

International Justice/ICC: Feb '09

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ICC project continues to provide unique reports and analysis on landmark Lubanga trial. As International Criminal Court, ICC, prosecutors present their case against a Congolese militia leader, IWPR Netherlands is the only media outlet covering this historic trial on a day to day basis.

The project's daily updates and weekly stories from the courtroom are published on the <http://www.lubangatrial.org/> website, which is backed by the Open Society Justice Initiative – an international NGO which supports legal reform.

The site carries commentary and legal analysis and also features useful background information and links to related websites. Readers are invited to participate by asking questions and posting comments.

Ugandan journalist Wairagala Wakabi is writing the updates, ensuring that voices from the DRC and Great Lakes region are helping to shape discussion about the trial. He follows on from IWPR contributor Rachel Irwin, who also covers the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, ICTY, for IWPR.

Readers told IWPR that nothing else like the lubangatrial website currently exists.

“Without your excellent coverage we would have very little idea of what is going on in this trial,” said one.

“This is a fantastic resource for information on the ICC’s first landmark case. It’s nice to know there is a place to go that is so focused on this issue,” said another.

A Hague-based journalist told IWPR that the website was useful for her work.

“I was able to attend the hearings during the first week, but am not in a position to carry on with that for the whole trial. For me, as a journalist, this site is very valuable. Please continue doing such good work,” she said, preferring not to disclose her name.

The journalist described a recent article on preparing witnesses for trial at the ICC as “enlightening”.

“[It] made some things clearer. I drew the same conclusion as several other journalists, getting the impression that the prosecution should have been better prepared,” she said.

The project also has a Congolese journalist in The Hague to report back to the country’s radio stations from the ICC courtroom.

Ewing Ahmed Salumu is in near daily contact with 16 stations around the country, including those in Lubanga’s native Bunia, as well as in Burundi and Rwanda – countries heavily involved in the mayhem which has engulfed Congo in recent years.

The station RCK in Lubumbashi, southern Congo, said Ahmed’s reports had provoked discussions about why one of the witnesses retracted his testimony, and that they had given Congolese people the feeling that they were participating in the trial.

The project’s reports on the trial have been republished within the Congo.

Kinshasa daily Le Phare has published all the weekly updates and says it greatly appreciates them as it could not afford to send a journalist of its own to The Hague.

Le Phare's international justice reporter Desire Israel-Kazadi said the articles are the only source of information the paper has on the trial.

He says they are being read and debated by readers hungry for information from The Hague.

Location: Balkans

Israel

Democratic Republic of Congo

Topic: Project Highlight

Focus: ICC - International Criminal Court

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