

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE  
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



Ferry terminal

**PRESS CLIPPINGS**

**Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office**

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.  
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# Taylor tells judge he sympathizes with victims during sentencing plea

## LOCAL NEWS

Convicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor told judges at his sentencing hearing yesterday that he sympathizes with victims of the civil war in Sierra Leone he helped foment, and judges should render their sentence against him in a spirit of "reconciliation, not retribution".

However, he stopped short of admitting any wrongdoing, apologizing for his actions, or expressing remorse. In a landmark ruling in April, judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone found Taylor guilty of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, and conscripting child soldiers. Judges at the UN-backed court said his aid was essential in helping rebels across the border in Sierra Leone continue their bloody rampage during the country's decade-long civil war, which ended in 2002 with more than 50,000 dead.

It was the first time a former head of state had been convicted of war crimes since the aftermath of World War II.

Taylor is due to be sentenced on May 30, with prosecutors demanding an 80-year prison term, and defence lawyers planning an appeal -- and arguing he should at least be given a sentence that leaves him some hope for life after release.

"I express my sadness and sympathy for crimes suffered by individuals and families in Sierra Leone," Taylor said. He insisted his actions had actually been done to help stabilize the region and claimed he never knowingly assisted in the commission of crimes.

"What I did...was done with honour," he said. "I was convinced that unless there was peace in Sierra Leone, Liberia would not be able to move forward."

Judges found Taylor helped the rebels obtain weapons, knowing they would likely be used to commit terrible crimes, in exchange for payments of diamonds often obtained by slave labour. Prosecutors said there was no reason for leniency, given the extreme nature of the crimes and Taylor's position of power. "The purposely cruel and savage crimes committed included public executions and amputations of civilians, the display of decapitated heads at checkpoints, the killing and public disembowelment of a civilian whose intestines were then stretched across the road to make a check point, public rapes of women and girls, and people burned alive in their homes," said prosecutor Brenda Hollis in a pre-hearing brief.

Defence attorney Courtenay Griffiths argued for a sentence reflecting Taylor's indirect role: he was found guilty only of aiding the rebels, not leading them as prosecutors originally charged.

He said Taylor's conviction has been "trumpeted...as sending an



unequivocal message to world leaders that holding office confers no immunity" from war crimes prosecution. But the reality is that while many Western countries have

funded militias that have committed atrocities, no Western leader has ever been indicted by a war crimes tribunal, he said. The lesson is "if you are a small, weak

nation, you may be subject to the full force of international law, whereas if you run a powerful nation you have nothing to fear," Griffiths said.

Griffiths also said the 80-year sentencing demand is "manifestly disproportionate and excessive" for Taylor, who is 64.

In court, Hollis scoffed at that. She said Taylor's involvement in the crimes was "more pervasive than that of the most senior leaders" of the Sierra Leone rebels who have already been sentenced. The longest sentence so far, 52 years, was handed down to former rebel leader Issa Sesay, who testified on Taylor's behalf in 2010.

Taylor fled into exile in Nigeria after being indicted by the court in 2003 and wasn't arrested for three years. While the Sierra Leone court is formally based in that country's capital, Taylor's trial is being staged in Leidschendam, a suburb of The Hague, Netherlands, for fear that holding it in West Africa could destabilize the region.

## Charles Taylor says prosecution 'paid witnesses'

**F**ormer Liberian President Charles Taylor has accused the prosecution of paying and threatening witnesses in his war crimes trial.

Taylor, who was convicted last month, also told judges in The Hague he was "no threat to society".

It was the 64-year-old's last chance to speak at the international court before he is sentenced later this month.

Taylor was found guilty of aiding and abetting rebels in Sierra Leone during its civil war.

In its landmark ruling last month, the Special Court for Sierra Leone found Taylor guilty on 11 counts, relating to atrocities that included rape and murder.

The prosecution wants an 80-year prison term, which the defence says is excessive.

### 'Corrupting role'

Delivering his statement from a witness box on Wednesday, Taylor - who insists he is innocent of all charges - said money had

played a "corrupting, influential, significant and dominant role" in his trial.

For a 64-year-old man facing the possibility of spending the rest of his life in jail it was a remarkably composed performance. Taylor calmly set out what he said was the "political context" of his plight - and even politely excused the judges for perhaps not understanding it.

The context was a "conspiracy" led by the former US President George W Bush. It was carried out by the President's "attack dogs" - members of the prosecution who used to work for the various security arms of the Washington administration.

Taylor once again declared his innocence - he would never support rebels who committed atrocities. He said he had tried to bring peace, not war, to Sierra Leone.

The prosecution had earlier referred to the two faces of Charles Taylor - a man who

talked of peace but in fact waged war. We saw the calm and reasonable face today.

Nothing the judges have said so far indicates they believe that side of Charles Taylor's story.

"Witnesses were paid, coerced and in many cases threatened with prosecution if they did not give statements," he said.

He also questioned why former US President George W Bush, who he alleged had admitted to ordering torture, was not being brought to face a court, asking: "Is he above the law?"

He said he condemned atrocities across the world, and had the "deepest sympathy" for victims in Sierra Leone, but stopped short of expressing remorse or apologising for his part in the conflict.

Later, he asked the court to consider his age when making their decision.

"I'm a father of many children, grandchildren and great-grand.

"I say with respect: Reconciliation and healing, not retribution, should be the guiding principles in your honours' task."

At the end of his address, Mr Taylor also congratulated one of the judges, Julia Sebutinde of Uganda, the first African woman to sit at the International Court of Justice.

### 'Savage crimes'

Prosecutors have said that

Taylor's ill health and age, or the fact that he has a family, should have no impact on the sentence.

In written filings, prosecutors said a sentence of 80 years would reflect the severity of the crimes and the central role that Taylor had in facilitating them.

o **1989:** Launches rebellion in Liberia

o **1991:** RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone

o **1997:** Elected president after a 1995 peace deal

o **1999:** Liberia's Lurd rebels start an insurrection to oust Mr Taylor

o **June 2003:** Arrest warrant issued; two months later he steps down and goes into exile to Nigeria

o **March 2006:** Arrested after a failed escape bid and sent to Sierra Leone

o **June 2007:** His trial opens - hosted in The Hague for security reasons

o **April 2012:** Convicted of aiding and abetting the commission of war crimes

"The purposely cruel and savage crimes committed included public executions and amputations of civilians, the display of decapitated heads at checkpoints... public rapes of women and girls, and people burned alive in their homes," wrote prosecutor Brenda Hollis.

But defence lawyers said the recommended sentence was "manifestly disproportionate and excessive", and that Taylor had only been found guilty of an indirect role - aiding the rebels, rather than leading them. They said their client should not be made to shoulder the blame alone for what happened in Sierra Leone's war.

The court should not support "attempts by the prosecution to provide the Sierra Leoneans with this external bogey man upon whom can be heaped the collective guilt of a nation for its predominantly self-inflicted wounds", his lawyers wrote.

During the 1991-2002 Sierra Leone civil war, Taylor supported Revolutionary United Front rebels who killed tens of thousands of people.

The war crimes included murder, rape, the use of child soldiers and the amputation of limbs. In return, Taylor received "blood diamonds".

The sentence is due to be handed down on 30 May.

Taylor is widely expected to appeal against any prison sentence and the hearing could continue for several more months.

Under a special arrangement with the international court, any prison term Taylor does receive will be served in Britain.

Awoko

Thursday, 17 May 2012

# TAYLOR EXPRESSES “DEEPEST SYMPATHY FOR THE ATROCITIES”

By Betty Milton

Clad in a gray and in a comfortable mood Dagbana Charles Ghankay Taylor took the witness stand and placed the papers containing his prepared speech on the edge from he read it out to the Trail Chamber II of the Special Court of Sierra Leone sitting in The Hague, yesterday.

In his statement which may be his last and final to the court, Charles Taylor thanked the court for the opportunity to speak to both the prosecution and defence teams and the international

audience.

He said: “the last six years have been challenging years for judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers, victims and their families, me and my family and the peoples of Sierra Leone and Liberia and now this process is at the end and I am grateful that this court has extended me the opportunity to be heard at this time.”

The former President of Liberia noted that his action was done with one thing in mind which was to bring peace to

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## Taylor expresses “deepest sympathy for the atrocities”

Sierra Leone thus providing an enabling environment for progress in these countries, “Liberia being my constitutional responsibility as president.”

Charles Taylor went on: “As I have done many times, I do it again here and now. I express my saddest and deepest sympathy for the atrocities that was suffered by individuals and families in Sierra Leone. I too have experienced pain and sadness; I lost my father, friends as well during the war. I am 64 years ... I am a father of many children, grand and great grand children, I am of no threat to society. I say with respect, reconciliation and healing not retribution should be the guiding principles to justice.”

On the issues of the prosecution, financially supporting witnesses and the role of other countries in his trial, the former President asserted that he disagrees with the findings of

guilt by the court as it is easy for him to see how prosecution contributed seemingly to the findings.

He went on: “Sadly, I am saddened by the findings today that you consider for sentence during the cause, the issue of money, the purchasing of witnesses’ evidences with money; money played a correcting, influential, significant and prominent role in this trial.” He added, “Money in this case prejudices my rights and interests; the prosecution received millions of dollars from the US government outside of the official funding process of the court administration. The prosecution has never accounted for those monies and how those monies were utilized or received; how much and for what purpose or purposes where they given for.”

He went further, “Witnesses were paid, coerced and in many cases

threatened by the prosecution if they did cooperate with them. Witnesses were rewarded with thousands of dollars to cover cost of children school fees, transportation, food, clothing, medical bills and even cash allowances for protected and non protected witnesses in the country. The question that comes to mind is what was the prosecution buying?”

He said that the judges “were handicapped by not having the benefit of the full contextual picture of why and how I ended up before this court. That contextual matrix is uniquely political and illegal in nature and having enslaved Charles Taylor at this time and time will tell how many other African Heads of State stand to be destroyed in this continued week.”

Charles Taylor stated also, “these handicaps are not the fault of your honours in the sense that you could

not be absolute to know so much that was ever meant to see the light of day. Despite these obstacles, it was uncertain as the truth was clouded behind the shadow of the doubt.”

He said, “At the end of the civil war in Liberia. I stood before the people and apologized; and expressed deep regrets for the loss of lives and limbs and the overall effects of the civil war. I stated that no words no matter how polished and sincere could heal the scares and pains or suffering. There are many who do not hold a brief of sympathy for the Liberian people. Indeed none other than the current President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who was identified in the Liberian TRC report as somebody from whom such an expression of regrets or sympathy for what happened in Liberia should have been forthcoming since she was one of

the three principal leaders of the NPFL along with me.”

On his mitigating factor, Charles Taylor submitted to the Court that during the war in Liberia he punished people responsible for crimes against others as factual evidences were presented before this court proved that certain NPFL fighters were put on trial for violent crimes. “Some were executed for rape, murder and other serious crimes. Let me be very clear about one thing. I do not condone impunity in any shape or form. Let me say in the strongest term that I Dapana Dr. Gankay Charles Taylor could not have even and would never have knowingly and refuse responsibility and or authority to prevent or stop or punish someone from carrying out act of atrocity failed to do so.”

“I say this not only in the context of Sierra Leone and the charges against me but also in a wider context of impunity in Africa and the rest of our global community,” the Special Court convict said.

## Awoko

Thursday, 17 May 2012

## Taylor Prosecutor urges Judges to think of the victims ... Defence says "the process was selective"

By Betty Milton

During the oral argument of the sentencing hearing in the trial of Charles Taylor, Prosecuting Counsel Brenda Hollis has urged judges at the Trial Chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting in The Hague to think of the victims in consideration of a sentence on Charles Taylor.

Courtney Griffith, lead Defence Counsel for Taylor submitted otherwise submitting that such a consideration would tantamount to "a selective process."

Yesterday at the court house, Brenda Hollis submitted that the chamber looks at both the gravity of the crime and the responsibility and suggested that sentence be handed down based on these factors. She noted that once this is done by the chamber, "it will reflect the essential role Mr. Taylor played in the war in Sierra Leone."

Brenda Hollis furthered stated that the judges should look at "the vulnerability" of the victims and "the impact" on those victims, noting that they were not arguing based on the fact that there was invasion in Sierra Leone or

because of the war in the country, but because of the crimes committed during the war.

The Prosecutor told the court that if they ignore the gravity of the offence, they have ignored the victims as some victims are already dead and could not speak but they should think about those alive.

Speaking on the attacks that were carried out in different locations in the country, Prosecutor Hollis said that the attacks in Kono were planned by Taylor and Sam Bockarie but this was downplayed by the defence with a submission that Taylor rather gave advice to Sam Bockarie and received updates from Sam Bockarie through the communication set he gave to him.

She maintained that the Judges should not only look at the broad spectrum of the trial, but also "the special role" played by Taylor in aiding and abetting of "operation no living thing" for which she said Taylor was "the planner" of the vicious bloody chapter of that aspect of the war in Sierra Leone.

The mitigating factor put forward by the defence Hollis averred, should be considered

"an aggravating factor" rather than "a mitigating factor" and the time spent in Nigeria should not be taken into consideration.

She argued further that the contributions of Taylor to the peace process in Sierra Leone does not deserve any credit, since he was also providing arms and ammunition to the rebels during the process.

On the issue of Taylor's defence claim of his voluntary stepping down as President of Liberia, Brenda Hollis maintained that he left to avoid the same kind of torture they meted out to Samuel Doe and also that the shipment of ammunition he had ordered had not arrived.

Regarding Taylor's health also put forward as a mitigating factor, Hollis posited that there was no substantial medical report ascertain his ill-health.

Brenda Hollis therefore rejected in totality all factors put forward by the defence to mitigate the sentencing, noting that by upholding the sentence suggested by the prosecution, it would "truly prove an end to impunity."

Submitting their oral argument, Defence Counsel, Courtney Griffiths noted that

they have always made the point that the Trial Chamber "is politically motivated by Western powers" and questioned what happens to those governments and leaders such as Tony Blair of Britain who provided support for pro-government forces during the fighting in Sierra Leone. According to Griffiths, those powers and their leaders "also committed atrocities" and asserted that they also killed, maimed and raped.

Griffiths maintained that Taylor's conviction sends two messages to world leaders: "if you are a leader in a small country and you are weak, the International Criminal Court will be after you, but if you are a powerful nation, you have nothing to fear."

He said that there is "selectivity in the process" noting that the entire process, beginning with the prosecution to the evidence and the trial itself "were vindictive" because the United States and Britain wanted Taylor to be removed from Liberia.

On this issue of mitigation, Mr. Griffiths adduced that mitigation should be established on the basis of balance of probability, which

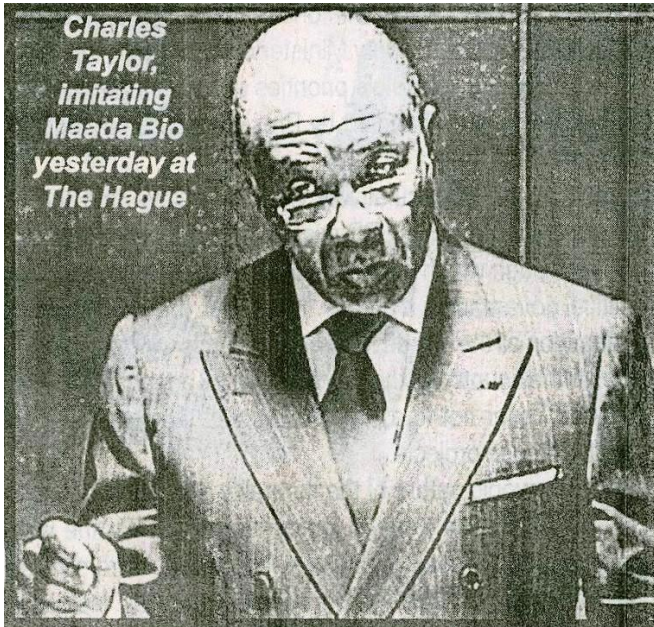
is why they have put forward certain areas which the Judges have been implored to consider.

Courtney Griffiths argued that peace would not have come to Sierra Leone if not for the support of Taylor as he played a role in the release of the UNAMSIL personnel and also played a role in the appointment of Issa Sesay as the leader of the RUF which culminated to the Lome Peace Accord. "If without all of this in context, peace would not have returned to Sierra Leone," he maintained.

On the issue of Taylor's age, Griffiths implored the Judges to consider the sentence of a 64 years old man to an 80-year jail term as wanting him to die in jail.

He said if the court upholds the submission of the prosecution by sentencing Taylor to so long a term, it will mean that the prosecution is "endangering peace" and posited therefore that retribution should never be the sole criteria or a deterrent and that even the accused must be left with some hope, they should see light at the end of the tunnel no matter how long the tunnel will be.





"There's nothing as arrogant as having committed a crime and refusing to accept it, even when you have been discovered to be the perpetrator," was how a Freetown political analyst summed up the lack of remorse displayed yesterday by convicted former President of Liberia, Charles

Taylor, for aiding and abetting rebels of the Revolutionary United Front in the war in Sierra Leone in the 1990s. Given an opportunity to speak at The Hague where he would be sentenced by May 30 following the guilty verdict handed down a few weeks ago, Taylor refused to tender

*Contd. page 3*

## Taylor As Arrogant As Maada Bio

*From front page*

a direct apology, but instead merely said he sympathized with the victims of the war. "I express my sadness and sympathy for crimes suffered by individuals and families in Sierra Leone," he said, while insisting that he never knowingly assisted in the commission of crimes. He maintained that "What I did... was done with honour," and that he was "not in a position to prevent or stop" the crimes. Political analysts have been quick to make a comparison of Taylor's arrogance with the so-called apology of the flag-bearer of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), Julius Maada Bio, who after a lot of pressure from the public made a similarly arrogant speech with regards the extrajudicial killing of 29 Sierra Leoneans, including a pregnant woman. In that speech, Maada Bio stated that "I had made it clear, in my testimony to the TRC, that I bear neither personal involvement nor personal responsibility for those executions nor was I in any position to prevent them from happening. I was neither the head nor the deputy head of the NPRC junta at the material time.

I stand by that testimony...

as a member of the former NPRC junta, I feel morally bound to express, on its behalf, deepest regret for the wrongs committed by the NPRC and to also express profound apology and sympathy to the families of the victims concerned" - almost exactly as Taylor has said.

As if that comparison is not enough, both Taylor and Bio are clinging to attributes that are actually the opposite of what they represent. Maada Bio claims that he willingly brought democracy to Sierra Leone, while the reality speaks on the contrary. Even his own Special Adviser, Dr. Abass Bundu, has written in a book that Bio was chased out of power by a coalition of political parties, civil society groups, journalists, and the international community. Taylor, in his self-insulation yesterday, claimed to have worked for peace in Sierra Leone: "I pushed the peace process hard, contrary to how I have been portrayed in this court" - while everybody knows that both Maada Bio and Charles Taylor were against democracy and against peace respectively.

## Satellite

Thursday, 17 May 2012

### **CHARLES TAYLOR SAYS PROSECUTION 'PAID WITNESSES'**

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has accused the prosecution of paying and threatening witnesses in his war crimes trial. Taylor, who was convicted last month, also told judges in The Hague he was "no threat to society". It was the 64-year-old's last chance to speak at the international court before he is sentenced later this month. Taylor was found guilty of aiding and abetting rebels in Sierra Leone during its civil war. In its landmark ruling last month, the Special Court for Sierra Leone found Taylor guilty on 11 counts, relating to atrocities that included rape and murder. The prosecution wants an 80-year prison term, which the defence says is excessive. Delivering his statement from a witness box on Wednesday, Taylor - who insists he is innocent of all charges - said money had played a "corrupting, influential, significant and dominant role" in his trial. For a 64-year-old man facing the possibility of spending the rest of his life in jail it was a remarkably composed performance. Taylor calmly set out what he said was the "political context" of his plight - and even politely excused the judges for perhaps not understanding it. The context was a "conspiracy" led by the former US President George W Bush. It was carried out by the President's "attack dogs" - members of the prosecution who used to work for the various security arms of the Washington administration. Taylor once again declared his innocence - he would never support rebels who committed atrocities. He said he had tried to bring peace, not war, to Sierra Leone.

### **RATKO MLADIC LED ETHNIC CLEANSING, WAR CRIMES TRIAL TOLD**

Former Bosnian Serb army commander Ratko Mladic intended to "ethnically cleanse" Bosnia, the opening day of his war crimes trial has heard. Gen Mladic faces 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including genocide, in connection with the brutal 1992-95 Bosnian war. Prosecutors in The Hague said they would show his hand in the crimes. He has called the accusations "monstrous" and the court has entered a not guilty plea on his behalf. Gen Mladic is accused of orchestrating the massacre of more than 7,000 Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) boys and men at Srebrenica in 1995. He is also charged in connection with the 44-month siege of Sarajevo during which more than 10,000 people died. Gen Mladic, dressed in a dark grey suit, applauded and gave a thumbs-up as the judges walked in. The prosecution opened the hearing at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) with an audio-visual presentation laying out the case against Gen Mladic. Prosecuting counsel Dermot Groome said they would prove Gen Mladic's hand in the crimes.

## UK Parliament

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

### Written Answers (Charles Taylor)

Jim Cunningham (Coventry South, Labour)

**To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what plans his Department has made for the imprisonment of Charles Taylor.**

· Hansard source (Citation: HC Deb, 16 May 2012, c174W)

**Crispin Blunt (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Prisons and Probation), Justice; Reigate, Conservative)**

The United Kingdom has not yet received an application from the Special Court for Sierra Leone to imprison Charles Taylor. Should such an application be made, arrangements will be put in place similar to those made for the small number of prisoners detained in the UK on behalf of the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia. It would not be appropriate comment further on those arrangements.

# The Guardian

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

## Charles Taylor accuses Hague court of targeting African leaders

Liberian war criminal likens offences he was convicted of to those he claims US forces committed during Iraq war

Owen Bowcott, legal affairs correspondent

The convicted war criminal Charles Taylor has accused the international community of selectively targeting African heads of state with prosecutions while ignoring offences committed by US forces in Iraq.

In his final address before sentencing by a UN-backed tribunal in The Hague, the 64-year-old former Liberian president denied encouraging human rights abuses during the long-running civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone, insisting he had in fact been trying to stabilise the region.

The court should deliver its sentence in a spirit of "reconciliation, not retribution", said Taylor, who offered no admission of wrongdoing or words of remorse.

"I express my sadness and sympathy for crimes suffered by individuals and families in Sierra Leone," he told the panel of judges at the special court for Sierra Leone (SCSL).

"What I did to bring peace to Sierra Leone was done with honour. I was convinced that unless there was peace in Sierra Leone, Liberia would not be able to move forward. I pushed the peace process hard, contrary to how I have been portrayed in this court."

In his 30-minute statement, the one-time accountant and Libyan-trained guerrilla-leader disputed the accuracy of evidence presented during his four year-long trial. "Witnesses were paid, coerced and in many cases threatened with prosecution if they did not give statements," Taylor told the court.

"Families were rewarded with thousands of dollars to cover costs of children's school fees, transportation, food, clothing, medical bills and given cash allowances for protected and non-protected witnesses in a country where income is less than a dollar a day."

He repeatedly blamed his predicament on the US, comparing what he has been convicted of to offences he says American forces carried out during the Iraq war. Other African leaders could be subjected to similar unjust fates. "I never stood a chance," he said. "Only time will tell how many other African heads of state will be destroyed."

Taylor was found guilty last month of 11 counts of aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity by supporting rebels in Sierra Leone between 1996 and 2002 in return for conflict diamonds. Offences of which he was found guilty included: murder, rape, sexual slavery, recruiting child soldiers, enforced amputations and pillage.

He will be sentenced by the court on 30 May. The special court, which is based in the Dutch capital, cannot impose capital punishment or life sentences but the prosecution has called for an 80-year prison term. Any sentence is likely to be served in the UK, which has offered to accommodate Taylor once his trial and appeal are completed. The civil war left more than 50,000 dead in the West African state.

Taylor's defence lawyers say that exiling him to Britain's jails – where a Serbian war crimes convict was attacked in his cell two years ago – would leave him "culturally isolated" and constitute a "punishment within a punishment".

Courtenay Griffith QC, his lead counsel, has argued that "the suggestion that but for Mr Taylor the war in Sierra Leone would not have happened the way it did is an outright fallacy or wild speculation at best."

The lawyer has also pointed out that: all those awaiting trial at the international criminal court, including the former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo, are from Africa.

During the trial, Griffiths also said that Africans were being sent for trial and detention thousands of miles away to Europe "in handcuffs and chains", a judicial intervention which amounted to "a 21st-century form of colonialism".

The court's chief prosecutor, Brenda Hollis, a former US military prosecutor, has dismissed allegations that witnesses had been paid as inaccurate, saying that they had only received the standard entitlement to court expenses.

"Considering the extreme magnitude and seriousness of the crimes that were committed against the people of Sierra Leone for which Taylor has been found responsible ... the prosecution recommends that Charles Taylor be sentenced to a prison term of no less than 80 years. No significant mitigating circumstances exist in this case," she told the court.

"[His] positions both as president of Liberia and within the west African regional bodies distinguish him from any other individual that has appeared before this court. Taylor's abuse of his authority and influence is especially egregious given that west African leaders repeatedly entrusted him with a role to facilitate peace."

## Voice of America

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

### **Charles Taylor Speaks at War Crimes Trial Sentencing**

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor has said he has “deepest sympathies” for those who suffered during Sierra Leone's brutal civil war — but stopped short of apologizing for atrocities committed by rebels he armed in exchange for diamonds.

Instead, Taylor told judges in The Hague Wednesday that his actions during the bloody conflict were “done with honor” to bring peace to the Sierra Leone.

“I say with all stupor (sic) that my actions were genuine and done with one thing in mind — helping to bring peace to Sierra Leone, thus providing an enabling environment for progress in both countries, Liberia being my constitutional responsibility as president.”

The former president made a 20-minute appeal for leniency before judges at a sentencing hearing on Wednesday.

The U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone convicted Taylor last month on 11 counts of crimes against humanity, including acts of terrorism, murder, rape and the recruitment of child soldiers.

Prosecutors have asked the 64-year-old former leader to be sentenced to 80 years in prison. Taylor's attorney's have argued an 80-year jail term would be overly harsh and place too much blame on Taylor.

He is due to be sentenced on May 30.

During his remarks on Wednesday, Taylor accused the prosecution of paying witnesses to testify against him and accused the court of being part of a Western conspiracy against him and other black Africans.

Prosecutors said he armed rebels during Sierra Leone's civil war in the 1990's in exchange for so-called “blood diamonds,” mined in eastern Sierra Leone.

The court found Taylor did not have command and control of the rebels, but was aware of their activities and provided them with weapons and other supplies.

Taylor is the first African head of state to be brought before an international tribunal to face charges for mass atrocities and violations of international humanitarian law.

(( CHARLES TAYLOR, FORMER LIBERIA PRESIDENT, SAYING:

“I say with all stupor, that my actions were genuine and done with one thing in mind – helping to bring peace to Sierra Leone, thus providing an enabling environment for progress in both countries, Liberia being my constitutional responsibility as president. Unfortunately and as a result of efforts on the part of my government for peace in Sierra Leone, there now appears to have been collateral activities undertaken by unsavory individuals that led to consequences that I was entirely unaware of and could not have ameliorated or prevented. As I have done before many times, I do again here and now. I express my sadness and deepest sympathy for the atrocities and crimes that were suffered by individuals and families in Sierra Leone.”

Reuters

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

### Charles Taylor says West manipulating war crimes courts

The war criminal and former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, accused the international court that

convicted him of crimes against humanity of being manipulated by the West, and said prosecutors had paid witnesses to testify against him.



Appearing in court at The Hague for a pre-sentencing hearing, Taylor claimed that witnesses at the trial had been "paid, coerced, and in many cases threatened with prosecution if they did not co-operate".

Taylor, who is due to be sentenced on 30 May, was convicted last month at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Judges found him guilty of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, and conscripting child soldiers. They found he had helped rebels in neighbouring Sierra Leone continue their rampage during the West African nation's decade-long civil war, which ended in 2002 with more than 50,000 dead.

Taylor expressed sadness for the victims of the civil war and said he sympathised with their families. But he did not apologise or express any remorse. He said his actions

were carried out with the aim of bringing stability to Liberia.

"I express my sadness and sympathy for crimes suffered by individuals and families in Sierra Leone," he said. "What I did... was done with honour. I was convinced that unless there was peace in Sierra Leone, Liberia would not be able to move forward."

The defence attorney, Courtenay Griffiths, argued for leniency on the basis that Taylor was found guilty only of aiding the rebels, not leading them, as prosecutors had originally charged. He said the lesson of the trial is that "if you are a small, weak nation, you may be subject to the full force of international law, whereas if you run a powerful nation you have nothing to fear".

But prosecutors argued that the severity of Taylor's crimes did not warrant leniency, and are demanding an 80-year prison sentence.

Reuters

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

### Charles Taylor says West manipulating war crimes courts



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor attends his trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone based in Leidschendam, outside The Hague, May 16, 2012. Taylor will on Wednesday tell judges he bears no responsibility for atrocities during Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war, rejecting the prosecution's demand for an 80-year sentence in a maximum-security British jail.

THE HAGUE - Former Liberian President Charles Taylor said on Wednesday witnesses had been threatened and paid to testify against him in a trial that found him guilty of crimes against humanity, and described the international court system as a tool of the West.

Taylor - the first head of state to be found guilty by an international tribunal since the Nazi trials at Nuremberg - told the war crimes court in The Hague that Washington had used the case to achieve regime change rather than justice.

"Witnesses were paid, coerced, and in many cases threatened with prosecution if they did not co-operate," Taylor said at a sentencing hearing where his defence team hopes to minimise a possible 80-year jail term.

Taylor's trial made international headlines, partly because of the grisly accounts of murders and mutilations, many committed by child soldiers, and partly because of Taylor's alleged gift of 'blood diamonds' - gems plundered from Sierra Leone to fund the war - to supermodel Naomi Campbell who was called as a witness for the prosecution.

The first African leader to stand trial for war crimes, Taylor was convicted of aiding and abetting on 11 counts of murder, rape, conscripting child soldiers and sexual slavery during intertwined wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone in which more than 50,000 people were killed.



But he was acquitted of ordering and planning the atrocities.

Wearing a pin-striped suit and a diamond wedding band that glittered under the courtroom lights, the warlord-turned-president lay his gold watch beside the lectern to keep to his assigned 30-minute time limit at the stand.

Taylor said the United States and other powers involved in military actions in Africa and the Middle East were using the court to pursue colonial aims against smaller countries.

"Regime change in Liberia became a policy of the U.S. government," he said. "I never stood a chance."

"Only time will tell how many other African leaders of states will be destroyed," he added and questioned the way his trial had been funded.

## **LIFE**

"The prosecution received millions of dollars from the United States government outside of the official funding process to the court administration. The prosecution has never fully accounted for how those monies were spent . . . who received how much and for what purpose or purposes," he said.

The prosecution has called for Taylor to serve jail terms amounting to 80 years, arguing that his position as president, his level of education and the duration of the conflict are aggravating circumstances.

Taylor's defence asked the court to consider a more lenient sentence, saying 80 years amounted to life for the 64-year-old.

At Wednesday's hearing, chief prosecutor Brenda Hollis described Taylor as a "Janus" - after the Roman god with two faces turned in opposite directions.

"Mr Taylor acted as a two-headed Janus, publicly espousing peace while clandestinely undermining it," Hollis said.

"As one chief said in Sierra Leone, if the roots of a mango tree are cut, the tree will die," she said, describing Taylor as the root which had kept the conflict alive.

Judges are scheduled to sentence Taylor on May 30, after which both sides are likely to lodge appeals. Taylor is due to serve any sentence in a maximum security prison in Britain.

## UN News Service (via AllAfrica.com)

Thursday, 16 May 2012

### Sierra Leone: At UN-Backed Court, Charles Taylor Denies Role in Atrocities

Convicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor told the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) today that he was saddened by the atrocities and crimes committed in Sierra Leone, but denied that he aided the rebels who committed the abuses.

Mr. Taylor told judges at his sentencing hearing in The Hague, where the Court is based, that he felt "sadness and deepest sympathy for the atrocities and crimes that were suffered by individuals and families in Sierra Leone."



He asked that "reconciliation and healing and not retribution should be the guiding principles in your honours' task" in determining his sentence.

Last month, the SCSL handed down a guilty verdict against Mr. Taylor for planning, aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity. He had been on trial on 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including pillage, slavery for forced marriage purposes, collective punishment and the recruitment and use of child soldiers, related to the civil war in Sierra Leone in the 1990s.

The Court will deliver its sentencing judgement on Wednesday, 30 May.

In their April 26 judgement, the SCSL judges ruled that Mr. Taylor had participated in planning the rebel attacks on Kono, Makeni and Freetown between December 1998 and February 1999, and that he had instructed the rebels to "make the operation fearful."

They also convicted him on all counts for aiding and abetting the rebels in the commission of crimes during the war in Sierra Leone by providing arms and ammunition, military personnel, operational support and moral support.

Prosecutor Brenda Hollis, for her part, today said that Mr. Taylor was a "willing and enthusiastic participation" in the crimes, and that his "leadership positions and betrayal of positions of trust" were sufficient to justify a long sentence, which would "reflect the essential role that Mr. Taylor played in crimes of such extreme scope and gravity." She has recommended that Mr. Taylor serves an 80-year term in prison.

The SCSL was set up jointly by the Government of Sierra Leone and the UN. It is mandated to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in the country since 30 November 1996.

CNN

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

## In his last stand, Charles Taylor defends himself as a peacemaker

By Moni Basu, CNN



He stood before judges Wednesday not as the first former head of state convicted of war crimes since World War II but as a leader convinced he was wronged by corruption and a hypocritical hand of justice.

In his last stand at a special court for Sierra Leone, his last chance to address the world before he is locked behind bars, former Liberian President Charles Taylor made a plea for why he should be spared the harshest sentence for his conviction on aiding and abetting war crimes.

He said he was saddened by last month's guilty verdict, in which the court said he had assisted Revolutionary United Front rebels who fueled Sierra Leone's long and bloody civil war that ultimately left 50,000 dead or missing.

Taylor insisted his intent was far from what had been portrayed by prosecutors and that he, himself, was a victim.

"What I did to bring peace to Sierra Leone was done with honor," said Taylor, standing before the tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands, dressed immaculately in suit and tie as he has been all throughout his trial.

He delivered a 30-minute defense of his actions in a calm voice, his demeanor the opposite of the combative Ratko Mladic, the Bosnian Serb commander whose war crimes trial opened Wednesday in another special tribunal, one for the former Yugoslavia, in The Hague.

Not once, however, did he express remorse.

"I pushed the peace process hard, contrary to how I have been portrayed in this court," Taylor said.

He blamed money for an unfair trial.

"Money played a corrupting, influential, significant and dominant role in this trial," he said. "Money, in this case, prejudiced my rights and interests in an irrevocable way."

He said prosecutors received millions of dollars from the United States government and witnesses were paid off.

He compared the charges against him to what he called U.S. abuses but said President George W. Bush would never have to stand trial.

"President George W. Bush ordered torture and admitted to doing so," Taylor said. "Torture is a crime against humanity. The United States has refused to prosecute him. Is he above the law? Where is the fairness?"

He warned that other African leaders could receive similar unjust fates.

"I never stood a chance," Taylor said. "Only time will tell how many other African heads of state will be destroyed."

Last month's landmark ruling by the international tribunal against Taylor was the first war crimes conviction of a former head of state by an international court since the Nuremberg trials after World War II that convicted Adm. Karl Doenitz, who became president of Germany briefly after Adolf Hitler's suicide.

Former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic was tried by an international tribunal, but he died before a judgment was issued.

Taylor, 64, was found guilty of all 11 counts of aiding and abetting rebel forces in Sierra Leone in a campaign of terror that involved murder, rape, sexual slavery, conscripting children younger than 15 and mining diamonds to pay for guns.

The prosecutors failed, however, to prove that Taylor assumed direct command over the rebels who committed the atrocities.

He has been a pivotal figure in Liberian politics for decades and was forced out of office under international pressure in 2003. He fled to Nigeria, where border guards arrested him three years later as he was attempting to cross into Chad.

The United Nations and the Sierra Leone government jointly set up the special tribunal to try those who played the biggest role in the atrocities. The court was moved to Netherlands from Sierra Leone, where emotions about the civil war still run high.

In closing, Taylor reminded the court that he was a father and a grandfather, and a man of genuine actions. At 64, he is not young anymore, he said. He is a man who favors peace and reconciliation, a man, he said, who is the opposite of the monster that the court said he really was.

"I am no threat to society," Taylor said.

Few, however, are likely to agree. The judges' guilty verdict last month was unanimous and prosecutors have said Taylor deserves a stiff prison sentence to reflect the gravity of the crimes.

There is no death penalty in international criminal law. Brenda Hollis, chief prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone, has said an 80-year sentence would be appropriate.

"But for Charles Taylor's criminal conduct, thousands of people would not have had limbs amputated, would not have been raped, would not have been killed," Hollis said in a statement released earlier. "The recommended sentence provides fair and adequate response to the outrage these crimes caused in victims, their families and relatives."

Taylor will find out his fate on May 30 when the special tribunal delivers its sentence.

## Financial Times

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c9d02fea-9f5a-11e1-a255-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1v78CfTOn>

### Taylor claims ‘conspiracy’ in war crimes trial

By Matt Steinglass in The Hague

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor, convicted of war crimes last month by an international court in The Hague, has told judges at his sentencing hearing that he was a victim of a “conspiracy” by the US.

He claimed the verdict against him was “unfair” because western leaders had not been tried for actions by their own armed forces.

He said he felt “sadness and sympathy” for victims of the civil war in Sierra Leone that he helped foment, but he stopped short of admitting any wrongdoing, apologising for his actions, or expressing remorse.

Last month the Special Court for Sierra Leone ruled that, as leader of Liberia during the civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone from 1998-2002, Taylor had armed, backed and in some cases issued orders to rebel militias who carried out mass amputations, enslavement of child soldiers, massacres and other atrocities, profiting from the militias’ control over rich diamond mines.

The court convicted him of war crimes and crimes against humanity for having aided and abetted the militias – the first time a former head of state has been convicted by an international court since the second world war.

Taylor is appealing the decision and appeared in court on Wednesday to testify on his own behalf, hoping for a lenient sentence. The sentencing hearing is scheduled for May 30.

“I condemn all atrocities committed all over the world,” Taylor told the court. That included collateral damage from bombings and drone strikes carried out by “powerful nations”, he added.

He said US foreign policy objectives in west Africa changed early in the last decade, after which US diplomats had wanted to make sure that he was no longer leader of Liberia.

Taylor described the Rome statute, which serves as the basis for the SCSL and other international courts, as “a western document that does not take into account certain customs, cultures and other sensitivities” in Africa and other parts of the world. He did not explain what customs or sensitivities might excuse the crimes committed by the Sierra Leonean militias he had backed.

During the trial, prosecutors said there was no reason for leniency, given the extreme nature of the crimes and Taylor’s position of power. They recounted widespread instances of torture, sexual slavery, children kidnapped and indoctrinated as soldiers, and the carving of rebel groups’ initials into the foreheads of villagers enslaved to work in the diamond mines.

Using radio intercepts, documents and testimony from former militia officers, prosecutors showed Taylor had been intimately involved with the rebel militias, the Revolutionary United Front and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. In one instance he directed the RUF to launch an offensive named Operation No Living Thing.

# International Business Times

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

## Charles Taylor Tells Hague Court: 'I'm No Threat'

By Oliver Tree

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor told judges in The Hague on Wednesday that he poses "no threat to society," while accusing his prosecutors of paying witnesses and threatening them to testify against him.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor sits down at the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in Leidschendam, the Netherlands. Standing before the justices on Wednesday, Taylor asked why former U.S. President George W. Bush had not been forced to stand trial for allegedly ordering torture. "Is he above the law?" Taylor said.

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor sits down at the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in Leidschendam, the Netherlands. Standing before the justices on Wednesday, Taylor asked why former U.S. President George W. Bush had not been forced to stand trial for allegedly ordering torture. "Is he above the law?" Taylor said.

Taylor, who was convicted in April of supporting rebels during Sierra Leone's bloody civil war, was speaking before the court for the last time before sentencing later this month.

"Witnesses were paid, coerced and in many cases threatened with prosecution if they did not give statements," he said.

Protesting his innocence, the 64-year-old added that money had played a "corrupting, influential, significant and dominant role" in his trial, the BBC reported.

The court, which is a joint project of the United Nations and the government of Sierra Leone, was set up as part of the peace agreement which brought the country's decade-long civil war to an end in early 2002.

Taylor was indicted nine years ago and the trial began in April 2006 in Freetown, Sierra Leone, before being moved to The Hague.

The first African head of state to be brought before an international tribunal, he was charged with 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.

Other offenses, alleged to have been committed in Sierra Leone between 1996 and 2002 under his direction, involved terrorizing the population, murder, rape, the use of women and girls as sexual slaves, enforced mutilations and amputations, as well as abducting children and adults and forcing them to work as laborers or fight in the conflict in Sierra Leone.

Standing before the justices on Wednesday, Taylor asked why former U.S. President George W. Bush had not been forced to stand trial for allegedly ordering torture.

"Is he above the law?" Taylor said.

Prosecutors are seeking an 80-year prison sentence for Taylor, something the defense has labeled as excessive.

During Wednesday's hearing, he asked that the court consider his age in determining his sentence.

"I'm a father of many children, grandchildren and great-grand children."

"I say with respect: Reconciliation and healing, not retribution, should be the guiding principles in your honors' task."

Taylor, who served as president of Liberia from Aug. 2, 1997 until his resignation on Aug. 11, 2003, was accused of backing and arming the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The rebel group fought in Sierra Leone from the end of November 1996 -- the date on which the Abuja accord peace agreement was signed -- until January 2002, when the Sierra Leone Civil War was officially brought to an end.

## Daily Maverick (South Africa)

Thursday, 17 May 2012

### Charles Taylor: the war criminal pleads for mercy



**It was another bravado performance in The Hague from Charles Taylor, who looked gentle and unassuming as he asked for leniency. Almost tempted to believe him, SIMON ALLISON recalls that no amount of smooth talking can erase the horrors the man inflicted on Sierra Leone.**

Watching Charles Taylor defend himself is a disconcerting experience. You know he is responsible for the rapes, the murders, the child soldiers. The court knows it too, that's why he was found guilty earlier this month on 11 charges of aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity, all related to the actions of his rebel movement in Sierra Leone. And yet the man standing before the court does not look like a killer. On the contrary: gentle, distinguished, avuncular spring to mind. You almost want to believe him.

The judges, fortunately, won't be swayed that easily. On Wednesday, Taylor addressed the Special Court for Sierra Leone in a speech carried live on TV networks across the world, hoping to persuade the judges to go easy on him when it comes to sentencing. He's a man of peace, apparently, and should be remembered not for the violence but for the reconciliation process which he initiated in Liberia. He's a family man, with children and grandchildren who will miss him.

And he's a wronged man, victim of a biased international justice system.

"What I did... was done with honour," he said. "I was convinced that unless there was peace in Sierra Leone, Liberia would not be able to move forward."

The former Liberian president dwelt long on the injustice of the verdict – a tactic unlikely to impress the judges. "George Bush not long ago ordered torture and admitted to doing so. Where is the fairness?" said



Taylor. “I never stood a chance. Only time will tell how many other African heads of state will be destroyed.”

And he had harsh words for the conduct of the trial itself, accusing the prosecution of bribing witnesses to testify against him. “Witnesses were paid, coerced and in many cases threatened with prosecution if they did not give statements...Families were rewarded with thousands of dollars to cover costs of children's school fees, transportation, food, clothing, medical bills and given cash allowances for protected and non-protected witnesses in a country where income is less than a dollar a day.”

This last claim has been a controversial issue throughout the trial, where the defence has accused the prosecution of using a special discretionary fund to pay relatively large sums to witnesses. But the argument is a red herring; with or without such witnesses (giving the claim a credence it hardly deserves), there was enough testimony to convict Taylor.

Taylor’s combative posture did not surprise Annie Gell, a legal researcher for Human Rights Watch’s international justice programme who has been following the case closely. “Taylor's address to the court today echoed themes that his defence team has brought up throughout the trial, so there was nothing particularly surprising about his arguments,” Gell said. “His discussion of other world leaders’ potentially culpable of serious crimes does nothing to explain or excuse his own culpability for the atrocities committed during the armed conflict of Sierra Leone.”

Prosecutor Brenda Hollis was even more dismissive of Taylor’s plea for leniency. “The purposely cruel and savage crimes committed included public executions and amputations, the display of decapitated heads at checkpoints, the killing and public disembowelment of a civilian whose intestines were then stretched across the road to make a check point, public rapes of women and girls and people burnt alive in their homes,” Hollis said in a briefing just before Taylor’s speech. One suspects her graphic descriptions were a quite deliberate – and effective – technique to discredit Taylor’s defence.

The prosecution is calling for an 80-year sentence. Some are criticising this as overly harsh, and a violation of the court’s mandate, which prevents it from handing down life sentences. But this argument seems largely irrelevant given Taylor’s advanced age. He’s already 80 and can’t have all that much longer left; pretty much whatever sentence the prosecution calls for will amount to a life sentence for him.

The sentence will be announced on 30 May and will be closely watched by the legal community. As this is the first time a former head of state has been found guilty by an international court, any court decisions form an important precedent for future cases. But the most important precedent has already been set: not even presidents are immune from justice.

For Sierra Leone, where most of Taylor’s atrocities occurred, the verdict against him provides at least some measure of satisfaction. “Sierra Leone's war victims can never be made whole,” commented Gell. “But victims and civil society leaders in Sierra Leone and Liberia have told me that Taylor's trial and the verdict against him have sent a strong signal that impunity is no longer the rule and the possibility of justice does exist, even when the accused is at the highest levels of power. Sierra Leoneans and Liberians have also told me that Taylor's trial and conviction have freed many in the sub-region from the looming fear of his return and helped bolster a feeling that long-term stability and peace is attainable.” And that, if it happens, will be the best justice of all. DM

# The Telegraph

Wednesday, 16 May 2012

## Charles Taylor accuses prosecutors of paying witnesses

Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president convicted of crimes against humanity, accused United Nations prosecutors of paying witnesses to testify against him and threatening them if they refused.



By Mike Pflanz, West Africa Correspondent

Taylor made the claims at a sentencing hearing at The Hague in his last opportunity to address the court that last month convicted him on 11 counts including murder, rape and using children as soldiers, before he is sentenced.

"Witnesses were paid, coerced and in many cases threatened with prosecution if they did not give statements," he told the Special Court for Sierra Leone's three-judge panel.

The proceedings were held to allow him to present his case for a lenient sentence. Prosecutors are pushing for a maximum 80 year jail term for the 64-year-old former president that could see him jailed in Britain.

During his 30-minute testimony, Taylor failed to apologise to families of the tens of thousands of Sierra Leoneans who died during the country's civil war, in which he played a role by helping a rebel army.

Instead, he spoke on of his "sadness and deepest sympathies at the crimes suffered by victims and their families in Sierra Leone".

Taylor insisted that he had "pushed hard for peace" in Sierra Leone when he was leader of neighbouring Liberia.

"I was convinced that unless peace came to Sierra Leone, Liberia could not go forward," he said.

His defence lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, argued that because Taylor was convicted of "aiding and abetting" the rebel Revolutionary United Front, instead of leading them, he should be given a softer sentence.

He said Taylor's conviction has been "trumpeted ... as sending an unequivocal message to world leaders that holding office confers no immunity" from war crimes prosecution.

"But the reality is that while many Western countries have funded militias that have committed atrocities, no Western leader has ever been indicted by a war-crimes tribunal," he said.

Prosecutors said there was no reason for leniency, given the extreme nature of the crimes and Taylor's position of power.

"The purposely cruel and savage crimes committed included public executions and amputations of civilians, the display of decapitated heads at checkpoints, public rapes of women and girls, and people burned alive in their homes," Brenda Hollis, the lead prosecutor, wrote in a pre-hearing brief.

During his five-year trial, prosecutors said that Taylor gave the RUF weapons in return for "blood diamonds" mined from territory under the rebels' control.

Taylor will be sentenced on May 30. He is expected to appeal both his conviction and the sentence.

The New Dawn  
 Thursday, 17 May 2012  
 Opinion

## Taylor: Prosecute George Bush, Too

Paul Yeenie Harry



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor, now convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity in relations to atrocities committed in Sierra Leone, has stressed the need for former US President George W. Bush to be prosecuted for similar crimes.

Taylor made the call in his first post-verdict special statement he read before judges of the Special Court for Sierra Leone Wednesday. He said he agreed with the judges' statement that the April 26 historic judgment reinforces the new reality that Heads of State will be held accountable for war crimes and other international crimes, that with leadership comes not just power and authority, but also responsibility and accountability, and that no person, no matter how powerful, is above the law.

Then, Taylor, who sees unfairness in his prosecution in comparison to the scot-freeness of ex-President Bush, states: "President George W. Bush not too long ago ordered torture and admitted to doing so. Torture is a crime against humanity. The United States has refused to prosecute him. Is he above the law? Where is the fairness?"

Although it is not known whether the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague or the justice-oriented international community will seek President Bush's prosecution as a result of Taylor's comments, the call to indict and prosecute the former president has continuously been made in various quarters.

Just last year (December 2011), when the former US President was about to make a visit to three African countries – Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia – Amnesty International called on those countries to arrest Mr. Bush and detain him for allegedly committing international crimes, including torture. The organization had earlier made a similar call.

In October of 2011, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch jointly called upon the Canadian government to arrest and prosecute the former president if he visited Canada.

In January of 2010, one Professor Francis A. Boyle of the College of Law at the University of Illinois filed a Complaint with ICC against President Bush and at least five of his senior officials for allegedly committing international crimes.

In May of 2009, when the former president was scheduled to visit Canada, a group of Canadian lawyers under the banner, Lawyers Against the War, campaigned for the President to either be barred from entering Canada or to be arrested and prosecuted for what they termed his role in the commission of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including torture.

Many have said that the failure of the ICC to issue an arrest warrant on the former president shows that the ICC is biased towards leaders of developing or African countries. Those accusing the ICC indicate that, besides the late Milosevic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, all the other leaders whose arrests have been announced, or whose trials have started, are African leaders.

However, some have said that it is highly unlikely that a US President, whether former or sitting, will ever be indicted or prosecuted by the ICC, while others say it is possible, but it is only a matter of time.

Meanwhile, Taylor admitted that terrible things happened in Sierra Leone and there is no justification for that. "... My sadness and deepest sympathies at the crimes suffered by victims and their families in Sierra Leone." Taylor said.

He, however, stated that witnesses were paid and coerced to testify at his trial. He also pointed out that the prosecution team both former and present is all former US Government officials suggesting a team of conspirators hired to accomplish a mission.

## Daily Mail

Thursday, 17 May 2012

### Convicted war criminal Charles Taylor says he sympathises with victims of the violence in Sierra Leone as he faces 80-year jail sentence

- Former Liberian President Charles Taylor begs for leniency before sentencing at The Hague for war crimes
- Taylor's aid to rebels in decade-long Sierra Leone civil war contributed to horrific violence against civilians
- Court hears of rape, public executions, amputations, decapitations of civilians
- Taylor due to be sentenced on May 30

By Tom Gardner

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor begged for leniency ahead of his sentencing for a catalogue of brutal war crimes saying he has sympathy for Sierra Leone's civil war.

Taylor was found guilty of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, and conscripting child soldiers, during a landmark ruling by judges at the U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in April.

He asked judges at The Hague to render their sentence against him in a spirit of 'reconciliation, not retribution'.

However, he stopped short of admitting any wrongdoing, apologizing for his actions, or expressing remorse.

Prosecutors said there was no reason for leniency, given the extreme nature of the crimes, Taylor's 'greed' and misuse of his position of power.

'The purposely cruel and savage crimes committed included public executions and amputations of civilians, the display of decapitated heads at checkpoints, the killing and public disembowelment of a civilian whose intestines were then stretched across the road to make a check point, public rapes of women and girls, and people burned alive in their homes,' wrote prosecutor Brenda Hollis in a pre-hearing brief.

Single mother of three 'feral' children known as 'Ma Baker' is run out of housing estate after three-year campaign of terror

Sobbing father of 17 who lost SIX children in house fire talks for the first time about inferno which police say was started by petrol being poured through the letterbox

The court found his aid was essential in helping rebels in Sierra Leone continue their bloody rampage during the West African nation's decade-long civil war, which ended in 2002 with more than 50,000 dead.

It was the first time a former head of state had been convicted of war crimes since the aftermath of World War II.





Attacked: Victims of the brutal crimes committed during the Sierra Leone civil war nurse their wounds



Crimes: Taylor was found guilty of conscripting child soldiers during the decade-long Sierra Leone civil war



Child soldier: Youngsters were forced into the army during Liberia's violent civil war, where women were held as sex slaves and civilians had limbs hacked off with machetes





Innocent victim: A young girl, who has had both of her hands amputated, rests at a camp for amputees and wounded from Sierra Leone's civil war

Taylor is due to be sentenced on May 30, with prosecutors demanding an 80-year prison term, and defence lawyers arguing he should at least be given a sentence that leaves him some hope for life after release.

'I express my sadness and deepest sympathy for the atrocities and crimes that were suffered by individuals and families in Sierra Leone,' Taylor said.

He insisted his actions had actually been done to help stabilize the region and claimed he never knowingly assisted in the commission of crimes.

'What I did...was done with honour,' he said.

'I was convinced that unless there was peace in Sierra Leone, Liberia would not be able to move forward.'



Chaos: The decade-long civil war saw tens of thousands of people killed and many more horrifically mutilated during the bloody conflict  
a fighter loyal to Taylor keeps watch on the streets of Monrovia



Bloody: A soldier loyal to Taylor keeps watch on the streets of Monrovia during fighting

Judges found Taylor helped the rebels obtain weapons in full knowledge they would likely be used to commit terrible crimes, in exchange for payments of 'blood diamonds' often obtained by slave labor.

Defence attorney Courtenay Griffiths argued for a sentence that reflects Taylor's indirect role: he was found guilty only of aiding the rebels, not leading them, as prosecutors originally charged.

He said Taylor's conviction has been 'trumpeted...as sending an unequivocal message to world leaders that holding office confers no immunity' from war crimes prosecution.

'But the reality is that while many Western countries have funded militias that have committed atrocities, no Western leader has ever been indicted by a war crimes tribunal, he said.

Miners from Sierra Leone wash gravel in large sieves looking for rough diamonds



Real prize: Miners from Sierra Leone wash gravel in large sieves looking for rough diamonds



Country's gems: Diamonds from Koidu town in eastern Sierra Leone, which sparked horrifying civil war that would later inspire the film Blood Diamond

The lesson is 'if you are a small, weak nation, you may be subject to the full force of international law, whereas if you run a powerful nation you have nothing to fear,' Griffiths said.

Taylor added that once Britain and the U.S. decided they wanted him out of power, his conviction was a foregone conclusion.

‘The conspiracy was born, all systems put into motion, and here I stand today,’ he said. ‘I never stood a chance.’

Leaked Wikileaks diplomatic cables admitted into evidence appeared to show the U.S. government hoped Taylor would never return to power, but the cables did not prevent his conviction.



Judgement day: Judges Teresa Doherty, Richard Lussick and Julia Sebutinde, rear row from left to right, will sentence Charles Taylor on May 30

Griffiths said the 80 year sentencing demand is ‘manifestly disproportionate and excessive’ for Taylor, who is 64.

In court, Hollis scoffed at that.

She said Taylor's involvement in the crimes was ‘more pervasive than that of the most senior leaders’ of the Sierra Leone rebels who have already been sentenced.

The longest sentence so far, 52 years, was handed down to rebel leader Issa Sesay, who testified on Taylor's behalf in 2010.

Taylor fled into exile in Nigeria after being indicted by the court in 2003 and wasn't arrested for three years.

While the Sierra Leone court is formally based in that country's capital, Taylor's trial is being staged in Leidschendam, a suburb of The Hague, Netherlands, for fear holding it in West Africa could destabilize the region.