

**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:**

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

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Special Court for Sierra Leone: Charles Taylor Judgment Set

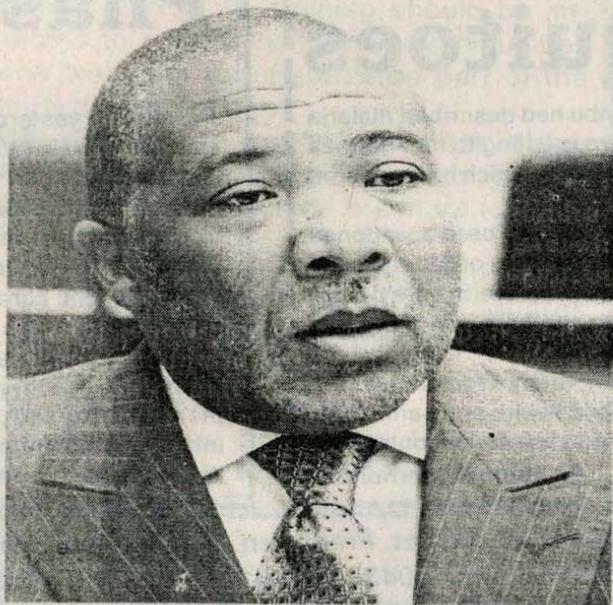
Landmark Ruling on Liberian Ex-President's Role in Brutal Neighboring Conflict

(The Hague, April 17, 2012) - The Special Court for Sierra Leone is scheduled to issue a judgment in the case of former Liberian president Charles Taylor on April 26, 2012. The judgment will be a major development for victims of horrific crimes committed in Sierra Leone during its armed conflict, which ended in 2002. Taylor, whose influence extended throughout West Africa, is the first former head of state to face judgment in an international or hybrid international-national court on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Slobodan Milosevic was the first head of state to be tried by an international criminal tribunal, but he died before a judgment was issued.

The Special Court indicted Taylor on March 7, 2003, for crimes - including murder, terrorizing civilians, rape, sexual slavery, and recruiting and using child soldiers - committed during Sierra Leone's armed conflict. After enjoying safe haven in Nigeria, Taylor was apprehended in March 2006 and transferred to The Hague for trial by the Special Court.

"The Special Court's judgment in the Taylor trial will be a watershed moment regardless of the verdict," said Elise Keppler, international justice senior counsel at Human Rights Watch. "Those implicated in the gravest crimes, even at the highest echelons of power, are being held to account."

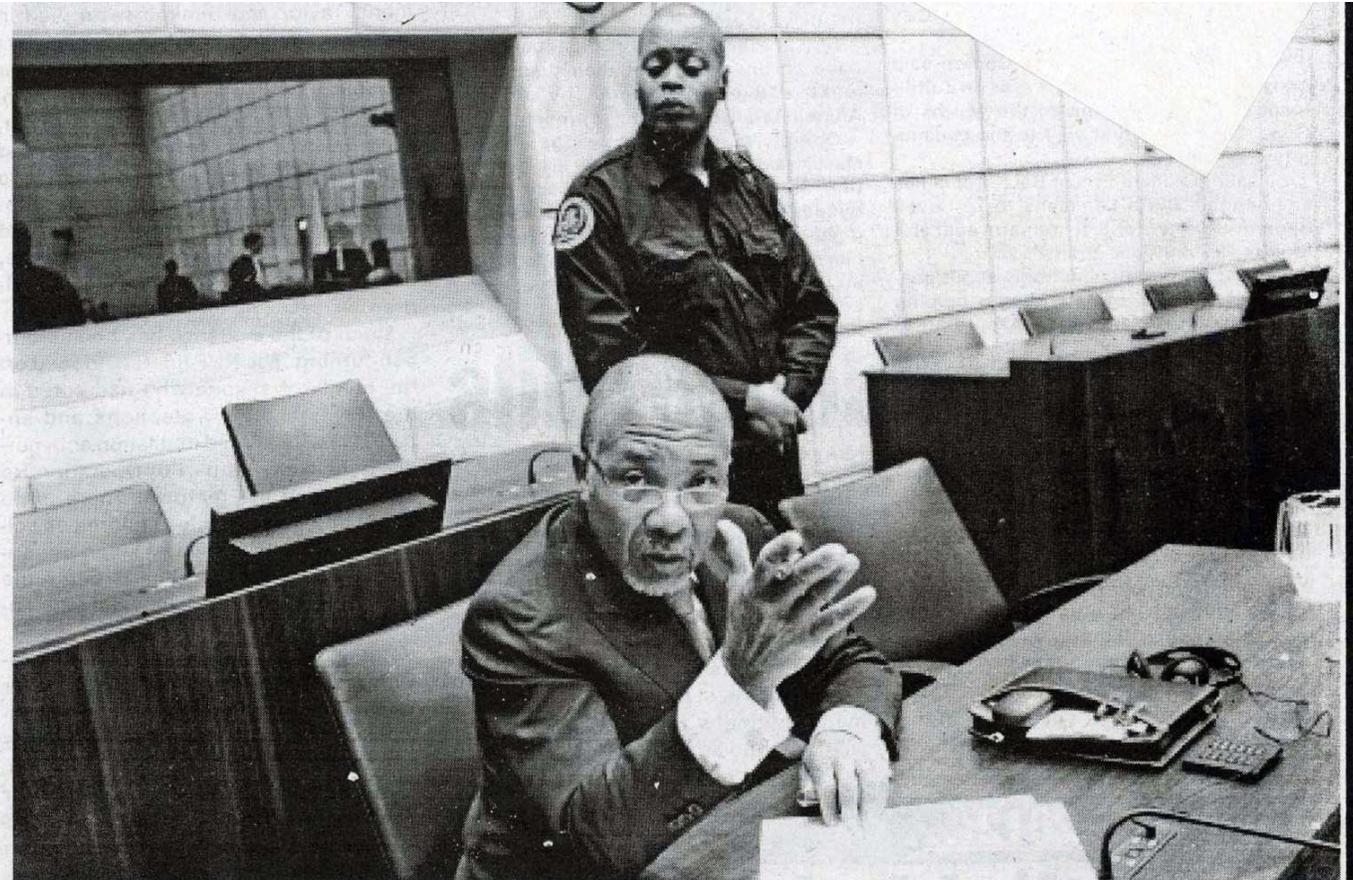
The judgment in the Taylor case will come less than five months after former president of neighboring Côte d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, became the first former head of state to appear at the International Criminal Court on charges of crimes against humanity.



Exclusive

Wednesday, 18 April 2012

Judgement Day for Taylor



Independence Watch Night...

The verdict on Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia, will be announced on April 26, 2012 by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone has sat for over three years in The Hague to hear accusations that in order to gain a share of Sierra Leone's diamonds, he (Taylor) conspired with the late Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to wage Africa's most brutal war against a democratically elected government. Taylor and Sankoh (who died in 2003) are alleged to have trained in Libya at the invitation of Late Col. Muammar Gaddafi (an "unindicted co-conspirator").

During the war, it is said that Taylor, posing as a peacemaker, presented some of his ill-gotten uncut diamonds to supermodel Naomi Campbell, after dinner chez Nelson Mandela. He is charged with murder, rape, terrorism, pillage, sexual enslavement, and recruiting children.

Much of the evidence has been stomach-turning. The RUF fighters lopped off the hands of anyone who had voted in the U.N.-sponsored elections and engaged in widespread mutilation and murder of civilians as part of Operation No Living Thing in Freetown. There is no doubt that they recruited children as soldiers and sex slaves, and killed prisoners of war to eat their hearts out in the 'juju' belief that they would gain their enemies' strength.

But was Charles Taylor in any way responsible for these atrocities? He never set foot in Sierra Leone and the prosecution had to rely on evidence that he was in communication with rebel leaders. That contact was necessary, so Taylor testified, to perform his U.N.-accredited role as peacemaker. The prosecution claimed he was directing his RUF proxies, and in return for diamonds was arranging to supply them with weapons, military personnel, and safe haven on the Liberia-Sierra Leone border.

It will be for the court—a judge from Northern Ireland, a judge from Uganda, and a judge from Samoa (trained in Australia) to determine where the truth lies. Instead of defying the court like Milosevic or trying to disrupt it by defending himself, Taylor retained a British Queen's Counsel (a senior Old Bailey advocate) to represent him throughout the trial. This made it a true adversarial proceeding and enhanced his prospects of acquittal by independent judges on prosecution evidence that has been mainly circumstantial—no witnesses testified to receiving orders from him to fight the war. The judges must be satisfied of his guilt beyond reasonable doubt, so his conviction on all or any of the charges is not a foregone conclusion.

The verdict will be announced April 26. One disquieting feature of the case is the time the court has taken to deliver this judgment—thirteen months, no less, since the final speeches finished. The trial itself lasted over three years, during which time the judges should have been working on their assessments—the issues are complicated but it should not take over a year to give reasons for a verdict. While it is not necessary to follow the lead of the German judges who convicted one of the last Nazis John Demjanjuk, only two days after the end of his two-year trial, it remains true that justice delayed is justice denied, especially in a court whose first President promised that "our justice, whilst it may not be exquisite, will never be rough."

At any event, it can be predicted that the judgment will be lengthy. It has been touted as the first international-court

decision on the guilt of a head of state (Milosevic having died mid-trial and Jean Kambanda, President of Rwanda, having pleaded guilty before the tribunal in Arusha established to deal with the Rwandan genocide), although purists will note that Admiral Dönitz, briefly head of Germany after Hitler's death, was convicted at Nuremberg.

Media interest will doubtless center on the findings in respect to Naomi Campbell's "blood diamonds." The prosecution alleges they were a gift from Taylor (he denies it)—an example of his gains ill-gotten from the war. Some light may also be shed on how Charles Taylor ever became a guarantor, with the U.S. and the U.N., of the Lomé Accord—the infamous peace agreement that put the fox in charge of the henhouse by making RUF leader Sankoh the Deputy Prime Minister of Sierra Leone and minister in charge of the diamond mines. It was Jesse Jackson as President Clinton's emissary who had secured Sankoh's release from prison (hailing him as "West Africa's Nelson Mandela") and who joined in sponsoring the worst peace deal since the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. "The Lomé Accord stank," says David Scheffer in his recent autobiography: as Clinton's war-crimes ambassador, he should have brokered it but says he was shut out. Taylor relies on Lomé as evidence that he only met Sankoh at the request of the U.S. and the U.N.: they wanted him to act as a peacemaker in the region. The prosecution, claiming he was the "godfather" of the RUF, suggests that he exploited this role to deliver the spoils of war into the hands of his proxies. These are some of the disputed issues on which the court must make findings of fact.

His case has already made a contribution to war-crimes jurisprudence. He was indicted at a time when he was president of Liberia, and the right of an international court to override the traditional immunity of a head of state was in some legal doubt. His challenge to the indictment enabled the court to rule that sitting presidents no longer have impunity: they can be arrested by U.N. courts for crimes against humanity. On this precedent, the international-criminal-court prosecutor had no legal compunction in indicting Gaddafi when he was ruler of Libya or Laurent Gbagbo while he was still claiming the presidency of Ivory Coast.

The Taylor trial will serve in other respects as a useful guide to avoiding the mess that was made of the trial of Saddam Hussein. Taylor's trial was moved from Freetown to The Hague because of security concerns. There, he has been tried fairly by independent international judges, unlike the politically manipulated jurists who condemned Saddam. Taylor will not face the death penalty (he would inevitably receive a long sentence if convicted and the U.K. has agreed for him to serve it in an English prison). This would be a more just and seemly result than the obscene cellphone pictures of the hanging of Hussein or the lynch law visited upon Gaddafi.

If Charles Taylor is acquitted, the prosecution can appeal, unlike prosecutors in the U.S. and the U.K. That would keep him in The Hague, perhaps on bail, for several more years. Or he could be returned to Liberia for trial for different offenses under local law. He could not, however, be sent back to Liberia if there were any prospect he could face the death penalty. Once in the custody of international law, even the worst criminal's life is safe.

Geneva Lunch

Tuesday, 17 April 2012

<http://genevalunch.com/blog/2012/04/17/charles-taylor-sentencing-date-set-by-the-hague-court/>

Charles Taylor sentencing date set by The Hague court

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND – Charles Taylor, former Sierre Leone leader who is accused of crimes against humanity, will be judged 26 April in The Hague by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Taylor was apprehended in 2006, three years after the court indicted him on 17 charges, including terrorism. He was president of the country from 1997 to 2002 after years of warfare in Sierre Leone.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up jointly by the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations 10 years ago.

Taylor is the first former head of state to be sentenced by an international criminal court. Slobodan Milosevic, the first former head of state to be tried, died before he was sentenced.

Links to other sites: [Human Rights Watch page on Taylor](#), [The Special Court for Sierra Leone](#)
Posted by Ellen Wallace on 17 April 2012 at 10:15 | [permalink](#)

The New Dawn (Liberia)

Tuesday, 17 April 2012

9 Days to go



The verdict in the three-year-plus prosecution of former President Charles Taylor is expected to be handed down next Thursday, April 26, as the Court has out rightly rejected any calls to change the date.

The former president was indicted in 2002 by the Special Court for Sierra Leone for his role in the ten-year Sierra Leone war, arrested in 2006 in Nigeria and sent to The Hague for prosecution.

He is accused of aiding the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Foday Sankoh for diamonds. Many believe that he (Charles Taylor) was the “Godfather” of the rebel group.

His charges contained 22 counts from the beginning, but was later reduced to eleven, including murder, rape, terrorism, pillage, sexual enslavement, and the recruitment of child soldiers. He has since denied all charges.

The trial opened on 4 June 2007 in The Hague. It was adjourned immediately after the Prosecution’s opening statement when Mr. Taylor dismissed his Defence team and requested new representation. Witness testimony commenced on 7 January 2008, and ended on 12 November 2010. Closing arguments took place in February and March 2011.

The Court heard live testimony from 94 prosecution witnesses, and received written statements from four additional witnesses. The Defence presented 21 witnesses, with Mr. Taylor testifying in his defence.

After the presentations of arguments and counterarguments, the appearance of various witnesses, including Naomi Campbell, the examinations and cross-examinations of witnesses and evidence, the Court finally announced in March of this year that the judgment would be issued on April 26.

Already, some family members and friends of Mr. Taylor have either arrived in The Hague or are planning to be there on/or before next Thursday.

The Special Court said it will underwrite the travel expenses of ten members of Liberian and Sierra Leonean Civil Society groups to attend the verdict. If found guilty, Taylor could serve his prison terms in a UK prison.

Vibe Ghana

Tuesday, 17 April 2012

<http://vibeghana.com/2012/04/17/liberian-ex-president-charles-taylors-judgment-set-april-26/>

Liberian Ex-President Charles Taylor's Judgment Set

The Special Court for Sierra Leone on Tuesday set April 26 to give judgment in the case of Former Liberian President Charles Taylor's role in the brutal conflict of Sierra Leone.

“The judgment will be a major development for victims of horrific crimes committed in Sierra Leone during its armed conflict, which ended in 2002,” a statement issued by the Court in The Hague, has said.

The statement described Mr Taylor as “one whose influence extended throughout West Africa and the first former head of state to face judgment in an international or hybrid international-national court on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

The Special Court indicted Mr Taylor on March 7, 2003, for crimes – including murder, terrorizing civilians, rape, sexual slavery, and recruiting and using child soldiers – committed during Sierra Leone's armed conflict.

The statement recounted that Taylor after enjoying safe haven in Nigeria, was apprehended in March 2006 and transferred to The Hague for trial by the Special Court.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was created by an agreement between Sierra Leone and the United Nations to prosecute “those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in the territory of Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996”.

Eight individuals associated with the three main warring factions have been tried and convicted by the Special Court in Freetown, and all are serving their sentences in Rwanda.

The Taylor trial, held in The Hague due to concerns raised over stability in the West African sub-region, is expected to be the final trial of the Special Court, which is in the process of winding down its operations. GNA

Washington Times

Monday, 16 April 2012

Traumatized Liberians see little justice in trial

By Clair MacDougall - Special to The Washington Times



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor is on trial for war crimes in Sierra Leone, but many Liberians want him to face justice for massacres, rapes and torture committed during his rule of their country. (International Criminal Court via Associated Press)

MONROVIA, Liberia — As judgment day nears in the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes in neighboring Sierra Leone, many Liberians are wondering whether he will ever face justice for brutality in his own country.

“There were more atrocities that occurred in Liberia under [his] leadership as compared to that in Sierra Leone,” said Nathan F. Gull, a 33-year-old businessman in Monrovia.

Mr. Taylor, a former rebel leader, is best known internationally for his bands of drugged-up child soldiers who terrorized Liberians throughout the 1990s until 2003.

Fourteen years of civil war killed 250,000 people and left survivors coping with traumatic memories of massacres, rape, torture, forced conscription and cannibalism, according to testimony given to Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, created in 2005 to investigate the conflicts.

Ethnic divisions that helped spark the civil wars remain, and 8,000 U.N. peacekeepers still patrol the West African nation.

In what was known as the First Liberian Civil War, Mr. Taylor led a rebel force that in 1990 overthrew and executed Samuel Doe, who grabbed power in a military coup 10 years earlier. Many observers agree that Mr. Taylor essentially terrorized the population into electing him president in 1997.

He stepped down in 2003 in the face of another armed uprising known as the Second Liberian Civil War, which broke out in 1999.

During his years as president, Mr. Taylor was accused of arming rebels in Sierra Leone in a civil war also known for massive atrocities.

Now facing 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, Mr. Taylor is awaiting an April 26 verdict from a three-judge international tribunal in the Netherlands, where he is in custody. He is expected to appeal a guilty verdict.

High-level suspects

Many Liberians will not be satisfied with a conviction for crimes committed in Sierra Leone. They want Mr. Taylor and other rebel leaders tried in Liberia.

"A lot of people who committed atrocities are still in government," said Chris Samukar, who lost his brother during the wars.

Among the most controversial leaders is Prince Y. Johnson, the former head of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia, a warring faction in the 1990s.

The truth commission named Mr. Johnson the worst perpetrator of war crimes, yet he serves in the Senate and chairs the Committee on National Defense, Intelligence, Security and Veteran Affairs.

Aaron Weah, a Liberian civil society activist, said the presence of war crimes suspects like Mr. Johnson in the government underscores the many challenges the nation faces in its pursuit of justice and reconciliation.

"It just shows that we are still far away from having any breakthrough. If Johnson presides over the national security committee of our country that is trying to reform the very security architecture he destroyed - that is a joke," Mr. Weah said.

In its final report in 2009, the truth commission recommended that 120 people be prosecuted for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The commission also listed 49 people who should be barred from politics for 30 years because of their suspected associations with warring factions.

Among those mentioned was the current president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who sent money to Mr. Taylor early on during the war. She claimed she helped finance his army "to challenge the brutality" of the Doe regime.

Mr. Weah and many others say the indictment of powerful members of the political establishment, such as Mrs. Sirleaf, has been the main reason why the report appears to have been shelved.

Dan Sayree, head of the Liberia Democratic Institute, said Liberia's approach toward reconciliation is "a charade and deceitful."

"If you want to reconcile people, [they] ... must be convinced that they have justice," he said.

'Ugly head of the past'

The close of Mr. Taylor's trial follows tense presidential and legislative elections last year that resulted in claims of electoral fraud. The opposition party, Congress for

Democratic Change, boycotted the second round of voting, and demonstrations left one protester dead the day before the polls opened.

"The elections were a very beautiful example that no one can sidestep reconciliation," said Nobel Peace Prize laureate Leymah Gbowee, who serves as head of the Liberian Reconciliation Initiative, an independent body that will work alongside government organizations in the reconciliation effort.

"For six years we have sidestepped it, and when the time came for the election of leaders, the ugly head of the past rose up.

"We haven't as a people been able to look that evil that brought the war in the eye and say, 'This is it. This group is responsible, and this group has not come back to say, 'Yes we are responsible.' "

Elise Keppler, a senior counsel for Human Rights Watch's International Justice Program, said prosecutions are essential.

"What we are seeing is a justice vacuum that puts Liberia in stark contrast with its neighbor Sierra Leone," said Ms. Keppler, who worked on the U.N. Special Court for Sierra Leone and helped press for Mr. Taylor's arrest.

"Trials for the gravest crimes and human rights violations committed are essential to making a serious break from the past, giving redress to the victims and to strengthening the rule of law."

Still, the Sierra Leone trial will have broader implications for the region, she added.

"When it comes to West Africa, this is the first time a 'big man' has been forced to face trial for alleged crimes," she said, "and that makes it an important day not just for Sierra Leone but for all of West Africa."

New York Times

Monday, 16 April 2012

As a Defendant Bullies and Boasts, Questions Arise on a Court's Limits

By MARLISE SIMONS

THE HAGUE — In the nine years since his arrival in The Hague, Vojislav Seselj, a Serbian politician, has often harangued judges and has taken pride in provoking and trying to outwit prosecutors. At a recent hearing in his war-crimes trial, he had another bit of theater up his sleeve.



Vojislav Seselj, shown in 2009, has told an international criminal tribunal how much he enjoys trying to “shatter” it.

Rebutting accusations that he had incited ethnic violence, he insisted that, really, inflammatory speech was not that unusual. He began quoting the lyrics of a song, one of his favorites, he said. In ringing tones, he read out the stanzas: “Citizens, take up your arms! Form your battalions! ... Let the blood of the unclean soak our fields.”

Mr. Seselj then turned to the chief judge, Jean-Claude Antonetti of France, and said with glee: “I’m sure you recognized the verses. This is the national anthem of France.”

Known for loutish outbursts and a fierce intellect, Mr. Seselj has been free to display these qualities in court because he is acting as his own lawyer. Throughout his trial, he has used his perch to hurl insults at court officers, attack his political enemies back home and delay proceedings with exceptional demands. The case, now in its fifth year, is the longest before the tribunal prosecuting suspects in atrocities committed during Yugoslavia’s wars of the 1990s.

This and other international tribunals have seen truculent defendants before, the best known among them former President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia, who died here in 2006 of a heart attack before the end of his trial. But Mr. Seselj’s drawn-out case has reignited a debate over how much bad behavior in the dock should be tolerated before the rules are changed.

As international criminal justice expands, and high-profile suspects are served arrest warrants, courts are likely to face many more military commanders and political leaders who have a flair for the dramatic and are used to getting their way.

In The Hague, former President Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast awaits trial at the International Criminal Court, where a warrant for the arrest of President Omar Hassan al-Bashir of Sudan is still outstanding. The verdict for Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia, is due this month, and the trial of Ratko Mladic, the former Bosnian Serb military commander, is expected to start in May.

Until now, lawyers and academics say, international judges have been rather lenient in an effort to move the process along and keep defendants involved in the proceedings.

Mr. Taylor, for instance, boycotted his trial at first, until he got the higher-caliber team of legal aid lawyers he had demanded. And Mr. Seselj went on a hunger strike when judges imposed a standby lawyer to rein in his disruptions. After four weeks of taking no food or medicine, a seriously weakened Mr. Seselj was told by appeals judges that he could continue to act as his own lawyer. In both cases, there were murmurs that the courts had given in to blackmail.

But the question that keeps coming up among judges and lawyers is how to adjust procedures to limit the grandstanding and bullying while preserving standards of justice.

The answers have been widely different.

The rules at the temporary tribunals and at the permanent International Criminal Court, all created in the past two decades, say that representing oneself at trial is a fundamental right, even though many countries do not permit this in their national systems. This right, however, can be restricted or suspended if a defendant refuses to cooperate or persists in derailing the process.

Gideon Boas, the senior legal adviser to the bench that tried Mr. Milosevic, insists that these rules must be tightened further. In his book "The Milosevic Trial," he wrote that the lessons from that case and from Mr. Seselj's trial showed that such proceedings "are simply so complex and challenging that the potential for mischief, disruption, delay and ultimately fairness is too great."

Goran Sluiter, a judge and a teacher of international law in the Netherlands, argues the opposite. He said that "it is up to the judges to manage and master their cases, and some have not come to grips with this, but you cannot forbid people to represent themselves." Mr. Sluiter said that Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi of Libya, who was wanted by the International Criminal Court before he was killed in October, probably would have wanted to be his own lawyer. "It would have been an extremely interesting case of self-representation, but we will never know," he said.

Some experts have called for a more radical solution. Geoffrey Robertson, a former international judge and a defense counsel based in London, said that perhaps the time had come to move away from the Anglo-American adversarial system on which much of international criminal justice is based.

"Civil law may be more suitable than common law for complex war-crimes trials," he said, because it does not depend on the cooperation of the defendant. Civil law gives a far greater role to judges, who examine the evidence and present their findings, which the defense may challenge. "An uncooperative defendant could be denied the right to an adversary trial," he said.

Few have been more invidious than Mr. Seselj.

Most malevolent, in the view of the court, has been his persistent use of his Web site, which is run from Belgrade, for publishing confidential court documents and revealing the names of protected witnesses. Prosecutors say this has led at least 10 crucial witnesses to withdraw or change their testimony.

Mr. Seselj has been convicted twice of contempt of court, and a third contempt trial is under way. But nothing much has changed. When the Web site is closed in one country, it reappears elsewhere.

In court, Mr. Seselj, speaking as accused and as lawyer, has made his position abundantly clear. Since he surrendered to the tribunal in 2003, he has repeatedly said that he was using the court as a political stage because it was "above all a political court" created by the West to punish Serbia.

"So the only way to confront you is with political speeches that are smarter than yours," he said.

Mr. Seselj has been charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes, and his indictment holds him responsible for offenses like killing, raping and looting committed by the gangs of Serbian irregulars he mobilized in 1991 to fight in Croatia and Bosnia. The verdict is expected this year.

He has called no witnesses in his defense. But as his trial ended last month, he delivered a 10-hour summary speech over three days, with a clear eye on the Serbian elections in May. He is still the head of the influential far-right Serbian Radical Party. "I despise this court, and I'm here to shatter you," he boasted. "It might take its physical toll on me, but I'm enjoying it. I'm having the time of my life."