The Judges end the Plenary in Freetown Today

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, 22 November 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday. Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact Martin Royston-Wright Ext 7217
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A former child soldier in Sierra Leone’s civil war was named an ambassador for the U.N. children’s agency on Tuesday, vowing to be an advocate for children worldwide, not just in African war zones.

Ishmael Beah lost his family in a rebel attack at about age 12, was kidnapped by Sierra Leone’s national army and forced, along with other captured children, to fight a deadly war.

His memoir “A Long Way Gone” was a best-seller this year, recounting his remorse over the war and how he eventually found support from a UNICEF rehabilitation program and from a new adoptive family in the United States.

“I met UNICEF at a time of my life when I had lost hope,” Beah said as he was appointed UNICEF Advocate for Children Affected by War in a ceremony marking the 18th anniversary of the U.N.’s convention on the rights of the child.

Education equipped Beah to become an outspoken defender of children’s rights and, now aged 26, he has become a regular public speaker on the plight of children.

He said his new role as UNICEF ambassador would give him “more strength to continue to do what I have dedicated my life to, which is to make sure that what happened to me does not continue to happen to other children around the world.”

The use of children in Africa’s armed conflicts is still routine. Last week, some 230 child soldiers, whose average age was 14, were released from Congo’s pro-government militia, according to UNICEF.

Beah said he did not want to focus only on war-ridden countries. He said social and economic disparities were the root of violations of children’s rights around the world.

“Either children are leaving home because they are extremely poor, social conditions are bad, or because they’re abused at home,” Beah told Reuters after the ceremony.

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Former child soldier now
UNICEF goodwill ambassador

From Page 2

“All of this is coming from the social, economic disparities in these places,” he said, pointing to the poor condition of children in Brazil’s “favelas,” or slums.

He said the U.N.’s 18-year-old international treaty on children’s rights had helped focus attention on children’s rights but added that he was often frustrated by the slow pace of change.

“Especially when it comes to the development of international legal standards and resolutions to these problems, it develops very slowly while the problem goes on.” The 26-year-old Sierra Leonean, who now lives in the US joins the ranks of such famous names as Audrey Hepburn, Lord Richard Attenborough, David Beckham, Harry Belafonte, Jackie Chan, Whoopi Goldberg, Sir Roger Moore, Nana Mouskouri, Youssou N’Dour, Vanessa Redgrave, Susan Sarandon and Roger Federer among others.
Former child soldier, nurse tell of life in war-torn home

The effects of war still haunt Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier and his rehabilitation nurse, Alusine Kamara, as the two shared their experiences with a packed Cox Auditorium in the Alumni Memorial Building Monday.

The event was sponsored by the Center for the International Study of Youth and Political Violence and UT’s Ready for the World Initiative. Beah and Kamara experienced the war from two different perspectives but shared similar sentiments regarding the civil war that ravaged their homeland of Sierra Leone, ultimately claiming the lives of tens of thousands and displacing more than two million.

Beah in particular specified how quickly his country changed from the secure land of his idyllic childhood to a war zone. “It was a place where the innocence of a child was really celebrated, and it became a place where that innocence was feared deeply,” said Beah.

Rebel soldiers attacked his village when he was 12 years old, leaving Beah to wander the country with other boys his age. By age 13, the government’s army captured him, training him to kill and giving him drugs to enhance his combat skills, he said.

“Most people who have never experienced war have a glorified conception of what it is like,” said Beah. “They think of movie scores and pride and glory, when really, war is the direct opposite of that. It is much more grim. It is much more bleak.”

Beah was eventually released by the army to a UNICEF rehabilitation center run by Kamara. Traumatized by his experiences in combat, Beah said he struggled to function in society. “It is much more difficult to re-enter society than to leave it,” said Beah. Beah said war dramatically affects the thoughts of children. At an early age Beah lost nearly every member of his family, including his parents and two brothers, and even had his uncle die in his arms. Beah never allowed himself to grieve because a child soldier is not allowed to deal with remorse and mourning, he said. Beah said one would be killed for taking time to think about those lost.

“Boys like Ishmael, when they get to me, are so gone,” Kamara said. “They can’t look you in your eye, they want to fight all the time. The many sides of war (embed themselves) in these children early on.” Eventually nurses like Kamara weaned Beah off his warlike mentality.

In 1998, Beah moved to the United States, where he was adopted by an American family. He finished high school and attended Oberlin College and is now an active member of the Human Rights Watch Children’s Rights Division Advisory Committee. Beah has spoken before the Council on Foreign Relations, the Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities, and the United Nations about children affected by the war in Sierra Leone.

He said the psychological effects of war initially outweighed whatever aid he received with re-entering society. “During war, it dehumanizes all people,” Beah said. Kamara echoed the statement: “The destruction of something so precious as (the human spirit) is not so easily reversible.”
Johnny Paul Koroma

By December 1998, RUF/AFRC forces had reversed this position, invading Freetown in January 1999. Failing to hold territory, the RUF/AFRC retreated into the Northern Province of Sierra Leone.

Lomé Peace Agreement

The leadership of the RUF led peace negotiations with the Government of Sierra Leone led to the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord on 7 July 1999. Koroma was cut out of both negotiations and the AFRC did not benefit from the substantive provisions of the agreement.

Nevertheless, Koroma participated in the disarmament process, encouraging the SLA soldiers that had joined the AFRC to demobilize. By 2000, Koroma no longer held significant influence over the RUF leadership, as evidenced by the involvement of ex-AFRC members (from a splinter group called the West Side Boys) in defending towns in Port Loko District against a renewed RUF offensive in May 2000. In August 2000, Koroma officially disbanded the AFRC and sought to consolidate his political position through the formation of a political party.

Special Court for Sierra Leone

In early 2002, the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations signed a bilateral treaty establishing the Special Court for Sierra Leone, mandated to try those who "bear the greatest responsibility" for crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

According to the indictment, the RUF and AFRC, under the orders of Koroma, led armed attacks in Sierra Leone wherein the primary targets included civilians, humanitarian aid workers, and UN peacekeeping forces. These attacks served the purpose of terrorizing the population as a form of punishment for not supporting rebel activities. These attacks included such crimes as looting, murder, physical violence (notably mutilations), employing child soldiers, sexual violence and rape, as well as kidnapping women and girls to be raped or turned into sex slaves. Men and boys were also abducted and forced to work or fight for the rebel groups.

On 7 March 2003, the Prosecutor of the Special Court issued his first indictments. For his role in the RUF/AFRC, Koroma was among them. Koroma fled Freetown in December, reportedly to Liberia.

On 1 June 2003 he was officially declared dead under mysterious circumstances, claimed to be murdered.

The Prosecutor has yet to withdraw the indictment against Koroma.
Former child soldier becomes UNICEF ambassador

By Walter Brandimarte

NEW YORK (Reuters) - A former child soldier in Sierra Leone's civil war was named an ambassador for the U.N. children's agency on Tuesday, vowing to be an advocate for children worldwide, not just in African war zones.

Ishmael Beah lost his family in a rebel attack at about age 12, was kidnapped by Sierra Leone's national army and forced, along with other captured children, to fight a deadly war.

Author and former child soldier Ishmael Beah (L) of Sierra Leone smiles next to UNICEF executive director Ann Neneman after being announced as a UNICEF Ambassador in New York November 20, 2007. (REUTERS/Lucas Jackson)

His memoir "A Long Way Gone" was a best-seller this year, recounting his remorse over the war and how he eventually found support from a UNICEF rehabilitation program and from a new adoptive family in the United States.

"I met UNICEF at a time of my life when I had lost hope," Beah said as he was appointed UNICEF Advocate for Children Affected by War in a ceremony marking the 18th anniversary of the U.N.'s convention on the rights of the child.

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"Especially when it comes to the development of international legal standards and resolutions to these problems, it develops very slowly while the problem goes on."
Yar’Adua Seeks Senate Support to Write-Off $13m Liberia's Debt

Andrew Oota

Source: All Africa Global Media Date: November 21, 2007

Nov 21, 2007 (Leadership/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) -- Against the backdrop of heavy debt burden on Liberia and the need to give a helping hand, President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua is seeking Senate's support to write-off a US $13 million debt from a total debt of US $48 million owed Nigeria by Liberia. In a letter signed by the president himself, addressed to the Senate president, dated November 14, 2007, but made public yesterday by the Senate president, David Mark, the president stated: "I am writing to enlist the support of the Senate in respect of a proposal to write-off a portion of debt owed Nigeria by Liberia."

Liberian President tells Haaretz: Africa is gaining power and hope

By Lior Kodner, Haaretz Correspondent

Haaretz.com, Israel – 21 November 2007: It would be no exaggeration to say that Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is the second most important person in Africa. Like Nelson Mandela, the 69-year-old president of Liberia symbolizes the other Africa, a continent with leadership, economic growth, an independent education system and, above all, a continent with hope for a better future. On November 8, 2005, Johnson-Sirleaf became the first woman to be elected to the top leadership position in an African country. She heads one of the poorest countries on the continent, a country that is still recovering from two civil wars in which at least 200,000 people were killed and one-third of the inhabitants became refugees. Her country has done much in the past two years, she told Haaretz on Tuesday in an interview during a three-day visit in Israel for a women’s leadership conference organized by the Foreign Ministry.

President Sirleaf Makes More Gains in Israel, Visits Palestine

Source: All Africa Global Media Date: November 21, 2007

Tel-Aviv, Nov 21, 2007 (Liberia Government/All Africa Global Media via COMTEX) --The Government of Liberia has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Diamond
Institute of Israel geared towards fostering cooperation to develop Liberia's diamond sector. The agreement was signed today in Tel-Aviv, Israel, by Liberia's Lands, Mines and Energy Minister, Dr. Eugene Shannon and Dr. Morti Gantz, President of the Israel's Diamond Institute. As a result of this, a conference is scheduled to be held in Tel-Aviv, Israel, from February 11th -12th, 2008, in which specific aspects of cooperation will be worked out.

11/21/2007 04:43:09

**Carjack-ring suspect sentenced to 12 yrs.**

Michael Hinkelman Philadelphia Daily News

Source: Philadelphia Daily News (KRT) Date: November 21, 2007

Nov. 21--A federal judge yesterday sentenced a Liberian national to more than 12 years in a federal lockup for attempted carjacking and pointing a gun at the victim. Authorities are continuing to investigate whether the man, Musa Donzo, and others from the West African nation are part of an international carjacking network that steals luxury vehicles and ships them overseas for resale in Africa. U.S. District Judge R. Barclay Surrick said that the sentence was "very appropriate" and that anything less would have "depreciated the severity" of Donzo's crime. "This offense is about as serious as it gets," Surrick said, adding that Donzo had demonstrated little remorse or acceptance of responsibility for his crime.

11/21/2007 05:59:45

**Sierra Leone bans exports of mineral samples**

By Katrina Manson and Christo Johnson

FREETOWN, Nov 21 (Reuters) - Sierra Leone has banned exports of mineral samples in a bid to stop valuable diamonds, gold and other commodities being illegally shipped out of the country. President Ernest Bai Koroma, who won elections in the West African nation in September with pledges to stamp out corruption, wrote to the Ministry of Mineral Resources saying samples were being exported with insufficient controls. "It is reported that there appears to be little or no supervision or regulation of this activity by government," said the letter from Koroma's office, seen by Reuters on Wednesday.

11/21/2007 17:14:33

**Former child soldier becomes UNICEF ambassador**

By Walter Brandimarte

NEW YORK, Nov 21 (Reuters) - A former child soldier in Sierra Leone's civil war was named an ambassador for the U.N. children's agency on Tuesday, vowing to be an advocate for children worldwide, not just in African war zones.

Ishmael Beah lost his family in a rebel attack at about age 12, was kidnapped by Sierra Leone's national army and forced, along with other captured children, to fight a deadly war.

**Local Media – Newspaper**

**Eight Killed in Tragic Motor Accident**


- Eight Persons were yesterday killed in a tragic motor accident along the Robertsfield Highway in Margibi County. The accident occurred when a Nissan Sunny car marked 2
HJ collided with a 'Mack Truck' BT 0394, killing all the occupants on board the Nissan Sunny car.

- According to eyewitness account, the incident occurred around 11 a.m. between Palm Wine Station and Foday Town along the Robertsfield Highway. The accident occurred when the Nissan Sunny attempted to dodge potholes along the route when it ran into the truck, which came from Buchanan.
- Five females including a baby girl about 8, with three men all heading for Harbel with goods, perished in that fatal accident. Meanwhile the only survivor of the tragic accident who was the driver of the truck was whisked to the RIA Police Detachment for investigation.

**Government and UNMIL jointly launch nationwide campaign against crime**
*(The News, New Democrat, Heritage and The Informer)*

- The Government of Liberia and the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) on Tuesday launched a nationwide campaign against crime code-name “Say No to Crime”.
- The campaign, according to Deputy SRSG responsible for Rule of Law, Henrietta Mensa-Bonsu, is led by the Liberia National Police (LNP) with the full support of UN Police (UNPOL) and will ‘enhance and encourage a partnership approach to crime prevention and reduction.’
- The launch of a nationwide campaign against crime comes in the wake of a reported increase in criminal activities, particularly in Monrovia and its suburbs.

**Government Claims workers are targeting foreign staffs at key plantations**
*(The Inquirer)*

- The Liberian Government says it has received credible reports backed by written communications that some employees of the Weala and Salala Rubber Plantations have issued threats that they would attack and eliminate some expatriate workers of the two companies amidst differences over a number of issues.
- The pronouncement by government comes barely two days after the killing of a Belgian expatriate, Bruno Michiels at the Liberia agricultural Company (LAC). Presidential Press Secretary, Cyrus Badio told reporters on Monday that government was convinced that the murder of the Belgian manager was not far from the statements to resist LAC’s expansion.

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

**Public School Students Protest in Solidarity with Striking Teachers**

- Students of one of the Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS) schools in Central Monrovia, the Matilda Newport High have been striking for the return of their teachers to the class room.
- The students this morning chanted for the return of the teachers while other expressed solidarity with the teachers’ plight.
- The public school teachers started the strike action yesterday in demand of ten-month salary arrears, transportation and allowances and threatened not to return to the classroom until their demands were addressed adequately.
- The students however dispersed after Education Minister, Dr. Joseph Korto intervene to listen to their concerns.

*(Also reported on Truth FM, Star and ELBC Radio)*

**Liberia, Israel Sign Memorandum of Understanding**

- The Government of Liberia has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Diamond Institute of Israel geared towards fostering cooperation to develop Liberia’s diamond sector.
- The agreement is the first since the United Nations lifted the embargo on Liberian diamonds export in April imposed six year ago.
- The embargo was aimed at stopping former President Charles Taylor from using Liberian Diamonds to fuel wars in the sub-region.
• The agreement was signed yesterday in Tel-Aviv, Israel, by Liberia’s Lands, Mines and Energy Minister, Dr. Eugene Shannon and Dr. Morti Gantz, President of the Israel's Diamond Institute.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Star and ELBC Radio)

8 Killed in Motor Accident on Monrovia-Robertsfield Highway

• Police have confirmed that least eight people are now known to have died in Tuesday’s motor accident on the Monrovia-Robertsfield Highway in Margibi County when a taxi travelling from Monrovia collided head on with a container truck killing all passengers, three men and five women on the taxi.

• An eyewitness said the accident occurred around 11 a. m. between Palm Wine and Foday town along the Robertsfield Highway when the taxi attempted dodging a pothole along the route and ran into the truck that was on its way from Buchanan.

• Meanwhile, the truck driver is currently in Police custody after he was rescued from angry mob who attempted flogging him.

(Also reported on Truth FM, Star and ELBC Radio)

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