

Special Court for Sierra Leone
The Office of the Prosecutor

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 15 May 2003

Bockarie's Family Alleged Murdered; Office of the Prosecutor Demands Full Cooperation From Taylor

This morning, the Chief of Investigations of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Dr. Alan White, announced that he had confirmation that the family of indicted war criminal Sam Bockarie had been killed in Liberia. "We have credible information that Bockarie's family has been murdered at the direction of Taylor. This latest development casts serious doubts about his claims regarding the circumstances of Sam Bockarie's death. Taylor continues to obstruct our efforts. He is a roadblock to international justice."

Liberian authorities claim Bockarie was killed on May 6 during an alleged arrest attempt by government forces. For the past ten days, they have refused to transfer the body to the Court for an independent forensic examination in order to provide positive identification. The Office of the Prosecutor has repeatedly called on President Taylor to cooperate with the Court's work to no avail.

The Court's British Deputy Prosecutor, Desmond de Silva, QC, expressed frustration with the present stand-off with the Liberian government. "Taylor's time is running out. We want the body. If the Liberians claim it is Bockarie's body, there is no justification for holding it, as he was a Sierra Leonean national. We are extremely concerned that if the information regarding the murder of his family is true, it was carried out in order to avoid possible DNA profiling."

In an interview with the Washington Post yesterday, Chief Prosecutor, David M. Crane, charged that Bockarie has been executed by Taylor's chief of security, Gen. Benjamin Yeaten. He also repeated demands that the Liberian government take all steps to deliver international fugitive Johnny Paul Koroma, reported to be in northern Liberia, alive to the Court.

Bockarie and Koroma, indicted by the Court on March 7, 2003, are wanted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

The Special Court, created through an international agreement between the United Nations and Sierra Leone, is mandated to try those who bear "the greatest responsibility" for atrocities committed during the country's decade-long civil war.

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