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:

Friday, 2 December 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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Norman Calls For Civil Disobedience

By Foday Fofana
The former Deputy Defence Minister and Coordinator of the former Kamajor militia, Chief Sam Hinga Norman has stated that if the Government "with expressed or implied consent of the Supreme Court, chooses to violate the Constitution, then the people will be morally justified and obligated to disobey the Government for conscience sake."

In a special press release put out by The Committee To Elect Hinga Norman and signed by Rev. Alfred M. Sam Foray, Chief Norman cited the violations, on grounds of section 35(4) of the constitution which stipulates that "no political party shall have as a leader a person who is not qualified to be elected as Member of Parliament."

Chief Norman was directly referring to section 76(1)(h), which states that, "no person shall be qualified for election as an MP if he/she is for the time being the President, Vice President, a Minister or a Deputy Minister."

ANNUL BEREWA
Based on the above, Chief Norman through his counsel, seeks that the High Court "Annul and make of no lawful effect the election, appointment or selection, as the case may be of Solomon Berewa as leader of the SLPP."

The Special Court indictee wants "the court to hold VP Berewa in violation of the constitution for failing refusing or neglecting to support, uphold and maintain the constitution with respect to the oath of the Vice President of Sierra Leone."

BASIS FOR THE LAWSUITS
The committee to elect Hinga Norman reminded the Sierra Leone public and the international community which has invested so much in the establishment of democracy in this country that, "from 1967 to the present, it has been Mr. Norman's lot to defend the constitution and only in 1997 as Deputy Minister of Defence was he able to acquire the support of ordinary citizens to defend, protect and uphold the constitution first by force of arms and now through legal action."

MAKEI CONVENTION
The committee recalled Chief Norman's original lawsuit which sought to prevent the leaders of the SLPP from holding the last SLPP National Delegates Conference (Convention) in Makeni.

At the time, the Supreme Court ruled that Chief Norman had no legal right to bring this matter to court. Now Norman wishes to inform the world that "The SLPP has in fact committed an illegal act and that the court must reverse its original ruling and correct this illegal act."

There has so far been no reaction from Government as they comfortably stand by the supreme court ruling which sees no wrong doing in the holding of the Makeni Convention and the subsequent election of Vice President Solomon Ekuma Berewa, as leader of the SLPP and flagbearer in 2007.
Obasanjo, Sirleaf parley on Taylor's fate

Posted to the Web: Thursday, December 01, 2005

ABUJA—Liberia’s new president elect, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, said Wednesday she had discussed the fate of her exiled predecessor Charles Taylor with his host and protector President Olusegun Obasanjo but no decision was made about him.

Taylor, who has been accused of war crimes by a UN-backed tribunal in Sierra Leone, has been living in Nigeria since August 2003, when Obasanjo asked him to leave to end to 14 years of consecutive civil wars.

Since then, the Nigerian leader has resisted mounting pressure from the international community to hand Taylor over to a special court in Freetown to face allegations that he sponsored a brutal Sierra Leonean rebel army which maimed and murdered thousands of civilians.

Instead, Obasanjo has vowed to hand him over to any elected Liberian regime that asks for him. Next year, president-elect Sirleaf will formally become Liberia’s first elected leader since the fall of Taylor, but she in no hurry to stoke tensions in her still unstable country by rushing to drag the former warlord back from his luxurious Nigerian bolthole.

“There are certain national and regional sensitivities which will be taken into account,” she told reporters when asked about Taylor’s fate. “With a little bit of time we will find a solution that will serve Liberia’s peace, and West Africa’s peace.”
She confirmed that she had discussed the matter with Obasanjo during her overnight stopover in Abuja, part of a six-nation tour of Liberia's West African neighbours.

If Taylor were to be returned to Liberia and Obasanjo has insisted he will not send him straight to Sierra Leone, he is likely to be arrested by the country's 15,000-strong UN force and taken to Freetown under the terms of a Security Council resolution.

Earlier this month, Sirleaf said that she did not think Liberia was ready for such an upheaval. Since Taylor still has supporters in Liberia and, according to international prosecutors, has attempted to maintain his influence at home by funding politicians there. She is due to continue on her visit to Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Burkina Faso.
Face-to-Face With Regional Power Wielders

The Analyst (Monrovia)
NEWS
December 1, 2005
Posted to the web December 1, 2005

"I am ready for the job," President-elect, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, told CNN's West Africa Bureau chief Jeff Koenja last week in an interview. She was responding to questions regarding her readiness to meet Liberia's stubborn challenges that range from the extradition of Taylor to Sierra Leone to reconciliation of the Liberian people who are separated along several lines including tribal.

In what seems a proof of that assertion, Madam Sirleaf set up a 36-man transitional team to study the current situation within what are regarded as "Areas of Emphasis" and report within three weeks. As apparent proof of that readiness also, the President-elect over the weekend met with the vice standard-bearer of the aggrieved CDC at a church service and reportedly offered "olive branch". Now, Madam is offering an even bigger proof of her readiness, traveling throughout the ECOWAS subregion apparently to thrash out remaining issues regarding smooth transition, peace, and stability inside Liberia and security in the subregion.

The Analyst's Staff Writer has been looking beyond media headlines regarding what analysts called Madam Sirleaf's six-nation "proactive tour".

Media reports say President-elect Johnson-Sirleaf, Wednesday, held discussions with President John Kuffour of Ghana and is expected to meet other heads of state and government in the region before returning home.

She had earlier met with President Laurent Gbagbo of Cote d'Ivoire and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria.

Madam Sirleaf is expected to visit neighboring Guinea to meet President Susannah Conte and Sierra Leone to meet President Ahmed Tijan Kabbah, and Burkina Faso to meet President Blaise Compaore.

Sources close to the president-elect's entourage said her tour is a proactive initiative designed to gauge the pulse of ECOWAS' power wielders on several issues related to past security breakdown and current issues related to the current insurgency in Cote d'Ivoire and the growing threat against Conte's government which independent international investigations contend was originally and is still being supported by exiled president Charles Taylor from his asylum hideout in Calabar, Nigeria.

Madam Sirleaf, who left the country Monday this week, held brief discussions with President Gbagbo before moving on to Abuja Tuesday evening to meet President Obasanjo.

In Abuja, she immediately met with President Obasanjo who is also the Chairman of African Union.

According to Reuters' account of the discussion between the two leaders, Madam Sirleaf pledged to work with the Nigerian government to draw out a consensus that will preserve the dignity of Nigeria.

http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200512010588.html
Liberia's peace and security, and address the impunity concerns of the international community.

She told newsmen shortly following the meeting with Mr. Obasanjo Wednesday that a consensus would emerge on the future of former president and warlord Charles Taylor.

Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf said she had discussed Taylor, who is wanted for crimes against humanity by a UN-backed court in Sierra Leone, with Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Nigeria's position is that it will only hand over Taylor to an elected Liberian government and will not send him to a third country. Some Liberian authorities believe any attempt to move him would upset the region's fragile recovery from war.

"We are still continuing our consultations on that issue. We've consulted with President Obasanjo. We believe that some consensus will be reached in due course.

"We think with a little time we will find a solution that will preserve Liberia's peace and West African peace and meet the requirements of the international community," Johnson-Sirleaf told reporters in the Nigerian capital.

Under Taylor, Liberia was seen as the epicenter of instability in the region. The country's 14-year war, which spilled over into nearby countries, ended when Taylor was forced into exile in Nigeria in 2003 as part of a peace deal to end the then raging fighting inside Liberia.

Nigeria has come under intense pressure, including from the United Nations and the United States, to hand over Taylor to Sierra Leone, where he stands accused of backing rebels notorious for hacking off the limbs of their victims.

Obasanjo has said Nigeria would not bow to such pressure.

"Liberia is a good standing member of the United Nations and we abide by all the rules, but at the same time there are certain national and regional sensitivities that need to be taken into account," said Johnson-Sirleaf.

On her first official visit after beating soccer star George Weah in a presidential run-off three weeks ago, Johnson-Sirleaf said fostering good regional ties would help stabilize Liberia in the long term.

"ECOWAS countries will play a very important role," she said, referring to the Economic Community of West African States, which includes all the countries in her tour.

The grouping had already helped bring peace, she said, adding: "Now, securing that peace and making sure that we get on with the development agenda that involves regional cooperation and integration is the next step."

Still in Nigeria, Madam Sirleaf was met during a reception held in her honor by the daughter of Obasanjo, Iabo Obasanjo Bello, by top Nigerian women leaders and politicians including ministers and parliamentarians.

Prominent amongst the attendants was Finance Minister Ngozi Iweala and Senator Aisi Danjumah.

The president-elect used the occasion to thank the attendants and to encourage them to take inspiration from her long years of struggle.

In response, the women commended Madam Sirleaf for her steadfast

http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200512010588.html
Liberia and Nigeria discuss Taylor

ABUJA — Liberia’s new president elect, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, said on a tour of African states she had discussed the fate of exiled predecessor Charles Taylor with his host and protector, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, but no decision had been made.

Taylor, accused of war crimes by a United Nations (UN)-backed tribunal in Sierra Leone, has been living in Nigeria since August 2003, when Obasanjo persuaded him to step down as Liberian leader and allow a UN-backed peace process to bring an end to 14 years of civil wars. Since then, Obasanjo has resisted mounting international pressure to hand Taylor over to a special court in Freetown to face allegations that he sponsored a brutal Sierra Leonean rebel army.

Instead, Obasanjo has vowed to hand him over to any elected Liberian regime that asks for him.

Next year, Johnson-Sirleaf will formally become Liberia’s first elected leader since Taylor’s fall, but she seems to be in no hurry to stoke tension in her still unstable country by rushing to drag him back from his luxurious bolt hole.

“There are certain national and regional sensitivities which will be taken into account,” she said when asked about Taylor’s fate. “With a little time we will find a solution that will serve Liberia’s and west Africa’s peace.”

She confirmed she had discussed the matter with Obasanjo during her stopover in Abuja, part of a six-nation tour of Liberia’s west African neighbours. She was to continue on to Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Burkina Faso.

If Taylor were returned to Liberia, and Obasanjo insists he will not send him straight to Sierra Leone, he is likely to be arrested by the UN peacekeeping force and taken to Freetown under a UN Security Council resolution.

Earlier this month, Sirleaf Johnson said she did not think Liberia was ready for such an upheaval. Taylor still has supporters there and international prosecutors say has tried to maintain his influence by funding politicians.

But Johnson-Sirleaf said on Wednesday that Liberia would abide by UN rules.

Sapa-AFP
SIERRA LEONE

Forgotten victims of war

30/11/05, Martin Luther King

Civilian casualties of Sierra Leone’s brutal decade-long civil war are frustrated over government’s delay to pay them expected reparations.

Civilian victims of Sierra Leone’s brutal civil war are mobilising to ensure promises of aid do not remain mere words on paper. "Our hearts still bleed with tears because we are not satisfied," one amputee told a forum in the capital Freetown, which government officials attended.

The gathering was the culmination of two months of meetings of amputees and other war victims organised by the national human rights group Forum of Conscience.

While Sierra Leone’s decade-long civil war ended in 2002, the images of drugged-up youngsters hacking off the arms, legs and ears of innocent civilians have yet to fade. Reparation for amputees and victims-including free health care and monthly pensions-is one of the recommendations of Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), whose final report was presented to the government last year. Civil society and human rights groups have since been pushing the government to act on the TRC recommendations, which include reparations, better government accountability and laws to protect human rights.

Ahmed Jusu Janka, chairman of the National Amputees and War-wounded Association, told the forum that when amputees testified before the commission, they were told something would eventually be done for them. "This has not been realised and now we are suffering," he said.

Janka demanded that war victims must not go unsatisfied while those committing atrocities received rewards for disarming. His argument: "If the perpetrators who cut off our hands have been given money to turn over their weapons and even to return to their villages, then I see no reason why the government and the international community cannot raise enough money to help (victims) live their lives."

Victims' groups are reviewing their reparation demand after the government rejected an appeal that amputees and war wounded receive US$3,000 per month. Sierra Leone’s Attorney-General Frederick Carew instead presented a government plan for assisting war victims, including free primary and secondary education, free medical care and free transport on public buses for victims and their relatives. He also promised plots of land for farming.

Victims’ groups are scheduled to meet again to discuss the government’s plan but have come up with a revised demand.

"Not even ministers make that much money per month, how are we going to afford this?" asked Attorney-General Carew while dismissing as unrealistic calls for pensions of US$3,000 a month for the war victims. He stressed government’s readiness to improve the welfare of war victims "in any way we can," adding: "But the government has a responsibility to help with development and to eradicate poverty in the country. There are other people who are deserving and are needing help too."

Carew noted that the government, with assistance from Norway, has already provided 400 houses for war victims and plans to build more.

The Sierra Leone government’s point-by-point strategy for applying the TRC’s recommendations sparked dismay among civil society and human rights groups. Some lamented that the government had failed to commit concrete steps for helping amputees and other war victims.

The government’s white paper said it accepts in principle the TRC’s findings and recommendations. It added that "the government will use its best endeavours to implement the full and timely implementation of various reparations programmes recommended by the Commission subject to the means available to the state."

Many said the government should have laid out a plan to seek disbursement of the national community for victim reparations.

The TRC recommendations include free medical care for life for amputees, free education support for other war wounded, free health care for victims of sexual violence and monthly pension for amputees, war wounded and sex victims who lost at least 50 percent of the working capacity, as well as skills training for amputees, war widows and other at-risk groups.

Meanwhile, paucity of funds still threatens the first stretch of the United Nations’ Special Court for Sierra Leone as international donors recently pledged $2.42 billion.

AFP
policy US $10 million for its work - far short of the $25
million the court says is needed to complete its work of trying those suspected of atrocities in the
country's brutal war. Court officials and advocates said donors must not let the court falter after
years of what a human rights coalition called groundbreaking work.
"We are determined that the court, after three years of important achievements and with trials at
an advanced stage, must not now fail due to lack of resources," UN Deputy Secretary-General
Louise Frechette said in New York.
Sources close to the office of the court's chief prosecutor also told Africa Today of their
disappointment with the development.
Fourteen countries and the EU pledged some US $9.6 million to cover the court's operating costs
in 2006. The court is expected to wrap up its work in early to mid-2007. The United States, which
has been a major contributor to the Special Court over the years, did not announce a pledge. But
the UN will continue to work with member states to reach the court's $25 million target, according
to a UN statement.
The Special Court was set up to punish those bearing the "greatest responsibility" for the
murders, rapes and other atrocities during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 war. Human Rights Watch
and a group of other human rights NGOs that attended the donor meeting urged member-coun-
countries to do their part to sustain the court. "It would be shameful if at this point something as
important as the Special Court's work were compromised for lack of funding at this late stage."
Elise Kiepler of Human Rights Watch International Justice Programme stated.
Still dominating any discussion about Sierra Leone's Special Court is the fate of former Liberian
President Charles Taylor and whether he will stand trial. The court has indicted Taylor on 17
counts of war crimes, but the deposed warlord-turned-president has been in exile in Nigeria since
he fled Liberia and his presidential post in 2003.
The Special Court's chief prosecutor told reporters the court was trying to persuade Nigeria to
turn Taylor over for the "terrible crimes committed against the people of Sierra Leone." Nigerian
President Olusegun Obasanjo told the UN General Assembly in October that it would be best
that Taylor remain in exile in Nigeria for the time being.
Nigeria has repeatedly said that it will not hand over Taylor unless he breaks the terms of his
exile or an elected government of Liberia requests he be handed to the Special Court for trial.
The court is also still hunting Johnny Paul Koroma, the leader of a military junta that briefly
overthrew Sierra Leonean President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in 1997.
The Special Court was funded by voluntary contributions from UN member states through 2004.
In mid-2005 the UN General Assembly appropriated a supplemental $20 million for the court and
authorized another $13 million for the rest of 2005. But the court will revert to using voluntary
contributions from the first of next month, a development which may well hang in the balance courtesy of cash crunch.
IN PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT, SECURITY COUNCIL CALLS FOR DESIGNATION
OF PRIME MINISTER OF CÔTE D’IVOIRE WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY

Expressing Deep Concern at Persistent Disagreements among Ivorian
Parties, Council Calls Appointment Crucial to Relaunch of Peace Process

The Security Council today, affirming that the rapid appointment of a Prime
Minister of Côte d’Ivoire is crucial to relaunching the peace process leading up
to the holding of elections no later than 31 October 2006, considered that one
Prime Minister must be designated without any further delay.

In a statement read out by its President, Andrey Denisov (Russian
Federation), the Council stressed that the Prime Minister must have all the
necessary powers and resources described in paragraph 8 of resolution 1634
of 21 October 2005, by which the Council, among other things, urged the African Union
Chairman, the Chairperson of the Economic Community of West African States and the
African Union Mediator to ensure the appointment -- by 31 October 2006 -- of a
new Prime Minister acceptable to all the signatories of the Linas-Marcoussi
Agreement.

Commending the initiatives by the Chairperson of the African Union and Chairperson of ECOWAS and the African Union Mediator, the Council urged them to expedite their efforts and, given the consultations they have held, identify
soon as possible the candidate for the office of Prime Minister they deemed
acceptable to all parties signatories to the Linas-Marcoussi Agreement. It
endorsed the International Working Group’s final communiqué of 8 November. It
welcomed its decision to hold its second meeting on 6 December 2005 in Abidjan.

Commending the efforts of the Secretary-General’s Special Representative,
the High Representative for the elections, the Council encouraged the two
parties to cooperate fully with the High Representative to resolve the
dispute concerning the Independent Electoral Commission, and reaffirmed that
High Representative, in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 1605, would
make all the necessary determinations to help move forward the elections.

The Council also reaffirmed its readiness, in close consultation with
African Union Mediation, to impose individual measures provided for in
paragraphs 9 and 11 of resolution 1572 (2004) and resolution 1633 (2006) against
anyone blocking the implementation of the peace process or who was determined to be
responsible for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law
who publicly incited hatred and violence, or who was determined to have lifted
the arms embargo against Côte d’Ivoire.

The Linas-Marcoussi Agreement halted fighting between the Government
President Laurent Gbagbo and rebels controlling most of eastern Côte d’Ivoire.

For information media • not an official record • also available at http://www.un.org/News
It led to a ceasefire between the Government and the Forces nouvelles that took effect on 3 May 2003, as well as the creation of the Government of National Reconciliation.

The Pretoria Agreement of 6 April 2004, mediated by South African President Thabo Mbeki on behalf of the African Union, established a new plan for the peaceful resolution to the Ivorian crisis. A third accord, reached in the Ghanaian capital on 30 July 2004 and known as the Accra III Agreement, focused on those parts of Linas-Marcoussis that remained in dispute. Lack of progress in those areas and continuing ceasefire and human rights violations caused the one-year delay of the Ivorian elections.

The meeting began at 1:30 p.m. and adjourned at 1:34 p.m.

Presidential Statement

The full text of presidential statement S/PRST/2005/58, reads as follows:

"The Security Council renews its deep concern at the persistent disagreements among Ivorian parties on the appointment of the Prime Minister and considers that the Prime Minister must be designated without any further delay. The Council stresses once again that the Prime Minister must have all the necessary powers and resources described in paragraph 8 of resolution 1612 (2005).

"The Security Council commends the initiatives undertaken by the Chairperson of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union Mediator, and notes that their consultations with the parties signatories to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement have been facilitated provided for by the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union of 6 October 2005 and by resolution 1633 (2005). It reiterates its full support for them and urges them to expedite their efforts. The Security Council urges them to identify as soon as possible the candidates for the office of Prime Minister they deem acceptable to all parties signatories of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, given the consultations they have held.

"The Security Council expresses its full support for the IWG, and its final communiqué of 8 November 2005, welcomes its decision to hold its next meeting on 6 December 2005 in Abidjan, and urges the IWG to keep the Council informed of the conclusions of its work.

"The Security Council commends also the continuing efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the High Representative for the elections, and reiterates its support for them. In particular, it encourages Ivorian parties to cooperate fully with the High Representative for the purpose to resolve the current dispute concerning the Independent Electoral Commission."
reaffirms that the High Representative, in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 1603 (2005), can make all the necessary determinations in order to help the electoral process move forward.

"The Security Council reaffirms its readiness, in close consultation with the African Union Mediation, to impose individual measures provided for in paragraphs 9 and 11 of resolution 1572 (2004) and in resolution 1633 (2005)."

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