

The Al-Jazeera Case/The State v. Momoh Konte before Hon. Mr. Justice Abdulai Charm
24 May 2013

FACTS: Momoh Konte, CEO of Transtech International Ltd. and Alex Mansaray, CEO of African Sunshine Ltd. were charged under s. 35 (1) ACA 2008 with 2 counts of soliciting; count 1, for soliciting \$50,000 for the Vice President (VP), Chief Alhaji Samsamana for the latter's assistance in lifting a ban on timber exports in favour of Taybar Services and count 3 for soliciting \$1000 for the Director of Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry (MAFF), for expediting a timber export license for Taybar. Both Accused were charged with peddling influence contrary to s. 31 (3) ACA, under count 2, for soliciting \$100,000 in exchange for their influence to obtain assistance in lifting the timber ban re Taybar. Both Accused were charged with conspiracy contrary to s. 128 ACA¹ based on the facts supporting the soliciting and peddling counts, i.e. that they conspired with other persons unknown to, firstly, under count 4, "give" an advantage of \$1000 to the Director of Forestry, for expediting a timber export license, and secondly, under count 5, to solicit an inducement for the performance of an act in relation to the affairs of the VP, holding themselves out to be agents of the VP. The offences were allegedly committed on a date unknown between 1st October 2011 and 31st December 2011. The monies were allegedly sought to have been obtained from Aljazeera journalists who secretly taped the exchanges, pretending to be foreign investors seeking to export timber under Taybar, a nonexistent company.

The Prosecution's evidence consisted of the video documentary, transcripts of verbal exchanges therein, witness testimonies and Taybar's memorandum and articles of association. The Prosecution alleged that Konte and Mansaray were involved in a scheme in which Konte was to entice the investors, stressing his disinterest in any reward, while Mansaray was to ask for money. The Prosecution's theory was that there was a common purpose between the two, evident in Konte's introduction of Mansaray to the journalists and that Konte solicited the amounts indirectly through Mansaray. This theory was based on statements made by the two in the documentary. Konte told the journalists that; *he was not asking them for a dime for himself or any other person for his assistance given, that they should develop a relationship based solely on mutual trust and respect and that, he intended to assist them without any expectation of a reward.*² **However,** Konte also told the journalists to *take care of the Director of Forestry so as to secure his support, to arrange something for the VP and Director of Forestry.*³ The documentary showed the journalists initially offering to show appreciation "to some people" by sending \$15,000, to which Mansaray counter-suggested that they give \$50,000 instead to the VP, that they should provide \$100,000 for all the introductions, and upon their enquiry, that he would talk to the VP for them. In the absence of Mansaray, Konte was prosecuted on the collective basis of his generalized suggestive entreaties and Mansaray's statements.

Konte relied only on his ACC statement, where he denied asking the journalists to give money to the VP or to the Director of Forestry. PW2/Samura⁴ testified that he and three journalists; Mike Healey, Annas Arameyaw Annas and Bilal⁵ produced the documentary entitled "*Sierra Leone Timber*", although he also stated Abdul Seyram, Bilal and Annas are the same person.⁶ On the other hand, PW4⁷ testified that Konte and two men, one in Arabian garb visited his office in October. The judgment itself also often refers to the group of journalists/investors as consisting of PW5/Annas and Bilal.⁸ PW2 admitted they were deceitful to unearth corruption, filming secretly and openly. PW5 testified that there was a ban on logging timber in SL, that he contacted Konte from Ghana, that they agreed on a meeting in SL and for Konte to take them to the VP. PW5 and Konte had 7 meetings to arrange a meeting with the Director of Forestry and the VP in order to

¹ Cited as stated in the Al-Jazeera Judgment, although more specifically the crime of conspiracy under the ACA 2008 is captured in s. 128 (1) ACA.

² Al-Jazeera Judgment, p.16, J. Charm quoting from the documentary transcripts. However, no such statement is discernible from the broadcasted documentary, reviewed from Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DDisMlwISgk>

³ Al-Jazeera Judgment, p.15, J. Charm quoting from the documentary transcripts. However, no such statement is discernible from the broadcasted documentary, reviewed from Youtube.

⁴ Sorious Samura.

⁵ Al-Jazeera Judgment, p. 6.

⁶ Al-Jazeera Judgment, p. 8.

⁷ Sheku Mansaray, Director of Forestry, MAFF.

⁸ Al-Jazeera Judgment, pp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16, 17 and in counts 1, 2, 3 and 5. The actual documentary viewed on Youtube describes Annas as being a journalist from Ghana and Bilal as being a journalist from Jordan.

secure political protection in the timber business: the one meeting at the VP's office with Mansaray (Konte not featured), and the 2 held in Konte's office were secretly filmed. The most important aspects of the footage were compiled on one film; the editing involved PW2 doing the voice over/narration. PW2 said that Konte never requested money for himself or anyone else, except for \$2000 as part payment for the \$10,000 for registering Taybar and "to clear the way",⁹ which PW5 provided. However, PW1's¹⁰ search at the Registrar-General's office did not reveal that Taybar had been registered.

JUDGE'S REASONING: The Prosecution must not only prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Konte solicited an advantage but that he solicited \$50,000 and \$1000 respectively. Konte's conduct could not support the charges of soliciting since he never asked for anything for himself or another except the registration fee.¹¹ Mansaray's requests for monies can only be imputed to Konte where the conspiracy is proved meaning the soliciting counts mainly depended on the success of the conspiracy charges. Yet, there is no evidence that Konte approved or even knew about Mansaray's alleged solicitation. There was no proof of an agreement between Konte and Mansaray for the latter to request money; the fact of Konte introducing Mansaray to the journalists was not in itself proof of a conspiracy between them. Conspiracy can be proved against one conspirator, Konte, through the admission of the acts/words of a co-conspirator, i.e. Mansaray's statements, but Mansaray needs to have acted in furtherance of a common design/plan between himself and the Accused conspirator, Konte. Since Mansaray's words do not indicate the pursuit of a common plan/purpose between himself and Konte that Mansaray should seek money from the "investors", they cannot be admitted as evidence against Konte of a conspiracy. Even if, Mansaray's statements disclosed a common plan/purpose, other independent evidence of a conspiracy would have been necessary; *R v Hater* (2005) UKHL 6. Re this requirement for other independent evidence, note the Prosecution tendered the unedited documentary footage through PW5 but failed to, *at that point*, have it played in Court like the edited/public version. Its later oral submission to show the unedited version to highlight unpublicized footage was denied, being tardy and depriving the Defence of the opportunity to cross-examine PW5 on it. By failing to establish conspiracy, the Prosecution also failed to establish the charge of soliciting and peddling influence against Konte.

Further, Mansaray did not solicit the amount alleged from PW5 since he did not initiate the request; it was the journalists that offered to show a token of appreciation for "*some people*", whom the Prosecution would want us to believe were the VP and Director of Forestry.¹² Mansaray only negotiated the amount to be given. Had Mansaray initiated the request in furtherance of a common design between himself and Konte, his acts would have been admissible as evidence against Konte. Since this was not the case, his acts are inadmissible against Konte. Count 5, the charge of conspiracy to solicit an inducement for performing an act in relation to the affairs of the VP, required the Prosecution to prove both the solicitation of moneys from the journalists and that Konte and Mansaray held themselves out as agents of the VP. There is no such evidence; it was PW5 who contacted Konte raising the issue of access to the VP.¹³ The Prosecution sought to rely on *The State v. Baun & Ors. 2009, Unreported* in support of the soliciting counts. The distinction between **Baun** and **Konte** is that, although the Accused in **Baun** denied soliciting the monies, he admitted receiving them, whereas Konte denied both the asking and receiving money from anyone, except funds paid for the registration of Taybar.¹⁴ Specifically, regarding peddling influence, the Prosecution must prove that influence/undue influence was used by the Accused to secure favours for another and for which the Accused

⁹ *Al-Jazeera* Judgment, p.8, J. Charm on the evidence of PW2. However, no such statement is discernible from the broadcasted documentary, reviewed from Youtube.

¹⁰ Felix Lansana Tejan Kabba, Chief Investigations Officer, ACC.

¹¹ J. Charm reasons as such at *Al-Jazeera* Judgment, p. 15. However, note PW2's testimony that Konte requested \$2000 not just for partial payment of registration but also to "*clear the way*"; *Al-Jazeera* Judgment, p. 8. The documentary available on Youtube refers to a \$2000 registration fee; at 17.59.

¹² J. Charm reasons as such at *Al-Jazeera* Judgment, p. 16. See however, **Analysis** section on Mansaray's mention of the VP and "*Forestry guys*", at that point in time.

¹³ See the **Analysis** section on how access to the VP was arranged for the team.

¹⁴ See FN 11 above.

received reward.¹⁵ However, Konte had categorically told the journalists that he was not helping them out for any expected reward.

VERDICT: The ACC failed to prove conspiracy under counts 4 and 5, soliciting under counts 1 and 3, and peddling influence under count 2. Konte was acquitted and discharged on all five counts.

APPLIED LAW: The Prosecution's application under s. 144(2) of the Criminal Procedure Act, Act No. 32, 1965, as replaced by s. 3 of the Criminal Procedure Amendment Act, Act No. 11, 1981 for the Accused to be tried by judge alone rather than by judge and jury was granted. The Prosecution must prove every element of the offence charged beyond reasonable doubt; *Woolmington v. DPP 1935 AC 462* and *Kargbo v. R (1968-69) ALR SL*. Offences that are not strict liability offences do not require the Accused to prove his innocence. Conspiracy is an agreement between two or more persons to do an unlawful act by unlawful means. In principle, since the offence is grounded on the agreement, there can be convictions even where there are no overt acts. For a conspiracy conviction, the acts and statements of the co-conspirator are admissible against a Co-Accused if done in furtherance of the common design even where the latter is absent, to prove the nature and scope of the conspiracy; *nonetheless*, there must be some independent evidence to show the existence of the conspiracy and that the other conspirator was a party to it; *R v. Hater* (2005) UKHL 6.

Under the ACA 2008, a person solicits an advantage if he, or any other person acting on his behalf, directly or indirectly demands, invites, asks for or indicates willingness to receive, any advantage, whether for himself or for any other person.¹⁶ An advantage includes; *any gift, loan, fee, reward, discount, premium or commission, consisting of money or of any valuable security or of other property or interest in property of any description, or other advantage other than lawful remuneration.*¹⁷ A conviction for soliciting an advantage requires the Accused or another on his behalf, to have asked and/or accepted a gift, fee, reward, etc. in the performance of a function.¹⁸ "*Soliciting...is to invite, or to importune, or to request earnestly, or to seek*"; as per J. Brown-Marke, in *The State v. Baun Ors., 2009, Unreported*. Saying you're broke and asking for help with a specified sum, while performing an official but unpaid function amounts to soliciting; **Baun**. Influence peddling is the illegal practice of using one's influence in government or connections with persons in authority, to obtain favours or preferential treatment for another, usually in return for money.

ANALYSIS: The judgment does not reveal the whereabouts of Co-Accused, Mansaray, not being tried.

I. Case preparation: *1. Non-exhaustive investigative/prosecutorial techniques.* Although the ACC interviewed Konte after obtaining the documentary and transcripts, he was not confronted with the allegations of soliciting \$2000,¹⁹ \$50,000, \$1000 and \$100,000 from the journalists. During direct-examination, PW1 testified to not knowing whether statements had been taken from PW5 and Bilal, but by the time he was being cross-examined, he appeared to have informed himself.²⁰ The Defence raised the issue of editing affecting the documentary's credibility; PW2 admitted to doing the voice over/narration, saying the documentary contained a few montages, *techniques used to put shots together/introduce scenes*. He admitted that he "*was determined/it was his goal to expose those responsible for illegal logging in SL.*" **Admitted journalistic predispositions in these circumstances do not help**, since arguably they may influence editing; this was not caught out by witness prepping. Clearly, unedited video footage in itself is the captured/bounded experience of its author; witness testimony especially of its author, seeks to adduce wider surrounding circumstances not captured. It's here submitted that edited videos are arguably subjective interpretations of events and that the admission of exclusively the edited and not the unedited version of a documentary is akin to the absence of the original source of evidence in hearsay scenarios, where such evidence is generally

¹⁵ It may have been more accurate on these facts to say; *for which the Accused solicited reward*, see. s. 31 (4) ACA.

¹⁶ ACA 2008, Part I, Preliminary, Interpretation, s. 1 (2), For the purposes of this Act (b) a person solicits an advantage if he , or any other person acting on his behalf, directly or indirectly demands . . .

¹⁷ Part I, Preliminary Interpretation, s. 1 (1); In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires -"advantage" includes (a) any gift, loan, fee...

¹⁸ ACA 2008, s. 28 (2); Offering, Soliciting or Accepting Advantage.

¹⁹ **Al-Jazeera** Judgment, p.8; PW2 testified that PW5 gave Konte \$2000, which the latter requested both as part payment for registering Taybar and "*to clear the way.*"

²⁰ PW1 testified during Cross, that at that point no statements had been obtained from Bilal, Abdul Seyram and PW5.

inadmissible for issues concerning reliability. Against this backdrop, the ACC's tardy motion to adduce the unedited version appears a critical indiscretion. Prosecutors and investigators must engage in well coordinated team work with comprehensive communication and conjoint evaluation of the weight of evidence prior to trial to assess evidential strengths and weaknesses. As such, it's unclear why the Prosecution did not examine PW5 on the unedited documentary at the point when it was entered into evidence through him. This is especially so, since the core of the evidence relied upon by the Prosecution in the edited version was less than compelling specifically regarding Konte.

J. Charm states that Mansaray did not actually ask for money from PW5 since he did not initiate the request; it was the journalists that offered to show a token of appreciation "to some people, who the Prosecution would want us to believe were the Vice President and the Director of Forestry."²¹ In response to Annas' question; "How much do you think?", **Mansaray audibly says**; "Like the VP if you throw in 50,000 first, it will be fine..."²² Here the judgment states that Mansaray mumbles **inaudibly**, then suggests 50,000.²³ On the other hand, it's unclear how the Prosecution arrived at the breakdown in figures in counts 2 and 3; count 3 alleged that \$1000 was solicited for the Director of Forestry, but Mansaray suggests \$20/30,000 for the "forestry guys". What Konte received as per the testimony of PW2 was \$2000; if the link to the Director is the fact that part of this was, as Konte allegedly stated, "to clear the way", this is not clearly set out by the Prosecution. Although the judgment states that Mansaray did not actually ask the journalists for money, Mansaray's statements cumulatively strongly suggest otherwise. Mansaray brags about the political influence he and Konte have,²⁴ he counter-suggests 50,000 for the VP to the journalists' proposed 15,000 and he is emphatic about money; "Annas: Ok, we do Veep 15,000. Alex: \$50, 000 (author's omission) But those types of things, you have to come up with the money **and give to him**. You have to come with the money, **like here you go veep**. Come with the money say thank you for the last time. Annas: Ok. Alex: **You don't have cash, you don't talk. Money talks in Africa.**"²⁵ **Although the judgment cites Mansaray's entire emphatic speech it omits his references to Samsamana and does not seem to interpret it as soliciting**²⁶ Mansaray also suggests a budget of 100,000 and willingly volunteers for the responsibility of talking to the VP for the investors. A simple token of appreciation not qualifying as a kickback/bribe would need to have been accepted without negotiation.²⁷ Also, query the judgment on the point that to prove count 5, i.e. conspiracy to solicit an inducement for the performance of an act in relation to the affairs of the VP, the Prosecution must prove the (actual) solicitation of moneys.

The success of the soliciting charges depended *mainly* on the success of the conspiracy charges. Therefore, evidential presentation should have lucidly and cogently spelled out this nexus and the relevance of particular kinds of evidence in demonstrating this nexus. Thirdly, the conspiracy charges as the pivotal case theory should have been the central focus of investigative and preparatory diligence including the need to seek evidence outside of the journalistic enterprise. Although elaborate case theories as this require hardier efforts to ensure tight links where holes cannot be poked,²⁸ no other evidence was adduced to substantiate the offence of conspiracy other than the documentary and witness testimony directly concerning the events featured in it.

²¹ J. Charm reasons as such at *Al-Jazeera* Judgment, p. 16.

²² **Youtube reading**: at 0.35-0.42 and also at 21.18-21.25.

²³ *Al-Jazeera* Judgment, p. 16; Excerpt of transcript: "Annas: How much do you think is? Is there...Alex:(**inaudible**) 50,000? First it would be fine." **Youtube reading**: "Annas: How much do you think is? Is there...Alex: Like the VP if you throw in 50,000 first, it will be fine..." , at 21.18-21.25

²⁴ **Youtube reading** at 17.24-18.21.

²⁵ **Youtube reading** at 21.30-22.03.

²⁶ *Al-Jazeera* Judgment, p. 17; Excerpt of transcript: " But those types of things, you have to come up with the money and (~~give to him~~) then You have to come with the money-(~~like here you go veep~~), come up with the money. You come and say thank you for the last time."

²⁷ Unnamed, (2016), Wikipedia, **Kickback (bribery)**, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kickback_%28bribery%29; "A kickback is a form of negotiated bribery in which a commission is paid to the bribe-taker as a quid pro quo for services rendered. Generally speaking, the remuneration (money, goods, or services handed over) is negotiated ahead of time. The kickback varies from other kinds of bribes in that there is implied collusion between agents of the two parties, rather than one party extorting the bribe from the other."

²⁸ Tanford J. A., (2002), *The Trial Process: Law, Tactics, and Ethics*, 3rd Edition, LexisNexis; Chapter 2, Preparing for Trial, S. 2.01 Introduction.

Charges should be framed in terms that are strictly necessary and reflective of the evidence secured; see Lukuley advocating compactly drafted indictments.²⁹ The offences of conspiracy here are framed in terms that indicate they were committed, with persons unknown, but the evidence, liberally interpreted, does not implicate persons in the alleged scheme other than the 2 Accused and the VP, and 2 conspirators suffice for a conspiracy charge. This aspect of the charge may further encumber the Prosecution. The same is true of count 5, which charges conspiracy to solicit an inducement for performing an act in relation to the affairs of the VP. The allegation that Konte *put himself out as being an agent* of the VP in count 5 is superfluous. In like scenarios, authorities could be amassed on the fact that deception used to uncover corruption does not in itself affect the credibility of the evidence/witnesses³⁰ for the Prosecution's ease of reference, to counter any contrary authorities.

II. Cumulative circumstantial evidence: Perhaps more of an emphasis on adducing more than one principal source of evidence and laying out the cohesiveness of circumstantial evidence, where the latter predominates? To this end, the Prosecution could have paraphrased PW2's popular narration querying the legitimacy of the events. His narration underlined the attempt to set up a major long term timber exporting business with environmental implications despite an existing ban on the export of timber. PW5 testified that he sought political protection in the timber industry through Konte. Konte by arranging a meeting with the VP against the context of the ban and by his statements clearly understood this to be the crux of the assistance sought from him; Konte requested the journalists to *take care of the Director or Forestry so as to secure his support*, and, *to arrange something for the VP and Director of Forestry*.³¹ By actively helping the investors seek a timber export licence, and to this end facilitating a meeting with the VP a day before the permanent export ban was reinstated,³² Konte gave the impression that he would help bypass the ban. PW2 alleged that within 24 hours of this meeting they were completing the paperwork for their logging company, something that normally took weeks. He says that one of the Vice President's close advisors said that the VP has already put the wheels in motion for their business, with the advisor on the board as one of the major shareholders.³³ Konte said that he reported to the VP on their meeting where docs were presented.³⁴ PW2 testified that Konte said he would need \$2000 as part payment to "*clear the way*" and it appeared that there was never any registration done of Taybar, despite partial payment for this to Konte (some media sources exculpate Konte from blame for this).³⁵ The emphasis should be on the collective weight of these facts, highlighting illegitimate endeavours at the most, dubious ones at the least.

III. Potentially erroneous legal, factual findings: Soliciting as per the ACA is wide and although the provision is cited ad verbatim, i.e. that it includes, indirectly indicating a willingness to receive, the application of the law to the facts does not appear test this indirect standard against Konte's collective contested suggestive entreaties. Also, note that peddling influence is defined here as using one's influence, to obtain favours for another, "*usually*" in return for money whereas peddling influence surely **always** requires an exchange element, i.e. one's influence is traded against something of value, a reward of some sort.

²⁹ See Snapshots, specifically **Section II. Diligent Case Preparation**; p. 2. The relevant heading is; 2. The Defective Framing of Charges, A. General.

³⁰ PW5 said that they had to use hidden cameras because the people they were investigating would not talk freely if they used conventional cameras; Al-Jazeera Judgment, p. 10. Refer to also to discussion on "*Entrapment*" in work by this author; Hudroge A., (2015), *The Sierra Leone Anti-Commission Case Law Reports*. The relevant authority is, *The State v. Edward Mohamed Allieu*, The High Court of Sierra Leone, J. S.A. Ademusu, 6 June 2008; see specifically the **Notes** section at p. 159 -160 and the **Critique** at pp. 164-167.

³¹ See discussion below at; **IV. Precedential Consistency**.

³² Youtube reading at 17.24-17.44: "*Annas and Bilal (...) they've been told that the best way of doing this discretely is via the office of Sierra Leone's Vice-President, Samuel Samsumana.*" Youtube reading at 17.55-18.06: "*But before they can see him they are told they have to pay a \$2000 registration fee and they also have to go through several meetings with 2 of his closest aides.*" Youtube reading at 19.13- 19.19: "*Annas and Bilal finally get the go ahead from one of the aides to meet the Vice-President in person.*"

³³ Youtube reading at 22.50- 23.04. Not explicit that by "*advisor*" here, PW2 means Konte, although Konte is featured at that point.

³⁴ Youtube reading at 23.05-23.18.

³⁵ Blyden S.O., (2011), *Soriosis Samura, Al Jazeera Rubbish Sierra Leone & the House Slaves*, Awareness Times; <http://news.sl/drwebsite/exec/view.cgi?archive=9&num=22806>; According to Blyden, although Samura said he registered his Timber company in SL in just days, the journalists got from Konte after they paid \$2000, only a proposed Memorandum & Articles of Incorporation for their proposed company named Taybar. They left SL before signing the actual registration papers for forwarding to the Administrator & Registrar-General's Offices; the registration process was incomplete. Her sources are undisclosed.

IV. Precedential consistency: *The State v. Baun Ors, 2009, Unreported* is an ACC case. Whether it has been applied to its maximum effect here, is doubtful. In **Baun**, the Accused said that he was broke and that the Accuser should help him with Le500, 000 when the latter went to collect his C48 form from him. It was held that this suggestive entreaty could amount to soliciting, i.e. indirect solicitation. **Baun** underlined that solicitation in our cultural context is often indirect. However, this standard does not appear to have been tested against Konte's vague statements to *take care of the Director or Forestry so as to secure his support*, and, *to arrange something for the VP and Director of Forestry*. Like Konte, the Accused in **Baun** also denied asking for money other than for legitimate payments, but the judgment distinguishes the two in that **Baun** unlike Konte *admitted receiving them*. It is submitted that a more salient distinction lies in the fact that Konte, unlike **Baun**, never specified any amount. However, according to PW2, Konte requested monies to not only pay partially for registration but to also "*clear the way*." **Baun** appears not to have been applied to Konte's more questionable comments collectively.

V. Re Governance: Pandering to public opinion is an inappropriate motive for bringing charges. Here, the broadcast may have pressured the ACC into taking action, but action could have been limited to investigations/inquiries that only result in the release of press statements that disclose their findings and the fact that the standard for trial was not met. The making of such press statements at which the ACC is adept, can identify inappropriate/dubious conduct warranting warnings and can announce that investigative journalism/entrapment necessitates contacting the ACC with potential evidence prior to broadcast to avoid marring a potentially revelatory investigation even through use of the same means. PW2 narrates re Samsumana that; "*To me the very fact that he is even meeting with timber exporters, sends the message that Sierra Leone is for sale.*"³⁶ On being told that the investors are interested in logging business, the VP tells them, he will be meeting with the Minister of Agriculture later that day and that the ban would be postponed for a while.³⁷ Samsumana in his letter to Al-Jazeera admitted to knowing Mansaray and Konte, but said they did not work the GOSL and were not as claimed his advisor and campaign manager, that Mansaray was acting solely on his own accord. He said he had no knowledge of the registration of the timber company and that he offered to speak to the Ministry of Agriculture on their behalf because it handled all matters relating to forestry. The judgment holds Konte's conduct to be legitimate and does not expressly recognize Mansaray's conduct as illegitimate. Still, query however whether political protection in these circumstances is a testament to good governance practices.

MEDIA REVIEW: Konte was largely lauded as an entrepreneur-philanthropist, but PW2's credentials were attacked, his film deemed unprofessional, deceitful through editing and not credible enough for prosecution. Insubstantial evidence was noted as a recurrent ACC problem. Internationally, the press appeared to endorse the film, contextualizing the episode against wider corruption. Supportive national press coverage also contextualized the episode, tending to express pre-verdict allegations as facts (but for CARL), due to the ACC's reliance on a purported visual record of events, a yet contestable piece of evidence. They described how APC financiers for the 2007 election, (mostly businessmen such as Konte), were either rewarded with ministerial positions or sought to recoup their investments through association with the GOSL. This theme re-emerged in 2014 when State House Chief of Staff, Richard Conteh was tried by the State Prosecutor for relaxing the timber ban. The VP's role was subject to more criticism than Konte's, with the Press accepting a non-trial but seeking an inquiry/impeachment, an idea apparently supported by the some US lawmakers concerned with his other business dealings. Some sources talked about the VP being framed by the SLPP or President Koroma who'd welcomed PW2. Witness testimony was well covered and PW2's skipping trial mid-cross was widely reported as suggestive of dishonesty. The issue of strong whistle blower protection under the ACA was also raised. Generally, the public was embarrassed by the broadcast and feared its impact on international investments. The verdict was mostly welcomed with public confidence ebbing in the ACC.

³⁶ **Youtube reading** at 20.36-20.44.

³⁷ Not included in judgment. **Youtube reading** at 19.49-20.05.

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