



SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Prosecutor Hollis applauds the people of Sierra Leone following Charles Taylor's Conviction

On a tour of five provinces throughout Sierra Leone, Prosecutor Brenda J. Hollis hailed the resilience and determination of all Sierra Leoneans in demanding justice and accountability for the crimes committed against them during the 11-year armed conflict.

Over 500 Sierra Leoneans gathered in the towns of Makeni, Koidu and Kenema, and the villages of Tikonko and Mathiri, to discuss the conviction of Charles Taylor with the Prosecutor. Hollis stated that “this conviction is for you, the people of Sierra Leone, who suffered so horribly from the crimes for which Mr. Taylor stands convicted”.

The Head Man in Mathiri, Sakoba Conteh, replied that when he heard the judgment, he was as happy as the day that the war was declared over. Hollis remarked on the importance of hearing first-hand from the people of Sierra Leone a confirmation of what Taylor's conviction means for them. Village elders, youth leaders, women's civil society representatives, officers from the military, the police and the prison service, villagers and townspeople, gathered to express relief and satisfaction with the conviction handed down by the judges.

In Makeni, Paramount Chief Kasangha spoke of the judgment as a reminder that no one is above the law. In Tikonko, Paramount Chief Makavoray spoke of the duties which befall a leader, and that with authority comes responsibility.

It was recalled that Mr. Taylor was convicted for two principal types of conduct. First, he was convicted on all 11 counts for planning with Sam Bockarie the attacks on Kono, Makeni and Freetown in December 1998 and January 1999 as part of an offensive aptly named “Operation No Living Thing”. The judges found that the crimes committed during these attacks were a direct result of that plan.

Second, Mr. Taylor was convicted on all 11 counts for aiding and abetting the AFRC and RUF rebels. Recalling the language used by the judges, Mr. Taylor was “instrumental” in obtaining the arms and ammunition which the rebels used during the attacks on Kono, Makeni and Freetown, and these arms and ammunition were “critical” to these attacks. Arms and ammunition provided by or through Mr. Taylor were “critical” to the operational strategy of the AFRC and RUF, which was characterized by a campaign of atrocities against the civilian population of Sierra Leone.

“This judgment confirms what you told us back in 2002, that Charles Taylor is one of those who bear greatest responsibility for the crimes committed against you”, said Hollis.

Over 1200 Sierra Leoneans attended the SCSL’s premises in Freetown for the trial judgment on 26 April to watch a live broadcast of the proceedings from The Hague. This included 140 out of 149 Paramount Chiefs from across the country. Within the last year Prosecutor Hollis has engaged in 19 community outreach events in Sierra Leone. Other senior OTP staff members have engaged in an additional 20 community outreach events, all with the purpose of bringing the SCSL proceedings closer to the people of Sierra Leone, on whose behalf the Prosecution conducts its work.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established following a letter written by President Kabbah, the democratically-elected representative of the Sierra Leonean people, on 12 June 2000 to the UN Secretary General requesting that a court be created. The Sierra Leone legislature subsequently ratified the agreement creating the court.

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