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Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea

Judges Chosen for Cambodia Trial

BBC News

May 4, 2006

The trial of top Khmer Rouge leaders for genocide moved another step closer on Thursday as 30 officials were selected to serve a UN-backed tribunal.

In a meeting chaired by King Norodom Sihamoni, Cambodia's Supreme Council of Magistracy approved 17 Cambodian and 13 international officials for the role.

A tribunal spokesman said prosecutors would begin work in June, with the trial phase set to begin in 2007.

Some 1.7m people are thought to have died in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979.

Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot died in 1998, and his regime collapsed shortly afterwards, but several senior Khmer Rouge figures are still living freely in Cambodia.

In 2003, Cambodia and the UN agreed jointly to convene trials, but there are fears the process could be undermined by the dire state of Cambodia's judicial system, which was badly debilitated by the Khmer Rouge policy of targeting the intelligentsia for extermination.

A complex formula of majority voting by both Cambodian and international judicial officials has been devised to try to ensure that tribunal decisions are backed by both sides.

Of the 30 officials selected, 14 will serve as judges and two as prosecutors. The remaining 14 will be held in reserve.

'Capable'

Justice Minister Ang Vong Vathana said the Cambodian judges were up to the task.

"I don't know how much international experience they have, but in terms of dealing with domestic crime, they are capable of doing their job," he said.

The names of the appointees were not immediately available, but the justice minister said the international officials came from the US, the Netherlands, Poland, France, Australia and Sri Lanka.

The BBC's Guy De Launey says there have previously been questions about the government's enthusiasm for the process, as many of Cambodia's current leaders were, at one time, members of the Khmer Rouge themselves.

But now it seems nothing will stop the trials going ahead, he says.

At present two former regime leaders, Ta Mok and Kang Keng Ieu, more commonly known as Duch, are in jail on genocide charges. But others, including Pol Pot's "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea, former head of state Khieu Samphan and former Foreign Minister Ieng Sary live freely in Cambodia.

Almost every Cambodian family lost a relative to starvation, disease, forced labour or execution during the Khmer Rouge regime.

STILL FREE

Nuon Chea: 80, chief lieutenant to Pol Pot, most senior surviving member of regime

Khieu Samphan: 74, head of state 1976-79. Pol Pot and Ieng Sary both married members of his family

Ieng Sary: Age unknown, foreign minister 1976-78. Said to be suffering serious heart condition

Jurists approved for trial of Khmer Rouge officials

International Herald Tribune

May 8, 2006

The king of Cambodia has approved the Cambodian and UN judicial officials selected to oversee a trial of surviving Khmer Rouge leaders, paving the way for a long-awaited genocide tribunal, a court official said Monday.

King Norodom Sihamoni signed royal decrees Sunday that marked the final step in the selection process of 13 UN and 17 Cambodian judges, prosecutors and other judicial officials, said a tribunal spokesman, Reach Sambath.

The nominees were initially approved by the highest Cambodian judicial body, the Supreme Council of Magistracy, during a meeting last Thursday.

Appointment letters will be sent to each of the nominees so that they can start preparing themselves to take up their assignments, the spokesman said.

The tribunal's international officials will come from Australia, Austria, Canada, France, Japan, Poland, Sri Lanka, the Netherlands and the United States, according to a list released by the court.

Preliminary legal procedures are expected to start in June ahead of the actual trials, which are scheduled to begin in early 2007.

Cambodia and the United Nations agreed in 2003 to jointly convene trials of former Khmer Rouge leaders accused of responsibility in the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people from starvation, disease, overwork and execution during the group's rule from 1975 to 1979. The Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot, died in 1998. The ultra-communist movement collapsed a year later, but none of its top leaders has been brought to justice. Many still live and move freely in Cambodia.

Khmer Rouge prosecutors to start work in a few months

Reuters

May 10, 2006

Prosecutors will start work in a few months on indictments for the long-awaited trial of Pol Pot's top surviving henchmen for the 1970s Khmer Rouge genocide, court officials said on Wednesday.

Those "most responsible" for the estimated 1.7 million who were executed or died of starvation, overwork or disease under the ultra-Maoist regime from 1975 to 1979, would be brought to justice, said court director Sean Visoth.

" Cambodia has an obligation and has every means to make sure that once a warrant is issued they can bring the suspects before the court," he told a news conference in the Cambodian capital.

Almost every Cambodian family lost relatives under the Khmer Rouge, but no leader of the "Killing Fields" has faced justice for the atrocities.

Pol Pot himself died in a jungle guerrilla camp in 1998.

Last week Cambodia appointed 30 judges and prosecutors, including 17 Cambodians and 13 foreigners, to a tribunal that can be deemed under way once co-prosecutors open their preliminary investigations. Michelle Lee, the U.N. appointed deputy court director, said the co-prosecutors must first select their support staff.

"I can assure you our intention and our wish is to bring them on board as soon as possible, by either the end of June or the beginning of July," she said.

U.N. and Cambodian officials said in February the tribunal, which has a three-year budget of \$56.3 million, would be operating in earnest by 2007.

The trial will be conducted under a modified form of Cambodia's French-based judicial system, with domestic and international judges and prosecutors working jointly to try to guarantee the courts' independence.

Due to Cambodia's erratic and highly politicised judiciary, a complex formula of majority voting is in place to ensure no decision can be taken without support from both sides.

Only two top cadres -- Ta Mok, the octogenarian one-legged military chief dubbed 'The Butcher', and Duch, the born-again Christian who ran Phnom Penh's Tuol Sleng interrogation centre -- are in jail and have been accused by a military court of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

Pol Pot's deputy, "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea, former head of state Khieu Samphan and former Foreign Minister Ieng Sary are living as free men in Cambodia.

PENPIX-Judges on Khmer Rouge genocide tribunal

Reuters

May 10, 2006

Cambodia has released the names of the judges and prosecutors for the long-awaited trial of Pol Pot's top surviving henchmen for the 1970s Khmer Rouge genocide.

An estimated 1.7 million people were executed or died of starvation, overwork or disease under the ultra-Maoist regime from 1975 to 1979. No Khmer Rouge leader has ever faced justice, and Pol Pot himself died in a jungle guerrilla camp in 1998.

The trial will be conducted under a modified form of Cambodia's French-based judicial system, with domestic and international judges and prosecutors working jointly to try to guarantee the courts' independence.

Due to Cambodia's erratic and highly politicised judiciary, a complex formula of majority voting is in place to ensure no decision can be taken without support from both sides.

Officials say the court, aimed at those "most responsible" for the atrocities, will be up and running in earnest in 2007, but can be deemed under way once co-prosecutors open their preliminary probes.

Once formal accusations have been lodged, the two co-investigating judges conduct further research and write a report which goes to the trial judges.

The five-judge chamber -- three Cambodians and two foreigners -- then deliberate on its contents and arrive at a verdict.

Under the special trial format, there will be only one court of appeal -- the seven-member Supreme Court. A five-member Pre-trial Chamber is designed to rule on disputes arising between the co-prosecutors and co-investigating judges.

Following are brief personal histories of some key figures:

CO-PROSECUTORS

CHEA LEANG, 59 (CAMBODIA)

- Little-known Appeals Court prosecutor, despite being a rare female in a male-dominated profession and society. Has law degree from the former East Germany.

ROBERT PETIT, 44 (CANADA)

- Criminal attorney who has served on international genocide tribunals in Rwanda and Sierra Leone. Has also worked as a U.N. legal adviser in Kosovo and a serious crimes prosecutor during the U.N. mission in East Timor.

CO-INVESTIGATING JUDGES

YOU BUN LENG, 48 (CAMBODIA)

- Appeal court judge since 1993. Has Vietnamese law degree. Speaks English.

MARCEL LEMONDE (FRANCE)

- Details not immediately available

TRIAL CHAMBER

NIL NONN, 50 (CAMBODIA)

- Head since 1993 of the provincial court in Battambang, where he has dealt with fallout from the rehabilitation of Pol Pot's guerrillas after their final surrender in the area in 1998. Has Vietnamese law degree. Speaks English.

THOU MONY, 43 (CAMBODIA)

- Has served on Phnom Penh's Appeal Court since 1991, earning a reputation for judicial probity. His most high-profile case involved sentencing three Khmer Rouge commanders to 20 years in jail for the 1994 murder of three tourists from Australia, Britain and France. Has Vietnamese law degree. Speaks English.

YA SOKHAN, 51 (CAMBODIA)

- Phnom Penh Court judge. Attracted diplomatic and media attention in 2004 when he convicted Hambali, a suspected regional al Qaeda associate, in absentia for a plot to bomb the U.S. and British embassies. Has law degree from Metchnikov in Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union.

SILVIA CARTWRIGHT (NEW ZEALAND)

- Appointed Governor-General of New Zealand in 2001 after a distinguished career as lawyer and jurist. The first woman appointed to New Zealand's High Court, she is well known as an advocate of women's rights.

JEAN-MARC LAVERGNE, 45 (FRANCE)

- Vice-President of the Criminal Court in the French town of Le Mans. Previously served as Appeal Court adviser in Rennes.

PRE-TRIAL CHAMBER

The pre-trial chamber has three Cambodian and two international judges. Its most controversial member is:

NEY THOL, 55 (CAMBODIA)

- Military Court chairman since 1987. Has made several controversial rulings, including sentencing co-Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh to 30 years in jail after 1997 fighting between Ranariddh's forces and troops loyal to Hun Sen, the other co-Prime Minister.

Last year, he sentenced opposition MP Cheam Channy to seven years on charges of forming an illegal armed group. Diplomats and human rights organisations criticised both rulings. Sources: Khmer Rouge Trial secretariat, Reuters news reports.

Khmer Rouge Trials Delayed Again

Bangkok Post

May 14, 2006

The beginning of the long-awaited trial of former senior officials in the Khmer Rouge regime of Cambodia has again been delayed due to a shortage of qualified Cambodian staff, trial officials told a press conference Wednesday.

Top United Nations representative to the proposed tribunal, Michelle Lee, and her Cambodian counterpart Sean Visoth told reporters that although 11 UN staff had already been deployed to begin work, enough applications for Cambodian staff with suitable legal backgrounds had not yet been identified.

"(The prosecution stage) was to start in June. Now it has been delayed," Visoth said, adding that it was hoped the situation would be rectified by July, although it could be later.

The initial prosecution stage is estimated to precede the actual trials of the mostly aging and now often ailing former leaders by at least a year.

Candidates to stand trial for the deaths of up to two million Cambodians from starvation, disease, torture, executions and overwork during the regime's 1975 to 1979 reign have not yet been finalised.

The ultra-Maoist Khmer Rouge's Democratic Kampuchea regime decimated the nation's infrastructure during its drive to convert Cambodia into an agrarian utopia devoid of social classes, markets, religion and even money.

The Cambodian education system remains in tatters nearly three decades on, making suitable candidates hard to find, according to experts.

However advocates of a trial have warned that any tribunal must take place soon, or risk it never happening at all. The regime's leader, Pol Pot, died in 1998, and many of the prime candidates for trial are aged in their 70s or 80s.

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Central African Republic (ICC)

Official Website of the International Criminal Court ICC Public Documents - Situation in the Central African Republic

ICC reviewing suit against ex-president, official says

Reuters / IRIN

April 26, 2006

The United Nations International Criminal Court (ICC) is reviewing an application filed by the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) against former President Ange-Felix Patasse and four of his aides, to decide whether or not the prosecutor's office would order an inquiry into their alleged crimes, ICC prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo has said.

"There was a case pending before the [CAR] national highest court of appeal [court de cassation], and the final decision came a few weeks ago; now we are busy with the admissibility analysis," Moreno-Ocampo said during a media briefing on Tuesday in The Hague, the ICC headquarters.

The CAR Court of Appeal rendered its verdict on 13 April, ruling that national courts were unable to handle the case and confirming a December 2004 court ruling recommending its transfer to the ICC.

An international warrant of arrest issued soon after Francois Bozize overthrew Patasse in March 2003, accused the former president of murders, rape, looting and other human rights violations. Patasse, who is now in exile in Togo, allegedly committed these crimes between October 2002 and March 2003. Jean Pierre Bemba, then the leader of a Democratic Republic of the Congo-based rebel group that came to Patasse's rescue in that period is also on the list of the accused. Bemba is now one of the four vice-presidents in the DRC and is a candidate for

the forthcoming presidential elections in that country.

"Bemba cannot be judged by our national courts; only the ICC with its reputation and resources can do that," David Gamou, a spokesman of the CAR Ministry of Justice said from Bangui, the CAR capital.

He said one of the other men accused alongside Patasse, who worked as Patasse's driver and who is believed to have been killed during Bozize's 15 March 2003 coup, was still on the list "since no death certificate has yet been delivered to confirm the death".

Abdoulaye Miskine, a militiaman who became a commander of Patasse's special anti-highwaymen unit; and a retired gendarme, Paul Barril of France, who was Patasse's anti-terror adviser, are also accused of similar crimes.

Patasse's spokesman, Prosper Ndouba, said on Tuesday from Paris: "Patasse is ready to appear before the ICC if evidence of any wrongdoing or crime within the framework of his mandate are found and put forward."

Massive human rights violations - such as rape, looting, mass killings and arson - were reported during Bozize's six-month rebellion that culminated in the 15 March 2003 coup. The fighting pitted Patasse's troops and their supporters from the DRC against rebels loyal to Bozize, who were supported by Chadian mercenaries. Since then, tens of thousands of refugees have been living in camps in southern Chad, where they were joined by thousands of other civilians since June 2005 as a result of new attacks by armed groups in northwestern CAR.

Meanwhile, in neighbouring DRC, the first ICC suspect was arrested in March and transferred to The Hague, where the case is still at the procedural stage.

"Thomas Lubanga was the first, but not the last," Moreno-Ocampo said. "We are investigating a second case in Ituri [northeastern DRC] and a third is under evaluation."

He added that the ICC was awaiting the arrest of five leaders of the Ugandan rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), who are reported to be hiding in northeastern DRC, from where they continue to attack northern Uganda and southern Sudan.

"We believe that if [LRA commander-in-chief Joseph] Kony and [LRA deputy-commander-in-chief Vincent] Otti were arrested, criminality would decrease in southern Sudan and northern Uganda," he said.

Regarding the arrest on 14 April in Germany of Ignace Murwanashyaka, the leader of the Forces Democratiques pour la Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR), a Rwandan rebel group based in eastern DRC, Moreno-Ocampo said he needed more information about the FDLR and Murwanashyaka and about his responsibilities in the alleged FDLR crimes before he could take any further decision.

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Democratic Republic of the Congo (ICC)

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

DR of Congo: militia group comes forward to enter disarmament process

UN News Centre

May 12, 2006

A group of around 250 members of a renegade militia in the troubled Katanga Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have come forward to enter the country's disarmament and reintegration process, the United Nations mission in the country (**MONUC**) said today.

The group, part of the so-called Mayi-Mayi militia that linger from the country's devastating civil war, was armed with around 100 rifles, two rocket-propelled grenade launchers and four machine guns in bad condition, MONUC added.

Since last November, tens of thousands of people have fled fighting and reported human rights abuses in Katanga, as the DRC's army attempted to flush out militias in the province.

Meanwhile, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported today that three months after the launch of the 2006 Action Plan for the DRC, which aims to provide relief aid and promote stability in country, the international community has met just 13 per cent of identified needs, delivering only \$90 million of the \$682 requested.

"It is depressing to see that funding is still so low, given that the United Nations has declared 2006 the Year of the DRC," said Ross Mountain, United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in the country. "Underfunding can be as deadly as the armed conflict that the country is experiencing," he warned.

Despite the democratization process that is underway in the DRC, including plans for the first free and fair elections in the country's history, at least 10 million Congolese continue to suffer from the consequences of a decade of conflict, Mr. Mountain said.

He urged previous donors to double their contributions and new donors "to step up and help out in addressing one of the greatest tasks facing the humanitarian community today."

Probe into war crimes in DRC

Angola Press

May 13, 2006

The UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on Friday announced the arrest of another rebel leader held responsible for murdering peacekeepers, bringing to four the number of suspects captured on charges of war crimes.

The UN peacekeeping mission in Congo, known by its French acronym MONUC, said it had captured Ubemu Uzele, 34, in an operation launched Wednesday in the Nyakasanza district of the northeastern town of Bunia.

The suspect was the No.2 of the Front of Nationalists and integrationists (FNI) in Mongwalu, a village some 70 km north of Bunia.

The FNI has been held responsible for murdering the unarmed UN military observers, Safwat Oran, 37, from Jordan and Siddon Davis Banda, 35, from Malawi on May 12, 2003 in Mongwalu.

Their bodies, found six days after being buried deep in the region, bore traces of torture and mutilation.

The arrested rebel leader would be taken to the International Criminal Court (ICC) for trial on war crimes charges.

MONUC said Ubemu's arrest was a strong message to other suspects still at large that progress is being made in bringing perpetrators to justice.

Up to 30 peacekeepers have been killed on the mission in the DRC since 1999. MONUC has already arrested four rebel leaders behind those killings, including warlord Thomas Lubanga, who was the first war crimes suspect to be tried by the ICC since it was set up in July 2002.

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Darfur (ICC)

Official Website of the International Criminal Court ICC Public Documents - Situation in Darfur, Sudan

African Union Official Is Hacked to Death in Darfur

The New York Times

by Lydia Polgreen

May 8, 2006

An African Union official was hacked to death in this vast, squalid camp today after his post, manned by an unarmed team of eight civilian police officers, was overrun and looted by a mob of angry demonstrators.

The killing of the official — a Sudanese translator working with the African Union troops policing a much-violated cease fire agreement — underscored the tenuousness of the peace deal agreed to in Abuja by the government and the main rebel faction, as well as the barely contained tensions boiling over into violence in enormous camps where more than two million internal refugees now live.

The demonstrators were demanding that a **United Nations** force replace the African Union soldiers charged with protecting civilians here. Protesters at another camp, Zallingei, also attacked their African Union outpost, but no one was killed.

Chaos engulfed Kalma, one of the largest and most troubled camps for displaced people caught up in the conflict in **Darfur**, as Jan Egeland, the United Nations' chief humanitarian official, visited the camp to investigate deteriorating conditions after an aid group coordinating humanitarian assistance here was evicted last month.

The violence also raised questions about the ability of the African Union force to help Sudan survive this critical period between the signing of a peace agreement, which it will have to enforce, and the arrival of a much larger United Nations' force, which will not happen until October at the earliest.

The 7,000-member force is caught in an "impossible squeeze really between the exploding expectations of the civilian population of security which they have been denied for so long and on the other side the simple limitations of their capacity," Mr. Egeland said.

With limited means and facing rising frustration from the people they are charged with protecting, the African Union is struggling to police a grim conflict that has spawned what the United Nations has called the world's greatest humanitarian crisis and the United States has called genocide.

Mr. Egeland's visit here began peacefully. He was greeted by thousands of demonstrators hoisting banners that read, "No, no rapes and genocide," and chanting, "welcome, welcome U.S.A., welcome, welcome international force," a swirling mass of men in white robes and women in a rainbow of shawls. Their cries betrayed some frustration but little anger to foretell the violence to come.

As the morning wore on, the sun rose to a punishing zenith. Suddenly, the mood darkened. The discontent bubbled in a concoction of frustrations. Conditions had gotten worse in the past month, and this month, residents will get half as much food because the World Food Program, short of money, was forced to cut aid. Youth groups were angry that their elders shut them out of a meeting with Mr. Egeland. The population of the camp is mostly of the Fur ethnic group, the same tribe as the leader of a rebel splinter group that refused to sign the peace agreement reached in Abuja last week.

"We don't want this peace," shouted Siddiq Abakar Moussa, one of the menacing youths who gathered in the camp to denounce the peace deal. "This is not our peace. We need the United Nations force to protect us."

One banner denounced the leader of the other Sudan Liberation Army faction that signed the agreement, Minni Arcua Minnawi.

"To the Darfur Arco Minawi is destroyer," it read. "Ruinous subverter. He is a very bad in our country."

As Mr. Egeland's convoy left one part of the camp, a small group of protesters tried to stab an aid worker whom they suspected of being a government spy.

"Janjaweed, janjaweed!" the crowd shouted, grasping at a Sudanese man who works for Oxfam, the British aid organization, as he tried to flee the melee in a car. They were using the local term for the Arab militias who have aligned with the government and carried out brutal attacks on non-Arab villages across the vast arid, countryside of Darfur, a region the in western Sudan the size of France.

The anger in the swirling crowd was palpable when they set upon the aid worker, a Sudanese man who has been working as a primary health coordinator for Oxfam for many years. One young man wielded a knife that came so near the worker's flesh it sheared his shirt. Women tugged at his legs. Boys in filthy white robes wielding sticks and rocks smashed the windows of the United Nations car in which he was trying to get away.

Mr. Egeland, appearing shaken by the news of the killing of the African Union translator in the wake of his visit to the camp, condemned the violence.

"I have seen for myself how the African union colleagues courageously assist the civilian population and the humanitarian community," he said. "It is totally, totally unacceptable what happened today in Kalma."

Conditions have deteriorated in Kalma, one of the oldest and largest camps, since the Norwegian Refugee Council, an aid group, was evicted by Sudanese authorities. Government officials claim that the organization was allowing the rebels and criminals to flourish in the camp, but crime has increased since the agency left, people here said.

"We have no food, no safety," said Halima Muhammed Abakar, who has lived here for three desperate years. "Yesterday, four women were raped when they went to get firewood. We are so afraid."

The African Union is supposed to be protecting these and other displaced people, but the force of 7,000 troops is underfunded and outmanned. When the mob here set upon their compound here, the small, unarmed force inside was helpless and terrified. An armed contingent had to be dispatched from the regional capital to rescue them. But the force did not arrive on time, and the mob broke through their barricades. The translator was hacked and beaten to death, Mr. Egeland said.

Before the killing, protesters and camp residence said they were frustrated with the African Union because it was not doing enough to protect them and demanded that a United Nations force be sent at once. The U.N. is organizing such a force and the Sudanese government has said it will accept it now that a peace agreement has been signed, but it will take many months to arrive.

"The African Union are our friends, and we need them in this critical moment," Mr. Egeland said. "We need the population to support and not attack them."

Mr. Egeland visited Kalma in part because the situation here is emblematic of the frustrations of the displaced people in this conflict, which has raged for three years, killed 200,000 people and driven more than two million from their homes ,and in part because it symbolizes the enormous difficulties aid agencies face in helping those afflicted by the violence. Since the Norwegian Refugee Council was evicted, new arrivals to the camp have been stuck in improvised shelters with no food and little water.

"Since we arrived we don't have any access to food, to water, to any health service," said Sheikh Ahmed Khalil Muhammed, who fled to this camp with 160 families from a village nearby in March. They arrived two days before the Norwegian group was kicked out, and since then they have been living outdoors.

"No one has come to check on us," Mr. Muhammed told Mr. Egeland. "We have become desperate."

If conditions do not improve soon, Mr. Egeland said, "Kalma is a powder keg."

World leaders urge rebels on Darfur peace

The San Jose Mercury News (AP)

by Nick Wadhams

May 9, 2006

Eight foreign ministers led a U.N. Security Council meeting on Tuesday to demand that holdout rebels join the peace deal for Darfur and warned that the fate of the Sudanese region would be a test for the U.N. body.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned the council not to become complacent now that the peace deal has been signed to end violence in Darfur that has killed some 200,000 people since 2003.

"Darfur is still far from being at peace," he said.

He and other ministers urged other nations to contribute more money for humanitarian aid in Darfur. A severe shortage in contributions have forced some aid groups to scale back.

"The plight of the people of Darfur stirs the conscience of all human beings," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said. "But conscience alone will not feed starving people and save innocent lives or bring peace to troubled lands."

Rice was among several ministers who told their colleagues of recent or new pledges to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. The Bush administration recently requested another \$225 million for Sudan from Congress, well above what others have sought.

Annan warned that the council would soon undertake "one of the biggest tests this organization has ever faced," comparable to Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia.

"Since its inception, this council has stood at many moments of history," Britain's Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett said. "Now is such a moment. For the first time in three long hard years of war the people of Darfur have some hope."

Earlier Tuesday, U.N. humanitarian chief Jan Egeland called on Sudan to send food to Darfur, saying Tuesday that promised international aid would not reach the region in time to stave off shortages exacerbated by the coming rainy season.

Egeland spoke to reporters in Khartoum after returning from a tour of the western region that was marred by rioting during a visit to a refugee camp. The refugees attacked a translator in Egeland's entourage, believing he was with the feared Janjaweed militia, then killed a translator working for African Union peacekeepers.

Several diplomats pressured rebel groups to join the peace deal. The main faction of the Sudan Liberation Army had agreed to join, but another branch of the fractured Sudan Liberation Army has refused.

"By hesitating they fail their own people, who most of all want to see peace and security for themselves and future generations," said Ulla Toernaes, Denmark's minister for development and cooperation.

Sudan's temporary ambassador to the United Nations, Mohamed Manis, urged the council to pressure all of Darfur's rebels to join.

"This agreement did not come about by a quirk of coincidence, rather it has been a result of

hard, strenuous and exhaustive endeavors to reconcile the parties and promote negotiations," Manis said. "Abandoning it is unthinkable."

Darfur mediators defend peace deal after protests

Reuters

by Estelle Shirbon

May 10, 2006

Mediators who helped broker a peace agreement for Sudan's Darfur region on Wednesday stepped up efforts to win wider acceptance for the deal after it was greeted with violent demonstrations in some refugee camps.

The Sudanese government and one Darfur rebel faction signed the accord on May 5 but two other rebel groups rejected it and on May 8 protests in several refugee camps targeted the African Union (AU), which mediated the talks that led to the deal.

Many of the demonstrators said they were disappointed with the agreement because it would not protect them effectively.

Six AU mediators issued an open letter on Wednesday to the rebel groups who rejected the agreement, explaining in detail the benefits the deal is designed to bring to them and to the people of Darfur.

"There are so many attempts to misrepresent the agreement," said Sam Ibok, head of the AU mediation team and one of the signatories of the open letter.

"People have responded to one-sided information. They don't have the full picture," he told Reuters, referring to the demonstrations in the camps for internally displaced people.

Rebels took up arms in early 2003 accusing Sudan's Arab-dominated central government of neglecting Darfur, an ethnically mixed region the size of France in the west of Sudan.

Khartoum backed militias known as Janjaweed, drawn from Arab tribes, to crush the rebellion. Tens of thousands of people have died and more than 2 million have fled their homes in the ensuing campaign of murder, rape, looting and arson.

DIPLOMATIC PRESSURE

After two years of peace talks in Nigeria, only one faction of the rebel Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), led by Minni Arcua Minnawi, accepted the settlement drafted by AU mediators.

A rival SLA factional leader, Abdel Wahed Mohammed al-Nur, is still in the Nigerian capital Abuja where he is facing diplomatic pressure to belatedly sign the deal. The deadline for any signatures to be added is May 15.

Nur is weak militarily but the international community is desperate for him to endorse the agreement because he is a member of the Fur tribe, Darfur's largest. Minnawi has more fighters but he is from the smaller Zaghawa ethnic group.

"The open letter is first and foremost aimed at Abdel Wahed (Nur) and his people," said Ibok.

He added that a campaign was being prepared to inform people in Darfur about what the deal offered them. This would include explanatory leaflets in Arabic.

The open letter said some of the suspicions the rebels had expressed about the agreement stemmed from ignorance or misunderstanding of its content.

"At the moment you have nothing. Everything in the agreement is a gain, and if you obtain the support of the people, you can gain still more," said the letter, referring to elections that the agreement says must be held in three years.

"Whoever wins those elections, governs Darfur," the letter said, stressing that this represented an avenue for the rebels to pursue some of the demands that the accord does not meet.

Turning to security arrangements, the mediators wrote that these were the best part of the deal for the rebels.

"At long last, there is a clear plan for dealing with the problem of the Janjaweed," the letter said, spelling out a sequenced plan in which the government must disarm the Janjaweed before the rebels are required to lay down their weapons.

"Demilitarized zones are created along humanitarian supply routes and around camps for internally displaced persons, and in buffer zones that separate the forces of the parties," it added.

Darfur rebel makes peace overture

The Washington Post

by Estelle Shirbon

May 11, 2006

A factional rebel leader from Sudan's Darfur region, under intense pressure to join a peace deal, has made a tentative overture to the Sudanese government that has prompted intensive talks to push for a breakthrough.

Abdel Wahed Mohammed al-Nur, leader of one faction of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), has rejected a peace settlement signed on May 5 by the government and by rival SLA factional leader Minni Arcua Minnawi to end three years of bloodshed.

Nur's refusal to sign the deal, which was also rejected by a smaller rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), has raised fears it will not end the war. The accord was greeted with violent demonstrations in some Darfur refugee camps.

Nur said he had written to African Union (AU) mediator Salim Ahmed Salim asking to reopen discussions with Khartoum and pledging to sign the accord if a list of key demands were addressed in a separate document.

"We are ready to sign if there's a supplementary document ... We did this (the letter) because we want to avoid chaos in Darfur," Nur told Reuters at a hotel in the Nigerian capital Abuja where the talks that led to the peace accord took place.

He said his key demands were for more compensation funds for Darfur from Khartoum, greater political representation for his group, and greater involvement in mechanisms to enforce a ceasefire and disarmament plan foreseen in the accord.

Nur is weak militarily but the international community is desperate for him to endorse the agreement because he is a member of the Fur tribe, Darfur's largest. Minnawi has more fighters but he is from the smaller Zaghawa ethnic group.

Hostility between ethnic groups in Darfur has fueled the conflict.

SENSITIVE TALKS

The SLA and the JEM rebelled in early 2003 accusing the Arab-dominated central government of neglecting Darfur, a desert region the size of France in the west of Sudan.

Khartoum backed militias known as Janjaweed, drawn from Arab tribes, to crush the rebellion. Tens of thousands of people have died and more than 2 million have fled their homes in the ensuing campaign of murder, rape, looting and arson.

Diplomats in Abuja said intense and sensitive discussions involving Nur, Minnawi, the government and AU mediators were going on and it was possible that these would result in Nur signing, but there was also a risk it could all fall apart.

"It's all very delicate ... If Abdel Wahed (Nur) and the government can agree on something to bring him on board that's great, but it all has to involve Minni because they can't rewrite a deal he's already signed," said one diplomat.

Nur and Minnawi loathe each other. Their fight for control of the SLA was one of the main

problems during the Abuja peace talks, which dragged on for close to two years.

The AU considers May 15 a deadline for adding any new signatures to the peace settlement, as its Peace and Security Council meets that day and must afterwards formally present the document to its international guarantors.

Minnawi left Abuja early on Thursday for Chad, where he is expected to try to win support for the accord from President Idriss Deby, who is battling insurgents in a crisis that has become interlocked with the Darfur conflict.

Deby accuses Sudan of backing the Chadian rebels, a charge Khartoum denies. Meanwhile, the Darfur rebels from the Zaghawa tribe have rallied around Deby, who is also Zaghawa.

However, there have been tensions between Minnawi and Deby and observers fear that the Chadian president could act as a spoiler for the Darfur peace deal unless he is pacified.

UN joins inquiry into reported sex abuse by African Union troops in Darfur

UN News Centre

May 5, 2006

Following recent media reports of alleged sexual violence, including rape and child abuse, by African Union (AU) forces monitoring the conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (**UNIFEM**) will participate in the AU's newly established Committee of Inquiry.

UNIFEM Regional Programme Director in East and Horn of Africa, Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, welcomed the urgency with which the Committee was set up after the reports, saying it gives a ray of hope to African women, children and survivors of violence that impunity and inaction by authorities is being seriously dealt with.

"It sends immediate warning bells to perpetrators of sexual and gender based violence that impunity will no longer be the order of the day in Africa," she declared.

The Committee will examine the contents of a BBC Channel 4 television documentary to establish its veracity or otherwise, identify those responsible for the violations and make recommendations on appropriate sanctions.

The UN has a policy of zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse by its own staff, particularly peacekeepers in the field, imposed following allegations in 2004 against peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). At the time the UN Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) cited payments ranging from two eggs to \$5 per encounter. Some victims were abandoned orphans who were often illiterate.

In February, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guéhenno told the Security Council that significant progress had been made in dealing with the problem but much more needed to be done. He said that last year investigations had been completed into allegations of sexual abuse involving 296 peacekeeping personnel.

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Uganda (ICC)

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in Uganda**

**UGANDA: Humanitarian intervention for the north launched
Reuters / IRIN**

May 5, 2006

The Ugandan government has launched an emergency plan for intervention in war-affected northern Uganda, emphasising security, humanitarian assistance, peace-building and reconciliation.

The initiative pledges increased and enhanced police presence in the north, where the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has wreaked havoc for some 20 years, displacing almost 2 million civilians. It aims to establish clear roles for the army, local government-allied militias and police, who are working to facilitate the voluntary return of displaced people and maintain security. The emergency action plan also aims to consolidate peace initiatives and "establish contact and promote dialogue with middle-level LRA, where possible."

However, at the launch of the plan on Thursday, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni ruled out the possibility of a negotiated settlement with the LRA leadership. Instead, he asked for cooperation from Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to apprehend LRA leaders who have been indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes. "[LRA leader Joseph] Kony and the other three commanders must face trial in The Hague," he said. "What remains to be done now is working with the Sudan government, the SPLA [Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army], the Congo government and MONUC [the United Nations mission in the DRC] to capture Kony and a few of his associates and hand them over to The Hague so that we end impunity."

The president maintained the Ugandan army had secured the north and the war was nearing its end. "We have created capacity that henceforth, no terrorist or lawbreaker will come to Uganda and survive for any length of time. That is why Kony is running away. He is not going to the Garamba National Park [in northeastern DRC] as a tourist. We are left with a few gaps here and there, which we are going to solve."

UGANDA: Call for regional effort to tackle LRA

Reuters / IRIN

May 9, 2006

Uganda is pushing for "regional cooperation" in its efforts to hunt down and apprehend the leadership and remaining fighters of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group, who are believed to be hiding in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Following a meeting with his Sudanese counterpart, Abdelrahim Mohamed Hussein, in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, last week, Ugandan Defence Minister Amama Mbabazi called for a coordinated approach between the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), the Congolese and Sudanese national armies, and the United Nations mission in the DRC, known as MONUC.

In November 2005 UPDF operations against LRA bases in Sudan forced a group of fighters led by the second-in-command, Vincent Otti, to cross into the jungles of eastern DRC and set up camp in the Garamba National Park. The Ugandan army claims the group has since been joined by the elusive LRA leader Joseph Kony and is formulating a plan to mount further attacks on Uganda. The LRA has traditionally launched its attacks on northern Uganda from bases in southern Sudan.

Deputy army spokesman Cap Paddy Ankunda confirmed via telephone that excessive pressure by UPDF had made finding safe hideouts within Sudanese territory impossible for the LRA. "They could no longer get food and could not abduct, so they had to move to Garamba. We estimate the group of LRA there could be around 120 in total, including families and fighters," he said.

"We are looking for regional action, where all the parties affected by Kony being in Garamba jointly act and come up with a mechanism and arrangement where Kony can be apprehended and brought to book. We know this is where Kony currently is."

Arrest warrants for the top tiers of the LRA leadership, including Kony and Otti, were issued in 2005 by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague, where they have been indicted for war crimes.

"[Through] working with the Sudan government, SPLA, Congo government and MONUC, we want to capture Kony and a few of his associates and hand them over to The Hague so as to end impunity," said Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni at the launch of a joint monitoring committee for northern Uganda on 4 May. "If for some reason the ICC did not want to prosecute Kony, we would prosecute him ourselves."

The army has persistently threatened to enter DRC if the LRA were to mount any attacks against Uganda from across the border, through exercising its right to self-defence.

"If the regional powers, governments and the international community allow us to enter Congo," said the Ugandan army's Ankunda, "we would be more than willing to help, because the LRA certainly poses a threat to regional peace and security."

The LRA has been fighting against the Ugandan government for almost two decades in a brutal, undulating conflict characterised by the abduction and forced conscription of thousands of children into the rebel ranks. Tens of thousands have been killed and almost 2 million people - or 90 percent of the population of northern Uganda - have been forced to live in squalid camps for the internally displaced

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International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia **(ICTY)**

Official Website of the ICTY

Press Briefing of the ICTY

Christian Chartier, Senior Information Officer
May 3 and 10, 2006

Appeals Chamber Confirms Sentences Against Mladen Naletilic and Vinko Martinovic Summary of the Judgment Read in Court

May 3, 2006

Ivica Rajic Sentenced to 12 Years' Imprisonment Summary of the Judgment

May 8, 2006

Zeljko Mejakic, Momcilo Gruban, Dusan Fustar and Dusko Knezevic Transferred to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Text of the Decision

May 9, 2006

Serbia's Prosecutor Charges Men Behind Suva Reka Massacre Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN)

by Aleksandar Roknic

May 4, 2006

An important trial that is about to open in Belgrade of senior police officials charged with war crimes in Kosovo may influence proceedings in The Hague against seven former officials accused of the same crime.

Last week, the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor's Office brought charges against eight police officers for offences committed against civilians in Suva Reka on March 26, 1999, when 48 members of the Berisha family were murdered.

Among the victims were six children aged between one and four, seven children aged between seven and 13, a woman aged 100 and a woman in her eighth month of pregnancy.

If the Belgrade District Court War Crimes Chamber finds the eight guilty, the incriminating evidence may be re-used in the ongoing trial of former high-ranking Serbian officials in The Hague over Suva Reka.

The men facing trial in Belgrade are Radoslav Mitrovic, now assistant commander of the Gendarmerie but then commander of the police special units in Nis and a member of the Kosovo and Metohija police headquarters; Milorad Nisavic, former member of the State Security Service in charge of the Prizren area; Radojko Repanovic and Nenad Jovanovic, both former senior police officers in Suva Reka; and Sladjan Cukaric, Miroslav Petkovic, Zoran Petkovic and Ramiz Papic, also police officers from Suva Reka. They all denied the charges.

The Berisha murder charges are the first war crimes charges to be brought in any Serbian court against senior police officers in connection with events in Kosovo.

The family was killed on March 26, 1999. One eyewitness, Vjolca Berisha, told journalists, now members of Balkan Insight, that police raided her house that day and killed six men and a woman after searching the premises.

She said other family members fled to the nearby Calabria pizzeria to hide, where the police found them, however, throwing in hand grenades and killing the survivors by opening fire from automatic weapons.

They then loaded the bodies onto two trucks and drove them to the Prizren army barracks. After, the corpses were transported for burial at the shooting range of the Special Anti-Terrorist Unit, SAJ, in Batajnica, near Belgrade.

Before it investigated the Suva Reka case, the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor's Office took statements from about 200 witnesses. Most were Serbs who were then in Kosovo as members of police or military units, while around 50 were Albanians.

The Suva Reka case is likely to be the first in a series of war crimes proceedings that have followed the discovery of mass graves next to the interior ministry special units compound in Batajnica, from which about 900 Kosovo Albanian corpses have been exhumed, including bodies of Suva Reka villagers.

The Hague court has already said it expects Serbian courts to bring other war crimes charges connected with Kosovo after the Suva Reka case is completed.

The Hague tribunal, meanwhile, has indicted seven former senior officials over the same crime in Suva Reka.

They are Serbia's former president, Milan Milutinovic; the former federal deputy prime minister and Serbian prime minister, Nikola Sainovic; the retired general and former army chief of staff Dragoljub Ojdanic; generals Nebojsa Pavkovic and Vladimir Lazarevic and police generals Sreten Lukic and Vlastimir Djordjevic.

The indictment said that Serbian police units on or after the morning of March 25, 1999 "were raiding one house after another, threatening, attacking and murdering the local Kosovo Albanian residents and took away many people at gunpoint from their homes".

The former Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, was also charged in connection with the crime but he died on March 11 this year in the tribunal's Scheveningen detention unit.

Several witnesses who gave their testimonies in connection to the Suva Reka atrocity at Milosevic's protracted trial will probably give evidence before the Belgrade District Court War Crimes Chamber.

A source from the War Crimes Prosecutor's Office told Balkan Insight that the indictment has not yet come into force, as an appeal is still being heard.

However, the source said that when the appeal process is completed next week, and unless it is rejected, the indictment will then be made public.

The same source predicted that the Belgrade trial would have a considerable impact on the trial in The Hague, as prosecutors in both processes were passing evidence back and forward between them.

At any moment, the source added, they in The Hague "may seek some material from us".

The source suggested the evidence to be produced before the District Court War Crimes Chamber was likely to be significant, as the Serbian prosecutors had enjoyed exceptionally good communication with the Serbian police in the process of collecting the evidence.

A Hague tribunal spokesman, Anton Nikiforov, also confirmed that the two prosecutors' offices were in constant communication over Suva Reka.

He said the Hague court had delivered to the Belgrade prosecutor all the documentation and information it possessed over the massacre.

Natasa Kandic, director of the Humanitarian Law Fund in Belgrade, said the approaching trial was important, as it would "reveal the pattern of ethnic cleansing, the expulsion of the population, as it was applied throughout Kosovo.

"The example of Suva Reka shows to what an extent the expulsion operation was organised and institutionalised... and to what a degree the police took part in it."

Kandic said it was already clear that no police station could have conducted such a momentous operation on its own, independently of the chain of command.

"There was a system in place which specified how the decisions and orders within the police structures were to be distributed and acted upon," she said to Balkan Insight.

In her words, the Suva Reka case might reveal in detail more of the workings of this pattern and how the decisions were implemented.

Kandic maintained that the Suva Reka trial in Belgrade would be important for other reasons, too, as it would demonstrate to Serbs that no one could commit crimes in Kosovo with impunity.

"There is a problem with the way in which the Kosovo war crimes are perceived in Serbia, as if the message is that they were fortunate that 'we didn't slaughter all of them'," she went on.

"The Suva Reka case should show the monstrosity of this crime, as well as the wall of silence and the cover-up of what actually happened."

Andrej Nosov, of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights, said he hoped the trial would shed light on the wider context of events in and around Suva Reka. "This was not only about the Berisha family murder," he said to Balkan Insight.

"The Serbian police cleansed all the villages around Suva Reka over four days... the whole area.

"It was strategically important because it was on the way to Prizren. If the prosecutors are ready to present all the evidence about the police plan to cleanse Suva Reka of the Albanian population, this may have some bearing on the Hague trial of police and army generals."

Bruno Vekaric, spokesman for the War Crimes Prosecutor's Office, said to the media the approaching trial should send a clear message to the world that the Serbian state is ready to confront crimes committed by its own nationals head-on.

"This is a good sign that Serbia is ready to face up to its recent past and deal with the perpetrators," said Vekaric.

Aleksandar Roknic is a regular Balkan Insight contributor and journalists working with Belgrade daily

Russia frees Bosnian Serb suspect Zelenovic –Ifx

Reuters

May 6, 2006

A Russian court freed Dragan Zelenovic, a Bosnian Serb indicted by the United Nations war crimes tribunal, after he gave written agreement not leave the country, Interfax news agency reported on Saturday.

A court in the Khanti-Mansiisk autonomous district of western Siberia fined Zelenovic 20,000 roubles (\$735) for having a forged passport, the news agency reported, citing an unidentified court official.

A former military policeman, Zelenovic is wanted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague for atrocities committed by Serb forces after capturing the town of Foca early in the 1992-95 Bosnian civil war.

An amended 2001 indictment charged Zelenovic and fellow military policeman Gojko Jankovic with 14 counts each of crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war for torture and rape.

Hague prosecutor Carla del Ponte has said that Russia was not doing enough to look for fugitives. Del Ponte's spokeswoman said last year that she expected Russia to extradite Zelenovic soon.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday that Russia would fulfill its obligations to the Hague tribunal.

Interfax said prosecutors in Khanti-Mansiisk disagreed with the court's decision and have submitted an appeal.

Zelenovic was detained in Russia last August.

Russian media said at the time that he had been working on construction sites in Khanti-Mansiisk for several years and living under an assumed name.

In August last year, a spokesman for local prosecutors told Reuters that Zelenovic was being held and said documents for Zelenovic's extradition were being prepared.

Former Bosnian Croat militia leader jailed for 12 years by UN war crimes court

UN News Centre

May 8, 2006

A United Nations war crimes court today sentenced a former Bosnian Croat militia commander to 12 years in jail for an attack a dozen years ago on a village in which 31 Muslim civilians were killed, including two elderly women burned in their house and a family of seven who perished in the flames of their shelter.

Ivica Rajic, former commander of the Second Operational Group of the Bosnian Croat Army, last October pleaded guilty to four of the 10 charges against him: wilful killing, inhuman treatment, extensive destruction, and appropriation of property not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), sitting in The Hague, Netherlands, found that the crimes in the central Bosnian village of Stupni Do in October 1993 "were committed on a large scale, were of particularly violent nature and caused severe pain to the victims and their relatives."

Mr. Rajic was also sentenced for his role in the rounding up of more than 250 Muslim men in the nearby town of Vares and their subsequent inhuman treatment.

As aggravating circumstances in the Stupni Do attack, the court cited the examples of "two elderly women, one of whom was an invalid, [who] were found burned inside a house and that

seven members of the same Muslim family (two men, three women and two children aged 2 and 3 years old) were found burned inside their shelter.”

The court noted the importance of the role Mr. Rajic played in these events when, following orders of his own superiors, he planned and ordered the attacks and further ordered the rounding up of Muslim civilians, knowing the substantial likelihood that criminal acts would ensue following these orders.

As mitigating circumstances, the court held that Mr. Rajic’s guilty plea helped to establish the truth surrounding the crimes committed in Stupni Do and Vares. “This may contribute to the reconciliation of the peoples of the former SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) and to the restoration of a lasting peace in the region,” it added.

It also took into account Mr. Rajic's remorse, as expressed in the statement he gave at his sentencing hearing, as well as his cooperation with the Prosecution and his personal circumstances. He will remain in the custody of the Tribunal until he is transferred to a State to serve his sentence.

Bosnia war crimes court opens first genocide trial

Reuters

May 9, 2006

Bosnia's war crimes court on Tuesday launched the trial of 11 Bosnian Serbs charged over the 1995 Srebrenica massacre of 8,000 Bosnian Muslims, its first genocide trial since it opened last year.

The former army officers and special policemen are accused of killing over 1,000 Muslim men aged between 16 and 60 while they were trying to escape the eastern United Nations-protected enclave on July 13, 1995.

Prosecutor Ibro Bulic said 8 of the men fired their machine guns at the prisoners, one threw hand grenades at them and another reloaded the ammunition.

The victims were first buried in a nearby mass grave and transferred to Glogova and Zeleni Jadar mass grave sites two weeks later in order to hide the crime, Bulic said. Some bodies were found after the 1992-95 war.

"The prosecution will ask the court to declare these men guilty so that a small step toward meeting justice can be made," Bulic said in his introductory remarks.

Milenko Trifunovic, one of the men accused of firing his machine gun, and Milos Stupar, commanders of two special police squads engaged in the operation, were charged with individual criminal responsibility for failing to intervene and protect the prisoners.

The 11 accused were arrested last year and all have pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Their indictment brings to 36 the number of those charged for the Srebrenica massacre, Europe's worst atrocity since World War Two.

The U.N. war crimes tribunal in The Hague has also charged 19 people for the massacre. Six have been convicted and nine are on trial or awaiting trial.

The alleged masterminds, Bosnian Serb wartime leader Radovan Karadzic and his military commander Ratko Mladic, remain at large nearly 11 years after being indicted.

All deadlines have ended

B92

May 11, 2006

The Hague Tribunal said that today’s date has no significance, because all deadlines have already been overshot.

Tribunal representative Anton Nikiforov told B92 that there are no new deadlines for the extradition of Hague fugitive Ratko Mladić as far as the Tribunal is concerned, but that Chief

Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte's office still expects that the Serbian Government will fulfil its responsibility of arresting and extraditing Mladić.

Tribunal officials do not wish to comment on the operative actions of the Serbian police, but reiterated that they are only interested in the final result of having Mladić in custody. His arrest and extradition will be the most important step towards cooperation with the Tribunal, Hague officials stated.

Del Ponte will be giving her regular report to the United Nations Security Council on June 7-8. Nikiforov said that if the Mladić situation does not change, a negative report to the Security Council by Del Ponte on Serbia's cooperation is certain. He added that this does not mean that the beginning of June is yet another deadline for Mladić's extradition. Nikiforov said that all Serbia's deadlines have passed and that this obligation should have been taken care of a long time ago.

Martic Trial Adjourned
Institute for War and Peace Reporting
May 12, 2006

The trial of Milan Martić, former leader of the Croatian Serbs' rebellion against Zagreb, has been adjourned for ten days because the accused is ill.

His medical report was discussed in closed session, after which presiding Judge Bakone Moloto ordered the prosecution to prepare the next witness for May 22.

Martić is accused of the persecution, killing and deportation of civilians; the detention and mistreatment of soldiers and civilians; and plunder and destruction of villages in the Croatian and Bosnian Krajina region from August 1991 until August 1995. He is also indicted for attacks on Zagreb in early May 1995, when seven people were killed and 200 wounded.

The last witness to be heard was an analyst who told the court that there had been close links between various military and police services of the Serb Republica Krajina in Croatia, the interior ministry of Serbia and the police services of the Republica Srpska in Bosnia.

The prosecution has so far brought 26 witnesses and planned to finish presenting its case at the beginning of June - a date that may now be put back.

Martić's trial was also delayed in March, after doctors said he was suffering from "a temporary psychological crisis" following the deaths in custody of former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic and Martić's former-ally-turned prosecution witness, Milan Babic, who killed himself as his testimony against Martić was due to come to a close.

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International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR)

Official Website of the ICTR

Father Seromba's Trial Ends Prematurely
AllAfrica.com - Hironnelle News Agency (Lausanne)
April 28, 2006

Judges in the trial of Father Athanase Seromba, the first Catholic Priest to be tried by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) Thursday brought proceedings to a premature close without hearing the last two witnesses, after the accused refused to appear in court for the second day running.

Seromba informed the court through one of his lawyers that he would not appear in court as long as his appeal against the tribunal's rejection of his request to have the judges disqualified had not been heard.

The motion to have the three judges in his trial disqualified was denied on Tuesday.

The chamber ruled that the trial should not be interrupted by the pending appeal. Since they were not able to hear the two remaining witnesses- one of whom was Seromba - the judges brought the proceedings to an end.

The chamber then set the date for the presentation of the final submissions to June 27, 2006. The trial is presided over by Judge Andrésia Vaz from Senegal, assisted by Judge Kari HÅkberg of Sweden and Judge Gberdao Gustave Kam from Burkina Faso.

The former priest in charge of Nyange Parish in Kibuye (western Rwanda) is accused of having supervised the massacres of an estimated 2,000 Tutsis who had taken refuge in his church.

The trial opened at the end of January 2005 and Father Seromba began presenting his defence witness on October 31, 2005.

Seromba's co-counsel, Barnabé Nekuie from Cameroon- the only member of the defence team who has been in court since Wednesday - tried to have the court leave some avenue of appeal, but in vain.

"History will tell us whether this trial respected the rights of the defence", said the lawyer firmly.

The priest is charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. He has pleaded not guilty.

He had been performing his priestly duties under an assumed name in Italy and he gave himself up to the ICTR authorities in 2002 "so that truth could be known".

Two other Catholic priests: Father Emmanuel Rukundo and Father Hormisdas Nsengimana, are also detained by the ICTR as they await their trial.

ICTR Judicial Calendar for the Month of May 2006
AllAfrica.com - Hironnelle News Agency (Lausanne)

May 2, 2006

Several trials are on the agenda in May at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR).

Butare: This trial opened in 2001 and it deals with crimes committed in the southern town of Butare in 1994. It groups together six accused including the only female indicted by the tribunal, former minister of gender, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko.

The trial will be in session for the whole month of May and the defence will continue calling its witnesses.

Bizimungu and others: This trial used to be known as "Government II". Four former government ministers in the interim government in power during the genocide are on trial together. It opened in 2003.

The accused are the former minister of health, Casimir Bizimungu, Jerome Bicamumpaka of foreign affairs, minister of public service Prosper Mugiraneza, and Justin Mugenzi of commerce.

Ndindiliyimana and others: Popularly known as "Military II", this trial will also be in session for the whole month of May. It opened in September 2004 and the prosecution is still presenting its case.

Those accused are the former Chief-of-staff of the gendarmerie (Para-military police), General Augustin Ndindiliyimana, the former army Chief-of-staff, General Augustin Bizimungu, the commander of the reconnaissance battalion, Major François-Xavier Nzuwonemeye and his deputy, Captain Innocent Sagahutu.

"Military II" is going on at the same time as "Military I" which includes the former Directeur de cabinet in the Rwandan ministry of defence, Colonel Theoneste Bagosora and three other senior officers of the former Rwandan army.

This trial adjourned on April 5 and according to the official calendar, it is supposed to resume on May 15. However the accused who are currently presenting their defence witnesses have requested more time before the trial resumes. The trial began in April 2002.

Karemera and others: Edouard Karemera was one of the leaders of the former ruling party in Rwanda in 1994 and he is on trial with two of his former colleagues.

Proceedings were halted in March 2006, and when they resume May 15, the prosecution will continue calling its witnesses. This trial opened in September 2005.

Muvunyi: In 1994, Lieutenant- Colonel Tharcisse Muvunyi was the commandant of the Non-Commissioned Officers' school in Butare.

He was arrested in Great Britain in February 2000 and his trial opened in February 2005. Both parties are on the verge of concluding their cases, although a handwriting expert is to testify May 8 and 9.

Karera: The former Préfet (Governor) of Kigali rural, François Karera has been on trial since January this year. The prosecution wrapped up its case in less than two weeks. Karera will present his witnesses between May 4 and 12.

Mpambara: The former mayor of Rukara (eastern Rwanda) Jean Mpambara is charged with the massacres of an estimated 5,000 Tutsis in his hometown in 1994. The trial opened in September 2005 and closed on February 9, 2006. Both parties present their closing arguments May 2 and 3, 2006.

ICTR May Transfer Three Other Suspects' Files to European Courts

Hirondelle News Agency (Lausanne)

May 2, 2006

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which has already begun the process of sending one of its cases to be tried in Norway, is considering sending three other cases to national jurisdictions in Europe.

"The prosecutor has filed motions in those European countries regarding the accused", the ICTR chief of prosecutions Stephen Rapp told Hirondelle News Agency Tuesday.

"Those suspects are living in the countries we have approached, but have not yet been arrested", he continued, although he did not reveal the identities of the suspects or the countries contacted.

According to the modalities of transferring suspects to national jurisdictions, in the event the prosecutor receives a favourable answer from one of the countries concerned, he files a motion of transfer to the president of the ICTR who then selects one of the trial chambers to examine the request.

Rapp also said that if any of the countries were not willing to prosecute the suspects, they were then requested to arrest and transfer the individual to the ICTR detention facilities in Arusha (Tanzania).

In order to respect the United Nations Security Council deadline for terminating all trials in 2008, the ICTR must transfer some of the cases to national jurisdictions.

Norway was the first country without any link to the suspects to accept conducting the trial of Michel Bagaragaza, a former head of the Rwandan tea industry and close confidant of former president Juvenal Habyarimana.

A trial chamber has been assigned the task of examining the transfer motion filed by the Prosecutor on February 15.

The chief of prosecutions went on to say that the prosecutor is in the process of discussing with some European countries and the United States with a view of transferring to them some completed files for trial.

About 30 files of the same nature have been transferred to Rwanda, which, according to the prosecutor, has shown the most interest.

The ICTR has to date arrested 72 suspects of which 27 have been tried resulting in 24 convictions and 3 acquittals.

Govt Fails to Transfer Former Minister Ntamabyariro As Promised

AllAfrica.com - Hironnelle News Agency (Lausanne)

May 3, 2006

The trial of four former Rwandan cabinet ministers stalled further on Tuesday before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) after the Rwandan Government failed to transfer former minister Agnes Ntamabyariro to testify in Arusha as promised.

The Trial Chamber dealing with the four former cabinet ministers had last Wednesday been assured by the Tribunal's Registry that Ntamabyariro would be in Arusha by Tuesday. She has been scheduled to testify as a defence witness for former commerce minister Justin Mugenzi who is currently presenting his case.

When the trial resumed on Tuesday after its last session on April 26, Mugenzi's lead counsel, Ben Gumpert (UK) informed the court that Ntamabyariro had not been transferred to Arusha.

Gumpert said that Ntamabyariro who is being detained in a prison in Rwanda was not transferred because a letter authorising her transfer was not signed by the Rwandan Minister of Justice last Friday.

He told the court that although the Rwandan Government had given an assurance in a letter that it would transfer Ntamabyariro, it does not seem ready to do so.

He said the court should consider his motion asking for the dropping of charges against Mugenzi and his conditional release.

"Time has now come to give consideration to the motion" Gumpert said.

The trial chamber directed that the court convenes again on Thursday so that Gumpert and the prosecutor can argue the motion.

The trial commonly known as Government II groups together, former minister of commerce, Justin Mugenzi, former minister of health, Casimir Bizimungu, former minister of foreign affairs Jerome Bicomumpaka and former minister of public service Jerome Bicomumpaka.

All the accused who were ministers in the interim government of 1994 have pleaded not guilty to charges of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Their trial commenced on November 3 2003.

Longest Trial Clocks 370 Days in Court

AllAfrica.com - Hironnelle News Agency (Lausanne)

May 8, 2006

The longest trial in the history of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) Monday reached the 370th day mark with no promise of ending soon.

The so-called Butare trial opened in June 2001 and it groups six personalities from Butare in southern Rwanda who are accused of having played a major role in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

Among them is the only woman indicted by the ICTR, former minister of gender, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko and her son, Shalom Arsene Ntahobali, an alleged militia leader. Both mother and son are accused of rape among other counts.

The other accused are two former Butare prefets (governors), Sylvain Nsabimana and Alphonse Nteziryayo and two former mayors, Joseph Kanyabashi of Ngoma commune and Elie Ndayambaje of Muganza.

According to Rwanda government statistics, even though mass killings began two weeks later than in other regions, Butare lay claim to have had the largest number of victims with over 200,000 deaths (over 22% of total deaths countrywide).

With the prosecution having taken three-and-a-half years to argue its case, observers are of the view that the defence is likely take equal time which will see the trial through to the end of the tribunal's mandate in 2008 for trials and 2010 for appeals.

The trial has been dogged by internal squabbling among the accused with both Nsabimana and Kanyabashi running a parallel defence to that of the other accused.

The two's line of defence is that the killings in Butare were spearheaded by Nyiramasuhuko and her son who in turn blame senior government officials in Butare, the highest ranking of whom were the prefet and the mayor.

Nyiramasuhuko and others even applied to have a separate trial but their motion was turned down by the trial chamber which is presided over by William Sekule of Tanzania who has earned a name of passing harsh sentences to suspects brought in his chamber.

Last month the tribunal turned down a request by Ntahobali to have the judges sitting on the case to be disqualified arguing that the chamber was making decisions that were prejudicial to his trial.

Ntahobali is currently testifying on his own behalf.

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Iraqi High Tribunal

Official Website of the Iraqi High Tribunal Grotian Moment: The Saddam Hussein Trial Blog

Clark assails Iraqi trial of Saddam Hussein

Reuters

by Vicki Allen

May 9, 2006

Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, a member of Saddam Hussein's defense team, on Tuesday said the former Iraqi president's trial was a sham designed to justify the U.S.-led invasion.

Saddam's trial on charges of crimes against humanity was "a direct threat to international law, the United Nations, universal human rights and world peace," Clark said at a news conference. He demanded that proceedings be transferred from the Iraqi Special Tribunal to a new court that could work independently, free of prejudice.

Clark, who was attorney general under President Lyndon Johnson from 1967-1969, said the United States wanted the trial to "vindicate its invasion, to validate its occupation, and to make the world believe that the Iraqi people demanded that Saddam Hussein and leaders in his government be executed."

Clark has become known for his radical left-wing politics and for defending controversial figures, including ousted Liberian leader Charles Taylor, former Yugoslav president Slobodan

Milosevic, who died in April, and Elizaphan Ntakirutimana, a leader in the Rwandan genocide.

Saddam's trial has been rocked by the murders of two defense lawyers and one judge. It is currently adjourned until May 15 but Clark said the defense would seek at least another month to review documents.

So far in the trial, he said Saddam's defense lawyers have been denied exculpatory documents and evidence, as well as witnesses statements and court transcripts.

The judges have either been Kurds or Shi'ites, and the defendants with one or two exceptions Sunnis, he said. "It's a sectarian persecution, if you will."

Clark said a fair trial in the midst of such widespread violence sweeping the country was impossible.

He said it should be transferred to a court that was legal, independent, impartial and competent, working in a safe environment "free of prejudicial influences."

Saddam and seven others are on trial for the executions of 148 people in Dujail in 1982 following a failed assassination attempt. Clark said those executed had signed confessions and under Iraqi law, the death penalty was mandatory for treason.

"It is common for the law to require the highest official of a state to approve and sign death warrants. George W. Bush signed 152 such warrants as governor of Texas," he said.

Editorial: Saddam's trial and the unbearable cost of his execution

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

May 15, 2006

The scarcity of opinion articles on Saddam Hussein's trial in the Arab press is remarkable. Most **newspapers**, with slight variations in tone, limit their coverage to neutral informative articles mentioning the scheduled date for the resumption of the trial, May 15.

For most Arabs, the trial is only one aspect of America's grand design to change Iraq and reshape the Middle East. But there is no sense that the trial will have much impact on the future of the region. This may not be an accurate assessment and is probably more a reflection of changing priorities and the feeling that the worst has already happened.

Secular nationalists believe the trial and Saddam's indictment will further ignite Iraqi resistance. But no one really believes it will reunify Iraqis of different religious communities around a common objective. If Iraq's division along sectarian lines is in any way reparable, it is unlikely that memories of Saddam's rule or his contested trial will be effective.

The overwhelming majority of Arabs, governments and **public opinion** alike, have no trust in the way the trial has been organized. Opinions range from questioning the legitimacy of the tribunal and the trial procedure based on legal criteria - as some international human rights organizations have already stressed - to an outright denunciation of the **enterprise** as a farce: the Iraqi judiciary is not independent; the work of the tribunal is dominated by American advisers; basic guarantees for the accused are missing; past American support for Saddam's regime will not be revealed; the **composition** of the court is flawed and the chief judge is bent on revenge; the evidence produced to charge Saddam is not valid and much evidence of the alleged mass executions at Dujail as well as of other charges to come, has been lost.

In contrast, advocates of "democracy first" across the Arab world, mainly human rights activists and liberal intellectuals and opinion leaders, applaud the trial as representing the first time an Arab leader is held accountable in a court of law for his crimes. In **Lebanon** in particular, they see in it a hopeful precedent for the trial of key figures implicated in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Saddam is facing the retribution he deserves and Arabs need to learn that stability can and must be built on voluntary **civic** coexistence rather than on the iron-fist control of a dictator. They need to develop the notion of equal responsible citizenship as the basis of national cohesion. The annihilation of Saddam through his indictment and execution will provide the ruins on which to build this new political culture.

Defiant Saddam refuses to plead

BBC News

May 15, 2006

Iraq's deposed leader Saddam Hussein has refused to enter a plea after detailed charges were formally presented at his trial in Baghdad.

The chief judge read out specific charges against him relating to the killings of Shia Muslims in 1982.

"This is no way to treat the president of Iraq," Saddam Hussein said when asked to plead guilty or not.

After Saddam and seven co-defendants heard the charges against them, the defence starting presenting its case.

Under the Iraqi legal system, the court first hears the prosecution evidence and then the judges decided on the specific charges to be brought.

The charges read out by Chief Judge Raouf Abdel Rahman relate to the defendants' alleged roles in the crackdown on the town of Dujail in 1982 after a failed assassination attempt on Saddam Hussein.

Saddam Hussein was accused of ordering:

- The illegal arrest of 399 people
- The torture of women and children
- The destruction of farmland
- The murder of nine people in the early days of the crackdown
- The murder of 148 people in the later phase of the crackdown

Saddam Hussein, who if found guilty could face the death penalty, refused to enter a plea.

"I can't just say yes or no to this. You read all this for the sake of public consumption, and I can't answer it in brief," he said.

"You are before Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq. I am the president of Iraq according to the will of the Iraqis and I am still the president up to this moment."

The judge ordered the court to record that Saddam Hussein had denied the charges and then read out charges against the other defendants.

The first of these was Barzan al-Tikriti, the former head of the intelligence service, who was charged with the same crimes as his half-brother, Saddam Hussein.

"All you said are lies, everything you mentioned is a lie," Barzan al-Tikriti said when asked how he pleaded.

All eight defendants either refused to enter a plea or pleaded not guilty.

With the charges read out, the defence began its case, starting with Ali Daih Ali, a former Baath party official and one of the lesser known defendants.

Five witnesses were called to the stand before proceedings were adjourned until Tuesday. Three days of hearings are expected this week.

Protection

Since the trial began in October, the frequently interrupted court sessions have focussed on marshalling evidence against Saddam Hussein and his co-defendants.

Now it is the defence's chance to build its case for each of the accused, starting with the minor figures and building up to Saddam Hussein.

The defence phase is expected to last at least a month.

Defence witnesses will be under tight protection and some may testify from behind screens to protect their identity.

The trial has been marred by the killing of two defence lawyers, and in January the first chief judge resigned, amid accusations from government officials that he was too lenient towards the defendants.

Once the defence concludes its case, there will be a long recess while the court considers its verdict.

Recordings

Khamis al-Obeidi, a defence lawyer, told Reuters news agency that dozens of witnesses, including some from Dujail, would testify to the ex-leader's innocence.

The prosecution, which finished its case last month, presented evidence including audio recordings and signatures on execution orders linking the defendants to the killings.

The court also heard a report by handwriting experts confirming Saddam Hussein signed documents ordering the killing of the 148 Shia villagers in 1982.

Defence lawyers have insisted the signatures are forged. They have also contested the impartiality of the handwriting experts, who they say are linked to Iraq's interior ministry.

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Lebanon

Hariri Tribunal Can Restore Faith in Law

Human Rights Watch via Reuters

May 10, 2006

Cyprus denies being approached to host Hariri trial.

Head of the international committee investigating the assassination of Premier Rafik Hariri Serge Brammertz left Friday morning for New York through Amsterdam after questioning the four Lebanese officials detained in the case. This comes as Cyprus denied Friday being approached by the UN to host the trial of any suspects involved in the murder.

"No such request has been submitted by the UN," the Foreign Ministry said in an announcement issued in response to media reports speculating Cyprus would host the trial.

In March, UN chief Kofi Annan said a mixed Lebanese and international court should be established, probably outside Lebanon, to try suspects in the February 14, 2005, bombing that killed Hariri and 22 others.

A UN panel investigating the assassination has accused Syrian and Lebanese intelligence officials of involvement.

Foreign Ministry Permanent Secretary Sotos Zackheos told the Associated Press "no official request from the UN or any other country has been submitted."

A diplomatic source told Agence France Presse Thursday the Cypriot government is considering a proposal to host the UN-backed international court.

Annan has suggested the establishment of a mixed tribunal involving Lebanese and

international judges. Having such a high-profile trial in Lebanon appears to have been ruled out over security fears.

"Cyprus is carefully weighing up the proposal but is cautious not to upset relations with friendly Arab countries," the source told AFP.

Cyprus enjoys good relations with neighbors including Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Egypt and the island has been free of any Mideast terror-related violence since the late 1980s.

The Mediterranean island has long sought a more upgraded peacemaker role in the region and the EU member state is seen as a neutral venue where feuding sides in the Middle East can talk away from the spotlight.

Cyprus hosted low-level Israeli-Palestinian meetings in the past and would be confident in vouching for the safety of judges, witnesses and court personnel.

Nicosia stepped in to accommodate more than a dozen Palestinian gunmen to help break the siege of the Church of the Nativity in 2002. It was also the logistics headquarters for the weapons inspectors going into Iraq prior to the Iraqi war in March 2003.

The issue of the court could be on the agenda when Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos visits Egypt in early May.

Egypt and Austria are also in the picture to hold a trial.

"But Cyprus has the best odds since it's logically the closest and cheapest of all solutions," a Lebanese Justice Ministry source told the paper on Wednesday.

Local daily As-Safir estimates the cost of hosting a trial in Cyprus for several years to be in the region of \$162 million.

Meanwhile the international community awaits the report of UN Special Envoy Terje Roed-Larsen on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1559, which is due on Monday.

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Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL)

**Official Website of the Special Court for Sierra Leone
The Sierra Leone Court Monitoring Programme**

SCSL Court Summary

May 12, 2006.

Special Court Prosecutor to Step Down Press Release

April 28, 2006

The Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court, Desmond de Silva QC, today notified the Secretary-General of the United Nations that he will not seek to renew his contract when it expires on 30 June 2006.

Mr. de Silva originally joined the Special Court as Deputy Prosecutor in August 2002 after being nominated for the post by the Government of Sierra Leone.

As Deputy Prosecutor, Mr. de Silva headed the Appellate Section of the Office of the Prosecutor, where he oversaw the successful Prosecution response to the many legal challenges to the

Court's jurisdiction and existence which were brought by the Defence.

Some of these cases, Mr. de Silva observed today, resulted in landmark legal decisions which will have a considerable impact on the development of international jurisprudence in years to come.

In July 2005, upon the departure of then-Chief Prosecutor David M. Crane, the Secretary-General of the United Nations appointed Mr. de Silva as Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court.

"At a press conference in Freetown shortly after I took up the post of Prosecutor, I pledged to Sierra Leoneans that I would 'strain every nerve and every sinew to bring Charles Taylor to trial before the Special Court for Sierra Leone,'" Mr. de Silva said. "I leave the Court with that pledge fulfilled."

When he leaves at the end of June, Mr. de Silva will be the longest serving international member in the Office of the Prosecutor.

In his letter to the Secretary-General, Mr. de Silva indicated that, after four years in Sierra Leone, he now wishes to spend time with his family in England and also to attend to matters at his Chambers in London.

Mr. de Silva further informed the Secretary-General that, when Charles Taylor comes to trial, whether in Freetown or elsewhere, he would be willing to be considered for reappointment were that the wish of the Secretary-General. By Statute, only the Secretary-General can appoint a Prosecutor of the Special Court.

"When I joined the Special Court four years ago, I was no stranger to Sierra Leone," Mr. de Silva said. "I was called to the Bar in Freetown back in 1969 when I served as defence counsel in Sierra Leone's first treason trial. One of the defendants in that case, in which my colleagues and I finally prevailed, was Samuel Hinga Norman, who is now one of the defendants facing trial before the Special Court. Such is the wheel of fate!"

After being called to the Bar at the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple in 1964, Mr. de Silva entered the famous London Chambers of the Rt. Hon Sir Dingle Foot, QC, MP. In 1984 he was appointed one of Her Majesty's Counsel.

Mr de Silva's own legal practice has made him not only the adviser to Governments and Heads of State, but has also taken him to many jurisdictions in which he has appeared for the prosecution, the defence, or in an advisory capacity. Apart from Sierra Leone, they include The Gambia, Tanzania, Gibraltar, the Bahamas, Ghana, Botswana and South Africa.

"I believe the dedicated team I leave behind in the Office of the Prosecutor, which consists of both Sierra Leoneans and internationals from many countries, is a shining example of the way in which international criminal justice should be administered by the Prosecution," Mr. de Silva said.

Taylor prison location holding up trial

IRIN via Reuters

May 4, 2006

Legal wrangling over which European country might house the indicted former Liberian president Charles Taylor should he be convicted by the International Criminal Court, means he is unlikely to be moved out of Freetown until at least next month, experts warned.

Taylor, whose charges include responsibility for murder, mass rape and sexual slavery, mutilation, and use of child soldiers in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war, was arrested in late March.

Officials for the Special Court for Sierra Leone, citing regional concerns that Taylor is a potential security threat and that the trial could take many months and even years, requested immediately that the proceedings be transferred to the ICC in The Hague.

The Netherlands agreed to allow the Sierra Leonean Special Court to use ICC courtrooms, cells,

and facilities in The Hague. But it dictated that the UN Security Council had to authorise the trial; that the ICC and the Sierra Leoneans agree on cost sharing; and that arrangements be made for the transfer of Taylor to another state once the trial is over.

A spokesperson for the ICC confirmed to IRIN on Thursday that the governing body of the ICC and the Special Court for Sierra Leone had reached an agreement on the use of ICC facilities, and on how to split the cost of the trial.

But "there is still no news on which country will take him after the trial", said Tessa Martens, a spokesperson for the Netherlands Foreign Ministry in The Hague.

Richard Dicker, head of the international justice programme at the NGO Human Rights Watch, warned that leaving Taylor in his cell in Freetown was "a bad thing for the people of West Africa".

"It's imperative that the international community step forward and offer up facilities to incarcerate Taylor if he's convicted at trial. It's disturbing given that Taylor is in effect recognised to pose a threat to the peace and security of West Africa that states have not been more forthcoming in offering up their prison facilities to house him," said Dicker.

Sweden, believed by some analysts to be the current frontrunner to house Taylor if he is convicted, will not reach a formal decision on the matter until some time in June.

Nina Ersman at the Swedish Foreign Ministry in Stockholm confirmed Sweden had been approached by the UN, and that the government last month submitted legislation to the Swedish parliament that would change Swedish laws to allow it to host an international war criminal, but that parliament would not meet on the matter until after 1 June.

"The appeal must be passed through the parliament as Sweden cannot in its present legal framework receive this person. The legislation still has to be passed and then there has to be a decision on the case. The request was put forward specifically because of the Charles Taylor case," said Ersman.

Ersman said it would be premature to say it has been decided that Sweden will offer to hold him. "I have a feeling the last hasn't been said on this," she added.

Another Scandinavian country, Finland, is also a possible venue, should Sweden not pass its legislation. "The name of Finland has been mentioned informally but no official request has been made yet," said Erja Tikka, spokesperson for the Finland Foreign Ministry. "Finland does have the right legislation for this," she added.

A Danish government official told IRIN that a prior UN request to Denmark to house Taylor had been rejected.

"Denmark is a country that has always promoted international law and the rule of law so it was a natural one to think of. We've also taken some people convicted in the Yugoslav tribunal, so there is a tradition of these kinds of cases. But Denmark does not have the facilities needed to house Charles Taylor," the official said.

US's daily, The New York Times, reported on Friday that Austria was also asked to provide a prison by the UN but declined. Austrian government spokespeople were not available for comment.

Charles Taylor, a US and Liberian citizen, broke out of an American jail in 1985, where he was being held on charges of stealing US \$1 million from the Liberian government.

He fled back to West Africa where he resurfaced in Libya, Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, and launched a rebellion that cost more than 300,000 lives.

He has been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

May 9, 2006

Prosecutors at the trial of a Dutch businessman, charged with war crimes in Liberia, said on Monday he should be jailed for 20 years.

Prosecutors also demanded a fine of 450.000 euros for Augustinus Kouwenhoven -- allied with former Liberian President Charles Taylor -- because of the profit he made in dealing with weapons, Dutch newswire ANP reported.

A judgement is expected by mid-June

The 63-year-old is a former executive of the Oriental Timber Company and the Royal Timber Corporation in Liberia.

He is accused of committing war crimes against Liberians and violating a United Nations arms embargo between 2001 and 2003.

Kouwenhoven, who was arrested in Rotterdam in March 2005 by Dutch police, pleaded not guilty at the start of his trial last month in The Hague.

According to witness statements, his companies' militias "are believed to have been involved in the slaughtering of civilians, allowing nothing and nobody -- including babies -- to be spared", the prosecution has said.

Kouwenhoven was responsible for the logistics of delivering weapons to Taylor, who is currently in a U.N.-guarded cell in the capital of Sierra Leone awaiting trial for war crimes charges, prosecutors said.

Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity stemming from Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war, a conflict intertwined with neighbouring Liberia's own civil war that Taylor started in 1989.

The U.N.-backed court for Sierra Leone due to try Taylor has asked the Netherlands to hold the trial at the International Criminal Court in The Hague due to security concerns.

At Special Court for Sierra Leone... Witness explains how Kamajors fell out with soldiers
Awareness Times (Freetown)

by Saffia S. Kabba and Tom E Tommy

May 11, 2006

The fourteenth defence witness testifying in the ongoing trial of Chief Sam Hinga Norman and co. at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, yesterday explained how Kamajors fell out with their counterparts in the Sierra Leone Army in 1996.

The Kamajors, he said, were fighting in concert with the soldiers to get rid of rebels who were rampaging parts of the country.

The witness, who identified himself as a businessman named Borbor Brima, and a resident of Koribondo, said in 1996 the chief of Koribondo announced that they needed volunteers to be initiated into the Kamajor movement.

After recruiting a good number of Kamajors, he said they stated fighting alongside the loyal government soldiers to dislodge the rebels.

The witness noted that this collaboration lasted until May 25 1997 following the coup which saw the temporal overthrow of the legitimate SLPP government.

Following the coup, the witness said the soldiers put out an announcement that all Kamajors should surrender their arms and ammunition to the nearest police station.

This announcement, the witness said, did not augur well with the Kamajors, adding that they deliberately refused to comply by the terms of the announcement.

According to him, most of the Kamajors fled to nearby towns and forests to keep themselves away from their former allies turned enemies.

The disappearance of the Kamajors, the witness said, led the soldiers to launch an attack on Koribondo, adding that while the "People's Army" as they were called were there, they were behaving as if they were Kamajors so as to disguise their identities.

He said it was at this juncture that the Kamajors mobilized themselves and launched their first attack on Koribondo, though that attack was unsuccessful.

According to him, the relationship between the two former allies became even more sour by the said attack, adding that since then, the relationship remained hostile on to the day the war was declared over by no less a person than HE the President, Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah.

Also testifying was Wuyater Sheriff who in her testimony explained how they were mistreated by government soldiers who occupied Koribondo, before the Kamajors finally succeeded in taking over the town from them.

He said when the Kamajors succeeded in liberating the town; the retreating soldiers took away with them a number of civilians and set some houses alight.

War Crimes Court Undermines TRC, Says S/Leone Former TRC Chairman

The Analyst (Monrovia)

May 12, 2006

The Chairman of the erstwhile Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Bishop Joseph C. Humper, says having the Special Court in Sierra Leone to operate at the same time as the Sierra Leonean TRC, greatly undermined the effectiveness of that country's reconciliation process.

Bishop Humper made the disclosure over the weekend when he visited the offices of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia at the head of a two-man delegation from Sierra Leone to Liberia.

The Sierra Leonean Bishop said that the simultaneous creation and operation of the Special Court alongside the TRC created undue impediments in his country's TRC quest to get alleged perpetrators to appear for hearings.

Sharing his experiences with Commissioners of the Liberian TRC on the challenges and prospects of truth commissions, Bishop Humper said that due to the conflicting messages of the Special Court versus the TRC, uncertainty was created in the minds of alleged violators of crimes.

He said that many perpetrators believed that going to the TRC would mean automatic turnover to the Special Court for prosecution and therefore did not go to the TRC.

As a result, he lamented that many alleged perpetrators, including some former members of the RUF, who initially would have gone before the TRC opted to stay away for fear of being dragged to the Special Court.

Ironically, the Bishop further noted that this suspicion was buttressed by the fact that the TRC offices were located within a short distance from the Special Court.

" Indeed, it was even strongly speculated that there existed a secret tunnel from the TRC building to the building housing the Special Court via which alleged violators would be brought to appear before the Court," Humper maintained.

He emphasized that the tasks ahead of the Liberian TRC are daunting and challenging but, not unachievable. He said that the TRC's success is predicated upon support the Commission receives from everybody.

Bishop Humper stressed the importance of civil society and the media in the TRC process stating that the cooperation and support of both sectors is crucial to the effectiveness and

outcome of the TRC process.

He finally cautioned the TRC to remember that the Liberian experience is a unique one and therefore, the Commission must not copy or borrow blindly from other past truth commissions.

Responding, the Vice Chairman of the TRC, Mrs. Dede Dolopei, expressed thanks to the delegation for its interest and words of wisdom to the TRC.

She assured the delegation of the TRC's commitment to ensuring that the commission completes its mandate.

She disclosed that the mandate of the TRC is to promote national peace, security, unity and reconciliation, a release signed by the Chairman of Media Relations and Outreach of the Truth and Reconciliation of Liberia, Massa A. Washington, said.

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Reports

United Nations Reports

Torture 'conducted on systematic basis' in Nepal: UN rapporteur

UN News Centre

May 2, 2006

A United Nations expert on torture told a Geneva-based panel today that Nepal was the only country out of four he visited on fact-finding missions where he had concluded that "torture was conducted on a systematic basis."

The Committee against Torture said that Special Rapporteur Manfred Nowak had briefed them on his missions to Georgia, Mongolia, Nepal and China, along with his examination of detention facilities in Guantanamo Bay -- despite not visiting these, and all other work he had done related to the issue of torture since his appointment in December 2004.

Special Rapporteurs are unpaid experts serving in an independent personal capacity who received their mandate from the now defunct UN Commission on Human Rights and will now report to the newly established and enhanced Human Rights Council.

Nepal was the only country where he had concluded so far that torture was conducted on a systematic basis. "Torture was being conducted both by the Government and by the Maoists, who were using shocking forms of torture, including on their own members," the Committee quoted Mr. Nowak as saying about his trip to Nepal in September 2005.

"One of the reasons he concluded that the practice of torture was systematic was that he had had fairly frank admissions at a high level. One official had said that 'a little bit of torture helps.'"

Nepal was also the country that had received the highest number of allegations in 2004, 2005 and 2006 although Mr. Nowak noted that notwithstanding the civil war that was going on with the Maoist insurgents, there was a very lively non-governmental organization (NGO) community in the country.

Concerning his visit in February 2005 to Georgia, Mr. Nowak said the Georgians wanted to improve their human rights situation and he had encountered a very open spirit there, adding that many of his recommendations had already been implemented, including the ratification of the Optional Protocol against Torture.

The Special Rapporteur told the Committee that the only visited countries if he received assurances that he could visit all the detention facilities without prior warning and interview detainees in private. That was the reason why he and other experts had had to cancel their inspection visit to Guantanamo Bay. The United States Government would not grant their request to have private interviews with the detainees there.

Mr. Nowak said there had been some difficulty with his mission to China although he was able to visit the prisons in Tibet and other areas that had not been visited before and there had been no problem with meeting the detainees in private. The only problem was that quite a number of detainees were afraid to speak, and he had to respect that.

After Mr. Nowak's briefing, the Committee debated various issues relating to torture and human rights, including whether the Special Rapporteur would visit Chechnya and investigate the alleged situation of private prisons there.

Côte d'Ivoire : UN mission condemns attack against one of its buses

UN News Centre

May 6, 2006

The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (**UNOCI**) has strongly condemned an attack carried out against one of its buses and its civilian occupants in Yopougon, a suburb of Abidjan.

In a statement released today on the 28 April incident, UNOCI also condemned "the threats against its personnel and the obstruction of their freedom of movement."

The mission "urgently calls on Ivorian authorities to do everything possible to prevent and punish such acts, which are in contravention of Ivorian laws and international commitments of the Government of Côte d'Ivoire."

The acts and threats "follow inflammatory declarations by political leaders against various aspects of the implementation of the roadmap," the statement said.

The Security Council established UNOCI in 2004 to assist the Ivorian parties in implementing a peace agreement they signed in January of that year, ending their north-south civil war. It currently guards the so-called Zone of Confidence separating the Government-ruled south and rebel-held north.

One year after Uzbekistan killings, UN rights chief conveys sympathy to families

UN News Centre

May 12, 2006

Marking one year since the tragic killings in the eastern Uzbek city of Andijan, in which hundreds of people reportedly lost their lives, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour today conveyed her deep sympathy to all the families affected, saying the consequences of these tragic events continue to be widely felt.

"One year after the killings, no internationally accepted account of the events has been established," **said** the High Commissioner, expressing the hope that Uzbekistan will still take advantage of the offers for assistance made by the international community, including the UN.

Ms. Arbour has on several occasions called for an independent, international inquiry into the events on 13 May last year when reports stated that hundreds of protesters were killed after Uzbek troops fired indiscriminately to disperse them. The event sent hundreds of Uzbeks fleeing out of their country, and sparked a refugee crisis with Kyrgyzstan.

The Uzbek Government claimed fewer than 200 people were killed in the unrest. However, more than 450 of the Uzbek refugees subsequently provided testimony to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) regarding the events of 13 May and an **OHCHR** report in July concluded that based on consistent, credible testimony, military and security forces committed grave human rights violations that day.

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) assisted in the evacuation to Romania of 439 Uzbeks who had fled to neighbouring Kyrgyzstan after the killings and almost all of these have been resettled to

other countries worldwide.

However UNHCR said today that the repercussions of last year's tragedy are still being felt by the survivors, some of whom remain in Kyrgyzstan, while others have been given jail terms in Uzbekistan for alleged involvement in the events of last May.

Haitvoy, a 29-year-old Uzbek, has been in exile in Kyrgyzstan for a year now, struggling to survive amid news that his brother back home was recently sentenced to 13 years in prison. Others tell similar stories, many having left their families behind, including Dilshot, whose brother is still in detention for taking part in the protests.

Another Uzbek, Rasuljon, is alone in Osh, which is in south-western Kyrgyzstan, having not been resettled because he couldn't get into the border camp at Jalal-abad from where the 439 were evacuated, due to security measures. Now he is among a group of Uzbeks awaiting a decision on their refugee status from the Kyrgyz Government.

Another four Uzbeks recognized by UNHCR as refugees are still in detention in Osh, pending a decision by the Kyrgyz authorities on their fate, and a UNHCR spokeswoman today reiterated the agency's concern about the fate of the four and its calls on the government not to send them back by force.

Those who do file asylum claims are interviewed by the Kyrgyz Government's Committee on Migration and Employment together with the UN refugee agency.

UNHCR closed its office in Uzbekistan last month after 13 years of service following an ultimatum by the Foreign Ministry to end its work by 17 April.

"UNHCR expressed regret over the decision as our work in the country was ongoing and many refugees continued to depend on assistance from us," UNHCR spokeswoman Jennifer Pagonis said at the time. "But we only work in a country by invitation and in support of the government. So in those exceptional situations where we are asked to leave, we leave."

NGO Reports

U.S. Offers No Concrete Steps Toward Implementing McCain Ban on Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment

Human Rights First

May 5, 2006

In the final day of its appearance before the UN Committee against Torture, the United States Government failed to provide a concrete plan for preventing all U.S. officials from using cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment in interrogations of detainees in U.S. custody. Abusive interrogations are banned by the McCain Amendment, which was passed by Congress last year. This law reaffirms the U.S. government's obligation under the Convention Against Torture, but the administration has yet to make clear what the law means in practice.

"In light of the widespread abuse of detainees in U.S. custody, which Human Rights First and others have documented, the continued failure of the United States to implement the law banning cruel treatment by all U.S. officials remains deeply troubling," said Gabor Rona, Human Rights First's International Legal Director.

Human Rights First has documented nearly 100 deaths in U.S. custody, only 12 of which resulted in any kind of punishment. The Pentagon has classified 34 of these cases as homicides. Human Rights First has documented eight cases where detainees in U.S. custody were tortured to death.

"Human Rights First has urged the U.S. Government to incorporate the McCain Amendment standard in its new Army Field Manual on interrogations," said Mr. Rona. "But unfortunately we received no such assurances at these hearings," Rona said.

U.S.: Bush Should Close Guantanamo Now

Human Rights Watch

May 9, 2006

President George W. Bush should shut the Guantanamo Bay detention facility now and not wait for a Supreme Court ruling, Human Rights Watch said today.

In an interview with the German public television station ARD that was broadcast Sunday night, President Bush said for the first time that he would like to close the facility at Guantanamo. But Bush undercut his remarks by referring to a pending case in the U.S. Supreme Court, stating that the Supreme Court first had to decide whether the detainees there should be brought before civilian courts or military commissions.

"There is no reason for the Bush administration to wait for a court decision before closing Guantanamo," said Joanne Mariner, Terrorism and Counterterrorism Program director at Human Rights Watch. "Any detainees implicated in criminal acts can and should be charged now. The rest should be released."

In *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld*, a case currently before the Supreme Court, the justices will be ruling upon the legality of the military commissions established by the Bush administration to try so-called enemy combatants held at Guantanamo. A ruling in the case is expected in June. But Human Rights Watch said the administration can and should remedy Guantanamo's problems before the court's decision in *Hamdan*.

President Bush's statements on German television were important in several respects. First, they were an implicit acknowledgment that Guantanamo has been a failure. Second, and equally important, they were the first time that Bush has recognized that the detainees should face trial, rather than be held in indefinite detention.

In acknowledging that Guantanamo should be closed, Bush belatedly joins a host of other world leaders, including some of his closest allies. Others who have called for Guantanamo's closure include British Prime Minister Tony Blair, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Among the problems that led to Guantanamo's notorious international reputation was the physical abuse of detainees. At least 60 detainees have made credible allegations of serious abuse at Guantanamo, as documented in a **recent joint report** by several human rights groups, including Human Rights Watch.

One detainee, Mohammed al-Qahtani, was reportedly subjected to weeks of sleep deprivation, isolation and sexual humiliation in late 2002 and early 2003. Human Rights Watch has obtained an unredacted copy of al-Qahtani's interrogation log, and believes that the techniques used during al-Qahtani's interrogation were so abusive that they amounted to torture. Another detainee, Mohamedou Slahi, has made similar allegations about interrogation abuse.

The coercive interrogation techniques practiced at Guantanamo severely complicate the possibility of future trials. When a confession is coerced from a criminal suspect, it can be difficult to prove, as due process requires, that his later prosecution is not based on the fruits of that coercion.

"The coercive methods used at Guantanamo have not only been abusive but also counterproductive in terms of putting the detainees on trial," Mariner said.

Although Bush's remarks suggest that the Guantanamo detainees should end up in court, the administration has indicated to date that only a fraction of the detainees will be prosecuted. Only 10 of the 480 detainees now held at Guantanamo have been charged before military commissions. The chief prosecutor, Air Force Col. Morris Davis, said two weeks ago that charges were expected soon against about two dozen others. Administration officials have said in the past that they expect up to 70 to 80 detainees to be charged.

Hundreds more detainees are apparently not slated for prosecution. Instead, they are being held because they allegedly engaged in hostilities or were allegedly connected to groups like the Taliban or al-Qaeda.

Human Rights Watch is also concerned that some detainees face return to countries where they may face torture or other abuse. At present, there is no meaningful mechanism to allow detainees to challenge their possible return to a country where they would be subject to mistreatment.

Guantanamo currently holds almost 500 detainees, including large numbers from Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Afghanistan. The United States is also believed to be holding three dozen or more detainees in long-term incommunicado detention at undisclosed detention facilities outside the United States, in violation of international legal prohibitions against enforced disappearances.

One year on, Andizhan victims deserve justice **Amnesty International**

May 13, 2006

On 13 May 2005 Uzbekistani security forces fired indiscriminately on demonstrators, who had gathered in the city of Andizhan in eastern Uzbekistan to complain about repressive government policies and widespread poverty, killing hundreds, mostly unarmed civilians.

Hundreds fled to neighbouring Kyrgyzstan in search of refuge. Hundreds suspected of involvement in the events were detained, and many were allegedly tortured or otherwise ill-treated. Dozens were tried and sentenced in unfair trials.

One year on, the authorities in Uzbekistan have continued to reject calls of the UN, the European Union and other members of the international community for an impartial, independent and thorough international investigation.

They have refused to take effective measures to investigate the violations by the security forces and to bring to justice those responsible.

Instead, the authorities have imprisoned human rights activists and gagged the independent media in an attempt to bury the truth about the Andizhan killings.

They have tried to conceal the fact that repressive practices such as arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment, unfair trials, and lack of freedom of expression and association – that led to the Andizhan protests – continue unabated.

Several prominent human rights defenders, including **Mutabar Tadzhibaeva**, **Saidzhakhon Zainabitdinov** and **Dilmurod Muhiddinov**, have been sentenced to long prison terms after trials that fell far short of international fair trial standards.

These prisoners of conscience –detained solely for trying to tell the truth about Andizhan – should be released immediately.

Respect for universal human rights is the only way to properly underpin our security. Fair trials and an absolute ban on torture are among the most potent weapons in the fight against terrorism.

Violence and Repression Worsening in Year Since Massacre in Uzbekistan **Human Rights First**

May 13, 2006

One year ago, on May 13, 2005, Uzbek security forces murdered hundreds of unarmed, civilian protestors gathered in a town square in Andizhan, Uzbekistan. The government of Uzbekistan has hidden and distorted information about the massacre. It has severely persecuted lawyers, human rights advocates, and independent journalists – and their families – who have tried to investigate and report on the Andizhan events.

“The massacre in Andizhan should have served as a wake up call to the international community,” said Maureen Byrnes, Executive Director of Human Rights First. “Instead, many

governments continue to cooperate with and provide assistance to the government of Uzbekistan. They have done so as the human rights situation in Uzbekistan has gone from bad to worse."

Human Rights First calls on the international community to send a unified message to the government of Uzbekistan: The murder of hundreds of unarmed civilians and continuing widespread repression will not be tolerated. All agreements made with the Government of Uzbekistan must be contingent on verifiable improvement of its human rights practices.

Specifically, Human Rights First urges the United States Government to support targeted sanctions against the Government of Uzbekistan. US leaders must continue to make clear that the US will not sacrifice human rights and democracy concerns in the interest of promoting greater security cooperation. Leaders of the international community, including the United States, must take added measures to apply effective pressure on the Government of Uzbekistan to abide by its human rights obligations.

Background

In its November 2005 report ***Karimov's War: Human Rights Defenders and Counterterrorism in Uzbekistan***, Human Rights First placed the Andizhan massacre in context, describing how over the last decade President Karimov has misused concerns over security to undermine respect for basic rights. While the Andizhan massacre was the most massive single act of violence committed by the Uzbek government against civilians to date, it was not an isolated incident. Rather, what happened at Andizhan was part of a much broader pattern of oppression in the name of counterterrorism that has characterized President Karimov's long rule.

ICRC deplores U.S. prison access CNN / Associated Press

May 12, 2006

The head of the international Red Cross has deplored the refusal of the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush to allow its neutral delegates to visit detainees in secret detention.

In an unusually strongly worded statement issued Friday, the neutral agency known for its discretion expressed disappointment that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and other officials refused to yield to the demand.

"No matter how legitimate the grounds for detention, there exists no right to conceal a person's whereabouts or to deny that he or she is being detained," said Jakob Kellenberger, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, following a series of top-level meetings in Washington.

The ICRC is designated by the Geneva Conventions on warfare as the organization to visit prisoners of war. It is the only independent body the United States allows to visit terror suspects detained in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but it has long been demanding access to detainees in "undisclosed locations."

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