



Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone
Public Information

PRESS RELEASE

The Hague, the Netherlands, 7 September 2020

Charles Taylor's Application to be Transferred From the UK Due to COVID-19 Dismissed

The Court has denied an application by Charles Ghankay Taylor, the former President of Liberia, to be transferred temporarily from the UK due to the COVID-19 pandemic to a safe third country.

Charles Taylor was convicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in 2013 of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Sierra Leone. Under an agreement with the UK, he is serving his 50-year sentence at HM Prison Frankland.

Taylor had argued that, due to the "massive outbreak of COVID-19 in the UK", his continued detention in that country posed "a substantial risk to his right to life". He argued further that the RSCSL had a duty to supervise his sentence to ensure his safety, and has the authority to order his transfer to a safe third country.

Justice Teresa Doherty, who heard the application as RSCSL Duty Judge, noted that Taylor had failed to comply with Court directions that he specify which countries he considered safe, or to clarify which countries were his "'first' or 'second' countries for the purposes of his application". She further noted that the World Health Organization has not declared any place in the world safe from COVID-19.

She found that Taylor's claim that HM Frankland was overcrowded and that other claims regarding adverse conditions in the prison were at variance with facts adduced in the Registrar's submission. She also ruled that international conventions and precedents from other tribunals which he cited were not applicable to his request.

#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.

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