



Special Court for Sierra Leone
Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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Charles Taylor Sentenced to 50 Years in Prison

The Judges of Trial Chamber II today sentenced convicted former Liberian President Charles Ghankay Taylor to a term of 50 years in prison for planning and for aiding and abetting crimes committed by rebel forces in Sierra Leone during the country's decade-long civil war.

The Trial Chamber, comprised of Justice Richard Lussick of Samoa (Presiding), Justice Teresa Doherty of Northern Ireland, and Justice Sebutinde of Uganda, unanimously imposed the single global sentence for all 11 counts of the crimes for which Mr. Taylor was convicted. These included acts of terrorism, murder, rape, sexual slavery, outrages upon personal dignity, cruel treatment, other inhumane acts, conscripting or enlisting of child soldiers, enslavement and pillage.

Justice Lussick, who read out the judgement in court, said the Trial Chamber found that Mr. Taylor's abuse of his position as President of Liberia to aid and abet the commission of crimes in Sierra Leone, and the abuse of his position as a member of the ECOWAS Committee of Five (later Six), which was "part of the process relied on by the international community to bring peace to Sierra Leone," was "an aggravating factor of great weight."

The Judges also cited the extra-territoriality of Mr. Taylor's acts, and his exploitation of the Sierra Leone conflict for financial gain, as aggravating factors considered in the sentencing.

The Judges took into account the report of Mr. Taylor's good conduct in detention, but otherwise rejected a number of mitigating factors proposed by the Defence.

While the jurisprudence of the Special Court and other tribunals "holds that aiding and abetting as a mode of liability generally warrants a lesser sentence than that imposed for more direct forms of participation," Justice Lussick said that Mr. Taylor's leadership role "puts him in a class of his own."

"The Trial Chamber wishes to underscore the gravity it attaches to Mr. Taylor's betrayal of the public trust," Justice Lussick said. "In the Trial Chamber's view, this betrayal outweighs the distinctions that might otherwise pertain to the modes of liability discussed above."

The parties, if they intend to appeal, must submit written notice to the Appeals Chamber within 14 days of today's sentencing judgement, setting forth the grounds of their appeal.

#END

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996.

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