

Refugee Crisis:

A Case Study of the Economic Community of West African States

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The objective of this article is to discuss the horrendous refugee crisis in sub-regions of Africa. In that regard, the Economic Community of West African States with emphasis on the Mano River Union is the focus of this study. The member countries of the Mano River Union are Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry. In addition to sharing common borders, common ethnic groups and common cultural norms, there are marriages and fruitful commercial links between the people in the Mano River Union countries.

In order to thoroughly probe the factors that contribute to the dreadful refugee crisis in the sub-region, a number of questions are asked including: *Where are the most intense concentrations of refugees and displaced persons in the Economic Community of West African States? What are the factors that give rise to the acute political instability in the Mano River Union? In what instances are the citizenry displaced and become refugees by natural or environmental phenomena? When are citizens of a nation-state displaced and made refugee? What attendant elements are relevant in examining refugee crisis? Finally, what initiatives have the heads of state and government of the Mano River Countries explored to stem refugee crisis, restore*



peace, stability, and economic development? The answers to the above queries and many more are significant aspects of this work.

This article has three parts. Part One articulates the causes of outflow of the citizenry as internally displaced people and refugees from the Mano River Union countries since 1989. Part Two discusses the experience of internally displaced people and refugees during their ordeal in foreign countries. Part Three analyzes the role of United Nations, Economic Community of West African States,

and the international community in the management and resolution of internal conflicts in sovereign states and international conflicts that cause internally displaced people and refugees. In this seminal article, 'international community' is defined as European Union, United States, Canada, non governmental organizations and their contributions to the debate on management and resolution of refugee crisis in the world in general and Africa in particular.

The history of the human race is hitherto the history of migrations. For

many centuries, man survived as a 'gatherer'. He wandered from place to place, ostensibly in search of food. The weather was another phenomenon that caused man to wander from place to place in search of a more habitable environment. Due to crude technology in primitive communal society, man developed a culture of endurance for harsh conditions. Hence, migration is as old as the human race (Hakovirta, 1991; Parnwell, 1993; Cohen, 1995).

During the Twentieth Century, a number of factors *viz.*, internal conflicts, wars between nation-states, environmental hazards, for example, famine caused by drought, disease and above all, population explosion contributed to movement of people everywhere in the world. Interestingly, statistics show that the whole Twentieth Century witnessed heightened political instability caused by ethnic conflicts within nation-states. Currently, internal political instability stands out as the single most important destabilizing factor responsible for the horrendous displacement of people in the world in general and Africa in particular (Ogata, 2000).

A number of approaches have been discussed in the past as a way forward to restore internal stability in nation-states. In that regard, resolution and management of conflicts are relative in various parts of the world. In Europe, for example, strong institutions supported by the public as expressed through democratic elections have established a generally accepted framework for the resolution of disputes within the body politic.

Additionally, European governments emphasize individual freedoms, law and order and peaceful resolution to internal conflicts. The reverse is true of nation-states in Africa. Since the attainment of independence about five decades ago the governments of African states have failed to establish such a consensus on institutions to maintain law and order in such a way as to ensure peace—other than by the use of force and intimidation. In addition the ruling cliques, often tribal, do not protect human rights and in particular property rights, against arbitrary violations (Zolberg, 1989).

Suffice it to say that many unresolved-armed conflicts in countries in Africa continue to undermine regional stability and force the citizenry to flee from their place of abode and become internally displaced and refugees in Europe, Middle East and North America. Social analysts including Baker and Aina probed the historical framework for the study of population movements in Africa and concluded, "the phenomenon of migration is not new in Africa." Similar studies contend that Africa is and has always been a "continent perpetually on the move" (Baker and Aina, 1995).

Since the achievement of political freedom, the leadership of post-colonial states in Africa has failed to deliver public goods and services as a measure of independence and fulfillment of the high expectations of the citizenry. Indeed, the provision of public goods and services was the bedrock of the struggle for national liberation in the middle of the Twentieth Century.

In recent times ethnic rivalry, abject poverty and lack of essential goods and services have contributed to the scourge of internal instability in sub-regional conflicts in East Africa, Horn of Africa, North Africa, West Africa and Southern Africa. Invariably, protracted armed conflicts between states and ethnic groups paralyze government ministries, cripple economic development, and above all, cause displaced people and outflow of the citizenry as refugees. Recent data indicate that there are about 25 million internally displaced persons and 18 million-refugee population in the world. Of these estimates, 15 million (60%) of the displaced in the world are in Africa. Hence Africa has a disproportionate share of displaced and refugee population in the world (Deng, 1993).

Tap Root of Internally Displaced People and Refugee Crisis in the Mano River Union since 1989

During the past two decades, many social commentators argue that the emerging economies in Africa, Asia and Latin America are mis-governed. Exponents of this thesis insist that ruthless, power hungry, corrupt and semi-literate dictators poorly govern citizens of emerging economies. A leading exponent of this school of thought is Professor Robert Hotberg. On one hand, Professor Hotberg writes that if the manifestations of good governance including free, fair, competitive and periodic elections were organized in non-European parts of the world "civil wars would cost less deadly." On the other hand, he

insists that countries that apply western democratic norms are better governed. In such societies, the political leadership performs services for their citizenry, respects political freedoms and human rights, nurtures strong institutions, provides quality education and health services, regulates effective infrastructure and delivers high levels of security to the citizenry and country. Additionally, such governments bolster institutional framework conducive to economic growth and prosperity as well as create an atmosphere in which civil society flourishes and regulates the 'environmental commons' for the benefit of all.

Interestingly, in countries where there is diminished good governance, the governments prey on their citizens, deliver few if any public goods and services and above all "the arteries of commerce, education, health and security are generally weak." In such emerging economies, "the rule of law is honored in the breach and political institutions are rudimentary." Similar to other 'failed' states in Africa, Liberia and Sierra Leone were under siege by rebel factions for many years before national elections were organized under the auspices of the United Nations and the international community. Pundits contended that after national elections, law and order, education and commerce would be restored in the Mano River Union. Notwithstanding presidential and legislative elections in 1997, Liberia and Cote D'Ivoire came under siege in 1999 and 2002 respectively. The instability in the two countries is

characterized by open displays of greed for power, ethnic rivalry, sectionalism and weakened central authority.

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one-party constitutions with functionally literate, corrupt and inept political leadership. In such states, the heads of state and government were unwill-

ing to organize free and fair elections or democratize and relinquish political power to a more responsible and popular opposition. The Republics of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry were not exceptions. Also, political stability dramatically deteriorated. Hence, the way forward to bring about 'regime change' in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry where brutal dictators ruled for many years was either through organized internal rebellion or invasion force.

Liberia

With a pre-war population of about 3.5 million and an area the size of the state of North Carolina, the Republic of Liberia is the oldest independent nation-state in Africa. It became an independent republic on July 26, 1847. Founded and nurtured by the American Colonization Society as a home for freed African-American slaves, Liberia is considered a step daughter of the United States of America and has always been treated as such for most of its one hundred fifty six years of nationhood. Before the outbreak of hostilities in 1989, Liberia was a loyal friend and the staunchest ally of the United States of America and its Western Alliance in Africa throughout the 'cold war' period (Sesay, 1980).

One of the thorniest issues that has confronted Liberia since it was founded in 1847 is the relationship between Americo-Liberians, and the indigenous population that constitutes eighteen ethnic groups. Americo-Liberians are descendants of freed slaves repatriated to Liberia in the middle of the

nineteenth century. The cultural bias on behalf of Americo-Liberians has persisted for generations. For one hundred and fifty years, the head of state and government has always been Americo-Liberian. This period is characterized by glaring economic and social inequality between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous population. The latter was effectively excluded from political power. As expected, the indigenous population resented the state sponsored lopsided socio-economic arrangements on behalf of Americo-Liberians (Smokel, 1969; Libenow, 1969; Hope 1979).

Suffice it to say that no indigene has ever held the office of head of state and government until the notorious True Whig Party government was violently over thrown in a bloody military coup d'etat organized and led by Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe on April 12, 1980. During the insurgency, President William R Tolbert was assassinated. The coup plotters arrested, tried and executed thirteen senior Liberian government officials on the beaches of Monrovia, Liberia on April 13, 1980. The executions were popularly known as the "beach party". Indeed, the revolution brought an abrupt end to one hundred thirty-three years of political, economic, cultural and social domination by Americo-Liberians at the umbrage of indigenes (Boley, 1983).

Additionally, the coup d'etat on one hand transferred political power to the indigenous people of Liberia and on the other hand, reinforced catastrophic retributions, recriminations and urge to 'settle old scores' through

the use of force. It was the above scenario that brought about the founding of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) by descendants of Americo-Liberians under the leadership of Charles Ghankay Taylor in 1989. The *sine qua none* of NPFL, among other things, was to 'revenge' the assassination of President Tolbert and the executions of thirteen Americo-Liberian government officials as well as to re-capture political power. Essentially, the NPFL was an armed opposition ostensibly organized to oust indigenous people from political power in Liberia. The majority of the descendants of Americo-Liberians were rank and file members of NPFL (Ellis, 1998).

Additionally, the NPFL was to:

1. Contain once and for all, the severe economic hardships experienced by Liberians since President Doe came to power in 1980;
2. Restore the good image of the Republic of Liberia overseas;
3. Bring to an end the dictatorial regime of President Samuel Kanyon Doe;
4. Restore in the government of Liberia democracy, ethics and human rights and finally,
5. Organize free and fair elections under international supervision.

In complete disregard for Christmas Day and the desire to utilize the element of surprise to inflict maximum casualties on civilian population, insurgents belonging to the NPFL under the leadership of Charles Ghankay Taylor and battlefield commander General Prince Yomi Johnson

began an offensive on December 24, 1989. The combatants attacked unarmed civilians in the border town of Butuo in Nimba County from neighboring La Cote d'Ivoire. The attack signaled the beginning of a protracted and dreadful civil war in Liberia. Also, the military offense caused the first wave of internally displaced people and refugees in the Mano River Union. The initial operation gave rise to about five hundred internally displaced people and two hundred refugees who fled their villages for safer communities in Liberia and La Cote d'Ivoire (Ellis, 1998; Boley, 1983).

As expected, the reaction of President Doe was swift. He ordered the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) to drive the insurgents out of Liberia and to capture Charles Taylor. The president later discovered that his troops were poorly trained, ill equipped and were not up to the task. In June 1990, NPFL controlled the battlefields. In spite of this shortcoming, President Doe informed Liberians that his soldiers had the upper hand in the conflict. At the end of 1990, there were over 450,000 displaced people in Monrovia and about 800,000 refugees had crossed the borders into the neighboring countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea-Conakry and La Cote d'Ivoire. As expected, the Mende, Vai/Galinese, Kissi and Kru ethnic groups on the long and porous border between Sierra Leone and Liberia extended warm hospitality to their cousins from Liberia and accommodated them into their homes. The warm relationship continued to March 1991. During that

period, there were no refugee camps in Sierra Leone for Liberians until Charles Taylor, NPFL leader, provided arms, munitions and logistics to the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)—a rebel organization—to attack Sierra Leone on March 21, 1991 (Pratt, 1999).

The attack awakened the government and people of Sierra Leone. As expected, the government and people of Sierra Leone were concerned and unhappy with Liberians. In that regard, the Government of Sierra Leone reacted and established two refugee camps at the National Stadium in Freetown and Waterloo, about twenty-five kilometers to accommodate Liberians. The two camps held about 80,000 Liberian refugees. At the end of 1996, there were over 1,000,000 Liberian refugees in camps in Sierra Leone. The number increased sharply after President Doe was captured and murdered by General Johnson, leader of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) in September 1990. After the collapse of President Doe and his government, there was no law and order throughout Liberia. Chaos prevailed in Liberia for a decade (Boley, 1983).

The ‘freedom fighters,’ as NPFL combatants preferred to be called, gained success after success against the Armed Forces of Liberia because of their resilience, superior military prowess and propaganda bias. The author (Boley) contends that parties in the conflict committed atrocities and anti-social crimes against women, children and the aged.

Sierra Leone

During the past decade, the recent history of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Conakry are inextricably interwoven with reference to internally displaced people and refugees. In this regard, the taproot of the current political instability in the Mano River Union that originated in Liberia where a homegrown insurgency in 1989 gained international notoriety and spread to countries with common borders. In addition to the population being traumatized, the three countries have suffered economic, cultural and social setbacks.

The Republic of Sierra Leone achieved independence from the United Kingdom in April 1961. It became a republic within the British Commonwealth in 1971. Honorable Siaka Probyn Stevens, founder and leader of the All People’s Congress Party became the first president of the republic. Since the attainment of political freedom thirty-two years ago, Sierra Leone experienced relative stability for only six years. Economic mismanagement, corruption, greed and nepotism marginalized the majority of Sierra Leoneans who live in the provinces in favor of a minute and potent elite in Freetown.

President Siaka Probyn Stevens stamped his authority on Sierra Leone when he banned opposition parties and outlawed political pluralism and multiparty democracy in 1978. Essentially, Sierra Leone became a *de jure* one-party state in 1978. After he ruled Sierra Leone for seventeen years (1968–1985) and ruined the economy in the process, President Stevens

retired from active politics and unconstitutionally handed power to Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh, his hand-picked successor over the Honorable Ibrahim Sorie Koroma, vice president for seventeen years (Profile on Sierra Leone, 2003).

President Momoh’s inability to salvage the worsening economic decline was a major setback for his administration. His problems multiplied when former army corporal Foday Saybana Sankoh, founder and leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and a surrogate of President Taylor of Liberia, attacked Sierra Leone ostensibly to overthrow the corrupt, nefarious and inefficient All People’s Congress Party regime. President Momoh’s ineffectiveness was revealed by his inability to deal with the insurgents. He was overthrown in a bloodless coup d’etat by battle-hardened junior officers in 1992 who installed Captain Strasser as head of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). As expected, Captain Strasser promised to rid the country of the cankerworm of corruption and defeat the RUF on the battlefield. Captain Valentine Strasser failed to deliver what he promised.

The consequence was unpleasant for the NPRC Chairman. He was overthrown in a palace coup plot led by Captain Julius Maada Bio in 1996. In spite of delaying tactics by the military, Captain Bio with the NPRC, was forced by civil society to hand over power to a popularly elected Sierra Leone People’s Party Government under the leadership of Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah in 1996. In the mean

time, continued rebel activities prevented the government from exercising effective control over urban and rural communities in Sierra Leone.

As the RUF offensive got under way on March 21, 1991, insurgents came from Liberia and attacked Bomaru, a small farming village in Dia Chiefdom, Kailahun District, Eastern Province, Sierra Leone. The Eastern Province of Sierra Leone is the most lucrative and productive area of Sierra Leone. As the war escalated, farming villages and towns in Kissi Teng and Kissi Tongi chiefdoms were overrun. Many civilians including women, children and the aged were either wounded or killed. Those who were fortunate to escape the wrath of the insurgents became internally displaced and refugees in Liberia, Guinea-Conakry, and sub-region of West Africa, Europe and North America (United States and Canada). In December 1991, there were over 60,000 and 70,000 Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia and Guinea-Conakry, respectively (Pratt, 1999).

The next stage came in April 1992, when the NPRC overthrew the All People's Council regime in April 1992, and Captain Strasser became Chairman. Captain Strasser declared blanket amnesty for all combatants including the Revolutionary United Front. He specifically asked the rank and file of the rebel unit to stop the war effort and join NPRC in implementing a new national agenda. But this effort was a gross miscalculation and failure of the first step towards normalizing relations between government, civil society and the RUF. The rank and file of RUF

ignored the amnesty. Instead, the War Council used the period of cease-fire to escalate the war and moved men and materiel to strategic positions near government troops, rural and highly populated urban communities. They were reassured of the element of surprise they craved.

The RUF combatants attacked government troops' positions causing heavy casualties and simultaneously attacked urban and rural towns and villages and forced thousands of civilians to flee to safer areas in Sierra Leone and refugees in Liberia, Guinea-Conakry, Nigeria and Ghana etc. The RUF maneuver caused the influx of refugees in the neighboring countries to increase from 450,000 to over 750,000. The out flow of thousands of refugees placed extra burden on United Nations Human Rights Commission resources. At the end of 1996, over 2,000,000 Sierra Leoneans were either internally displaced or refugees. Interestingly, I became a refugee in La Cote d'Ivoire and subsequently in Liberia and currently in the United States (Pratt, 1999; Amnesty International Report, 2000).

Guinea-Conakry

Relative to the rebel incursions into Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1989 and 1991 respectively, the experience of the Government of the Republic of Guinea-Conakry was less traumatic. Although there are anti-government insurgents in Guinea-Conakry, their campaigns in that country did not cause internally displaced and refugees to the degree in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Following the state funeral of President Ahmad Sekou Toure in 1973, General Lansana Conteh, Commanding Officer of the armed forces of Guinea-Conakry overthrew the remnant regime in a bloodless coup d'etat. He was in power for eight years as a military ruler before duly elected president of Guinea-Conakry. General Conteh has remained in power ever since. However, during the last decade, there have been accusations and counter accusations between President Conteh and former President Taylor of Liberia of meddling into the internal affairs of each other's country by supporting anti-government insurgents. Currently, the two countries are at the brink of war.

The Experience of Internally Displaced People and Refugees in the Mano River Union

Since the beginning of hostilities in the Mano River Union in December 1989, the citizenry of the constituent states became internally displaced and refugees. Although Democratic elections were held in 1997, Liberia has been under siege since 1999 by a faction known as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). Currently, the confrontation has economically paralyzed Cape Mount and Lofa Counties. The no-win dilemma has given rise to about one hundred thousand internally displaced people and seventy thousand refugees who crossed the border into the Pujehun District, Southern Province, Sierra Leone. A similar number is also in Guinea-Conakry and Cote D'Ivoire.

Interestingly, when communities are threatened by hostile activities, there is tendency for the citizenry to flee and avoid areas of conflict for more secured and safer environments. Hence the crisis in the Mano River Union is not an exception. When residents of Bomaru village left, they faced a variety of anti-social problems during their ordeal as displaced people and refugees. Incidentally, combatants swelled their number by conscripting captured male youths in to their ranks. May I emphasize that those captured youths that refused to serve with rebel units were summarily executed. The RUF commandos slaughtered thousands of Sierra Leonean youth that refused to take up arms against their community. Those conscripted were exposed to dangerous drugs such as cannabis, hashish and cocaine, etc. The rationale for giving drugs to combatants was to strengthen their resolve in battle so as to commit heinous crimes including rape, amputation of limbs of nursing mothers and children with machetes (Allen and Morsik, 1994; Pratt, 1999).

The future of internally displaced people and refugees is uncertain. Among other things, they leave behind homes, personal effects, jobs, and above all, loved ones. During their ordeal, the aged and the sick are left to perish due to absence of physicians, drugs and medicines. The lucky female youth that escapes captivity face the gruesome future with prostitution and illegal substances. Part of the experience of women is that they exchange sex gratification for food and shelter in foreign countries. In

such cases, they are forced into relationships with notorious commandos and may lose their lives if they disobeyed orders. Hence sexual exploitation is part of the horrible experience of women. In this regard, women have a higher risk of suffering from sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS/HIV (Pratt, 1999; Gillian, 2000).

The national governments of countries that accept refugees in West Africa often place them in special camps. Since refugee camps are poorly built, they are recipes for diseases. During the rainy season, many occupants of refugee camps die from pneumonia and water borne diseases such as dysentery and diarrhea. Also, refugees are harassed by immigration and border control officers. They demand sex from female refugees in exchange for favors. Another area of concern is food. The shortage of food in the sub-region of West Africa in general and Mano River countries in particular cannot be underestimated. As a result of continued-armed confrontation between combatants of rebel units and forces loyal to national governments of states, farmers are unable to produce food. In that regard, high prices of food is the norm in the Mano River Union. Additionally, the above scenario has contributed to dependency on foreign imports since the beginning of hostilities in 1989. This explains why displaced people and refugees depend on handouts from United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) for food, blankets, utensils, medicines and transportation. (Ferris, 1993; Ogata, 2000).

The Role of the International Community in Management and Resolution of Internally Displaced People and Refugees Crisis in the Mano River Union

In tandem with the *raison d'être* of the Charter of the United Nations, the Security Council underscores the significance of diffusing internal conflicts in member states and external conflicts between member states that lead to internally displaced persons and refugees in the world in general and Africa in particular. Currently, Africa disproportionately has the largest internally displaced and refugee population in the world. This is why the Security Council attempts to nip in the bud factors that may lead to arm conflicts that cause instability, internal displacement and out flow of refugees across international boundaries. Despite specific international commitments, the management of the huge problem of displaced people and refugees is not being dealt with effectively (Zolberg, 1989).

Since 1997, human suffering caused by violations of human rights and humanitarian law has contributed to heightening political instability and conflicts in sub-regions of Africa. The Security Council has repeatedly expressed concern about the alarming treatment of internally displaced people and refugees by African governments. A number of reasons are responsible for the above. First, the rebel incursion in Liberia quickly engulfed Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry, paralyzing subsistence farming which feeds over ninety per cent

of the population. Second, there is wide spread abject poverty in the states of the Mano River Union and in their acute political instability, the governments are unable to render assistance to their citizens much less to aliens. The popular contention is that the internally displaced and refugees in the countries of Africa are not adequately protected in spite of the 1951 United Nations Convention, 1967 Protocol and Organization of African Unity Convention of 1969. Although the conventions and protocol protect the status of internally displaced people and refugees, many deaths have occurred among refugees. To eliminate this anomaly, the governments of countries in Africa through the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (now African Union) enacted the 1969 Convention targeting food, welfare, security and employment of people and refugees in Africa (Carver, 1995; Kaplan, 2000).

The United Nations Security Council calls on member states to accept their obligations under international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law as the way forward to implement regulations on internally displaced persons and refugees. In tandem with the United Nations framework, the Security Council urges member states that have not acted on United Nations conventions and protocols to ratify the relevant instruments of humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. The President of the Security Council on one hand commends member states for their gallant contribution aimed at “promoting an effective collective response of the international commu-

nity to situations of internal displacement.” On the other hand, he appeals to governments in general and in particular governments with internal displacement and refugee crisis to

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support the effort of United Nations agencies, regional organizations and non- governmental agencies (UN Security Council, 2000; Ogata, 2000).

The United Nations Security Council

places the burden on host governments to provide welfare and security for refugees. In this regard, the Council expects that humanitarian character of refugee camps and other places of settlement are in accordance with generally accepted international standards, human rights and humanitarian laws. Also, the Security Council takes into consideration the “extensive experience and burden” of countries in Africa in areas of displacement and refugees and the budgetary limitations of governments hosting refugees. In consideration of the needs of countries in Africa and “noting with concern the shortfall in funding,” the Security Council calls on industrialized countries in Europe and North America to generously contribute financial resources to programs coordinated by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (Ogata, 2000).

The Security Council strongly opposes conscription, training and use of individuals; including women and children in refugee camps for military purposes. Indeed, this provision was violated with impunity on a number of occasions during the civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2001) and Liberia (1989-1997). In the period under review, RUF and NPFL captured and trained elementary and secondary school pupils as “freedom fighters.” Collectively, that was how the RUF and NPFL recruited new members in violation of international regulations, which effectively disrupted the educational system of Sierra Leone and Liberia (U.N. Security Council, 2000).

One of the United Nations guiding provisions on displacement and refugees

is unhindered access to refugee camps and other settlements in accordance to international guidelines by United Nations staff and non-governmental organizations. Although United Nations law protects humanitarian personnel in areas of conflict, many lost their lives in Panguma and Gbarnga in Kenema District, Sierra Leone and Liberia respectively. The Security Council condemned such acts of deliberate violence against its staff and non-governmental organizations (United Nations. Security Council, 2000).

Finally, this article has examined displaced people and refugee crisis in the Mano River Union countries namely, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Conakry. It was argued that the crisis started in Liberia in December 1989, when NPFL combatants under the leadership of Taylor and General Johnson attacked Butuo, Nimba County, Liberia from Cote D'Ivoire. The war orchestrated in Liberia spread like wildfire when RUF insurgents attacked Bomaru, Kissi Teng Chiefdom, Kailahun District, Sierra Leone in March 1991. The experience of refugees, international laws protecting refugees and probing of the United Nations was articulated.

The carefully coordinated attacks on the sovereignty of Liberia and Sierra Leone were accompanied by displaced people and outflow of refugees in the sub-region of West Africa, Europe and North America. The author argued that, the military campaign had a horrendous effect on the Mano River Union with respect to political, economic, educational and

cultural destruction of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Peace was achieved in Sierra Leone and Liberia with the assistance of the United Nations, Economic Community of West African States, European Union, Organization of African Unity and the United States. The government of the United States contributed generously to the maintenance of United Nations and regional forces in Sierra Leone. After peace accords were signed between the Government of Sierra Leone and RUF and the thirteen warring factions in Liberia, free and fair presidential and legislative elections based on one man, one vote without intimidation were held under the supervision of international observers. Democratically elected governments emerged in Sierra Leone and Liberia in 1996 and 1997 respectively. However, peace was short lived in Liberia because the country again came under siege by Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy in 1999.

The Special Court set up by United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone to try combatants guilty of heinous war crimes of murder, rape and amputation has commenced proceedings in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Thus far, eight rank and file RUF and Kamajoor militiamen have been indicted. Two of the indicted, Johnny Paul Koroma and Sam Boackarie, alias General Mosquito are at large. In May 2003, the Government of Liberia announced the death of Sam Boackarie in confrontation with Liberian government troops when he resisted arrest. The American prosecu-

tors of the Special Court have demanded the return of the corpse to Freetown, Sierra Leone for DNA analysis.

As Liberians fled the fighting between Liberian government troops and LURD fighters, they were displaced in their country and crossed borders to become refugees in neighboring countries. A new rebel organization, Movement for Democracy (MODEL), emerged in Liberia in May 2003, and engaged Liberian government troops. Thus, the conflict in Liberia has escalated reducing the prospects of a quick negotiated peaceful settlement. According to United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the fighting in Liberia has displaced one million people inside the country and sent three hundred thousand refugees to Sierra Leone, Guinea-Conakry and Cote D'Ivoire. In that regard, Ruud Lubbers, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees accused then President Taylor of Liberia of being behind the violence in the sub-region of West Africa and recommended his removal from office by force. It is impossible to project when political stability will return to the Mano River Union and stem the flow of displaced people and refugees.

The departure of President Taylor from the political scene in Liberia was an auspicious event that fostered the peace process between the government and rebel factions. Before Mr. Taylor came to national and international limelight, Liberia was a prosperous and stable country in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, after he supervised the worst destruction and carnage in history, Liberia is catego-

rized as the poorest country in the world by United Nations Development Program without basic facilities and infrastructures ideal for descent living in the Twenty First Century.

On August 11, 2003, President Taylor bowed to pressure from battle hardened fighters of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and Movement for Democracy (MODEL) and, the international community to resign his presidency and leave Liberia. The quest for his departure for Nigeria was to avert mayhem in Monrovia—a capital city that was placed under siege for weeks by LURD and MODEL fighters, which the Armed Forces of Liberia could not lift. Spear headed by President George Bush of the United States and echoed by President Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria), President Thambo Mbeki (South Africa), President Joaquim Chissano (Mozambique), President John Kufuor (Ghana), President Taylor was persuaded and pressured to accept the asylum offer before it expired. Indeed, it was three heads of state and government including the presidents of Mozambique, Ghana and South Africa who accompanied President Taylor to Nigeria. He left behind a country in ruin from a decade of brutal power struggles, without sewage and electricity, a train system that runs on back-powered handcarts, and a water plant operated as a charity by the European Union.

It was the National Patriotic Front of Liberia that orchestrated the devastating military campaign on December 24, 1989, at Butuo, Nimba County. In terms of human lives, property, social

and economic development, conservative estimates indicate that 150,000 people lost their lives, twice that number were wounded and 75% of the population of Liberia was internally displaced and became refugees in West Africa, North America and Western Europe.

During the term of office of President Taylor, 1997-2003, Liberians lived in peace for only three years before LURD and MODEL militia began their offensive that toppled the regime and sent the head of state into permanent exile. Also, it was a period in which wealth was amassed through control of the Liberian economy. In order to achieve his goal, President Taylor relied on patronage and intimidation to instill fear into Liberians. The president used thugs effectively to silence and disperse his political adversaries. For example, thugs cum assailants assaulted former President Amos Sawyer in 1998. After that unfortunate episode, the former head of state packed his bags and left Liberia for a safer and tolerant society in the United States. I would like to point out that the beneficiaries of the administration were those who participated in the bush campaign with Taylor. They were rewarded with responsible positions in government. May I point out that probity, accountability and good governance were absent and corruption, greed and nepotism were gratified and held in high esteem by the regime? A classic example was the embezzlement of hundreds of thousands of United States dollars from the treasury and government accounts in commercial

and central banks without investigation. For former President Taylor, he amassed millions of United States dollars from the sale of natural resources of Liberia viz., diamond, gold and timber etc., and pillaging of the national treasury. Currently, Mr. Taylor may be worth one billion United States dollars.

The good nature of the former president of Liberia was his benevolence. He made generous contributions to churches, mosques and institutions of higher learning. The A.M.E. Zion University College was a beneficiary of the generosity of the former president when I was president of the institution. President Taylor contributed thirty five thousand United States dollars to defray six-month faculty and staff salary arrears in 1998. The gift helped the 1997/98 academic year end well.

In conclusion, in spite of the enormous wealth of former President Taylor, with an evasive and cunning nature, he will not make “a come back” to the political scene of Liberia in the near future. Essentially, events that make the political leadership in Sierra Leone, Guinea-Conakry and La Cote D'Ivoire to hold Mr. Taylor in trust and provide a rendezvous and staging platform for military campaign against Liberia are unlikely to emerge in the foreseeable future. Currently, the leadership and people of these three countries dislike former President Taylor's political escapades in the sub-region. Incidentally, Sierra Leoneans have mobilized and demonstrated, as a way forward, to pressure their government and President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria to lift

the asylum granted to Mr. Taylor. Sierra Leoneans would like former President Taylor extradited to Freetown, Sierra Leone to answer charges against him in the United Nations Special Court. Currently, many members of rebel organizations and civil defense forces charged with crimes against humanity are in confinement awaiting trial. In my judgment, Mr. Taylor will not walk away free from charges against him. He will be extradited in the future because he has violated the current asylum agreement by communicating with the head of state, foreign minister and businessmen in Liberia. Additionally, the former president is raising funds for an undisclosed program in breach of his asylum agreement. Finally, heads of state are not immune from prosecution for crimes against humanity.

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