

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE  
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Freetown, 29 March 2006

### **Chief Prosecutor Announces the Arrival of Charles Taylor at the Special Court**

**Freetown** – The Prosecutor Desmond de Silva QC today announced the arrival of Charles Taylor into the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

“Today is a momentous occasion and an important day for international justice, the international community and, above all, the people of Sierra Leone. The indictee Charles Taylor has today been safely secured and is now in the detention facility of this international criminal tribunal here in Freetown,” said Mr de Silva.

“His presence in the custody of the Special Court sends out the clear message that no matter how rich, powerful or feared people may be – the law is above them.”

The Prosecutor originally indicted Charles Taylor on 3 March 2003 on a 17-count indictment for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the conflict in Sierra Leone.

“On the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2006, a Judge of the Special Court gave leave to amend the indictment against Charles Taylor. Under the amended indictment, Taylor is charged with 11 counts. This will ensure a more focused trial. The thrust and gravity of the former indictment is in no way diminished.

“In summary, he now stands indicted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including sexual slavery and mutilations.”

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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. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted thirteen persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Two indictments were withdrawn following the deaths of the accused. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

Produced by the  
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Visit the Special Court's website at [www.sc-sl.org](http://www.sc-sl.org)

## **Brief Chronology on Efforts to Bring Charles Taylor to Justice**

**On 3 March 2003** the Special Court Prosecutor signed a 17-count indictment alleging war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. The indictment was confirmed by the Trial Chamber on 7 March 2003 but ordered kept under seal.

The Prosecutor unsealed the indictment on 4 June 2003, during Taylor's first trip out of Liberia since the signing of the indictment.

**On 4 August 2003** Taylor went into exile in Calabar, Nigeria.

**On 31 October and 1 November 2003** Taylor's lawyer, the late Terrence Terry, introduced a preliminary motion before the Special Court's Appeals Chamber unsuccessfully challenging the Court's jurisdiction to try him. The motion argued that as President of Liberia, Taylor enjoyed head of state immunity. He also argued that the Court was not an international tribunal and thus had no jurisdiction outside of Sierra Leone.

**On 31 May 2004** the Appeals Chamber decided the Special Court was an international court and that a head of state does not enjoy immunity from prosecution before an international court. The motion was consequently dismissed.

**On 24 February 2005** the European Parliament unanimously passed a resolution calling for Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

**On 4 May 2005** the U.S. House of Representatives passed a Resolution, 421-1, calling for Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

**On 11 May 2005** the U.S. Senate passed the 4 May House Resolution by unanimous consent, joining the call for Nigeria to transfer Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

**On 24 May 2005** members of the United Nations Security Council underlined the importance of ensuring that all those who have been indicted by the Court appear before it, thereby strengthening the stability of Sierra Leone and the sub-region and bringing an end to impunity.

**On 30 June 2005** a coalition of up to 300 African and international civil society groups sent a declaration to the African Union (AU) demanding that Nigeria surrender Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Press conferences were held in 14 countries throughout Africa announcing the declaration.

**On 11 November 2005** the UN Security Council passed resolution 1638 which gave the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) the powers to detain Charles Taylor should he ever be returned to Liberia, and apprehend and transfer him to the Special Court. This resolution clearly displays the views of the UN Security Council's that Taylor should be brought to justice at the Special Court.

**On 16 March 2006** the Judge of the Special Court for Sierra Leone approved an amended indictment of 11 counts.

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