PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

Tuesday, 18 July 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
Mariama Yilla
Ext 7217
UN wants Taylor in court for war crimes

Free Town

17 July 2005 08:38

UN Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour on Saturday stepped up pressure on Nigeria to extradite former Liberian leader Charles Taylor to stand trial at a UN-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone.

Winding up a three-day visit to Sierra Leone crisscrossing the former war-torn country to evaluate the state of human rights, Arbour added her voice to the growing campaign to extradite Taylor to the Special Court in Sierra Leone.

"I call and will continue to call publicly not only on (Nigerian) President Obasanjo but all African leaders to stand up and say very firmly that they believe in justice just as they believe in peace and that they support the immediate transfer of Taylor to Sierra Leone to stand trial."

In August 2003 Liberia emerged from two decades of deadly civil war when Taylor bowed to pressure from rebels besieging the capital Monrovia -- and from Ecowas and members of the international community -- and stepped down.

At the request of Ecowas and the African Union, Obasanjo agreed to allow Taylor to settle in Calabar, southern Nigeria.

The former head of state is wanted by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone who is seeking to indict him for his presumed support for rebels of the Revolutionary United Front who sparked a civil war in this west African country in 1992.

Both the UN-backed tribunal and the United States want Taylor to be judged in this court.

Earlier this month Obasanjo complained that his country was being harassed and blackmailed for having taken in Taylor.

Stressing that there would be "no lasting peace in Sierra Leone until Taylor faces the Special Court," Arbour said, "the pressure on President Obasanjo to turn over Taylor to the Special Court is not targeting the Nigerian leader unfairly."

Commenting on the report by Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Arbour said it contained "fundamental and important recommendations" and called for the "speedy establishment of an independent, representative and credible National Commission for Human Rights."

The UN Human Rights Commission has implemented several human rights projects in the country, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

It was the second time in six years that a UN human rights commissioner visited the west African state. - Sapa-AFP
Regional leaders await evidence on Liberia's Taylor
Fri Jul 15, 2005 12:54 PM GMT

MONROVIA (Reuters) - West African leaders would need evidence that Liberia's former president had broken the terms of his exile agreement before deciding whether to hand him over to a Sierra Leone war crimes court, a top mediator said.

Pressure is mounting on Nigeria to send Charles Taylor to the U.N.-backed tribunal where he faces charges of crimes against humanity for stoking a brutal conflict in Sierra Leone through an illicit trade in guns for diamonds.

Taylor went into exile in Nigeria in August 2003 under a deal to end years of civil war in Liberia.

Nigeria has said it will not extradite Taylor unless he is found to have broken the terms of his exile agreement, despite accusations from Liberian politicians that he has done so by interfering in politics back home.

The top Liberia mediator from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Abdulsalami Abubakar said the organisation, which was one of the parties to the exile agreement, would not act on simple allegations.

"ECOWAS does not work on accusation and allegations. We work on facts. If anyone has evidence that Charles Taylor is violating the agreement, let him produce it and the international community will act on it," Abubakar told a news conference in the Liberian capital Monrovia late on Thursday.

"Eighteen months ago, everybody said, let Charles Taylor leave, let Charles Taylor leave. Now, he is gone and there is peace here, they want him to come back," he said.

Liberian Justice Minister Kabineh Ja'neh, himself a former rebel, accused Taylor this month of trying to destabilise his homeland from exile in the run-up to elections in October -- which Taylor's spokesman in Nigeria denied.

United Nations human rights chief Louise Arbour called this week for Taylor to stand trial in Sierra Leone. The United States is also pressing Nigeria to hand Taylor over for trial.

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Sierra Leone: UN rights chief should call for Taylors surrender

The Campaign Against Impunity (CAI), a coalition of 13 human rights groups, has called on the UN human rights chief to oversee the surrender of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. The CAI said that UN human rights chief Louise Arbour should call on Taylor to surrender to the Special Court as part of the resolution that was reached in January of this year.

The CAI, which includes the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, said that Taylor's surrender would be a significant step towards justice for the victims of the conflict. The CAI also called on the UN Secretary-General to ensure that Taylor is held accountable for his role in the conflict.

The CAI's call comes after a report by the Independent Commission for Truth and Reconciliation in Sierra Leone, which found that Taylor was responsible for a range of human rights abuses during his time in power. The Commission called for Taylor to be tried for his crimes.

The CAI said that Taylor should be held accountable for his actions and that his surrender is a crucial step towards reconciliation in Sierra Leone. The CAI also called on the international community to support efforts to bring Taylor to justice.
Class II pupil discloses how a rebel impregnated her

Saturday July 16, 2005

By Tamba Borbor in Freetown

In her evidence before the Trial Chamber of the Special Court, Prosecution witness, TF1-014 narrated how she was raped by a rebel, which eventually left her pregnant.

The witness who could not ascertain her age said they were attacked by the rebels and some members of the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) in August 1998 at Bamukura village in the Koinak District.

"When the attack occurred, all the civilians fled into the bush to seek refuge,' the witness said the rebels she explained captured her parents and took them in a house where they were taken and killed. "My cousin who was also captured together with my parents, informed me that they were killed; so I went to the place where I saw my father's head lying after been chopped off. mother too was laying their dead," she said.

The witness went on to say that Andrew, who was a rebel, later captured her. During the time capture, the witness noted that she was in class II and had not even reached puberty stage. "I was taken to Yemadu village where I was raped by Andrew. I would have been killed if I had refused! After the raping, I later realized that I was pregnant. I used to launder and do other menial job him as I was with him for a very long time," the witness narrated.

During their stay she said, the civilians both men and women were trained in the use of weap men called- 'Qga my brother'. "The civilians again left Yemadu village for Bamukoro as Superr ordered that all the women in the village should leave, as he maintained that they were not all the boys to fight," she explained further.

The troops journeyed through various villages under the Command of Saj Musa until they stopped in Kamalo where Reverend Farther Mario was captured, the witness recounted. "Saj Musa ordered that the Forces should advance to Freetown. When we entered Waterloo, the women were quaternity pregnant women, suckling mothers and then followed by Saj's group." Continuing, TF1 further stated that she was with the troops until they retreated to Makeni where she had a still she told the Court.
Witness discloses...

5 rebels raped, and then stabbed her

By Henry Allori

FREETOWN: A witness who met rebels at the Special Group's Freedom Village TFI-19 disclosed that five rebels raped and then stabbed her.

The witness said that one rebel held a gun, and two others were with knives. After they had finished raping her, one of them pushed her to the ground, grabbed a knife and stabbed her on the back of her neck. The two others insisted that she should not be telling because they had raped her. She said she was then forced to take them to where the other civilians were hiding. When they got to the area, she said she urged them to go to Port Loko to search for them, and found them in a village around the Buckama area. She recalled that she met rebels there also.

One of the rebels called her and took her to the bush, took out his penis and forced it in her mouth, saying that she could suck it. She had wanted to refuse but was afraid he might kill her. He wanted to rape her again but she refused so he took her to one of his colleagues who used a stick to beat her left foot. He also took her into the bush when she was raped, and as he raped her, it was five of them.

After the rebels had left, she returned and found out that most of the houses had been burnt down, including her own.

Awoko
18 July 2005
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 17 July 2005

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

International Clips on Liberia

UN steps up pressure to extradite former Liberian strongman Taylor

FREETOWN, July 16 (AFP) - UN Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour stepped up pressure Saturday on Nigeria to extradite former Liberian leader Charles Taylor to stand trial at a UN-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone.

Winding up a three-day visit to Sierra Leone crisscrossing the former war-torn country to evaluate the state of human rights, Arbour added her voice to the growing campaign to extradite Taylor to the Special Court in Sierra Leone.

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International Clips on West Africa

Ivory Coast clears another hurdle in peace process

by Jean-Pierre Campagne

ABIDJAN, July 17 (AFP) - Ivory Coast has cleared another hurdle in its troubled peace process with the promulgation of new election laws, but many difficulties lie ahead before a presidential election due at the end of October.

Just hours before the expiry of the Friday deadline set by a South African-sponsored agreement, Ivory Coast's President Laurent Gbagbo promulgated new election laws.

Among the measures is the creation of an independent electoral commission to oversee the presidential election due to be held in the west African country on October 30.
International Clips on Liberia

UN chief names Briton as new Liberia representative

UNITED NATIONS, 15 July (AFP) - UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has named Alan Doss of Britain to be the UN special representative in Liberia, a spokeswoman announced Friday. Doss, a 60-year-old career diplomat at the UN, will take over from Jacques Klein of the United States who announced he was standing down in April.

Regional leaders await evidence on Liberia's Taylor

MONROVIA, 15 July (Reuters) - West African leaders would need evidence that Liberia's former president had broken the terms of his exile agreement before deciding whether to hand him over to a Sierra Leone war crimes court, a top mediator said.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board and would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Ms. Kadiatu Konteh at kontehk@un.org.
UNAMSIL to take over security at the Special Court

BY ABU BAKARR KABBO

As the final withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL draws nearer, questions have been raised from many quarters as to who will be responsible for security at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Reports reaching the press state that the UN Security Council has agreed to let the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) take full responsibility for security at the Special Court after UNAMSIL would have finally ended their mission and mandate in December.

Reports revealed further that the battalion that would take up this responsibility would be announced shortly and that the UN Country Team in Sierra Leone would provide support to the battalion whose mandate would be determined by the Security Council.

About 3500 Residual Forces will have to make an exit and repatriated to their various countries.

It could be recalled that UNAMSIL successfully carried out their mandate of restoring confidence in the minds of Sierra Leoneans, building the peace and providing humanitarian assistance and support to the Sierra Leone Police and Army.

Standard Times
18 July 2005
Students debate Special Court for Sierra Leone

Wednesday last week held a symposium at the British Council auditorium on the theme "Justice in Sierra Leone," the United Nations Special Court as a case study.

One of the issues highlighted by the students was the fact that the agreement between the United Nations and the Sierra Leone government stipulated that the Chief Prosecutor should be a Sierra Leonean, but that on two occasions the Chief Prosecutors have been foreigners contrary to the agreement.

They students also read a letter signed by incarcerated Chief Sam Hinga Norman claiming that the Special Court is full of corruption, injustice, and impunity and threatened to go on hunger strike if not given prompt attention. The students pledged their total commitment to solving national problems.

Among other issues undertaken by the students in an anti-corruption workshop that attracted more than one thousand students in the tertiary institution, was the issue of corruption.

The students raised concern that the issue of corruption in Sierra Leone was still not addressed and that more attention should be given by the relevant authority especially the government to make more input into the fight against corruption in the country.
Hinga Norman
to contest SLPP Leadership and Presidency
Cocorioko Website

HINGA NORMAN IS NOT ABOVE THE LAW

By Joseph Seidu Sherman, Washington DC

I think that in Sierra Leone, people have the tendency of taking the law for granted especially if it applies to our kith or keen. As we are all enshrined with certain inalienable rights to dignity, which are the foundations of freedom and justice, those same rights should be extended to every Sierra Leonean irrespective of your tribal affiliation or strong political support.

News about Hinga Norman, War Crimes indictee contesting the leadership of the SLPP and the presidency in Sierra Leone while in incarceration, signals that his supporters are taking the law for granted and encouraging the culture of impunity.

Perhaps no word defines the experiences encountered by innocent civilians in Sierra Leone like the word impunity. The lack of punishment, of investigation, of justice. The crimes committed during the civil war—from common robberies to rape, torture, murders—without having to face any punishment is an implicit approval of the morality of these crimes. Our nonchalant attitudes or paying blind eyes to these atrocities is sanctioning that perpetrators of these heinous crimes are free to repeat them any time without fear.

Since the brutal civil war, relatives of the victims are waiting patiently for justice and truth. Elements of truth and justice are essential for lasting reconciliation and for allowing Sierra Leone to move forward. At the moment, all rational Sierra Leoneans should allow the rule of law to apply to all the accused irrespective of the popularity of any of the accused.

Can there be lasting peace with impunity alive and well? The answer is an absolute no! Impunity is a main factor which allows torture and crimes against humanity to continue. It promotes further disintegration of the rule of law. It undermines systems built over years to protect against atrocities.

Finally, supporters of Hinga Norman's leadership for the SLPP and candidacy for the presidency should allow the rule of law to prevail if Sierra Leone is to experience total peace and reconciliation. There are many qualified and aspiring candidates out there untainted with the blood of Sierra Leoneans and foreigners killed in the brutal civil war. Giving dim hopes to Hinga Norman that he is above the law is encouraging him to be unrepentant for the crimes he is alleged to have committed against the people of Sierra Leone.

About The Author:

Joseph S. Sherman was an erstwhile Broadcast Journalist with ELCM Community Radio, now Radio Veritas, Monrovia, Liberia, and General Editor of the defunct FOOTPRINT Newspaper, Freetown, Sierra Leone. At Present he is a Director of a Multi-Cultural Adult Education Center in Washington, DC.
PROSECUTION RESTS CASE AGAINST CDF ACCUSED

Friday July 15, 2005

The Special Court Prosecution has rested its case against the three leaders of the now-disbanded Civil Defence Force (CDF) Chief Hinga Norman, Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondowah. The three faced 8-counts charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This sets the stage for the much-awaited Defence case during which witnesses for the accused will provide evidence aimed at rebutting the Prosecution's charges. It hopes to be a cliff-hanger as it had long been talked about that Chief Hinga Norman may implicate many high-placed citizens within the SLPP hierarchy.

During the trial, prosecution witnesses gave testimonies linking all three men to the atrocities committed by the CDF during the Sierra Leone war.

READ TAMBA BORBOR'S REPORT LATER TODAY
Gov't not committed to implement TRC recommendations

The National Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Thabo Makgoba, has said that the government has not committed to implement the TRC recommendations. "The government's response to the TRC recommendations is still pending," Makgoba said.

Addressing a press conference on Wednesday, Makgoba said that the government had not responded to the TRC recommendations, and that the government had not made any commitment to implement the recommendations.

Makgoba also urged the government to take action to address the issues raised by the TRC, including the issue of compensation for victims of apartheid.

The TRC was established in 1995 to investigate human rights abuses during the apartheid era. The commission's recommendations, which were published in 2004, called for compensation for victims of apartheid, as well as the establishment of a truth and reconciliation fund.

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