Registrar Herman von Hebel shakes hands with Rwandan Foreign Affairs Minister Rosemary Museminali at the signing on Wednesday of an enforcement agreement with the Government of Rwanda. At right is Justice Minister Tharcisse.

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:
Friday, 20 March 2009

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday. Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact Martin Royston-Wright Ext 7217
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Lead defence lawyer for Charles Taylor has accused the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone Special of 'cheap propaganda'.

Courtney Griffiths said the court was trying to play games through a recent statement that Taylor might be freed due to the lack of funds. "The Court's statement was intended to rush the Taylor defence team while taking the stance to properly defend its client, the former Liberian President," he said. The lawyer said he would not be intimidated by the court's actions but would instead take his time to present witnesses that are currently willing to testify in the case. In his words, this would put Contd. page 3

The Special Court for Sierra Leone
Special Court in 'cheap propaganda'

From page 1

the real story of the former Liberian leader.

The court statement that it does not have money to continue the trial of Mr. Taylor, Griffiths said was rather a major propaganda to put the Defence team under pressure to fast track the team's quick appearance before the Court something he vowed to resist.

Meanwhile, chief of outreach and public affairs of the Special Court for Sierra Leone Peter C. Andersen said the information was never an official statement from the court.

"The Special Court has not issued any statement suggesting that Charles Taylor might be released due to lack of funds.

Quoting the Court's March newsletter under the headline 'Special Court Faces Critical Shortfall in Funds', the chief said "any decision as to whether a detainee could be freed if his trial were to be stalled due to lack of funding would be strictly a decision for the Judges. There is no such motion before the Court, and so going down this road now would be merely speculation."

The report further stated that "The Special Court currently has only enough money in the bank to fund operations through April 2009. After that, with no major contributions expected in May or June, the Court is facing the prospect of insufficient cash to fund essential operations after that time."

However, the court was optimistic on the possibility for funding. "While at this time we still face a funding shortfall, we have received encouraging signs from donor countries. I am confident that the Court will be in a position to complete its mandate," the court concluded.

In a separate event the defence team said it would not accept any pressure from the court to commence presentation on their client much earlier than required.

Lead counsel Courtney Griffiths told the BBC World Service Trust in Monrovia that they would resist any attempt by the UN backed tribunal to fast track the commencement of the Taylor Defence presentation before the court.

Griffiths said they were contemplating the start of their side of the case during the summer in Europe which means sometimes in September to October this year.

He said this position by the defense team would be made known to the court at a conference on April 6 in The Hague, but added that the court might try to impress on them to start rather earlier than that.

To this end, Griffiths said he anticipates that the court would allow them ample time to prepare Taylor's witnesses.
Taylor Defence Team To Resist Early Resumption Of Trial

The Defence team of former Liberian President Charles Taylor says it will not accept any pressure from the SCCL to commence the presentation of the Taylor side of the case early than required to prepare Taylor’s defence.

Charles Taylor’s lead Defence Counsel British Barrister Courtney Griffiths told the BBC World Service Trust in Monrove that he and his team will resist any attempt by the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone to fast track the commencement of the Taylor Defence presentation before the court.

Griffiths said the Taylor defence Counsel was contemplating the start of their side of the case during the summer in Europe which means sometimes in September to October this year. He said this position by the defense team will be made known to the Court at a conference on April the sixth in the Hague, but he added that the court might try to impress on them to start rather earlier than that.

To this end, Griffiths said he anticipates the court allowing them ample time to prepare Taylor’s witnesses.

The Charles Taylor defense team leader accused Sierra Leone Special of trying to play games through a recent statement that Taylor might be free due to the lack of funds to continue the trial.

Cdr. Griffiths said the court statement was intended to rush him while taking the stance to properly defend his client, the detained former Liberian leader.

The lawyer said he will not be intimidated by the court’s actions but will instead take his time and present witnesses that are currently willing to testify in the case so as to give what he called the real story of the former Liberian leader.

The court statement that it does not have money to continue the trial of Mr. Taylor, Griffiths said was rather a major propaganda to put the Defence team under pressure to fast track the team’s quick appearance before the Court something he vowed to resist.

He also accused the court of detaining the former Liberian leader for political reasons and not for crimes he claimed the court is accusing his client of committing in Sierra Leone.

According to him, with the prosecution now resting the adding of evidences against Mr. Taylor, up to present the prosecuting witnesses have failed to produce evidences to indict the former Liberian leader for alleged crimes against the people of Sierra Leone.

Lt. Laveli Supuwood and courtmey Griffiths -Taylor Lead Counsel -

Cdr. Griffiths said the dozens of witnesses presented by the court have all failed to produce major issues that could be counted against Mr. Taylor and called on the court to dismiss the case.

He further accused the court of going after only African leaders something he said was very ugly.

Griffiths said powers were promoting the ideal that none of their leaders can be held for crimes against humanity and that it was African leaders doing such something he lamented as unfair to the African people.

The African born and British trained lawyer said he is calling on the African Union to intervene into the matter by organizing their own court instead of allowing those from the western world to take control of the their affairs.

The Taylor defense lawyer argued that if the trial of Taylor is intended for justice, former United States of America president George W. Bush and former British Prime Minister Blair must equally stand trial for atrocities instigated by them in Iraq.

He said the issue only becomes of interest when a black African leader who does not enjoy the backing of the western power is accused for crimes against humanity. This and that his visit to Liberia will allow for screening such people to better present the Taylor side.

British Barrister said when the Special court resumes proceedings in the Taylor case, the former Liberian president himself will take the stand to present his side. Griffiths said he’s in Monrove to prepare Taylor’s witnesses to take the stand in the Hague.

He announced that the Defense Team had earmarked about two hundred potential witnesses for Taylor.
Local News

By Abdul Karim Koroma

Ministry of social welfare, gender and children’s affairs principal social development officer, Patrick Bangura, on Thursday registered his ministry’s commitment to promote juvenile justice in the country.

Bangura said his institution was planning to build remand homes nationwide, adding that they were also intending to establish juvenile structures at community level.

“My ministry is faced with challenges ranging from finance to human resource capacity,” he said.

Magistrate Bankole Shyllon said most remand homes in the country lacked structures, citing the deplorable under which younger offenders were living.

He expressed dismay over the manner the ministry of social welfare, gender and children’s affairs handled issues of young offenders.

Magistrate Shyllon urged all the stakeholders to treat issues of children in conflict with the law with utmost concern.

He said he has worked with DCI for over four years promoting juvenile justice in the country.

“The conditions under which these children are living in remand homes are very appalling. Male and female child offenders sleep in the same place,” he said.

DCI’s board chairman Momoh Turay said the objective of the conference was to bring stakeholders involved in the implementation of the child rights act 2007.
A Warrant of Hypocrisy

Earlier this month, the International Criminal Court (ICC) upheld the request of the court’s chief prosecutor to issue an arrest warrant for Omar el-Bashir, the President of Sudan, charging him with war crimes and crimes against humanity. Bashir responded by expelling foreign aid agencies looking after the refugee camps in Darfur. This is the point that a sitting head of state has been indicted for war crimes, with reaction around the world mainly divided between those who hailed the move as a great step for international justice and those who condemned it as colonialism. Both positions are hopelessly buried in intellectual and moral fog.

The warrant was no leap forward. From the legal point of view, it makes no difference whether the accused is a sitting or former head of state. It makes an enormous practical difference that an incumbent ruler can do a lot more future damage to his people than an ex-ruler, and therefore should be given no incentive to retaliate.

As a result of Bashir’s policies, 300,000 people are estimated to have died and 2.7 million displaced in Darfur. The expulsion of the aid agencies has put over a million Darfuris at risk of genocide and starvation. According to the statute that established the ICC, the prosecutor is required to ensure that any prosecution is in the interest of the victims as well as of justice. But, to lawyers like the ICC prosecutor, the abstract claims of justice are more vivid than any concrete duty of protection. In this case, justice comes with poisoned arrows.

Emboldened by the warrant and its elusive suggestion of international support, the Darfur rebels, the Justice and Equality Movement, have walked out of peace talks with Sudan’s government.

Meanwhile, Bashir, with little to lose, will no doubt take the opportunity to attack his enemies. The counter-argument is that the threat of indictment will deter rulers from wicked behavior. But the law will deter only if its sanctions are credible. A law that cannot be enforced deters no one. In fact, it weakens respect for law.

Moreover, while the fear of being hauled off to The Hague may have some effect in deterring rulers from committing crimes against humanity, the claim that the Bashir warrant will deter the current crop of human rights’ violators is derisory. Indeed, it is likely to prolong wicked regimes. Robert Mugabe, for example, refuses to leave office - at great cost to Zimbabwe's people - for fear of being put on trial. Whatever the attractions of bringing criminals "nowhere to hide, whatever the consequences," the consequences cannot be ignored when the criminals are heads of state.

The policy of never negotiating with terrorists cannot be scaled up to state level when hundreds of thousands of lives are at stake. The charge of colonialism, meanwhile, is simply reflex: colonialism no longer exists. The charge that international law is just "western law" is also rubbish. International law is the conscience of mankind. But the perception that the law is selectively applied happens to be true.

In the Nuremberg trial of 1946, which laid the basis of current international law, the main charge against the Nazi leaders was that of "planning and waging aggressive war." Prohibition of war except for self-defense is enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

But the ICC’s creators deemed the waging of aggressive war - which the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg called "the supreme international crime" - to be outside the court’s jurisdiction. This guaranteed legal immunity for the leaders who carried out the invasion of Iraq. The charge of selective application also applies to the Bashir warrant.

Bashir stands accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The latter were first defined in the Nuremberg principles of 1950 to include murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation and "other inhuman acts." In 1998, these other acts were clarified to mean false imprisonment, torture, rape, persecution of a group, enforced disappearance of persons, and apartheid.

It comes as no surprise, then, to read in the Arab News that Bashir’s warrant "reeks of hypocrisy." Where, indeed, are the arrest warrants for Bush and Cheney? Does extraordinary rendition not count as "enforced disappearance of persons"? Does the water boarding of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed not count as torture? Why is Vladimir Putin not standing trial for war crimes in Chechnya?

The answer is simple: where the interests of a UN Security Council member or one of their clients are at stake, the court’s jurisdiction ends. The ICC is like a coathook: small flies get stuck, but wasps and hornets get through.

Until the United States ratifies the ICC treaty, the Court is bound to seem to many to be little more than a politicised kangaroo court. Without American support, it has little hope of earning legitimacy, let alone doing its job effectively. The Security Council has the power to defer the warrant for Bashir’s arrest for renewable periods of one year.

It can do this indefinitely, and it seems likely that it will. The idea is that deferring the warrant will give the Security Council leverage over Sudan. Gareth Evans, a former Australian Foreign Minister, has called it "a powerful diplomatic tool," while the Washington Post has called for the warrant to be used "as a bargaining chip with Mr. Bashir and his Chinese and Arab allies." They believe that the threat of arrest can be used to force Bashir to mend his ways. If this proves true, the ICC and its sponsors have muddled justice with diplomacy.

If the world can dispense justice only at the expense of the weak and to the advantage of the strong, it should stick to the older tools of crime prevention: force and negotiation, and leave justice out of it.
Defence lawyer for Charles Taylor has accused the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone Special of cheap propaganda.

Courtney Griffiths said the court was trying to play games through a recent statement that Taylor might be freed due to the lack of funds.

“The Court’s statement was intended to rush the Taylor defence team while taking the stance to properly defend its client, the former Liberian President,” he said.

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The court statement that it does not have money to continue the trial of Mr. Taylor, Griffiths said was rather a major propaganda to put the Defence team under pressure to fast track the team’s quick appearance before the Court something he vowed to resist.

He also accused the court of detaining the former Liberia leader for political reasons and not for crimes he claimed the court was accusing his client of committing in Sierra Leone.

According to him, with the prosecution now resting the adducing of evidences against Mr. Taylor, up to present the prosecuting witnesses have failed to produce evidences to indict the former Liberian leader for alleged crimes against the people of Sierra Leone.

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He announced that the Defense Team had earmarked about two hundred potential witnesses for Taylor and that his visit to Liberia will allow for screening such people to better present the Taylor side.

Defence team for Charles Taylor said it would not accept any pressure from the Special Court for Sierra Leone, SCSL to commence presentation on their client much earlier than required.

lead counsel Courtney Griffiths told the BBC World Service Trust in Monrovia that they would resist any attempt by the UN backed tribunal to fast track the commencement of the Taylor Defence presentation before the court.

Griffiths said they were contemplating the start of their side of the case during the summer in Europe which means sometimes in September to October this year.

He said this position by the defense team would be made known to the court at a conference on April 6 in The Hague, but added that the court might try to impress on them to start rather earlier than that.

To this end, Griffiths said he anticipates that the court would allow them ample time to prepare Taylor’s witnesses.
Reduce rebel verdict - lawyers

Freetown - Lawyers for 3 former Sierra Leonean rebel leaders convicted of war crimes are seeking vastly reduced sentences, court documents released on Thursday by a UN-backed tribunal showed.

Prosecutors are seeking up to 60 years for Issa Sesay, Morris Kallon and Augustine Gbao of the Revolutionary United Front who were convicted for mass murder, rape, mutilations and using child soldiers during a decade-long war which ended in 2001.

In documents filed ahead of a special hearing on Monday to discuss a date for sentencing, Sesay's lawyers urged a sentence of between 15 and 20 years, Kallon's lawyers sought a "lenient" term, while Gbao's defence said he should be set free.

In separate submissions to the court the prosecution has asked for a 60-year term for Sesay and Kallon and 40 years for Gbao.

On Monday the parties will present arguments to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to support their demands.

Gravity of the crime

The judges are expected to set a date later this month to hand down the sentences.

The court has no death penalty and no maximum sentence. The highest penalty it has handed down so far is 50 years in prison for 2 leaders from another rebel group.

The 1991-2001 war in Sierra Leone was one of the most brutal civil conflicts in modern history. Some 120 000 people were killed and tens of thousands mutilated by having their arms, legs, noses or ears cut off.

Earlier deputy prosecutor Joseph Kamara said he did not believe the sentences sought were harsh.

"Take into consideration the gravity of the crime as well as the number of victims: thousands were murdered, hundreds raped, children enlisted into armed hostilities as well as innocent girls forced into marriage and persons amputated," he said

The RUF trial is to be the last trial held in Freetown by the court, which was set up in 2002.

Its other outstanding trial, of Liberia's former president Charles Taylor, is being held in the Netherlands for security reasons.

- AFP
Newspaper Summary

Environmental Lawyers Criticize Three Forestry Management Contracts

- The Association of Environmental Lawyers has criticized three Forestry Management Contracts currently before the National Legislature for ratification.
- The three contracts include the Alpha Logging Wood Processing Corporation, E.J. and J Investment and the Liberia Tree and Trading Company Incorporated.
- Speaking during a public hearing, the Executive Director of Green Advocate, Attorney Alfred Brownell said the contracts lack relevant documents needed for ratification.
- He named due diligence report and bidding documents as key information missing from the contracts.
- But the Managing Director of the Forestry Development Authority, John Woods says the documents were available and would be provided to the Legislature.

Senators Lobbying to fill Vacant President Pro-Tempore Seat

- Intense lobbying has begun in the corridor of the Senate for the possible replacement of President Pro-Tempore Isaac Nyenabo who resigned the post Tuesday.
- Correspondents say consultations are taking place among key senators interested in the position of President Pro-tempore of the Liberian Senate.
- Though no Senator has publicly declared his intention for the position, Legislative sources say those secretly vying for the post include Lahai Lassana of Bomi, Sumo Kupee of Lofa, Cletus Wortorson of Grand Kru, Mobutu Nyepan of Sinoe and Gloria Scott of Maryland.

DSRSG Ryan Bids Farewell to Liberia – Outlines Accomplishments and Challenges
(The News, Heritage, National Chronicle, and The Informer)

- The outgoing Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General responsible for Recovery and Governance, Mr. Jordan Ryan, held a farewell press briefing in Monrovia Wednesday at which time he detailed his accomplishments since joining the UN in Liberia in November 2005. Mr. Ryan also spoke to remaining challenges to move Liberia forward in its recovery, rehabilitation and development drive.

Armed Gangsters Rampage Sinkor Residents
(Daily Observer)

- An unidentified man in his mid 30s was on March 18, 2009 allegedly killed by angry residents of 17th Street in the residential district of Sinkor in Monrovia. Several residents of the 17th and 18th Streets told the Daily Observer Wednesday that the suspected gangster was part of a group of gangsters that had previously terrorized many residential homes for several hours in the Sinkor Community.
One Joe Philips Hunter of 16th Street told the Daily Observer that at about 3:30 am Wednesday, several homes and business houses were allegedly attacked by a band of suspected gangsters rendering many of their victims wounded and homes looted of valuable items. The residents pointed out that the current wave of armed robbery in Monrovia and its environs was well-organized and jobless and unskilled foreign and Liberian youths.

Radio Summary

Star Radio (News monitored today at 9:00 am)
“Intense” Lobbying Begins for New President Pro-Tempore
(Also reported on Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Forestry Management Contracts under Scrutiny
(Also reported on Sky F.M., and ELBC)

Workers at Guthrie Rubber Plantation Demonstrate over “Arrears”
- Workers of the Guthrie Rubber Plantation have again staged another demonstration at the plantation claiming their latest action is in demand of one month salary arrears allegedly owed them by the management.
- They claimed the past action only benefitted the tappers leaving the rest of the staff out.
- Correspondents say the aggrieved workers have mounted roadblocks and are obstructing the free flow of commercial vehicles and commuters.
- There has been no reaction from the company’s management.

Truth F.M. (News monitored today at 9:00 am)
Several Liberians Condemn Passage of Threshold Bill

- [SIC]Several Liberians have condemned the passage Population Threshold Bill by the House of Representatives. A cross section of Liberians said the bill is selective because it intends to disadvantage counties with smaller population. The citizens believe that once a county is recognized it must be given equal benefits and privileges like other counties regardless of size. The House on Tuesday reached a compromise during the passage of the controversial Population Threshold Bill reducing the threshold from forty-five thousand to forty thousand. They lawmakers said the amendment was to ensure that counties with lower population are represented.
How Sudan's leader sealed his fate

Omar Hassan al-Bashir shows every sign of being extremely pleased with himself.

Since the International Criminal Court issued a warrant this month charging Sudan's President with committing atrocities in Darfur, he has made it clear he will not simply stand around waiting to be arrested. Instead, he has lashed back at his accusers by expelling aid groups and rallying supporters against the "criminals" who want to "sabotage our country." He boasts that no war-crimes court will be able to touch even "an eyelash" on him.

All of this will lend ammunition to those who say the ICC's lofty edicts only complicate matters in the real world. That, in fact, is transparently what Mr. al-Bashir intends: to demonstrate that the arrest warrant against him is not only useless but counterproductive.

But there is a whiff of desperation in what he is doing. Mr. al-Bashir is like the gangster who seizes a hostage when the cops are closing in. The ICC's charges have cracked his aura of invulnerability. His reaction only serves to remind the world what kind of man he is and how important it is to bring him to justice. In Darfur, you'll recall, as many as 300,000 people have been killed and nearly three million driven from their homes since 2003.

Just look at what he has done since the ICC indictment came down on March 4. Within minutes of the announcement, aid groups is Khartoum, the capital, started getting phone calls from government officials calling them on the carpet. Within the day, 10 had received letters revoking their authority to work in Sudan. Three more soon got the boot. A week after the humanitarian groups were ejected, four aid workers, including Canadian nurse Laura Archer, were kidnapped (all were released).

This was a premeditated, cold-blooded attempt to make innocents suffer and pin the blame on the West. Though United Nations and Sudanese organizations are trying to fill the gap left by the expulsion of the aid groups, disease is spreading and the suffering growing worse among the more than one million people dependent on their help.

Mr. al-Bashir, meanwhile, has been visiting Darfur to fulminate against his persecutors. On Monday, he accused the expelled aid groups of profiting from the conflict and supplying evidence to the ICC. He raved about "spies" who "trade" in suffering. On Wednesday, he told a crowd of spear-waving Arab tribesmen that Western "colonizers" were trying to overthrow him. He vowed to resist, and said his "holy warriors are ready to fight." Those warriors are none other than the ruthless pro-government militias that have wreaked havoc in Darfur.

To their shame, many voices around the world have been cheering him on. China, which buys two-thirds of Sudan's petroleum, objects to the indictment. So does Russia. The African Union, the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference all called for the ICC charges to be referred to the UN Security Council - a way of putting the matter off if charges might complicate peace negotiations. There is little chance of that in Sudan, where Mr. al-Bashir has scuttled any chance of peace.

In other parts of the world, though, Mr. al-Bashir's in-your-face response to the ICC charges is provoking a different reaction. This week, U.S. President Barack Obama appointed a retired general, J. Scott Gration,
as his top-level envoy to Sudan. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton vowed that Mr. al-Bashir would be "held responsible for every single death that occurs in those camps" after the expulsion of the aid groups.

Mere words? Perhaps. After all the years of inaction on Darfur, it is easy to be cynical. But it is just possible that the ICC indictment and Mr. al-Bashir's response may be a turning point - the moment at which the world finally says "enough."

Recall what happened with Slobodan Milosevic. When he was charged with war crimes in the middle of NATO's 1999 bombing campaign against his regime, critics said it would make him dig in his heels. Instead, he capitulated a week later. Two years after that, he was overthrown and delivered to The Hague to face trial for his atrocities. It was the same with Charles Taylor, the leader of Liberia. Months after being indicted in March of 2003, he struck a deal to leave office. He, too, is now in The Hague facing war-crimes charges.

An indictment is only a piece of paper - but what power it can have. Mr. al-Bashir has been named and shamed. The indictment strikes at the very foundation of his legitimacy. No wonder he is lashing out.