

Special Court for Sierra Leone  
Press and Public Affairs Office

**PRESS RELEASE**

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 31 May 2004

**Charles Taylor is subject to criminal proceedings before the Special Court**

The Appeals Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone ruled today that former Liberian President Charles Taylor was and is subject to criminal proceedings before the Court in Freetown.

The ruling was delivered at the temporary courthouse, and read out by Court President Justice Emmanuel Ayoola. The Appeals Chamber found:

"We hold that the official position of the Applicant as an incumbent Head of State at the time when these criminal proceedings were initiated against him is not a bar to his prosecution by this Court. The Applicant was and is subject to criminal proceedings before the Special Court for Sierra Leone."

Defence Counsel for Mr Taylor argued that, as a sitting head of state at the time of his indictment in March 2003, he enjoyed immunity from prosecution under customary international law. Defence Counsel further argued that the Special Court did not have the jurisdiction to indict Charles Taylor, because it was a national and not international Court.

Today's Appeals Chamber decision reaffirmed an earlier decision delivered on 16 March, which found that the Special Court is not part of Sierra Leone's judicial system. Today the Chamber found that the Special Court is truly an international criminal court properly constituted under international law.

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