

**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:**

Wednesday, 9 May 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

Local News

Liberian Lawmaker Wants Short Term for Taylor / <i>Concord Times</i>	Page 3
Charles Taylor: Sierra Leone Scapegoat / <i>Awareness Times</i>	Page 4
Interview With Former US Ambassador to Sierra Leone / <i>Independent Observer</i>	Pages 5-6
Incomplete Justice: Taylor War Crimes Verdict / <i>The Exclusive</i>	Page 7

International News

Lavish Life of An ICC War Criminal Inside a Rwandan Jail / <i>The East African</i>	Pages 8-10
Unprecedented Jail Term Sought for Charles Taylor / <i>Reuters</i>	Pages 11-12
Conviction of a Warlord, Justice For His Victims? / <i>Washington & Lee University</i>	Pages 13-14
Liberia: More Prayers Offered Taylor / <i>Heritage</i>	Pages 15-16
Masters of War Meeting Justice / <i>Boston Herald</i>	Page 17
Charles Taylor, Liberia and Sierra Leone / <i>The Economist</i>	Page 18
Should Africa Drum at Every Change of Guard? / <i>The Observer</i>	Pages 19-20
Grassroots Justice in Rwanda / <i>Africa Research Institute</i>	Page 21
ICC Must Not Succumb to Selective Justice / <i>Arabnews.com</i>	Pages 22-23

LOCAL NEWS

Liberia lawmaker wants short term for Taylor

- 'he was not guilty of direct involvement'

Maryland County Senator, Dan Morias, has called on the United Nations backed war crimes Court for Sierra Leone to give former Liberian President Charles Taylor a short prison term. The former Liberian leader was found guilty by the Special Court for aiding and abating the war in Sierra Leone. Speaking to a Monrovia-based newspaper on Sunday, Senator Morias said Taylor should be given a short time in prison because "he was not found guilty of any direct involvement with the war in Sierra Leone as he was charged by the court". Senator Morias, who was elected on the ticket of the former ruling National Patriotic Party (NPP) of Taylor, said it would be fair enough were the former president given a short time in prison. This, according to him, should be retroactive of the

years he (Taylor) had already spent in custody during the time of the trial.

"The verdict against Mr. Taylor, I consider a victory for him, because he was not convicted of any of the crimes that he was linked to. This means that he actually won the case, but that is foreign politics and we must understand this," the Maryland County lawmaker pointed out.

"In actual sense, Mr. Taylor was guilty from the first day of his arrest, and so, that verdict was not amazing. Taylor's verdict was a trophy or an achievement to some international powers who thought convicting him was something great. There is nothing else for Mr. Taylor, but prison, and this is why we are requesting for a short period, because he has already spent a lot of time in custody. In fact, there isn't anything that clearly defines the period of

aiding and abating war as said by the prosecutor."

The former Maryland County Superintendent described the verdict of the former Liberian President as "troubling" not only for Liberia, but the entire sub-region.

Giving the historicity of crisis, Morias said the West African crisis is intertwined and that no one nation or individual should take responsibility or account for it. According to him, other countries in West Africa including Sierra Leone, Ivory and Guinea have been directly involved with crisis in Liberia which claimed the lives of more than 150,000 persons.

Speaking further, Senator Morias observed that the verdict of Taylor could also in turn negatively affect Liberia with respect to the indictment period. He further pointed out that Liberia could be made to pay reparation to the people



of Sierra Leone since the indictment period indicates that Taylor was president of Liberia at the time. "One thing I want to stress is that Liberia as a country could also be affected by this verdict. This verdict makes Liberia vulnerable to the people of Sierra Leone," he added.

Awareness Times
Wednesday, 9 May 2012

Charles Taylor: Sierra Leone's Scapegoat (Part 1)

By Dr. Sylvia Olayinka Blyden (First Published on May 2, 2012)

Many readers contacted me to enquire as to why I made little, if any, mention of the Charles Taylor trial at The Hague. My response has been simple. I will not join to twist History to suit those who would want History to be twisted. Charles Taylor is just a bogeyman; an excuse created by Sierra Leoneans' inability to take responsibility for our mad actions against each other.

Taylor is the scapegoat who has been given omnipotent powers which deep in our hearts, we know is untrue. *First of all, Charles Taylor would not have had impact here if some Sierra Leoneans (**mostly from the South-East**), had not used the aggrieved Taylor as a tool to help them destroy our country simply because they (Sierra Leoneans) were bitter with Momoh & Stevens APC regime.*

Secondly, there is an untold story which our Truth & Reconciliation Commission (TRC) failed to elicit. Charles Taylor, like his willing allies from South-Eastern Sierra Leone and Corporal Foday Sankoh, shared angry resentment of APC.

The story commences with an arrangement in late eighties for Liberian dissidents in America to use Sierra Leone soil to launch a rebellion against Samuel Doe, the then Liberian President. It received the tacit endorsement of then APC Government of President Momoh in Sierra Leone.

Taylor entered Sierra Leone with a huge cache of money in earlier part of 1989 but Charles Taylor was double-crossed by APC elements and locked up at the CID. It took intervention of prominent Liberians in exile in America to have him 'released'. Some say he 'escaped' from police cells at CID. Taylor left Sierra Leone in 1989 with bitter experience - penniless.

With the assistance of his Liberian backers in America, he now launched their rebellion into Liberia, not from Sierra Leone as originally planned, but from Ivory Coast to unseat the brutal Samuel Doe regime.

In the process of carrying out his actions, the same APC Government which had double-crossed Charles Taylor, now allowed Sierra Leone to be used as a launching pad for ECOMOG to stop Taylor's advance on Monrovia. APC also armed, sponsored, aided and abetted two groups of Liberians to assist ECOMOG to stop Taylor. They included ULIMO.

As a result, what should have been an easy unseating of Samuel Doe became much more prolonged than initially planned and the suffering of Liberians took to unprecedented levels. Taylor, in understandable reaction, then threatens Sierra Leone that they will also taste the bitterness of war. The rest is History.

*However, in the midst of all of this, the fact remains that no matter how bitter Charles Taylor might have been, he would never have been able to help RUF destroy Sierra Leone had it not been for our own kith and kin; **mostly South-Easterners** who bore grievances against the former APC regime. These people opened their doors to Taylor backed RUF. They are Sierra Leoneans.*

So, whenever I hear people shouting and raging against Charles Taylor's destruction of Sierra Leone, I simply shake my head at it all because the truth is that Taylor is just the Bogeyman taking the fall for something much deeper.

When Historians really do in-depth studies into the origins and processes of the Sierra Leone war, they will find out that unlike the superficial nonsense of Lans Gberie and his Blood Diamonds Theory, the war in Sierra Leone goes much deeper than just diamond sales to a despot.

With respect to his despicable actions in Liberia, Charles Taylor is clearly a War Criminal but when it comes to Sierra Leone, I will not join those who naively proclaim as if Taylor was the sole source and sole offender in our Sierra Leone madness. No, I will not.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: Article is being reproduced as a direct challenge to Sama Banya & a few South-Easterners. They should prepare for Part 2 very soon!

Interview With John Hirsch, Former US Ambassador to Sierra Leone, on Charles Taylor

"The conviction of Charles Taylor is an enormously important event in terms of bringing a very senior level person finally to account," says John Hirsch, former US Ambassador to Sierra Leone and IPI Senior Adviser. "I mean Charles Taylor probably could never have imagined a decade ago that he would ever be, first of all, deposed, secondly, arrested, and thirdly, convicted.... I think this is definitely a kind of warning sign to dictators not only in Africa but elsewhere, that there is no such thing any more as impunity."

Ambassador Hirsch, who lived in Sierra Leone from 1995-1998, outlines the origins of the conflict that embroiled the country and discusses the possibilities for redress, and what can be learned. "What I remember about that period was that it was very, very hard to get the attention of the international community," he said. The interview was conducted by Till Papenfuss, IPI Policy Analyst.

by Till Papenfuss, Monday, April 30, 2012

Till Papenfuss (TP): John, thanks a lot for taking the time to speak with us here on the Global Observatory today, a significant moment in the history of Sierra Leone with the conviction of Charles Taylor just yesterday. You served as the US Ambassador and lived in Sierra Leone from 1995-1998. Can you share with us some of your memories from that time, and remind us of the origins of the conflict in Sierra Leone and the special challenges it posed for the international community.

John Hirsch (JH): This is historic day for the people of Sierra Leone. There was an eleven-year war in Sierra Leone, which started in 1991 from Liberia and involved a collaboration between the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), which was headed by Charles Taylor, and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh in Sierra Leone and which led in 1992 to the overthrow of the Momo government, the installation of what was called the National Provisional Revolutionary Council (NPRC) which was a government led by Valentine Strasser and a number of other junior officers.

During those years, and even before I arrived, and while I was there, this war primarily took the form of a tax on people in remote villages who were dispossessed of their homes, many were killed, many were mutilated. This was all an effort to persuade people in the country that the NPRC government could not give them security and to create an opportunity for the RUF to come to power. This was all abetted by Charles Taylor's NPFL. There was an arms-for-diamonds trade that was going on throughout these years. So many arms arrived from Liberia and many diamonds were taken out in return.

When I was the ambassador, when I arrived, there had been a decision taken to hold elections in 1996, in February and March of 1996. And in an effort to dissuade people from voting, the RUF carried out a campaign of mutilations, cutting off hands, arms, even of little children, legs, to dissuade people they would no longer have a hand with which to vote on a ballot, or they would not have the legs with which to walk to a voting booth. And this was clearly involving the NPFL and the RUF together. What I remember about that period was that it was very, very hard to get the attention of the international community. This was seen as a kind of second-echelon conflict that was much smaller than the events in Somalia and Rwanda. International attention was not focused on this. So it took many years for the UN to get organized, and it took many years for a UN peacekeeping force to deploy. There first was an ECOWAS/ECOMOG deployment while I was there, and it took a long time for a judicial process to be established. It only got started in 1999 after I had stepped down. So we are talking about a decade of suffering by the people of Sierra Leone and the conviction yesterday of Charles Taylor was a long time given the context that I have just described to you.

TP: So indeed, finally, yesterday, on Thursday, April 26, 2012, the Special Court for Sierra Leone convicted Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia, as you already pointed out, for his responsibility for the brutal civil war that ravaged Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002. He was convicted for mass murder, rape, sexual slavery, enlisting child soldiers, and for the infamous mutilation of victims' limbs. Ten years after the end of the civil war, the verdict comes at a highly symbolic time, what is the significance of Taylor's conviction in your view?

JH: First of all, as has been noted in the media, this is the first head of state to be convicted by the Special Court, or by any court as a matter of fact, in the post-Cold War era.



Secondly, in my mind, this is the first conviction at a high level of those responsible for these atrocities. Foday Sankoh died in prison before the trial was completed by the Special Court. Muammar Qaddafi, who was never indicted by anybody, however, was heavily complicit in all of this because Taylor and Sankoh met in Libya. They both had support from Libya. Qaddafi was involved in destabilizing Liberia and Sierra Leone. He is dead as well. So, therefore, the conviction of Charles Taylor is an enormously important event in terms of bringing a very senior level person finally to account.

The other point I would like to make to you Till is that while this conviction relates to Taylor's role in Sierra Leone, he also is heavily responsible for the mass murders and atrocities that were committed in Liberia over more than a decade from the overthrow of Tolbert by Samuel Doe in 1980, the civil war that ensued there among the different Liberian factions, and the brutal role that he played in Liberia even after becoming president of that country. I refer you, among others, to Helene Cooper's article in this morning's New York Times, where she gives a graphic account of the atrocities perpetrated on her sister and her sister's relatives during those years in Monrovia and elsewhere in Liberia. So even if this trial has to do with his responsibilities for the atrocities in Sierra Leone, we should definitely remember his role in the massive atrocities that took place in Liberia.

TP: John, I wanted to ask you, the conviction of Charles Taylor took place on the premises of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague—holding the trial and keeping Charles Taylor in detention in Freetown was deemed too big a security risk for fragile Sierra Leone. Do you share the assessment of the security risks a continued presence of Taylor in Sierra Leone would have caused? Do you think conviction in The Hague will be as impactful as it would have been or could have been, had the trial been conducted in Freetown?

JH: Well, I am reluctant to second-guess the decision of the Tribunal in this case, and certainly there were lots of sensitivities about trying Charles Taylor in Freetown. I do think there is a certain distance when the trial takes place

at such a huge remove—so not everybody was able to follow this over the several years that the trial has taken place. That said, there certainly is major attention to this outcome in Freetown today and yesterday, and as the appeals process moves forward.

As regards the impact, I think the big challenge for the international community is to give the people of Sierra Leone redress. And this involves not only the conviction of Charles Taylor, but helping the country and particularly those that were disabled, maimed, harmed, to get their lives organized together. In other words, to provide, for example, prosthetic devices for those who have lost their limbs, to give material assistance to them and their families to get their lives going again, and, more broadly, to rebuild the state and its institutions so that this kind of war, this kind of conflict does not happen again.

So I don't think the conviction in and of itself constitutes redress, I think many more things need to happen. The same applies in the former Yugoslavia or in Rwanda. These tribunals are important, but I think they are only a piece of what needs to be done to bring some measure, however limited, of closure to the victims of these crimes and atrocities.

TP: Finally, John, you have already pointed out - rightly so - that Charles Taylor has just become the first head of state to be convicted by an international criminal tribunal since the World War II. And we have already looked a little bit at some of the impacts this conviction may have had in Sierra Leone or will have going forward. Now I want to ask you what will the effects of this verdict be on Africa more generally? Do you believe the Taylor verdict might have a deterrent effect on other leaders in Africa and maybe beyond?

JH: I think this is very significant. As you know, there is a pending indictment by the ICC against Omar al-Bashir, the serving President of Sudan. And just recently the Kenyan government has established a commission, and even though President Bashir was recently in Kenya, it has been indicated that if were to go there again he might well be arrested in terms of fulfilling the indictment. And I think that is in part a response to what has just happened. There are others like Hissene Habre and so on who are still pending some kind of judicial outcome.

So I think this is definitely a kind of warning sign to dictators not only in Africa but elsewhere, that there is no such thing anymore as impunity. I mean, Charles Taylor probably could never have imagined a decade ago that he would ever be, first of all, deposed; secondly, arrested; and thirdly, convicted. I met him once with a group of diplomats shortly after he became president, and he was swaggering and very self confident, very defiant, and so on. And this is an incredible message, I think, to the various leaders of Africa, and particularly to dictators, that there is no such thing as a guarantee that you are going to die safely in bed.

TP: John, thank you very much for speaking with us today.

JH: Till, thank you very much.

The other point I would like to make to you is that while this conviction relates to Taylor's role in Sierra Leone, he also is heavily responsible for the mass murders and atrocities that were committed in Liberia over more than a decade from the overthrow of Tolbert by Samuel Doe in 1980

The Exclusive

Wednesday, 9 May 2012

Opinion

Incomplete Justice: Taylor War Crimes Verdict



Better than just the conviction would be recovering his vast assets and making him face the enormity of his crimes.

Charles Taylor, above, and an amputee victim and her baby, lower right, in a camp run by Doctors Without Borders in Sierra Leone. Maria Tukamara, 14, lost both her hands when the Revolutionary United Front invaded her village. In photo at lower left, young Sierra Leone men who had their ears, hands or fingers chopped off wait at a hospital for medical care. While many Sierra Leoneans are relieved to see Taylor finally convicted for his destructive role in their country's brutal civil war, his wanton destabilization elsewhere in West Africa hardly figured in the criminal proceedings against him.

In Taylor's home country of Liberia, the seven-year civil war that brought him to power in 1997 cost the lives of more than 250,000 Liberians. Thousands more were killed during the second Liberian civil war, which sent him into exile in 2003. As president, Taylor's violent anti-terrorist unit, led by his son, Charles "Chucky" Emmanuel, brutally repressed his opponents. Meanwhile, Taylor and his clique enriched themselves at the expense of average Liberians, who lived in abject poverty.

In neighboring Ivory Coast and Guinea, Taylor's armed forces committed horrendous abuses with impunity. And he has long been suspected of playing a role in the assassination of Thomas Sankara, the visionary leader of Burkina Faso.

But none of this led to his much-anticipated conviction on April 26. While criminal accountability is one of the few safeguards against permanent impunity and lawlessness, Taylor's conviction on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone was insufficient.

To make the conviction more meaningful, the Special Court for Sierra Leone at The Hague should hand down a sentence that seeks restorative justice. Reparation and healing among all those affected by the criminal's acts are key features of restorative justice, which also invites victims to participate in the justice process.

As they consider Taylor's sentence, the judges on the Special Court should solicit input from his Sierra Leonean victims. And they ought to think creatively about how to make his sentence fit the nature of his crimes. Instead of letting him idly pass his days in prison, for example, Taylor could be trained to help manufacture prosthetic limbs, thereby allowing him to improve the lives of the estimated 10,000 Sierra Leonean amputees who were maimed during the war.

Part of his sentence might also include requiring him to read and respond to victims' letters. In creating a space for those who didn't make it to The Hague to tell their stories, Taylor would be confronted with the magnitude of his crimes.

What's more, a renewed effort must be made to recover his vast hidden assets so that they can be used to repair the damage he caused.

By imposing a sentence of restorative justice, the Special Court would point to a more effective way of dealing with criminals. Punishment without communal healing serves no one's interests.

Carina Ray is assistant professor of African history at Fordham University. Her publications include "Darfur, and the Crisis of Governance in Sudan: A Critical Reader" and "Crossing the Color Line: Race, Sex and the Contested Politics of Colonial Rule in Ghana."

The East African (Kenya)

Saturday, 5 May 2012

Note: This also appeared in The Independent (Uganda) on Tuesday, 8 May 2012 under the title “‘Torture’ in a Rwandan Prison” <http://www.independent.co.ug/rwanda-ed/rwanda/5738-torture-in-a-rwandan-prison>

Lavish life of an ICC war criminal inside a Rwandan jail



Issa Hassan Sesay, centre, at his trial on April 8, 2009 in Freetown. Picture: AFP

By Andrew M. Mwenda (email the author)

By all standards, Issa Hassan Sesay, a convicted international war criminal and former leader of Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group, is a remarkable man.

“Imagine, I am convicted for rape, torture and killing and sentenced to 52 years in jail,” he tells a young student of journalism from Uganda somewhat wistfully. “Yet the UN Tribunal knows, or should know, that that is the stuff war is made of.” Convicting him for such crimes, Sesay believes, is like convicting Lionel Messi for scoring a goal in the European Champions League or the Spanish La Liga. He adds that the Allies committed worse war crimes during World War II and were not punished for them.

I had brought a group of 21 students from Makerere University and Uganda Christian University, most of them studying journalism, to Mpanga Prison as part of a tour of Rwanda. The students belong to a discussion group I manage where we debate national, regional and global political economy. Since Rwanda features a lot in our discussion, we decided to visit the country in order to have a firsthand experience of its realities.

The students had heard numerous stories of suffering in Rwandan prisons — congestion, dirt, torture, disease — but after hearing about decent conditions at the prison in Butare, where the inmates even played a game of volleyball with us, I brought them to the international section of Mpanga for another impression.

Protected by the UN, these convicted war criminals are more likely to feel free to express their unhappiness with their conditions than the local convicts. And Sesay, the man who took over command of the RUF after the arrest founding leader Foday Musa Sankoh, is now the leader of the prisoners here. And

true to form, he was ready to disabuse the students of the “rosy” picture painted of Rwandan prisons by its government and its propagandists.

He first complained bitterly about me. He said I had visited him last year, listened to his story, taken pictures and written nothing about his predicament. His fellow prisoners agreed. Yet to my recollection, Sesay did not have many complaints then. He had told me the Rwandan prison warders were treating him well. His complaint was against the UN for convicting him of war crimes, even though whatever he had done had been “political.” I promised to publish a story about his complaints if he told me about them.

“We are going through untold suffering here,” he told the students. “We are being mistreated by these Rwandan prison warders. I am telling you all this to their face because I really no longer care. They are bad people,” he said as the Rwandan prison guards look at him in silent wonderment. From the expression on the face of the chief of security at the prison, he was clearly uncomfortable at Sesay’s open hostility perhaps regretting allowing us into the premises. The students seemed all too happy to hear it all. And Sesay was ready to tell it.

Laundry list of complains

First, Sesay said, the prison cooks did not always follow the menu. For example, on April 9, he was served tea with sugar, powdered milk, sausages, baked beans and bread for his breakfast. But the menu also said he was supposed to be served yoghurt as desert. He didn’t get any. Besides, he added, with the confidence of a man who knows his rights, the menu was substandard because it should have included scrambled eggs as well.

“I tell you, these people don’t follow the menu,” he declared as students stretched their necks to look at the paper he was holding in his hand, “On April 12, I was supposed to be served mineral water for lunch but instead these cooks gave me a soft drink – a Coke. How can they?”

And on another day, Sesay told the amused students, he was supposed to be served a fruit salad after his dinner, which the cooks omitted. He brought out the book where he signs every time he is served food as proof. True to his claim, the menu stated that there would be fruits served after dinner but the cooks gave him a cheese cake for desert.

“Believe me when I tell you that these people don’t follow the menu... you see?”

He also complained that he is tired of chicken, fish, beef and groundnuts on his menu daily. “I have not eaten the whole of this week,” he went on, “the menu is monotonous.”

Moving around the international section of Mpanga prison, led by an angrily gesticulating Sesay, is an experience to remember. Behind us was a group of baffled and clearly embarrassed Rwandan prison officials and guards. Sesay, on the other hand, walked with a swagger. He was wearing a designer jacket on top of an expensive T-shirt and tracksuit bottoms complete with brand new white sneakers. Although in his mid 50s, Sesay looks to be in his mid 30s and has the air of a man who knows he would have become president of Sierra Leone had the UN, Ecowas, Tony Blair and other such enemies of the revolution not intervened to block him.

Sesay complained that the prisoners are “only” allowed to call their families six days a week (Monday to Saturday), but not on Sundays. That, he said, amounts to torture. Why not allow him to talk to his wife and children on Sunday, a day of worship? And to make matters worse, the prison provides him newspapers like The EastAfrican, Daily Nation, Daily Monitor, New Vision and New Times. But they don’t provide him and his group newspapers from West Africa, which is where he comes from. Or they could provide him the Financial Times and the Wall Street Journal that have global significance. This, he

told us, has made his life in Rwanda difficult. I was saddened to hear that the Rwandans don't give him the Independent, the newspaper I work for. Perhaps with that he would complain less.

In the TV room, Sesay and his colleagues have a 32-inch plasma flat-screen complete with DSTV. Upon entering the room, we found a live English Premier League match on.

“That is not enough for Sesay,” Isaac Musimenta, one of the journalism students complained sarcastically on Sesay's behalf. “He needs a 50-inch plasma screen in HD so that he can watch his games properly.”

When we visited his gym and saw a shower next to it, another journalism student, Nicolas Bwana, said — again sarcastically — that Sesay should have been provided a bathtub instead. Sesay turned to accept the recommendation with the assurance of a man realising that his listeners had got his point: “You see?” he said, “That is what I am talking about.”

In his self-contained room, Sesay has a radio, newspapers, blockbuster movies and books on a reading table. He also has a wardrobe full of clothes, a shower and flush toilet. He has a long line of shoes stretching from one corner of the room to another. In the bathroom, he has toilet soap, Vim and Harpic. He complained that those are the only disinfectants provided by Rwanda's mean prison guards — ignoring other vital items such as air freshener. The students were now making a game of it; now Sandra Akello asked why Sesay did not have a Jacuzzi, at which Sesay nodded enthusiastically.

When we visited the computer lab, where he and fellow prisoners take lessons in computer science, business management, economics, political economy etc, Sesay was not amused at the excitement our group expressed at the HP desktops provided to him and his fellow prisoners.

“We are not allowed access to the Internet,” he pointed out. I chipped in that he should have been provided Macs instead of HPs, at which he turned and looked at me with shining eyes. I added that he should be provided with a fully loaded iPad, a suggestion he embraced with open arms, although it seemed to me he did not know what a Mac or iPad really was.

Finally, it was time to visit his tormentors in the kitchen. There it was: The freezer, stocked with frozen fish, goat meat and chicken, icecream and butter. “They bought most of this stuff when they heard that you were coming to visit,” he said in a low voice. Realising that one cook had overheard, he changed the tone and claimed that his problem was not the absence of food but the prison cooks not adhering to the menu.

Inside the dry food store were packed juice, tinned beef, UHT milk, biscuits, eggs, instant coffee, tomato ketchup, fresh pineapples, baked beans, powdered milk, packets of tea leaves etc. Some students joked to prison guards that they would like to take Sesay's place in prison. Even I envied Sesay since my freezer at home does not have such an assortment of goodies. It all looked like a 5-star hotel, not a prison.

But Sesay did not see any of that. At least I would agree that his room, although much better than any students' room in the best hostel at Makerere University, was certainly not to 5-star hotel standards. And for a man who would have become president of Sierra Leone if the evil Blair had not intervened, who can question his right to complain of mistreatment in Rwanda's Mpanga Prison?

The writer is the publisher of The Independent of Uganda

Reuters

Friday, 4 May 2012

Unprecedented jail term sought for Charles Taylor

Prosecutors have demanded an 80-year jail term for former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who last week was convicted of aiding and abetting crimes against humanity, before a sentencing decision that is expected to set a precedent.



Taylor's sentencing, on May 30, will be closely watched for its impact on other heads of state involved in cases at the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, where Laurent Gbagbo, the former president of Ivory Coast, is due to face charges of crimes against humanity.

In a brief filed to judges at a special court in The Hague on Thursday, the prosecution said Taylor's position as a head of state, and the "length of time during which the crimes continued", were aggravating circumstances that necessitated a lengthy term.

Last week judges ruled that Taylor, 64, had helped the militias which, during the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone, had perpetrated acts of terror against the civilian population, disembowelling and mutilating their victims, and recruiting child soldiers.

Until now, the longest sentence imposed by the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) was one of 52 years, handed down to Issa Sesay, a commander in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) militia that was responsible for some of the war's worst brutality.

The prosecution had sought to have Taylor convicted of direct criminal responsibility for human rights violations committed during the course of the conflict, but judges found that Taylor had not been in a position of direct command.

"The SCSL has given huge sentences, but that would be difficult for Taylor, given the way judges characterised his role," said William Schabas, professor of law at Middlesex University.

For now, there are few precedents. While Karl Doenitz, the German admiral, was German president in the final days of World War II, his 10-year sentence was handed down for his activities as a military commander.

Heads of state who have been tried and sentenced, albeit by national courts, include Alberto Fujimori, who received 25 years for his role in kidnappings and killings committed while he was president of Peru, and Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi dictator, who was hanged.

"The whole field (of international criminal justice) is in disarray over sentencing," said Jens David Ohlin, professor of law at Cornell University.

"There is quite a debate in our field over whether the central issue is Charles Taylor's position as a former head of state or whether it's more important that he was only an accomplice in these crimes," Ohlin added.

"In theory accomplices should receive lower sentences than perpetrators, but if the crimes are so severe that only a life sentence will capture that level of guilt, then there is an argument that even accomplices should receive a long sentence."

The Sierra Leone court has handed down far more severe sentences than the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), whose sentences have topped out at 30 years apart from one life sentence.

"In Europe, there is a mindset that excessively long sentences trigger human rights concerns," Ohlin said.

The ICC, which has been heavily influenced by the practices evolved over 19 years by the ICTY, was likely to follow this pattern of milder sentencing, he said.

Judges are due to sentence Taylor at the end of this month, after receiving a sentencing brief from his defence counsel. Both sides are expected to appeal.

Washington & Lee University

Tuesday, 8 May 2012

<http://news.blogs.wlu.edu/2012/05/08/conviction-of-a-warlord-justice-for-his-victims/>

Conviction of a warlord, justice for his victims?

By Mark Drumbl

Class of 1975 Alumni Professor of Law and Director, Transnational Law Institute
(Reprinted from the May 8, 2012, edition of the Richmond Times-Dispatch)

Charles Taylor, former president of Liberia, has been convicted of 11 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Although symbolic, imprisoning Taylor is a small step toward the arc of accountability. All the effort — time, resources and money — that went into convicting Taylor should not distract from the ongoing efforts that are required to deliver justice to the people of Sierra Leone.

Mark Drumbl, professor of law, Washington and Lee University

Taylor, whose trial began in 2007, was prosecuted in The Hague by an international tribunal called the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which was set up to deliver justice for the atrocities committed in the war that plagued Sierra Leone, Liberia's neighbor in West Africa, in the 1990s.

Atrocities included widespread killings, amputations, sexual slavery, rape and conscription of child soldiers — all fueled by blood diamonds and shadowy transfers of funds. Tens of thousands of people were killed. For the rebels, a "smile" meant cutting away victims' lips. "Short" or "long sleeves" became euphemisms for where arms were to be hacked off. Rebel campaigns were called Operation No Living Thing and Operation Spare No Soul.



Taylor, who can appeal, will be sentenced at the end of May. He would do his time in a British prison.

That atrocities were committed in Sierra Leone is plain to see. The effects of those atrocities continue today. Survivors struggle in rehabilitation programs while the country gets back on track. The Special Court has already delivered eight convictions that implicate leaders in Sierra Leone of the factions that fought in the conflict.

But Taylor had never set foot in Sierra Leone during the war. How, then, to link him to the atrocities committed there?

Prosecutors floated a number of theories to establish a nexus between Taylor in Liberia and rebel groups in Sierra Leone. These theories grapple with international criminal law's sore spots. The higher up the defendant, the more distant his hands, the cleaner his handiwork, and the harder it is to link him to the crimes. The more people are killed, and the more endemic the violence, the tougher it is to come up with forensic evidence and eyewitness testimony. Simply put, it isn't easy to connect the victim to the killer and then the killer to superiors within a criminal state.

Prosecutors argued that Taylor had command responsibility over the rebel leaders and, hence, was individually responsible for their conduct. The Special Court rejected this theory. The evidence didn't support it. Taylor had influence, but not command and control. Another theory was that Taylor

participated in a joint criminal enterprise — in other words, a common plan — with the local leaders who committed the crimes. This, too, was rejected.

The third theory was that Taylor aided and abetted the crimes — namely, that he provided encouragement, equipment and practical assistance — and that he also helped plan some attacks. This third theory stuck and formed the basis of the convictions entered against him. Just like U.S. prosecutors nailed Al Capone with tax evasion, sometimes the highest-ups can be convicted only for the more anemic of reasons.

Nazi trials were facilitated by Nazi paper trails, to be sure. But in the annals of atrocity, they are the exception. The Taylor prosecutors worked with little connective evidence. They had to resort to radio intercepts. They showed how diamonds came into Liberia from Sierra Leone in exchange for weapons. Supermodel Naomi Campbell testified that, after a dinner she attended with Taylor present, someone sent "dirty little pebbles" — uncut diamonds — to her hotel room. The prosecution alleged it was Taylor.

The difficulty in linking the mastermind with the actual violence underscores how criminal trials should form only one element of post-conflict justice. Criminal law takes us only so far. It fails to deliver what most victims really want — reintegration, rehabilitation, skills training, restitution, and apologies.

Blood diamonds helped fund the rebel cause. Gems were traded for guns. These diamonds were exported illegally from Sierra Leone and, eventually, purchased — including in the West. They came to adorn wedding bands and sparkle in earrings. Symbols of love, those diamonds emerged from terror. The international community needs a better way to monitor trade in natural resources that are pillaged from war-torn countries.

Criminal convictions react to the past. More active measures, however, are needed to prevent mass atrocity from occurring in the present.

Mark A. Drumbl is a law professor at Washington and Lee University and author of *"Reimagining Child Soldiers in International Law and Policy"* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Heritage (Liberia)

Tuesday, 8 May 2012

Liberia: More Prayers Offered Taylor

Former warlord now Nimba County Senator Prince Yormie Johnson has offered intercessory prayers for his onetime adversary, former President Charles Taylor as he appeals against his guilty verdict in The Hague. Senator Johnson, who headed the dreaded Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) rebel group, was a fierce adversary to former President Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel group during the heydays of the Liberian armed insurrection.

On Thursday, April 26, 2012, judges of the Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting in The Hague found Taylor guilty of aiding and abetting war crimes during the Sierra Leone civil war.

Taylor, 64, has been on trial for almost five years. He was accused of backing rebels who killed tens of thousands during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war. Taylor was convicted of 11 counts including terror, murder and rape - but cleared of ordering the crimes. He is the first former head of state convicted by an international court since the Nuremburg military tribunal of Nazis after World War II.

The presiding judge of the Special Court Richard Lussick said the prosecution proved beyond reasonable doubt that Mr. Taylor aided and abetted rebel activities in Sierra Leone. But defense lawyer Courtenay Griffiths told the BBC Taylor lawyer told the BBC shortly after the verdict that the trial was unfair. He maintained that the verdict of the trial judges was expected. However in reaction, the Prosecution led by Breda Hollis contended that the arguments that the trial of Mr. Taylor was 'politically motivated' were made several times by the defense.

Madam Hollis said the verdict eloquently rejected these claims and assertions by the Taylor defense team and supporters. Sentencing of former Liberian leader is due May 30 after lawyers of both the prosecution and the defense had filed their brief ahead of the appeal.

Speaking in exclusive interview with this paper via cell phone on Monday, May 07, 2012 in Monrovia, the former presidential candidate in the much publicized 2011 Presidential and Legislative Elections said although Taylor was once an enemy on the battlefield, he has asked God to grant his (Taylor) heart desires as he appeals against his guilty verdict.

"I am an evangelist, I not suppose to wish my enemies bad, I have offered prayer for him," Senator Johnson said.

Among other things, the Nimba County Senator added that he was surprised that the Prosecution was not able to prove that Taylor bore the greatest responsibility for the war in Sierra Leone.

The former ECOWAS parliamentarian assertions come on the heels of recent comments by Liberia's former President Moses Z. Blah.

Former President Blah said he "feels hurt" over the verdict handed down by the UN-backed Special Court.

"I feel a little bit hurt and I am not happy about the whole situation. Taylor is my friend and Brother, I still respect him." He stated.

Mr. Blah, who served as a prosecution witness in the trial of his former boss, said he did not expect that Mr. Taylor would be found guilty.

Speaking on the BBC Network Africa Program recently, Blah pointed out that his testimony in the Taylor's trial was not against his former boss (Mr. Taylor).

However, he said he testified to what he knew based on a subpoena of the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Speaking further, Mr. Blah described Mr. Taylor as his revolutionary brother who he still respects.

He said, if Taylor is set free by Appeal Chamber of Special Court, he would organize a party for his former boss.

He said he would intercede for the former president through prayers to ensure that he is set free.

Meanwhile, the Special Court for Sierra Leone has announced a change in the composition of Charles Taylor's defense team as Morris Anyah, formerly a co-defense counsel, has been appointed as the lead defense counsel to handle the former Liberian president's appeal.

"It is understood that this change in his defense team has been announced with the consent of Mr. Taylor, in line with his right to be represented by counsel of his choosing," a statement issued by the Special Court for Sierra Leone said.

For the purposes of his appeal, Mr. Taylor will now be represented by Mr. Anyah, who has served as co-defense counsel throughout the trial phase of the case. Courtenay Griffiths, QC will continue to serve as Mr. Taylor's lead defense counsel only through the sentencing phase of the proceedings, which will be concluded on May 30.

Boston Herald

Tuesday, 8 May 2012

Opinion

Masters of war meeting justice

By Arthur I. Cyr

“Without justice, courage is weak,” Ben Franklin wrote, and around the world today dangerous disciples of war are being brought to justice.

In late April, Liberia’s former president, Charles Taylor, was formally convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity by an international special court established in The Hague, Holland. Taylor aided Sierra Leone rebel forces in carrying out bloody, brutal atrocities.

Liberia under Taylor was rightly regarded as having a ruling regime that was corrupt and dangerous, both domestically and toward other countries.

Liberia’s current president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, earlier spent more than a year in prison during Taylor’s dictatorship. He’d once threatened to kill her. Her legendary determination and courage inspired the nickname “The Iron Lady.”

Around the world, other war criminals are slowly but steadily being brought to justice through due process.

Last November, a New York jury convicted Viktor Bout for trying to sell arms to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, in order to kill Americans. His nickname is “The Merchant of Death.”

Former Soviet army officer Bout became rich and feared dealing in weapons and drugs on a vast scale. Wholesale death literally was his occupation. Bout was seized in Thailand in a sting operation orchestrated by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

In July 2011, Goran Hadic was arrested in Serbia. He was the last remaining accused Balkans war criminal not yet taken into custody following the brutal fighting in that region during the 1990s.

United Nations officials joined with representatives of the international judicial tribunal overseeing these trials in welcoming this benchmark event. Slow and inefficient, international legal institutions nonetheless steadily are making progress.

If this brief, brutal list indicates such practices are removed from the United States, think again. Edwin P. Wilson, a retired U.S. intelligence pro, went to work for terrorist state Libya in the 1970s. Wilson recruited expert military veterans, including U.S. Army Green Berets, for Col. Moammar Gadhafi’s regime.

Killings in Colorado as well as Germany were blamed on Wilson’s efficient lethal crew. Alleged deals, backed by substantial evidence, included shipping 20 tons of C-4 plastic explosives to Libya in chartered planes. Wilson became a U.S. law enforcement priority. Libya refused to extradite him, but imaginative American operatives set up an attractive bogus deal and lured him to the Caribbean, where he was arrested.

Wilson spent almost three decades in prison, but then was released. A federal judge declared the CIA and Justice Department had acted improperly regarding the trial, and overturned his conviction on procedural grounds.

By definition, the rule of law puts the same obligations on all parties, innocent and guilty. Franklin and fellow Founders understood the goal is great but the process often painful.

The Economist
Monday, 7 May 2012
Opinion

Charles Taylor, Liberia and Sierra Leone

Few seem interested

FREETOWN AND MONROVIA

WHEN the guilty verdict in the trial of Charles Taylor was announced on April 26th, traffic did not stop in Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone, where the former Liberian president is deemed to have abetted war crimes in a brutal civil war. People did not gather in the streets, nor did they crowd around their Chinese-made radios. A photographer scouring the city centre, looking for people watching the event on television, found barely a handful.

The views of Aminata Morkai, a 31-year-old selling clothes at a stall opposite the Libyan embassy, were typical. "The trial is not important for me, because it's none of my business," she said. "It has passed. We need to forget about it. We don't want to think of the past any more."

Several reasons made the verdict feel irrelevant to the people in whose name the prosecution was carried out. For one thing, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, a UN-backed tribunal set up to try those "most responsible" for the country's bloody civil war (1991-2002), heard its earlier cases in Freetown. But the Taylor trial was relocated to The Hague for reasons of security. Public consciousness faded. Moreover, it is ten years since the war ended and six since Mr Taylor was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Special Court. With a general election scheduled for November and concern rising over the cost of living, many people have more pressing concerns.

The court's organisers presented the tribunal as a joint venture between the government of Sierra Leone and international bodies but foreigners dominated proceedings, not least because Sierra Leone's sclerotic bureaucracy could not have coped. For many Sierra Leoneans, the court seemed alien. After the verdict the information minister mused that the money the case cost might have been better spent renovating a local university.

Liberians felt a bit differently. Many of them had called Mr Taylor "Papay". Even if they disliked him, some felt bad about seeing their head of state facing prosecution, especially in a foreign court. On Tubman Boulevard in Monrovia, Liberia's capital, the blackboard that chalks up breaking news declared, "The conspirators v Taylor." Under the conspirators it listed the UN, George Bush, Tony Blair and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

The Observer (Uganda)

Tuesday, 8 May 2012

Opinion

Should Africa drum at every change of guard?

Charles Taylor has been pronounced guilty of abetting crimes against humanity following his arraignment at The Hague.



As this verdict reverberates in joy in various circles, Africa will discover that Taylor does not differ from the medley of riff-raffs and miscreants that pock-mark the general African scene. Whenever one analyzes the situation across Africa, one senses the dreadful circumstances that pervade life at the instigation of Africa's power centres. Charles Taylor had risen to the Liberian executive mansion by waging an armed insurgency that toppled a military strongman, Sergeant Samuel Doe. But, having saddled himself in the trappings of office, Taylor settled to ordinary routine of the exercise of a governor's power.

It left the country easy prey to contending opportunists who also emerged to engineer his downfall using both the overt and covert connivance of different foreign interests. The ensuing conflagration saw another round of bloody civil mayhem that raged in Liberia. In the mounting threats to his grip on power, Taylor retaliated by also sponsoring destruction in countries he perceived as harbouring his foes.

Sierra Leone, which had faced earlier tensions of insurrection of its own, found itself swamped with Kony-type brigandage and reprisals against the population.

It took the intervention of the British Navy to avert the imminent overrunning of Freetown. The US and British authorities then bayed for Charles Taylor's head. General Obasanjo, then the President of Nigeria, brokered a deal on behalf of the miffed US and British governments in which Taylor accepted to exit office in exchange for a solemn bargain of exile in the safe haven of Nigeria. Pursuing his own calculation of obtaining a bill of no objection from Washington and London over his pet project of staying in office beyond the limits set by the Nigerian constitution, Obasanjo was quick to hand Taylor over in the vain hope of courting for favours which he never got anyway.

Taylor became a splendid victim of a volte-face by Obasanjo, hitherto unseen in the history of treachery. Not a single squeak of protest was uttered from the compact corridors of power in Africa. The excellencies whose specialisation is in the service of their handlers against their countries were content to think that their own turn would not be coming. Not long after, there is already a rising toll. The renowned Gaddafi of Libya, who had repented to the West for his earlier infractions, was hunted down by the US-Anglo-French forces and felled in the trenches of his own hometown like he had been worthless vermin.

There are many more prospective qualifiers or alternate candidates for this treatment. Most would not take consolation in the fact that long before them, African chiefs had suffered dethronement. Eminent kings like Mwanga of Buganda and Kabalega died in exile as prisoners. In Eastern Uganda, countless braved atrocities meted out by Semei Kakungulu's expeditions on behalf of colonialism. But, these great names of the times of our forefathers are inscribed in the pages of veneration. They stood for their communities and cause.

Those who have joined forces to deny Africa its place can have no word of honour in their memory, no matter how faithfully they toady to their principals. A false notion has crept in our consciousness that the fate of our lives now rests in the intervention from the mega-powers. It is increasingly believed that in the brandishing of a trial at The Hague lies the prospect of good governance. We are increasingly becoming blind to the fact that the forces that dominate our world have never had an eye for the happiness of humanity. They have always been the purveyors of crimes in the world. George Bush, the butcher of Iraq and his close accomplice, Tony Blair, are tucked in safety with no threat of a trial of any nature.

No amount of change of guards can constitute freedom for the African people. Rather than ululate and drum in victory songs at every instance that the guards are changed by the rulers, we should learn to screen our independent interests in such changes and use every opening to advance the true emancipation of our society.

It is by preparing and organising ourselves ideologically, politically and organisationally into a patriotic, democratic national wave that we can overwhelm the misrule of Africa and the narrow paradigm of the collaborators.

*The author is a member of NEC (NRM) representing historicals.
megawa@hotmail.com*

Africa Research Institute (London)

Tuesday, 8 May 2012

Opinion

Grassroots Justice in Rwanda

The conviction of former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, by the Special Court for Sierra Leone has once again put the spotlight on the efficacy and objectives of international criminal tribunals. On the other side of the continent, in Rwanda, a radically different - and equally controversial - judicial process will conclude in June 2012. In *How Rwanda judged its genocide*, the latest publication in Africa Research Institute's Counterpoints series, Dr Phil Clark scrutinises the gacaca community courts set up to prosecute crimes committed during the 1994 genocide.

The gacaca community courts have been the centrepiece of Rwanda's justice and reconciliation process. In 2001, approximately 120,000 genocide suspects were detained in jails across Rwanda at a cost of US\$20m a year. More than 10,000 people had died in detention since 1994.

There were hardly any judges or lawyers left in the country after the genocide, and the judicial infrastructure was in ruins. Few countries have had to tackle the aftermath of a conflict in which hundreds of thousands were killed or injured by hundreds of thousands of their fellow citizens with such limited legal and financial resources.

The aims of gacaca were to prosecute every individual genocide suspect, regardless of seniority or social standing, and to begin the reconstruction and reconciliation of Rwandan society. Crucially, the process was designed to involve the people who experienced the genocide first-hand at every stage. Formally trained judges and lawyers were excluded from any official involvement. In 2002, gacaca was launched by the Rwandan government as "justice without lawyers". More than 250,000 lay judges were elected by their communities in about 11,000 jurisdictions. As gacaca identified new suspects still at large, the number of people prosecuted swelled to 400,000.

Most international observers have fiercely opposed the use of gacaca courts for trying genocide crimes in Rwanda, claiming that they were ill-equipped to handle such complex cases fairly. This Counterpoint argues that such criticism reflects legal rigidity in the face of the unprecedented challenges confronting post-genocide Rwanda - and a limited understanding of the multiple aims of gacaca. The perspective stems from a narrow conception of justice based on the experiences of the Nuremberg and Toyko trials after World War II and subsequent tribunals - including the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

As many as one million cases have been heard by gacaca courts in a decade, at a cost of US\$40m, compared with the US\$1 billion spent on 69 trials at the ICTR. Gacaca has inevitably been imperfect. Its shortcomings have included cases of corruption, bribery of judges and intimidation of witnesses. Some survivors have also been retraumatised.

But the process was also highly innovative and delivered significant benefits. A vast genocide caseload was cleared. Popular participation during gacaca hearings was conducive to truth-telling and truth-hearing.

As court proceedings were shaped by local communities, vigorous political exchange often ensued. Phil Clark asserts that other societies confronting the aftermath can learn much from the achievements of gacaca - as well as its flaws and pitfalls.

"There are serious questions we must ask about the appropriate responses to mass conflict", said Phil Clark at the launch of *How Rwanda judged its genocide* at Africa Research Institute in London. "Critiques of gacaca have been vociferous since day one. But critics have ignored one of its greatest assets, namely that Rwandans have been able to talk about the genocide, and its impact, on their own terms, in a language that is familiar to them".

Arabnews.com

Wednesday, May 9, 2012

ICC must not succumb to selective justice

By ALEMAYEHU G MARIAM

After 420 days of trial (over nearly four years), 115 witnesses, over 50,000 pages of testimony, and 1,520 exhibits, Charles Taylor, warlord-turned-president of Liberia, was found guilty on 11 counts by the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Taylor was found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Sierra Leone from Nov. 30, 1996, to Jan. 18, 2002. Over 50,000 people died in that conflict. Taylor “aided and abetted” the notorious warlords Foday Sankoh, Sam “the Mosquito” Bockarie and Issa Sesay of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. Taylor participated in the planning, instigation and commission of these crimes and provided weapons and military support in exchange for “blood diamonds” mined by slave laborers in Sierra Leone. Taylor will be sentenced next month.

There were some problems in the prosecution’s evidence. There were few documents to show the depth and scope of Taylor’s involvement with the rebels. There was no evidence that Taylor was at the scene of the rebel crimes. There was little evidence showing the Liberian troops Taylor sent to Sierra Leone were directly involved in the war crimes and crimes against humanity. However, prosecutors were able to use radio and telephone intercepts and the testimonies of Taylor’s close associates and security detail and show that Taylor had shipped weapons to the rebels in exchange for (blood) diamonds.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for other current and former African heads of state, including Cote d’Ivoire’s former President Laurent Gbagbo and Sudan’s President Omar Bashir (and the late Muammar Qaddafi). In November 2011, Gbagbo was quietly whisked away to the Hague from house arrest in Cote d’Ivoire to face justice before the ICC on charges of crimes against humanity (murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence, persecution and other inhuman acts) that were allegedly committed during the post-election period. Gbagbo will soon be warming Taylor’s chair.

Bashir sneered at the ICC indictment in 2009: “Tell them all, the ICC prosecutor, the members of the court and everyone who supports this court that they are under my shoe.” (In time, he may come under the ICC’s shoes.) The UN estimated well over 300,000 people have perished under Bashir’s regime. Along with Bashir, the ICC has also issued warrants against other Sudanese nationals including Ahmed Haroun, a lawyer and minister of humanitarian affairs, Ali Kushayb, a former senior Janjaweed (local militiamen allied with the Sudanese regime against Darfur rebels), Bahr Idriss Abu Garda, a rebel leader and two others.

The ICC has also indicted criminals against humanity in Kenya. Uhuru Kenyatta, finance minister and son of Kenya’s famed independence leader Jomo Kenyatta, resigned following an ICC ruling that he will face trial for crimes against humanity in connection with the communal post-election violence between supporters of presidential candidates Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki in 2008. The UN estimates some 1,200 people died in weeks of unrest between December 2007 and February 2008, and 600,000 people were forcibly displaced. Cabinet secretary Francis Muthaura, a close ally of president Mwai Kibaki, former Education Minister William Ruto and radio announcer Joshua arap Sang face similar charges.

In Uganda, the ICC has indicted senior leaders of the “Lord’s Resistance Army” including the notorious Joseph Kony, his deputy Vincent Otti and three other top commanders. In the D.R. Congo various rebel and militia leaders and Congolese military officers and politicians including Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, Bosco Ntaganda, Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui and two others have been indicted.

The ICC has issued arrest warrants for Muammar Qaddafi's son Saif Al-Islam and Libyan intelligence chief Abdullah Al-Senussi who was arrested in Mauritania in March of this year. Libya is contesting ICC jurisdiction so that it may be able to try the two suspects in Libyan courts.

While seeking out war criminals and criminals against humanity in the Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, the DR of Congo, Libya and other places, the ICC and UN Security Council have avoided "Crimes Against Humanity Central-Ethiopia". The evidence of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Ethiopia is fully documented, substantial and overwhelming.

An official Inquiry Commission appointed by Meles Zenawi in its 2006 report documented the extrajudicial killing of at least 193 unarmed protesters, wounding of 763 others and arbitrary imprisonment of nearly 30,000 persons in the post-2005 election period in Ethiopia. The commission was limited to investigating the "violence that occurred on June 8, 2005 in Addis Ababa and violence that occurred from Nov. 1 to 10, 2005 and from Nov. 14 to 16, 2005" in other parts of the country.

The commission's evidence further showed that nearly all of the 193 unarmed protesters died from gunshot wounds to their heads or upper torso. The Commission found substantial evidence that professional sharpshooters were used in the indiscriminate and wanton attack on the unarmed protesters. These and many other shocking facts were meticulously documented by the Inquiry Commission which examined 16,990 documents, received testimony from 1,300 witnesses and undertook months of investigation in the field. There is also documentary evidence to show that there are at least 237 named police and security officials directly implicated in these crimes and subsequently dismissed from their positions. No person has even been criminally investigated, arrested, charged, prosecuted or in any way held accountable for any of these crimes.

It is historic and commendable that the ICC UN Special Tribunal for Sierra Leone has convicted Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The verdict is undoubtedly a giant step forward in ending the culture of official impunity and criminality in Africa. African dictators and tyrants may no longer assume automatic impunity for their criminal actions. David Crane, the former prosecutor who indicted Taylor in 2003 correctly pointed out, "This is a bell that has been rung and clearly rings throughout the world. If you are a head of state and you are killing your own people, you could be next." UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon described the Taylor verdict as "a significant milestone for international criminal justice" that "sends a strong signal to all leaders that they are and will be held accountable for their actions."

But the ICC and the UN Security Council must not succumb to the shameful practice of selective justice. It is hypocritical to indict criminals against humanity in the Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and the D.R. Congo and pretend to "hear no evil, see no evil and speak no evil" on the war criminals and criminals against humanity in Ethiopia. There cannot be a double, triple or quadruple standard of justice tailored for different grade of war criminals and criminals against humanity. There is no such thing as a good war criminal or criminal against humanity. There can be no beauty contest among warthogs.

What is good enough for the Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and the DR Congo must be good enough for Ethiopia because what is good for the goose is good for the gander. Based on the compelling and substantial readily available evidence, the ICC has a legal duty and a moral obligation to at least open an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Ethiopia since 2002 when the court was created.