Peter Andersen (right), yesterday receiving the Lifetime Distinguished Membership award from Friends of Sierra Leone

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:
Thursday, 12 February 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday. Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact Martin Royston-Wright Ext 7217
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Had I acted otherwise, Salone would have been like Kenya and Zimbabwe - Solo B

By Ishmael Bayoh

Former Vice President Solomon Ekuma Berewa has said at a public lecture that had he acted otherwise in the 2007 Presidential Elections, the country would have been a precursor to the type of post conflict election violence witnessed in Kenya and Zimbabwe.

The former Vice President was delivering a public lecture yesterday morning organized by the Special Court for Sierra Leone at Hill Valley Hotel on the topic: Pursuing Justice and Peace in Post-conflict Sierra Leone-Examing the Challenges. Illustrating how a badly handled democratic elections, may be the source of conflict, instead of enhancing the peace of the country, and making reference to the 2007 Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Sierra Leone which he introduced as personal elements, Solomon Berewa reviewed that when the elections went in to a run-off, the chief electoral commissioner, Christiana Thorpe invalidated a total of two hundred and one thousand six hundred and seventy vote cast for him at forty seven polling stations in various districts. "In doing so, she automatically disenfranchised that number of electorates and acted in a manner not authorized by the law or the constitution. The votes which according to the chief electoral commissioner’s own published figures were cast in my favor and those she invalidated amounted to one hundred and sixty nine thousand and fifty four. She declared my opponent the winner and me the loser."

He continued that the reason Christiana Thorpe gave for invalidating the one hundred and sixty nine thousand votes was that there was excess voting in the districts where the votes were cast. "She never indicated the individual polling station where the excess votes were cast."

That lack of transparency in my opinion rendered the process suspect and unfair. She only clustered the excess votes by districts and not by polling station and made it impossible for anyone to verify and authenticate her assertion relating to the excess voting and the extent of such excess voting. This is so because the results were tallied according to polling stations and not according to districts. The former Vice President also mentioned the issue of the computer which he referred to as the manipulation of the computer in tallying the results as he stated that the inputs in to the computer and its outputs were only done by and known to the chief electoral commissioner and an extraneous employee of the National Electoral Commission. "He was brought into Sierra Leone merely for the purpose of operating that computer. With his job concluded, he left the country precipitously even before the final results were announced. I and my party naturally felt cheated, unfairly and unjustly treated."

Notwithstanding that, he emphasized that within the midst of his opponents declaration as President, he decided to "concede defeat and to congratulate him."

He said he took that cause of action not because he wanted to legitimize the irregularity and lack of transparency connected with that election but so because "I was aware of the real life level of the calibration befalling this post conflict country and because of the absolute need existing to maintain the peace, the attainment of which I have played no small role, I did not wish further bloodshed and conflict to be the lot of this country. I conceded defeat whole heartedly and allowed the result to stand."

Had I acted otherwise, Sierra Leone would have been a precursor to the type of post election violence witnessed in Kenya and Zimbabwe. No well meaning Sierra Leonean for the purpose of achieving political office however, would have allowed or wished Sierra Leone to revert to conflict.

To experience that, he continued that post conflict Sierra Leone would have been more catastrophic than Kenya having regard to the large number of unemployed youths and the ex-combatants around at that time who would have taken any pretence opportunity to reverse the country.

In his opinion, he said that was certainly not the way to pursue peace and justice. "I did not take the bait," he said.

Explaining about the meaning of democracy and one way to maintain peace and justice which he referred to as inseparable, he said it meant the way people exercise power including the participation in the decision making process, the making of laws and above all their participation in the nation’s wealth on the basis of equity distribution. "If this presupposes the people’s participation in true form, underwritten and undeterred election process that is transparent, if it is not properly and fairly handled it will become a recipe for chaos and conflict of an unclaimable proportion."

A democracy that is fair only to one contestant but unfair to the other would not instill trust or enhance the national unity and social cohesion. If the process is intended to be unjust which will destroy the peace of the nation especially in a post conflict country like Sierra Leone."
Solomon Berewa Chats Special Court
...Says Peace and Justice are Inseparable

By Theo filtris S. Gondia

The former Vice President of the Republic of Sierra Leone, Solomon Ekuma Berewa, yesterday, Wednesday 11th February 2009 at the Hill Valley Hotel, Signal Hill Road in Freetown, delivered a paper at a public lecture organized by the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Speaking on the topic ‘Pursuing Justice and Peace in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone: Examining the Challenges’, Mr. Solomon Berewa who was Guest Speaker, referred to the topic as fascinating, saying having spent more than half his age as a lawyer and later became Attorney General and Minister of Justice and also Vice President, he has seen first hand how justice is administered in the country and has been an active participant in the process.

He said throughout the period, he has been intimately involved in advancing the policy relating to judicial and legal reform, and also played a crucial part in bringing about the peace Sierra Leone currently enjoys.

Mr. Berewa stated that the destruction of the country’s social fabric and economic infrastructure would require more than mere hand-outs from donors or mere humanitarian assistance or even a number of democratic elections, however described, to get the country firmly on its feet and get moving forward again.

“Today the discussion is therefore most appropriate as there is the pressing need for us as a nation to pursue the peace that we now enjoy and ensure that the possibility of the country slipping back into chaos and hostilities become very remote”, Mr. Berewa maintained, adding that “The eleven years old conflict in this country happened when the elements of peace and justice ceased to be treated as having a place or proper place in the governance of the country”.

He described peace as the prerequisite for human development, pointing out that, “There will be no peace without tolerance, as tolerance is ingrained in peace”.

Peace, Mr. Berewa stressed, is born out of the culture of accepting that people are different; they carry different views of situations, beliefs, values and backgrounds and they should be allowed to express these differences and still exist amicably with their individual differences.

Justice on the other hand, Mr. Berewa went on, connotes fairness and impartial behaviour in adjudicating between the state and individual citizens, and between citizens and citizens.

Going further, Mr. Berewa noted that the obligation to act fairly and impartially applies to every person who has a duty to make decisions, or give judgements or to make objective assessments in matters and in circumstances where the rights of a citizen may be affected.

He went on to state that the obligation to be fair and impartial does not permit the person adjudicating to be motivated or influenced by any considerations whatever except the relevant facts adduced before him together with the application of the predetermined and appropriate procedural rules necessary for arriving at a fair determination of the matter.

He said in so far as there is a special burden on the president and judicial personnel to do justice whenever they perform their duties, their respective oaths of office as enshrined in the country’s national constitution, require them to do justice “to all manner of people according to law, without fear of favour, affection or ill-will”.

Mr. Berewa said he was able to properly discuss the topic ‘Pursuing Justice and Peace in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone: Examining the Challenges’, it would require a critical look at the causes of the decade long civil war in the country, stating further that “the proper thing to do in that direction is to accurately and shamelessly diagnose the true causes of the conflict if we intend to eradicate it for good and to now pursue peace”.

Still on the causes of the conflict, Mr. Berewa stated authoritatively that leadership failure and failure of governance, overshadows all previously thought causes.

As a nation, Mr. Berewa warned that “such failures should be eliminated from our conduct and resolve to prevent their recurrence both in the governance of the state and in our own inter-personal dealings among ourselves as citizens”.

He pointed out that “it is only by putting our fingers on the true causes of the conflict that we can prevent their creeping into our national life again”, adding that “It is only by our doing this that we can be said to be pursuing peace and justice in post-conflict Sierra Leone”.

In pursuing peace and justice in post-conflict Sierra Leone, Mr. Berewa implored that all eyes should be firmly fixed on the road map prescribed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). “With this as our guide, we would not go astray again”, Mr. Berewa added. Peace and justice according to Mr. Berewa are inseparable, and that what binds them neatly together is true democracy. For him, democracy means the way and manner in which the people exercise power, including participation in the decision-making process, the enacting of laws and above all, their participation in the nation’s wealth on the basis of equitable distribution.

The holding of regular elections and the changing of political leaders, Mr. Berewa opined, is an essential part of the democratic process.

The result of a democratic process achieved through threat, coercion, violence, intimidation, misinformation and extravagant promises, or through the complicity of those charged with the conduct of the process, Mr. Berewa furthered, is a fraud on the electorate as it negates their free will and power to choose their leaders.

This, Mr. Berewa noted, is not the kind of democracy that will promote peace and justice in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

Mr. Berewa used the occasion to break silence on what still remains topical, reiterating that the invalidation of a total of at least 201,670 votes cast in the last general elections, rendered the entire process suspect and unfair.

He said even though he felt openly cheated by the National Electoral Commission (NEC), he, in the interest of peace and posterity, decided to concede defeat and congratulated his opponent within minutes of the announcement of the suspicious result.

“I took the above course of action not because I wished to legitimate the obvious irregularity and lack of transparency connected with the election mentioned here, I did so because I was aware of the real likelihood of a conflagration befalling this post-war country and because of the absolute need existing to maintain the peace in the attainment of which I had played no mean role”.

Friends of Sierra Leone
Wednesday, 11 February 2009

Wednesday, February 11, 2009

On behalf of the Members and Board of Directors for Friends of Sierra Leone:

We are honored to bestow upon Peter C. Andersen the Friends of Sierra Leone Lifetime Distinguished Membership Award, in recognition of your dedication and significant contribution to the culture and development of Sierra Leone. This is only the second time this prestigious award has been awarded.

The Board of Directors for Friends of Sierra Leone feels that you, Peter, embody not only the qualities one would expect a Distinguished Member to exhibit, but you have exceeded the standard. The Friends of Sierra Leone does not bestow this award lightly or on a regular basis, and you should have received it years ago. Given your renowned web site that is considered the authoritative resource for matters concerning Sierra Leone -- particularly during the war -- and your availability to anyone trying to find out anything about Sierra Leone, that is more than enough reason for you to be named Distinguished Member.

But you have even more achievements that merit this award. The work you have done and continue to do at the Special Court in Freetown is truly historical and greatly appreciated by, not just the Friends of Sierra Leone, but everyone who has any connection to Sierra Leone and by everyone hoping to see the terrible, terrible events of the war in Sierra Leone accounted and answered for by those responsible. The Friends of Sierra Leone does not give any one person the Distinguished Member award twice, but you certainly deserve the award for both of your major contributions to Sierra Leone and to those who love her and her people.

Thank you, Peter, for all that you have done and continue to do. You have our respect and gratitude.

Peggy Murrah
President
Friends of Sierra Leone
Newspaper Summary

Community Residents Express Security Concerns over Armed Robbery Attacks - Police Arrest Several Suspects

- The media continued to reflect security concerns by community members following a reported spate of armed robbery in Monrovia and its surrounding communities. Incidents of armed crimes remained at high levels over the weekend with reports of attacks predominately in the Paynesville suburb [Congo Town, Duport Road, ELWA Community, and Thinker’s Village Community].

- Cases of armed robberies were also reported in a number of communities in Sinkor including Old Road, 17th and 18th Streets. The National Chronicle, The Independent and The Parrot newspapers speculated that the armed robbers have taken complete control of the security network in Monrovia as they are rather attacking homes and business as early as 8:00 pm.

- Most print media outlets carried articles suggesting that the Emergency Response Unit (ERU), on whose training millions was spent to help mainly combat armed robbery and other violent crimes, have proven incapable to help with the security situation in Monrovia and its suburbs, as the situation turned volatile on a daily basis.

- The public encouraged state security and UN Police officers to increase their night patrols and develop a security strategy to deal with the reported upsurge in armed crimes.

River Gee Citizens Go To the Polls Today
(The News, the Informer, Daily Observer)

- About 22,000 registered voters are expected to vote in the River Gee Senatorial by-election today in south-eastern Liberia. The election is set to replace late Senator Isaac Johnson who died late last year after a brief illness.

MRU Agric Ministers Hold Emergency Confab
(Daily Observer)

- Agriculture Ministers of the Mano River Union (MRU) countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia and La Côte d’ Ivoire on Friday February 6, 2009 held an emergency conference in Monrovia. The objective of the confab was to discuss and chart the most appropriate approach to combat the hazard that invading caterpillars continue to cause in the sub-region.

Liberia Celebrates Armed Forces Day Wednesday
(Daily Observer)
The Ministry of National Defense and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) will on Wednesday, February 11, 2009 celebrate the 52nd Armed Forces Day Celebration and the 101st Celebration of the AFL at Barclay Training Center (BTC) in Monrovia.

Radio Summary
Local Media – Star Radio (News culled from website today at 12:00:pm)

New City Mayor Demolishes Market Stalls
- The nominated City Mayor of Monrovia has destroyed several make-shift stalls around the Water and Randall Streets area.
- Madam Mary Broh took the aggressive approach at the head of a small delegation early Monday morning.
- Dressed in a white T-Shirt with the inscription "Keep Monrovia Clean and Green", Broh threatened to close down stores if the owners are not tidy conscious.
- She said she is executing a Presidential mandate that seeks to ensure that the city returns to its past glory.
- Broh described Monrovia as the most untidy city in West Africa because store owners are not really beautifying their surroundings.
- She said is being given a great task to ensure that the entire city, which is besieged by huge stocks of garbage, must be clean.
- However, several sellers at the Water Street area said they are disappointed by the Presidential mandate.
- They said the government should first establish a place to relocate them instead of breaking down their stalls.
- Meanwhile, Sinoe County Senator Mobutu Nyepan has described as illegal, actions by the newly appointed Monrovia City Mayor Mary Broh.
- Senator Nyepan said in the absence of her confirmation, Madam Broh has no legal authority to function as City Mayor.
- Article 54 of the Liberian Constitution gives the President the right to appoint Mayors with the consent of the Senate.
- Mr. Nyepan however, welcomed Madam Broh’s passion for the job but urged her to proceed properly and within the confines of the laws.
- At the same time, the Executive Mansion says Mary Broh’s nomination as City Mayor of Monrovia is pending confirmation by the Senate.

(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky F.M., Truth F.M. and ELBC)

Security Expert Opt for de-politicization of AFL
- A regional security expert wants the Armed Forces of Liberia to remain what he called ill-political.
- Dr. Thomas Jaye said the new AFL must remain a constitutional army and loyal to the state in order to enjoy the confidence of the Liberian people.
- Dr. Jaye indicated that the new AFL must serve as an agent of change and be responsive to the needs of society, noting this can be done based on the training provided the officers.
- He recalled during the era of imperial presidency in Liberia, the AFL and other security institutions were responsible only to the President.
- According to Dr. Jaye, such practice produced counter-productive results at the detriment of the people.
- He also stressed coordination and cooperation amongst security institutions in the country to ensure genuine peace.
- Dr. Jaye, a Senior Research Fellow at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) in Ghana, spoke Monday at a symposium organized by the Ministry of National Defense.
- The symposium was part of events marking the observance of the 151st celebration of Armed Forces Day.

*(Also reported on Radio Veritas, Sky F.M., Truth F.M. and ELBC)*

**Executive Mansion Denies Claims of Paying Superintendent’s Rental Fees from County Development Funds**

- The Executive Mansion has denied claims that the President directed the payment of Superintendent Catherine Khasu's rental fees from the County Development Funds.
- In a letter of request for the payment of seven thousand two hundred from the CDF, Madam Khasu claimed it was by the directive of the President and Internal Affairs Minister.
- Presidential Press Secretary Cyrus Wleh Badio said the President did not authorize the payment as the CDF is not for paying rents but developments.
- Mr. Badio said Khasu would be made to restitute the money if it is established that she actually took it for rent.
- He said the Internal Affairs Minister has been asked to look into the issue though he’s mentioned as one of those who directed the payment.

**TNIMA’s Rehabilitation Begins Tuesday**

- Rehabilitation works on the Tubman National Institute of Medical Arts is expected to begin today, Tuesday.
- The TNIMA is the national nursing training centre and is situated at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Medical Center in Sinkor.
- The rehabilitation is being funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development through the Liberia Community Infrastructure Programme.
- According to a statement issued in Monrovia, the American people provided a grant of seven hundred fifty thousand U.S. dollars to the Health Ministry for the TNIMA.
- Health Minister Walter Gwenigale, USAID Mission Director Pamela White, and a representative of the TNIMA will mark the occasion by mortaring concrete on one pillar of the facility.
- The rehabilitation of this massive three-story building of forty thousand square feet will provide adequate, safe and clean residential living quarters.
- Upon the completion of the rehabilitation, the TNIMA would accommodate 467 future Liberian nurses.
- In addition, the statement said the John Snow International and partners based in the United States will provide four hundred thousand U.S. dollars.
- The money would be used to expand and strengthen teaching capacity and curriculum and provide learning equipment and supplies for the health practitioners.
- USAID Mission Director Pamela White said the contribution from the American people signifies the revival of TNIMA.
Cocorioko
Tuesday, 10 February 2009

Charles Taylor and NPFL rebels ate human beings

Posted by Liberian Meh

Former National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) General Zizag Mazzah has told the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that he and former Liberian President Charles Taylor along with other senior NPFL fighters ate human beings for food.

“When Gbarnga fell to ULIMO, we were in Beala, we were 48 senior commanders along with Chief Charles Taylor, they cooked the human beings and we got in line, single filed and started taking our own one by one, Taylor took the liver with the long cooking spoon and we started taking own with long sticks”, Zizag Mazzah Told the TRC.

Charles Taylor
Responding to question by TRC Commissioner Pearl Brown Bull on how he knew the cooked food was human beings and not monkey or other animals, Zizag Mazzah said “I knew it by the hand, by the finger; human being finger is different from Monkey finger or baboon finger. I saw the hand, human being finger, all in the pan. I saw ten fingers. 48 persons, Taylor went first and took the liver. Taylor called attention and everybody went in parade rest and stood in the line to get their own of food”.

According to former General Mazzah, Taylor told them it was time to get in guerrilla warfare, and there will be some places where there will be no food and they will have to eat human beings and they must get ready for such time at the battle front.

Former General Mazzah said the eating of the human beings was a sacrificed by the NPFL fighters in preparation for a fierce battle with ULIMO for recapture of Gbarnga, then Taylor stronghold which was captured while Taylor was in Ghana on peace talk.

Also commenting on whether after the first instance of eating human beings, he and Taylor or other NPFL fighters ate humans at any point in time, Mazzah said after the capture of Gbarnga, there was no serious war that could make them (NPFL men) not to see food that could prompt them to eat human beings anymore.

Killers of Jackson F. Doe

Zizag Mazzah told the TRC that during the civil war, he was told by other close NPFL generals that it was Paul Vaye, another general only identified as Border Patrol and George Masuo, all Nimbaians that killed Mr. Jackson F. Doe.

The former NPFL general accused the three men of killing prominent citizens from Nimba accordingly upon the orders of Mr. Charles Taylor.

On the death of Isaac Vaye and John Yormie, Zizag Mazzah explained that former Vice President and later President Moses Blah is the best person to narrate what occurred prior to the death of these individuals.
He said Moses Blah was arrested along with these individuals and he (Blah) could be best suited to explain what transpired.

Mazzah admitted that there were summary executions and extrajudicial killings in the control areas of the NPFL.

In his testimony before the TRC which has been described by many as interesting, Mazzah said he was sent by Mr. Charles Taylor to help fight alongside the Revolutionary united Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone.

He confirmed rumor that General Benjamin Yeatan alias General “50” killed his wife and extracted the breast and took along to the Airport.
U.N. diplomats and officials say judges at the International Criminal Court have decided to indict Sudan's president for war crimes in Darfur.

Officials say on the condition of anonymity that the court will issue an arrest warrant for President Omar al-Bashir. They say the decision will be made public later this month.

It is not clear whether the Hague-based court will indict him on all 10 counts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes brought by the court's chief prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo.

On Tuesday, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said Sudan must cooperate fully with whatever decision the court makes and should ensure the safety of U.N. peacekeepers and civilians in the country.

Sudan has rejected the court's authority. Sudanese officials say the safety of peacekeepers in Sudan is not in jeopardy, but they say authorities cannot control public outrage if an arrest warrant is issued for the president.

The developments come as a key Darfur rebel group holds peace talks in Qatar with the Sudanese government. The rebels from the Justice and Equality Movement accused Sudan's government Wednesday of undermining the talks by allowing army troops to advance towards rebel positions on the ground in Darfur.

Also Wednesday, key members of the U.S. Congress urged the Obama administration to quickly focus on the situation in Sudan and to appoint a presidential envoy to the country. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom also called on the administration to help Sudanese leaders implement a fragile peace deal that ended years of fighting between the Khartoum government and southern rebels.
Associated Press  
Thursday, 12 February 2009

Int'l Court: no arrest warrant yet for al-Bashir

By MIKE CORDER

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A spokeswoman for the International Criminal Court said Thursday no arrest warrant has yet been issued for Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir for masterminding atrocities in his country's Darfur region.

The court's prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, asked a three-judge panel in July to order al-Bashir's arrest on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

If judges agree, al-Bashir would be the first sitting head of state indicted by the court since it was established in 2002.

But the warrant may not cite all the charges sought by the prosecutor, omitting any charges the judges believe are not supported by submitted evidence.

The New York Times, citing unnamed lawyers and diplomats, reported late Wednesday that judges have decided to issue a warrant.

Court spokeswoman Sonia Robla said she did not know whether the judges have made their decision, but that no warrant has yet been issued publicly or under seal. Other court officials said they expected a decision this month.

United Nations spokeswoman Marie Okabe said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has not been told of any decision by the court, which is the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal.

While the court is independent of the United Nations, it was the Security Council that called for an investigation into possible war crimes in Darfur.

In Washington, a senior U.S. official said the Obama administration expected the arrest warrant "to come down before the end of the month." The official spoke on condition of anonymity because of the diplomatic sensitivity of the situation.

Even if the court issues an arrest warrant for al-Bashir, there is no guarantee he will be sent to the court's seat in The Hague any time soon. Sudan does not recognize the court's jurisdiction and refuses to turn over suspects.

However, an arrest warrant would put al-Bashir alongside the likes of former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, his political ally Radovan Karadzic and Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor as national leaders indicted for atrocities committed while they were in office.

All three eventually ended up in The Hague; Milosevic's genocide trial was aborted when he died of a heart attack in 2006, Taylor is on trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and Karadzic's genocide trial is expected to start this year at the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal.
Al-Bashir rose to power in a 1989 military coup and has ruled his east African nation with the support of the military, northern tribal leaders and a ruling party with an Islamic fundamentalist ideology.

U.N. officials are worried about reprisals if the arrest warrant is issued, including a possible attempt by Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to order the U.N. out of Sudan.

Al-Bashir's government is currently in peace talks with Darfur's most powerful rebel group in the Qatar capital, Doha.

A cease-fire between the government and the rebels of the Justice and Equality Movement would be a significant step in easing fighting in Darfur, where rebel groups, complaining of discrimination and neglect, took up arms against the government in 2003. The six years of fighting has left 300,000 people dead and 2.7 million displaced, according to U.N. figures.

Sudanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Ali al-Sadiq underscored Wednesday that "Sudan will not hand over any of its citizens to the ICC and any indictment by the ICC is categorically rejected."

Speaking in Khartoum, al-Sadiq said that the court is "a mere tool for political conspiracy against the Sudan and that it has nothing to do with the international justice."

Associated Press Writers Matthew Lee in Washington and John Heilprin at the United Nations contributed to this report.
Bribe claims over Kenya tribunal

A Kenyan MP has accused the government of blackmailing and bribing lawmakers to vote for a special tribunal to try those behind the post-poll violence.

MP Gitobu Imanyara has opposed the creation of the court, saying he has no faith in the country's justice system.

Mr Imanyara told the BBC he wants some of the alleged ringleaders to be tried in The Hague instead.

Some 1,500 people were killed and more than 300,000 others fled their homes after the election in December 2007.

The government on Tuesday delayed a parliamentary vote to marshal support for a bill to set up the tribunal.

A commission of inquiry into the violence, led by Justice Philip Waki, recommended the establishment of the tribunal to try suspects.

The tribunal must begin hearings by 1 March 2009 otherwise a sealed list of suspects is to be handed over to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The government missed a deadline to pass the bill on 30 January, and a new parliamentary vote is expected next week.

'Indefensible conduct'

A growing number of MPs have opposed the bill, saying the Kenyan government cannot be trusted to try the ringleaders of the violence.

"Parliamentarians are opposed [to the bill but] they are being threatened, they are being blackmailed with letters, but we have sufficient numbers," Mr Imanyara told the BBC's Network Africa programme

"They've been threatened, they're being offered money and it is unconscionable. The conduct of the government is indefensible really."

Mr Imanyara is the sole legislator from the Chama Cha Umma (CCU) party, which is affiliated to President Mwai Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU), one of the coalition partners.
He said the establishment of a local tribunal would entrench the culture of impunity and those implicated in the violence should be tried at The Hague.

"There is no possibility that this bill as crafted can serve the purpose for which it is intended or it's purportedly intended, and this has been confirmed by the government," he said.

"This is the first time we stand a real chance, a real opportunity of arresting the culture of impunity. Let it be one person or two who go to The Hague."

**Deadline**

President Kibaki chaired a cabinet meeting on Tuesday to lobby for support for the government-sponsored bill, which requires support from at least 145 of the 222 MPs.

Kofi Annan, the chief mediator of the talks which led to the creation of the coalition government, received a sealed list of suspects from Justice Waki, which he will forward to the ICC if the Kenyan government fails to implement the recommendations.

Mr Annan has previously said that he is satisfied with the efforts made to set up the tribunal but correspondents say his position may change if the government fails to meet the March deadline.

In December 2008, parliament dissolved the electoral commission, following recommendations by another inquiry into the voting process during the 2007 general elections.