

CONFRONTING LIBERIA

HEARING
BEFORE THE
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OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 14, 2001

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ed Royce [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Mr. ROYCE. This hearing of the Subcommittee on Africa will come to order.

It is a great pleasure for me to chair the Subcommittee for another Congress, and I would like to say I look forward to working with Mr. Payne, the Ranking Member, and all the Members of the Subcommittee. I would like to extend a special welcome to one of our new Members who is here with us, Congressman Jeff Flake of Arizona.

There are several individuals that I would like to acknowledge in the audience at this time. The Ambassador of Sierra Leone, Ambassador John Leigh, is with us. I would ask him to stand.

Ambassador Mohamed Aly Thiam of Guinea is with us as well.

I regret that we are starting this session here with such a grim situation, but it is really a subject that demands our immediate attention. Over the past 4 years, Charles Taylor has waged a continuous assault on the democratic dreams of the Liberian people. He rules by decree, he suppresses the press, including USAID-supported STAR radio, which he forced off the air, and he sanctions, if not directs, the murder of political opponents, including Sam Dokie. The fortunate ones in the opposition now live abroad.

Today we will hear from a representative of the Liberian-American community on its vision of a better Liberia.

Taylor has ruined what remained of the Liberian economy after the 7-year war he waged. He and his so-called "inner circle" control virtually all the nation's significant trade, as the United Nations recently reported. Liberia has been described as Charles Taylor, Inc. This corporation is corrupt to its core.

As this Subcommittee has profiled over the last several years, Charles Taylor is a menace to West Africa. One of today's witnesses will state that "Taylor's role has been to mastermind carnage in Sierra Leone for the sole purpose of controlling its diamond mines from which he derives income to enrich himself and buy arms and ammunition to continue his control over Liberia and, ultimately, over West Africa as a sub-region." That witness recognizes Taylor as a "regional terrorist." Mydea Reeves-Karpeh, I believe, is right.

Taylor's accessories in Sierra Leone, as we now know with crystal clarity, are the Revolutionary United Front, as we refer to them, the RUF. The U.N. panel of experts issued a report last December, and I am going to quote from the U.N. report: "We found unequivocal and overwhelming evidence that Liberia has been actively supporting the RUF at all levels in providing training, weapons and related material, logistical support, a staging ground for attacks and a safe haven for retreat and recuperation, and for public relations activities."

President Taylor, the report notes, is actively involved in fueling the violence in Sierra Leone. Underscoring his tight ties with the RUF, the report found that Taylor even uses the RUF personnel for his own personal security detail. This is the same RUF whose signature is forced amputations of men, women and children.

I highly commend this report by the United Nations, which well documents the frightening syndicate of international crime that Taylor now stands at the center of, to anyone concerned about West Africa's fate.

Acting on this report, the U.N. Security Council last week acted to impose diamond export, travel and other sanctions on Charles Taylor. Sanctioning Taylor was the right thing to do, but in my view, it was a mistake to give him 2 months to comply with the U.N. demands that he stop aiding the RUF before the sanctions bite. This man has a record. For him, peace agreements are tactical delays, designed to lull opponents before he strikes again. This was the case with the Lome Accord for Sierra Leone. Taylor has worked a cease-fire between the RUF and UNAMSIL, the U.N. peace-keeping operation in Sierra Leone, and he has done that so that the RUF is freed up to attack Guinea. Now Taylor is making a bid to stave off the diamond and travel sanctions, but it is a feint.

Instead of waiting 2 months, the Security Council should have imposed these sanctions now, in my view, as well as a ban on Liberian timber exports, as it was considering. Some reports have the timber trade being more valuable to Taylor than his illicit diamond trading. What is clear is that Taylor is instigating an environmental calamity. The Liberian virgin forest is critical to the environmental health of West Africa. Taylor's timbering, done in conjunction with foreign companies, is of no economic benefit to the Liberian people. It is also unsustainable; this is clear-cut timber, and it threatens to devastate the rain forest within a decade. It doesn't surprise me that the Chinese Government rejected the proposed U.N. timber sanctions, giving Taylor a victory. I wonder why the French Government did as well?

UNAMSIL, tasked to cope with RUF aggression, unfortunately has proven to some extent a failure. This U.N. force of some 10,000 men appears unwilling and incapable of doing the job that needs to be done if we are serious about peace and stability in Sierra Leone, and that is driving the RUF out of Sierra Leone's diamond fields. This is the job some 300 well-equipped and motivated soldiers managed to do 4 years ago. Right now, UNAMSIL is effectively dividing Sierra Leone, unfortunately ensuring that the RUF can mine diamonds and sustain itself with impunity in their region. The people of Sierra Leone are tiring of UNAMSIL. This operation's mandate expires at the end of this month. It needs to be

fundamentally reformed by then, or I will no longer be able to support UNAMSIL.

It is not just Sierra Leone that is imperiled. The survival of Guinea is on the line. Its government has awakened to this reality, as Charles Taylor wages war on Guinea with his proxies. Conakry has requested U.S. military aid to bolster its armed forces' ability to secure its borders. The U.S. must strongly consider providing that aid now.

West African states are weak and they are getting weaker. If we don't act with vigor now, the region neighboring Liberia will become an irreversible humanitarian and environmental nightmare. In a few years, our ability to do anything constructive may well be gone. We need to bring a sense of urgency to our West Africa policy. We are not serious about Liberia and Africa if we are not serious about this crisis.

We do need to be realistic about what we can achieve. Democracy is not going to develop overnight in West Africa. What we can achieve in the short term, though, is stability. Charles Taylor is a plague on the region.

Senator Feingold, who I am pleased we will hear from later today, called Taylor a "war criminal" during a recent trip to the region. Considering what Taylor has been doing to his country and region, and recalling the little boys and girls who last September told us to our faces how they had their arms and legs severed by the Taylor-supported RUF, the Liberian President should live with that tag day and night. I have said before that Taylor should be made to realize that the U.S. has the ability and the will to undermine his rule, should his support for the RUF continue. Well, it has, and Taylor's time is up. For the sake of tens of millions of West Africans, it is time to act forcefully against President Taylor.

Now I would like to turn to the Ranking Member for an opening statement. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Royce follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE EDWARD R. ROYCE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA

WASHINGTON, D.C.—“The West African country of Liberia is in terrible shape. Its 1997 election, far from being the beginning of a more hopeful era in Liberia—one in which stability and democracy and human rights take root—instead now looks like a blip of false hope in President Taylor's ruthless march to power. Over the past four years, Taylor has waged a continuous assault on the democratic dreams of the Liberian people. He rules by decree, suppresses the press, including USAID-supported STAR radio, which he forced off the air, and he sanctions, if not directs, the murder of political opponents, including Sam Dokie. The fortunate ones now live abroad. Today we'll hear from a representative of the Liberian-American community on its vision of a better Liberia.

“Taylor has ruined what remained of the Liberian economy after the seven-year war he waged. He and his cronies, the so-called 'Inner Circle,' control virtually all the nation's significant trade, as the United Nations recently reported. Liberia has been described as Charles Taylor, Inc. This corporation is corrupt to its core.

“As this Subcommittee has profiled over the last several years, Charles Taylor is a menace to West Africa. One of today's witnesses will state that ‘Taylor's role has been to mastermind carnage in Sierra Leone for the sole purpose of controlling its diamond mines, from which he derives income to enrich himself and buy arms and ammunitions to continue his control over Liberia, and ultimately over the West Africa sub-region.’ That witness recognizes Taylor as a ‘regional terrorist.’ Mydea Reeves-Karpeh is right.

“Taylor’s accessories in Sierra Leone, as we now know with crystal clarity, are the Revolutionary United Front, the RUF. The U.N. Panel of Experts report issued last December found ‘unequivocal and overwhelming evidence that Liberia has been actively supporting the RUF at all levels, in providing training, weapons and related material, logistical support, a staging ground for attacks and a safe haven for retreat and recuperation, and for public relations activities.’ President Taylor, the report notes, is actively involved in fueling the violence in Sierra Leone. Underscoring his tight ties with the RUF, this report found that Taylor even uses RUF personnel for his own personal security detail. This is the same RUF whose signature is forced amputations of men, women, and children. I highly commend this report—it well documents the frightening syndicate of international crime that Taylor now stands at the center of—to anyone concerned about West Africa’s fate.

“Acting on this report, the U.N. Security Council last week acted to impose diamond export, travel, and other sanctions on Charles Taylor. Sanctioning Taylor was the right thing to do. But it was a

mistake to give him two months to comply with U.N. demands that he stop aiding the RUF before the sanctions bite. This man has a record. For him, peace agreements are tactical delays, designed to lull opponents before he strikes again. This was the case with the Lome Accord for Sierra Leone. Taylor has worked a ceasefire between the RUF and UNAMSIL, the U.N. peacekeeping operation in Sierra Leone, so that the RUF is freed up to attack Guinea. Now Taylor is making a bid to stave off the diamond and travel sanctions, but it’s a feint.

“Instead of waiting two months, the Security Council should have imposed these sanctions now, as well as a ban on Liberian timber exports, as it was considering. Some reports have the timber trade being more valuable to Taylor than his illicit diamond trading. What is clear is that Taylor is instigating an environmental calamity. The Liberian virgin forest is critical to the environmental health of West Africa. Taylor’s timbering, done in cahoots with foreign companies, is of no economic benefit to the Liberian people. It’s also unsustainable and threatens to devastate the rain forest within a decade. It doesn’t surprise me that the Chinese rejected proposed U.N. timber sanctions, giving Taylor a victory; I wonder why the French did as well?

“UNAMSIL, tasked to cope with RUF aggression, unfortunately has proven a failure. This U.N. force of some 10,000 men appears unwilling and incapable of doing the job that needs to be done if we’re serious about peace and stability in Sierra Leone: that is, driving the RUF out of Sierra Leone’s diamond fields. This is the job some 300 well-equipped and motivated soldiers managed to do four years ago. Right now, UNAMSIL is effectively dividing Sierra Leone, ensuring that the RUF can mine diamonds and sustain itself with impunity. The people of Sierra Leone are tiring of UNAMSIL. This operation’s mandate expires at the end of this month. It needs to be fundamentally reformed by then, or I will no longer be able to support UNAMSIL.

“It is not just Sierra Leone that is imperiled. The survival of Guinea is on the line. Its government has woken up to this reality, as Charles Taylor wages war on Guinea with his proxies. Conakry has requested U.S. military aid to bolster its armed forces’ ability to secure its border. The U.S. must strongly consider providing that aid now.

“West African states are weak and getting weaker. If we don’t act with vigor now, the region neighboring Liberia will become an irreversible humanitarian and environmental nightmare. In a few years, our ability to do anything constructive may well be gone. We need to bring a sense of urgency to our West Africa policy. We are not serious about Liberia and Africa if we are not serious about this crisis.

“We do need to be realistic about what we can achieve. Democracy is not going to develop overnight in West Africa. What we can achieve in the short term though is stability. Charles Taylor is a plague on the region. Senator Feingold, who I’m pleased we’ll hear from today, called Taylor a ‘war criminal’ during a recent trip to the region. Considering what Taylor has been doing to his country and region, and recalling the little boys and girls who last September told us to our faces how they had their limbs severed by the Taylor-supported RUF, the Liberian President should live with that tag day and night. I’ve said before that Taylor should be made to realize that the U.S. has the ability and will to undermine his rule should his support of the RUF continue. Well, it has, and Taylor’s time is up. For the sake of tens of millions of West Africans, it is time to act forcefully against President Taylor.”

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for calling this first hearing of the new session. I don’t think it could be on any more important region in Africa than West Africa and the tremen-

dous problems that we see there. I welcome the African diplomats who are present and also our Senator, whom we will hear from in a few moments.

Although nearly 4 years have elapsed since the official end of Liberia's bloody civil war, the country continues to falter on the brink of collapse. In February of this year, the government of President Charles Taylor shut down a handful of newspapers and arrested four journalists after a report appeared in the local newspaper about the government's procurement of spare parts for a helicopter or several helicopters, the article headlined, "Government Spends \$50,000 to Repair Helicopters at a Time It Can Hardly Pay Civil Servants." These journalists were charged with espionage, and only yesterday were denied bail at the court hearing.

So we have seen things continue to deteriorate. As we all know, Monrovia many years ago was a thriving city, and on the recent visits, you would be shocked and saddened by the fact that Monrovia, in most instances, has no running water, no lights, no infrastructure, no banks; and we could go on and on.

The relationship between pro-democracy activists continues to be tense with the arrest of journalists and human rights activists continuing. The same harsh reaction has been applied to human rights activists and organizations that are working to document the government's terrible human rights record. Late last year, a leading pro-democracy group was attacked by a group of armed thugs as police watched. Most recently, a cycle of violence began with the fresh fighting between Liberia's opposition groups, the genuine anti-government rebels, and Liberia-sponsored RUF rebels. This has added fuel to the already flaming Sierra Leone crisis.

In December 1998, Congressman Campbell and I on a trip to West Africa met with President Taylor; and Congressman Campbell and I pressed him about his support, alleged at that time, of the RUF. At that meeting, we repeatedly warned him about the severe consequences if he continued providing RUF with military support.

As we know, on March 7 of this year, as we have just heard from our Chairman, the United Nations Security Council imposed sanctions on Liberia, including a ban on the export of diamonds and restrictions on travel of senior Liberian officials. The report charged Liberia with using its country as a center for arms and diamond trafficking in the region to stir up the war in Sierra Leone. I also agree that the May 7 2-month grace period serves no useful purpose and that it is unfortunate that the sanctions could not have gone in immediately.

I am very concerned about the RUF and the AFRC's support throughout the region and the potential spillover and fostering of instability within neighboring countries. The crisis in Sierra Leone has already exacerbated the problem in countries such as Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, which already had political illegitimate regimes and weak institutions, coupled with another problem that we hear very little about, but which is a tremendous problem, the mounting refugee situation.

I am eager to hear the testimony from the witnesses today, but before I turn over my time to the Chairman, let me say I am disappointed that there were no representatives from the Department

of Defense, because I think it is very important that we have updated reports as to what is going on there. I was looking forward to that testimony.

Let me say, I was encouraged last week when Secretary of State Colin Powell testified before the Full Committee. At that time Secretary Powell stated that this Administration will have unwavering commitment to the continent of Africa. Making Africa a top foreign policy objective is very important to me and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

I think that one step that could be made by the new Administration is if they would look into the possibility of having a health facility, a modern kind of health facility, that could be built in Sierra Leone, in Freetown, where artificial limbs and physical therapy and psychological support could be given to the victims of the atrocities in Sierra Leone. That is something that I would like for us to explore, because we do recall the testimony of the victims here and the little girl, who had both arms amputated above the elbow, who said, I simply want to go back to school. A beautiful innocent.

So we could perhaps assist some of those faceless, unknown victims who are all around.

In conclusion, Sierra Leone and Liberia's history are closely tied to the United States' history. Following the Civil War, slaves who had fought on the side of the British were given their freedom and allowed to return to Freetown. Back in 1822, the first freedmen from the U.S., who were black, returned. In 1847, officially, they started the country of Liberia, naming its capital city after President Monroe, and the second largest city after President Buchanan. So there is a tremendous amount of historical importance to both of these countries, and we look forward to the time that we can see a restoration of some semblance of democracy and freedom.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Payne.

In deference to the Senator's time, I am going to ask the other Members to give me their statements, and we will submit them for the record later. We would like at this time to go to Senator Russ Feingold.

Senator Feingold has represented Wisconsin in the U.S. Senate since 1993. He is a Member of the Foreign Relations Committee, where he has focused on human rights issues. Senator Feingold serves as the Ranking Member of the Africa Subcommittee. He recently returned from northwest Africa, where he visited Nigeria and Senegal and Sierra Leone.

Senator, on behalf of the Subcommittee, I would like to thank you for taking the time to share your views of developments in West Africa. These are critical issues, and I personally appreciate your commitment to the region.

Senator.

**STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RUSSELL D. FEINGOLD, A
U.S. SENATOR FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN**

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Congressman Payne. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Congressman Payne and all the Members. I have admired the leadership of the Chairman and Ranking Member on this Committee

for many years and have learned a great deal from both of you; and I particularly admire your commitment to making sure the issues relating to Africa get attention in the United States Congress.

I want to thank all the Members. I know Representative Houghton, as well, has been very involved with these issues. Thank you for your courtesy in allowing me to come at this time. It is a terribly important subject.

As you indicated, I have served in the Senate Subcommittee on African Affairs since 1993 and have had the honor of being the Ranking Member of the Africa Subcommittee since 1995. I have had the honor of working closely with this Subcommittee on many occasions and am very pleased to be working with you again today. I am well acquainted with the work of this Committee and hope that this is one area where we can work extremely closely together to try to get some changes in what is happening in West Africa.

You have, fortunately, taken the time in a very busy time of year to identify one of the worst of those problems today, the terrible instability in West Africa and the deeply disturbing trend that has emerged in strong-man politics in that region. In the model emerging in West Africa, violent regimes hold entire civilian populations hostage in order to win concessions, and even under the guise of legitimacy, from the international community.

As the Chairman spoke, he made it very clear that at the heart of this trend is Liberian President Charles Taylor. While the Liberian embassy and the man himself are currently trying to persuade the world of their good intentions, no one who has followed Africa in recent years should be deceived. Taylor has absolutely no credibility. All reliable reports continue to indicate that he is manipulating the situation in West Africa for personal gain at the expense of his own Liberian people—as Congressman Payne certainly was illustrating, the people of Sierra Leone, and now the people of Guinea.

We have all read the appalling accounts of atrocities committed in the region. I believe that some of the responsibility for these terrible abuses must fall upon Charles Taylor's shoulders. In fact, I believe—as the Chairman indicated, I believe and have stated that Liberian President Charles Taylor is a war criminal.

Having secured the presidency essentially by convincing the exhausted Liberian people that there would be no peace unless he was elected, he has proceeded to provide support for the RUF, Sierra Leone's rebel force, perhaps best known for hacking off the limbs of civilian men, women and children to demonstrate their might, although their large-scale recruitment of child soldiers, a page also borrowed from Taylor's book, is also notorious.

By funneling diamonds that the rebels mine in Sierra Leone out through Liberia, and providing weapons in exchange, Taylor has profited from terrible bloodshed. And while the precise nature of Taylor's role in the RUF command structure has often been unclear, after the capture of RUF leader Foday Sankoh last year, many RUF statements suggested that Taylor was directly in control of the force.

The U.N. has found overwhelming evidence that Liberia has been actively supporting the RUF at all levels, providing training, weap-

ons and territory to use both as a staging ground and as a safe haven.

As this Subcommittee knows, an international travel ban and embargo on Liberian diamond exports has been proposed at the United Nations. Unfortunately, implementation of the sanctions will not occur for several weeks, and I believe that is regrettable, because I see no reason at all, absolutely no reason, to give the Government of Liberia the benefit of the doubt any longer. And the sanctions, as was indicated by others, will not address the timber industry, a very significant source of profit for the Taylor regime, which, by many accounts, is involved in incredibly destructive but also highly lucrative clear-cutting of Liberia's forests. There can be no question that sanctions and pressure are the correct course. While many fear the impact on the long-suffering Liberian people, the unfortunate truth is that they are living in a state of total economic collapse, even without the sanctions, largely because their head of state has no interest in the well-being of his citizens.

Press accounts suggest that Taylor and his close associates have amassed significant fortunes since coming to office. But the people of Liberia have known only deprivation. Time and again I have heard people express their shock at conditions in Liberia, at the breakdown in the most basic of services. And the most recent State Department human rights report indicates that life for Liberians is difficult and dangerous. It documents extrajudicial killings and torture committed by security forces, the detainment of political prisoners, and threats and intimidation directed at journalists.

Human rights groups have identified a pattern of intimidation and abuse directed at their counterparts in Liberia, and press reports indicate that since taking office, President Taylor has created at least two extralegal elite security forces accountable only to him. These forces have developed shameful records of abuse against Liberian civilians.

Last month, I—as was noted, I had the opportunity to travel to Nigeria and Senegal to learn more about the situation in West Africa today. I also did visit Freetown, Sierra Leone. There I looked into the faces of amputees, refugees, widows and widowers, and orphans. I saw the tragic consequences of the near total disruption of a society, the malnourishment, the disillusionment, the desperation. And the entire time I knew that some people were getting rich as a result of this misery. It is truly an outrage, and the United States and the rest of the international community cannot let those gaining from this tragedy blur the truth. This activity is criminal and it is abhorrent.

I also know that there is a very real possibility that this devastating brand of destabilization will spread even more widely throughout the region. Already, refugees flee from one country to the next, desperately seeking safety. States fear—and we heard this on our trip—that they will be the next target of the syndicate of thugs led by Charles Taylor and personified by the RUF; and for Guinea, this fear has already become a reality.

There are a number of things that I believe the U.S. can do to begin to address West Africa's crisis. One of those is to work with the rest of the international community to isolate Charles Taylor and his cronies and to tell it like it is when we talk about that re-

gime. There was a time when some believed that he could be part of the solution in West Africa. At this point, we should all know better, and we must speak the truth about the role played by the Government of Burkina Faso, the Government of Gambia, and the others involved in the arms trade in the region.

But just one word of caution. We should not be deluded into thinking that Taylor is the only key to the cleaning up of the regional mess. It is crucial that the United States response to the current crisis include a serious look at what has made countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone so vulnerable to these criminal forces. Corruption, a breakdown in the rule of law, impunity for terrible abuses, and the disenfranchisement of whole swaths of society have created a breeding ground for the likes of Taylor and the RUF.

The U.S. has been guilty of turning a blind eye to bankrupt regimes in the past, and the current state of affairs in Liberia is, in part, a consequence of those misguided policies. We must tell it like it is all over the region, not simply with egregious actors like Taylor, and we must work through a combination of responsible assistance and, sometimes, pressure to push for more accountability among governments and more opportunity for West African populations.

Mr. Chairman, I sincerely thank you for this opportunity. While I have to go back to the Senate side in just a few minutes, I will look forward to reading the hearing transcript with interest.

Again, thank you for holding this hearing.

[The prepared statement of Senator Feingold follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE RUSSELL D. FEINGOLD, A U.S. SENATOR
FROM THE STATE OF WISCONSIN

I want to thank the Subcommittee for inviting me to testify before you today. I have served on the Senate's Subcommittee on African Affairs since 1993, and I have been the ranking member since 1995. I have had the honor of working closely with this Subcommittee on many occasions, and I am very pleased to be working with you again today. I am well-acquainted with your excellent work here in the House on issues relating to Africa, a region, as we all know, of both tremendous promise and horrific problems.

You have identified one of the worst of those problems today—the terrible instability in West Africa, and the deeply disturbing trend that has emerged in strong-man politics in that region. In the model emerging in West Africa, violent regimes hold entire civilian populations hostage in order to win concessions, and even the guise of legitimacy, from the international community.

At the heart of this trend is Liberian President Charles Taylor. While the Liberian Embassy and the man himself are currently trying to persuade the world of their good intentions, no one who has followed Africa in recent years should be deceived. Taylor has absolutely no credibility. All reliable reports continue to indicate that he is manipulating the situation in West Africa for personal gain, at the expense of his own Liberian people, the people of Sierra Leone, and now the people of Guinea.

We have all read the appalling accounts of atrocities committed in the region. I believe that some of the responsibility for these terrible abuses upon Charles Taylor's shoulders. In fact, I believe that Liberian President Charles Taylor is a war criminal.

Having secured the Presidency essentially by convincing the exhausted Liberian people that there would be no peace unless he was elected, he has proceeded to provide support for the Revolutionary United Front, Sierra Leone's rebel force perhaps best known for hacking off the limbs of civilian men, women, and children to demonstrate their might, although their large-scale recruitment of child soldiers—a page borrowed from Taylor's book—is also notorious. By funneling diamonds that the rebels mine in Sierra Leone out through Liberia, and providing weapons in ex-

change, Taylor has profited from terrible bloodshed. And while the precise nature of Taylor's role in the RUF command structure has often been unclear, after the capture of RUF leader Foday Sankoh last year, many RUF statements suggested that Taylor was directly in control of the force.

The U.N. has found "overwhelming evidence that Liberia has been actively supporting the RUF at all levels," providing training, weapons, and territory to use both as a staging ground and as a safe haven.

As this subcommittee knows, an international travel ban and an embargo on Liberian diamond exports has been proposed at the United Nations. Implementation of the sanctions will not occur for several weeks, and I believe that this is regrettable, because I see no absolutely reason to give the Government of Liberia the benefit of the doubt any longer. And the sanctions will not address the timber industry, a very significant source of profit for the Taylor regime, which, by many accounts, is involved in incredibly destructive but also highly lucrative clear-cutting of Liberia's forests. But there can be no question that sanctions and pressure are the correct course. And while many fear the impact on the long-suffering Liberian people, the unfortunate truth is that they are living in a state of total economic collapse even without the sanctions, largely because their head of state has no interest in the well being of his citizens.

Press accounts suggest that Taylor and his close associates have amassed significant fortunes since coming to office. But the people of Liberia have known only deprivation. Time and again I heard people express their shock at conditions in Liberia—at the breakdown in the most basic of services. And the most recent State Department human rights report indicates that life for Liberians is difficult and dangerous. It documents extrajudicial killings and torture committed by security forces, the detainment of political prisoners, and threats and intimidation directed at journalists. Human rights groups have identified a pattern of intimidation and abuse directed at their counterparts in Liberia. And press reports indicate that, since taking office, President Taylor created at least two extralegal elite security forces, accountable only to him. These forces have developed shameful records of abuse against Liberian civilians.

Last month, I traveled to Nigeria and Senegal to learn more about situation in West Africa today. I also visited Freetown, Sierra Leone. There, I looked into the faces of amputees, refugees, widows and widowers and orphans. I saw the tragic consequences of the near total disruption of a society—the malnourishment, the disillusionment, the desperation. And the entire time, I knew that some people are getting rich as a result of this misery. It is truly an outrage, and the United States and the rest of the international community cannot let the titles held by those gaining from this tragedy blur the truth—this activity is criminal and it is abhorrent.

I also know that there is a very real possibility that this devastating brand of destabilization will spread even more widely throughout the region. Already, refugees flee from one country to the next, desperately seeking safety. States fear they will be the next target of the syndicate of thugs led by Charles Taylor and personified by the RUF, and for Guinea, this fear has become a reality.

There are a number of things that I believe the U.S. can do to begin to address West Africa's crisis. One of those is to work with the rest of the international community to isolate Charles Taylor and his cronies and to tell it like it is when we talk about that regime. There was a time when some believed that he could be part of the solution in West Africa. At this point, we should all know better. And we must speak the truth about the role played by the government of Burkina Faso, the government of Gambia, and the others involved in the arms trade in the region.

But one word of caution. We must not be deluded into thinking that Taylor is the key to the cleaning up the whole regional mess. It is crucial that the U.S. response to the current crisis include a serious look at what has made countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone so vulnerable to these criminal forces. Corruption, a breakdown in the rule of law, impunity for terrible abuses and the disenfranchisement of whole swathes of society have created a breeding ground for the likes of Taylor and the RUF. The U.S. has been guilty of turning a blind eye to bankrupt regimes in the past, and the current state of affairs in Liberia is in part a consequence of those misguided policies. We must tell it like it is all over the region, not simply with egregious actors like Taylor, and we must work, through a combination of responsible assistance and sometimes pressure, to push for more accountability among governments and more opportunity for West African populations.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to any questions that you may have for me. And while I will have to go back to the Senate side in just a few minutes, I will read the full hearing transcript with interest.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you.

Do you have time for a few questions? We appreciate that. We have two new Members of the Subcommittee, Earl Hilliard of Alabama, whom we want to welcome; and Congressman Amo Houghton of New York who will return as our Vice Chairman for the Committee. Thank you.

The first question I have is, if the U.N. sanctions don't deter Charles Taylor, if he continues on this route of aggression, what should be done next?

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, there is no excuse for not making those happen immediately and there has to be as much international pressure as possible. But among the things that have to happen, at least with regards to Sierra Leone, is the strengthening of the mission and the effort of the UNAMSIL U.N. force. Fortunately, the United States is involved in training seven battalions, five from Nigeria, one from, I believe, Ghana and one from Senegal, that will be, we believe, helpful in strengthening that force and doing exactly what some of you have suggested, pushing the RUF back and out. That has to be a priority.

The other thing is, the Government of Sierra Leone itself has to show a resolve to govern that country, to take seriously the role of making sure that they can be a credible governing body, so the whole nation, as they retake that territory, can feel that that government has the ability to have the sorts of credibility that it hasn't always had in the past.

In terms of the broader region, we have to ask our friends in the other countries, whether it be Cote d'Ivoire, that is suffering great difficulty at this time, or the President of Mali and others to join with us in being as firm as possible to one of the greatest threats to their stability, Charles Taylor.

Finally—and I should have mentioned this earlier—there has to be accountability supported where these crimes are committed. That means specific American support, financial support, that we have already committed, both for the special court that is to convene in Sierra Leone to deal with the extreme bad actors; but also support for the truth and reconciliation commission which Sierra Leone contemplates coming in the future.

If we do not support that process, I don't think we can say that we have lived up to our responsibilities and commitments to allow that nation to come together and to heal and to return to the status that it once had, as Congressman Payne indicated.

Those are some of the things that I would suggest.

Mr. ROYCE. So basically advocating for a change in mandate for UNAMSIL, to be focused on moving the RUF out of the control of the diamond area?

Senator FEINGOLD. There are those who would suggest that there would not have to be a formal change of mandate to make that possible. I am skeptical. I think that there probably does need to be a change in the mandate.

But in any event, we are talking here about the use of force to remove this element from Sierra Leone. I, for one, think it is probably best if we do strengthen that mandate.

Mr. ROYCE. I have one last question.

A major civil society conference took place in Sierra Leone recently, and they called for the creation of a U.N. Trust to manage

the country's diamonds, and they expressed some frustration at UNAMSIL; and they called for the Government of Sierra Leone also to engage a security firm to bring about a military solution to the problem of the RUF as soon as possible.

If I could just ask you your views, first on the idea of that Trust that would be created through the U.N., in their view, to control the diamonds; and second, on a security firm being basically employed by the Government of Sierra Leone. Senator?

Senator FEINGOLD. I am aware of those two concepts, but have not looked at them closely. I am open to it.

Let me just say this, because it relates to the UNAMSIL and the military forces there. One of the things we must do as a part of this process you are describing is make sure that the forces of UNAMSIL, including especially the forces that we trained, do not in any way participate in any of this troubling conduct that you have referred to. We asked questions about that when we were there, got some general assurances. But one of the things that has to be absolutely clear is that not only is Charles Taylor or the RUF exploiting this situation, but to make sure the forces we are involved with would not ever be involved in that as well.

I will look at those ideas and get back to you with a better answer, but I do think accountability not only for that, but for any human rights abuses that could occur by even the forces we support, has to be a part of our solution to the problem.

Mr. ROYCE. There is one last point I want to make. When Congressman Payne and I were in Nigeria, the Nigerian Government was very concerned about this spilling over and affecting stability eventually in Nigeria, because they see, piece by piece, the anarchy and terror coming country by country.

How would America be harmed if West Africa continues this trajectory into chaos, just for the record?

Senator FEINGOLD. Mr. Chairman, I had the same experience in Nigeria, Senegal, and places that are not literally next door to this, and there was a generalized fear that this could expand and threaten countries, even as far away as Mali or Cote d'Ivoire.

What are the consequences? For example, if you look at Nigeria, they finally have an opportunity for democracy, but it is very dicey. It is a very complicated country, an enormous country. They are doing everything they can to provide some sort of leadership role in that part of the world and develop democracy. If this area becomes further consumed by the type of activity that Charles Taylor is fostering, it will not just threaten and cause the tragedies in smaller countries such as Sierra Leone; I think it even threatens the stability of the entire region, and it makes it impossible for Nigeria to develop and play the kind of leadership role that it very much wants to play in the region. I think it threatens the entire continent and threatens all of our economic and other interests if it goes in that direction.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Senator.

Our Ranking Member, Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much. I will try to be brief, since I know you do have to leave. But once again, I thank you for your testimony and the interest and leadership you have taken in the Senate on African issues.

As you know, the U.N. forces are in, 10,000, and they are in Chapter 6. If there is indeed going to be an offensive to once again attempt to defeat the RUF, what are your estimates of the number of troops that would be needed?

In my opinion, 10,000 will not suffice.

Secondly, I do have problems with mercenary groups. I think we are running into very dangerous territory. As you know, there is, I think, the Sandline from Britain, you have got Executive Outcomes from South Africa. Some of them have ex-Green Berets and the fighting forces of the South African military. They are guns for hire. I am not sure that this is a proper response to warlords and other terrorists, because some of their tactics are as brutal as those of these other oppressors.

So I think it would have to be under a United Nations legitimate leadership. Do you see the possibility of increase?

Secondly, where could we stand in the U.S. as relates to the increased costs? As you know, Nigeria spent close to \$13 billion of its own money, and when they had their presidential election—they didn't have the military dictatorships that say, you must stay there, but presidential candidates had to say, we have to look at overextending our men in these other countries.

How do you see that whole situation going?

Senator FEINGOLD. Congressman, first, let me strongly agree with you in terms of your skepticism and concern about these kinds of mercenary and other organizations being involved in these operations. I think that is dangerous, and I would like to work with you to make sure that that is not the way in which American foreign policy is conducted in those areas.

We had some conversations there about what the size of the troops should be. I am obviously not an expert in this sort of thing, but we did talk with the U.N.'s Special Representative there. I believe he was speaking in terms of getting the force up to 13,000, or roughly that figure; 17,000 was his original goal. His goal realistically is 13,000 at this time; they are talking about 17,000.

I can't tell you that is the right figure. It sounds like various parties agree, all of us agree it needs to be more than the figure you mentioned and the figure that it is now.

There is no question that if this is going to succeed, given the tremendous commitment that Nigeria and other countries have made, that the international community and this country are going to have to participate in the financial elements of this.

I think it is pretty clear that neither the United States nor do the African countries particularly want American ground troops there. I am not advocating that. But I think we have a moral obligation, and it is in our interest to put some of our resources into trying to solve this problem and doing what is right and just in this situation. That is why I have fought the various holds that occasionally occur in the Senate on this issue and will continue to.

I think the first step to show good faith would be to get the \$7 million for the Special—I believe we committed to the Special Court release, but I think you are absolutely correct that we have to pay our fair share if we have any sincerity at all about trying to prevent these enormous tragedies in Western Africa.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Houghton.

Mr. HOUGHTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks very much for having this meeting. I think it is wonderful. It is well timed, and I appreciate the Senator being here.

Obviously, you know, we have got two things. One, you have the immediate, and what do you do. But let me veer away from that just to get your words of wisdom on this.

When Charles Taylor was fighting to gain preeminence in Liberia, I am not quite sure what our position was, whether we were for him or against him; and I guess we felt it would be bad if either side won. But we didn't do very much. That is my impression. Now we have him, and we have a terrible problem of trying to clean up the mess, if we are involved in this thing.

I don't see—and this doesn't necessarily lend itself to slide rules and strategic policy statements, but I don't see a policy of government toward the African continent and toward potential countries that are going to continue to explode.

I mean, we have got them all over the place. You have them in the Congo, you have them in Zimbabwe. Where else will it be?

So, you know, you can worry about this, you can try to do something about it, yet there are going to be four or five others that will crop up; and I don't see us as a Committee helping our State Department, or vice versa, trying to think through what our position should be.

Should we be trainers of people? Should we go the sanction route? Should we try to encourage a rapid strike force? What should it be?

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, obviously, that is a very big question. Let me just attempt briefly—and I do have to go after that, Mr. Chairman—to say that the first principle, to me, Congressman, is, we can't have a double standard with regard to Europe and other parts of the world on the one hand and Africa in the other hand. I fear in the time I have been here, that is kind of what things look like.

I understand why. The Somalia operation was such a sad disaster for our country that we developed an attitude that even in situations where really a modest amount of effort could, I think, have prevented the situation in Rwanda, we somehow had this extra hesitance to act when we should, in Africa.

I think what was initiated under the Clinton Administration, the ACRI idea of trying to work with African countries who are willing to participate, to try to enhance their ability to take the leadership role in these crises, is a good idea. We have to be careful about it, we have to be especially careful when it gets to the next level, which is the lethal training.

But the concept of seeking regional leaders, responsible regional leaders, who will help take the lead in conflict resolution is the kind of thing that I think has been done in Sierra Leone—not with complete success, but that is the intent—the thing that has to be done in the Democratic Republic of Congo, not in a Western- or American-driven operation, but one where we support it and have the same attitude and concern for human tragedy that we show when it is the result of the actions of people like Mr. Milosevic. It should be the same standard.

Finally, the policy has to be one, particularly consistent throughout the continent, of accountability. When there are crimes being committed, what I consider to be war crimes by people like Charles Taylor, that we are just as aggressive in demanding that justice be done, and support that, as we are when it comes to crimes in the Balkans.

Those are just some things I would say, Congressman. There are so many other points.

We do need a stronger, clearer policy, and as was indicated, I think the Secretary of State has a sincere interest and a real background in this area, as well as having a fair amount of knowledge on the ground in Africa. So I am optimistic we can work with the new Administration to have a more coherent policy.

I thank you so much, and I thank the Chairman very, very much.

Mr. ROYCE. We are going to look forward to working with you as we move forward on this issue. I believe that there is much greater interest in helping to resolve this than we may realize. I think Americans do care, and I think if we are focused; and if on the Senate side you are focused, with the Administration, we might be able to produce something that we can be proud of in terms of our engagement here.

So, again, Senator, thank you for your appearance here today.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROYCE. I am going to call up our second panel. We are going to start our testimony with Ms. Mydea Reeves-Karpeh. She is the National President of The Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas. This is a 27-year-old umbrella organization that has worked to promote peace and democracy in Liberia.

Mrs. Reeves-Karpeh earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Liberia, a Master's of Public Administration from the University of Southern California, and an advanced professional teaching certificate from Coppin State University. She is an educator with the Baltimore City public schools.

Secondly, we are going to hear from Timothy Bishop. He is a New York-based West Africa Regional Director for the International Rescue Committee. He supervises all facilities of the IRC programs in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. He has worked in the fields of development and humanitarian assistance in several West African countries since 1989. Mr. Bishop returned from an 8-day visit to Guinea last Friday. He received BA and MA degrees in international affairs from Columbia University.

Sister Stephanie Mertens is a member of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ religious order. She coordinates the Office of Peace and Justice for the order. This office does education and advocacy at the local, national and global levels on the concerns of the poor, especially women and children. Sister Stephanie holds a BS in theology from St. Louis University and a Master of Arts in religion from the Catholic University of America. She personally knew the five nuns from her order who were killed in cold blood in 1992 in Liberia. Sister Stephanie comes to us on the recommendation of our Chairman, Mr. Hyde.

So we will begin with Ms. Mydea Reeves-Karpeh.

One suggestion I am going to make—we are going to hold you all to the 5-minute rule—so if you will summarize your testimony, then we will go to questions. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF MYDEA REEVES-KARPEH, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, THE UNION OF LIBERIAN ASSOCIATIONS IN THE AMERICAS

Ms. REEVES-KARPEH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On behalf of Liberians residing in the United States, I am honored and pleased to express our thanks and appreciation for your consistent support in engaging the Liberian Government to improve its governance of our people and to establish better relationships with our neighbors in the West African subregion. As President of The Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas, I am indeed gratified to share my insights on the proposed U.N. sanctions on Liberia and other issues concerning U.S.-Liberia relations. We consider this opportunity a unique one for ULAA and Liberians residing in this great country.

Let me start off by saying that we represent the largest Liberian group in the United States, and we have made efforts to engage the Taylor government. As a matter of fact, we have an engagement policy with them, with all, but all efforts to get the government to respond positively have not been forthcoming.

We wish to note the failure since elections were held in 1997 by the Taylor government to meet the basic needs of our people; the unprecedented impoverishment of people while a few live in an ostentatious lifestyle; the criminalization of the economy, with Liberia made a safe haven for international criminals engaged in illegal diamond, arms and drug dealing; Mr. Taylor's own penchant for adventurism, exemplified by his support for the RUF and the heinous crimes they have committed in Sierra Leone, particularly against innocent women and children; the likelihood that the entire subregion will face instability, as evidenced by the spread of the war to Guinea.

The failure of Africa's leaders to even recognize the wrongs can also be noted here. The inaccurate reporting on Liberia by those responsible in the previous Administration has also contributed to our problems.

Liberians in the Americas are not under the delusion that the international community should bear the brunt of our burden. However, we are aware that we must define our priorities, establish our own strategies, and fully assume responsibility for the reconstruction and development of our country. We want to lead these efforts and play a vital role in our country's return to self-reliance, but the support and collaboration of our traditional friends are important in relation to the efficient use of our resources and the integration of our projects and programs.

Our goal, therefore, is to offer broad-based benefits to all Liberians. The imposition of sanctions, which we support, should assist us to pressure the Taylor government to introduce changes that would benefit the people of Liberia. The government's programs should be made relevant in meeting the needs of the people, especially the most disadvantaged. We need a window of opportunity, and solution to the political crisis is therefore crucial for democracy

and development, not only for Liberia, but in the entire West African subregion.

Liberians in the United States feel that our resources should be used properly for its development and the benefit of the people. Therefore we ask you to please support pro-democracy efforts that have been advanced here in our paper.

The Union of Liberian Associations is prepared to pursue this agenda. That has been the posture since our inception. We wish to register our strongest support for the sanctions and to urge the United States to take the lead in increasing its humanitarian assistance to bring much-needed relief and avoid the establishment of another historical record of large-scale deaths resulting from starvation, disease and neglect. The Liberian communities in the United States have been providing for national and material assistance, and we will continue to do so. We ask you to extend a hand of cooperation to us and support us as we accomplish our goal of bringing reforms to Liberia.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Reeves-Karpeh follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MYDEA REEVES-KARPEH, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, THE
UNION OF LIBERIAN ASSOCIATIONS IN THE AMERICAS

On behalf of Liberians residing in the United States, I am honored and pleased to express our sincere thanks and appreciation for your consistent support in engaging the Liberian government to improve its governance of our people and to establish better relationships with its neighbors in the West African sub-region. As President of the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA), I am indeed gratified to share my insights on the proposed UN sanctions on Liberia and other issues concerning US-Liberia relations. We considered this opportunity a unique one for ULAA and Liberians residing in your great country.

For 27 years, ULAA has served as a forum through which Liberians have addressed their common concerns and interests regarding their beloved native land. As an organization, ULAA represents the largest group of Liberian organizations in these United States. ULAA is multi-ethnic and cuts across religious, gender, professional and educational background. As the umbrella organization of Liberians abroad, ULAA has served as the watch-dog organization for the mobilization of Liberians in the United States to transform Liberia into a democratic and developed society. In the early '70's and 80's, ULAA held rallies, demonstrations, candlelight vigils and formidable nonviolent activities in order to reform the Liberian Government, promote human and constitutional rights, fiscal accountability and the misuse of power and authority. Today, ULAA has continued this policy by actively engaging the Government of Liberia on various issues.

From 1990 to 1997, ULAA played active roles in promoting several peace initiatives and calling for an end to violence and free and fair elections in Liberia. ULAA further lobbied extensively for the creation of an interim government in Liberia and the establishment of a sub-regional peace initiative to resolve the senseless war in our country. ULAA and other Liberian organizations and communities in the Diaspora participated in several humanitarian programs to provide substantial financial and material relief to thousands of displaced Liberians at home and in the sub-region. We wish to also acknowledge the tremendous support and assistance of the U.S. Government and the good people of the United States.

ULAA's "Active Engagement Policy" was started by my predecessor, Dr. Joseph Korto, whose administration engaged the Government of Liberia in dialogue, expressed concerns and conveyed sentiments of Liberians in the Americas on issues affecting the quality of life of Liberians at home, security matters, sustainable development and the practice of democracy in particular. When we assumed the presidency of the Union, we continued a policy of actively engaging the Government of Liberia. to the letter and spirit of our Active Engagement Policy. The Union wrote several letters to the Government expressing concerns and requesting responses. We went a step further by hosting two delegations from Liberia and made every effort to open the lines of communication with the Taylor Government. On August 26,

2000, for example, we sent a list of inquiries to the Government for its response, and up to today's date no response has been received.

ULAA, therefore, decided to cease to engage the Taylor Government for its failure to respond to our various communications, and to pursue an aggressive compact of cooperation and activism with the Liberian people through the international community, human rights and other civil-minded groups. In this regard, ULAA has appealed to the international community for the establishment of an international criminal tribunal for crimes Taylor and his associates have committed and continue to commit against the Liberian people.

ULAA is considering filing class action lawsuits against the perpetrators of political and economic crimes committed against the Liberian people before, during and after the Civil War.

Furthermore, we support the continuation of the arms embargo against Liberia and the imposition and the strict enforcement of international sanctions as a result of the illicit trading in timber, diamonds and weapons. Also, ULAA calls for the declaration of personal assets by former, current and future commissioned officials of the Taylor Government.

Similarly, ULAA will intend to spearhead efforts by Liberians and their organizations to establish and operate a National Democratic Awareness and Advocacy entity charged with the responsibility of helping, building and sustaining democracy in Liberia. A conclave of meetings and regional listening tours across the United States will precede the launching of its democratic network group. Among the suggested activities will be civic education, monitoring of human rights and justice, public information and public policy research, a mass participation in the ensuing 2003 Liberian Presidential and General Elections by all Liberians at home and abroad.

All efforts to engage the government have failed. Meanwhile, the Taylor government continued to violate the human rights and civil liberties of our people; non-adherence to the principles of constitutional democracy and the precepts of the rule of law has made democracy in post-war Liberia a sham and mockery under the reign of Charles Taylor. Furthermore, pillaging and plundering of resources for personal gains has made Liberia a pariah state. With this new image, Mr. Taylor has created events after events of ethnic hatred, religious intolerance, repression of fundamental rights, abuse of power as well as reduced the quality of life of our people to the lowest ebb. As a matter of fact, water, electricity and sanitation have become luxury items. Today, Liberia continues to be without electricity, pipe borne water, public health care, adequate educational institutions, security and adequate food production. Yet, President Taylor continues to ignore all efforts at dialogue and mis-manages the resources of our country.

Furthermore, ULAA registered its full support for the introduction and passage of the resolution before the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions against the Government of Liberia for Liberia's active involvement in the illicit diamonds trade and arms smuggling operation fueling the reign of terror in neighboring Sierra Leone as well as destabilizing the peace and security of the West African sub-region. Mr. Chairman and honorable members, we wish to make it absolutely clear that the Union does not favor any sanctions of a general nature against the general population of Liberia because to do so will be inhumane, selfish and unrealistic. The ULAA leadership and the rank and file of its member organizations from all walks of Liberian society have expressed utter dismay, disgust and indignation over the personal involvement of President Charles Taylor and some members of his government who have engaged themselves in these unwholesome machinations. ULAA has no alternative but to support the selective sanctions imposed by the United Nations.

As the Taylor government came to power in 1997 it had two options as it faced the daunting task of post-conflict restoration in Liberia. The first was to assess the national needs, realistically conclude that Liberia needed help from the international community, and proceed to realistically court this community for assistance, keeping its focus on the real needs of the Liberian people. The second option was to think narrowly, of the interests of "his government" as opposed to people, of the interest of his party as opposed to people, of the interest of Charles Taylor as opposed to Liberia. Clearly, Taylor opted for the latter option. It has been in an effort to sustain this option that Taylor has had to depend on illicit trade and the unholy relationship with the RUF. However, without his blood diamond, his ties to the RUF, the illicit timber trade, and related activities there would be no funds to sustain his second option.

Taylor's role has been to mastermind carnage in Sierra Leone for the sole purpose of controlling its diamond mines, from which he derives income to enrich himself and buy arms and ammunitions to continue his control over Liberia, and ultimately over the West African sub-region. As this criminal complicity between Mr. Taylor

and his Sierra Leonean rebels continued, Sierra Leone has suffered not only the loss of control over its diamond mines, but the people of Sierra Leone are also victims of some of the worst war crimes atrocities ever. In Taylor's own Annual Message to the Legislature this year, amongst other things, the message confirms that he is involved with RUF. It confirms that he has done nothing to improve the life of the Liberian people. For example, in the area of health, he admitted that his accomplishment was the renovation of JFK by the government of Taiwan. In the area of education, he was only able to renovate the men's dorm at the University and some high schools in Monrovia. The only work done on the roads of Liberia was to enable Mr. Taylor and his partners in the notorious OTC logging company to deplete the forest of Liberia to the detriment of the Liberian people. The revenue from these sales is used to increase the suffering of the people of the sub-region. The managers and shareholders of the timber companies should also be brought to justice for using their chartered vessels to illegally import arms into Liberia.

Meanwhile, the ULAA Board of Directors, National Administration, National Leadership Council and all member organizations appeal to the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Taiwan, the European Union, and other international institutions to increase their financial and material support for our people at home and in the refugee and displaced camps in neighboring states through local and international non-governmental organizations. Continued assistance to the suffering people of Liberia, in face of the evil regime of Charles Taylor, is the right thing to do, so that they may be empowered, and through them democracy may be restored to Liberia. Consequently, stability throughout the region will be accomplished.

ULAA further calls for a direct ban on foreign assistance to the Taylor Government until such time when it is clear that it has taken the appropriate actions to address the issues of all sanctions and good governance is restored to Liberia.

Liberia has undergone a disastrous event but all is not lost. The silver lining of this disaster is that the Taylor Government had a glorious opportunity to do things differently and failed miserably. The Government has lost the trust and confidence of the people both at home and abroad who gave them a mandate at the polls in 1997. In general, weaknesses of the Legislature, the inefficiency of the Judiciary, the abuses of the security and the imperial presidency continue to haunt us. The Taylor government has lost its legitimacy. One can cite specific instances of the blatant abuse of power by the Government and its functionaries in violation of the constitutional rights of the Liberian people to exercise and enjoy the rights to life and liberty, freedoms of movement, thought, conscience and religion, opinion and expression, assembly and association as well as protection against torture, inhumane treatment and discrimination among others. Other references can be made regarding the murder case of Sam Dokie and family, the disappearance of Nowai Flomo, the unceremonious resignation, assassination attempt on his life, and flight of Senate President Pro Tempore Charles Brumskine, the sedition charges against James Torh, the killings on Camp Johnson Road, the imprisonment of 13 Krahn men on treason convictions, the constant accusations that political opponents are supporting dissidents, the intimidation of students at the University of Liberia, the closure of STAR Radio and others. More recently, the case of the journalists charged with espionage because they published a story, although factual, not favorable to the Government. Finally, the issues of the Liberian Government's involvement in the Sierra Leone (arms and diamonds), monopolistic practices in the trading sector, favorable preferences for timber concessions, debt crises and donor countries foreign aid to Liberia as well as the flamboyant life and undemocratic behavior of some Government officials and NPP officials. Mention can also be made of how some Government officials have as many as six cars.

In spite of the unfavorable climate in Liberia, the long historic ties between the United States and Liberia demand that the United States lead the international community in addressing the need for ensuring democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law in Liberia. Mr. Taylor is no longer just a Liberian problem; he is now become a regional terrorist. The United States should therefore commit itself to assisting Liberia in respect of the following:

1. Commit resources in support of the democracy and development initiatives of international, national, and community based non-governmental organizations.
2. Support the empowerment of grassroots or community based organizations here and in Liberia.
3. Provide a mechanism through which Liberians in the United States would invest their time and skills in support of democracy and development efforts at home.

4. Address the provision of social infrastructure (health, education, agriculture and housing), physical and service base infrastructure, economic development, entrepreneur and business development
5. Provide support for the 2003 Elections through support for the establishment of a radio station to educate Liberians about their rights to vote freely and fairly as guaranteed by the Constitution, voters' education and assist the Elections Commission to get rid of technical bottlenecks which may arise.
6. Assist in conducting sectoral needs assessment in the areas of education, health, rural development, small-scale industry/ private sector development, housing, electricity and water supply;
7. Sponsor a conference of donors to assist in economic recovery.
8. Allow business to go on and have the United Nations put the money in escrow to be used to develop social infrastructure. The money will be managed by donor agencies and the Taylor Government will no longer have access to funds derived from the sale of Liberia's resources.

Let me emphasize here that Liberians in the Americas are not under the illusion that the international community should bear the brunt of our burden. We are aware that we must define our priorities, establish our own strategies and fully assume responsibility for the reconstruction and development of our country. We want to lead these efforts and play a vital role in our country's return to self-reliance. But the support and collaboration of our traditional friends are important in relation to the efficient use of resources and the integration of projects and programs. Our goal, therefore, is to offer broad-base benefits to ALL Liberians.

The imposition of the sanctions, for example, should assist us to pressure the Taylor Government to introduce changes that will benefit the people of Liberia. The Government's programs should be made relevant in meeting the needs of the people, especially the most disadvantaged. We need a window of opportunity. Solution to our political crisis is therefore crucial for democracy and development, not only in Liberia but also in the entire West African sub-region. Liberians in the Americas must unite and mobilize to make a difference. But we need your help.

The resources of Liberia should be properly used for its development and the benefit of its people. But regrettably, Mr. Taylor uses our resources to suppress us, and destroy neighboring countries like Sierra Leone and Guinea. We are confident that our traditional partner, the United States, and the international community will assist our people, as we endeavor to empower our people in spite of Mr. Taylor and his cohorts. Help us give that glimmer of light and hope so that our unfortunate brothers and sisters will see a brighter tomorrow. We, for our part, are prepared to do whatever it takes to make a difference in Liberia.

The Union is prepared to pursue this agenda in a non-violent manner and this has been our posture since our inception. In this regard, we wish to register in the strongest terms our condemnation of the perpetrators and supporters of the on-going insurgence into Lofa County, Liberia. We ask this honorable body to publicly condemn these actions as well. We further believe that these cross border raids will only exacerbate the present situation and will accelerate the deplorable conditions of our people who have been displaced because of the fighting and killing. The Union additionally urges the United States to take the lead in increasing its humanitarian assistance to bring some much needed relief and avoid the establishment of another historical record of large scale deaths resulting from starvation, disease and neglect. The Liberian communities in the United States have been providing financial and material assistance and we will continue to do so. We only ask that you extend a hand of cooperation and support and help us accomplish our goal.

Mr. ROYCE. I thank you. I thank all the witnesses for taking the time to come and testify here today. And we will go now to Timothy Bishop.

**STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY BISHOP, REGIONAL DIRECTOR,
WEST AFRICA PROGRAMS, INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE**

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. Good afternoon and thank you for the invitation to speak today before the House Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Africa.

Since 1933, the International Rescue Committee, the IRC, has assisted refugees and other persecuted persons worldwide. In West

Africa, our programs total almost \$13 million annually in humanitarian aid and provide needs-based assistance to refugees and internally displaced.

Much has been written about the causes and consequences of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars. While exact numbers are not known, since 1989 conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and now Guinea have displaced well over 1 million persons and killed over 100,000. In the process, West Africa has crept onto America's television screens and into our newspapers with images of barbaric amputations, gang rapes and drug-addicted child soldiers.

Though not of equal strategic importance as Kuwait, not equal in sheer numbers to the Rwanda genocide and apparently not as newsworthy as Kosovo, the West African conflicts have raised the bar for human cruelty. I first reached West Africa in mid-1989. In the 11 years since, I have helped build refugee and IDP camps, have passed military checkpoints decorated with human skulls, and have interviewed victims of rape and torture. I have visited hospital wards full of amputees. In mid-1996, I sat at the bedside of a 15-year-old Sierra Leone boy who had been captured by rebels and had a thick plastic bag placed over his head. The bag had been lit on fire, the molten plastic burning hair and skin off of the teenager's face. When I met him a few days later, the right side of his face had peeled away from his skull and jawbone and he resembled a grotesque Halloween mask.

I have also witnessed the social and environmental destruction from diamond mining which, according to a recent United Nations report, underpins this barbarism. In eastern Sierra Leone, I toured the Koidu and Yengema diamond fields where thousands of young men and women toiled for 10 to 12 hours each day in the hot sun in waist-deep pools of brown, muddy water. Armed with shovels and sieves, they hunted the alluvial diamonds that plague the region. But as the number of workers far outstrips the number of diamonds, poverty crept through Koiku and Yengema.

My visits to the Kono District followed the resettlement in late 1996 of over 25,000 displaced persons from Makeni town. These Sierra Leoneans had fled RUF attacks on Kono in 1995, and with the peace that enveloped the country from 1996 to early 1997, had returned to their homes. Unfortunately, despite humanitarian efforts to distribute food and agricultural materials, the dearth of economic activity in Kono forced many returnees into the diamond mines. More unfortunately, thousands were again forced to flee Sierra Leone as the RUF retook diamond-rich Kono.

In the midst of civil war and insecurity, I tried to provide useful and accountable humanitarian assistance to needy West Africans. Unfortunately, the delivery of humanitarian aid, once seen by combatants as worthy of protection, has itself come under attack. During my 8 years in Sierra Leone and Liberia, I witnessed the looting of aid agencies by rebel groups, the commandeering of dozens of UN and NGO vehicles, and the ambushing of food aid convoys which resulted in increases in malnutrition among needy populations.

The United Nations has stated that unless the Liberian government disassociates itself from the RUF, they will impose sanctions on diamond exports. As a representative of an NGO operational in

West Africa, I leave it to this Committee to make the appropriate recommendations toward returning peace to the region. As a member of the humanitarian community, however, I request that any sanctions imposed on Liberia exclude humanitarian aid. Despite efforts on the part of the Liberian government to rebuild the country's shattered infrastructure, humanitarian aid remains vital to the social and economic health of the Liberian population. Health care, education and infrastructure are underfunded and inadequate to meet Liberia's needs, yet Liberia remains a wonderful country, with a population full of pride and energy and many government officials genuinely interested in peace and progress.

Lasting peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone and cessation of a widening war in Guinea necessitate rapid and clear political action. I wish to thank this Committee for your continued efforts to increase America's awareness of the terror, displacement, and atrocities I described.

Thank you.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Mr. Bishop.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bishop follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY BISHOP, REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WEST AFRICA PROGRAMS, INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

Good afternoon and thank you for the invitation to speak today before the House Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Africa. It is an honor and a pleasure to present the following testimony on the subject "Confronting Liberia."

I am Timothy Bishop, West Africa Regional Coordinator for the International Rescue Committee, the IRC. I have eight years professional experience living and working in West Africa, including two years in Benin with the U.S. Peace Corps and two each in Sierra Leone and Liberia with an American non-governmental organization. Presently I supervise from New York City the IRC's programs in West Africa, including Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. I travel frequently to the region, having returned last Friday from an eight-day visit to Guinea.

Since 1933, the IRC has assisted refugees and other persecuted persons worldwide. In West Africa, our programs total almost thirteen million dollars in humanitarian aid annually. Monthly in West Africa, the IRC provides needs-based assistance to over one hundred thousand refugees and internally displaced with emergency education, healthcare, and psycho-social services.

Much has been written about the causes and consequences of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars. While exact numbers are not known and may never be, since 1989 conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and now Guinea have displaced well over one million persons and killed over one hundred thousand. In the process, much of Liberia and Sierra Leone has been returned to the middle ages.

UNHCR figures from December 2000 report a quarter million Sierra Leone refugees and ninety thousand Liberian refugees needing assistance in Guinea, most located along border areas with Sierra Leone and Liberia. Of these, as of March 6 UNHCR estimates 135,000 refugees and tens of thousands Guinean internally displaced persons, or IDPs, were trapped in the Parrot's Beak section of Guinea. These persons became trapped last September and December, following rebel attacks on Macenta and Gueckedou border towns. Despite a suggestion in February to create a safe corridor for repatriation of these persons to eastern Sierra Leone, the humanitarian community has decided that such repatriation is unwarranted given continuing insecurity in eastern Sierra Leone. As such, these refugees will continue to receive assistance in Guinea.

Meanwhile in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the Global IDP Project reports up to 1.3 million IDPs in Sierra Leone, while UNHCR reports as of mid-2000 about 78,000 IDPs in Liberia. UNHCR reports an additional 46,000 Liberians have been displaced from Lofa County, Liberia, since mid-2000. Finally Liberia remains host to at least 25,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in western Liberia.

In the midst of this violence, West Africa has crept onto America's television screens and into our newspapers with images of barbaric amputation of body parts of old men, pregnant women, and the smallest of children. Photos of mutilation have been accompanied by stories of further atrocities: the gang rapes of mothers and sis-

ters by their sons and brothers, the eating of human hearts by drug-addicted child soldiers. The latter image—of fearless soldiers twelve, thirteen, and fourteen years old—has consequently become burned into the American conscience. Though not of equal strategic importance as Kuwait, not equal in sheer numbers to the Rwanda genocide, and apparently not as newsworthy as Kosovo, the West African conflicts have nonetheless raised the bar for human cruelty to an unthinkable level.

I first reached West Africa in mid-1989, only a few months before the start of the Liberian civil war. In the eleven years since, I have seen first-hand many of the haunting images above. I have helped build refugee and IDP camps to house over half a million people. I have passed military checkpoints decorated with human skulls. I have interviewed victims of rape and torture. And I have visited hospital wards full of amputees. In mid-1996, I sat at the bedside of a fifteen-year-old boy who, one week earlier near the town of Bo, had been captured by rebels and had a thick plastic bag placed over his head. The bag had been lit on fire, the molten plastic burning hair and skin off of the teenager's face. When I met him a few days later, the right side of his face had peeled away from his skull and jawbone. He resembled a grotesque Halloween costume. Unable to speak, he looked at me out of his left eye, his only remaining eye. I could not pretend then, and I cannot now, to know the thoughts that ran through his mind. He died a few hours after my visit.

In the midst of this human tragedy, I have witnessed the social and environmental destruction from diamond mining which, according to a United Nations December 2000 report, underpins this barbarism. In eastern Sierra Leone, from mid-1996 through early 1997, I frequently toured the Koidu and Yengema diamond fields, where thousands of young men toiled for ten to twelve hours each day in the hot sun, in waist-deep pools of brown muddy water. Armed with shovels and sieves, they hunted the plentiful alluvial diamonds that plague the region. But as the number of workers far outstripped the number of diamonds, poverty crept through Koidu and Yengema over the thousands of diamond craters that had turned the once agriculturally-rich area into a moonscape. During my last visit in early 1997, my car had to swerve diamond mines dug into the middle of the roads, in a frantic search for virgin mining territory.

My visits to Koidu and Yengema followed the successful resettlement in late 1996 of over twenty-five thousands displaced persons from Makeni town. These Sierra Leoneans had fled RUF attacks on Kono District in 1995 and, with the peace that enveloped the country from 1996 to early 1997, returned to their homes. Unfortunately, despite humanitarian efforts to distribute food and agricultural materials, the dearth of economic activity in Kono forced many returnees into the diamond mines, an existence seemingly no better than their prior displacement. More unfortunately, thousands were again forced to flee eastern Sierra Leone as the RUF retook diamond-rich Kono.

Like diamonds, a report from the NGO Global Witness in January 2001 stated that Liberian timber also funds the RUF in Sierra Leone. In several visits to Maryland and Sinoe counties, Liberia from 1997 to 1999, while visiting health and agricultural projects supported by humanitarian aid, I passed through logging camps and toured timber port loading operations. Though not labor-intensive as diamond-mining—the movement of logs weighing as much as three to four tons each requires massive machinery—and while ostensibly providing valuable infrastructure to rural Liberia including roads and bridges, these logging operations extract huge quantities of hardwood timber. Though logging occurred away from major roadways and reportedly under controlled clear-cutting regulations, the results of massive cutting could be seen on the sides of forest roads leading towards the sea ports of Harper and Greenville. At regular intervals, timber companies cut roadside clearings, where front-end-loaders raised huge tree trunks onto waiting eighteen-wheel trucks, most capable of hauling only two to three logs at a time. From there the trucks worked their way to the ports, where the massive logs were sorted and the best piled onto stacks three and four stories tall for loading onto the ships. Reject logs, numbering in the thousands, were often left to rot by the side of roads or at the port, or were cut for plywood for sale in Liberia. When possible due to electricity supplied by the logging companies, port loading proceeded twenty-four hours a day.

Thus in the midst of civil war and insecurity, I like hundreds of others tried to provide useful and accountable humanitarian assistance to thousands of needy West Africans. Unfortunately the delivery of humanitarian aid—once seen by combatants as worthy of protection—has itself come under attack. During my years in Sierra Leone and Liberia, I witnessed the looting of aid offices by rebel groups, the commandeering of dozens of UN and NGO vehicles, and the ambushing of food aid convoys which resulted in increases in malnutrition among needy populations. An article in this week's *Economist* newspaper, titled "The dangers of trying to help," recounts the final minutes of a United Nations High Commission for Refugees staff

member killed by rebels in Guinea last September. The article paraphrases a UN report, stating “[U]narmed aid workers are increasingly vulnerable to violent attack. Civilian UN staff often arrive in dangerous places before peacekeepers do, and withdraw later.” In the case of Guinea, staff of non-governmental agencies like the IRC frequently restart work in conflict areas even before the United Nations.

The United Nations has stated that, unless the Liberian government disassociates itself from the RUF before May 2001, they will impose sanctions on Liberian diamond exports. As a representative of an international NGO operational in West Africa, and for the safety of IRC staff and equipment, I leave it to this Committee to make the appropriate recommendations toward returning peace to the West Africa subregion. As a member of the humanitarian community, however, I would request that any sanctions imposed on Liberia exclude humanitarian aid. Despite efforts on the part of the Liberian government to rebuild the country’s shattered infrastructure, humanitarian aid remains vital to the economic and social health of the Liberian population. Few, if any, reliable services are now provided by the Liberian government, especially in rural areas. Healthcare, education, and infrastructure are all grossly under-funded and inadequate to meet the needs of Liberia’s population. Yet Liberia remains a wonderful country, with a population full of pride and energy and many government officials genuinely interested in peace and progress.

Until the Liberian government directs tangible assistance to its population, aid agencies like the United Nations and the IRC will represent the only hope for progress for much of the country. Nonetheless, lasting peace in Liberia and Sierra Leone—and the cessation of a widening war in Guinea—necessitate rapid and clear political action in the subregion. I wish to thank this Committee for your continued efforts to increase America’s awareness of the terror, displacement, and atrocities I have described, and I commend your efforts to seek an end to the barbarism committed in the name of diamonds and timber.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before this Committee, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. ROYCE. Sister Stephanie.

STATEMENT OF SISTER STEPHANIE MERTENS, COORDINATOR, PEACE AND JUSTICE OFFICE, ADORERS OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Sister MERTENS. Thank you, Chairman Royce.

Mr. ROYCE. Could you push that button right there in front of you?

Sister MERTENS. Is it on?

I was invited to come here today, the Committee asking me to come in order to honor the memory of five of our Sisters who were killed at gunpoint, in cold blood in Liberia, as Mr. Chair mentioned earlier. And as I have listened to what Representative—Senator Feingold had to say, as well as my partners on the panel here, I can think that there is no greater action that we could take at this time to honor their memory than what we are doing here today.

However, I would say that 10 years ago, in 1992, when the Sisters were shot down in cold blood in Liberia, we also had hearings. The House had a hearing, the Senate had a hearing, and we called for a changed policy then. And I am not trying to be negative but I am trying to offer a challenge. We must not drop the ball. This situation is grave, and it is a festering thing that is spreading throughout West Africa. And if West Africa goes, we know the trauma the rest of Africa is in. So we can see the pieces all connected in terms of the future of Africa as well as other nations of the world, because the whole world is one.

I could talk to you a lot about what the Sisters were doing prior to their deaths. They were working with children who were victims of trauma. They were working with infants who were suffering

from all of the tropical diseases that are present in countries like Liberia.

Sister Barbara Ann Muttra was establishing clinics to help the children. Several of the Sisters were working with education. Two of the people that were there of our personnel had doctorates in education and mathematics and were teaching the children at grade, high school, and university level, reaching out in every possible way to the people of Liberia. I am sure if they could be here today, what they would want to say is that what we are talking about here must happen for the future good of Liberia, for all the people of Liberia as well as the rest of West Africa.

I would like to note when we are talking about the needs of the people, I am aware of the work of the Center for Victims of Torture that is based in Minnesota and is also working in West Africa. And if there is additional support that we could give to a group like that, that would be very good. I know that our community has contributed financially to the work of the Center for Victims of Torture. At the same time I heard someone here express the need for a new hospital that can address the injured and so forth, but the psychological trauma is a dimension of this, in addition to the physical trauma which is being addressed by the Center for Victims of Torture. So I just would like to highlight that.

I am very grateful. I through the years have been involved with this whole situation. After the war, we tried to launch a national effort called the Campaign for Peace in Liberia that called for prayer and letters to our representatives, other efforts to try to bring the peace so much needed in Liberia.

I think I would conclude with that and would be happy to try to answer any questions that you might have. I was planning on describing the events that led to death of the Sisters and so forth, but at this point I think that is not necessary. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Sister Stephanie Mertens follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SISTER STEPHANIE MERTENS, COORDINATOR, PEACE AND JUSTICE OFFICE, ADORERS OF THE BLOOD OF CHRIST

Chairman Royce, and Members of the Africa Sub-Committee, the Adorers of the Blood of Christ (ASC), are grateful to respond to your invitation through this Liberia Hearing Testimony to honor the memory of our five sisters murdered in October 1992 during the war in Liberia. I am Sister Stephanie Mertens, ASC, Coordinator of the Adorers Office of Peace and Justice. I personally knew all five of the Sisters. I hope during this testimony to acquaint you with each of the sisters and their ministry, and to tell the story of their deaths. I will describe the responses of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ to the Sisters' deaths and that of the numerous other groups around the world, including our own US State Department officials. I will also try to envision what the lives they have given might mean for the future of Liberia and all peoples seeking peace and stability in our world.

Sister Shirley Kolmer,⁶¹ was a leader, a person of vision. She loved and taught math in grade, high, and university in the US and in Liberia. She was a jovial spirit. Part of her ministry in the US included being friend and companion to young women in the US preparing to enter religious life. Sister also served as provincial of the order. She challenged all Adorers to be women of prayer and to work for justice.

Sister Joel,⁵⁸ was an educator, a person with a great smile, a sparkle in her eye, and hearty laughter. She was artistic, creative. She taught religion and did parish ministry. She was in charge of candidates from Liberia for the order.

Sister Barbara Ann Muttra, 69, was a nurse with a great love for the infants. She was compassionate, energetic, very active. She collected medicines and food for the poor. She cared for babies. She helped Liberian mothers learn child care. She founded clinics.

Sister Agnes Mueller, 62, loved to read and discover ideas. She was a nurse and religious educator. She was especially concerned about helping women. She was doing literacy programs with the people.

Sister Kathleen McGuire, 54, had a very great sense of hospitality. She helped the child soldiers of Liberia cope with the trauma of war. During her work for justice in the US she organized Sanctuary ministry to help refugees fleeing to the US for safety from violence in Guatemala.

The five women lived in a convent in Gardnersville. For some months it had been clear that the deteriorating situation posed grave danger to the sisters. The sisters, fully conscious of the danger, resolved to stay in order to serve the people who had nowhere to go. The sisters remained in harm's way for the sake of charity and solidarity with the people. It was not long after their deaths that it became clear that they were truly "Martyrs of Charity", a term first used by John Paul II on November 1, 1992 at his noon address.

I will now describe the events that led to their deaths. The night of October 20, a security guard at the convent said he was worried about his family. Two of the sisters, Barbara Ann and Joel, agreed to drive him home. On the way they picked up two ECOMOG soldiers. The sisters did not return from the trip and the other sisters feared the worst. Later it was learned that the two sisters had been killed.

On October 21, the sisters and the young women with them, packed some belongings into a car with a view to move into Monrovia, but they were afraid to leave because of the intense shooting all day. On October 23, at about 5:00 p.m., NPFL soldiers arrived. Five of them entered the Convent grounds under the command of C.O. Mosquito. He ordered everybody out of the Convent. Mosquito said he was going to kill all the white people. Sister Shirley begged him not to kill the Sisters. Sister Kathleen went towards the gate in order to open it. As she did so, Mosquito shot her in the forearm. She fell and he then shot her fatally in the neck.

Sister Shirley was ordered to bring the car keys and any money she had. She entered the convent and came back with the keys and the Liberian Dollars which she offered to Mosquito. He took the keys and demanded American dollars. She told him she had none. All were then ordered outside the fence where Sisters Shirley and Agnes were told to step to one side from the others. At that point another soldier, Black Devil, fatally shot Agnes and Shirley. They died instantly.

Here in the states the first alert that the sisters were in imminent danger came on October 28, 1992. Their deaths were confirmed by Church and State Department Officials on October 31, 1992. On All Saints Day November 1, 1992, the Adorers Convent Mass in Ruma, Illinois was for all of our martyred Sisters. On November 5, 1992 a Mass honoring the five sisters, was held at the diocesan Cathedral with over 2000 people present.

Immediately upon the death of the sisters responses came from around the world. U.S. Ambassador William Twaddell said: "The safety and welfare of the wounded and defenseless were their only concerns." U.S. Ambassador Peter Devos said: "They were real Americans who ate hamburgers, drank milk shakes, and ate French fries." The Catholic Standard of Washington, DC archdiocese wrote: "Their killing took the largest number of U.S. Clergy women since the three nuns and one lay woman were murdered in El Salvador in 1981." Senator Simon wrote: "I hope that through the tragic deaths of these heroines, a new consciousness of the need for love and compassion will emerge in the war-torn areas of west Africa." Archbishop Michael K. Francis of Monrovia said: "Together they served the Lord in this part of His vineyard, together they went to Him." The Pope said: "Despite great danger they remained alongside the people 'til the end." The Pope prayed that their deaths would be a catalyst for peace in Liberia.

It was important to all Adorers that after some time with the assistance of the Society of African Missions (SMA), State Department Officials, and Senator Paul Simon, the sisters remains were able to be retrieved and returned to our convent for burial in the convent cemetery. The grave sites have been visited by many people.

I will now describe other responses to the deaths of the five Sisters. In 1992-93 both the US House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Africa and the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa held hearings on the situation in Liberia including the deaths of the sisters. Adorers presented testimony at each hearing with a focus on hoped for rebuilding of Liberia. The matter was also addressed in testimony delivered by Assistant Secretary of State, George E. Moose before the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa on May 18, 1994.

A national effort titled: "ASC Martyrs of Charity—Peace in Liberia Campaign" was launched by the Adorers with assist from the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN). The campaign called for prayer and fasting, development of personal peace

skills, and letters to the President, legislators and the UN Ambassador concerning Liberia. Thousands of actions were taken as part of the campaign.

Other responses by Adorers and friends were a Scholarship established in honor of the sisters at the Kansas Newman College. A large memorial sculpture by Professor Rudy Torrini which depicts the Sisters standing as strong figures in a circle looking out with hands clasped together raised to heaven was erected in front of the Ruma Convent. A symposium titled: "Hope for Africa" was held on the fifth anniversary of the Martyrs deaths. A beautiful "Song to the Martyrs" was composed by Carolyn McDade. A book about the martyrs titled "Echoes In Our Hearts" was written by Clare Boehmer, ASC.

Adorers have continued to collaborate with the bishops of Liberia giving whatever financial assistance was possible. We have been saddened by the untimely death of Bishop Sekey, 61, youngest of the three bishops, due to heart attack in December 2000. We have given financial educational support to five young women from Liberia in the US. At present no Adorers are in Liberia. As an international congregation, we hold great hope that one day we shall return.

I will now briefly envision what the lives given may mean for the future of Liberia. The dedication of our slain Sisters has motivated Adorers throughout the world to pursue the Jubilee 2000 Debt Cancellation Program. We are collaborating with Bread for the World in its work to bring hunger relief to African countries. We are doing advocacy with appropriate authorities to guarantee fair trade with the countries of Africa. We support efforts to deal with the HIV-AIDS problem in various countries, including Liberia.

It has been very encouraging this past week to learn that the UN Security Council is demanding that Liberia immediately cease support for the RUF and other armed rebels. This action, as well as the work of Senator Russell D. Feingold and others, give us new hope for peace in Liberia and all west Africa.

Our vision for the future of Liberia includes the presence of programs of education, cultural enrichment, women's development, adult literacy, and other skills training opportunities in harmony with the work the five sisters had been doing in Liberia. A missionary who knew the Martyrs has recently sent this message to Adorers: "I have no doubt that their lives, so generously given have borne, and are bearing fruit that we know nothing about at this time."

Hopefully, this Liberia Hearing will be an instrument bearing such fruit. I thank you again for the invitation to honor the five Martyrs and all that their lives given with such great charity and solidarity have meant for Liberia and the whole world.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Sister. And I will mention that Senator Simon is currently heading a study center at the Southern Illinois University, and as a matter of fact he has been in correspondence with us. He held those hearings in 1992 on the Senate side. He is still very troubled about what is going on in Liberia, still wants to call international attention to the problem.

Sister MERTENS. He was a great ally to us, even at the personal level, when this happened. And the State Department as well as other people helped us, for instance, with the effort to retrieve the bodies of the Sisters so that their remains could be buried in our convent cemetery. So we had many friends. We could not have helped ourselves at that time.

Mr. ROYCE. Has your religious order received a full accounting from the State Department or some other organization of who killed your five colleagues in October 1992?

Sister MERTENS. I don't think we know the answer to that question. We know that the area where they were became completely embroiled in the fury of the war at that time as they were trying to move to Monrovia.

Mr. ROYCE. And no one was ever brought to trial in the country.
Sister MERTENS. That is correct.

Mr. ROYCE. Would you join calls for creating an international criminal tribunal for President Charles Taylor and his associates?

Sister MERTENS. At the global level, I am personally in support of an international criminal tribunal.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Sister Stephanie.

I wanted to ask Ms. Mydea Reeves-Karpeh a couple of questions. And one goes to the role of radio in Africa in order to try to get information to people. What role can radio play in promoting democracy in Africa and how has the Liberian government censored radio broadcasts?

One of the issues that I had talked with former President Clinton about was to try to get radio broadcasts on an ongoing basis, just as we did in the former eastern Europe, into troubled African states, where people really had access to information about what was going on inside the country and what was going on internationally. And if I could just have your views on that and also on the censoring.

Ms. REEVES-KARPEH. We think that radio is very important in our effort to educate our people. STAR radio, for example, played a vital role in educating the people prior to the 1997 elections. We think that it is very, very important, and we request support for this effort in getting radio to educate the people and to send messages in our various languages to the people so that they can understand what their rights are and what they are entitled to and what things will force democracy and development in our countries.

We think that independent radio—presently President Taylor's radio stations have access to basically everything, and there is no independent radio with the capacity to transmit information throughout the country. We propose that a radio station be funded to beam democratic programs and news of democratic activities into Liberia, because as it is now, the government is censoring everything that goes on now. As you know, there are four journalists who have been jailed for espionage. So all of this tends to create obstacles for fostering democracy in our country.

Mr. ROYCE. Referring to the U.N. Report and to other reports, how serious is the destruction of the Liberian forests to Liberia and the region? We have heard that this is not sustainable, this clear-cutting. Do we know if logging operations are using forced Liberian labor? That is one of the issues that has come up.

And I guess the final question is, do you know why France and China did not come forward and support the effort to get some control over this clear-cutting, this logging of timber from Liberia?

Ms. REEVES-KARPEH. Let me say I had a friend who just returned from his father's funeral in Liberia. And in my home area where some of the logs are being cut, he told me—which was very sad, and I was sad that the weather pattern in the country, in our home area had changed completely, and the environment was being affected by the cutting of those logs and not having a reforestation plan in effect. We think that this is going to harm our country in the long run.

And we don't know if our friends agree to not support the sanctions on timber, but we want to register our protests that timber is one thing that is going to affect our environment, and we need to look at the resources that are being obtained from that timber sale. We also don't know why it was dropped from the sanctions. We hope that it could come into place.

We don't support general sanctions for Liberia but we support humanitarian aid to Liberia, and we hope that that the resources

that are going to be used when they cut the timber, they will use the resources to replant that forest so we wouldn't experience environmental problems.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Ms. Reeves-Karpeh.

My last question is for Timothy Bishop. And that is, where will the people of Sierra Leone who are being forced from the region be resettled? You know we had Sierra Leoneans go to Guinea. Now we have an attack on Guinea by the Revolutionary United Front. And in the meantime back in Sierra Leone, because of the way that we have proceeded in fact, the RUF has been left with the good part of the territory under their control. So, will these refugees who now try to come back to their country to flee the fighting in Guinea that you hear about, are they going to be safe when they come back to Sierra Leone?

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At the current time, there are several hundred thousand Sierra Leone refugees living along the Sierra Leone/Guinea border inside Guinea. And up until last September, September 2000, those refugees were considered largely safe. Guinea had not seen the violence that had been inflicted on both Liberia and Sierra Leone. That violence began there in September with attacks along border towns in Guinea and retribution on the refugee population for the fear among the Guinea government that those refugees were harboring rebels. To the greatest extent, I believe those fears were unfounded.

At the current time, the humanitarian community in Guinea is making great efforts to move the refugees away from the borders to further points inside Guinea. For the most part, most humanitarian actors in Guinea believe it is not safe yet for refugees to return to Sierra Leone. There is some repatriation of refugees both from Conakry to Freetown, but that is a minority of the refugee population, leaving several hundred thousand refugees again within Guinea. It appears at the current time those efforts to move the refugees from border areas to safe points inland will not be completed before the coming rains which, to a large extent, halt all road traffic along the secondary roads in south Guinea. And there is still a great fear that those refugees are going to be in areas along the borders that can come under attack at any point from RUF elements inside Sierra Leone.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you very much. I will go to Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you. Sister Mertens, what countries are you actively working in in West Africa?

Sister MERTENS. At the present time we have a few people in Guinea-Bissau, none in Liberia, and we also have members in Tanzania. That is the extent of our presence in Africa.

Mr. PAYNE. And I understand that you are also working with the problem of HIV and AIDS in trying to educate or to comfort victims.

Sister MERTENS. That is a part of our support for the Catholic AIDS network in this country which reaches to other countries.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you. I have seen some of the work done in some countries, and you are to be commended for the work that you and the Sisters have done for a number of years.

I wanted to respond to Congressman Houghton. At the time when there was the civil war was going on, there was a request

that the U.S. intervene. I think that much of this could have been avoided had we gone in at that time. Mr. Mfume was chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus and I had led the international relations area for the Caucus for many years, and we met at that time with George Bush's National Security Council head, Brent Scowcroft, and we urged that since the Marines were there actually on ships, that we could have gone in and actually, without even any conflict, taken President Doe, whoever the sergeant who took over from the—he led the Government of Liberia back in 1991, that they knew exactly where Doe was holed up and that if the Marines had gotten in and taken him out at that time, that would have ended the crisis and we could have moved toward having elections and bolstered up the government.

But that did not happen. The Persian Gulf was starting and they were reluctant to do it. But it would have been a very, very simple maneuver. And unfortunately, Prince Johnson and the forces of Liberia, Charles Taylor and all the rest, were created by the lack of taking that very simple step.

I just have a question regarding the lobbying in Liberia. The question is why—I am not surprised that China has voted the way it has, and I am also not surprised that France has either because, as you know, all during the conflict, France was a major purchaser of the logs for the last 4 or 5 years in the first place. And secondly, in addition to the climatic exchange in Liberia because of the extensive rainforest, and there were the beautiful birds that used to have sanctuary in that environment, and with the logging and the destruction of the trees and the natural rainforest, I am made to understand that many of the migrating birds that used to have sanctuary now are also being lost.

So it is an overwhelmingly troubling trend. And I think that we should talk to our U.S. representative to the U.N., whoever is in charge up there now, to see whether there could be reconsideration of the sanctions and include lumber in that.

Mrs. Reeves-Karpeh, have you organized the Liberian-American community to try to support or lobby Members of Congress about attention to Liberia? And, secondly, is there a single voice, more or less a monolithic voice with the Liberian-American community as to its position as it relates to Liberia, Charles Taylor and sanctions, et cetera?

MS. REEVES-KARPEH. Thank you, Mr. Payne. Yes, we have made efforts to unite Liberians under one umbrella, and most Liberians in the United States tend to fall under the umbrella of the Union. Our presence here today testifies to the fact that the Union seeks to unite all Liberians so that we can have a united front in mobilizing our citizens here to lobby Congress, to lobby the United Nations and the international community to bring pressure to bear on Taylor or on anyone that seeks to suppress our people and to divert our resources for other means.

We hope that we can continue doing this and to work for the good of Liberia.

MR. PAYNE. Just finally, that protective status; we need to continue to work on that, the status, the temporary status that continues to linger until we can have the Liberian community that came over under the protective status moved into a permanent sta-

tus, of which the name escapes me right now. But we will continue to try to work with the community.

Ms. REEVES-KARPEH. Thank you very much. We want to thank you for your efforts in assisting the Union and Liberians here in getting the deforesting departure. We want to ask you to continue your support as we lobby Congress to get the bill passed submitted by Senator Reed and Representative Canady for immigration of Liberians to the United States. Thank you very much.

Mr. ROYCE. Congressman Meeks of New York.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me ask Ms. Reeves-Karpeh, my concern is this: This thing seems to be spreading like an infection. Now you hear that President Taylor claims that the sovereignty of his country is at stake because President Conte, some of the military insurgents, have moved into those areas; and, of course, President Conte feeling that the sovereignty of Guinea is at stake because of Charles Taylor.

And then you know, there is the surrounding—I am concerned about the surrounding country, whether it be Ghana or wherever. My concern is, my question is, it seems to me that maybe all of the countries could get together. I don't know whether or not there has been a meeting recently, ECOWAS Summit or Mano River Union Summit. Do you know whether or not there has been one planned and if so what the agenda is? And maybe—or do you believe the coming together of all the nations surrounding Charles Taylor, since he seems to be the central part, if they would come together that maybe that could help to begin to resolve some of the problems and also maintain some of the sovereignty issues that the various bordering countries are beginning to feel threatened by?

Ms. REEVES-KARPEH. The reason that—there was a meeting of the Organization of African Units and they came up with a pact called the Union of Africa. And they were seeking to unite the countries of Africa so that they would carry out their own agenda for ensuring peace and stability in Africa. However, you know that there are various countries and there are various players in this puzzle and there are some strong players and there are some weak players. And so one has to ensure that we get the cooperation of the international community to set that Union into place, because if we don't do that, then we have one person trafficking, and if he is stronger, he can overrun his neighbor and his neighbor will not be able to do anything.

So it requires the nurturing of the international community, so to speak, so that people will see that there is some clarity in direction and that everyone is working on the same page for the same goal.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Bishop, to that end I am told that from March 6th to the 26th that the Secretary General of the U.N., Kofi Annan, has decided to dispatch an interagency mission to West Africa, traveling to several different countries in West Africa. Do you have any idea of what that agenda is and whether or not the U.N. will try to solicit support for the sanctions against Liberia? Because I hear Nigeria and Mali may not be for the sanctions. Do you have any idea what the agenda is, what they think they will be able to accomplish?

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you very much for the question, and I have to plead ignorance on this one. Largely, the work that the International Rescue Community does is rescue work and we do humanitarian work and are not terribly involved in the political issues. So, no, I am not aware.

Mr. MEEKS. Ms. Reeves-Karpeh do you know anything about it? Have you heard anything about the U.N.'s interagency mission to West Africa?

Ms. REEVES-KARPEH. No, but it would be interesting to see what the mandate is.

Mr. MEEKS. That is what I am trying to figure out. It might be inappropriate, but that is what I was trying to figure out, what the agenda was or is, and what they are trying to accomplish and why they are there. I understand that there is a mission that is there. And I was just trying to find out if anybody had any knowledge what it is for.

Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you. We will go to Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California and then Congressman Jeff Flake of Arizona.

Ms. LEE. Thank you for these hearings, and our Ranking Member, because once again we are focused on a region, a part of the world that oftentimes is neglected, especially with regard to West Africa, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. And one of the areas I think that has been neglected, of course, is the whole HIV/AIDS pandemic as it relates to West Africa. We know what it is doing to southern Africa. We have some figures of some statistics with regard to Nigeria, a country of over 100 million people. But we don't have really enough data, I don't think, on Liberia and Sierra Leone.

And I am just wondering how the war and how the fact that there is no peace and stability in Liberia or Sierra Leone, what is that doing in terms of the whole HIV/AIDS pandemic and the ability to respond to it? We have a refugee population, huge; we have peacekeeping forces, general population. Yet, in a war, you can't do anything with regard to infectious diseases, especially a disease such as HIV and AIDS. So what has been the impact of the instability on this very horrible scourge? Anybody?

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you very much for the question. I think at this point there is very little information, very few data available regarding rates of HIV, AIDS, and largely other infectious diseases. What is clear throughout West Africa, throughout these countries that are experiencing civil war, is the health systems have been devastated to the point that largely the governments themselves provide very few, if any, health services. Much of it provided by the United Nations and the larger humanitarian community.

The International Rescue Committee recently in Sierra Leone undertook a mortality study in the Kenama district in the east of the country, which found that approximately 1 out of every 3 children die as infants due to the unavailability of health services, high rates of diseases, what have you.

There are very few—and many of these countries presently have no systems for registering HIV, for testing blood; or, if there are systems, for informing the persons thus infected. It is a crisis that

is sweeping throughout all of Africa, clearly. Time magazine had a very recent article which points this out.

And I think one of the priorities that has to be for the Committee and for the international community is to reestablish health systems as quickly as possible, including sensitization campaigns to try to bring down rates of these diseases, even if we are not aware of where the rates might be.

Ms. LEE. What then would be the potential impact of sanctions as it relates to the health care, the lack there of health care systems?

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you. As I requested in my testimony, I would hope that any sanctions imposed on Liberia do not include humanitarian aid; that humanitarian aid is excluded largely, as I said, because humanitarian assistance is providing many of the services, whether in the health sector, education sector or what have you, to the local population it has. I believe that if at a point in the future humanitarian aid were sanctioned, in effect sanctions placed on humanitarian aid, that would only further devastate the coping systems for the local populations.

Ms. REEVES-KARPEH. I would like to say after every war the population experiences all kinds of diseases. And presently, given the resources that are available, Liberia—the major hospital is John F. Kennedy Hospital, which was just reopened. And the with the prevalence of these diseases there, the government has been unable to properly deal with the outbreak of HIV or any kind of infectious diseases.

And that is why we support the need for humanitarian assistance, because we think that if resources were available to conduct research, we would be able to record data, we would be able to educate the population on advantages and disadvantages of citing health hazards that you might experience. So we hope that in this process of looking at Liberia-U.S. relations, that there would be added efforts made to assist the health sector to redevelop, so to speak, and to assist the people in dealing with these infectious diseases, as the country is unable, the government is unable, to really deal with those issues. So I hope that we can get resources, we can mobilize resources, that we can be able to educate our people on HIV or any of the infectious diseases that we find in our country today.

Ms. LEE. May I hear Sister Mertens' response?

Sister MERTENS. I wanted to take 1 minute. I am aware of an NGO that is working in capacity building. That is a special type of program which is multifaceted and includes human development, general education on health and so forth. And that group is to some extent addressing the AIDS question which you raised, Representative Lee. So that that is a small NGO that has followed the presence of Jesuit refugee services in Liberia. But it is something that is actually on the ground there.

Ms. LEE. Thank you.

Mr. ROYCE. Thank you, Congresswoman Lee. Thank you, Sister. We are going to go now to Jeff Flake of Arizona.

Mr. FLAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for having missed much of the testimony but I really appreciate the opportunity to hear what I did. You mentioned, Mr. Bishop, that you

hope that humanitarian assistance does not stop and is not affected by any sanctions. How much at risk are you humanitarian workers in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia? And will the impact of sanctions have an impact on the safety of those workers? The sanctions in other areas, I should say.

Mr. BISHOP. Thank you very much. And that is certainly an excellent question because IRC, like all humanitarian organizations, is concerned with the security of our staff, with the security of the populations that we serve. If we do not have adequate security, as has been the case in large parts of Guinea in the past 6 months, we were unable to provide the services for which we are approved.

West Africa in general does have a horrible history of death or certainly injury to humanitarian workers. As recently as last September, a United Nations High Commission for Refugees staff member was killed in Guinea during an attack by rebels. And there have been other deaths, certainly other injuries, even rapes of humanitarian workers.

I would never say that we suffer nearly as much as the local population, but clearly we have seen in the past there has not been adequate security for those humanitarian operations.

In terms of your direct question, would the humanitarian aid and the security of humanitarian staff be affected by the imposition of sanctions, to be quite frank I don't know if anyone can say yes or no at the current time. What is hoped is that if sanctions were imposed on the Liberian government, that the government would understand that the work of humanitarian aid is apart from the politics of these sanctions, and that we maintain the goodwill to try to assist the government in reaching their responsibility toward their populations, whether it be in health care, education, or any other sector of intervention. Thank you.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. I would just like to indicate for the record that normally when sanctions are imposed—and I have been a supporter of sanctions in South Africa, Nigeria, I support sanctions here if it is going to change the government. Humanitarian issues are always excluded from the sanctions. In Iraq, food—oil can be sold for food, though it is not working that well. But usually there is an attempt to find some humanitarian way to provide medical and health services, food assistance. So any sanctions we would push would certainly exclude those areas.

I just also would like to indicate that Mr. Lantos has a statement that he would like to have placed in the record.

Mr. ROYCE. Without objection. I would like to thank Mr. Payne for clarifying that point.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Lantos follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE TOM LANTOS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

“CONFLICT DIAMONDS” IN WEST AFRICA FUEL “THE WORST REFUGEE CRISIS IN THE
WORLD”

After the near-collapse of UN refugee operations in Guinea, UNHCR announced on February 26, 2001 it will resume aid to 170,000 refugees trapped in the southwest portion of the country known as “Parrot’s Beak.” Plans continue to create safe corridors to return refugees to Sierra Leone. Nearly one-half million war-weary refugees primarily from Sierra Leone and Liberia (approximately the population of

Washington, D.C.) have been caught for the last decade between rebels, government armies, and more recently armed militias fighting for control of “conflict diamonds” areas. Although the resumed aid should prevent the trapped refugees from starving, an international security force is needed to protect the newly-established safe corridors and allow the refugees to return.

Key Points for Members

- The African nation of Guinea faces the worst refugee crisis in the world, with nearly one-half million refugees trapped and starving in inadequate refugee camps. Immediate action must be taken to resolve this crisis, which threatens the stability of West Africa.
- The resumed aid and the establishment of safe corridors announced by the United Nations last week are steps in the right direction. Unless the safe corridors are protected by a international security force, however, the refugees will remain trapped and the crisis will fester.
- The United States should lend its moral and material support international efforts to secure the safe passages. We should also continue to press for strengthening sanctions against neighboring Liberia, which is perpetuating the crisis, and pass the Clean Diamonds Act, which would address the root cause of the civil war raging in Guinea.

Background

Escalating battles between Guinean government and rebel forces fighting in Sierra Leone have created the “worst refuge crisis in the world,” according to Rudd Lubbers, Head of the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Until aid resumed February 26, the fighting had cut off assistance and escape routes to tens of thousands of men, women and children trapped in Guinea’s southeast region known as “Parrot’s Beak.” Most refugees had not received food aid for five months and are desperate to return home despite fears of spreading violence.

Lubbers brokered an agreement with the warring parties to establish three safe corridors connecting Guinea and Sierra Leone allowing refugees to escape. However, without guaranteed cessation of fighting and anti-civilian terrorism, there is no way to assure the continued security of the passage ways. In December 2000, ECOWAS—a regional security organization comprised entirely of African states—agreed to send 1,700 peacekeepers to the border areas to help secure the safe passages. ECOWAS awaits a green light from the UN Security Council, however, in order to deploy. Although this peacekeeping force would help, most military analysts consider this force far too small for the daunting border security tasks involved.

Analysis

War over the control of “conflict diamonds” in Sierra Leone is the primary cause of the refugee crisis. Rebel forces terrorize civilians while mining diamonds, which fetch between \$25 million and \$125 million in Western markets every year. In order to profit from this bloody trade, neighboring Liberia has actively supported the rebels. While not a diamond-rich country, Liberia exported \$300 million worth of diamonds over the last two years. A panel of experts mandated by the UN Security Council to investigate the role of diamonds in West African conflicts concluded that Liberia is indeed facilitating the trafficking of conflict diamonds and contributing to the refugee crisis.

Liberia faces a ban on diamond exports, a travel ban on senior Liberian officials, and the grounding of Liberian-registered aircraft, in addition to an increased arms embargo. The UN Security Council has given Charles Taylor, President of Liberia, two months to negotiate with other West African leaders to end support for the rebels.

Policy

To help the resolve this pressing crisis, the United States should take the following action:

- Increase U.S. contributions to the UN humanitarian assistance agencies.
- Pursue UN sanctions against Liberia if there is no fundamental change in behavior
- Provide Guinea and Sierra Leone with aid packages to help with refugee resettlement
- Provide non-lethal military assistance to Guinea and Sierra Leone to defend themselves

In addition to this immediate action, the United States should take steps to address the underlying causes of the crisis, especially the continued trade in “conflict

diamonds." The Clean Diamonds Act, to be reintroduced in the 107th Congress, would only allow the importation of diamonds from countries implementing a system of controls by UN standards or a future international agreement that implements such controls. A presidential commission would monitor compliance and subject civil and criminal penalties against violators dealing in contraband diamonds.

Mr. ROYCE. I would like to thank the Members for their participation in this hearing, and I especially want to thank the witnesses for their willingness to submit their testimony today. Thank you all. And this meeting stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:40 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GREGORY W. MEEKS, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I am honored to serve on this committee again this year and look forward to working with all our members on issues that are vital to achieve peace and prosperity in Africa. I was particularly pleased at the Full Committee Hearing last week to hear that you, Mr. Chairman, will make trade and AGOA implementation a priority for us this session.

I am heartened that our first hearing will address Liberia, a country whose history is so closely linked with our own, and whose activities lie at the root of crisis in West Africa. About half a million refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia have fled fighting stirred up by the Revolutionary United Front. The result has been a massive refugee crisis in neighboring Guinea.

One week ago, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to impose a 12-month ban on diamond imports from Liberia and to restrict travel by senior Liberian officials. These measures are in response to Monrovia's involvement in arms and diamonds trafficking with rebels from Sierra Leone. They will take effect in two months unless the Council determines that Liberia has ceased these activities.

The use of sanctions to achieve political goals is always controversial, and we have heard some opposition from leaders in the region. The question now is, "where do we go from here?"

I commend the Congressional initiative calling attention to the problem of "conflict diamonds", and demanding transparency from the diamond industry. I also commend the UN for its resumption of refugee aid programs and the setting up of safe corridors to allow refugees to return home. Nigeria has shown responsible leadership by its commitment to deploy troops to Sierra Leone, troops whom we will continue to train.

"What can we do to boost these measures?" I am looking forward to hearing our distinguished panel's thoughts on how U.S. policy can respond to the problem. An effective strategy may combine continued pressure on the Taylor government along with institution building throughout the region.

I believe that the current situation is unacceptable. The Liberian people deserve better as they struggle to build a post-war society where people have confidence in their government.

Civilians in the region also deserve better. West Africa needs infrastructure to develop trade. The most frustrating aspect of the crisis is that conflict prevents regional cooperation, and further contributes to a stagnant regional economy. West Africa's quagmire must be linked to both the unacceptable actions of Taylor's government and overall institutional decay in the region.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE EARL F. HILLIARD, A REPRESENTATIVE IN
CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ALABAMA

Dear Chairman:

Thank you for holding this hearing on Liberia. The situation in Liberia is a classic example of many African countries that struggle to develop, and create order out of chaos and peace from a reign of cruel oppression. To add to their struggle, they must attempt to accomplish this challenge with few resources.

Liberia is also a prime example of the new and horrific manner of conflict. Wars used to be fought among soldiers, but now civilians are the targets of militant factions. Revolutionary groups arrogantly wage war for authoritarian ideals or shallow aspirations of power, while masses of people have no choice but to suffer and endure.

As different militant groups wage a senseless war with incomprehensible objectives, the country's infrastructure is destroyed or left to decay. Economic, trade, education, the health care system and even the most basic services provided by a functioning government are shut down. The everyday routine of society is disrupted, and people are left to fend for themselves or forced to depend on an overwhelmed and overburdened system of international organizations that cannot meet the needs of all those desperate to receive aid.

This suffering must stop and I look forward with great interest to hearing the concerns and potential solutions our witnesses bring to this committee. I hope a viable solution will soon emerge, the hope and livelihood of thousands rest upon an effective intervention.

