

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



**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:**

Friday, 23 March 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.  
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact  
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## Heritage (Liberia)

Thursday, 22 March 2012

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201203220968.html>

### Charles Taylor Will Be Set Free If...

By O. Testimony Zeongar

"If the issue of Mr. Charles G. Taylor is legal, Mr. Taylor is going to be a free man, but if it is political, then there will be some problems," these were the words of Mr. Sando Johnson, when he spoke on the Truth FM Breakfast Show in Monrovia on Wednesday, March 21, 2012. Mr. Johnson is the spokesman of the Taylor's family and also Senator of Bomi County.

He maintained that there will be some problems if the issue of Mr. Taylor's verdict is political rather than legal.

But he fell short of stating the problems he envisages with the Taylor's verdict if the verdict in his words is political.

However, the Bomi County senator indicated that all remaining constant, he was of the conviction that the former Liberian leader will be a free man.

According to him, Taylor's lawyers have done all that they could do, and they were now waiting to see which way the verdict would go, adding: "I am of the conviction that Mr. Taylor will be a free man, and he will one day come back to Liberia."

The assertions by the spokesman of Taylor's family followed announcement by the Trial Chamber II that judgment in the trial of the former Liberian President will take place on 26 April 2012.

According to a recent press release issued by the Special Court for Sierra Leone Outreach and Public Affairs, Freetown, Sierra Leone, the judgment will be delivered at 11:00 a.m. in a courtroom belonging to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in The Hague, where the Taylor trial has been taking place.

Taylor was charged in an 11-count indictment alleging responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed by rebel forces in Sierra Leone during the country's decade-long civil war. The former Liberian president has since pleaded not guilty to all of the charges.

## Comments

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**gloriaPUSA**

Mar 22 2012, 09:36

 Report Abuse

Come on, what is the basis for printing this story? I mean this not news worthy at all. It seems it is a PR stunt for Charles Taylor. People like Sando Johnson are in denial the fact remains that Charles Taylor will be convicted and sentence to life. Maybe Sando and others can visit Chales Taylor while he is incarcerated in the UK.

Associated Press  
Tuesday, 20 March 2012

## **Homes destroyed in cross-border attack on Liberia**

By Jonathan Paye-Layleh

MONROVIA, Liberia—Hundreds of men from Sierra Leone crossed the border into Liberia last week, destroying homes in an attack in a sensitive border area that straddles the two countries recovering from war, a regional official said Tuesday.

No deaths were reported, but at least five houses, two churches and two buildings used to store rice were destroyed when some 300 Sierra Leoneans crossed into the villages on the Liberian side in the country's northern Foya region last Thursday, said Eugene Fallah Kparkar, the Congressional representative from the region.

Both Sierra Leone and Liberia are recovering from horrific civil wars, and the Foya region in Lofa County is where the final round of Liberia's war started in 1999. Ex-President Charles Taylor, who is awaiting his verdict on crimes against humanity at The Hague, was accused of using the region to ferry fighters from Liberia into Sierra Leone to fuel that country's war.

Kparkar, who represents the area in Liberia's House of Representatives, told The Associated Press that the attack was apparently in retaliation for the death of a Sierra Leonean motorcyclist. The motorcyclist had apparently been beaten to death in Liberia, and then dumped on the Sierra Leone side, Kparkar said.

"The folks from Sierra Leone came in (great) numbers to the border towns, and in retaliation, decided to carry out this high-level vandalism," Kparkar said. "We need to see how best we can address the situation in a way that will not have a spillover effect in the region."

The incident was first reported Tuesday in the country's independent press, and was confirmed by officials. The New Dawn newspaper estimated the attackers to be "around 300."

The Sierra Leonean Ambassador to Liberia, Marie Jilo Barnett, told AP that her government has been informed. The embassy was awaiting an investigation into the incident before taking further action.

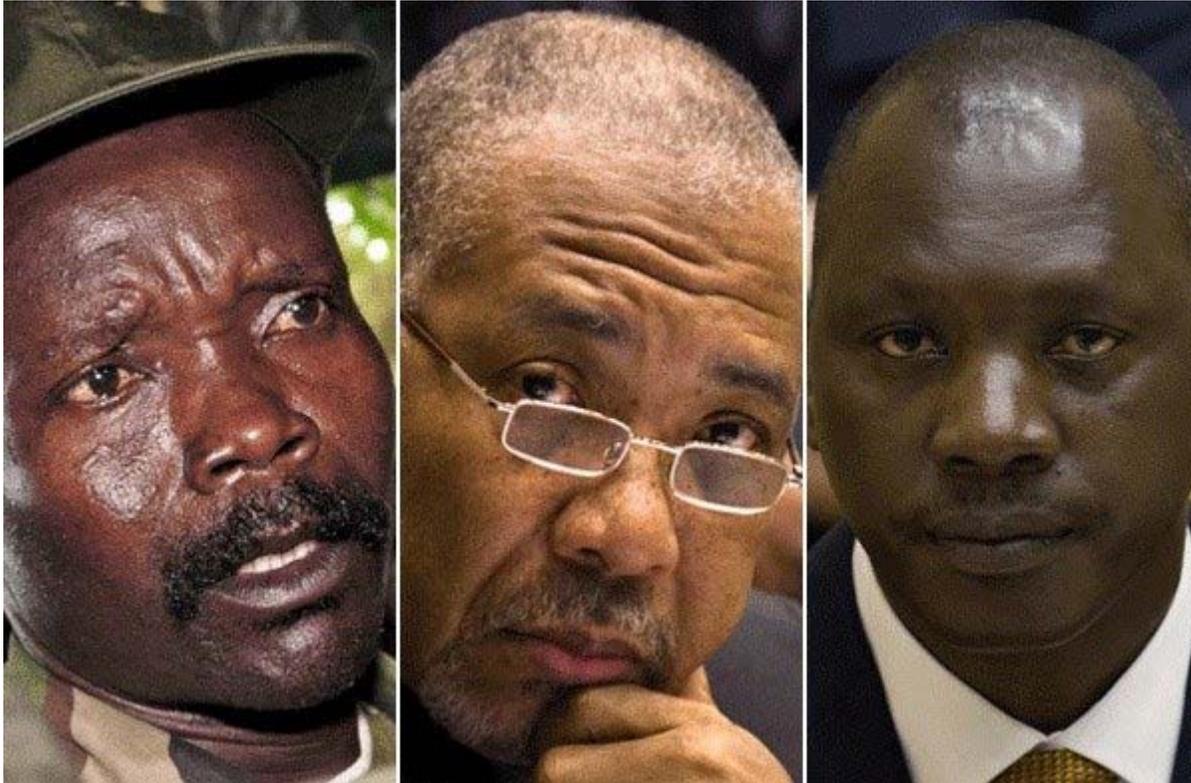
# Los Angeles Times

Wednesday, 22 March 2012

Opinion

## Child soldiers: A worldwide scourge

Joseph Kony, Thomas Lubanga and Charles Taylor are just the tip of the iceberg. The use of children as soldiers extends far beyond Africa.



From left to right: Joseph Kony, Charles Taylor and Thomas Lubanga could be regarded as the three most infamous child soldier recruiters in the world today. (Stuart Price / EPA; Jerry Lampen, Michael Kooren / AFP/Getty Images / March 22, 2012)

By Jo Becker

Last week in The Hague, the International Criminal Court, or ICC, found the Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga guilty of recruiting and using child soldiers in the armed conflict in that country, sealing his fate as the court's first convicted war criminal.

At the same time, the viral video "Kony 2012" has seemingly achieved its goal of making Joseph Kony, another rebel commander facing an ICC arrest warrant, notorious for his alleged crimes, including the abduction of an estimated 30,000 children for his Lord's Resistance Army. Millions of people have viewed the video, with millions more learning about Kony, who is still at large, through mainstream media coverage of the campaign.

Kony, Lubanga and Charles Taylor could be regarded as the three most infamous child soldier recruiters in the world today. Taylor, the former president of Liberia, is awaiting a verdict from the Special Court for Sierra Leone on charges of recruiting child soldiers and other crimes.

Together, the three may bear responsibility for forcing tens of thousands of children into brutal and deadly wars.

But the use of child soldiers extends far beyond Central and West Africa. Today, child soldiers are fighting in at least 14 countries, including Colombia, Myanmar (also known as Burma) and Afghanistan. In most of these cases, there have been no arrest warrants, no trials and no convictions for those responsible.

The United Nations has identified more than a dozen "persistent perpetrators," governments and armed groups that are known to have used child soldiers in active conflict for more than 10 years. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, rebels in Colombia, for example, have recruited children as young as 7 and forced them into combat. They execute fighters who try to desert.

In some cases, military recruiters not only escape punishment but are rewarded for bringing children into their forces.

On the Thailand-Burma border, I interviewed boys who had escaped from Burma's army. Some were only 11 years old when recruiters threatened or coerced them into joining the army. They said that when they arrived at the recruitment center, the commanders not only turned a blind eye to the boys' young age but gave the recruiters cash and bags of rice.

The situation in a few countries is becoming notably worse. In Afghanistan, the Taliban has stepped up its use of children for suicide attacks. In Somalia, the Islamist armed group Shabab has increasingly targeted children for forced recruitment, often abducting children as young as 10 from their homes or schools.

Lubanga's conviction is a landmark. But more action is needed to address the problem globally.

At the national level, governments need to crack down on commanders who recruit children. Burma has prosecuted some low-level soldiers but no high-ranking officers. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, not only is Bosco Ntaganda, one of six wanted by the ICC for recruiting child soldiers, still at large, but he has been promoted to the rank of general in the national army.

Other governments may be complicit in the use of child soldiers by other countries. The United States, for example, continues to provide military assistance to governments using child soldiers in their national forces, including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Yemen, despite U.S. laws prohibiting such aid.

Lubanga and Taylor are facing real consequences for their use of child soldiers. Kony, if apprehended, could also face decades in prison.

But the scourge of child soldiers reaches around the globe. To end the use of child soldiers, we can't stop with these three.

*Jo Becker is the children's rights advocacy director for Human Rights Watch. She has investigated the recruitment and use of child soldiers in Uganda, Burma, Sri Lanka, India and Nepal.*

## Human Rights Watch

Friday, 23 March 2012

Press Release

### **Mali: Coup Leaders Must Respect Rights**

Treatment of Minorities a Source of Special Concern



Malian soldiers and security forces gather at the offices of the state radio and television broadcaster after announcing a coup d'etat in the capital Bamako.

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*The political and social upheaval created by the coup must not lead to a vacuum in the protection of basic rights. The military officers who took over Mali's government must not only maintain discipline within the security forces, but should also ensure that the human rights of all Malians are respected.*

*Corinne Dufka, senior Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch.*

(Nairobi) – Military officers responsible for a coup in Mali should restore basic human rights protections, ensure the humane treatment of everyone in custody, and protect the lives and property of all Malians, Human Rights Watch said today. The security of the ethnic Tuareg, Arab populations, and other minorities is of particular concern.

On March 21, 2012, young military officers protesting the government's handling of a Tuareg-led rebellion staged a coup against President Amadou Toumani Touré. After taking over the state television and radio station, a spokesman for the officers announced the suspension of the constitution and "all institutions," as well as the closure of all borders and the main airport in the capital, Bamako, and imposed a nationwide curfew. Since the outbreak of armed conflict in northern Mali in mid-January 2012, some 200,000 Malians have fled their homes, most to neighboring Algeria, Burkina Faso, and Niger.

"The political and social upheaval created by the coup must not lead to a vacuum in the protection of basic rights," said Corinne Dufka, senior Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch. "The military officers who took over Mali's government must not only maintain discipline within the security forces, but should also ensure that the human rights of all Malians are respected."

The coup leaders of the self-proclaimed National Committee for the Reestablishment of Democracy and the Restoration of the State (CNRDR) said they had overthrown the government because of the inadequate support for the army in its military operations against the rebellion by the separatist Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), which seeks autonomy for the north they call Azawad. Since the outbreak of fighting, the Malian army has lost several major military bases, most recently the strategic base of Amachach, near Tessalit. On January 24, the rebels overran the Aguelhoc military base, allegedly summarily executing at least 70 Malian soldiers.

Local and international media reported that the coup leaders, reportedly headed by Capt. Amadou Sanogo, had detained at least two government ministers – the foreign affairs minister, Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga, and the territorial administration and local authorities minister, Kafougouna Koné – as well as several loyalist military officers. There were also reports of looting of the presidential palace, shops, and gas stations in Bamako. As a result of soldiers firing in the air, numerous civilians are reported to have been shot by stray bullets. During a speech on national television, Capt. Sanogo called for calm and denounced all looting.

Human Rights Watch is concerned that the unrest provoked by the coup could result in attacks against minority populations, notably the Tuareg and Arab ethnic groups, and called on the coup leaders to ensure that the rights and safety of all Malians are respected. In early February, civilians carried out scores of reprisal attacks against the homes and businesses of Tuaregs in Bamako, Kati, Sikasso, Koulikoro and Gao. The attacks provoked widespread panic and the flight of tens of thousands of Tuaregs from Mali.

In a statement read on state television on the morning of March 22, coup leaders said: “We promise to hand power back to a democratically elected president as soon as the country is reunified and its integrity is no longer threatened.” Presidential elections had been scheduled for April 29. President Touré has served two, five-year terms.

Human Rights Watch called on the coup leaders to give a specific timeline for the imminent return to democratic rule, respecting the fundamental right of Malians to elect their leaders.