

Independent Legal  
Representation of  
Victims of War Crimes  
and Crimes Against  
Humanity

CIVITAS  
MAXIMA



Annual Report  
2014

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# 1. Introduction

Civitas Maxima (CM) was founded as a not-for profit organization under Swiss law in Geneva, Switzerland in September 2012. Its ultimate goal is the fair administration of international justice for all victims of international crimes. Its immediate goal is the collection and preservation of information, which can later be transmitted to judicial authorities, either in the countries where the crimes were committed or in other national or international legal fora. CM's mandate is based on the conviction that victims of international crimes must hold the keys to their own quest for justice.

CM operates in situations where no legal action to bring alleged perpetrators of international crimes to justice has been taken or has been successful. The process of recording information and its analysis is carried out according to guidelines set by due process standards recognized by most domestic and international judicial systems and according to CM's comprehensive investigation protocol. The lawyers working for CM ensure that the material collected is of the high quality needed to encourage and allow the relevant national prosecutorial authorities, the International Criminal Court (ICC) or other competent international legal fora to use it as a starting point in their investigations . CM currently works on three countries: Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone.



# CM's Work Methodology

**A**

Represent, at their request, a victim/group of victims. Interview them, record and preserve their accounts in conjunction with local organizations and victims' support groups.

**B**

Store all relevant information in a secure electronic database.

**C**

Based on the rigorous legal analysis of victims' accounts and if deemed appropriate and possible after a thorough security assessment, build a list of potential alleged perpetrators.

**D**

Explore any appropriate accountability avenues on behalf of the victims.

**E**

In situations where an identified alleged perpetrator resides in or travels to a country with due process of law where arrest/indictment/prosecution is legally possible, transmit, with the full consent of the victims, information collected to the relevant authorities (national or international) and/or file a complaint directly on behalf of the victim(s).

**F**

In the event that an alleged perpetrator never resides in/travels to a country with due process of law where prosecution is possible and/or there is no realistic prospect for international courts to investigate the relevant crimes, continue to monitor the movement of the perpetrator if possible.

**G**

Regardless of how accountability efforts advance, continuously follow up with victims, make sure they are informed.

**H**

Whenever appropriate, possible and needed, assist local partners in building their capacity to take and preserve victims' accounts in order to safeguard the historical record for future generations, keeping in mind that political circumstances may change and prosecutions that seem impossible may become a reality in the future.

## 2. Summary of Civitas Maxima's impact in 2014

CM has had a considerable impact in 2014 as its work with national prosecutorial authorities and the establishment of long-term relationships with key-players showed various positive effects. Not only did CM function as the provider of crucial information that prompted the beginning of official investigations, it also provided leads to finding witnesses, facilitated travel of victims and/or authorities and built important bridges among various national investigative teams. All of this work led to astounding breakthroughs in 2014, notably the two recent historical arrests detailed in this annual report (see Annex 1), which in turn had positive effects on CM's visibility. The "Universal Jurisdiction Annual Review 2015" mentions 5 arrests made globally in 2014, 40% of which were achieved based on CM's work.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, positive impact could be observed on the ground in CM's focus countries. The documentation work in Ivory Coast and Liberia responds to a pressing need since little testimonial evidence exists on atrocities committed in the countries. The 2014 Ebola crisis demonstrated how important it is to record victims' accounts while they are alive if accountability is to remain a possibility. Despite mounting security and health challenges, CM and its Liberian partner organization, the Global Justice and Research Project (GJRP, [www.globaljustice-research.org](http://www.globaljustice-research.org)), continued to record accounts of numerous Liberian victims in 2014 as did CM's analysts with Ivorian victims. It is the strong belief of Hassan Bility, director of the GJRP, that not only victims but also the vast majority of the Liberian people want justice to be done for crimes committed during the two Liberian civil wars. The reactions to the recent arrests have reaffirmed this belief and given the team on the ground new strength, in spite of mounting threats. Moreover, the Ivorian victims have, time and again, expressed how empowering it has been to have CM staff listen to and record their stories over the years in a long-term tireless push towards justice.

The main challenge to CM's work remains the fact that the majority of those in power in Liberia and Ivory Coast, many of whom were democratically elected, oppose any move towards unbiased prosecution of war crimes. However, the Martina Johnson and Alieu Kosiah arrests (see annex 1) have shown that extraterritorial cases can positively impact domestic affairs. CM's strong belief is that such cases compel governments to confront the question of accountability openly. One example is the recent winner of the Montserrado senatorial election race in Liberia in december 2014, who made accountability and justice a main topic of his election campaign.

<sup>1</sup> Published by TRIAL (Track Impunity Always), the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), <https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/international-justice/universal-jurisdiction/make-way-for-justice-universal-jurisdiction-in-2014-scrutinized-by>



CM's innovative work fills an important gap as its staff members act as advocates for those victims who are forgotten or ignored because of political circumstances and reasons beyond their control. Preserving their testimonies now is the only way to preserve hope that they can see alleged perpetrators being held accountable one day.

At the same time, CM acts as a crucial intermediary for national prosecutors and investigators. Those professionals, even though trained to investigate and prosecute international crimes, do not always have the necessary cultural and historical knowledge of the conflicts or access to the necessary information and often rely on CM's network, partnerships and knowledge as the historical arrests of Martina Johnson and Alieu Kosiah in 2014 demonstrate (see Annex 1).

The models CM uses in its work in Liberia, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone have formed blueprints that can be applied to other regions of the world.

# 3. Operational Development

2014 was an important year for CM's organizational development. Reinforcement and consolidation of CM core staff and board members led to the establishment of various internal structures.

Next to filing, titling and security of information protocols, 2014 also saw the adoption of new versions of investigation and security protocols, as well as the creation of a database of funders and a more systematic approach to fund-raising and external communication through social media. Moreover, CM adopted its strategic plan, which lays out the core functions and goals for the next 3 years as well as an exit strategy that draws a road map for exiting Liberia and having the GJRP become a completely independent entity. 2014 also marked the beginning of a more strategic approach to following up with the victims CM represents and formalizing the relationship with them, with the establishment of an internal victims' database, discussions regarding the follow-up mechanisms and the drafting of a new agreement between victims and CM. Thanks to a new accountant, CM's financial systems also became even more professional in late 2014.

Finally, CM's ethics protocol should be mentioned. It can be downloaded on the CM website and governs not only the organizations' ethical obligations towards its employees but also the staff's ethical obligations when engaging with victims, vulnerable communities and local partners. The protocol also established an internal complaint mechanism for ethical issues.

CM has made considerable progress in becoming an even more professional, organized and accountable organization in 2014.

**In 2014, CM's Board was comprised of well-respected practitioners and academics from 8 different countries on 5 continents.**

### **CM's 2014 Board Members**

- **Roland Adjovi (Benin).** Jurist and visiting Professor at Arcadia University, Glenside, USA. He was Lead Counsel for Rev. Mtikila before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights and worked at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and at the International Criminal Court. He is also a Member of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.
- **Olympia Bekou (Greece).** Professor of Public International Law at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom.
- **Corinne Dufka (USA).** Senior Human Rights Watch Africa Division researcher with specialized expertise in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, and Guinea. In charge of the organization's work in West Africa.
- **Basil Fernando (Sri Lanka).** Lawyer, leading scholar and former officer of the United Nations. Former Executive Director of the Asian Human Rights Commission and Asian Legal Resource Center based in Hong Kong and presently serves as their Director of Policy and Programmes.
- **Olivier de Frouville (France).** Professor of Public Law at the University of Paris 2 (Panthéon-Assas), Deputy Director at the Center of Research on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law and a member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee. Former member of the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.
- **George Kegoro (Kenya).** Executive Director of the Kenyan section of the International Commission of Jurists.
- **Maina Kiai (Kenya).** United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and Co-Director of InformAction in Kenya.
- **Nicholas Koumjian (USA).** International Co-Prosecutor at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia.
- **Robert Roth (Switzerland).** Professor of national and international criminal law at the University of Geneva and Director of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.
- **Kim Thuy Seelinger (USA).** Director of the Sexual Violence Program at the Human Rights Center of the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law.
- **Lesley Taylor (Australia).** Barrister at the Victorian Bar in Melbourne, Australia.
- **Robert Troxler (USA).** Former Executive in investment related activities at the Citibank and Founder and Director of Global View Asset Management S.A. in Geneva.

## 4. Capacity Building

After intensively training two GJRP staff members in The Hague in 2013, two staff members of the Institute for International Criminal Investigations (IICI, <http://www.iici.info/>) travelled to Liberia in 2014 to continue training the whole GJRP staff, as well as one CM staff member, on investigation, interviewing techniques, elements of crimes and security.

All GJRP staff received full scholarships for the training and IICI staff and consultants stayed in close contact with CM and the GJRP and guided them through their development of investigative and security protocols. In late 2014, CM's legal counsel also participated in an evidence analysis training session, knowledge that she will pass on to GJRP in 2015. Further, two GJRP staff members are expected to attend IICI training in The Hague in 2015, which was scheduled for November 2014 but had to be deferred due to the Ebola crisis. Two GJRP and one CM staff member were also invited by the IICI to participate in a training of trainers on sexual and gender-based violence in early 2015.

Additionally, CM continues its dialogue with the GJRP and international consultants regarding the possibility of slowly but surely establishing the GJRP as an independent Liberian-based documentation centre that preserves evidence for future generations, even beyond Liberia. CM and GJRP developed an exit strategy, which sees the GJRP eventually becoming completely independent, financially and administratively.

The overall goal of the capacity building efforts in Liberia is to help the GJRP in becoming a leading civil society organization in the fight against impunity in Liberia and beyond. 2014 marked a considerable step in that direction. CM sees capacity building as one of its core functions whenever it engages with local partners.



*Mr Hassan Bility Director of GJRP  
Missing Peace Symposium on Sexual Violence  
in Conflict and Post-Conflict Settings  
Held at the United States Institute of Peace*

## 5. Financial Situation

The firm Pricewaterhousecoopers ( [PWC, www.pwc.com](http://www.pwc.com) ) was hired again in 2014 to audit the accounts of CM for the period December 2013 to December 2014. This audit was successfully completed and the report was reviewed by CM's board and general assembly in March 2015.

Two foundations are currently funding CM's projects: Pro Victimis in Geneva ( [www.provictimis.org](http://www.provictimis.org) ) funds most of the Liberian project and their grant has been recently extended for the fourth time, until march 2016. Humanity United in San Francisco ( [www.humanityunited.org](http://www.humanityunited.org) ) funds the Ivorian project and their grant has been recently extended for the third and last time, providing operating costs to the end of November 2015.

Additional funding has been received in 2014 for the Liberian project from the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture ( [www.ohchr.org/en/issues/torture/unvft](http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/torture/unvft) ) and from several private donors.





**LET'S GO TO  
SCHOOL**

## ANNEXES:

- Annex 1 – Detailed description of ongoing cases
- Annex 2 – Press clippings

# 1. Annex - Current cases

In 2014 CM worked on three countries: Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

### **A. Liberia – Extensive, long-term documentation of crimes and historical, ground-breaking arrests**

Since March 2012, CM, in partnership with the Liberian Global Justice and Research Project (GJRP) in Monrovia, has been recording accounts of Liberian victims of international crimes committed during the two Liberian civil wars (1989-1996 and 1999-2003). Hassan Bility, the director of the GJRP, was the editor of a Liberian newspaper, nominated as the best journalist of the year by the Press Union of Liberia in 2002. He was detained and tortured under Charles Taylor's regime. In 2003, he was granted asylum in the United States, received the international UK Media Award from Amnesty International in the category "Human Rights journalism under Threat" and was the recipient of the Hellman-Hammet grant administered by Human Rights Watch for writers who have suffered political persecution. He returned to Liberia to fight for justice in 2009, when it became clear that there was no political will to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in favour of criminal accountability for crimes committed during the civil wars.

At the time of writing, CM and the GJRP have collected over 150 accounts of Liberian victims and stored them in a secure database. However, this information can currently not be used in Liberia to obtain criminal investigations and prosecution on behalf of victims: for political reasons there is a de facto impunity for crimes committed during the civil wars. Thus, CM and the GJRP believe that it would currently not be possible for the victims to obtain fair and impartial justice in a Liberian court of law.

However, two Liberian citizens were arrested in 2014 outside of Liberia for crimes they allegedly committed in Liberia against Liberian citizens during the civil wars.

## I) Case against Martina Johnson in Belgium:

In 2012, three Liberian victims, assisted by CM and the GJRP, filed a criminal complaint in Belgium against Martina Johnson. The former commander who fought with Charles Taylor's forces, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) during the first Liberian civil war was recommended for prosecution by the TRC. The fact that she was living in Gent, Belgium, for several years was generally known among certain communities in Liberia as well as among the diaspora. According to CM's and GJRP's professional assessments, the information they collected in Liberia about her alleged crimes was overwhelming.

A two-year non-public investigation by Belgian authorities culminated in her arrest on September 17, 2014. She was charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in 1992 and is now awaiting trial under house arrest, monitored via a GPS bracelet. Investigations continue while the beginning of her trial in Ghent in Belgium is expected in 2016.

This indictment is historical and groundbreaking as it is the first time ever someone has been charged with international crimes committed during the first Liberian civil war. The Guardian in London called it *"a milestone in quest for justice"* and Human Rights Watch in New York *"a major step for justice"*. It has also led to very positive reactions in Liberia and diaspora communities and has encouraged other victims to contact the GJRP with a view to telling their story. CM and the GJRP are confident that the arrest has re-ignited a national dialogue centered on justice and institutional reforms in Liberia and presents an important step towards closure and healing for the victims.



## II) Case against Alieu Kosiah in Switzerland:

Alieu Kosiah was arrested on November 10, 2014 in Switzerland after the filing of a criminal complaint in July 2014 by Alain Werner, lawyer in Switzerland and Director of Civitas Maxima, on behalf of 5 Liberian direct victims of Alieu Kosiah. The accused is a former commander of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), which opposed Charles Taylor's NPFL during the first Liberian civil war. A Swiss federal judge decided on November 13, 2014, that the suspect was to remain in detention for at least three months and prolonged the detention in February 2015. Alieu Kosiah is suspected by the Swiss authorities to have committed war crimes between 1993 and 1995.

The arrest would not have been possible without CM's and the GJRP's documentation of ULIMO's crimes and their discovery of the role played by Alieu Kosiah during the war as well as their discovery of his residence in Switzerland where he has lived for several years. The arrest was made public on 15 January 2015 and the news of Alieu Kosiah's arrest was widely reported in Liberia and worldwide as this is the first ever arrest of a ULIMO member for crimes committed during the Liberian civil war.

As soon as the arrest became public, the GJRP ensured that the momentum was used in Liberia to continue the national conversation, sparked by Martina Johnson's arrest, regarding national accountability for war crimes. Some members of Alieu Kosiah's ethnic group, Mandingo, reacted negatively to the arrest but the majority seemed to favor accountability of alleged war criminals.

## B. Ivory Coast - Representation of a large group of Ivorian victims

Since 2012, CM represents a large group of victims of the 2011 post-election violence in Ivory Coast. These victims are perceived as supporters of Laurent Gbagbo, former Ivorian President currently in the custody of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The civilians were victims of heinous crimes committed by militias loyal to the current president and Gbagbo-opponent: Alassane Ouattara. So far their plea for justice has been completely ignored by Ivorian government and the international community. The ICC investigation has not yet led to any case against individuals from Ouattara's side.

CM analysts spent 12 weeks in 2013 and 8 weeks in 2014 in the victims' communities, speaking to them relentlessly. These missions documented the accounts of almost 200 victims who described acts of terror, torture, persecution, deportation and forced displacement, murder of adults and children, as well as acts of sexual violence including gang rapes.

The information collected by CM's analysts shows a very clear intent to commit atrocities specifically against perceived Gbagbo supporters as a retaliation for their alleged support of Laurent Gbagbo. The degree of cruelty inflicted on these civilians is astonishing: they were hunted like animals in the bush even after Alassane Ouattara had already assumed the role of President and the crisis was deemed to be over. CM has drafted both a factual and legal analysis of the accounts collected.

Preserving and storing the information provided by the victims in a secure and protected database is of crucial importance as the events documented happened in the bush and no exhibits exist to prove them. In addition, many of the victims – especially the women who suffered heinous crimes of sexual violence – are sick and their health may quickly deteriorate. Therefore, without proper documentation this information could disappear and justice could ever be achieved for them.

Moreover, while it is of utmost importance for CM's staff members and local partners to operate within the limits of their mandate, they aim to adopt a holistic approach to their work, not ignoring other needs that victims have besides their desire for justice. Since CM's lawyers and investigators have exclusive access to these vulnerable Ivorian populations in secluded areas, they spent a considerable portion of their working hours in 2014 partnering with representatives who have the respect of the victims and assisting them in organizing and speaking strongly with one voice. Those reliable partners have the task of ensuring continuous communication between CM and the victims during periods when CM staff is not on the ground and ensuring that all victims' needs are articulated and heard. CM's staff has also connected victims to medical service providers in their area. Service providers were often not aware of the victims' suffering and simply did not have the time, resources or mandate to conduct needs assessments in those remote areas.

Before CM started working with Ivorian victims, they had never spoken to a lawyer about the gruesome crimes that happened to them and many of them had never seen a doctor in spite of ongoing health problems.

They also did not have any support network. CM staff is working tirelessly to make sure that the gruesome crimes committed against these victims are not forgotten but documented and securely stored.



## C. Sierra Leone - Blood diamond cases

CM represents several villagers from Sierra Leone who were forced to work for the diamond industry during the civil war. Unfortunately, the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) – an international tribunal established to try the crimes committed during the war in Sierra Leone – did not indict and try any of the actors specifically involved in the trade of so-called blood diamonds.

CM represents victims of slavery in cases against two individuals suspected of having been involved in the trade of blood diamonds: a citizen from a western country, Mr. P., and a Senegalese, a former close associate of Charles Taylor, Ibrahim Bah.

Legal proceedings against either of those two individuals would be the first time slavery and/or pillage connected to the blood diamond trade would be addressed as a crime under international law.

In June 2013, authorities in Freetown, Sierra Leone, apprehended Ibrahim Bah after the release of a UN panel expert report on Liberia revealed his presence in Freetown in breach of a **UN** travel ban. Despite CM filing a private complaint against Ibrahim Bah in Freetown, coupled with a public campaign in cooperation with the Freetown-based Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL, <http://www.carl-sl.org>), the president of Sierra Leone signed a deportation order expelling Bah to Senegal in July 2013. CM took concrete legal steps against Ibrahim Bah in Senegal, which turned him into a high-profile fugitive with highly limited possibilities of movement.

Regrettably, the case against Ibrahim Bah did not show much movement in 2014, despite CM's relentless efforts, which included a mission to Sierra Leone in January 2014 to collect additional information. Nevertheless, without the work of CM, official investigations would never have been initiated.

Although political circumstances are making the advancement of the cases difficult, thanks to CM's storage and preservation of crucial information, there is still the possibility that key players in the trade of blood diamonds from Western Africa will face justice one day.

## 2. Annex - Press clipping

# Le Monde **Afrique**

Compte rendu

## Arrestation en Belgique d'une générale de l'ancien président libérien Charles Taylor

Par Stéphanie Maupas (La Haye, correspondance)

LE MONDE Le 18.09.2014 à 18h18 • Mis à jour le 19.09.2014 à 09h09



# The Washington Post

Africa

## Belgium arrests Liberian ex-rebel commander



By **Associated Press** September 18 at 9:13 AM

BRUSSELS — A spokesman for Belgium's prosecutors says police have arrested a high-ranking member of the rebel movement that plunged Liberia into conflict more than two decades ago, on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Jean-Pascal Thoreau said Thursday that Martina Johnson, former head of heavy artillery for the National Patriotic Front of Liberia, was arrested and charged this week in Belgium. She is only the second Liberian to be charged for international crimes committed during Liberia's two civil wars that spanned 14 years and, by some counts, killed hundreds of thousands of people before ending in 2003.

October 7, 2014

# Martina Johnson's Liberian war crimes trial is a milestone in quest for justice

Former commander has been called to account for actions during civil war, following years of work by campaigners



## ACADEMIC COMMENTARY OP-EDS ON LEGAL NEWS BY LAW PROFESSORS AND JURIST SPECIAL GUESTS

# Recent Arrest May Encourage Judicial Reforms in Africa

Saturday 18 October 2014 at 2:12 PM ET

edited by [Josh Guckert](#)

JURIST Guest Columnist Roland Adjovi, Assistant Professor at [Arcadia University](#), discusses some of the possible implications of the recent arrest and accusations levied toward Martina Johnson ...

Martina Johnson joined the National Patriotic Front of Liberation (NPFL) of Charles G. Taylor in 1990. She was actively involved in the major military operation known as Operation Octopus, an attack on the capital Monrovia conducted in October 1992 as part of NPFL's fight against the government and the regional peacekeeping forces, ECOMOG. She is alleged to have been a commander implicated in crimes against humanity and war crimes. She is specifically alleged to have killed the relative of one of the three victims at the origin of the case against her in Belgium and to have injured one of those victims. These are only a sample of the atrocities that were committed at the checkpoint called Dry Rice Market, which she was manning with her fighters in the outskirts of Monrovia. It is alleged that those atrocities were committed against the civilian population, often on ethnic grounds. In addition, she is alleged to have taken part in the killing of the American Catholic nuns in Gardnersville on October 23, 1992. After the first civil war, she



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SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2014

# Search for justice abroad for crimes committed in Africa

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**By GEORGE KEGORO**[More by this Author](#)

## In Summary

- Leaders have failed people: Vilification of international justice arrangement merely masks the fact that African governments have badly failed their people.
- The failure to provide justice for crimes committed on African soil is driving the search for justice abroad.

In the same way that globalisation has facilitated treatment abroad, the failure to provide justice for crimes committed on African soil is driving the search for justice abroad, with globalisation playing a facilitating role.

The assumption is that justice is a necessity for Africans. In that case, the arrest of Johnson in far-away Belgium should embarrass both Liberia and the AU.

The only way in which African countries, including Kenya, can justify the condemnation of Western intervention in their justice affairs is by providing their own justice at home.

The vilification of international justice arrangements merely masks the fact that African governments have badly failed their people.

## Belgium/Liberia: War Crimes Arrest Major Step for Justice

First Indictment for Atrocities During Liberia's 1989-96 War

SEPTEMBER 19, 2014

 Tweet 260  Like 40  EMAIL

(Brussels) - The Belgian authorities' arrest of a Liberian for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity during [Liberia's](#) first civil war is a major advance for justice. It is the first arrest for crimes that violate international law committed during the conflict in Liberia from 1989 to 1996, which left tens of thousands dead.


On September 17, 2014, Belgian police arrested Martina Johnson, a former commander of the

### RELATED MATERIALS:

Liberia: Support War Crimes Prosecutions  
DECEMBER 10, 2009 [Press release](#)

Europe: National Courts Extend Reach of Justice  
SEPTEMBER 16, 2014 [Press release](#)

*In 2009, Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended a hybrid tribunal for atrocities committed during Liberia's conflicts, but five years later, there's been no progress in prosecuting these crimes.*



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## A long road ahead for justice in Liberia

*Recent arrests in Europe reignite debate on national accountability in Ebola-stricken nation*

February 23, 2015 2:00AM ET

by **Hassan Bility**

Schools in Liberia reopened this week after a six-month closure due to the Ebola outbreak. Until the epidemic began in April 2014, the international media largely ignored Liberia, particularly since the end of the country's tragic civil wars. Now that the disease is finally being brought under control, Africa's oldest independent republic will once again become an afterthought. Yet these two seemingly disparate stories, one of a bloody civil war and the other of a botched government response to an epidemic, have a common thread: Liberia's long-standing tradition of impunity.

A less-reported story from Liberia offers some signs of hope for the end of impunity. In the last few months, the Global Justice and Research Project (GJRP), in partnership with Swiss-based nonprofit Civitas Maxima, helped initiate the arrests of two of Liberia's previously untouchable human rights abusers.

In September 2014, Martina Johnson, a former artillery commander of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), a major rebel group in Liberia's first civil war, from 1989 to 1997, was arrested and indicted in Belgium for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Two months later, Swiss authorities arrested Alieu Kosiah, a commander in the opposing rebel group, United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO) on similar charges. ULIMO represented a different tribal community and was opposed to the NPFL politically and militarily. Both investigations and arrests were prompted by the GJRP's documentation of crimes and criminal complaints filed on behalf of victims, with Civitas Maxima's assistance.

# The New York Times

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## A Former Commander of Liberian Rebels Is Arrested in Switzerland

By [CLAIR MacDOUGALL](#) JAN. 16, 2015

MONROVIA, Liberia — The Swiss authorities have arrested a former commander of a Liberian rebel military faction who is accused of ordering civilian massacres, rapes and other atrocities in northern Liberia during the nation's first civil war from 1989 to 1996.

The arrest was reported this week on the website of Civitas Maxima, a network of international lawyers and investigators.

The former commander, Alieu Kosiah, of the military faction United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy, known as ULIMO, had been living in Bern, in western Switzerland, since 1997, said Morisara Doumbia, a leader of a Liberian association in the city.

Mr. Kosiah was arrested on Nov. 10 in connection with accusations that he was involved in mass killings in parts of Liberia's Lofa County from 1993 to 1995, when he was a commander of ULIMO, a faction that later split along ethnic lines. Complaints had been filed against him by seven Liberians, represented by Alain Werner, director of Civitas Maxima, which has been working since 2012 with the Global Justice and Research Project in Liberia to document crimes committed during the wars. The seven witnesses are currently in Liberia. A pretrial investigation could take months.

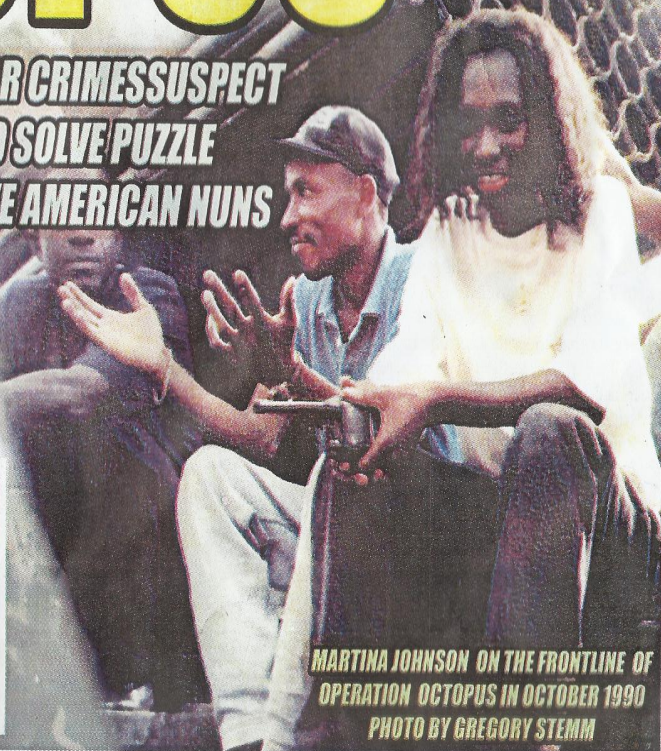
Liberia's back-to-back civil wars killed about 250,000 people. The fighting ended in August 2003, with the signing of a cease-fire agreement and President Charles Taylor's departure into exile.

Mr. Doumbia contended that Mr. Kosiah's forces did not commit major crimes and only defended themselves against Mr. Taylor's forces. He called Mr. Kosiah "a well-disciplined commander."

Mr. Kosiah's arrest is the second of a Liberian in Europe in connection with accusations of atrocities committed during Liberia's civil war. Martina Johnson, a commander of a heavy artillery unit of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia led by Mr. Taylor, was detained in Belgium in September.

## ZOOMING IN ON 'OCTOPUS'

**ARREST OF LATEST LIBERIA WAR CRIME SUSPECT  
MARTINA JOHNSON COULD SOLVE PUZZLE  
SURROUNDING KILLING OF FIVE AMERICAN NUNS**



MARTINA JOHNSON ON THE FRONTLINE OF OPERATION OCTOPUS IN OCTOBER 1990  
PHOTO BY GREGORY STEMME

**INSIDE**



**KEEPING KIDS ENGAGED  
- UNDER STATE  
OF EMERGENCY**

One woman is taking charge of educating children



**MSF TO THE  
RESCUE**

Doctors Without Borders Distributing  
Humanitarian Aid to Liberian Communities



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