

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE



Unloading rice at Cline Town

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:

Monday, 9 July 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Independent Observer
Monday, 9 July 2007

Special Court Elects Justice Benjamin Itoe Presiding Judge

Hon. Justice Benjamin Mutanga Itoe of Cameroon has been elected to a one-year term as Presiding Judge of Trial Chamber I. He succeeds Hon. Justice Bankole Thompson of Sierra Leone, who ends his term today, July 5.

Justice Itoe was called to the Bar on 25 July 1968.

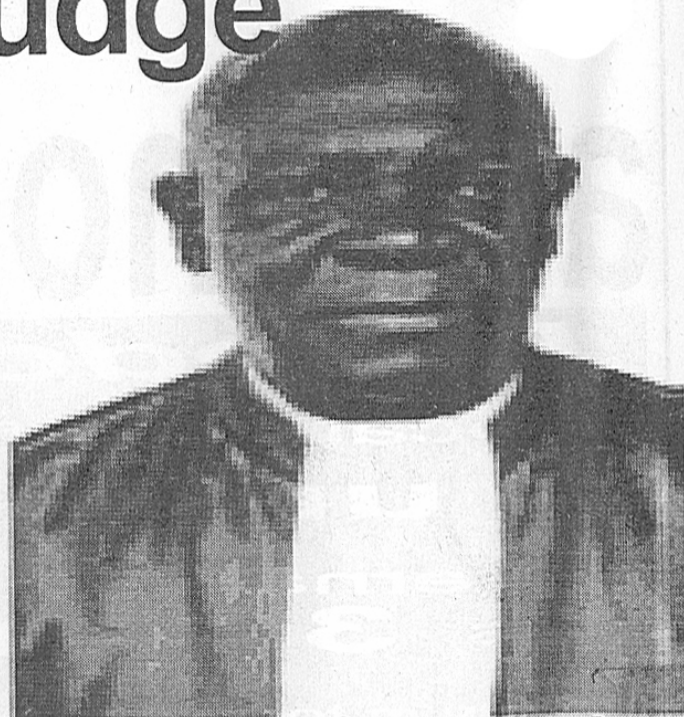
After a career in the Bar, he was appointed Prosecutor General of the Bamenda Judicial Province in 1972, a post he held for nine years. During that time he was a Member of Cameroon's National Law Reform Commission. He participated in drafting the Cameroon Criminal Procedure Code which harmonised the country's Civil and Common Law Procedures. In 1982 he became Deputy Director of Control of Judicial Services of Cameroon in the Ministry of Justice.

From 1984, Hon. Justice Benjamin Itoe held a series of Ministerial posts in the Government of Cameroon, including Minister of Transport in 1984; Minister of Justice in 1985; and Minister of Tourism in 1989.

In 1998 he was appointed Judge of the Supreme Court.

He was conferred with the State Honour of Cameroonian Knight of the National Order of Valour in 1985, and Officer of the National Order of Valour in 1997.

Before his appointment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to serve as a Judge of the Special Court, Hon. Justice Itoe was Deputy Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Cameroon. At the same time, he served as the Chief Judge of the Administrative Bench of that Court.



Hon. Justice Itoe is serving for the second time as Presiding Judge of Trial Chamber I. He first served as Presiding Judge of this Chamber from May 2004 to May 2005. During that tenure of office, he presided over the opening of both the CDF and RUF trials, respectively, on 3 June and 5 July 2004.

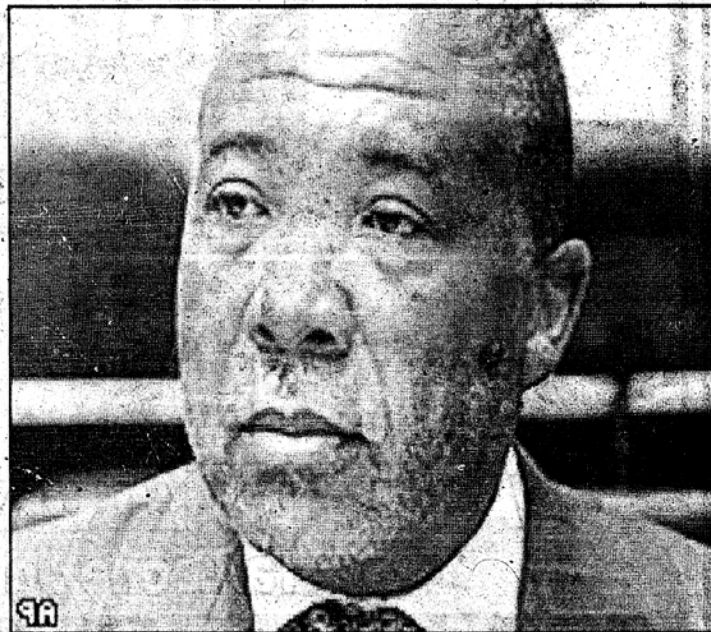
Update on Charles Taylor's trial

The trial for former Liberian President Charles Ghankay Taylor by the Special-Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), commenced today Monday 4th June, 2007 at the International Criminal Court at the Hague with the Accused being absent. Counsel for the Accused Mr. Karim Khan however, submitted that the Accused has not waived his right to be present and would be representing himself. The President Judge, Justice Julia Sebutinde, ordered that Mr. Khan represent the Accused. This ruling was pursuant to Rule 60 (B) of the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the SCSL. Counsel of his choice, or as directed by a judge or Trial Chamber may represent the accused.

Following this Ruling, Counsel for the Accused informed the court that Mr. Taylor has terminated his services for lack of legal resotirced and he would not be in the position to represent him in his absence. He was however ordered by the president judge to stay in court and allow the prosecution to commence with their opening statements in order to ensure expeditious proceedings. This implies that the trial would only continue in the absence of the Accused if he waived his right to be present or is being represented. Mr. Kahn insisted that the Accused has not waived his right to be

present and he cannot at this point represent him in his absence. The president judge cautioned him that he cannot stand up without permission and that he is violating the conduct of an Attorney and he could be charged with contempt. Despite such warnings, Mr. Khan walked out of the Court room. The Prosecution was however allowed to commence with their opening statement. The trial was adjourned to 25th June 2007.

The trial recommenced on the 25th June 2007 at about 9:00 A.M. with the Accused being absent. However, the Office of the Principal defender in conformity to have an expeditious proceeding provided a Duty counsel during the trial. The Duty counsel informed the Court that he was not representing Mr. Taylor but rather he was there to speak on issues relating to the case of Mr. Taylor. He informed the Court that that the Accused has expressed an opinion that his previous defence team had insufficient resources to adequately defend or present him. Following arguments from the Prosecution, the Registry and the Principal defender, it was submitted that the chamber should grant Mr. Taylor adequate time to prepare his defence. The registry however, expressed concerns about the funds that would be required to facilitate a new defence



Charles Taylor

team for Mr. Taylor would be very exorbitant. They suggested that an interim counsel should be drawn from the former defence team to avoid undue delays in the preparation of a new team.

The Chamber ruled that a new defence counsel should be assigned to the Accused and all other residual

members of the Taylor defence team should be retained. The team should be in compliance with the qualification set out in the Rules and it should comprise of Lead Counsel, two Co-counsels, and one senior investigator. A Duty Counsel is requested to represent the Accused on 3rd July 2007, which is the next adjourned date for the trial.

Special Court denies the Sierra Leoneans access to Taylor's trial

This morning the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) has again effectively denied the people of Sierra Leone access to the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor. The SCSL conducted a public procedural hearing at the Hague this morning, but failed to broadcast a video of the hearing anywhere in Sierra Leone, the country where the crimes for which he is being tried took place. In so doing, the Court violated United Nations Security Council Resolution 1688, which requested that the Special Court make the trial accessible to the people of the west African subregion, including Sierra Leone, through video link. Trial Chamber II scheduled the hearing to explain last week's decision to delay the trial until 20 August. This delay means that those who suffered during the civil war will have to wait even longer to see justice delivered to Charles Taylor. It is vital that Sierra Leoneans have the opportunity to fully access these proceedings, so that they can understand the workings of the judicial process, and because they more than any other group will have to live with the results.

Indeed, the proceedings took a surprising turn - one that the people of Sierra Leone were forced to miss - when Taylor arrived unexpectedly to plead not guilty to the recently amended indictment. Nor is this the first time the Sierra Leonean people have been denied access to observe the judicial

process at work: first, the case was transferred out of Sierra Leone to the Hague; then on 4 June, the morning of the Prosecutor's opening statement, the broadcast at the Special Court repeatedly sputtered and halted, with the Court eventually resorting to broadcasting coverage from news-channel CNN. Finally, on 25 June, when the trial was scheduled to resume, the broadcast again failed. Sierra Leoneans have thus been denied any and all access to the trial of the man accused of sponsoring a war that killed thousands of their countrymen and victimized millions more.

"Lack of access to the Taylor trial does not only hinder the healing process of the Sierra Leonean people," says Mohamed Suma, Programme Director of SLCMP, "but also undermines the anticipated impact of the trial on our legal system since the lack of access to justice was one of the underlying causes of the war".

"These repeated failures indicate a lack of seriousness by the Court in terms of its commitment to accessibility," elaborates SLCMP Special Court monitor Joseph A.K. Sesay. "This can only erode the legitimacy of the Court in the eyes of the people of Sierra

Leone".

This denial of access seems particularly absurd in the context of the Special Court, which, unlike the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, was placed in the country where the alleged crimes occurred specifically to encourage greater public access to the court and a stronger national legacy. These goals seem impossible to achieve when the public cannot even observe the proceedings. The absence of access has further implications for transparency and accountability because it disrupts observations by local monitors attempting to keep track of the national impact and implications of Court decisions. Instead, they are forced to track the proceedings via transcripts or broadcasts available only on the internet, a luxury which remains prohibitively expensive for most Sierra Leoneans. It is said that justice must not only be done, but must be seen to be done. Taylor's proceedings are currently scheduled to continue on 20 August. Hopefully the Special Court will successfully broadcast them in Freetown, and the people of Sierra Leone will have the opportunity to watch the Prosecution call its first witness in one of the most important trials in recent African history. If not, the SCSL will have again violated its commitments to transparency, a positive legacy, and the people of Sierra Leone

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Court issues judgment in AFRC trial

By Joseph A.K. Sesay

The Trial Chamber II of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) presided over by Justice Jullia Sebutinde with Richard Lussick and Teresa Doherty being the other justices on Wednesday 20th June 2007, convicted the Accused in the case between the prosecutor against Alex Tamba Brima, aka Gullit, Brima Bazzy Kamara aka Ibrahim Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu, aka 55, First, Second and Third Accused respectively

of the Armed Forces Revolution Council (AFRC) after 176 days of trial. The convicts were found guilty on counts 1-6, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 which included acts of terrorism, collective punishments, extermination, murder, violence to life, rape, outrages upon personal dignity, violence to life in particular cruel treatment, conscripting of children under 15, enslavement and pillage respectively. There was no conviction on counts 7 and 8 which included sexual slavery and other

inhumane act because according to the Bench, "it was bad for duplicity". The bench informed the court that they have considered charges relating to the "bush wife" phenomenon or where women were kidnapped and forced into long term sexual relationships as set out in count 9 (outrages upon the personal dignity).

The convicts were not found guilty on count 11 charging other inhumane acts. Below are the charges and their subsequent findings

FEATURE

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The convicts were found guilty on counts 1-6, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 which included acts of terrorism, collective punishments, extermination, murder, violence to life, rape, outrages upon personal dignity, violence of life in particular cruel treatment, conscripting of children under 25, enslavement and pillage respectively. There was no conviction on counts 7 and 8 which included sexual slavery and other inhumane act because according to the Bench, "it was bad for duplicity". The bench informed the court that they have considered charges relating to the "bush wife" phenomenon or where women were kidnapped and forced into long term sexual relationships as set out in count 9 (outrages upon the personal dignity). The convicts were not found guilty on count 11 charging other inhumane acts.

The convicts, who were alleged leaders of the former AFRC, were separately indicted on 17 counts of alleged commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law contrary to Articles 2, 3 and 4 of the Statute of the SCSL. The initial counts have later amended to 18 counts and finally 14 counts in 2005. Following the order of the Chamber on the 28th February, 2004 for the joint trial of all three Accused persons, the Prosecutor issued a consolidated indictment on the 5th of March, 2004.

The prosecution on the 7th March, 2005 began its case against each Accused persons and concluded on 21st November of that same year, calling 59 witnesses and tendered 80 exhibits in evidence. The Defence opened its case on the 6th of June 2006 and finished on the 26th of October 2006, calling on 87 witnesses, including the First Accused, who testified in his own defence, and tendered 39 exhibits in evidence. Pursuant to Rule 86 of the Court's Rules of Procedure and Evidence (The Rules), the parties presented their closing arguments on the 7th and 8th of December 2006.

In convicting the Accused, the Chamber informed the court that it has made its factual findings and they (Judges) were convinced beyond all reasonable doubts about all the decisions they made. These factual findings were conducted on a district level namely; Freetown and the Western Areas, Bombali, Bo, Kenema, Kailahun, Kono, Koinadugu and Port Loko. The guilt findings were made in pursuant to Article 6(1) of the Statute of the SCSL, which found the accused individually guilty of "planning, instigating, ordering, committing or otherwise aiding and abetting the crime." For the charge of rape under Count 6, however, the Court convicted the First Accused on the basis of superior responsibility pursuant to Article 6(3) based on the fact that he had actual control over a person committing a crime, knowing or being in the position to know of the crime, and failing to take necessary and reasonable measures to prevent the crime or punish the perpetrators. The Second and Third accused were also convicted of the same (Rape) pursuant to Article 6(1) and (3).

Prior to the judgments, the defence charged the indictment as being defective. These alleged defects include the locations where crimes were committed, that is, according to the defence, the exact locations were not specified in the indictment. Also, the indictment does not specifically charge their clients with a specific crime. Other defect includes the issue of forced marriages. In making a ruling, the Chamber dismissed count 7 and the issue of forced marriages, the latter being declared as sexual slavery. Regarding their role, the First accused tendered Alibi evidence denying that his name is Alex and

there was a mistaken identity and that he was too sick to perform his duties and responsibilities during the junta regime. The Chamber ruled that his name is Alex Tamba Brima and he performed his duties as a senior member of the AFRC. Following claims that he was detained by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in May 1998 – July 1999, the Court rejected the alibi and ruled that following the death of SAJ Musa the First accused became the leader of the AFRC/RUF fighters which invaded Freetown in January 1999 and however accept evidence that he was detained in 1998. It was ruled that the Second and Third Accused were members of the AFRC and they participated in the coup of May 1997. The Second accused held the position of Principal Liaison Officer III and was referred to as “Honourable”. It was proved that he had close association with Denis Mingo and that he took command of the relegated AFRC faction at Okra Hills known as the “west side boys”. The Third accused was Chief of Staff and G5 commander and was in charge of the abducted civilians.

In convicting the First Accused, the Chamber is satisfied that he was a member of the group that organized the coup of May 25 and he held the position of Principal Liaison officer II in the supreme council of the AFRC. The Prosecution proved that there was a wide spread attack against the civilian population during the invasion of Freetown January 1999 killing about 145 and amputated about 234 in an operation called “operation cut hand”. The Chamber ruled that it was proved by the Prosecution that, the First Accused unlawfully killed civilians who refused to join them, and those who gave refuge to Nigerian soldiers. In Bombali district, the Prosecution proved that Brima was the overall commander of the AFRC troops that occupied Camp Rosos. He ordered attacks known as “operation clear the area” on Karina, which he referred to as Kabbah’s village. Houses were burnt down and children were thrown into flames. The element of “use of child soldier” was also established. The First Accused ordered for the capture of children, and 300 young boys between the ages of 10 and 12 were brought for recruitment in 1999. The Chamber was not satisfied that the Accused was individually responsible for crimes committed in Koinadugu, Bo, Kenema and Kono. There was however evidence to show that crimes were committed in these areas, but the Prosecution did not prove effective control to show any superior-subordinate relationship and the theory of joint criminal enterprise was dismissed because according to the Bench it was “mispleaded” in the indictment.

It was established that the Second Accused, Brima Bazy Kamara, aka Ibrahim Bazy Kamara/Alhaji Ibrahim Kamara, was a senior member and a part of the decision making body of the AFRC. During the attack on Freetown in 1999, he aided and abetted troops for operation “cut hand”. The Prosecution proved that Kamara was in charge of the relegated faction of the AFRC known as the “West side boys” at the okra hills. By virtue of his position, he became liable for atrocities committed by this faction. In Kono district, the Prosecution proved that the Second Accused had authority over Savage (senior commander) and his troops. He was present in Tombodu during the commission of crimes. In Bombali district, the Prosecution failed to prove individual responsibility, however, they proved that the Second accused was aware of the activities of the troops in that area.

The Chamber unanimously agreed that the Third Accused, Santigie Borbor Kanu, aka 55/Santigie Khanu/Santigie Kanu/S.B Kanu/Santigie Bobson Kanu/Borbor Santigie Kanu, was a senior member of the superior council but no evidence was adduced whether he implemented decisions. Furthermore, the evidence were insufficient to convict him for individual criminal responsibility for crimes committed in Bo, Kenema, and Kailahun districts. Following evidence that he was in control of SAJ Musa and Denis Mingo’s troops, the Chamber ruled that it was inconclusive. In Freetown and the Western Area, the Chamber was convinced that the Third Accused murdered and amputated civilians. He personally killed and ordered for the death of prisoners of war at state house.

Following the judgment, the convicted accused were remanded until a sentencing hearing on 16 July 2007. Justice Sebutinde advised counsel on both sides that, pursuant to Rule 100 of the Special Court’s Rules of Evidence and Procedure, they were obligated to submit information relevant to sentencing at the hearing.

Pursuant to both Article 20 of the Statute and Rule 106, both the Prosecution and Defence may appeal the judgment on the basis of procedural error, an error in a question of law invalidating a miscarriage of justice. By Rule 108, a party seeking to appeal a judgment must file an appeal with the registrar and serve a written notice of appeal upon the other party within fourteen days of the judgment. Appeals should therefore be expected by 4 July. In considering the Trial Chamber’s judgment, the Appeals Chamber may affirm, reverse or revise.

Concord Times

Monday, 9 July 2007

Charles Taylor's Rights as an Accused

By Zoila Hinson, Freetown

On Monday, June 4, the first day of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor's trial in The Hague, his attorney, Karim Khan spelt out three of Taylor's complaints about his Defence team: "that Taylor's defense had been granted insufficient time, resources and facilities to prepare its case; that the Special Court's Registrar had denied Taylor's request to speak with Principal Defender, Vincent Nhemille; and that there was no 'equality of arms' between the Prosecution and Defence teams because the Prosecution team was larger and had greater legal experience, both individually and as a group."

This is not the first time Taylor had made these complaints. Indeed, his Defence team has filed no fewer than three motions stating versions of these grievances. While Taylor does have significant rights as an accused that relate to all three of these complaints, the exact standards by which the Court evaluates those rights remain unclear, and thus far the Court has ordered the Registrar to make changes in terms of his decisions and defence financing in only the most obvious or egregious instances.

All three of these complaints are based on Taylor's right as an accused stated in Article 17 of the Statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. These rights include the right "[to] have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his or her defence and to communicate with counsel of his or her own choosing" under Article 17(4) (a) and the right to a "fair and public hearing" under Article 17(2). This right to a fair trial combines with Article 17(4) to guarantee "equality of arms" refers to the principle that, in an adversarial system like the Special Court where the prosecution and defence are essentially fighting each other to convince the judges

of their version of the truth, the prosecution and defense should be evenly matched. In sum, these rights mean that Taylor's complaints are not based on a general sense of what is fair, but on specific rights guaranteed by the Court's own rules: the right to equality of arms; the right to adequate time and resources to prepare a defense and the right to communicate with chosen counsel. Thus while Article 17 does not mean that Taylor's complaints are valid, it does state the rights that form a basis of such complaints.

Simply stating that Taylor has rights, however, does not indicate whether those rights have been violated. To determine whether Taylor's rights have been violated, one must first determine if there is a clear legal standard by which a Court must judge such violations or if the Court has any other guidance in determining what is or is not a violation other than the plain language of the statute. Part of the way to make that determination is to examine previous decisions and see if any of them spells out a rule.

By virtue of Article 20(3) of the Rules of the Special Court, the Appeals Chamber "...shall be guided by the decisions of the Appeals Chamber of International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, (ICTY and ICTR)." The Trial Chamber has similarly treated ICTY and ICTR decisions as precedents. Treating a decision as a precedent means that when the ICTR or ICTY has made decisions about similar factual situations or legal issues, the Trial Chamber tries to make sure its decisions follow the same rules or match up with those decisions; this idea of binding precedent exists in many countries, including Sierra Leone.

The statutes for the ICTY and ICTR contain essentially identical guarantees as the Special Court statute, but unfortunately the cases from these tribunals do not further

explain the standard. In general, cases from the ICTY and ICTR have interpreted the rights to adequate facilities broadly, and have used it as the basis for granting access to, for example, a laptop computer and a photocopier. They have also tended to judge these situations individually, rather than creating broad rules. In terms of equality of arms, in a case from the ICTR called the *Prosecutor v. Kayishema/Ruzindana*, ICTR judges ruled that "the rights of the accused and equality between the parties should not be confused with the equality of means and resources." In other words, while Taylor has the right to adequate facilities and equality of arms, this right does not mean a guarantee that the facilities for his defence or the size or experience of his defence team must be identical to that of the prosecution. This decision, however, also does not mean that any difference between the defence and prosecution would be acceptable. Thus, again, the tribunals have not articulated guidelines for deciding when the requirement of equality of arms has been met.

The Special Court has followed suite, though its rulings have tended to focus on the question of inadequate resources. For example, in January of this year, Trial Chamber I granted the Sesay defence team an order for a second office, a second networked computer, a vehicle for the team's use and a witness management officer who would locate witnesses. It did not, however, create a broad rule to determine why these resources were necessary for an adequate defense and others were not. Taylor's own team has also filed several motions requesting time and facilities based on his rights under Article 17. In December 2006, for example, his team filed a motion requesting office space in Monrovia and asking

to postpone the start of the trial from April 2, 2007 to September 3, 2007. While the defence's motion for a Monrovia office was rejected, the start of the trial was postponed, though only to June 4, 2007. Again, the Court did not explain what made a resource or period of time adequate or not. Thus the Special Court, like the ICTR and ICTY, has generally not spelt out broad rules.

Because the judges have not yet specified how they define these terms, only the Statute of the Special Court and the Court's own judgment as to what is "adequate" or "equal" will guide decisions as to whether Taylor's rights have been violated. Indeed, the judges' decisions in this case may reflect a certain ambiguity. Thus far, the judges' orders have only addressed situations where the violations of the defendant's rights seem particularly obvious. In other words, while it may be difficult to draw the exact line between what is inadequate and what is adequate, the Court has still issued orders when the issue fell clearly to the "inadequate" side of the line, but only in those situations. For example, on June 4, Judge Sebutinde ordered the Registrar to ensure that the defence team had an office from which to operate. While she did not address more ambiguous issues such as the differences in the sizes of the Defence and Prosecution teams, the Defence team's not having an office, if true, would be an unambiguous example of inadequate resources.

Similarly, she ordered the Registrar to make arrangements for the Principal Defender to fly to The Hague to meet with Mr. Taylor. Again, denying Taylor access to the head of the Defence office seemed clearly to violate his right to meet with a counsel of his choice. The Court almost certainly has its own

independent reasons for why it chose to issue orders in these instances and not others, but it does seem to have limited its orders based on Article 17 to when the violations were the most egregious and therefore the most clear.

Regardless of whether any of these particular examples violate Taylor's rights as an accused, the Court should act aggressively to protect Taylor's rights as an accused. In cases like this one where there are a lot of negative feelings toward an accused, people sometimes argue that it is okay for his rights to be neglected because he is "guilty anyway." In other words, because others may believe an accused deserves to be punished, they argue that it does not matter whether the court follows its own rules or protects his rights when it decides to punish him. As the Principal Defender has pointed out, however, "there is the presumption of innocence."

Perhaps more importantly, without protections for the rights of the accused, the Court would no longer be legitimate or deserving of respect. Indeed, if the Court did not act to protect Taylor's rights when they were violated, it would validate his assertions that he did not recognise the Court's authority. This respect for the rules and for justice is particularly important in the Special Court because of the nature of the conflict in Sierra Leone. The lack of a fair, regular, swift and just judicial system has been identified as one of the root causes of the conflict. Moreover, one of the goals of the Special Court has been to leave a positive legacy in Sierra Leone. As part of the legacy, the Court must first endeavour at every turn to function as fairly, as just and as regularly as possible.

Culled from the 24th edition of the SLCMP

PEEP!

Monday, 9 July 2007

The Special Court Denies the People of Sierra Leone Access to the Taylor Trial

culled from The Monitor, official newsletter of the Sierra Leone Court Monitoring Programme, Vol. 24, June 2007

This morning the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) has again effectively denied the people of Sierra Leone access to the trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor.

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In so doing, the Court violated *United Nations Security Council Resolution 1688*, which requested that the Special Court make the trial accessible to the people of the West African subregion, including Sierra Leone, through video

accused of sponsoring a war that killed thousands of their countrymen and victimized millions more.

"Lack of access to the Taylor trial does not only hinder the healing process of the Sierra Leonean people," says Mohamed Suma, Programme Director of SLCMP, *"but also undermines the anticipated impact of the trial on our legal system since the lack of access to justice was one of the underlying causes of the war."*

"These repeated failures indicate a lack of seriousness by the Court in terms of its commitment to accessibility," elaborates SLCMP's Special Court monitor Joseph A.K. Sesay.

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Nor is this the first time the Sierra Leonean people have been denied access to observe the judicial process at work: first, the case was transferred out of Sierra Leone to the Hague; then on 4 June, the morning of the Prosecutor's opening statement, the broadcast at the Special Court repeatedly sputtered and halted, with the Court eventually resorting to broadcasting coverage from news channel CNN; finally, on 25 June, when the trial was scheduled to resume, the broadcast again failed.

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It is said that Justice must not only be done, but must be seen to be done. Taylor's proceedings are currently scheduled to continue on 20 August. Hopefully the Special Court will successfully broadcast them in Freetown, and the people of Sierra Leone will have the opportunity to watch the Prosecution call its first witness in one of the most important trials in recent African history.

If not, the SCSL will have again violated its commitments to transparency, a positive legacy, and the people of Sierra Leone.

Acting Registrar Agrees to Increase Funding for Taylor Trial

The Hague

The Special Court for Sierra Leone held a short press briefing today led by the Acting Registrar of the Special Court, Herman von Hebel, to provide an update on the formation of Charles Taylor's defense team. As the Special Court's June 25, 2007, decision stated, by July 31, 2007, the newly-composed defense team must include one lead counsel, two co-counsel, and one senior investigator. The Acting Registrar expressed that he "shares the [Special Court's] concerns" that Mr. Taylor receive effective representation and that the trial proceed in a timely manner.

The Acting Registrar described a financial package that will enable the Special Court to meet both these goals. Von Hebel stated that he would provide one additional legal assistant for the Taylor defense team for the duration of the trial, as well as two additional legal assistants for the first three months of the trial, to allow legal counsel to familiarize themselves as quickly as possible with the case. Further, the Acting Registrar increased the overall funds allocated to Taylor's defense team to 70,000 USD per month. The budget for Taylor's defense team is now nearly three times the budget for most defense teams of the Special Court and two times the budget for most defense teams of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

Von Hebel stated that this increased budget does not include either the additional funds allocated for the senior investigator or the office space that the Registry will provide for the defense team. With these allocations included, the budget for Taylor's defense team amounts to approximately 100,000 USD per month. The Acting Registrar concluded by noting that the Principal Defender's Office has been actively consulting with many attorneys all over the world to identify lead counsel for Taylor's defense team. The Acting Registrar stated that he is confident that a defense team will be assembled before the trial resumes in August.

Stephen J. Rapp, Prosecutor of the Special Court, was also present at the hearing. Rapp supported the Acting Registrar's increased budget for the Taylor defense team and stated, "It is important that justice be done and be *seen* to be done." Because the Prosecution expected its first witnesses to testify beginning July 2, 2007, it released the names of the witnesses 45 days before that date, as required by law. The Prosecutor emphasized that Taylor needs adequate representation by August 20, 2007, not only because he has been detained for more than a year, but also because the Prosecution's witnesses "are in danger" as a result of the release of their names.

During the hearing, Rapp indicated that although he "did not believe Mr. Taylor is indigent," the Office of the Prosecutor did not want to "hold up" the trial by litigating this point. Rapp stated that if substantial assets belonging to Taylor are later found, this money will be seized and used to fund his defense team. Both Rapp and von Hebel stated that "it is with the judges to control the trial" and expressed the belief that the judges would not allow either the prosecution or the defense to further delay the trial without good cause.

International Justice Tribune

Monday, 9 July 2007

First verdict for the Special court

On June 20, five years after beginning its work, the Special Court for Sierra Leone reached its first verdict.

The three defendants were leading figures in the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), the military junta that held power in Freetown between May 1997 and February 1998. After joining forces with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the AFRC began a brutal offensive on the Sierra Leone capital on January 6, 1999. It was ousted after three weeks of massacres and pillaging.

In a decision that stretched to 631 pages, the judges found the three AFRC chiefs, Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara, and Santigie Borbor Kanu guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Their sentence will be handed down on July 16.

The trial, begun on March 7, 2005, came to a close on December 8, 2006.

The Court heard 148 witnesses and admitted 155 exhibits. The main suspect, Johnny Paul Koroma, the AFRC's head, who was indicted in 2003, is still at large, but possibly dead.

The Chamber found that the AFRC and the RUF, and the three defendants in particular, had committed the crimes of extermination, murder, rape, sexual slavery, enslavement, pillaging, acts of terrorism, recruiting child soldiers, forced labor, mutilations, and collective punishment between 1997 and January 2000 in various parts of the country.

A majority of the judges ruled that the crime of forced marriage did not constitute a separate crime but rather was a form of sexual slavery. The Chamber dismissed the charge of joint criminal enterprise, concluding that the AFRC's goal of seizing power and controlling national territory did not violate international law.

International Herald Tribune

Monday, 9 July 2007

Opinion

A Just Ending

They looked like ordinary Sierra Leoneans that day, sitting side by side in the dock before trial chamber No. 2 at the international war crimes tribunal in West Africa, called the Special Court for Sierra Leone. But they were not.

In March of 2005, I looked across the courtroom at them as they filed into the chamber. The case of Prosecutor versus Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu was about to start. For more than two years we had been perfecting a solid case against them, the leadership of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. In 2003, I signed the indictment against each of them, my investigators arresting one as he staggered drunk down a road in Pujehun.



Upon the order of the presiding judge, I began my accounting of what these seemingly ordinary men had done to Sierra Leone in a brief and horrific year. I carefully laid out the general allegations and the individual criminal responsibility of each. This was the third of three joint trials against the leadership of all the combatants in the bloody 10 year conflict that destroyed not only Sierra Leone, but - with President Charles Taylor of Liberia added and abetted by Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya and Blaise Campore of Burkina Faso - Liberia and portions of the Ivory Coast as well. With this trial the last of a 25-year joint criminal enterprise came to an end.

A little more than two years later, on June 20, 2007, that very trial chamber rendered their verdicts on the 14 counts of the joint indictment. Each of the accused was found guilty for 11 of those counts: Count 1 (acts of terrorism); Count 2 (collective punishment); Count 3 (extermination); Count 4 (murder, a crime against humanity); Count 5 (murder, a war crime); Count 6 (rape); Count 9 (outrages against personal dignity); Count 10 (physical violence, a war crime); Count 12 (conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups, or using them to participate actively in hostilities); Count 13 (enslavement); and Count 14 (pillage).

Behind each of these counts is pain and suffering that cannot be imagined. In Freetown, they came out of the hills, sweeping the civilian populace before them in an orgy of rape, pillaging, murder and mutilation. January 1999 will forever be etched in the memories of all West Africans as the month when the devil, in the guise of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and their allies, the Revolutionary United Front, destroyed Freetown. Child soldiers roamed the streets dragging bloody burlap bags filled with severed hands, arms and other body parts back to their commanders as directed. The "chop hand" units were busy during those monstrous three weeks..

As I worked my way through the opening statement on that warm March day in 2005, I looked into the eyes of the accused. I saw nothing, no soul, no humanity. Nothing. These weren't ordinary men, but something else.

And so they have been tried, convicted and await sentencing later this summer. It is anticipated that they will never see the light of a free day again. They represent all that is bad in mankind and for that they have been brought to justice.

Justice is never perfect, efficient, nor at times swift, but it can bring hope, some reconciliation for the victims and the possibility of a sustainable peace. It is my fervent prayer that their trial will help bring that peace to the people of Sierra Leone.

David M. Crane, a distinguished professor of practice at Syracuse University College of Law, was the chief prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 06 July 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

Two Neo-Nazis jailed in Germany for beating up Liberian

Magdeburg, Germany_(dpa) _ Two neo-Nazis who bashed a Liberian because of the colour of his skin and kicked a policeman who came to his aid in Germany were jailed Friday for 42 and 30 months. The May 2005 assault in the eastern city of Halberstadt shocked Germans, but at a lower-court trial, one of the men, 31, was let off with a suspended penalty.

.S. judge in Miami upholds law banning foreign torture: Miami ruling means son of Liberia's Taylor can be charged

South Florida Sun-Sentinel (KRT)ul. 6--A Miami federal judge on Thursday upheld the constitutionality of a 1994 torture ban, clearing the path for the first criminal prosecution under the law to proceed against the son of former Liberian president Charles Taylor. In December, Charles McArthur Emmanuel, a 30-year-old U.S. citizen who once lived in Orlando, became the first person charged under the so-called Torture Act, which outlaws acts of torture committed in other countries.

Court grants Charles Taylor more money for defense in Sierra Leone war crimes trial

AP Alert – Financial, July 06, 2007--THE HAGUE, Netherlands_The court trying former Liberian president Charles Taylor for war crimes committed in Sierra Leone has again raised the amount of money he receives to pay for defense attorneys, a court official said Friday. Taylor, charged with backing rebels who murdered, raped and mutilated thousands of Sierra Leoneans during the country's 10-year civil war, will receive a package worth some \$100,000 (euro73,500) per month, said Special Court for Sierra Leone acting registrar Herman von Hebel.

UN Official, Duchess of York Dedicate New School

SouNew York, Jul 06, 2007 (UN News Service/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- The United Nations today dedicated a newly constructed school in Liberia at a ceremony attended by Sarah, the Duchess of York, who called for continued attention to the country as it solidifies stability after years of conflict.

International Clips on West Africa

Special Court Violates UN Resolution

Concord Times (Sierra Leone) July 6, 2007--The Sierra Leone Court Monitoring Group, SLCMP Tuesday issued a statement accusing the Special Court of violating United Nations

Security Council Resolution 1688 after the Court failed again to broadcast the hearing in The Hague of Charles Ghankay Taylor.

Ivory Coast PM in Burkina Faso for talks after assassination bid

OUAGADOUGOU, July 6, 2007 (AFP) - Ivory Coast's prime minister was in Burkina Faso on Friday, a week after surviving an assassination attempt, for talks on his security and the peace process in his country, officials said. Guillaume Soro flew into the Burkinabe capital Ouagadougou late Thursday, where an historic peace deal was signed in March between his New Forces rebels and Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo.

Ivorian entrepreneur sets sights on tropical wine

ABIDJAN, July 6 (Reuters) - A Italian-based vintner from Ivory Coast hopes to make the West African state's first wine if grapevine cuttings planted as an experiment in the tropical country's soil can produce fruit. African countries with cooler, more Mediterranean climes such as South Africa, Morocco and Algeria are already renowned producers but Amani Yoboue, 44, aims to be the first to produce wine in this former French colony just north of the Equator

Local Media – Newspaper

IMF Cautions Government against Privatizing Customs

(The Forum)

- Sources at the Ministry of Finance told *The Forum* newspaper that the International Monetary Fund cautioned the Government of Liberia to drop its plan to privatize its revenue collectorate but should instead use the money for such venture to train more personnel to manage the sector.

Community Radio Stations Ticked for Pilot Project in Liberia

(The Forum, Public Agenda, Heritage, National Chronicle, The Inquirer and The Informer)

- A press release issued in Monrovia yesterday said that the Liberia Media Center and Radio Netherlands Training Center selected the Voice of Tappita, Radio Nimba nad Radio Kergheamahn among others to kich-off their four-year radio training programme in Liberia.

Chinese University to Assist Medical College and JFK Hospital

(The Analyst and The News)

- The President of the Jiamusi University in Heilongjiang Province, China, Professor Wang Wiseman disclosed that his institution will provide medical and technical assistance to the A.M.E. Doglioti College of Medicine at the University of Liberia and the John F. Kennedy Medical Hospital, a key State-owned referral hospital in Liberia, adding he said that a team will visit Liberia soon to assess and formalize arrangements for the assistance.

Lawmakers Differ with Presidency on Assets Seizure Acts

(The Diary, Plain Truth, The Forum and New Democrat)

- Representatives Saah Gbollie, George Mulbah and James Biney have described as "malicious and vindictive" the move by the Presidency to introduce two Acts seeking to freeze or confiscate the assets of corrupt officials of Government and called on the Lawmakers not to endorse the instruments simply because they lacked objectivity.
- But, in its editorial, *New Democrat* commended the Presidency for introducing the Bills and entreated President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and members of opposition political

parties who are interested in justice and transparency to ensure the passage of the Acts.

Local Media – Radio Veritas (*News monitored yesterday at 6:45 pm*)

Chinese University to Assist Medical College and JFK Hospital

Executive Mansion Denies Being Pressured to Submit Assets Freeze Bill

- The Executive Mansion said it is not under pressure to submit the bill calling for the freezing and seizure of assets of corrupt and would-be corrupt government officials.
- Speaking to journalists, Presidential Press Secretary, Cyrus Badio said the bill is in adherence to the United Nations resolution of 1532 and not a direct policy of the government.
- He clarified that the bill does not target any particular group of individuals but is intended to curb “deliberate” attempts by to dupe government of money.
- The passage of the asset freeze bill will authorize the government to legally effect the U.N. resolution.
- Meanwhile, the Executive Mansion has rebuff claims that the President offered funds to lobby with members of the Legislature to pass the 2007/2008 National Budget and thought that lawmakers did not need to be bribed to perform their national responsibility.
- Members of the House of Representative yesterday shifted their previous position to pass 1/12th of the proposed fiscal budget to be expanded until the ongoing debate is completed and budget approved.
- The motion was made 2 weeks ago and got the backing of majority of the lawmakers.

Opposition Party Maintains Stance to Shun Consultative Meeting

- The opposition Liberty Party says it still maintains its earlier statement not to attend a meeting between President Ellen Johnson- Sirleaf and political parties today.
- Information Minister Laurence Bropleh last week encouraged the Party to attend the meeting and put forth their concerns for discussions but the party said the meeting is a tactics by government to create “false impression” that it is engaged in consultations.

Police Alarm over Increase in Sale of Stolen Phones and Illegal Drugs

- The Liberia National Police has raised an alarm over the increase in sale of looted mobile phones in Monrovia.
- Speaking to reporters, Deputy Police Inspector, Asatu Bah-Kenneth said they have also received intelligence that illegal drugs are also being sold and warned those dealing in the sale of drugs and stolen phones to immediately desist.

Living scotsman.com

Sunday, 8 July 2007

Opinion

Children of the revolution

PAULINE DIAMOND

FOR 14 years Liberia was bathed in blood as rebels and government troops fought a brutal civil war. Jerry Boweh was lucky - he escaped the murders, rapes and mutilations when he fled to Glasgow. Now he is heading back home with a Scottish youth project to help heal wounds inflicted in that terrible conflict.

AS THE multicoloured sparks of Hogmanay fireworks exploded across Glasgow's night sky and revellers shrieked and cheered in the streets below, Jerry Boweh was cowering behind the curtains of his Govan flat. "The fireworks terrified me," he says. "They sounded exactly like gunfire, and I thought if I looked out the window I would see soldiers shooting people in the street."

The 38-year-old Liberian fled his homeland during one of the world's most brutal civil wars. As a youth worker in Liberia's capital city, Monrovia, Boweh was in his 20s when rebels executed the country's president, Samuel Doe, triggering 14 years of furious conflict and anarchy in the small West African country and stealing the childhood of a generation.

Boweh recalls the night he knew for certain that if he didn't leave Liberia, he would die. "I was working as a youth leader on a college campus just across the road from the national army barracks. When the rebels attacked the barracks my students and I became trapped inside the college for three hours as the rebels and soldiers exchanged gunfire outside.

"I peeked out the window during the gunfight and saw that some of the rebels had painted their faces in voodoo-style masks and were dressed up in strange wigs and women's clothes. People were running everywhere to escape the bullets, but we had nowhere to run as the campus was wedged between the barracks and the ocean. All we could do was wait to see who would capture us first, and wonder what they would do with us."

That night, the rebels defeated the national army. In an act that epitomises the brutality of the Liberian conflict, they displayed the severed heads and bloody entrails of the soldiers on the gates of the barracks. Then they returned to Boweh's campus. "They pointed their guns at us and ordered us to leave the campus and walk towards the city centre. I organised the students and did my best to look after them as we stepped over dead bodies, lying where they had fallen on the street. Everyone was walking. It seemed like the whole country was on its feet."

A massive percentage of Liberia's population of three and a half million did indeed walk, seeking refuge in neighbouring Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast. Boweh found his own escape route. Through his work in Monrovia, he had made friends with a couple of Glaswegian aid workers who offered to help him move to Scotland. "I had no idea what to expect in Scotland," Boweh recalls.

"I had been told people spoke English - as in Liberia - but Scottish English sounded very different from the language I had grown up with. The cold was a shock as well. I had never really felt cold before, and for the first couple of weeks I didn't relate my feeling cold to the weather outside. Of course I also expected everybody to be in kilts, as this was how I had been told Scottish people dressed. I was actually slightly disappointed when this turned out to be false."

Despite the initial culture shock, the nightmares that left him shaking and sweating, and his fear for the family and friends he'd had to leave behind, Boweh gradually built a life for himself in Scotland. He

graduated with a degree in youth and community studies from Glasgow University and went on to work with young people from deprived areas across the city.

Like many refugees, Boweh had lost contact with his family when the conflict in Liberia intensified. Hundreds of thousands of Liberian families became separated and dispersed as rebels ransacked towns and villages. As he tried to settle into life in Scotland, Boweh didn't know whether his family were alive or dead. "For the first four and a half years in Scotland I didn't have any contact with my family," he says. "The only time the UK news reported on Liberia was to say that the conflict was escalating."

Finally, he got in touch with his parents and his younger brothers and sisters. "Knowing that the people you left in that unbearable situation are alive and you can speak to them helps. But you can still see their scars from a distance."

The United Nations estimates that one million Liberians were displaced during the 1989-1996 civil war, 250,000 killed and at least 25,000 women raped. One of the key architects of the conflict, Charles Taylor, is currently on trial at the Hague for crimes against humanity. The 11 counts of war crimes and serious violations of international law - to which he has pleaded not guilty - are for atrocities committed by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). Taylor is alleged to be the driving force behind the RUF, a group of brutal rebel fighters notorious for the mutilation of civilians - hacking off limbs, slicing off ears and noses - as well as summary executions and indiscriminate rape and murder.

The horrifying tactics employed by the RUF also included abducting children and sending them to fight at the frontline of the conflict. One of these youngsters, Thomas (his name has been changed), became separated from his family and was living on the streets of Monrovia when he was recruited by the rebels. "The war was coming to Monrovia, to my home. There was nothing to eat. No food, no water. I went to kill the enemy."

Identifying the enemy became difficult, though, as numerous groups fought for supremacy. Armed with an AK47, Thomas fought for a rebel group headed by Taylor. He was 11 years old. "We were there to kill the enemy, to destroy them. But not to destroy the Liberian people - to destroy enemy life. We told civilians to get on the right path and support us. If I killed any civilians it was in the crossfire," he says.

"I'd go into a village where the rebels were based, to go take them. I'd make myself small, go slowly and creep. I'd creep, I'd get there, open fire and kill. I can't tell you how many people I killed, plenty of people, maybe hundreds. Everyone was fighting. Children who were holding guns, I killed them. They wanted to kill me, so before they killed me I killed them first."

A generation of Liberians, the ones who managed to stay alive, lost their childhood in this way. Amnesty International estimates that 21,000 Liberian children became soldiers like Thomas. Others were used as cooks for army commanders, and young girls were abducted as army wives. Bertrand Ramcharan, the UN's acting high commissioner for human rights, estimates that one out of every ten Liberian children may have been recruited into the war effort. "Liberian children have suffered all kinds of atrocities," he says. "Sexual violence, disruption of schooling and forced displacement."

Child soldiers were often supplied with drugs, including amphetamines and marijuana, which they were told would make them invincible. "I lived on smoke, on grass," says Thomas. "I like to smoke grass. It makes you relaxed and wise. If anybody's coming, you will know. Your heart will be ticking fast. I like it. I smoke, I sit down - cool. That's the medicine they gave us, marijuana medicine."

International pressure forced Taylor to stand down from the presidency in 2003. After three years of interim governance, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf - Africa's first female head of state - was democratically elected to replace him in 2006. (Her main rival was George Weah, Liberia's most famous son, who is recognised as having been the best African footballer of all time.) Liberia was returned to a state of relative peace. But after 14 years of fighting, the country Johnson-Sirleaf inherited was in tatters.

While work goes on to restore electricity supplies, and international aid projects battle a malaria epidemic, Liberia's social infrastructure also needs to be repaired. This, says Boweh, must start with the country's youth. "For young Liberians in their teens and 20s now, all they have ever known is war. Schools and training projects were unable to function during the conflict, so there is a desperate need for education in Liberia. But of course education costs money, and so does war, and Liberia has been left in debt. The country needs teachers, and it also needs buildings with desks and chairs and school books. Young people like Thomas need to learn, and they need to discover how to express themselves in ways that don't involve aggression."

Johanna MacVeigh, protection adviser for Save the Children, agrees that there is an urgent need to rehabilitate Liberian children. "Child soldiers desperately need long-term support when they are released from armed groups. Many will have been subjected to brutal intimidation, violently abused and forced to commit terrible atrocities. Girls taken to become army wives will have been frequently raped, and may be made pregnant as young as 11 or 12. Even when they're released, former combatants are frequently rejected by society, refused access to school, and find it impossible to re-enter 'normal' life after being so long immersed in violence."

A decade spent working with disaffected young people in Glasgow has given Boweh an insight into the means of connecting with troubled teenagers. Now he is taking this experience and knowledge back to Liberia - along with a group of Scottish teenagers. His charity, the African Youth Development Action Project (AYDAP), aims to encourage cross-cultural education and skill-sharing among young people and qualified youth workers.

As an accomplished musician, Boweh is convinced that engaging young people in the arts can help accelerate their healing. "Music is an international language that everyone understands and can relate to," he says. "It also gives you the freedom to say what you feel - no matter what that is - and to share that with others."

As part of the project, Boweh is planning a month-long festival of music, art and skill-sharing in Liberia. "Liberian children are desperate for fun, desperate for activities and things to do to take their minds off what they have experienced."

He hopes that both Liberian and Scottish teenagers will benefit from the exchange. "The festival will exhibit their talents and widen their experience. Scottish teenagers from deprived backgrounds will benefit from experiencing a new way of life, widening their understanding of different cultures," he says. "I hope they will bring this insight back to their communities in Scotland, easing local tensions here."

The Liberian children will be offered a series of workshops and arts programmes alongside the Scottish youngsters. "The youth workers we're taking to Liberia will be able to share their skills and help recruit and train Liberian volunteers. A youth club in Scotland might have a dozen kids in it and to get those dozen kids involved you've practically got to beg them. In Liberia, the same youth club would have hundreds of kids in it."

Although Boweh was fortunate to escape from Liberia when he did, he has always felt a sense of responsibility for the young people of his country. "It's like jumping out of a burning house and hearing your siblings shout out at you for help. You need to pass on this message, this need for help. We have to let our crying brothers and sisters and all the crying children of Liberia know that we have them in our hearts. And this means more than just thinking about them. This means taking action. Action is where the difference lies."

The rise and fall of Charles Taylor

LIBERIA'S former president, 59-year-old Charles Taylor, appeared for the first time at his war crimes trial in the Hague on Tuesday, having boycotted previous hearings.

Proceedings are to be delayed until August 20 while a defence team is appointed. Taylor sacked his lawyer in what is the first war crimes trial against a former African head of state.

Taylor has been indicted on 11 charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law due to his alleged role in the brutal civil wars of Sierra Leone and Liberia. He denies charges of backing rebels in an 11-year campaign that saw thousands of civilians killed. Charges include terrorising the civilian population, murder, sexual violence, physical violence, using child soldiers, enslavement and looting. Taylor pleaded not guilty when he appeared in court in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in March last year. Following this, the trial was moved to the Hague because of fears it could lead to renewed tensions within Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Chain of events

1989 Taylor launches the rebellion
 1991 RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone
 1995 A peace deal is signed
 1997 Taylor is elected president
 1999 Liberia's Lurd rebels start insurrection to oust Taylor
 2003 An arrest warrant for Taylor is issued in June; in August he steps down as president and goes into exile in Nigeria

Music to heal the soul

GLASGOW'S non-denominational gospel choir raises money for the AYDAP through performances at music festivals and functions. The 20-strong group was established by Jerry Boweh ten years ago, and is mostly made up of non-religious Scots in their 20s and 30s.

Boweh, who started the choir in a bid to meet new people and to maintain links to his own culture, says, "Gospel music is at the root of Liberia's history and culture. Gospel expresses the pain and the struggle of slavery. It's a way of crying beyond tears as well as a way of rejoicing. To be joyful singing these songs is the best internal healing and strengthening you can ever find."

The choir performs a mixture of traditional gospel, African folk and Negro spiritual songs as well as applying a gospel take to modern classics. They appear regularly around Scotland, and last month gave a week-long series of spiritually uplifting performances to inmates at Glasgow's Barlinnie prison.

Members of the choir say they are in it for the music and for the chance to sing publicly in a group. Julie, a full-time mother in her early 30s, has been with the choir for a year. "I've always loved singing, but where do you go to sing if you don't go to church or join a band? When I thought of choirs I thought of old ladies, very prim and proper. Plus I'm not at all religious. Then I heard about the gospel choir, heard it's quite young and quite funky, so I came along and a year later I'm still here."

Janine, also in her 30s, has been with the group for six months. "My dad was a big fan of Mahalia Jackson, one of the best-known gospel singers. He played her music when I was young, and I always loved the harmonies and melodies," she says. "I'm not a trained singer, but I used to sing in a rock band. I didn't want to join another band, so the choir gives me a chance to sing and perform. Even better, rather than leaving me drained, singing with the choir is uplifting. After rehearsing gospel songs I feel re-energised."

Voice of America

Friday, 6 July 2007

Rwanda Says France Protecting Image by Resisting Genocide Courts

By Nick Wadhams
Nairobi

Rwanda's foreign minister says France is refusing to try former officials on charges that they may have been complicit in the 1994 genocide because it does not want them to be associated with such a crime. Nick Wadhams reports from our East Africa bureau in Nairobi.



Charles Murigande (2004 file photo)

Foreign Minister Charles Murigande tells VOA France played a role in the massacre of Rwandan Tutsis in 1994. He insists France is resisting calls to bring former officials to trial because doing so would harm its image.

"You know, genocide is the worst crime that can be committed on this Earth and there is no person and no country which would associate itself with genocide," he said. "I can understand France trying to deny involvement whatsoever in the genocide. All those criminals that are being tried for genocide in all these international courts, every one of them denies participation because it is something that is horrible, nobody would willingly accept responsibility."

The foreign minister's remarks come three days after the French newspaper *Le Monde* reported that French officials had clear warnings in the early 1990s of a possible slaughter by ethnic Hutus of the minority Tutsis. The newspaper says French officials backed the Hutu-led government nonetheless.

On Tuesday, Rwanda's justice minister said France should prosecute politicians who ignored warnings about the genocide.

France's Foreign Ministry refused comment on Murigande's remarks, but France has long denied any complicity in the genocide.

Nearly 800,000 people are believed to have been killed in 100 days of violence by Hutu extremists, who slaughtered members of the Tutsi minority and also moderate Hutus who did not support the extremists.

Rwanda also accuses France of refusing to cooperate with a commission of inquiry into the 1994 massacre. Murigande says he believes that France will eventually have to try former officials for their involvement.

"If France wants to hold to that image of a democratic and a law abiding country, it will eventually have to hold accountable those who played such a horrible role," he said.

Last year, Rwanda broke off diplomatic relations with France after a French judge accused Rwandan President Paul Kagame of ordering the assassination of his Hutu predecessor, Juvenal Habyarimana. The genocide began after Habyarimana's plane was shot down outside the Rwandan capital Kigali.

President Kagame, a Tutsi, led the rebel group that eventually brought the genocide to an end.



Paul Kagame at VOA (file photo)