRC when they are invited. This process is not only for healing and reconciliation, it is also for justice," Sirleaf said at the start of proceedings in an opening ceremony in Monrovia.

The commission, created on similar lines to South Africa's post-apartheid panel after a 2003 peace pact, began work in 2006 by touring the western African nation to gather evidence of rights violations committed between 1979 and 2003.

Over two years, the aim is to shed light on massacres, summary executions, sexual violence and economic crimes perpetrated during Liberia's conflicts, with a longer-term goal of national reconciliation.

"I call all Liberians to be honest and truthful during this process. All those suffered during the crisis will have to share their pains," Sirleaf told a gathering of about 200 people including TRC members, government ministers and foreign diplomats.

"The TRC is the key to the reconciliation and achievement of genuine peace in Liberia," stated the commission's president, Jerome Verdier, who led a tour of six northern and eastern provinces where TRC members were able to go and explain their work.

During the public hearings, which will last until July 31, victims of the Liberian conflicts will come face to face with those they hold responsible.

The panel has been empowered to convene anybody, regardless of their social and political standing, TRC spokesman Richmond Anderson said, and three people were to appear yesterday.

Meanwhile, in The Hague, a reverend who survived a massacre and was held captive by rebels testified yesterday in the trial of Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor about seeing killings, rapes and mutilations. Taylor is accused of arming, training and controlling the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone in exchange for still-unknown amounts of diamonds.

The former Liberian leader has pleaded not guilty to 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity including terrorising the civilian population, murder, rape and the use of child soldiers. Alex Tamba Teh, 47, a reverend in the diamond-rich Kono district, was the first victim of atrocities to take the stand in the trial which resumed this week after a six month delay.

Tamba Teh told the court that after his town was taken over by RUF rebels he was captured along with other civilians and taken to a rebel leader.

"After they killed the civilians in the group, other adult men, he gave instructions that they should be decapitated," he said.

Rocky's so-called Small Boys Unit of child soldiers carried out the orders.

"They were small, small boys below the age of 15, some could not even lift their guns, they were dragging them," Tamba Teh said.

After the massacre a harrowing incident followed where some of the child soldiers killed another boy by chopping off his limbs.

"He was crying, screaming, asking: What have I done? They put his right arm on a log and with a machete, amputated it at the wrist," Tamba Teh described.

After cutting off his other hand and both feet, the child soldiers took the boy who was still screaming and threw him into a toilet pit, he added.

After being spared from the killings by the rebels because he was a clergyman, Tamba Teh was taken to another rebel base where he was held with other civilian men and women.

The captives were forced to find food for the rebels and at night the women were raped, he told the court. According to the prosecution Taylor controlled rebel forces in neighbouring Sierra Leone who went on a blood diamond-funded rampage of killing, mutilation and rape during the 1991-2001 civil war.

Around 120,000 people were killed in the conflict, with rebels mutilating thousands more, cutting off arms, legs, ears or noses.

Taylor's defence team stressed yesterday that the witnesses' testimony was not necessary because they do not say these crimes did not happen, they just argue Taylor was not responsible for them.

"Why do these victims have to travel thousands of miles and have to tell their terrible stories 10 years after it happened," Taylor's lawyer Courtenay Griffiths said.

"We do not contest these crimes happened, they have already been examined before the Sierra Leone tribunal. Are we going to repeat this ad nauseam," he asked. – Agencies

Daily Observer (Monrovia)
Wednesday, 9 January 2008

Daily OBSERVER

If someone
you love has
HIV/AIDS

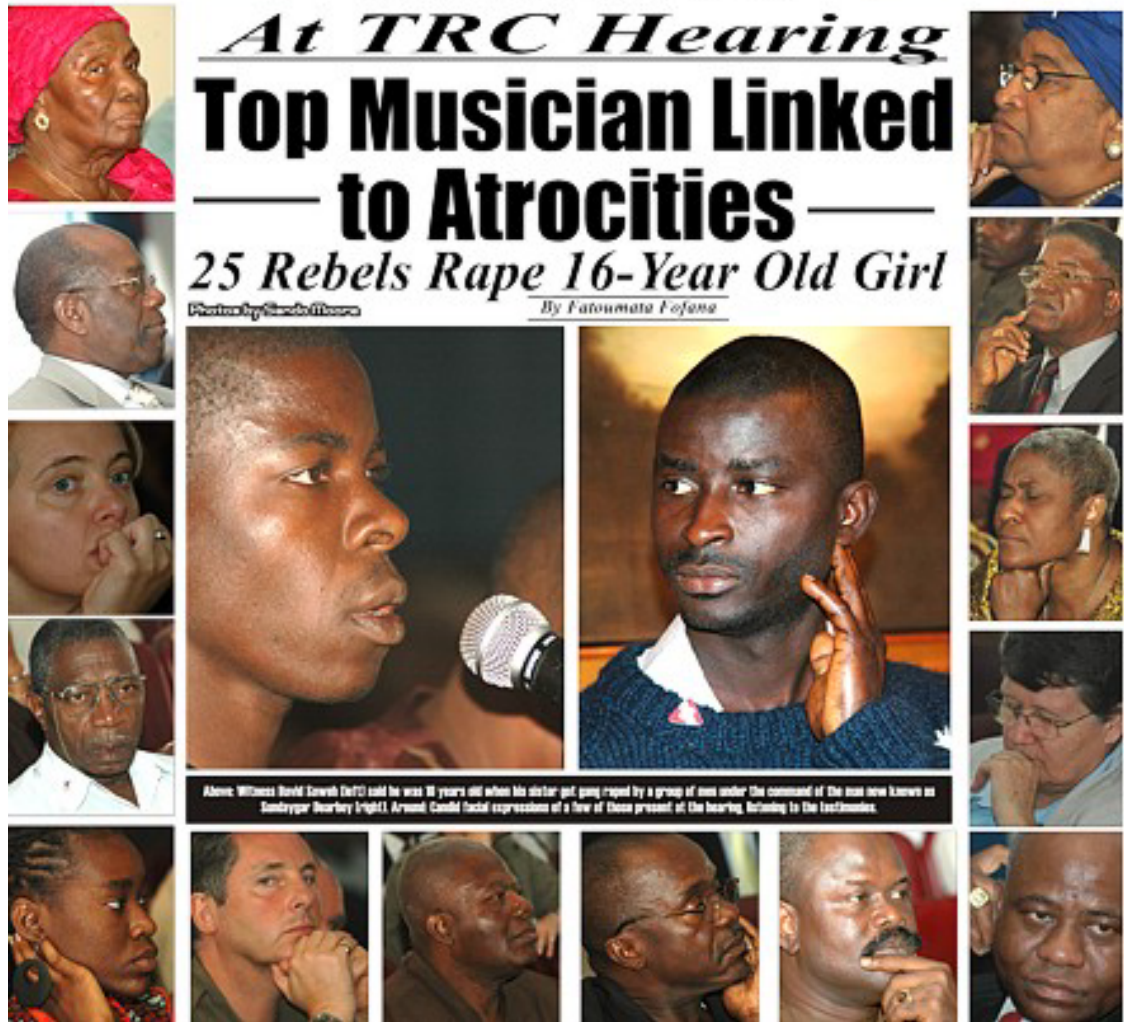
Does that stop
you loving them

A message from the Catholic Church
in collaboration with a 1000 program of the
Medical Practice College of South Carolina

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At TRC Hearing Top Musician Linked to Atrocities 25 Rebels Rape 16-Year Old Girl

Photos by Shadrach Mburu By Fatoumata Fofana



Above: Witness David Saweh (left) said he was 10 years old when his sister got gang raped by a group of men under the command of the man now known as Sundagar Dearboy (right). Around: Candid facial expressions of a few of those present at the hearing, listening to the testimonies.

Above: Witness David Saweh (left) said he was 10 years old when his sister got gang raped by group of men under the command of the man now known as Sundagar Dearboy (right), around: Candid facial expressions of the few of those present at the hearing, listening to the testimonies

At TRC Hearings Top Musician Linked to Atrocities, 25 Rebels Raped 16-Year-Old Girl

By Fatoumata Fofana

MONROVIA, The much-awaited public hearings on atrocities of the Liberian civil war began yesterday with one of the first witnesses testifying on how 25 armed rebels raped his sister during an attack by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) fighters in Grand Bassa County.