PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Thursday, May 20, 2004

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday. If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact Ibrahim Tommy
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INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR RWANDA
NEWS OF MAY 18TH, 2004

ICTR/RWANDA

RWANDA ALARMED BY RESIGNATION OF TOP TRIBUNAL OFFICIALS

Arusha, May 18th, 2004 (FH) Rwanda's representative to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), Aloys Mutabingwa, Tuesday, said that his country was very troubled by the high rate of resignations by top Tribunal officials.

Mutabingwa made the remarks during a press conference held at his offices in the Tanzanian town of Arusha, where the Tribunal is located. He was reacting to the recent withdrawal of a judge from a very important trial at the ICTR.

Judge Andresia Vaz from Senegal, the vice president of the ICTR, was the second judge to withdraw from a trial since the beginning of this year. She had been the presiding judge in the trial of four senior officials in the former Rwandan government accused of genocide.

"The Tribunal must come up with an answer to explain their leaving. These are among the most upright, professional and competent officers", said Mutabingwa.

Judge Vaz's withdrawal from the case follows shortly after the resignation from the Tribunal of Judge George Lloyd Williams from St. Kitts and Nevis and Judge Asoka de Zoysa Gunawardana from Sri Lanka.

Judge Williams' reasons for leaving were given by the ICTR as "personal" while Gunawardana reportedly resigned "on health grounds". No official reasons were given for Judge Vaz's withdrawal.

The Rwandan official suggested that it was likely some of the top ICTR brass were leaving because they did "not want to jeopardise their characters" in connection with what he termed "external pressures" exerted upon them.

"We are aware that the Tribunal is caught in a web of political crisis, but that should not be the issue", he said. The official hinted that France was one of the sources of the said pressure, adding that it was "undermining the due process of the court".

The President of the Tribunal, Judge Eric Møse from Norway, has not yet announced a replacement for Vaz. He met on Monday with both prosecution and the defence teams in the trial in question to chart the way forward.

The trial known as the 'Government I' trial groups together three leaders of the former ruling party, the MRND: Mathieu Ngirumponge, president; his vice president Edouard Karemera; and Joseph Nsirorera, Secretary General; and the former minister of education, Andre Rwamakuba.

The defence has made it public that it intends to apply for a restart of the trial which only opened seven months ago.

KN/JA/GF/FH (RW"0518e)
TRIBUNAL NOT VICTIM OF EXTERNAL PRESSURE-ICTR SPOKESMAN

Arusha, May 18th, 2004 (FH) - The spokesman of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), Tuesday, denied claims that the Tribunal was a victim of external political pressure.

Roland Amoussouga was reacting to claims made earlier by the representative of Rwanda to the ICTR, Aloys Mutabingwa, that recent resignations by top Tribunal officials were the result of political pressures, singling out France as one of the probable culprits.

"This is an independent Tribunal. It does not take orders from anyone, not France not Rwanda," declared Amoussouga.

The latest exchange of accusations was the result of the recent withdrawal from an important case by the vice President of the ICTR, Judge Andresia Vaz from Senegal. The vice President is the second highest ranking judge.

Judge Vaz was the presiding judge in the case of four former Rwandan government officials who are on trial at the Arusha-based Tribunal.

Lawyers for the accused had filed numerous petitions seeking the removal of the judges in the trial. They had argued that since Judge Vaz had once provided accommodation for a member of the prosecuting team in this trial, there was no guarantee that she would be impartial.

"Judge Vaz voluntarily withdrew from the case because she has the highest esteem for the dignity of a judge", said Amoussouga, adding that other judges who had resigned had done so "for personal reasons".

Judge Vaz's withdrawal from the case follows shortly after the resignation from the Tribunal of Judge George Lloyd Williams from St. Kitts and Nevis and Judge Asoka de Zoysa Gunawardana from Sri Lanka.

Earlier, the Rwandan representative had praised the Tribunal's existence highly "in terms of precedence, judgements delivered and even in terms of the spirit needed to address issues of international concerns like genocide and crimes against humanity".

However Mutabingwa had also criticized the Tribunal's delay in transferring some of the convicted persons to Rwanda to serve out their sentences. Amoussouga has said that this was an area they are working on.

So far no replacement for Judge Andresia Vaz has been named by the President of the Tribunal.

KN/JA/GF/FH (ICTR*0518e)
US invites UN members to help expand security forces for Iraq

19 May 2004 – The United States called on United Nations Member States today to help provide a special protective force for UN personnel returning to Iraq to assist with preparations for future elections.

"We must expand international security forces to support the return of United Nations international personnel to Iraq," the US Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador James Cunningham, told the Security Council in the last periodic briefing on Iraq by the US-led coalition before sovereignty is returned at the end of June.

"We are working to establish a unit within the MNF (Multinational Force) under unified command to provide dedicated security for United Nations personnel and facilities in Iraq," he said. "The ability of the United Nations to continue its vital role in assisting Iraqis to prepare for elections depends on its security. We urge the international community to participate in this important task."

More than 210,000 Iraqis already serve in the Iraqi security force, but their response has been uneven and their quality and leadership are being improved, he said.

Meanwhile, "we expect that violent elements will make a concerted effort to disrupt the transition and destabilize Iraq as we approach June 30," he said. "Faced with the violent elements I have just described, continued MNF operations after June 30 will be necessary to ensure Iraq's security and progress in its political transition."

The past month has been particularly difficult, Mr. Cunningham said, with the MNF having to go on the offensive against "former regime element and foreign terrorists in Fallujah and Ramadi."

The American justice system was moving swiftly to address the abuses of Iraqis imprisoned in Abu Ghraib that "stain the honour and reputation of the United States," he said. He noted that President George W. Bush had condemned and apologized for the abuses, two officers had been relieved of command and the first of seven trials of military personnel took place today.

The Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Emyr Jones Parry, said British military personnel operated strictly in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and international law, and any form of abuse was unacceptable. Britain was conducting 33 investigations of the Royal Military Police.
Reviewing the practical progress made in Iraq, he told the Council that already 11 government ministries had been restored to Iraqi control.

Oil revenues were due to rise to $28 billion next year from $18 billion this year, leading the Ministry of Finance to revise its 2004 budget, Mr. Jones Parry said.
Review the Disarmament Guidelines

The Analyst (Monrovia)
EDITORIAL
May 19, 2004
Posted to the web May 19, 2004
Monrovia

IN OUR BANNER story titled "MADNESS" we reported that a mob of ex-fighters belonging to the former Government of Liberia (GOL) blocked the main route between Paynesville and Congo Town, looted goods belonging to marketers and shop owners, threw stones, and snatched cell phones, wrist watches, and other valuables from innocent passers-by. The mob action that disrupted the quietude of the Monrovia suburb of Paynesville and ELWA and left one person dead is the result of attempts by the ex-fighters to remind the UNMIL authorities of the arrears that have been pending since December last year.

UNMIL AUTHORITIES CLAIM the mob action referred to above was the result of impatience and unruly behavior on the part of the ex-fighters. According to them, the ex-fighter refused to wait for their time and abruptly turned out at the 72nd Military Barracks, demanding to be transported to the cantonment site in VOA. But the ex-fighters are saying something else. They are saying that they should receive their arrears before the process continues with those who have been disarmed and that the current procedure was intended to rob them of their arrears.

SIMILAR SITUATION OCCURRED last December when the same GOL ex-fighters reportedly refused to follow the timetable for disarmament and instead demanded the compensation for the weapons they turned in. As the result of that misunderstanding between UNMIL and the ex-fighters, five persons were killed, and thousands of United States dollars worth of properties were either carted away or damaged. No doubt this is unfortunate.

WHILE IS TRUE that the ex-fighters acted unruly, and unfortunately so, we think there is a serious problem with the implementation of the DDRR procedures. For instance, we don't understand why misunderstanding continues to exist between UNMIL and the ex-fighters on the same issue of compensation when the nation was made to understand on April 13, 2004 that there were enough resources to start and keep the DDRR programme going to its eventual end. It baffles us also that there should be a problem arising from
procedure interpretation when UNMIL has at its disposal a huge propaganda machinery that runs twenty-four hours a day. In our view, the fact that the confusion between UNMIL and the ex-fighters is over the same issue points to two possibilities: either the fighters are not getting the information or the procedures are convoluted and therefore not working. There is something wrong here that must be corrected and corrected immediately.

THIS IS NECESSARY and must take absolute priority if the DDRR programme proceed smoothly. Not is it necessary for the process, but it is also mandatory because the population cannot continue endure the danger of encountering rowdy mobs every four to five months because a group fails to follow a procedure laid down for them or because some bureaucrats refused to acknowledge the failure of a system of procedures they have put in place. It must be remembered that each time there is this misunderstanding, innocent people lose their lives. Not only that, the property of poverty stricken Liberians taken away by hooligans without compensation. This is happening under the glare of the largest yet peace-keeping mission in Africa is baffling.

BY NOW THE issue of financial compensation in the DDRR process should by now be considered cardinal to the success of the process, for, to think otherwise is to live in outer space or in another world. There is no more time to brush it aside unless somebody somewhere wants to drag the process for his own benefit while the population continues to suffer and die. We think the decision to withhold the compensation of the GOL ex-fighters who had already disarmed until new entrants are processed is not working and should therefore be reviewed.

THE PEOPLE ARE tired of running and dying because of procedures that though make a lot of sense on paper but that are not working in the fields. The disarmament process must therefore be reviewed in light of the continued compensation-related violence in the country, mainly the nation's capital that has the largest concentration of UNMIL troops.