

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



PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Tuesday, 9 June 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Concord Times
Tuesday, 9 June 2009

Special Court slams Taylor claim

By *Bhoyy Jalloh*

Several articles this week, most of them in the Liberian press, have suggested that the Special Court has prevented Charles Taylor from communicating with his lawyers.

Family members of the war crimes-arraigned former Liberian president raised alarm over the latest alleged mandate from the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone to bar Taylor from speaking

to his defense counsel for weeks. He takes the witness stand on June 29, 2009.

However, chief of outreach and public affairs of the Court, Peter Andersen said there were serious misrepresentations of the facts.

"It is not the Special Court's policy to prevent an accused from communicating with his lawyers. Mr. Taylor's privileged communications with

Contd. page 3



Taylor and wife before incarceration

Special Court slams Taylor claim

From page 1
his Liberian counsel has been provisionally suspended due to concerns about misuse of the privilege. He is still allowed unprivileged communications with his Liberian counsel until further notice. The provisional ban in no way affects his privileged communications with his other counsel."

The spokesman of the former president's family, Sando Dazoe Johnson, told a news conference in Monrovia last week that the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, sitting in The Hague, has mandated

that Taylor is barred from speaking to his Liberian-based legal team until the 25th of June, few days to his testimonies.

Mr. Johnson lamented that the "ruling denying accused former President Charles Taylor access to his legal team, who are supposed to guide him in the days leading to his taking of the witness stand until the 25 of June, 2009," was sheer injustice, noting that the family is terribly angry.

He said the Special Court has been and continues trying to deny Charles Taylor justice

and fair trial but the family is optimistic that Taylor will walk out of jail with flying colors and come back to his home soil.

However the court has taken exception to that. It said: "Lead Counsel for Mr. Taylor, Courtenay Griffiths QC, submitted a motion to the Appeals Chamber on Wednesday appealing the date of June 29 for the opening of the Defence case. Mr. Griffiths is asking the Appeals Chamber to grant the Defence until 15 July 2009 for the commencement of their case."

Independent Observer
 Wednesday, 3 June 2009

Top job for Sa. Leonean At Special Court

Binta Mansaray has been appointed by the UN Secretary-General to act as Registrar of the Special Court for Sierra Leone following the resignation, which takes effect yesterday, of Herman von Herbel who is now working for the Lebanon Tribunal in The Hague. Binta is the substantive Deputy Registrar and will hold the post until a new appointment is made.

Meantime, the Deputy Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Joseph F. Kamara, has completed a mission to several European capitals where he promoted the work of the Special Court. One of the goals of the events was for participants to profit from the lessons of the Special Court. "By sharing our knowledge and learning from one another, we further the cause of justice and peace for all," said Mr. Kamara.

During the month of May, Mr. Kamara first delivered a lecture at a training seminar in Berlin, Germany on rapid responses to humanitarian crises. He spoke on the role of the Special Court in securing peace and justice in Sierra Leone.

Next the Deputy Prosecutor was in Oslo, Norway, for an INTERPOL conference, where he

addressed the challenges of prosecuting international war crimes.

Mr. Kamara then gave two final presentations in the Dutch capital of The Hague, seat of the Special Court trial of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor. At the International Criminal Court he spoke on the RUF judgment and what it means for international jurisprudence and for Sierra Leone. At the Grotius centre for International Legal Studies Mr. Kamara concentrated on the legacy of the Special Court.

Participants were keenly interested in the precedents set by the Court. Mr. Kamara focused in particular on the recent groundbreaking rulings in the RUF judgement. "The groups I met with were particularly impressed by the RUF convictions for the crimes of attacks United Nations peacekeepers, sexual slavery as a crime against humanity, and forced marriage, the first such convictions in world history."

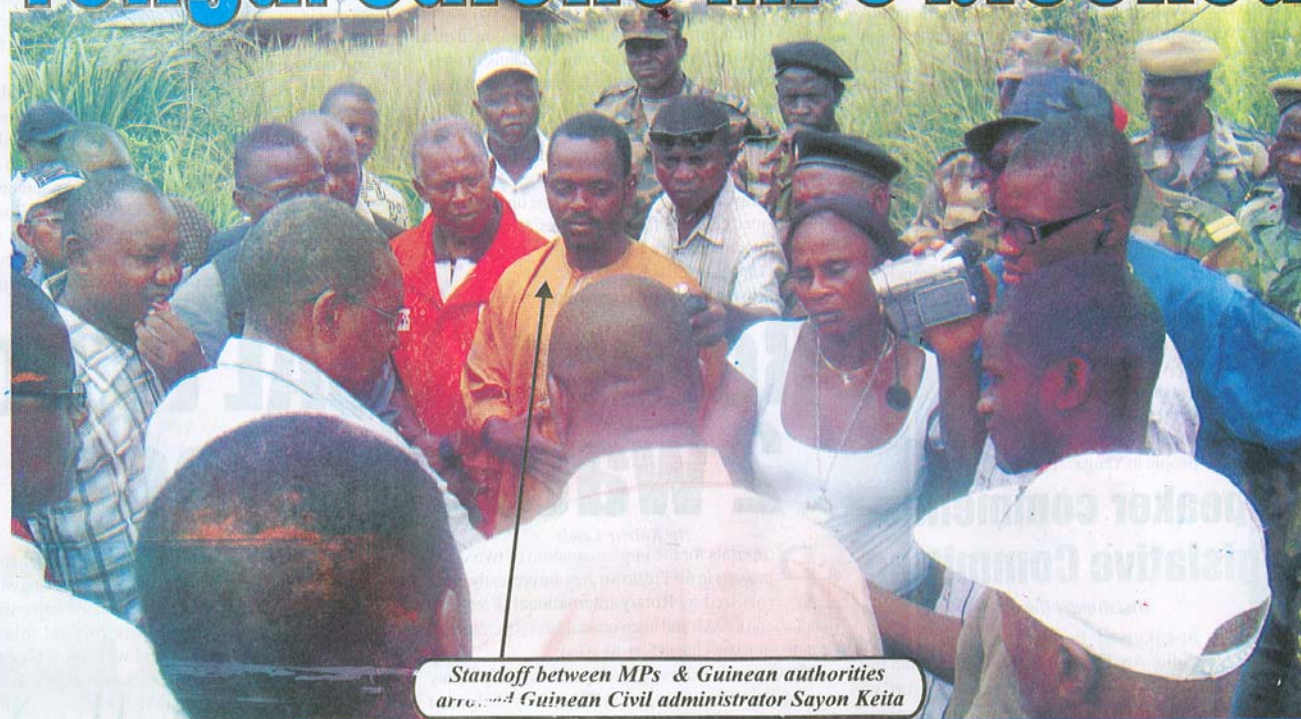
"The Special Court has set a standard of independence and fairness hitherto unknown in the subregion," said Mr. Kamara.

"There is great interest in our work and accomplishment internationally. Sierra Leoneans should be proud to know this tribunal is looked to as a model for justice in many respects."

Awoko

Monday, 8 June 2009

Yenga: Salone MPs blocked



Standoff between MPs & Guinean authorities arrested Guinean Civil administrator Sayon Keita

Yenga: Salone MPs blocked

By Umaru Fofana just back from Yenga

The Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Presidential Affairs has visited the disputed border town of Yenga in the Kailahun district. The visit got off to a shaky start when Guinean civil and military personnel rebuffed the MPs attempt to enter the town which both Guinea and Sierra Leone have laid claim to. This resulted in a standoff lasting over one hour and left the parliamentarians visibly incensed.

The chairman of the parliamentary committee, Cpt (Rtd) Abdul Rahman Kamara explained to the Guinean authorities that they had gone to the area on a fact-finding mission following recent reports that Sierra Leoneans were being harassed in the town. Backed by senior Guinean military personnel, the Guinean-appointed civil administrator in the town, Sayon Keita said he would not allow the delegation access to the town because it belonged to Guinea. "I am president of this town and I have a duty to protect it" he told Awoko in French.

Keita said the MPs should have given him a one-week written notification if they wanted to go beyond a beacon the Guineans had erected as the frontier between the two countries. After giving varied reasons as to why they would not allow the delegation to enter the town, among them that there was a funeral on the other side which proved to be a hoax, the parliamentarians stood their ground insisting "we must visit our people in Yenga". It paid off as the Guineans

backed off and allowed the delegation to enter the town on condition that they left behind their convoy of vehicles and all cameras and other specified gadgets.

The delegation walked the nearly 1000-metre long distance to the Makona River which was the border between the two countries before Guinea officially laid claim to Yenga at the end of Sierra Leone's civil war in 2002. A contingent of Guinean troops is stationed on a hill overlooking Yenga with an armoured tank in view. Few metres down the hill on the disputed Sierra Leone side of the Makona River was another armoured tank, and well-armed Guinean soldiers who created a ring round the delegation that also included unarmed personnel of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces. There were even suspicions that the Guineans had set up an ambush as armed men emerged from the bushes. In an apparent show of force, there were also Guinean troops patrolling in dugout canoes in full view.

A family living in Yenga which now has only ten houses

still standing as opposed to the fifty that was said to be there before the war, told this press that life was very tough for them. Kumba Morrie a mother of five, said only Guinean soldiers were farming in the town as they would not allow Sierra Leoneans to do so. She said her children have to walk to Kóindu or another nearby village to be able to attend school. Residents of the town, she went on, must also travel to Kóindu or to Guinea to buy foodstuff with "the little money I manage to get from visitors".

Guinean troops first entered Yenga in the 1990s with the approval of the Sierra Leone government who were desperate to fight against RUF rebels. They have since refused to leave. Despite talks between Freetown and Conakry, their troops have not backed off. In a somewhat strange development, Minister of Defence Pallo Conteh announced that the Sierra Leone government was discontinuing talks with the Guineans until an elected government was in place in the troubled neighbouring country.

New Democrat (Monrovia)

Monday, 8 June 2009

Liberia: I'm Hampered in Defending Him

With Mr. Charles Taylor expected to take the stand on 29 June in his own defence, one of his lawyer, his Liberia-based lawyer Cllr. J. Lavalu Supuwood, says the Court's decision in curtailing his (Taylor's) privileged communications here is a setback for effectively defending him.

In an interview Sunday with this paper, Cllr. Supuwood said the ban on communication with his client will pose problems for his defence, adding that it undermines Mr. Taylor's fair trial and right to defend himself.

He said the right of the accused to communicate with his lawyer is an internationally observed one, and that its abrogation violates Mr. Taylor's right.

He said if he had known that the Special Court would curtail his client's rights in such a manner, he would not have opted to serve as his lawyer.

He said there are investigators here, along with potential witnesses, that Mr. Taylor would like to communicate with for his defence, and that by ending the privileged contacts, adequate preparation will not be possible.

"There are critical witnesses that Mr. Taylor should talk to", the lawyer said.

He said the Special Court's rules specifically guarantee this rights, and that with its abrogation, "It is impossible" for Mr. Taylor to prepare for his case.

Last week, the spokesperson of the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, Peter Andersen, confirmed the provisional ban imposed on Mr. Taylor, which stops him from talking with his local lawyer here due to concerns about the misuse of the privilege.

He said Mr. Taylor and his local lawyer have misused the opportunity granted them to consult and communicate privately and regularly on issues relevant to his trial.

It is not clear how Mr. Taylor and his lawyers have allegedly abused the opportunity, but there are hints of discussions outside the framework of the trial between Mr. Taylor and his Liberian lawyers.

"Mr. Taylor's privileged communications with his Liberian counsel has been provisionally suspended due to concerns about misuse of the privilege," Mr. Andersen told this paper via E-mail Wednesday, after it made an inquiry into the matter.

He said the ban with his Liberian lawyer, Cllr. J. Lavalu Supuwood, does not affect his other counsels outside Liberia.

"The provisional ban in no way affects his privileged communications with his other counsel," Andersen added.

But He said it is not the Special Court's policy to prevent an accused from communicating with his lawyers, adding that Mr. Taylor would be allowed an unprivileged communication with his Liberian counsel until further notice based on the concerns raised. This indicates that consultations will not be private but in the presence of others.

Mr. Taylor is on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity he allegedly committed in Sierra Leone.

Fox News

Monday, 8 June 2009

Report: Ex-Liberian President, On Trial for Genocide, Converts to Judaism

Print The former warlord president of Liberia, on trial for genocide, has converted to Judaism, one of his wives told the BBC.

"He is now a Jew," Victoria Taylor said of her husband Charles, who has been charged with war crimes connected to atrocities committed during the gruesome Sierra Leone civil war, which ended in 2002.

The radio interview was broadcast last week after Victoria Taylor's three-week visit with her husband at The Hague.

"Because of the difficulties, he always wanted to know God in a very different and special way," she told the BBC.

Charles Taylor, 60, has pleaded not guilty to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, torture and using child soldiers. He is accused of orchestrating violence in Sierra Leone's civil war and trading in illegally mined diamonds to finance the conflict


United Nations Nations Unies
 United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 8 June 2009

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

International Clips on Liberia

Genocide Survivor Shares Experience With Liberians

By Gilbert Ndikubwayezu

Kigali, Jun 08, 2009 (The New Times/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Immaculee Ilibagiza, a survivor and author on the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, was yesterday scheduled to share her reconciliatory experience with the people of Liberia.

When Genocide started in 1994, Immaculee Ilibagiza was a teen mechanical engineering student at the National University of Rwanda and she spent 91 days hidden in a pastor's cramped bathroom together with a group of other women.

NewLiberian.com reported early this week that during her week-long visit in the country, the recipient of several notable international accolades will share her story, experience and motivation for survival with Liberians.

"It is hoped that by sharing her story, Liberians will be further strengthened to deal with their post conflict effects and promote healing and recovery among victims of the conflict," read part of the statement.

Local Media – Newspaper

President Sirleaf Wants U.S. Government Deny Visa to Liberians Accused of Fraud

(The News, New Democrat, The Analyst, New Vision, The Informer, Daily Observer)

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has called on the U.S. Embassy in Liberia not to give visa to any Liberian accused of fraud.
- President Sirleaf said Liberians are bent on squandering funds not intended for them and using America as save haven.
- The Liberian leader said the executive would work with the Legislature to formulate laws for Liberians who are accused of stealing and are already residing in the US to be prosecuted abroad or at home.
- She called on the US government to work with the Liberian government for a reality of the initiative.
- President Sirleaf spoke Friday at the ground breaking ceremony of the new US Embassy Complex in Monrovia.
- President Sirleaf has given assurances that tackling graft in the public and private sectors is a key objective of her government, but there are continuing public sentiments that the President needs to do more against corruption by taking tougher measures against corrupt elements in her government. There are mixed emotions regarding the President's commitment to battling endemic corruption. Most of the President's critics including the media continued to hold the view that the Administration is somewhat selective in punishing corrupt public officials. Some critics said the President sacked only a handful of high-profile officials for corruption and that those officials were never prosecuted to serve as a disincentive.

UNMIL Builds Court House for Unification Town - Envoy Stresses Transparency in Justice System

(The Informer, Liberia Journal, Public Agenda)

- The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General responsible for the Rule of Law, Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, says the conduct and quality of output of personnel working within the justice system is essential for restoring greater public trust and confidence in the system.
- Ms. Mensa-Bonsu urged all members of the Judiciary, court officials, the Police, the prosecution and defense lawyers – both public and private, to play their part by performing and upholding their responsibilities with transparency and integrity.
- The Deputy UN Envoy stressed that the justice system will only be as good as they, as individuals, make it. Ms. Mensa-Bonsu made the statement when she handed-over a newly-constructed building to the Government of Liberia for use as a magisterial court.
- The new court building is located in Unification Town, Margibi County, adjacent to the Roberts International Airport. The court was constructed by funds made available through the Quick Impact Projects programme of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), with additional resources from the UNDP.

U.S. Breaks Ground for New Embassy Complex in Liberia

(Daily Observer, Heritage, New Democrat)

- The United States Government has broken ground for a new state-of-the-art Embassy Complex at Greystone Compound. The new Embassy complex, which is being constructed at the Greystone Compound in Mamba Point, is estimated to cost over US\$130 million.
- Speaking during the ceremony, the President lauded the U.S. Government for its decision to construct a new embassy complex in Liberia and welcomed the employment opportunities to be generated from the construction of the complex, noting that the project will add significant impetus to the implementation of Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), otherwise known as "Lift Liberia."
- Also speaking at the programme, U.S. Ambassador to Liberia, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, described the project as a symbol of her country's confidence in the President's efforts to build Liberia. The U.S. embassy building project is expected to be completed in 30 months and will provide jobs for more than 600 local workers, with more than USD \$20 million infused in the local economy.

Fula Community Protest Killing of Fulani Motorcyclist in River Gee

(New Vision, New Democrat)

- Normal activities came to a standstill Saturday in Monrovia when the Fulani community took to the streets in protest, demanding speedy justice from the Liberian Government over the mysterious killing of their compatriot in River Gee County in South-eastern Liberia. The protest also coincided with the second observance of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's presidential proclamation setting the first Saturday of every month a cleaning up campaign day from 8 to 10 am.
- The protesters chanted anti- Government slogans, saying, "We want justice, no arrest, no peace." among others. The protestors also waved placards, banners with Arabic inscriptions, and flags of neighbouring Guinea. The protestors said the solidarity match was intended to create awareness, for the Liberian government to speedily probe circumstances surrounding the death of their fellow countryman.

Local Media – Star Radio (News monitored today at 09:00 am)

President Sirleaf Wants Corrupt Liberians Denied U.S. Visa

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

Legislative Finance Committee Demands Clarity on Maritime Bureau's National Budget Contribution

- The joint Finance Committee of the Legislature has expressed serious concern over the projected revenue contribution of the Maritime Bureau.
- The Committee said it wants to know how US\$16 million was projected as the input of the Maritime Bureau into the draft Budget.
- It wants the Finance Ministry clarify the issue by stating the income and operational costs of the Maritime Bureau for the last fiscal year.

- The Chairpersons of the Legislative budget committees raised the concern during a public hearing into the 2009/2010 draft budget.
- Meanwhile, the Finance Ministry says it would cooperate with the budget committees of the Legislature on the concerns raised on the Maritime Bureau but said sensitive issues on the Bureau must be treated with care.

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

Hundreds Walk to Fight Hunger

- Hundreds of students and other Liberians took to the street in a walk to fight hunger.
- The programme organized by the World Food Programme in Liberia is a global effort to encourage Governments and policy makers around the world to take decisive action to eradicate hunger.
- Education Minister, Dr, Joseph Korto speaking during the programme disclosed that 300 million of the world's hungry people are children.
- Dr. Korto encouraged the WFP and other agencies to continue sustaining the school feeding programme describing it as a solution to enhancing children's learning ability.

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

President Sirleaf Breaks Ground for Residential Housing Construction

- President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has broken grounds for the construction of 1000 housing units located on Marshall Road, Margibi County.
- The project is being undertaken by the Chinese Company, Hainan Century Investment which intends to build 10,000 housing units across the country.
- The President described the venture as a new partnership in Liberia's recovery and reconstruction programme that must be encouraged.
- For his part, Chinese Ambassador to Liberia, Zhou Yaxiao, said he hoped that a system would be put in place to ensure that the homes are acquired by those they are intended to benefit.

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

Armed Robbery Court Agrees to Delay Trial

- Criminal Court "D" Friday granted a defense request to delay the trial involving seven men accused of armed robbery.
- The suspected armed robbers were brought in for trial from the Zwedru Correction Palace.
- The Government transferred them to the Zwedru four months ago, after the December 2008 jailbreak at the Monrovia Central Prison.
- The men were arrested in connection with a series of armed robberies in the Jacob Town area on Somalia Drive.

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

The Analyst (Liberia)

Monday, 8 June 2009

Liberia: Justice Should Not Be Compromised - Says TRC Chairman Verdier

Monrovia — Justice is a natural course of human civilization that should not be compromised or sacrificed in the name of forgiveness and reconciliation, Truth and Reconciliation Chairman Jerome Verdier has said.

But Counselor Verdier said while it is true that justice, in whatever form or manner conceived, may be balanced with the needs and aspirations of the society, forgiveness is a form of victims justice that must be embraced by all.

He however said when people acknowledge their wrongs and apologize, it makes reconciliation and forgiveness easier; but when they fail to do so, which is very often the case, forgiveness becomes a choice of personal considerations.

"The second thing to know is that to forgive is not to ignore justice or condone that wrongful act. It is to love others, heal ourselves and liberate our souls. Justice can be, should be and will be done even when we forgive the wrongdoers."

Cllr. Verdier was speaking Friday at the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in Monrovia where a special program organized by the TRC was held for visiting Rwandese Peace Advocate Immaculee ILigabiza. The TRC partnered with United States based Truth Reconciled and the Catholic Diocese of Monrovia to bring the survivor of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide to share her experience with the People of Liberia.

Mr. Verdier said after two decades of conflict and a revealing national process in the work of the TRC, it is the duty and obligation of every Liberian to acknowledge the wrongs of the past and forgive - if for anything else – because it is the right thing to do, saying, "when we do this, we make our contribution to national development more meaningful."

"We can build infrastructure, construct roads and bridges, offer the best health care and education opportunities possible; we can even reduce poverty but if we fail to heal, forgive and reconcile, our development goals will be meaningless and come to fraught."

Our development aspirations are sustained, he said, when we rebuild the human spirit, reconstruct broken relationships, mend broken hearts and institutionalize the rule of law as a governing principle and national priority.

Rwandese Peace Advocate Immaculee promised to use her foundation by extending her humanitarian efforts to Liberia.

"I'm so sorry for what have happened in Liberia. I'm hoping to help Liberia", she said as she made mentioned of her foundation which she said was funded out of proceeds she generated from three books she published.

Immaculee said forgiveness does not means victims of conflict are condoning the actions of the perpetrators, saying "reconciliation only happens when there is apology and there is a victim."

"There can be justice after forgiveness. But when we forgive others we ensure that there is love and reconciliation. Forgiveness doesn't mean that victims have condoned the wrong. Tears don't come from a place of confusion; tears don't come from a place of hate. Forgiveness is a personal decision."

Madam ILibagiza's visit to Liberia is in consonance with the TRC mandate to promote reconciliation and healing in Liberia following the country's civil conflict.

The TRC and partners envisaged that by sharing her story, Liberians could be further strengthened to deal with their conflict past and promote healing and recovery amongst victims of the conflict.

Immaculee's life was transformed dramatically during the 1994 Rwandan genocide where she and seven other women spent 91 days huddled silently together in the cramped bathroom of a local pastor's house. She entered the bathroom a vibrant, 115-pound university student with a loving family but emerged weighing just 65 pounds to find her entire family had been brutally murdered with the exception of one brother.

She later came face to face with the killer of her mother and her brother and said the unthinkable, "I forgive you." Immaculee knew, while in hiding, that she would have to overcome the immeasurable odds without her family and with her country destroyed.

Immaculee is a recipient of several notable international awards, publisher and host of a documentary titled: "Ready to Forgive, A African Story of Grace," a project sponsored by The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

Today she is regarded as one of the world's leading speakers on peace, faith, and forgiveness.

The New Times
Saturday, 6 June 2009

Rwanda: Genocide Survivor Shares Experience With Liberians

Gilbert Ndikubwayezu

Kigali — Immaculee Ilibagiza, a survivor and author on the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, was yesterday scheduled to share her reconciliatory experience with the people of Liberia.

When Genocide started in 1994, Immaculee Ilibagiza was a teen mechanical engineering student at the National University of Rwanda and she spent 91 days hidden in a pastor's cramped bathroom together with a group of other women.

NewLiberian.com reported early this week that during her week-long visit in the country, the recipient of several notable international accolades will share her story, experience and motivation for survival with Liberians.

"It is hoped that by sharing her story, Liberians will be further strengthened to deal with their post conflict effects and promote healing and recovery among victims of the conflict," read part of the statement.

Described as one of one of the world's leading speakers on peace, faith and forgiveness, Ilibagiza is a host of a documentary titled: "Ready to Forgive, An African Story of Grace," a project sponsored by The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America. She is also the author of the memoir titled 'Left To Tell' a book that has been praised by many people around the world.

"Everyone should read this story-survivors as well as perpetrators," wrote Rwanda's First Lady Jeannette Kagame in the book. Her family was brutally murdered during a three-month killing spree that claimed over a million lives.

Liberia is Africa's oldest republic, but it became better known in the 1990s for its long-running, ruinous civil war and its role in a rebellion in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

Although founded by freed American and Caribbean slaves, Liberia is mostly made up of indigenous Africans, with the slaves' descendants comprising 5% of the population.

The West African nation was relatively calm until 1980 when William Tolbert was overthrown by Sergeant Samuel Doe after food price riots.

Voice of America

Monday, 8 June 2009

African ICC Members Mull Withdrawal Over Bashir Indictment

By Peter Heinlein
Addis Ababa

African member states of the International Criminal Court are considering a mass withdrawal to protest the war crimes indictment against Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir. A pullout is unlikely, but many are demanding a one-year suspension of the indictment.



Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir (file photo)

There was an air of frustration at African Union headquarters as 30 African ICC member states met to consider a response to the arrest warrants filed against one of the continent's most prominent leaders.

African heads of state condemned the indictment at their last summit and called for a one-year suspension as provided in Article 16 of the Rome Statute that created the court. The summit also ordered member states to consider a mass withdrawal unless African views are taken into account.

But the U.N. Security Council has shown little interest in invoking Article 16. And while many African leaders complain the court is being used to target their own statesmen, there is little support for the drastic step of a mass pullout.

In his opening speech to the gathering of member states, A.U. Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra said the world body's inaction has damaged prospects for peace in Darfur.

"Article 16 of the Rome Statute is meant to give the U.N. Security Council the opportunity to give peace a chance," Lamamra said. "While the search for justice would not be affected by a 12-month deferral of judicial proceedings, the pursuit of peace can be deadly...if players, including a head of state, are denied even the fundamental presumption of innocence."

Lamamra blasted the ICC and its chief prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo, saying they are ignoring 'legitimate concerns' raised by Africans about a double standard in pursuing cases against some leaders while ignoring others.

"Some member states have raised profound apprehension on the...conduct of the prosecutor and unreservedly attributed the indictment of the Sudanese president to a glaring practice of selective justice," he said.

Lamamra said security in Darfur remains 'extremely fragile', with millions of civilians living in 'precarious conditions'. But, he said, statistics compiled by the joint A.U./U.N. peacekeeping force (UNAMID) indicate a 'low-grade conflict' in the Sudanese region, not the mass killings suggested by prosecutors.

"It is estimated that, on a month-to-month basis, 130 to 150 people die from violence in Darfur. Approximately one-third of the fatalities are civilians," Lamamra said. "The picture of the situation as presented by the authority responsible for UNAMID is obviously much different from what the ICC

prosecutor described last Friday before the U.N. Security Council as 'ongoing extermination of civilians.'"

Commissioner Lamamra suggested the African ICC member states take a moderate approach, again urging the U.N. Security Council to defer the indictments, while at the same time calling for Sudan to redouble efforts to end the ongoing human-rights violations in Darfur.

African diplomats say the group is likely to follow Lamamra's advice, rejecting calls by Libya as well as by ICC members Senegal, Djibouti and Comoros for a mass pullout from the court.

The issue is expected to come up again in early July, when Africa's heads of state hold their next summit in the Libyan town of Sirte, under the leadership of current A.U. Chairman Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi.

BBC Online

Tuesday, 9 June 2009

UN Gaza probe may not lead to prosecutions

A United Nations investigation into war crimes by Israel and Hamas is unlikely to lead to prosecutions.

A 15-member team has been in Gaza interviewing witnesses and victims of the three-week Israeli offensive in December and January. Israel refused to co-operate with the investigation, while Hamas security often accompanied the team.

But the chief barrier to a prosecution remains the lack of a court in Gaza to hear any cases.

Richard Goldstone, a South African judge who has prosecuted war crimes cases from Yugoslavia and Rwanda, said he wished he could be optimistic.

In particular, he hopes that the ensuing report, that will be published in September, will spur other UN bodies into action.

In Gaza, Mr Goldstone's team met with Hamas and UN officials, collected reports from Palestinian human rights groups and interviewed dozens of survivors.

But the presence of Hamas security has thrown doubt on the ability of witnesses to describe in detail the militant group's actions.

The UN team also visited a mosque where an Israeli missile strike killed 16 people, witnesses said. During the offensive, Israel accused Hamas of using mosques to hide weapons.

Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak said investigators could not reach an "unbiased conclusion" since they couldn't question those who fired rockets at Israel.

Israel has accused the UN Human Rights Council, which has organised the probe, of being anti-Israeli in the past.

Previous inquiries

Several investigations into alleged violations of international law during Israel's 22-day operation in Gaza, which ended on 18 January, have reported back.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon requested more than \$11m



Mr Goldstone (R), has been hearing from victims of the offensive in Gaza

DIFFERENT DEATH TOLLS

Palestinians killed during Israeli military offensive in Gaza, 27 Dec to 18 Jan

Total dead: 1,166 (1,434)
 Fighters: 710-870 (235)
 Non-combatants: 295-460 (960)
 Women: 49 (121)
 Children under 16: 89 (288)

Sources: Israeli Defence Intelligence Research Dept (and Palestinian Centre for Human Rights)

(£7m) compensation from Israel for damage to UN property in Gaza, after a limited UN inquiry accused Israel of targeting known civilian shelters and providing untrue statements to justify actions in which civilians were killed.

The report found Israel to blame in six out of nine incidents when death or injury were caused to people sheltering at UN property and UN buildings were damaged.

The Israeli military has concluded in an internal investigation that its troops fought lawfully, although errors did take place, such as the deaths of 21 people in a wrongly targeted house.

A fact-finding team commissioned by the Arab League said there was sufficient evidence for the Israeli military to be prosecuted for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and that "the Israeli political leadership was also responsible for such crimes".

It also said Palestinian militants were guilty of war crimes in their use of indiscriminate attacks on civilians.

Palestinian rights groups say more than 1,400 Palestinians were killed during the January conflict. Israel puts the figure at 1,166.

Israeli and Palestinian estimates also differ on the numbers of civilian casualties.

Ten Israeli soldiers were killed, including four by friendly fire, and three Israel civilians died in rocket attacks by Palestinian militants.