

Gbagbo's Wife Incarcerated for 20 Years

Today Tuesday 10 March, 2015 marks another sad day for supporters of the Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) Party as the former strong woman Simone Gbagbo got busted for up to 20 years jail term by a local court. She and other top military officials were handed down the same sentence while her son Michel Gbagbo received a lesser sentence (5 years); as this verdict makes headlines over the BBC, the Guardian, and other local news outlets across the continent, the outcome is stirring more mistrust among Ivoirians couple with the fact that the former President Mr. Laurent Gbagbo is equally facing charges of crimes against humanity in The Hague for alleged crimes committed in the post 2011 election crisis that led to the death of about 3000 people. While on the other hand those who lost love ones during the violence can now say justice has been delivered.

As the country grapple with its challenges after the uprising ranging from environmental to socio-economic, and most importantly the deep political divide that has left the country in a caliginous state as the populace decry over insecurity and looming fears that the country may again plunge into another civil war.

During the hearing Simone mentioned that she has been humiliated but she has forgiven those who were involved if not the country will burn. In a telephone interview by France 24 the Minister of Justice Mr. Gnenema Mamadou Coulibaly recounts that after the 2010 elections "some people took it upon themselves to prevent the people's will to prevail... through actions that caused more than 3,000 deaths." He proceeds similarly "We now have to establish historic and legal facts. We need to determine the responsibilities of all those involved in that coalition aimed at undermining the security of the state,"

Simone Gbagbo is noted for openly attacking opponents verbally on several occasions over the media and in her book. For instance in the 60s she criticize the former president Felix Houphouet-Boigny for refusing multi-party elections that landed her in jail in the 70s. Again she

is quoted to have referred to Nicolas Sarkozy former president of France as “the devil” for championing the demise of her husband. She is also noted for mixing her Christian faith with her activist role – a phenomenon which is questioned by many people.

While some celebrate the incarceration of 20 years behind bars of a woman who was referred to as the “Iron Lady” or better still as the “Hilary Clinton of Africa” others ponder whether the country is moving in the right direction. Her husband Gbagbo is equally noted for standing up against France by stating that former leaders in Ivory Coast have been servile to the former colonial master and he was willing to change the *status quo*. He is presently in The Hague charged for crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. The Trial Chamber I on March 11, 2015 at the request of the Prosecutor has join the cases concerning Laurent Gbagbo and Charles Blé Goudé which will be discuss in our next up date.

The events that unfolded in Ivory Coast in 2011 are not nouvelle in Africa; in fact it is vicious circle that is in a continuum in the continent, from Kenya to Libya and Central Africa this has been the scenario since the early 60s. Some will quickly point to Africa as the “trouble continent” and immediately tie it to colonialism. Mahmood Mamdani in a lecture pointed out that the colonial project end too soon; he was referring to one school of thought that claim that the colonial agenda should have been allowed to be completed. It will be however short-sighted to conclude that Africa’s nemesis today is solely shaped by its colonial past.

There is overwhelming evidence that many issues are yet to be redress in Africa. The problem of accountability is liken to what Adam Smith refers to in his treatise “Wealth of Nation” as the “invisible hand” because Africans are yet to come in terms with accountability of their actions and inaction. Those who benefit directly (essentially the powerful) from the porous system will traditionally engaged in the blame game – usually the western world; while those who are not affected are complacent, while the majority languishes in poverty because as long as the *status quo* is maintained they can always drape behind a reason to clench in power as long as they wish until they are topple by say a revolution or a coup, a classic example is Libya. My humble

submission is that Africans should be willing to submit to accountability in whatever capacity they are called to serve their nations and then proceed to take responsibility; this I want to believe should be the vantage point to redress the plethora issues of the already troubled continent.