

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



Rogbere River

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

as at:

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Judges Dismiss Taylor's Request For Judgment Date

Judges in The Hague for the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) have unanimously dismissed a request by former Liberian President Charles Taylor's defense to change the date for the delivery of judgment.

By Alpha Sesay

After the announcement that the judgment to determine Taylor's guilt or innocence will be delivered on April 26, 2012, defense lawyers filed a motion requesting a change of date because Mr. Taylor's lead counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, has prior engagements in proceedings in the UK that cannot be changed.

In addition, the defense argued that delivering the judgment on the eve of Sierra Leone's independence will pose a security threat and add a bad taste to the country's celebrations.

Sierra Leone celebrates its 51st Independence Anniversary on April 27. Prosecutors opposed the defense request, urging the judges to stand by their originally announced date of April 26.

In a decision delivered this week, the judges dismissed the defense request, noting that when it issued their Scheduling Order on March 1 confirming that the judgment will be delivered on April 26, this gave Taylor's lead counsel a notice of about eight

weeks, which according to the judges, "is more than reasonable time for Counsel to make arrangements to be present for delivery of judgment."

The judges also noted that there are other co-counsel as part of Taylor's defense team who would be present in court in a case that lead counsel cannot attend proceedings on that day.

On the point that delivery of the judgment on the eve of Sierra Leone's independence could pose potential risk to security in the country, the judges noted that such an assertion "is entirely speculative and without merit."

For these reasons, the judges maintained that they will deliver their verdict on the guilt or innocence of Mr. Taylor on April 26 as originally announced.

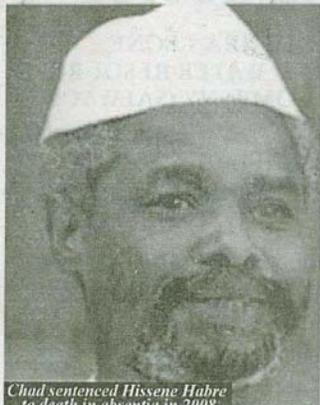
Taylor is accused of bearing responsibility for crimes committed by rebel forces in Sierra Leone during the country's 11 year civil conflict.

The war in Sierra Leone ended in January 2002. Throughout his trial, the former Liberian President has maintained his innocence.

Awoko

Tuesday, 13 March 2012

Hissene Habre: Belgian extradition case opens at ICJ



Chad sentenced Hissene Habre to death in absentia in 2008

The International Court for Justice is hearing a request from Belgium to extradite Chad's ex-President Hissene Habre for trial for alleged atrocities. Mr Habre, 69, is accused of

killing and torturing tens of thousands of opponents between 1982 and 1990 - charges he denies. He has been living in Senegal since he was ousted in 1990 and was arrested in 2005 - but never prosecuted.

Senegal has previously refused, four extradition requests from Belgium.

'Hope'

Belgium has asked the UN's highest court to order Senegal to fulfil its obligations under international law - and either prosecute him or extradite him to stand trial in Brussels.

The case is about "taking a stand against impunity in the most serious crimes in international law", Belgian representative Paul Rietjens said during opening remarks, the Associated Press reports.

Public sittings will be held until 21 March in Dutch city of the Hague, where the court is based.

Senegal's representative is due to open its case on Thursday.

A ruling, which is legally binding, is not expected for months.

Dubbed "Africa's Pinochet", Mr Habre was charged in 2005 by Belgium with crimes against humanity and torture.

Alleged victims filed complaints under Belgium's universal jurisdiction law, which allows the country's judges to prosecute human rights offences committed anywhere in the world.

In January, a Senegalese court rejected a Belgian request to extradite Mr Habre.

At the time, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade said he expected the extradition would be imminent - and the appeal court's decision was due to a procedural error.

In papers filed with the International Court of Justice, Senegal contends that it still intends to prosecute Mr Habre, according to campaign group Human Rights Watch.

But Senegalese officials have previously ruled out putting him on trial.

After years of wrangling, the African

Union has urged Senegal to either put Mr Habre on trial or send him to a country which would do so.

Last year, Senegal stopped plans to repatriate Mr Habre to Chad following a plea from the UN, which feared he could be tortured on his return.

Human rights groups also said he would not get a fair trial in Chad.

In 2008, a court in Chad sentenced Mr Habre to death in absentia for planning to overthrow the government.

A 1992 Truth Commission in Chad accused him of being responsible for widespread torture and the death of 40,000 people during his eight-year rule.

He was accused of carrying out a deliberate policy of terror to discourage any opposition.

Survivors of torture say that, among other things, they were subjected to electric shocks, near-asphyxia and "supplice des baguettes", when their head was squeezed between sticks.

Vanguard (Nigeria)

Monday, 12 March 2012

First African female sworn in as ICJ judge

The Hague - Julia Sebutinde from Uganda on Monday officially started her term as a judge at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague.

She becomes the first African woman to sit on the UN Court.

According to an ICJ statement, “her career objective is to contribute to world peace through the adjudication and settlement of legal disputes at national, regional and international levels.”

Sebutinde, 58, has worked for 32 years in the legal and judicial field.

Before joining the ICJ, she conducted judicial inquiries into high-profile corruption cases in Uganda and was a judge prosecuting against the former Liberian president Charles Taylor at a special court in Sierra Leone.

With Sebutinde, three female judges currently sit on the UN court bench, the other two being Judge Xue Hanqing from China and Judge Joan Donoghue from the U.S.

Both were elected in 2010. (NAN)

World war crimes court marks 10 years

The Hague - A decade after it was set up to try the world's worst war crimes, the International Criminal Court evokes strong responses with some hailing it and others branding it a tool of the winning forces.

For Luis Moreno-Ocampo, the court's chief prosecutor, it is a "respected global institution", but critics say the Hague-based ICC dispenses punishment only to losers in conflicts.

"When I started, people said we could not do it, we would never have a case in court," Moreno-Ocampo said in an interview on the eve of the ICC's first judgement since being called into life in July 2002.

"We now investigate in seven countries, we have people in prison, we are a court, we are normal," Moreno-Ocampo said ahead of the judges' verdict in the case of Democratic Republic of Congo militia leader Thomas Lubanga.

Lubanga, aged 51, is one of 20 suspects against whom arrest warrants have been issued to appear in The Hague. He will learn his fate on Wednesday, facing charges of recruiting child soldiers under 15 years to fight in his militia.

Considered to be a minor catch for the ICC and imprisoned in 2006, Lubanga has also been joined in a Hague prison by two other Congolese rebel leaders, as well as Democratic Republic of Congo former vice president Jean-Pierre Bemba.

15 procedures pending

Last year, the suspects at the tribunal's detention unit received a new addition: Former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo.

Fifteen procedures are now pending before the ICC, the world's first permanent international criminal tribunal to try genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. It held 321 hearings last year in three trials or pre-trial preparations.

More than 4 000 victims, many of them of ethnic violence, have taken part in proceedings before the court, which employs about 700 people and has a budget of €108m for this year.

"The court has become a globally respected institution," said Argentinian prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo, due to end his mandate in June. His deputy, Fatou Bensouda of Ghana, is set to take over the reins.

So far 120 countries have signed up to the Rome Statute and pledged to work with the court.

"We cannot attend a single meeting in New York where at one point or another the ICC is not being mentioned," a diplomatic source at the UN said.

No police

"The added value of the court is its legitimacy and its impartiality," the source said.

But there was a flip side, the source said.

"There lies the whole challenge for the future: Some countries would like to choose their suspects and decide themselves which arrest warrants should be executed.

"Already, nobody lifts a finger to arrest [Sudanese President] Omar al-Bashir," the source added.

Wanted by the ICC for genocide, Bashir continues to cock a snook at the ICC as he travels the world in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, the source said.

The ICC does not have its own police force and is dependent on the goodwill of member states to nab suspects.

Probes only on Africa

It has garnered strong support from global NGOs, but also some criticism.

"We regret that all investigations are conducted in Africa," said Karine Bonneau of the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH).

The African investigations were justified, added Human Rights Watch's Geraldine Mattioli, but it did hurt the court's legitimacy that some viewed it as a "tool of Western powers".

"The prosecution's strategy sometimes seems inadequate," Mattioli added.

For instance, only rebel leaders are being prosecuted for abuses in the DRC, "not the political and military leaders in Uganda, Rwanda and Kinshasa who have used these armed groups", she said.

"The court must do better in demonstrating that those in power can be targeted," said Goran Sluiter, an international criminal law professor at Amsterdam University.

Powerful tool

"In many situations those who have lost the conflict are being charged."

He said the ICC was today however being recognised as a "permanent institution and a very, very powerful tool".

"Somebody like [Syrian leader] Bashar Assad in Syria should be very afraid. It may be safe today and tomorrow, but who knows? Maybe in two of four years' time if there is a regime change and Syria submits the case, he could be at the ICC."

New York Times
Monday, 12 March 2012

Hague Court to Decide Where Former Dictator of Chad Will Be Tried

By MARLISE SIMONS

PARIS — International judges in The Hague are hearing a complex case this week that boils down to a single and unusual question: which country has the right to try Hissène Habré, the former president of Chad, who has been indicted in two nations in connection with political killings, torture and a host of other brutalities.

Senegal and Belgium have both charged Mr. Habré, but Senegal, where he now lives, has stalled any legal action for more than a decade, while refusing repeated extradition requests from Brussels.

The case has now landed before the International Court of Justice, the highest United Nations court that settles disputes between nations. Public hearings began Monday and are expected to last more than a week.

Mr. Habré, however, may not be in imminent danger of landing in any dock: now 69, he has lived undisturbed in his luxury villa in Dakar, Senegal's capital, since he fled a rebellion at home in 1990.

His fearsome rule, from 1982 to 1990, has been largely forgotten in a region where other strongmen and conflicts have since monopolized the news.

Mr. Habré's rise and fall played out during an earlier period of instability in North Africa: he received extensive support from Western countries, including the United States and France, which saw Chad, a former French colony, as a counterweight to its troublemaking neighbor to the north, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi's Libya.

The Reagan administration provided covert support to help Mr. Habré take power in 1982 and provided him with military aid.

Mr. Habré turned that arsenal against his own people. The Chad Truth Commission said in 1992 that his government had killed up to 40,000 opponents and tortured many others. Survivors of the prisons run by the dreaded political police have described atrocities, including the torture and killing of fellow prisoners.

Although Chad is among the world's poorest nations, Mr. Habré is said to have acquired a sizable fortune. The truth commission found that even during the final days of his rule, he stole more than \$11 million from Chad's central bank and the treasury, and ordered his soldiers to pillage other funds from the provinces.

He is said to have used some of that fortune in Senegal to buy political and legal protection and to shield himself from unfavorable media accounts. When he arrived in Senegal, local newspapers reported that a bank in downtown Dakar had to temporarily close to count the cash that arrived in suitcases on Mr. Habré's plane.

In 2000, a Senegal court charged him with crimes against humanity, including "acts of torture and acts of barbarity."

But the government has thrown up successive legal and financial hurdles to avoid putting Mr. Habré on trial. Senegal has said that it would conduct the trial if other countries would pay for it, at a cost, the president said, of about \$36 million.

Several times, Senegal has also threatened to send Mr. Habré back to Chad, where Senegal says he could be tried and rights advocates say he would be more likely to be tortured or summarily executed. He has already been sentenced there in absentia to death.

The African Union, which has often criticized a different court in The Hague, the International Criminal Court, whose indictments so far have all involved African cases, has urged a reluctant Senegal to try Mr. Habré “in the name of Africa,” rather than see him prosecuted in Europe.

“Senegal is doing its best in a time frame we consider reasonable,” Cheikh Tidiane Thiam, director of legal affairs at Senegal’s Foreign Ministry, told reporters in The Hague on Monday.

Belgium also wants to try the former dictator, based on a complaint filed by a group of Mr. Habré’s victims, among them Belgian citizens. They say that while Senegal has delayed action, a number of victims and witnesses have died. After lengthy investigations, Belgium issued an international arrest warrant in 2005, charging Mr. Habré with crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture.

But Senegal still insists that it plans to prosecute Mr. Habré, and has turned down three extradition requests from Brussels, which decided to take its case to The Hague in 2009.

Belgium argues that Senegal is in violation of the international convention on torture, which holds that countries holding people accused of torture must either prosecute them or hand them over for trial elsewhere.

Reed Brody, counsel for Human Rights Watch, who has led a long campaign on behalf of victims of the Habré government, said the issue could not be clearer: “Senegal has an international obligation to prosecute or extradite. It has been 21 years and nothing has happened.”

The court could take several months to announce its finding.