Ethel Peters-John of Finance was married on Saturday, June 24 to Bunting Charles-Williams at Christ Church, Pademba Road, Freetown.

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 at:

Thursday 29 June 2006

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

By Savoh Kamara
United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan will be with us Sierra Leoneans in Freetown on Saturday, July 2nd 2006 on an official visit to Sierra Leone. While in Sierra Leone, the UN Scribe will meet with President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, as well as senior members of the Government. Mr. Annan will also meet with the President, the Registrar and Acting Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. He is also expected to address the staff of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) and the United Nations Country Team (UNCT).

Contd: page 2
Kofi Annan to Visit

From front page

This will be Mr. Annan’s first visit to the country since the withdrawal of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) late last year.

Diplomatic sources yesterday revealed to Awareness Times that the visit by Annan to Sierra Leone will hopefully smoothen the relationship between senior government functionaries and Ambassador Victor Angelo, the Executive Representative of Annan in Sierra Leone. The relationship is currently strained following the recent report on UNIOSIL to the Security Council.

It is not known whether Mr. Annan will meet with members of civil society movements in the country, who had vehemently agitated for the trial of Charles Taylor to be conducted here in Sierra Leone.

It is also not known if Mr. Annan will meet with members of the Opposition. However, Lawyer Charles Margai of the People’s Movement for Democratic Change has already indicated that he wishes to have an audience with Mr. Annan.

Mr. Annan will however meet with accredited members of the press where he is expected to answer questions relating to the Taylor trial, the continuity of the Special Court, and the continuity of the United Nation’s assistance in Sierra Leone’s post war development.
United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, will arrive in Freetown on an official visit to Sierra Leone on Sunday, 2nd July during which visit he will meet with President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, as well as the President, the Registrar and the Acting Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Kofi Annan will also address the staff of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone just as he will also address the United Nations Country Team.

An interesting item on Monday 3rd July 2006 is the photo opportunity at State House which will take place at about 12:45, an occasion in which the Secretary General will speak freely after which no questions will be asked.

On the same day, Kofi Annan will address the media on the occasion of his visit to Sierra Leone.

The Secretary General will arrive in Sierra Leone from Gambia after the AU conference in that country and will later visit Liberia, Cote D'Ivoire and Germany before he returns to his base in New York.
Kofi Annan to visit Special Court

Story: Sahr Musa Tamba

United Nations (UN) Secretary-General, Kofi Annan is to Monday pay an official visit to Sierra Leone, including the Special Court, UN sources state.

Reports say Kofi Annan is to meet with President Kabbah and hold meetings with the Special Court President, Judges and other officials.

It is not immediately clear what the UN Secretary-General will be discussing with Special Court officials, but he is however expected to be briefed on proceedings at the Special Court.

Kofi Annan is further scheduled to address UN officials in Sierra Leone via the Gambisa where he is to attend the African Union Summit. UN officials say the Secretary General will hold, on the margins, series of bilateral meetings and host a mini summit on Cote d'Ivoire, which will bring together President Laurent Gbagbo and other African Leaders.

Kofi Annan also visits Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana before finally departing for Germany.
from purifying ‘potor potor’

Guma now rations water

Guma Valley Water Company, which is responsible for supplying water to the City, has announced that it is to start rationing water with immediate effect.

This was disclosed in a press release issued last night.

Earlier this month the Management of the water company took some sections of the press on a conducted tour of the Guma dam, where it was revealed that the 100ft dam had only 6 ft of water in it.

In effect the muddy water (Potor-potor) at the bottom of the dam was being purified and pumped out to consumers hence the brown colour of the water, which has caused a lot of concern to the public.

Consequently most residents have refused to drink the water from the taps and have sought to buy bottled water or water in small sachets, which is now being sold above its normal price.

Guma’s press release explains that “because of a sharp drop in rain fall in June 2006 of only 9.3 inches at the dam site as against a 29.3 inches for the same period last year, … the treated water flow has dropped from an average of 19 million gallons per day to 13 million gallons per day which is significantly lower than daily normal consumption.”

As a result, “with immediate effect water will be supplied zonally on alternate days until further notice.”
The battle to bring former Liberian president Charles Taylor to justice has involved one of the greatest, and least reported, civil rights campaigns in Africa.

More than 300 groups from across the continent were involved in three years of sustained pressure to persuade Nigeria to hand him over to the Sierra Leone Special Court.

The campaign began as soon as Taylor arrived in Nigeria in August 2003. He fled Liberia with rebel forces fighting battles in the streets of the capital, Monrovia, offering to stop the war if Nigeria would give him sanctuary.

But Taylor had by then been indicted on charges including crimes against humanity by the new Special Court, set up jointly by the UN and the Sierra Leonian government following the end of the civil war in 2000.

At the time, the big powers paid little attention to Taylor's fate. But rights groups thought differently. In Nigeria, lawyers and journalists set about what most believed would be a long and arduous campaign to take their own government to court. They believed that under the constitution, Nigeria was duty-bound to hand over anyone indicted by a UN-affiliated court.

Meanwhile, groups in Sierra Leone prodded the former colonial power, Britain, to apply its own pressure and galvanise the UN Security Council.

Elsewhere on the continent, other groups took their cue. In many nations with nothing to do with Liberia, rights groups pushed their own governments to raise the issue at both the UN and the African Union in Addis Ababa.

The reason for all this attention is not hard to find. Taylor was a huge presence in West Africa.

Prosecutors allege that under his direction, Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front deployed drugged child soldiers, set up rape camps, including one at Kissi, on the outskirts of Freetown. Their speciality was chopping off hands, a mechanism that instilled terror among the civilians in the diamond fields which, say prosecutors, was what Taylor’s military operations were really about. And then there was slavery.

In the northern province of Kono, I met Sahrbona Tombudu standing by the high grassy banks of a small river who’s muddy waters run by the village of Komadu in the heart of Sierra Leone’s diamond country. Jungle-clad hills rise on both sides in a scene that could have come from a tourist post card.
He points to a spot in the river where, eight years ago, he and dozens of local men worked, as slaves, sifting for diamonds for the rebel Revolutionary United Front. The RUF’s motivational technique was simple: Those too tired to work were shot. “They beat us, they flogged us,” he remembers.

Other local men were forced to become “mules”, transporting diamonds over the border to Liberia through the bush. They were not trusted with the diamonds themselves, which were carried by RUF soldiers. Rather, they had to carry the food and water the troops would need for the journey. Nobody knows how many men, too tired to keep up, were shot and left to die in the jungle.

The river looks incredibly peaceful today. As we stand there, a line of schoolgirls in white blouses and blue skirts walks past. The rebels are long gone: Most were disarmed and given jobs and training in exchange for agreeing not to go back to war.

Sahrbona is struggling to rebuild his life as a mechanic, in a region yet to recover from a war in which the rebels smashed almost every freestanding building. The idea that the man accused of being in charge of his tormentors would one day be sitting in a jail cell seems to him fantastic. “I never would have believed it,” he says.

And that gets to the heart of what this campaign was all about. For generations, Africans have learned to live with the Big Man problem, the idea that, whatever happens to the little people, the Big Men are immune from justice.

Taylor hoped to follow in the footsteps of men like Idi Amin, who fled to a comfortable exile in Saudi Arabia when things got too hot in Uganda. The possibility, and it was no more than that, of a war crimes trial at the special court galvanized a brand new human rights campaign.

“The object of this campaign was a deterrent,” says Voke Ighorodje of the Nigerian Coalition for an International Criminal Court. “We wanted leaders to see that a man like Taylor can be tried.”

The campaign was led by a new generation of African rights activists. Many are critical both of their own governments and of the West’s traditional, sporadic, efforts to help. They see debt relief as an excuse for corrupt governments to borrow more. They fear that ceasefires are used as an opportunity to rearm. But in international law, many hope they have found a mechanism less transient than a politician’s promises.

Among discoveries made by these groups was a shared interest that stretched across the continent. Also, they found that the internet meant complicated trans-continental campaigns could be coordinated with nothing more than a computer terminal.

After three years of hammering at the door, the campaign bore fruit. In January Liberia’s new president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, asked Nigerian leader Obasanjo to hand over Taylor. The EU then backed the plan, and in March the United States finally weighed-in.

“There was a lot of pressure from everywhere and Obasenjo knew it,” says Ighorodje “Bush and Blair were hearing what the NGOs were saying.”

There was a small hiccup: Having announced it would hand Taylor over, Nigeria then announced Taylor had vanished from the comfortable villa where he spent his exile. Then, when Washington threatened to cancel a meeting between President George Bush and Obasanjo, Taylor was magically found.

In fact it is now clear he was never truly lost. “We followed his progress across Africa by tracking his mobile phone,” says one official.

Doubts about how much ordinary Sierra Leonians cared about a war crimes court, when they have to fight a daily struggle to survive, vanished when the helicopter carrying Taylor arrived over Freetown. Thousands lined the rooftops to cheer the arrival.
“We worked hard for two years to get him here, a lot of behind the scenes diplomacy went on,” said Chief Prosecutor Desmond de Silva. “The world is moving from impunity to accountability.”

But the court, fearing Taylor could still cause trouble, called on the UN to switch the trial to The Hague. The call split the human rights groups, many of whom wanted the Freetown court to hold the trial to show that Africa was ready to dispense its own justice.

“We want to see justice done,” said James Matthew, director of Sierra Leone’s National Movement of Democracy and Human Rights. “Other trials have gone on peacefully here, why should the Taylor trial change that?”

Many MPs agreed, and so did some court officials. So did Taylor’s lawyer, London-based barrister Karim Khan. But America and Britain, the court’s paymasters, made the decision. Britain offered a jail cell if Taylor is convicted, and in early June the UN Security Council voted to make it so.

A long trial lies ahead. Not the least of the problems for the prosecutors will be proving, beyond reasonable doubt, each complicated link in a chain-of-command they say stretches from the diamond fields of Kono to the presidential palace in Monrovia.

But even getting a Big Man to trial is seen by many as a triumph. A new generation of Africans has found that peaceful pressure, energetically applied, can produce results.

The Special Court, it is true, has no remit beyond Sierra Leone, but the International Criminal Court is now gearing up for prosecutions elsewhere on the continent, most notably for the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda.

The hope — and right now it is no more than a hope — is that if today’s warlords can be jailed for their crimes, the warlords of tomorrow may think again about committing atrocities. An ambitious aim perhaps, but then so was hoping that one of the continent’s most notorious warlords could ever be put behind bars.

Chris Stephen has reported on wars in the Balkans and Afghanistan for The Irish Times and other newspapers. He is the author of Judgement Day: The Trial of Slobodan Milosevic, published by Atlantic Books.
The British government has agreed that former Liberian leader Charles Taylor could serve a prison sentence in the UK, if he is convicted of war crimes.

This paves the way for his trial to start in The Hague, after other European countries refused to host him.

A UN-backed tribunal in Sierra Leone, where he is in prison, wants the trial to be moved due to security fears.

Mr Taylor faces 11 war crimes charges after allegedly backing rebels in the decade-long Sierra Leone civil war.

"I was delighted to be able to respond positively to the request of the United Nations Secretary General, that, should he be convicted, Charles Taylor serve his sentence in the UK," British Foreign Minister Margaret Beckett said.

However, she said new legislation would be required.

Mrs Beckett said the decision showed the UK's "commitment to international justice". The Dutch government agreed to host Mr Taylor's trial, as long as he was imprisoned in another country, if he was convicted.

Both Sierra Leone and Liberia are recovering from years of conflict, in which Mr Taylor played a central role.

Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who took office in January, said she feared that putting Mr Taylor on trial in West Africa could lead to renewed instability.

Britain, the former colonial power in Sierra Leone, sent troops to help oust rebels from the capital, Freetown in 2000.

Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebels were notorious for mutilating civilians, by hacking off their arms or legs with machetes.
GALLANT Kilkenny soldiers were instrumental in handing over an African warlord last week to stand trial for war crimes.

Captain Canice Brennan; Company Quartermaster John Murphy; Sgt Martin Griffin and other personnel from James Stephens Barracks including Private Lorraine Donovan, Callan were deployed in an operation to secure the airport in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone. Afterwards, they were cheered through the streets for their actions. It was the single biggest operation carried out by the United Nations Peace Enforcement Mission in the region this year.

Operation Lansdowne got Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia from Sierra Leone to the Hague where he faces charges in front of the International Court for War Crimes. The Kilkenny troops formed part of a quick reaction force along with a cavalry troop from Collins Barracks, Cork.

On receiving the order earlier this month, a full-scale movement of personnel and equipment was planned for the following morning with the first elements departing "Camp Clara" at 4am. The Kilkenny men and women were airlifted into Freetown and by Monday at 10.30am all soldiers had arrived at the airport.

They immediately set up a defensive perimeter with Captain Brennan, an All-Ireland senior hurling medal winner with Kilkenny, as operations officer. At 9am two "Mi 8" helicopters arrived, one carrying a detachment of Mongolian special forces, the second carrying Mr Taylor and his security team.

On landing he was escorted to an awaiting jet and 30 minutes later the plane departed. The soldiers returned to their base from the airport by road and ferry.

All through Freetown locals gave the company the thumbs-up sign and cheered them. When Capt Brennan asked a police officer what they were cheering about he was told that the local population were blessing the Kilkenny contingent for facilitating the removal of a destabilising factor from their country.

"From a Kilkenny perspective, it was a proud moment for the soldiers being the main players in the highest profile operation undertaken by UNMIL this year," said Comdt Mick Curran, company commander A Company, 95th Infantry Battalion said.
The banana peel of power

Whatever goes up must surely come down one day. This seems to be the greatest irony of power. Unfortunately, not many men of power realise this early enough until the last days when they come face to face with this reality.

History is replete with many rulers who forgot that the leader hailed and decorated in letters of gold today, may hang from the cross tomorrow and be spat upon by the same people.

Jean-Beddel Bokassa, remember him, the one time dictator of Central African Republic who crowned himself the emperor of that impoverished nation was one. Idi-Amin was another. The list becomes long if you add Adolf Hitler, Mobutu Sese Seko, Samuel Joe and Saddam Hussein etc. There were rulers who equated power with a mistress, forgetting no one takes the trophies of power home for keeps.

This seems to be the story of Charles Taylor the former president of Liberia. In his days as the leader of that war-torn country, Taylor was a man dreaded and revered. His words were law, his orders and commands a-must-carried out. Whenever he coughed, the whole country would catch fever. Can you therefore ever imagine such a man in handcuff? Probably not. But that is the current fate and travails of the Liberia warlord.

Taylor who is standing trial for 11-count charges for war crimes was last Tuesday transferred from Sierra Leone to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague to continue his war crimes trial. He arrived Netherlands in handcuff and was immediately taken to the prison where former Serbian President, Slobodan Milosevic spent the last five years of his life.

The road to Taylor’s present adversity began in August 2003 when he got an offer of asylum from president Olusegun Obasanjo under the aegis of an ECOWAS-brokered-agreement, as part of agreement to end Liberia’s 14-year civil war.

Like many rulers who equate power with a mistress, Charles Taylor was one leader who believed he had the life and death of his fellow men in his hands. Such was the enormity of his delusion, in his own ability to do and undo, that he ordered the execution and amputation of his compatriots; oblivious of the basic fact – that there is always a judgement of history, a judgement which may be harsh or benign, depending on what events of the days ahead turn out to be.

Even though Taylor’s compatriots are sure to heckle him; some even desire a death penalty for him as a pay back for the tragedy, sorrow and tears he brought on his countrymen, his images on the CNN would no doubt pull at our heart strings. But does Taylor deserve public sympathy? I doubt if any Liberian man and woman will find it comfortable to answer this question in the affirmative.

Do you blame the Liberians? Hardly not. Taylor himself wrote his own obituaries. The world has lost count of Liberians and other nationals that have kissed the dust for no just cause of their own other than the cruelty of one man called Taylor who desired power at all cost.

Born in 1948, Charles Taylor, the third of 15 children of America-Liberian parents, was described as the third most wanted war crimes suspect in the world, sharing the same record with bestial dictators like Saddam Hussein.
Taylor had every opportunity offered by power to shape events around him, for good. But he is one man who
listens only to himself, and deaf to others. He was particularly deaf to the personal experience and elementary
lesson offered by Abraham Lincoln. The former US president once said “I claim not to have controlled events,
but confess plainly that events have controlled me.”

In other words, Taylor allowed events to control him; he is therefore the puppet, the events around him the
puppeteers. Pity, you would say. But let no one pity him for being given a doze of his own medicine.

The lesson therein is that, there is a great deal of worry in the corridors of power. As another former US
president, Richard Nixon once said “Life isn’t meant to be easy. It’s hard to take being on the top, or (to take
being) on the bottom.” But life is not easy in-between either.

The few men and women who learn these elementary lessons early enough manage to survive the butt of power’s
ribald joke, while those who mistake the shadow of power for substance are often left holding the short end of the
stick. Pity - that Charles Taylor is one of the latter.
The Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, will arrive in Freetown, Sierra Leone on Monday July 3, as part of his mini-West African tour.

During his stay in Freetown, the UN Chief will provide essential boost for the Sierra Leone Special Court by visiting the tribunal which has been trying those deemed as bearing the greatest responsibility for the atrocities committed during the Sierra Leone civil war. Annan will also visit with the scaled down UN Peace-Keeping operations in the country.

Mr. Annan's visit comes at a time when Sierra Leoneans are becoming increasingly convinced that the withdrawal of most of the soldiers of the peacekeeping was premature, especially with high-tension General Elections slated to be held in the country next year.

Though the civil war has ended, peace in Sierra Leone is still fragile and already events in Bo, Kenema and Kono have flashed danger signs that the forthcoming elections could lead to the resumption of hostilities, this time between supporters of the main political parties.

Mr. Kofi Annan the UN Secretary General is also expected to visit the UN mission in Liberia and he will also attend the African Union (AU) Conference of heads of states in The Gambia.
United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 28 June 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia
06/28/2006 07:41:24

Diamond conference opens in Monrovia

Monrovia (dpa) A "Diamond for Development conference" aimed to organize the diamond industry in the West Africa sub-region opened Wednesday in the Liberian capital Monrovia. The conference, sponsored by the United Nations Development Program and Britain-based based International Alert, is being attended by the Sierra Leone Minister of Mines Alhajo M S Dean and the Diamond Counselor International Mustapha Turay.

International Clips on West Africa

STATE DEPT.: INTERNATIONAL BODIES, LOCAL COURTS HOLD WAR CRIMES TRIALS
By Michelle Austen Washington File Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, June 27 -- The U.S. Department of State's International Information Programs issued the following press release:

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor was transferred to The Hague June 20 to stand trial for 11 counts of crimes against humanity. Taylor is accused of being responsible for the murder, rape and mutilation of thousands of people in Sierra Leone. If convicted, he will serve his sentence in Great Britain. The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established by the government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations to try those responsible for violating international law during the country's civil war. In addition to Taylor, 11 people are on trial in that court for war crimes and crimes against humanity, according to the court's Web site.

Local Media – Newspapers

President Disappointed in Government’s Low Level of Achievement
(Daily Observer, The Inquirer, New Democrat, Heritage and The Informer)

- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has expressed displeasure in the low level of achievement on the part of cabinet ministers and heads of government agencies in the first 150 days of her government. The President said that corruption was still topping the list of problems facing her administration.

Senegalese Government Pledges to Train Liberian Army
(Daily Observer and The Analyst)

- Following a meeting in Monrovia yesterday between the defense authorities of Liberia and Senegal, the leader of the visiting Senegalese army delegation and Defense Minister of
Senegal Becaye Diop told journalists that his country was interested in assisting the restructuring and professional training of the new Liberian army, which is critical to peace and progress in Liberia.

Legislature and International Partners Discuss Country’s Future
(The Analyst)

- The National Legislature and the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) met in Monrovia over the weekend to discuss putting forward a meaningful agenda for the development of Liberia after years of civil conflict.

Diamonds for Development Conference Opens in Monrovia Today
(The News, The Inquirer and The Informer)

- According to an Executive Mansion press release, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf will today open a conference aimed at developing the diamond industry in West Africa.
- The conference organized by Diamond Counselor International in collaboration with UNDP and International Alert is meant to enhance the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme established by the UN four years ago.

Local Media – Radio Veritas (News monitored yesterday at 6:45 pm)

President Opens Diamond Development Conference Today
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Lawmaker Apologizes to Colleague for Insults

- Sinoe County Representative Nelson Barh yesterday apologized to Montserrado County Representative Kuku Dorbor for insulting and attempting to engage in a fist fight with her, a National Legislature Press Bureau source said.
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Lawmakers Want President’s Executive Orders Examined

- In a letter to his colleagues, Grand Kru County Senator Cletus Wotorson called on the House of Senate to investigate the executive orders which President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf issued since her inception as President of Liberia. He said that in five months, the President had issued five different executive orders which he said the President had no right to issue in the presence of a sitting Legislature.
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Labour Minister Calls for Cooperation with Ghana’s Energy Sector

- Labour Minister Kofi Woods yesterday held talks with Ghanaian Energy Minister Joseph Koffi-Adda to enhance mutual cooperation in the area of manpower development and planning. He outlined his vision to restore dignity to Liberian labourers by training and strengthening the labour sector. Energy Minister Kofi-Adda of Ghana suggested the need for youth empowerment to enable them contribute towards Liberia’s socio-economic development.
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Education Minister Envisages New Curriculum for Liberian Schools

- In an interview yesterday, Education Minister Joseph Korto said that his Ministry has commissioned a group of Liberian professionals and other experts to draft a new
curriculum, highlighting issues of human rights, good governance and democracy for Liberian schools. He added that more teachers would be trained to teach the curriculum. *(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)*

**STAR RADIO** *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

**Justices of the Peace Acquire Training in Procedural Law**
- A Star Radio correspondent in Gbarnga, Bong County reported that the Supreme Court of Liberia in collaboration with UNMIL was holding two workshops to train 75 Justices of the Peace and 50 Magistrates from Bong and Lofa counties, focusing on administrative function and courtroom procedures.
Disbelief at LRA war crime denial

Uganda's government has dismissed as "ridiculous" rebel leader Joseph Kony's claims that his Lord's Resistance Army was not involved in atrocities.

International rights group Human Rights Watch expressed surprise at Mr Kony's claim but said he must defend himself at the International Criminal Court.

Thousands have died in a conflict in which the LRA targeted children.

Mr Kony told the BBC the LRA was not responsible for killings, maimings and abductions in northern Uganda.

Ugandan government spokesman Robert Kabushenga said Mr Kony's denial was "ridiculous".

"A lot of information, a lot of evidence has been given by people abducted into the LRA," he told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme.

"Young children, people who were their commanders have all admitted publicly [to atrocities], and of course there are reports by journalists who have gone to areas where the LRA has been in and massacred."

Indictment

HRW East Africa co-ordinator Jemera Rone said Mr Kony's insistence on his innocence was "amazing".

"We have testimony of extensive atrocities by the LRA," Ms Rone told the BBC News website.

She emphasised however that Mr Kony must be presumed innocent until proven guilty by the ICC, which has indicted him for war crimes.

"I think it is a good thing that Joseph Kony has come out of the woodwork and tried to engage with the international community, and I hope he will avail himself of the opportunity to clear his name," Ms Rone said.

Mr Kony described himself in an interview with the BBC's Newnight programme as a "freedom fighter" and called for peace talks.

He said stories of LRA rebels cutting off people's ears or lips were Ugandan government propaganda. He also denied his group kidnapped children.

"This is not true. I cannot cut the ear of my brother, I cannot kill the eye of my brother. I cannot kill my brother, that is not true," he said.
**Humanitarian crisis**

But earlier this year, UN humanitarian affairs chief Jan Egeland decribed the LRA's activities as "terrorism of the worst kind anywhere in the world" and the conflict as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Former BBC correspondent in Uganda, Will Ross, says Joseph Kony may describe himself as a freedom fighter but the LRA has had no clear political agenda and freedom is the last thing that he has brought as his rebels have caused widespread suffering and fear.

The rebels, claiming to be guided by the Bible's Ten Commandments, have caused insecurity in northern Uganda and southern Sudan.

The LRA has kidnapped many thousands of children over the years. It turns the boys into fighters or porters and uses many of the girls as sex slaves.

The south Sudanese vice-president, Riek Machar, is trying to broker a new peace initiative.

The Ugandan government says it is willing to discuss peace, but will not talk to those indicted by the international court.

HRW's Ms Rone said legal proceedings against Mr Kony "should not mean there are no peace negotiations in northern Uganda - the two should be independent of each other."

Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has said that Mr Kony had until the end of July to end the war and said his safety would be guaranteed.
Senegal told to prosecute Habre

Banjul - The African Union must press Senegal to prosecute or extradite former Chad president Hissene Habre to face charges of mass murder and torture, said a coalition of human rights groups.

A Chadian official inquiry had accused Habre's government of 40 000 political killings and 200 000 cases of torture during his 1982-1990 rule. He denied all knowledge of abuse and now lived in exile in Senegal.

Few former African strongmen had faced charges for past wrongs and many lived comfortable lives in exile, but activists said the extradition of Habre would reflect a stiffening resolve on the continent to seek justice over impunity.

Habre tops AU's agenda

The AU was expected to consider whether to try Habre in Africa or extradite him to Belgium in a summit in Banjul, Gambia, this week after Senegal said last month that the 53-member body should deal with the issue.

The Coalition Against Impunity, a group of 300 African and international civil society bodies, said that the AU must force Senegal to abide by its international obligations and ensure Habre faced justice.

Kolawole Olaniyan, director of Amnesty International's Africa Programme, which was part of the Campaign Against Impunity, said: "Habre's victims have been fighting for 16 years to see justice done."

"It is time for Habre to face trial for his alleged crimes." The pan-African organisation set up a panel of African jurists last year to decide what recommendation to make to the AU heads of state when they meet in Gambia on July 1-2.

Asphyxiation

Ismail Hachim Abdallah, president of an association of victims of political repression in Chad, was imprisoned for two years under Habre's rule.

Backing calls for the former president's extradition, he described how he was locked in a tiny cell and left to watch those around him die of asphyxiation.

He said: "It is a way of exterminating prisoners. Some of them were taken away to be executed, some were asphyxiated."

Habre's extradition would follow the transfer of Liberia's former warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor last week for trial at The Hague on war crime charges stemming from his role in Sierra Leone's brutal civil war.

Reed Brody, special counsel at Human Rights Watch, said: "Habre's trial would be a milestone in the fight to hold the perpetrators of crimes under international law, such as torture, criminally responsible for their crimes."
OP-ED: "JUDGEMENT IN PHNOM PENH"

The following op-ed was published by Project Syndicate on June 26. It was written by Dina Nay, a survivor of the Khmer Rouge killing fields and the executive director of the Khmer Institute of Democracy, and James A. Goldston, executive director of the Open Society Justice Initiative.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, June 26, 2006—Three decades after the Khmer Rouge killed a quarter of Cambodia's seven million people, a court to try the most responsible surviving leaders is set to open its doors.

Under an agreement between the United Nations and Cambodia's government, 13 foreign judges and prosecutors have now been chosen to serve alongside 17 Cambodian counterparts. This eclectic group of jurists will begin, in the first week of July, an unusual experiment in international justice. Over the next three years, the aptly named Extraordinary Chambers will seek to produce a measure of legal accountability for one of the worst genocides of the 20th century. Among those likely to be tried are two of Pol Pot's closest and most powerful cohorts: Nuon Chea, a Khmer Rouge party leader, and Ieng Sary, the former deputy prime minister for foreign affairs.

Given how long it has taken to get off the ground—on-again, off-again talks dragged out over nine years—this tribunal's very existence is a cause for celebration. But the test of the trials will be whether they are—and are seen to be—fact-driven, impartial, and consistent with international standards.

For reasons of history and as a matter of law, both the Cambodian government and the international community share responsibility for making this court a success. To do so, they must address several major challenges.

First, unlike hybrid tribunals in East Timor, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone, international judges are a minority. (A "super-majority" voting mechanism will ensure that the vote of at least one international judge is needed to reach a judgment.) There are good reasons why mixed tribunals should have substantial national components. Nonetheless, this arrangement poses particular challenges in a country where the quality and independence of judicial decision-making have long been questioned.

Second, the length of time that has passed since the crimes—longer than 30 years, in some cases—far exceeds that for any comparable proceeding. Other war crimes courts have taken place in the immediate aftermath of conflict. Cambodia's long delay complicates the task of preserving evidence, including human memory, which is so essential to proving guilt.

These structural impediments cannot be removed. But they can be partly overcome with intensive training in Cambodian and international law and complex investigative techniques. This must be reinforced by vigorous independent monitoring throughout the process.
Third, the court site is located in a military compound far from downtown Phnom Penh. If ordinary people are to observe this historic event, buses will have to transport them. The proceedings should be broadcast nationwide on radio and television. Civic groups and the court will need to develop creative outreach strategies to target the predominantly rural population to ensure that all Cambodians have the opportunity to understand these proceedings. At the very least, court staff should work with local groups to convene meetings about the trials, and the issues they raise, in communities across the country.

Fourth, in recent months opposition leaders and human rights activists have been subjected to criminal charges for speech critical of the government. Draft legislation seeks to make criminal defamation a permanent fixture, and includes new provisions making it an offense to criticize a court ruling.

Cambodia's political leaders and donor states should do more to underscore the value of wide-ranging debate about the tribunal and the larger legacy of Cambodia's civil conflict. Cambodian survivors of the Khmer Rouge recall the daily fear of criticizing that regime; it would be especially tragic if Cambodians did not feel free to express their views of the Extraordinary Chambers. Meaningful public engagement with the court requires an underlying environment that fosters—not punishes—the free expression of ideas.

Fifth, Cambodia has a shortage of highly qualified lawyers, because the legal profession was nearly wiped out by the Khmer Rouge. Yet, contrary to the practice in other international and hybrid war crimes courts, local law permits only Cambodian lawyers to represent the accused. For the sake of fairness and due process, this rule must be changed for the Extraordinary Chambers, so that international lawyers can contribute equally to the defense.

Finally, having generously contributed most of the tribunal's funds, donor governments cannot just sit back and watch. They can best help the court by coordinating their actions, exercising robust oversight, and helping to identify—and, where necessary, solve—problems as they arise.

In addition, they may have to provide additional resources. The court's bare bones budget of $56 million over three years does not cover basics such as a safe house for protected witnesses, transcripts of court testimony, or a library. It would help if the United States, which has yet to contribute to the Extraordinary Chambers, were to do so.

The Extraordinary Chambers marks a milestone in Cambodia's effort to come to terms with an exceptionally violent period in its past. How the court performs matters deeply to the millions of Cambodians scarred by the crimes of the Khmer Rouge. At the same time, this court is the latest manifestation of an enduring worldwide movement—which extends back to Nuremberg—to end impunity for mass atrocities. Its capacity to render justice should be of paramount concern to us all.