

Victors' Justice: The International Criminal Court (ICC) Begins Trial of Ousted Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo

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Global Research, February 02, 2016

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

Leader was overthrown by French paratroopers, detained and sent to the Netherlands

Former Ivory Coast President Laurent Gbagbo Is On Trial In The Netherlands Nearly Five Years After He Was Overthrown By French Paratroopers With The Backing Of The United States.

Gbagbo Had Challenged The Right Of Paris Who Supported The Current Leader Alassane Ouattara, A Former International Monetary Fund (IMF) Functionary And Darling Of Imperialism, To Install A Leader Of The West African State. Ivory Coast Is The World's Largest Producer Of Cocoa And Contains Significant Oil And Natural Gas Resources Off Shore.



Numerous Efforts Were Made By The Gbagbo Administration To Resolve The Dispute Surrounding The National Elections In 2010. Nonetheless, Paris With The Backing Of Washington And Its Allies Within The Regional Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) Rejected Peace Overtures And A Recount Of The Vote.

These Elements Were Determined To Remove Gbagbo And His Political Party From Power And Consequently Went To Great Lengths To Stage The Coup Which Installed Ouattara. At Present Ivory Coast Is Hailed By The West As A Success Story Due To The Greater Penetration Of Its Economy By The Imperialist Countries.

Gbagbo Plead Not Guilty To Four Serious Charges Including Murder And Rape Allegedly Carried Out By His Supporters Under His Directives During Clashes Which Resulted In 3,000 Deaths After Disputes Surfaced Over The 2010 Presidential Election Results. ICC Prosecutors In Their Opening Arguments Made At The End Of January Told The Court That Gbagbo Unleashed Violence Against His Supporters In Order To Remain In Office.

Defense Argues Political Motivation For The Trial

Lawyers For The Defendants, Whom Also Include Former First Lady Simone Gbagbo And Youth Leader Charles Ble Goude, Are Emphasizing The Role Of France In The Inability Of The Ivory Coast To Resolve Its Own Internal Problems. Bringing In That It Was French Military Operatives That Arrested The Former President In His Makeshift Residence Poses A Challenge To The Character Of The ICC Which Is Based At The Hague.



First Lady Simone Gbagbo Was Tried In 2014 And Sentenced To Twenty Years In Prison By Ivorian Authorities Under Ouattara. No Members Of Ouattara's Rally Of The Republicans (RDR) Party Have Been Indicted By The ICC Or Ivory Coast Prosecutors.

Defense Attorney Jennifer Naouri Said "Laurent Gbagbo Continually Sought Solutions To The Post-Electoral Crisis, Proposing For Example That Votes Be Re-Counted. Ouattara Didn't Agree To This." (Reuters, Feb. 1)

Gbagbo Supporters In Ivory Coast And Internationally Have Pointed Out The Bias Of The Proceedings. After The Isolation And Arrest Of Gbagbo, His Wife And Other Key Leaders In April 2011, The Western Nations Immediately Recognized Ouattara As The “Legitimate Head-Of-State” In Abidjan. This Same Policy Is Continuing Even Though Gbagbo Maintains Tremendous Support Inside Ivory Coast.



At The Opening Of The Trial Hundreds Of Members And Friends Of Gbagbo Were Present At The Court. Many Wore Shirts With Gbagbo’s Image Calling For His Release From Prison In The Netherlands.

Naouri Emphasized “Gbagbo Will Never Be Able To Shed The Image Of An Anti-French Nationalist That Has Been Stuck To Him By Supporters Of Alassane Ouattara. The French Establishment Will Never Accept Him.” (Reuters)

Gbagbo Began His Career As An Academic By Training Having Earned A Ph.D In History. He Was Banned From His Teaching Post And Imprisoned In 1971 For Supposedly Lecturing In A “Subversive” Manner.

He Was Left-Wing Ideologically And Became A Trade Union Organizer Among Educators During The 1980s. Gbagbo Opposed The First Ivorian Leader President Felix Houphouët-Boigny, A Protégé Of French Neo-Colonialism Who Ruled The Country For Three Decades.

In 1982 Gbagbo Was Exiled In Europe Returning In 1988 Only To Be Imprisoned Again In 1992. He Formed The Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) In 1982. Gbagbo Took Power Through An Electoral Process Accompanied By A Popular Uprising In 2000. He Ruled The Country Until He Was Overthrown On April 11, 2011.

ICC Trial Takes Place As African Union Summit Opens In Ethiopia

This Trial Comes Amid Growing Controversy Within The African Union (AU) And Other Non-Governmental Forces Over The Character Of ICC And Its Sole Pre-Occupation With The Kidnapping And Persecution Of African Leaders. Gbagbo Is The Highest Ranking Political Official To Be Tried By The Court Which Was Established Through The Rome Statute In 2002.

A Case Against Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta Collapsed In 2015 After The Credibility Of Witnesses Against Him Before The ICC Was Effectively Challenged. His Vice-President William Ruto Is Still Embroiled In A Legal Battle With The Court Prosecutors Led By Gambian National Fatou Bensouda.

Kenyatta Was Actively Opposed By The U.S. And Britain When He Won The Elections In 2013. Both The British And U.S. Governments Under Prime Minister David Cameron And President Barack Obama Leveled Threats Against Kenya Saying It Would Be Consequences If Kenyatta Won The Poll.

At The 50th Anniversary AU Summit In Ethiopia In May 2013, Widespread Criticisms Of The ICC And Its Failure To Recognize The Sovereignty Of African States Prompted Calls For The Withdrawal From The Rome Statute. Numerous African States Have Not Signed The Agreement And Consider Themselves Not Bound By Its Conventions.

Although The U.S. And Other European States Do Not Recognize The Supposed Authority Of The ICC, The Western Capitals Utilize The Actions Of The Court Which Often Coalesce With The Foreign Policy Imperatives Of Washington, London, Paris And Brussels. In Libya For Example, When The Pentagon, The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), NATO And Its Allies Sought A Legal Rationale For The Massive Bombing Of The North African State, The ICC Rapidly Indicted Former Leader Col. Muammar Gaddafi, Members Of His Family And Other Officials At The Time.

According To The Guardian Newspaper With Specific Reference To The 26th Ordinary AU Summit Held On January 30-31 In Addis Ababa, "Members Of The African Union Have Backed A Kenyan Proposal To Push For Withdrawal From The International Criminal Court, Repeating Claims That It Unfairly Targets The Continent. Chad's President, Idriss Déby, Who Was Elected African Union Chairman At The Two-Day Summit In Addis Ababa, Criticized The Court For Focusing Its Efforts On African Leaders. (Feb. 1)

Deby Said "Elsewhere In The World, Many Things Happen, Many Flagrant Violations Of Human Rights, But Nobody Cares." Of The Nine Countries Targeted By The ICC Only One Is Not In Africa, Georgia, A Nation Which Was Part Of The Former Soviet Union.

Another Gbagbo Defense Lawyer Emmanuel Altit Told The ICC During The February 1 Hearing "Ouattara And His Supporters Wanted To Seize Power By Force And The Battle Of Abidjan Was, Simply Put, The Very Implementation Of This Strategy. This Is Nothing More Than A Political Narrative That Has Been Heated Up And Re-Served."

Western Imperialism Ignored By ICC

Despite The Egregious War Crimes And Crimes Against Humanity Committed By The Imperialist States Such As The Destruction Of Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Etc., None Of These Leaders Have Been Investigated Or Prosecuted By The ICC. At Present The World Is Suffering From The Highest Levels Of Displacement Since The Conclusion Of World War II.

Some 60 Million People Have Become Internally Displaced Persons, Refugees And Migrants Largely Stemming From The Wars Carried Out By The Pentagon, NATO And Their Allies Throughout The Middle East, Africa And South-Central Asia.

From An Historical Perspective, Out Of All The Former Slave Trading And Colonial States

Including The U.S. And Many NATO Countries, None Have Paid Reparations To Their Former Subjects Nor Been Held Legally Accountable For Centuries-Long Crimes That Reaped Billions In Profits And Resulted In The Deaths Of Hundreds Of Millions.

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