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, 12 April 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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LAWCLA launches handbook on juvenile law

The Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance (LAWCLA) has launched a handbook on juvenile justice at the Miattia conference hall, Brookfields, in Freetown.

This handbook was launched by the country director of Plan International Mrs Fadimata Alainchar.

In her statement she said, “her organization is also helping young children to achieve their aim,” noting that their “organization is also a development partner with LAWCLA” and described the handbook as balanced.

Melron Nicol Wilson, LAWCLA’s director who gave an overview of the book, said in 2005 they got financial support from UNICEF to produce a handbook on children in the criminal justice system in Sierra Leone.

He noted that the handbook could be used to train law enforcers and other public officials dealing with children, and mentioned that LAWCLA also produced a quarterly newsletter on juvenile issues.

Mr Nicol Wilson stated that, “the reform and rebuilding of the criminal justice system is crucial to the restoration of a sound and effective judicial system,” adding further that “a cursory look at how the juvenile justice sector in Sierra Leone is administered provides ample evidence that the system is in dire need of reform”.

The LAWCLA director stressed that “the handbook begins by outlining various international standards, relating to the treatment of juveniles as enshrined in the convention on the rights of the child to which Sierra Leone is a signatory.”

He declared that the handbook considered provisions in Sierra Leone domestic legislation relating to juveniles, such as the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act and the Children Person Act.
Rapp prepares for war crimes trial

A Drake University graduate, he is in charge of the prosecution of Charles Taylor, former Liberian president.

By LEE ROOD
REGISTER STAFF WRITER

It is one thing to prepare for what many prosecutors would view as the trial of a lifetime. It's quite another to raise millions to support the court while working with people on three continents to build the case against a man accused of horrendous crimes against humanity.

Today, Stephen Rapp, an Iowa native, former Iowa U.S. attorney and Drake Law School graduate, returns to his alma mater to talk about his latest mission: prosecuting former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

"It's not just that the world will be looking you," the law school's dean, David Walker, said of Rapp and the trial set to begin June 4. "It's really a matter of having to establish a rule of law that is international and enforceable ... to condemn the mass taking of lives, the destruction of a people and ruination of many, many other lives."

Taylor took power in Liberia by force in 1989 and was elected president in 1997. The charges against the former warlord stem from his role in the war in neighboring Sierra Leone, where he is accused of backing rebels accused of the deaths and torture of thousands.

Rapp will lead Taylor's prosecution in the United Nations Special Court for Sierra Leone. The court, an independent tribunal established by Sierra Leone and the U.N. at The Hague, Netherlands, will try Taylor and others for crimes committed during the west African country's civil war from 1996 to 2002.

"Part of our challenge is outreach, to make sure the trial is accessible to people who want to follow it 3,500 miles away," Rapp said in a phone interview from Boston on Wednesday. "But we also need to make sure people understand what we're doing, so it's not mischaracterized or misunderstood ... so that there are no more Taylors and no more crimes like this."

Taylor's trial was moved to The Hague because of widespread security concerns in Sierra Leone, a country beset by extreme poverty following almost a quarter century of violence. There, the government is slowly re-establishing its authority, after the civil war resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people, or about one-third of Sierra Leone's population.

Part of Rapp's role has been traveling in the United States and countries in Europe to help raise money and awareness about the court, which supports itself entirely by donations from individual countries. So far, the United States has paid for about a third of its expenses, while about 40 other countries have given varying amounts.
"This year, the budget is higher than it's ever been, because the Taylor case is starting," he said.

The case will also take him frequently to Freetown, Sierra Leone, a number of international conferences, and other African countries, building diplomacy for the court's efforts and "to make sure we don't die with the secret of what we're doing," he said.

A native of Cedar Falls, Rapp paved new territory as a U.S. prosecutor in Iowa's Northern District. His office filed the first cases in the nation under the Brady Handgun Control Act and the Violence Against Women Act.

But he is best known internationally for the six years he spent as a senior trial attorney at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. There, he successfully prosecuted on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity the radio and newspaper executives who helped incite Rwanda's militia. The 2003 convictions, scholars said, set important precedent for future cases before the International War Crimes Tribunal.

A major issue in the media case was whether "hate speech" paved the way for the genocide in Rwanda or whether broadcasts and articles at the height of the violence were protected under the law as free expression.

"He's had an amazing career," Walker said of the 1974 graduate. "I love having him back. Here, one of your own is the prosecutor in one of the century's really acid-test trials."

Rapp has an intercontinental marriage: His wife, Donna (Dolly) Maier, a professor of history at the University of Northern Iowa, maintains the couple's house in Cedar Falls. When she's not teaching, she joins Rapp at their home in Arusha, Tanzania, and at The Hague. The couple has two grown children, Alexander and Stephanie.

Reporter Lee Rood can be reached at (515) 284-8549 or lrood@dmreg.com
War crimes prosecutor Rapp to speak at Drake

Stephen Rapp, a prosecutor for a special United Nations court, will speak Thursday at Drake University.

Rapp is a prosecutor for the United Nations Special Court for Sierra Leone, an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and Sierra Leone. The tribunal has the task of bringing to justice people responsible for atrocities committed during a civil war in the west African country after November 1996.

The special court has jurisdiction over the case against former Liberian President Charles Taylor, whose trial will be held at the Hague in the Netherlands.

Rapp, a 1974 graduate of Drake Law School, will meet with students and faculty members, and will deliver a lecture titled "The Compact Model in International Criminal Justice: The Special Court for Sierra Leone."

Prior to joining the special court, Rapp served as chief of prosecutions at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda from May 2005 to December 2006. There, he supervised the prosecution of people accused of the worst crimes during the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

He also spent time as a member of the Iowa Legislature and as a lawyer for the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee.

Rapp is best known internationally for successfully prosecuting media executives who helped incite Rwanda's extremist militia and who broadcast the whereabouts of Tutsi sympathizers - a conviction that scholars have said sets important precedent for cases before the International War Crimes Tribunal at the Hague.

His talk, which is free and open to the public, is scheduled for 3 p.m. in room 213 of Cartwright Hall, 27th Street and Carpenter Avenue.
Sierra Leone’s war wounded threaten national poll boycott

Freetown, Sierra Leone 04/08 - Members of Sierra Leone’s association of War-wounded and Amputees have threatened to boycott the country’s 28 July presidential and parliamentary elections accusing the government of neglecting their welfare.

Kadiatu Fofanah, the association’s Vice-President, said the more than 1,000 members of the group would not vote in the polls, unless government implemented the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Lome (Togo) 2000 Peace Accord that ended Sierra Leone’s bloody decade civil war.

According to her: "The TRC report stipulates that a special war victims’ fund should be set up 90 days after the report is submitted for implementation. But it is now two years and nothing has been done to this effect."

She claimed that despite a series of negotiations, the government and its agencies had failed to "address the health and education of our children, as well as transportation and other social problems through the payment of reparation as stipulated by the Truth and Reconciliation reports."

Sorie Sawaneh, of the Grafton displaced persons Camp, said: "We were convinced to go and testify before the Special Court, but nothing came out of it. We were promised by the Special Court and the government that they would expedite the implementation of the TRC recommendations, again nothing has happened."

He vowed: "Even though we have registered, we are not going to vote until our concerns are properly addressed by the authorities."

In his reaction, John Caulker, an official of local NGO "Forum of Conscience" and a member of the TRC working group, said it would be "dangerous" if the war-wounded and amputees boycotted the vote.
The first indication that everything relating to the UN-created Special Court for Sierra Leone should no longer be taken at face value came from the unintentional lucidity of the 22 February press statement by Court Registrar Loremore Mbofung. Announcing the death, after a botched hip operation, of Chief Sam Hinga Norman, one of the Court’s most important accused, Mbofung stated that the operation on Norman – carried out in a hospital in Senegal – had been “successful”. He then regretted that Norman’s death had “robbed the people of Sierra Leone of justice”.

Not many people who noted the cognitive dissonance that this callous statement represents readily connected it to one made four years ago, by the former American prosecutor of the Court, David Crane. Shortly after indicting Norman and seven others of crimes against humanity, Crane stated that the accused would “never see the light of day”. The accused, Crane stated, bore “the greatest responsibility” for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone during its decade-long war, 1991-2002.

The notion of “greatest responsibility” was always an intellectually slovenly contrivance, but no one who has followed the Court’s pellucid and expensive progress (over $100m spent to date) since it was set up in 2002, would fail to notice its haphazard methodology: success for it means conviction, never acquittal, of the accused, and where this is not likely, well...

Norman, and the two other members of the pro-government Civil Defence Force (CDF) which he led, Alieu Kondewa and Mohinna Fofana, were accused of using “cultural rituals” to conscript civilians into the CDF, and of scheming to “take a traditional belief system and [manipulating] it [sic] to their own ends”.

The charges, also including cannibalism, state that Norman hatched “a common plan” to use “illegal and forbidden means” to “defeat the RUF and AFRC forces”. Norman, the prosecution claims, was central in the “joint criminal enterprise” – the war.

The Court was meant to be in operation for three years, but four years after it was set up, it is yet to conclude a case. Its new multi-million dollar budget suggests it will be in operation at least until 2009. The Court has indicted 14 persons, but three – the RUF leader Foday Sankoh and his former commander Sam Bodaré, and now Hinga Norman – are dead; another, a military leader named Johnny Paul Koroma, has simply disappeared. A fifth (and most significant) former Liberian President Charles Taylor,
Chief Hinga Norman (in white) at one of his court appearances in Freetown. His death has thrown up questions about the "usefulness" of the court.

Court was set up - in addition to the immediacy of physical presence and its purported short, inexpensive lifespan - is now gone with the wind. This is a flat observation.

After years of inept trudging, the death in detention of key suspects, tens of millions of dollars virtually wasted on expatriate officials in salaries and other benefits, with zero earmarked for the war's thousands of victims (including hundreds of amputees), it has led to this: another tongue-in-cheek announcement by a dull former official about how Sierra Leoneans have been, once again, robbed of justice?!

It bears restating, in view of such brazen assault against decent sensibilities, what Norman and the CDF represented during Sierra Leone's bloody decade.

The CDF was set up in Guinea in 1997 by the exiled President Tejan Kabbah (after his overthrow by Koroma). It was formed as a coalition of various civil militia groups, among them the Mende-dominated Kamajor hunter militia, which had emerged during the war as a result of the corruption and ineffectiveness of the national army. These, groups emerged among largely displaced Sierra Leoneans - displaced by the ravages of the rebels and rogue soldiers - and they fought back to reclaim or protect their villages and homes from the depredations of the rebel forces. These groups represented a very rare phenomenon in Africa: the reality of ordinary, poor people organising against a backdrop of ancient, corrosive insult that has been levelled against a people who must remain benighted and patently hopeless. Norman, in the view of many Sierra Leoneans, was a true hero who acted as the spiritual leader of the CDF. As a result of his background as a British-trained soldier (he served in the Congo as a UN peacekeeper in the early 1960s), he was chosen to coordinate the operations of the CDF with the West African intervention force, Ecomog, during their assault against Johnny Paul Koroma's junta, in 1997-1998. The role exposed him to great danger, but he was ultimately successful: the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) junta, which had overthrown Kabbah in 1997, was deposed in February 1998, and Kabbah was reinstated.

Following the resurgence of rebel activities, Norman again coordinated CDF activities with those of Ecomog and the British forces to beat back the rebels, and played a crucial role in the subsequent disarmament process.

Without his courageous role, Sierra Leone may not have survived; it was only after his (and Ecomog's) success in putting down the coup and driving the nihilistic rebels out of Freetown, that the so-called international community sent a UN force to oversee the final stages of the war's end.

Now imagine what the nibbling, extravagantly paid, Special Court has wrought. The Court has profaned the very exalted achievement that the CDF represented, and at least in the minds of many people, the very idea of the sanctity and ultimate fairness of international humanitarian justice.

By mercilessly prosecuting (actually persecuting) Norman, a national hero with huge following in large parts of the country, the Court has further deepened the fissures in Sierra Leonean society, and deformed the already problematic socio-politics of the country just a few months before nationwide elections.

No one would forget that Norman incurred the health problem (whose attempted cure in hospital led to his death) as a result of his brutal treatment, on the day of his arrest and after, by Special Court officials.

No one would also forget that the current government, for which Norman has paid the ultimate price trying to defend, foolishly handed him over to the Court and abandoned him to his fate - underlining the all-too-familiar pathos of the petty native colluding in the destruction or ridicule of his own society.

That is a legacy of another sort… playing exactly to type. ■ NA

"With the death of Hinga Norman, the Court has further deepened the fissures in Sierra Leonean society."
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 11 April 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

There were relevant stories on Liberia in the international media today.

International Clips on West Africa

There were relevant stories on West Africa in the international media today.

Local Media - Newspaper

Liberian Leader Closes Public Cemetery
(The Inquirer and The Informer)

- At a ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a fence around the Palm Groove Cemetery yesterday, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf ordered the closure of the burial site and asked its occupants to vacate in preparation for the project.
- The Liberian leader also ordered members of the public who buried their dead along the side-walks of the street that runs through the site, to relocate them otherwise, the Government would demolish their graves.

Speaker Tyler Calls on President Johnson Sirleaf
(Heritage, Public Agenda, National Chronicle and The Analyst)

- An Executive Mansion release said that the newly elected Speaker of the House of Representatives Alex Tyler yesterday met with President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at which time she congratulated him and hoped the Executive and Legislative Branches would work harmoniously to project Liberia. In response, Speaker Tyler assured the Liberian leader that the Lawmakers would remain constructively engaged with the Executive in order to address the mounting challenges facing the Country.

UN Peacekeeper Empowers Liberian Police
(Heritage)

- An UNMIL Police Officer from Nigeria, Aliyu Abubakar yesterday donated some Police Traffic equipment including 60 sets of police uniforms, 50 caps, 60 reflective jackets, 110 pairs of gloves, 60 hand-bands and 100 notepads. The donor said that the items should be used to enhance the work of the police. For her part, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police Asatu Barh Kanneh lauded Col Abubakar for the items.

Labour Ministry Cites Enterprises for Awful Labour Practices
(The Analyst, Heritage and The Inquirer)

- The Ministry of Labour yesterday cited to conference, a leading manufacturer of cement and other enterprises for carrying out unfair labour practices with its personnel. The Ministry said that it has invited a number of businesses to answer questions for allegedly violating the labour laws of Liberia.

Local Media – Radio Veritas (News monitored today at 9:45 am)

President Orders Closure of Public Cemetery
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)
Newly Elected House Speaker Tyler Calls on President Johnson Sirleaf
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

UNMIL Police Officer Donates to Liberian Police
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

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 or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Weah Karpeh at karpeh@un.org.
Serbia jails Srebrenica death squad

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) -- Four Serb paramilitaries seen in a video gunning down Bosnian Muslims near Srebrenica in 1995 were convicted of war crimes against civilians on Tuesday by Serbia's War Crimes Court.

It was the first court ruling in Serbia related to the systematic killings of up to 8,000 Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica in the final months of the 1992-95 war in Bosnia -- Europe's worst atrocity since World War II.

Trials of Serbs in Serbia have only become possible since the 2000 ouster of President Slobodan Milosevic. The Srebrenica case has been a key test of the ability of Serbia's judiciary to deal with wartime atrocities.

The four Serbs found guilty Tuesday were seen in a video that surfaced in June 2005 when it was shown at the war crimes trial of Milosevic before the U.N. tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

The video shows members of a notorious Serbia paramilitary unit known as the Scorpions.

The unit's commander, Slobodan Medic, and a fellow paramilitary were each sentenced to 20 years in prison, while the only defendant who admitted to shooting the victims, Pero Petrasevic, was sentenced to 13 years in prison.

Another Scorpions member, accused as an accomplice, was sentenced to five years in jail, while a fifth was cleared.

The verdict followed a February decision by the U.N.'s highest court, the Netherlands-based International Court of Justice, clearing Serbia of direct responsibility for the Srebrenica genocide.

But the footage, widely broadcast in Serbia as well as in Bosnia, shocked some Serbians who were in denial about the wartime atrocities committed by the Serb forces.

Of the six victims in the video, four were shot in the back. Two others were ordered to carry the bodies into a barn where they, too, were killed. The victims were residents of Srebrenica, which was officially a U.N.-protected Muslim enclave during the Bosnian war.

In Belgrade, presiding judge Gordana Bozilovic-Petrovic, who read the verdict, said the recording presented evidence that proved the guilt "beyond any doubt" and that Medic, "as the commander, had the authority to issue such an order."

The accused did not face the death penalty, which is not allowed under Serbian law.