



Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone
Public Information

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 25 March 2015

Trial Chamber Denies Taylor Motion to Serve His Sentence in Rwanda

An RSCSL Trial Chamber has denied in its entirety a motion by convicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor requesting that the RSCSL terminate the enforcement of his sentence in the UK and transfer him to Rwanda to serve the remainder of his 50-year prison sentence. Following his unsuccessful appeal in September 2013, Mr. Taylor was incarcerated at Frankland Prison in Durham under an agreement with the UK. Eight Special Court convicts who were tried in Freetown are serving their sentences at Mpanga Prison in Rwanda.

The Trial Chamber, consisting of Justice Teresa Doherty (presiding), Justice Richard Lussick and Justice Emmanuel Roberts, was convened by RSCSL President Justice Philip Waki last July to rule on the motion. Mr. Taylor had argued that his imprisonment in the UK denied him his right to a family life as his wife and children had been denied UK visas and so prevented from visiting him. He also argued that because he was at risk from other inmates he was being held "effectively in isolation" as he was "too much of a target and too vulnerable" to be accommodated within Frankland's general prison population.

The Trial Chamber arrived at its decision on 30 January 2015, but released it publicly today after a decision on a pending related motion.

Mr. Taylor also argued that he is the only prisoner convicted by an international court forced, against his wishes, to serve his sentence on another continent. Africa is his continent of origin, and he maintained that travel costs to Rwanda are lower and Rwandan personnel share a "cultural affinity" with him.

RSCSL Prosecutor Brenda J. Hollis opposed the motion on a number of factual and legal grounds. She also argued that if Mr. Taylor were imprisoned in Rwanda that it would "increase the possibilities available to Taylor to undermine peace, security, stability and good order in Liberia and the West African sub-region, and would have implications on the security and sense of security of witnesses, Court personnel and former and current high level State officials."

The Court found that the inability of Mr. Taylor's family to obtain UK visas did not constitute interference by the RSCSL or the UK authorities with his right to a family life. Rather, the Judges said, this was due to their failure to provide information showing that they intended to leave the UK at the end of their visit and ruled that "such inability is due purely to his wife's failure to comply with the United Kingdom visa requirements and her ignoring the assistance offered to her (by the Registrar's office) to re-apply."

The Trial Chamber found that Mr. Taylor was being held in the prison's Health Care Unit after he was consulted and "with his assent and insistence." This was not intended to infringe upon his rights, the Court said, but to secure them. The Judges found that the conditions of his imprisonment accorded to international standards.

The Trial Chamber also noted that prisoners do not have the right to choose their place of detention and that Mr. Taylor had no justification for demanding that he be treated in the same way as other prisoners from Africa given his exceptional circumstances and the gravity of his offences. The Trial Chamber cited UN Security Council 1688 which concluded that his presence in the West African sub-region could pose an impediment to security and a threat to peace. Further, the Trial Chamber held that a prisoner convicted by an international court is subject to the same rights and restrictions as those applicable to convicted persons in national jurisdictions.

Charles Ghankay Taylor was found guilty in April 2012 of eleven counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. The Court found that he had planned, and aided and abetted, crimes committed by RUF and AFRC rebel forces during Sierra Leone's civil war. In May 2012 he was sentenced to 50 years in prison, with credit given for time served in detention since March 2006. His conviction and sentence were upheld by the Appeals Chamber in September 2013, and he was transferred to Frankland Prison the following month.

#END

The Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone is responsible for the ongoing legal obligations of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which concluded its mandate in December 2013. These include supervision of prison sentences, witness protection and support, maintenance and preservation of the archives, and assistance to national prosecution authorities.

INFORMATION FOR MEDIA - NOT FOR ADVERTISING

Produced by the
Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone
Email: info@rscsl.org

Visit our website at www.rscsl.org