

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as of:

Wednesday, 20 March 2006

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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Standard Times
20 March 2006

In Special Court in Sierra Leone has continued with the trials of those alleged to have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in spite of the fact that there has been much condemnation and outcry against the said Court and the disgraceful exit of its pioneering prosecutor, David Crane.

David Crane is known to have bowed out in shame simply because he was so vociferous about bringing all the indictees to Court's detention cells after which he will make sure they will never see the light of day again. However he had to leave without achieving such, as he left the main indictee, ex President Charles Taylor enjoying freedom in neighbouring Nigeria.

Since then for quite a considerable period, most Sierra Leoneans seemed to have lost interest in the whole business of the Special Court for myriad reasons. First and foremost that the common man, for whom the civil defence forces were fighting had long developed the notion that the indictment of members of the civil militia was not only a move in the wrong direction but a great injustice to somebody like Chief Sam Hinga Norman.

Apart from this notion which is held by the majority of people for whom the civil defence forces were fighting, even some critical members of the country's intellectual community have grave misgivings about the setting up of a United Nations Special Court in this country, which was not only a sad miscalculation but one that might have the potential of undermining the already fragile peace.

One such person who became quite outspoken against the setting up of the Special Court in its present form is Sierra Leonean Ombudsman, Lawyer Francis Gabidon, according to him there has been nowhere in the world where a Special Court of punishment and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of forgiveness has been set up to run concurrently.

With that exposure and considering the fact that we are just emerging from eleven years of brutal war, many joined our Ombudsman, Mr. Gabidon to advocate for the setting up of the TRC, where the victims would tell their ordeals, while perpetrators confess and ask for forgiveness.

Considering the fact that the Ombudsman unreservedly spoke against the setting up of the Special Court, one wonders why this government went ahead with this issue at all. In fact, such an action on the part of government left many to wonder whether the concern of this government and its UN backers actually had the desire of doing away with impunity or some other subterranean motive of caging the indicted.

Disappointingly, if you talk to any worker at the Special Court, one thing that he or she will be certain to say is "your government requested the Special Court".

If indeed our government requested for this Court, there is doubt, as events are today unfolding, that it was firstly a misplaced priority and secondly that

Something To Think About

When will President Taylor at the Special Court

this government must have had another motive for going all out to ensure that Chief Sam Hinga Norman and his colleagues are indicted and caged.

As far as some of us are really concerned, the priority of this government would have been trying to recall where we went wrong as a nation that gave cause to the bitter experiences we went through, and not merely thinking of addressing impunity.

It is however becoming clear that with these few years of relative peace, the government has forgotten and has allowed the same vices, corruption, patronage and the callous display of ill-gotten wealth to go on.

How can this government think of addressing impunity when the practices that largely contributed to the outbreak of the war are not being addressed?

Taking these into consideration many Sierra Leoneans have not

of ex-president Charles Taylor's appearance at the Court becomes increasingly possible.

With the resolution of the new president of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to risk reversing the security gains in the sub-region over the last couple of years simply because her government need a meager US\$50 million from the US government, whatever the consequences of that resolution we shall have to be ready for.

Government officials and those of the Special Court are adamant that there is not enough arrangement and structures in place to ensure that the repatriation of Charles Taylor to the Court in Freetown would not result into any negative security developments for the people of the region.

However no one knows for sure what will happen, and the only thing that is certain is that George Bush, the US president would

While some people may just see their testimonies as any other, there is however something important to note about their testimonies. In the first place those two British nationals have no other interest in this whole business other than their concern for humanity and to see sanity and justice return to Sierra Leone.

This was the reason why Peter Penfold stood with Sierra Leone in its darkest moment in history, and another reason why those involved in the trials at Special Court ought to take him and his testimony with all degree of seriousness that it deserves.

Additionally, Mr. Peter Penfold ought to be taken seriously because he was at the centre of all activities that saw the return of the government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah when it was ousted in 1997.

Thus since he was at the centre of activities and has no particular or per-

In the first place those two British nationals have no other interest in this whole business other than their concern for humanity and to see sanity and justice return to Sierra Leone

stopped wondering as to what would be the meaning of Special Court to the victims when those alleged to have committed crimes against them are enjoying twenty-four hours electricity supply while the nation's capital city is bathed in perpetual darkness? Is this not ironical?

We are however quite aware of the situation where the Special Court administrators have brought retired court officials from abroad for the job of merely saying, "court rise" for which they are paid seven thousand dollars.

How can any sane mind say that such is done in the interest of the victims who are still living in endemic poverty and suffering from perpetual hunger? Could such an amount that has been spent on the Special Court not have been better used to improve the lives of the victims of the war and the suffering masses?

But no! The government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah saw wisdom in setting up the Court where some of our compatriots who sacrificed everything including their family members could be rewarded with incarceration and demonization.

What does this government actually hope to achieve by such a venture that is growing unpopular every day, especially now that the prospects

have a point to call on in response to his numerous critics.

He was in fact nowhere when the war was at its height in Liberia, and especially the USA was nowhere when the Liberian people needed them, as they died in their hundreds in front of the US Embassy in Monrovia while the US Ambassador was watching everything from his window of the Embassy. The US Marines were also just out of sight of the naked eye in a war boat anchored a few miles from the coast of Monrovia, watching but doing nothing to stop the mayhem.

Even the Special Court in Sierra Leone is starved of funds and is only funded when the interest of the US, which is the Court's biggest benefactor, is taken into consideration.

Our interest as independent observers has particularly been drawn to recent developments in the ongoing trials of members of the civil defence forces.

Right from inception, the Court has requested from the populace to come forward and testify, which has attracted the attention of high profile personalities including the former British High Commissioner Peter Penfold during the war, and a British General, David Richards, who worked with the government army during the war.

sonal interest other than seeing a peaceful Sierra Leone, his testimony should be treated with all degree of seriousness.

It is important to stress here the interest of the British nationals, if there is any, because their testimonies are making a stark revelation. To those British nationals, great injustice has not only been demonstrated but the highest degree of ingratitude has been shown to Chief Norman.

They seem to be emphasizing the point that President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah should take responsibility for all that the civil defence forces are today being blamed for.

This is the crux of the revelations that has been made by those British nationals.

There is every reason to believe that this government and particularly President Kabbah should take a fair share of the blame the CDF are carrying today.

After all, during the war years, particularly when the government was overthrown, Chief Norman and his civil defence forces constantly made it clear that they were fighting to restore the government that was overthrown, of which President Kabbah was still the president. During all those periods, the President, who was also Com-

out



testify

mander-in-Chief of the Army did not come out with a single statement to denounce the action of the civil militia group.

Interestingly the government of President Kabbah, even while in political limbo, was drumming up support for the CDF. If this is the case, how can Chief Norman and the others be proscribed today by the government that they were fighting for and is made up of their own compatriots? Would one not be made to believe that there is another reason beyond this CDF business for the incarceration of Chief Norman in particular?

As Sierra Leoneans, we ought to be seriously concerned about what chief Norman is going through not because people are not interested about impunity but because there is the fear that should there be any problem in future like what we went through, no Sierra Leonean would come up to challenge the situation.

This observation has for a long time been made by Mr. Peter Penfold, something that is a pointer to the fact that those CDF members held in detention deserve not to be given such a treatment.

The other issue about the ongoing trials is that much has been said about President Kabbah, and he has been constantly named in the matter and the defence lawyers are insisting that he must appear and testify, we want to join them for fairness and justice for all, to appeal that the president also testify.

In fact now that Charles Taylor's date of arrival to the Court detention facility remains only to be named, many Sierra Leoneans are beginning to shift their focus to the time when President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah too will be made to testify.

This is important because if those spear-heading the Special Court fail to do so, there is the fear that very soon the whole idea of a Court will be dismissed as a witch-hunt and money-making venture for the Special Court staff.

Our concern here is that if this business of the Special Court is to end by the close of 2007, then it would appear as if the whole process was devised to ensure that Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah in spite of his leadership in both the army and DCF would not be made to appear before it.

However considering the persistent references made to President Kabbah during these ongoing trials, every effort must be made to ensure that he appears before this Court and testify. With ex-president Charles Taylor now expected to appear, there is no point why such should be difficult for President Kabbah if there is nothing serious to hide.

Sierra News
20 March 2006

Nigeria weighs up request for Taylor

See back page

In keeping with his commitment to give due consideration to any formal request from a democratically-elected Government of Liberia for the return of former President Charles Taylor, President Olusegun Obasanjo has duly notified the Chairmen of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of African States (ECOWAS) that President Johnson-Sirleaf has made such a request.

According to a Press Statement signed by Mrs Oluremi Oyo, Senior Special Assistant to the President on Media, Presi-

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Charles Taylor, praying for mercy?



President Obasanjo

Nigeria weighs up request for Taylor

dent Obasanjo is consulting on the request by President Johnson-Sirleaf with the current AU Chairman, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of the Republic of Congo and the current ECOWAS Chairman, President Mamadou Tandja of Niger whose predecessors were parties to the original agreement under which Mr. Taylor was received to stay in Nigeria.

The President has indicated that Nigeria will take a decision on the Liberian Government's request based on the views of the AU and ECOWAS and give an appropriate response.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan who gave his support to the arrangement which brought Mr. Taylor to Nigeria has also been informed of the Liberian Government's request for his return and President Obasanjo's ongoing consultations on the matter. The Chairperson of the AU Commission has also been informed.

Liberia has requested the extradition from Nigeria of former Liberian head of state Charles Taylor, the Nigerian presidency said on Friday.

President Olusegun Obasanjo's office said in a statement that Liberia's newly elected head of state, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, had made a "formal request" for the extradition of the former warlord.

And while on a visit to the US on Friday, Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf told the UN Security Council in New York that "it is time to bring the Taylor issue to closure."

Taylor, who was indicted for war crimes by a UN-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone, fled into exile to Nigeria in 2003 as rebel forces closed in on the capital Monrovia and the United States led international calls for him to step down.

Taylor's exit from power was crucial to the signing of a 2003 peace deal in Liberia that ended 14 years of a brutal on-off civil war, and despite repeated calls for his handover to the court, Obasanjo had always insisted he would only hand him over to a government that had been democratically elected.

Johnson-Sirleaf, who was on a visit to the United States, was elected to office last November in the first democratic polls held in the country since the peace deal.

"In keeping with his commitment to give consideration to any

formal request from a democratically elected government of Liberia for the return of former president Charles Taylor, President Olusegun Obasanjo has duly notified the chairmen of the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that President Johnson-Sirleaf has made such a request," the Nigerian statement said.

Nigeria will consult with the AU and ECOWAS before responding to Sirleaf's request, it added.

While Human Rights Watch representative Corinne Dufka, who is based in Dakar, praised Sirleaf's "enormous step," she criticised Nigerian plans to consult with regional bodies.

"Nigeria needs to respond favourably. We do not believe [Obasanjo] needs approval from the African Union or ECOWAS," Dufka told IRIN.

Representatives of the Special Court in the Sierra Leonean capital Freetown also welcomed the news.

"This is a breakthrough in many ways - we are glad to hear that things are finally progressing and would also like to see a conclusion as soon as possible," Harpinder Athwal, Special Assistant to the Prosecutor told IRIN.

The Special Court, due to close in 2007, is currently facing a funding crisis and only has enough money to last three or four more months. However, if Taylor were to appear in the dock donors would likely stump up the cash necessary to complete his trial, said Athwal.

"It would take about six months to organise and conduct his trial [but] if Taylor were to arrive by April, his trial could be completed alongside the others," Athwal said, adding that the life of the court could always be prolonged

if Taylor was sure to face trial.

But on the streets of the Liberian capital Monrovia, where some fear that Taylor's arrest could reignite old quarrels, reactions were mixed.

"We fought for Taylor to leave power and he left. Peace is now in Liberia," said Swaliho Mansaray a 30-year-old former fighter with the largest rebel group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, that was originally established to chase Taylor out of office.

"It is unfair at this moment to have him sent to court for crimes he committed in Sierra Leone. We should not encourage that. Sierra Leoneans and Liberians have all decided to put the past behind them," he continued.

But others want to see Taylor in the dock: "Taylor made us suffer too much in this country and helped to destroy Sierra Leone just for their diamonds," said Jerry Carter, who hawks cosmetics on the war-blackened streets of Monrovia. "Now it is time for him to face justice for all the wicked things he did."

Although Taylor has left Liberia, many of his former allies as well as his ex wife won seats in the new parliament and senate during elections held late last year, the first since the end of war.

Lawrence George, chairman of Taylor's former ruling party, the National Patriotic Party (NPP), told IRIN that the fate of the former leader should go before the legislature.

"Now that the Nigeria government has confirmed receipt of a formal request to have Taylor turned over, it is up to all stakeholders - local party leaders, the regional body and the international community - to jointly decide, not only the president," George said.

Exclusive
20 March 2006

President Requests Surrender of Taylor Nigeria Must Hand Suspect to War Crimes Court

Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took a landmark step for justice and accountability in West Africa when she formally asked Nigeria to surrender former president Charles Taylor

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President Requests Surrender of Taylor

From front page

to face trial, Human Rights Watch said today. President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria must now respond by promptly handing Taylor over to the U.N.-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone.

President Johnson-Sirleaf was inaugurated in January 2006 after winning pivotal elections in the war-torn West African nation. Taylor, the former president of Liberia accused of fomenting war crimes in Sierra Leone, went into exile in Nigeria in August 2003 as rebels threatened to take over the Liberian capital Monrovia.

"The people of Sierra Leone have waited a long time for justice, and today President Johnson-Sirleaf has taken a courageous step towards making sure they get it," said Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch. "Now President Obasanjo must play his part and surrender Taylor for trial."

As president of Liberia, Taylor actively supported armed opposition groups in Sierra Leone accused of committing multiple war crimes. His departure from Liberia in August 2003 was part of an arrangement brokered by the African Union, Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), and other key actors in the international community, including the United States, in a bid to reduce further bloodshed in Liberia. Since then, President Obasanjo has maintained that he would only surrender Taylor to the Sierra Leone Special Court upon a request from a duly-elected government in Liberia.

In a statement issued today, President Obasanjo said he would comply with the surrender request after consulting with the African Union and ECOWAS. During a press conference at the United Nations today, President Johnson-Sirleaf indicated that she wanted consultation between President Obasanjo and regional leaders on this issue. She indicated that it should include those involved in the original decision that Taylor should be allowed to depart Liberia, so as not to exclude them. However, she was equally clear that following such consultation, Taylor should face trial.

"President Obasanjo must promptly comply with the request for Taylor's surrender," Dicker said. "Consultation with other African leaders should not buy Taylor any more time to escape facing justice for his alleged crimes."

At a briefing by President Johnson-Sirleaf of the U.N. Security Council today, members of the council strongly endorsed her request for Taylor's surrender. Eight council members – Tanzania, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Greece, Argentina, and Slovakia – all explicitly supported this step. Many council members also expressed their support for the continued presence of U.N. peacekeepers in Liberia to help maintain security there.

"Security Council members have sent a strong signal in support of Liberia's request and for Taylor to face trial at the U.N.-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone," said Dicker. "President Obasanjo should listen to the message."

Taylor has been accused of 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Special Court of Sierra Leone. These crimes include killings, mutilations, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, abduction, and the use of forced labor by Sierra Leonean armed opposition groups, which Taylor actively supported.

Time is of the essence for Taylor to face trial, Human Rights Watch said. The Special Court of Sierra Leone is already advanced in its operations and is facing mounting international pressure to complete operations.

Concord Times

20 March 2006

Obasanjo to handover Taylor after consultations

Story: Ibrahim Seibure

A press release issued by Human Rights Watch last Friday has indicated that Nigeria President Olusagun Obasanjo has stated that he would comply with the surrender request of former President Charles Taylor of Liberia to the Special Court after consulting with the African Union and ECOWAS.

The release stated that during a press conference at the United Nations, President Johnson-Sirleaf indicated that she wanted

consultation between President Obasanjo and regional leaders including those that were involved in the original decision to grant asylum to Taylor in Nigeria.

However, President Sirleaf was equally clear that following such consultation, Taylor should face trial. "President Obasanjo must promptly comply with the request for Taylor's surrender," she noted.

"The people of Sierra Leone have waited a long time for justice, and today President Johnson-Sirleaf

has taken a courageous step towards making sure they get it," said Richard Dicker, director of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch and maintained that President Obasanjo must play his part now and surrender Taylor for trial.

Dicker called on President Obasanjo to promptly comply with the request for Taylor's surrender. "Consultation with other African leaders should not buy Taylor any more time to escape facing justice

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Obasanjo to handover Taylor after consultations

From page 1

for his alleged crimes," Dicker pointed out noted that at a briefing by President Johnson-Sirleaf of the U.N. Security

Council, members of the council strongly endorsed her request for Taylor's surrender.

He says eight council members – Tanzania, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Denmark, Greece, Argentina, and Slovakia – all explicitly supported this step and that many council members also expressed their support for the continued presence of U.N.

peacekeepers in Liberia to help maintain security there. The Special Court of Sierra Leone has accused Taylor of 17-count charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity that include killings, mutilations, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, abduction, and the use of forced labor by Sierra Leonean armed opposition groups.

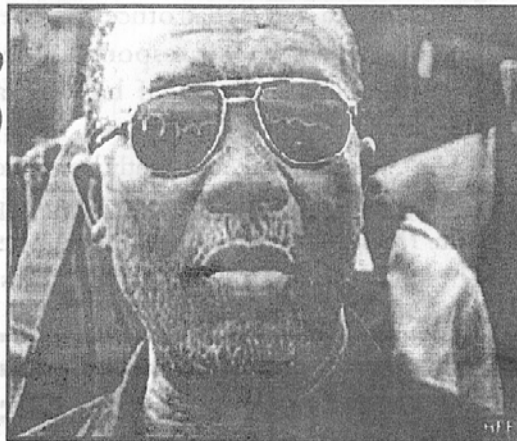
Spectator
20 March 2006

Special Court's cell awaits Taylor

A UN-backed war
crimes tribunal in
Sierra Leone wants

to put former Liberian
leader Mr. Charles Taylor
on trial for backing
Sierra Leone rebels. The
former stood down as Liberian leader and
went into exile in Nigeria in 2003 under an
international deal to end Liberia's 14-year

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Charles Taylor promised Liberians he would return

Special Court's cell awaits Taylor

from front page

civil war. Liberian Information Minister Johnny McClain told the BBC that if the request was granted, Mr. Taylor would be sent straight to Sierra Leone. The 15,000 United Nations peacekeepers in Liberia are under instructions to arrest Mr. Taylor and transfer him to the Special Court for Sierra Leone if he sets foot on Liberian soil. A spokeswoman for the court's chief prosecutor Desmond de Silva told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme that he welcomed the news that Mr. Taylor may soon end his exile in Nigeria. "His cell is empty and awaiting his arrival," the spokeswoman said.

An official from Mr. Taylor's National Patriotic Party said the news was "shocking". Mr. Obasanjo has always refused to send Mr. Taylor to Sierra Leone, saying he would only extradite him following a request from an elected Liberian leader. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf took power in Liberia in January after

winning last year's elections and visited Nigeria earlier this month. Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf has previously said her priority is rebuilding Liberia, rather than putting Mr. Taylor on trial. But before she briefed the UN Security Council in New York on the situation in Liberia, she confirmed the request, reports the AFP news agency. "I asked the African (Union) leadership to bring the Taylor issue to closure," she said. Mr. Taylor is accused of selling diamonds and buying weapons for Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front rebels, who were notorious for hacking off the

hands and legs of civilians during a 10-year war. He also started the Liberian civil war in 1989, before being elected president in 1997. Mr. Taylor's supporters have said that he enjoys immunity from prosecution under the peace deal which saw him step down. But human rights activists have accused him of breaking the terms of that deal by trying to influence Liberian politics. Just before Mr. Taylor stepped on a plane to take him to the south-eastern Nigerian city of Calabar in August 2003, he told Liberians: "God willing, I will be back."

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Harpinder Athwal, Interview on U.N. Radio, Tea Break

20 March 2006

So how prepared is the Special Court for the eventual turnover of Mr. Taylor? Harpinder Athwal is Special Assistant to the Special Court Prosecutor.

ATHWAL: (Words lost) receive Mr. Taylor the day they issued the indictment, in March 2003. (Words indistinct) it's not a question of whether the Special Court is prepared or not for the arrival of Charles Taylor; it is whether Mr. Charles Taylor will be arriving at the Special Court as soon as possible. We are ready and waiting to receive him.

Okay, people have the view that the timing is not quite right. What do you make of this?

ATHWAL: Well, the issue here is that Charles Taylor's indictment was issued against him in March 2003. The Special Court has wanted him since then, and has been waiting to receive him. The timing *is* now right to receive Charles Taylor simply because there's a democratically-elected government in Liberia. Liberia is [words indistinct] peace and security. There's a UN mission of 17,000 troops in Liberia at the moment too. If Charles Taylor is left in Nigeria at this stage and is not brought before the Court, he will remain a constant threat to Liberia and the region from his home in Calabar, because the UN mission will begin to wind down, the troops will begin to go home, and then Mr. Taylor will be free once again to return to the region. The Court also has a limited time mandate and needs to receive him now if trial is to begin and finish with the rest of the trials that are ongoing at the moment, the three trials that are ongoing at the moment. Therefore the timing is completely right to receive Mr. Taylor.

That was Harpinder Athwal, the Special Assistant to the Special Prosecutor of the Special Court. The programme is Tea Break, and it's coming to you from UN Radio FM 103.

Reuters

19 March 2006

INTERVIEW-Taylor case a warning to world warlords-prosecutor

By Alistair Thomson

DAKAR, March 19 (Reuters) - Moves to try former Liberian President Charles Taylor for crimes against humanity in a Sierra Leone court are a warning to the world's warlords that they cannot escape justice, the court's chief prosecutor said.

Newly-elected Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said on Friday she had asked Nigeria, where Taylor lives in exile, to consider handing him to a U.N.-backed Special Court in Freetown, which has indicted him for his part in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

"This does send out a message, in my mind, to all leaders and warlords and all people in positions of dominance: 'Be you ever so high, the law is always above you'," Desmond de Silva, chief prosecutor in Sierra Leone's Special Court, told Reuters.

"The world has moved in the last 10 or 15 years from impunity ... the world woke up to the fact that people simply had to be brought to justice," he said in a telephone interview.

Taylor is charged with supporting Sierra Leone rebels in return for diamonds in a war that cost 50,000 lives. The charges do not include his role in starting Liberia's own civil war, which killed 250,000 people and spread arms, violence and instability into nearby countries.

De Silva, a British state counsel, compared Taylor's case to that of Serbian ex-leader Slobodan Milosevic, who died a week ago, months before an expected verdict in his war crimes trial.

"With the departure of Milosevic, if Taylor's trial is taken to a conclusion he will be the very first head of state in history to have been indicted whilst he was in office and against whom a trial has been completed," de Silva said.

"In the world today, the three major war criminals who are wanted are Charles Taylor, Karadzic and Mladic," de Silva said, referring to Bosnian Serb suspects Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, who are still at large. As Milosevic was, they are charged with genocide and crimes against humanity.

"PRESIDENTIAL SUITE" FOR TAYLOR

Johnson-Sirleaf said on Friday Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo had agreed to consult African leaders involved in Taylor's exile deal in 2003 about handing him to the court in Sierra Leone.

"We have no reason to believe that there not will be a satisfactory outcome to these negotiations," de Silva said.

"We will receive him when we receive him. We have quite a large cell, in fact our largest cell, waiting for him. It is casually known as the 'presidential suite'," de Silva said.

He said Taylor would get no special treatment, but said the detainees at the Special Court enjoyed excellent conditions.

"We have quite the only cells in the world where people on hunger strike actually put on weight," de Silva commented.

He said Taylor's trial might take roughly 12 months.

The U.N.-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone is now trying nine defendants for war crimes: three from a government militia, three from a former military junta and three from the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

The trials have proved politically sensitive and revived painful memories of a horrific war in which RUF rebels raped, killed and chopped off the hands, feet and ears of civilians.

Some in both Sierra Leone and Liberia fear bringing Taylor to trial could endanger the fragile stability established in both countries with the help of U.N. peacekeepers, especially as Taylor still enjoys significant support in Liberia.

"I can't see how the stability of Liberia is going to be upset if he's locked up in my detention centre. Nor do I see there's a threat to Sierra Leone if he's under lock and key. I think he's a much bigger threat where he is," de Silva said.

Several suspects, including RUF leader Foday Sakoh, died before being brought to trial, but de Silva played down the chances of this happening in the case of Taylor, who is 58.

"Of course he is not a very popular man in Sierra Leone. We have a very good contingent of Mongolian guards (from Liberia's U.N. peace force) who are quite impressive ... I am sure they will see off anyone who wants to do him harm," de Silva said.

Jurist Legal News and Research

19 March 2006

Move to put ex-Liberia president Taylor on trial should serve as warning: UN prosecutor

Katerina Ossenova at 2:12 PM ET

[JURIST] The latest effort to put former Liberian President Charles Taylor [PBS profile; JURIST news archive] on trial for crimes against humanity at the Special Court for the Sierra Leone [official website] should be seen as a warning to the "world's warlords that they cannot escape justice," said Special Court Chief Prosecutor Desmond de Silva [official profile] in an interview with Reuters Sunday. De Silva said Taylor's case was on a par with that against the late Slobodan Milosevic [JURIST news archive] in key respects: "With the departure of Milosevic, if Taylor's trial is taken to a conclusion he will be the very first head of state in history to have been indicted whilst he was in office and against whom a trial has been completed." While Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo [official profile] consults with leaders from the African Union [official website] and the Economic Community of West African States [official website] on precisely how to respond to Liberia's request [JURIST report] last week to transfer Taylor to the court, De Silva believes the negotiations will end favorably. If they do, Taylor would join nine other defendants currently on trial for war crimes by the Special Court. Some critics of prosecution say Taylor's removal will disrupt the fragile stability in Sierra Leone and Liberia, established with the help of UN peacekeepers, but De Silva maintains that Taylor is "a much bigger threat where he is."

Taylor has been living in exile [JURIST report] in Nigeria since 2003 as part of an international agreement ending Liberia's civil war. He was later indicted [text; SC-SL case materials] by the war crimes court on charges of crimes against humanity and violations of the Geneva Conventions [ICRC materials] and other international humanitarian laws for supporting the insurgency of rebels in Sierra Leone. The court has ruled [PDF decision] that Taylor is not immune from prosecution [JURIST report] as a former head of state. Reuters has more.

IOL

20 March 2006

http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=86&art_id=qw1142805782241B241

Taylor Aides Held in Liberia

By Alphonso Toweh

Monrovia - Liberia's security agency briefly detained three associates of former president Charles Taylor after President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said she had requested he face a war crimes trial, a government minister said on Saturday.

Johnson Sirleaf, elected last year in polls aimed at drawing a line under more than a decade of civil war, said on Friday she had asked Nigeria, where Taylor has lived in exile since 2003, to hand him over to a special war crimes court in Sierra Leone.

The news, which followed more than a week of speculation and conflicting messages from the governments of Nigeria and Liberia, prompted rumours of an attempted coup in Liberia's capital Monrovia, which the government denied.

The rumours and arrests highlight the delicacy of the Taylor case, which Sirleaf Johnson has been under growing international pressure to tackle since her election in November.

Information Minister Johnny McClain said there was no truth in talk of a coup attempt, but said three officials of the National Patriotic Party (NPP), founded by Taylor, were briefly detained on Friday by the National Security Agency.

"This (rumour) is strange to me. There was nothing like a coup," McClain told reporters.

"I was told by state security that (senior NPP official) Sando Johnson and two persons were arrested. They were released yesterday," McClain said, adding that Johnson had been told to report to the National Security Agency on Monday.

Johnson, who has criticised moves to hand Taylor to the Sierra Leone court, told reporters he had been detained along with Taylor's former butler, David Norring, and another NPP member, Edmund Smallwood.

"I really do not know what I did to warrant my detention. But I think it is all related to this Taylor issue. I was the first person to speak on this matter," Johnson said.

He said some former combatants from Liberia's 1989-2003 civil war had considered an armed uprising against Johnson Sirleaf.

"When this Taylor issue came out, I was contacted by some former fighters to see if we can use violent means against this government. But I refused this. I told them that it was not right to do that. This is not time for any coup or violent means," Johnson said.

Under a deal brokered by Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and other African leaders to end the civil war, Taylor went into exile in Nigeria as rebels marched towards Monrovia.

Taylor still has support from certain groups in Liberia, and some have voiced fears that, by insisting that Taylor be tried by the Sierra Leone war crimes court, Johnson Sirleaf risks upsetting the fragile peace established since 2003.

Thisday (Nigeria)

18 March 2006

FG Approves Taylor's Extradition

By Idowu Sowunmi and Justice Ilevbare with agency report, 03.17.2006

The Federal Government yesterday approved the extradition of the former Liberian President, Mr. Charles Taylor to his home country.

The approval of Taylor's extradition came on the heels of the demand by the Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to President Olusegun Obasanjo to hand over the former exiled Liberian president to face war crimes charges.

The Special Assistant to the President on Media, Mrs Oluremi Oyo yesterday said in Abuja that the extradition of former Liberian President is in line with President Obasanjo's commitment to hand over Taylor on the request from the democratically elected government of Liberia.

President Johnson-Sirleaf yesterday told newsmen in New York, USA before addressing the United Nations Security Council that "we have said to President Obasanjo, it's time to bring... the Taylor issue to closure."

Voice of America

17 March 2006

Sierra Leone Special Court Welcomes Moves to Bring Charles Taylor to Trial

By Joe De Capua

Washington

17 March 2006

The Special Court in Sierra Leone welcomes the news that Liberia has formally requested that Nigeria turn over former Liberian president Charles Taylor. Taylor has been indicted on war crimes in Sierra Leone, stemming from the country's civil war.

Desmond de Silva is the chief prosecutor for the UN-backed court. From Freetown, he spoke to English to Africa reporter Joe De Capua about the effort to bring Taylor to trial:

"I'm very pleased about this request that has been made by President Johnson Sirleaf. It is a bold move by her and it does show very early on in her presidency that she wishes to uphold the rule of law. I look to the president of Nigeria, of course, to heed this call that has been made by President Johnson Sirleaf because (Nigerian president Olusegun) Obasanjo has repeatedly said over the past few years that he would heed the call from the new democratically elected government of Liberia. That call has now come. So I hope that both leaders can agree (on) a course of action that would bring Charles Taylor to trial."

De Silva says the legal term used in this case is transfer, not extradition, because Taylor would be turned over to the court, not to another country.

The prosecutor says the Special Court is prepared to try Taylor, but he says Taylor's lawyers would make a number of motions and require time to examine evidence. So it would probably be at least six months from the time the former Liberian leader was turned over before a trial would begin.

Press Conference by Liberia's President (Excerpt)

17 March 2006

-SNIP-

Turning to the many questions regarding Liberia's former President Charles Taylor, she said she had consulted with Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, and the leaders involved with taking Mr. Taylor to exile should now bring the matter to closure, meaning that a decision should be taken to allow Mr. Taylor to have his day in court. He should be given an opportunity for proceedings in an environment that was not hostile and that gave him the full right to self-defence. She had reported that to the Security Council this morning.

"Let me be clear," the President stressed, "Mr. Taylor was not indicted in a Liberian court... he was indicted in the Special Court of Sierra Leone supported by the United Nations. This is why we say the resolution of this must be in accordance with the United Nations and the international community." She added that time was of the essence in that regard. Liberia's peace was fragile. There were many loyalists to Mr. Taylor in Liberia, and he had many business interests there.

"Whatever decision is taken by the African leadership must ensure that the safety of the Liberian people and the stability of our nation is not undermined," she emphasized.

Another correspondent noted that Nigeria's President had indicated that President Johnson-Sirleaf had said that she had asked for former President Taylor to be handed over to the Sierra Leone Court, and that President Obasanjo was consulting with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on that, but that President Johnson-Sirleaf had indicated to the Security Council that she wanted that to be a collective decision of the African leadership. Could she clarify whether Liberia or she, herself, wanted to see Mr. Taylor appear before the Court in Sierra Leone?

As the correspondent might recall, President Johnson-Sirleaf said, President Obasanjo took a position, some time ago, that Mr. Taylor would remain in exile in Nigeria until the elected Government made a request. Liberia's response to increasing international pressure, her sensitivity to the fact that that matter "continues to hang over our heads, constraining our effort to move our country forward and raise the resources that we need for our development, led us to meet President Obasanjo's request with the provision, in an agreement between he and myself, that, before this is done, there will be due consultation with the African leadership, recognizing that it is an arrangement, in which they participated, that took Mr. Taylor to exile".

Asked if she would have been more comfortable if the Nigerian President had handled the matter, she said that, not only would she have been more comfortable, that would have been the right thing to do; the pressure on Liberia had been "unfair". She had hoped that the international community and the United Nations would have sought to implement a decision of the Security Council, in that regard, long before the new Government took over.

"So, we inherited a problem", she added. "We are faced with serious pressure. We are a small country. We have no powers that others have. We have no security forces to protect our people and the safety of our nation. So, we are caught in a situation, in which we have to take a major decision that should have been taken long before, giving us an opportunity to pursue our development agenda. But, that is the way it is. So, we have to get this behind us, because our people want to return our country to normalcy and they want to get on with their lives," she said.

She replied to a related question that the Council members had seemed to thank her for her rather courageous, but risky, decision to try to bring the matter to closure. What else they would do, depended on their own reflection based on what she had said, based on the security and stability of Liberia. Whatever happened, she knew that the Council would ensure that the fundamental rights of people were preserved and that security was protected to the degree possible.

In terms of the role played by Mr. Taylor, his potential influence and interference in the affairs of Liberia, she said she could not quantitatively assess his role, but Mr. Taylor had been in power for many years and he had many loyalists in Liberia. He had run a warring faction with thousands and thousands of young combatants who still felt solidarity with him, and they were still there. Until the new Government was able to respond to their needs and give them an alternative, they still had those ties. She could not judge the extent of the impact of those ties on the country's stability. She could only hope to manage and contain it. That was why she had appealed to the Security Council to ensure that the peace was maintained, should there be a response.

She said it was important to bring the matter to closure, but she was not in a position to talk about a precise date. The African leadership was being consulted.

-SNIP-

Los Angeles Times

18 March 2006

Liberia Seeks Extradition of Indicted Ex-Leader

Ex-President Charles Taylor, who lives in Nigeria, faces war crimes charges in Sierra Leone.

By Robyn Dixon
Times Staff Writer

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa - Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has asked Nigeria to extradite her country's former leader, Charles Taylor, to face war crimes charges, a move cheered by human rights advocates that is also laden with risks for her battered West African country.

An international court in Sierra Leone, which borders Liberia, has a cell waiting for Taylor, who has been indicted on 17 counts of war crimes. The United States has been putting intense pressure on Nigeria and Liberia to ensure that Taylor faces trial for his role in Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war.

In Sierra Leone, Taylor is accused of supporting rebels of the Revolutionary United Front, whose trademark was mutilating civilians and cutting off their limbs, as well as using children as soldiers. He left Liberia in 2003, accepting exile in Nigeria in a move that paved the way for the end of the civil war that racked his country.

Johnson-Sirleaf, a former World Bank official, upset the favored candidate, former soccer star George Weah, in a presidential election last year and took office in January. She has been applauded for her tough stance against corruption, but she also has alienated powerful figures in the country.

In recent months there has been increased speculation about a Taylor trial, and whether it would lead to a border attack on Sierra Leone by his supporters in Liberia or some other destabilizing event. Some have suggested holding the trial outside Africa, but many analysts say that would anger Africans who are highly sensitive to the legacy of colonialism.

President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria confirmed Friday that Liberia had formally sought Taylor's extradition.

Obasanjo has repeatedly promised to hand Taylor over if requested by a democratically elected Liberian president. However, he seemed to be setting new conditions, saying he intends to consult the African Union and West African government leaders.

Johnson-Sirleaf told journalists Friday that the decision would be a collective one involving African leaders. She appealed to the United Nations Security Council to help bring Taylor to justice.

"It is time to bring the Taylor issue to closure," she said.

Nigeria argues that the AU and the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS, must be consulted because they were part of the original deal to exile Taylor. But human rights groups and analysts say that extradition may become bogged down in a long consultation process, or that Taylor may take advantage of the delay and flee.

"The prosecution itself does not necessarily agree that this [consultations with the AU and ECOWAS] is a precondition to the transfer at all," said Harpinder Athwal, special assistant to the prosecution at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Those groups were involved at a point when Liberia did not have a functioning government, she said.

"Now this is an issue government-to-government and the prosecution doesn't necessarily see that there is a role for the African Union or ECOWAS," she said. "It only takes one spoiler to say 'no' for the whole thing to collapse again and then we're back to square one."

She said prosecution of Taylor would send a powerful message to Sierra Leone, to the region with its complex web of inter-related conflicts and to the world that no one is above the rule of law.

"Often it's seen that the rich and powerful escape the rules that have been set, that there's one rule for one person and another for another," Athwal said.

Johnson-Sirleaf has moved quickly in her first two months in office. She set up a truth and reconciliation commission, fired top officials in the Finance Ministry as part of her anti-corruption drive and barred officials of the former transitional government from traveling abroad until they underwent financial audits.

The transitional government consisted of members of factions from Liberia's 14-year civil war. When they left, there were reports that members stole cars, as well as the furniture, carpets and even the light fixtures in their offices.

The new president promised to give women's issues prominence, saying she had experienced the terror of attempted rape.

Johnson-Sirleaf won enthusiastic applause when she addressed a joint session of the U.S. Congress this week, and won the warm backing of the U.N. Security Council on Friday. But the extradition move is seen as her boldest yet.

"It's a very bold step," said Mike McGovern, West Africa analyst for the International Crisis Group. "It's going to buy her a degree of goodwill because people should recognize that she's taking a risk here for the sake of ending the culture of immunity and moving Liberia into a new era."

Corinne Dufka, West Africa analyst for Human Rights Watch, said there was no reason for Nigeria to balk at Johnson-Sirleaf's request.

"Now Obasanjo will have to move ahead, and do it quickly. We do not think that he needs to get approval from the African Union or from ECOWAS," Dufka said. "He has repeatedly stated that he will surrender former President Taylor after there has been a legitimate election in Liberia. That has happened. President Johnson-Sirleaf has made a request. There is no reason to delay this any further."

Newsupdated

18 Mar 2006

<http://www.tribune.com.ng/180306/news04.htm>

Charles Taylor For Extradition

PRESIDENT Olusegun Obasanjo on Friday in Abuja commenced process that will lead to the eventual extradition of former Liberian warlord, Mr. Charles Taylor, to Liberia to answer charges of genocide offences against him while he was at the helms of affairs. Taylor is currently on exile in Nigeria, courtesy of President Obasanjo-led government.

The president, according to a release signed by Senior Special Assistant on Media to the president, Mrs. Oluremi Oyo, has begun consultations with the current Africa Union (AU) Chairman, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso of the Republic of Congo based on the request made to him by the newly inaugurated president of Liberia, Mrs. Helen Johnson-Sireleaf that Taylor should be extradited back to Liberia.

Obasanjo's decision to notify the AU Chairman, Oyo said was in keeping with the president's commitment to give due consideration to any formal request from a democratically elected government of Liberia for the return of former president, Charles Taylor.

Besides, Oyo disclosed that President Obasanjo had notified the ECOWAS Chairman, President Mamadou Tandja of Niger whose predecessor were said to be parties to the original agreement under which Mr. Taylor was received to stay in Nigeria.

The Secretary-General of the United Nation, Mr. Kofi Annan, who was a party to the initial agreement, according to the Senior Special Assistant to President Obasanjo, was also notified by the president.

Mrs. Oyo disclosed that the president had indicated that Nigeria would take a decision on the Liberian government's request based on the views of the AU and ECOWAS.

Saturday Independent

18 March 2006

<http://www.independentng.com/saturday/nmar180606.htm>

I Won't Appear Before Tribunal –Taylor

He Won't Go Unpunished, Vows U.S.

By Bassey Inyang,
Correspondent, Calabar

Despite the extradition axe dangling over his head, former Liberian President, Mr. Charles Taylor, has vowed not to appear before the United Nations (UN) Special Court in Sierra Leone to answer charges over war crimes and human rights abuses.

Indications from Calabar where he has been exiled showed that the former warlord had remained unperturbed despite recent moves from his country's President, Mrs. Hellen Johnson-Sirleaf, to get him extradited to Liberia ahead of his likely trial in Sierra Leone.

Though, his home government has denied any move to extradite him, Taylor is said to have told his confidants that he would not honour any invitation by the court over the allegations against him.

This is even as, it was learnt that the court has resolved to convict Taylor on trumped up charges. Spokesman of the former Liberian leader and his Chief Press Secretary, Sylvester Vaani Paasewe corroborated this when he told Saturday Independent in Calabar, that Taylor and his supporters do not recognise the jurisdiction of the Sierra Leone Court.

He said that the extradition move was a complete betrayal of the spirit of the agreement upon which Taylor left Liberia for Nigeria on August 11, 2003.

The aide explained that the agreement, which was brokered in Accra, Ghana on June 4, 2003 by the Economic Community of West African (ECOWAS), and the African Union (AU) provided that Taylor should leave Liberia in the interest of peace and had no clause permitting extradition. Paasewe also gave indication that the much-sought extradition of Taylor by Johnson-Sirleaf would remain a mirage because Nigeria has no extradition treaty with Liberia.

“We feel the move for the extradition of Taylor violates the spirit of the June 4, 2003 ECOWAS/AU Conference in Accra that made Taylor to resign in the name of peace and leave the country (Liberia), and the agreement preclude trial. The request for his extradition is contrary to that agreement and I will like to say that Nigeria and Liberia have no extradition treaty. This request does not only contravene the agreement that brought Taylor out of Liberia but reflects the influence and pressure of the United State (US) on the Liberian government. What I can say is obtaining now is off target contrary to the spirit of the agreement.

Meanwhile, the United States has said Taylor would not go unpunished as it asserted that he must face trial before the United Nations tribunal for crimes against humanity.

The U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, Mr John Campbell, who made the disclosure said the position of the United States on the issue of Taylor remained unchanged.

Letter to Africa: <http://lettertoafrica.blogspot.com>

19 March 2006

CHARLES TAYLOR SHOULDN'T BE LIBERIA'S PRIORITY

By Chika Onyeani

This week, the newly installed first ever woman democratically-elected president of an African country, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, has been the toast of America, from her address to a joint-session of the U.S. Congress (the Senate and House of Representatives - and a feat only a few women have had the privilege), to her meeting at the United Nations, and then to a boisterous welcome by 53 members of the African Ambassadorial Group in New York. Some time this week, she will be meeting with U.S. President George Bush. She has within three months of her taking her oath of office, accomplished a feat that most African leaders will never dream of accomplishing in their lifetime presidencies.

Of course, Mrs. Sirleaf is playing to her greatest strength, as an internationally recognized bureaucrat. Apart from serving as Vice President of the African Regional Office of both Citibank in Kenya, and Equator Bank (HSCB) in Washington, DC, she was also Assistant Administrator and then Director of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), essentially a position equivalent to that of Assistant Secretary-General of the UN. After her speech to the joint-session of Congress, interrupted with lots of applause and standing ovation, Congress decided to increase the \$100 million allocated to Liberia by another \$50 million, making a total of \$150 million, but far lower than the over \$300 million America had given during the transitional period.

But behind all these hoopla and status cheering applause, is the fate of former warlord and President of Liberia, the exiled Charles Taylor, the man who plunged Liberia into 14 years of strife, murder of over 200,000 Liberians and dislocation and mayhem of incredible proportions. Charles Taylor is now in exile in Calabar, the capital of the best talked-about tourist states in Nigeria, Cross River State.

Charles Taylor is in Nigeria, after Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo offered and African leaders agreed to have him resign and go into exile in Nigeria, after the whole world coalesced in a demand, led by U.S.'s George Bush, that he stepped down for the good of Liberia. In 2003, whilst African leaders were trying to broker an easy resolution of the Liberian problem, the United Nations justice tribunal seating in Sierra Leone issued a warrant for Taylor's arrest, charging him with war crimes. The charges asserted that "Taylor created and backed the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone, which is accused of a range of atrocities, including the use of child soldiers." The U.N. prosecutor also said that "Taylor's administration had harbored members of Al-Qaeda sought in connection with the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania." But the crisis came to a boiling point during Taylor's official visit to Ghana when the U.N. issued the indictment, placing Ghana's President Kufuor in a big diplomatic mess. But with the advise and backing of South African President Thabo Mbeki, against the urging of Sierra Leoneon President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, Ghanaian police refused to effect the warrant for Taylor's arrest, who quickly returned to Monrovia.

But on August 10, Taylor went on national television in Liberia and announced that he would be resigning and leaving office the next day. On August 11, accompanied by Presidents John Kufuor of Ghana, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, and Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique and in a plane provided by Obasanjo, Charles Taylor resigned and flew to Nigeria where he was provided with houses for himself and entourage. So far, it would appear that Mr. Taylor has obeyed Nigeria's

condition for granting him the asylum - non-interference in the political affairs of Liberia.

Liberia's President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf should be commended for stirring away from the Taylor debate, though patently and importantly connected to the Liberian situation. She has made it plain in many speeches that her priorities are the rebuilding of Liberia and reconciliation for Liberians, job employment and educational opportunities for the teeming thousands of former child soldiers, and the provision of basic amenities to the Liberian people. Originally, she had said that Charles Taylor was not on her list of priorities, but unfortunately agitators, stridently led by some in the United States, are bent on making Charles Taylor's arrest that of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's first priority as well as her first headache.

Of course, there is no doubt that the United States Congress in November, 2003, had passed a bill that included a reward offer of \$2 million for Taylor's capture. On December 4 the same year, Interpol issued a "red notice", suggesting that countries have the international right to arrest him. Taylor is now on Interpol's Most Wanted list, noted as possibly being dangerous, and is wanted for "crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Convention." Now, don't tell me that with Nigeria's porous security borders, the shark-infested mercenary legion would not have been out for blood in collecting the \$2 million reward, if Taylor didn't have the means of protecting himself, which goes a lot to be mindful and frightened about what is happening right now.

As I said earlier, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is being pressured to do something about Charles Taylor and on March 17, 2006, she formally requested that Nigeria hand over Charles Taylor. It is very unfortunate that outsiders are luring her away from her stated priorities. The Charles Taylor case is a Pandora's box for Mrs. Sirleaf. She should stir clear from it. Those who want Charles Taylor's head on a plate should go ahead and get it for themselves. I am sure that Mrs. Sirleaf is more than cognizant of the fact that as obnoxious and criminal of Taylor's murderous regime, he still has a lot of supporters in Liberia and that there is no need to reopen the festering discontent.

Of course, Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo has an even higher burden in helping President Sirleaf succeed in Liberia, by not allowing her to jump into the minefield that is Charles Taylor. And the way he could do this is borrow a leaf from the canny President Abdoulaye Wade, who agreed to turn over dictator Hissene Habre of Chad to the International Court of Justice, but with the understanding that only at the approval of the African Union. Of course, being on the ground floor and wearing the shoes, and knowing where it hurts most, African leaders refused to allow Hissene Habre extradited.

Already, it seems Obasanjo has learned from Wade's politically astute actions. He has said that he would consult with other African leaders, and I must add he should have the African Union have the last say as to whether Charles Taylor should be allowed to become a martyr in the mode of Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia who died recently and became a hero, rather than the butcher and common criminal he is. We have a saying that "Trouble de sleep, 'Inyanga' go wakem."

Let the trouble that is Charles Taylor continue to sleep in Nigeria.

Chika Onyeani is the bestselling author of the internationally acclaimed and controversial book, "Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success," as well as publisher and editor-in-chief of the award-winning African Sun Times newspaper. Hear Onyeani interviewed and tell more than 10,000 other authors worldwide how to be a bestselling author on: <http://www.wbjbradio.com/viewshow.php?id=50&aid>

MCN International Pte Ltd.

17 March 2006

Milosevic's death poses questions over future of UN War Crimes Tribunal

The death of former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic poses a serious challenge for the UN War Crimes Tribunal at the Hague.

Critics say the tribunal mishandled Milosevic's trial which was overly complex, and lasted too long.

But UN chief prosecutor Carla Del Ponte says Milosevic's death has made her more determined to bring other war criminals to justice.

Carla Del Ponte is under pressure.

As the UN's chief prosecutor, she has admitted the death of Slobodan Milosevic has dealt a serious blow to the war crimes tribunal in the Hague, where the former Yugoslav leader was standing trial.

Beset by problems from the outset, the tribunal allowed Milosevic - who faced charges of war crimes against humanity and genocide - to defend himself.

The trial lasted four years, and finally ended after Slobodan Milosevic was found dead in his cell last weekend.

Carla Del Ponte insists Milosevic's death will give the tribunal new impetus to bring two other indicted war criminals, General Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic to justice.

But analysts say the future of the tribunal does not look good:

Ilana Bet Al, EU-Balkans Policy Advisor and Defence Analyst, said: "There are other trials out there, waiting to happen, not to mention they are hoping to get Mladic and Karadic. But I would have thought that until they have seriously re-worked their procedures, created a coherent body of law, decided on the manner on how you go about doing these things and the issues which you wish to prosecute, I wouldn't like to see another trial start to be perfectly honest."

The death of Slobodan Milosevic came on the heels of a suicide that of convicted former Croatian Serb leader Milan Babic.

Serious questions are now being raised about the future of the war crimes tribunal, and its ability to bring war criminals to justice.

Ilana Bet Al said: "Losing one person in a week may seem as a misfortune, but losing two is a bit of carelessness, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde - and it's not the first time these things have gone wrong. In each case I am sure there is a very good reason - somebody wasn't looking, this person had a heart attack the other one was depressed but no-one knew about it."

"But the fact of the matter is: it presents a lack of coherence, it presents a lack of an ability to maintain a proper organisation, to pursue issues from beginning to end, in a speedy

methodological, organised manner and bring them to a conclusion. If you're losing your defendants to suicide and death, I mean it's not really the purpose of the tribunal at the end of the day."

While the legitimacy of the war crimes tribunal is being questioned from Moscow to Washington, the EU has long maintained that if Serbia wants closer ties with the bloc, Belgrade must cooperate in handing over indicted war criminals.

EU officials insist the March deadline for Serbia to handover indicted war criminal Ratko Mladic still holds, and the responsibility lies with Serbia.

Jose Manuel Barroso, European Commission, said: "Co-operation with the International tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in the Hague is crucially important. This has to be achieved if not it will undermine all the progress we've reached so far in negotiations."

Some analysts here argue the death of Milosevic will have little impact on Serbia's relations with the EU, since the war crimes tribunal was never meant to be a tool for international diplomacy.

But whether Milosevic's death, and the handling of his trial will undermine the UN war crimes tribunal and its hopes of bringing other war criminals to justice, remains to be seen.

U.S. State Department

17 March 2006

<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=March&x=20060317165245sssille0.68948&t=livefeeds/wf-latest.html>

Sirleaf Election "Critical Milestone" for Liberia, U.S. Envoy Says

Ambassador Bolton welcomes efforts to bring Charles Taylor to justice

-SNIP-

BOLTON: Finally, we were encouraged to see reports that President Sirleaf and Nigerian President Obasanjo are discussing the issue of former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who faces multiple charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. We support the efforts of President Sirleaf, President Obasanjo, and other African leaders to bring Charles Taylor to justice.

African News Dimension

18 March 2006

NIGERIA : Human rights groups hail Liberian extradition request

By Andnetwork .com

Nigerian human rights groups have hailed Liberia's extradition request for former president Charles Taylor, calling it a warning to all leaders accused of atrocities.

Taylor, who has been accused by international prosecutors of sponsoring war crimes in neighbouring Sierra Leone, went into exile in Nigeria in a deal that brought peace to Liberia. Political analysts have however warned that the extradition request is in violation of the 2003 peace deal.

"It's a welcome development if the extradition process can begin to get Charles Taylor to the special court in Sierra Leone," said Shina Loremikan of the Lagos-based Committee for the Defence of Human Rights.

"If he is found guilty, it will be a message to all presidents of his order that if atrocities are committed, former presidents can be brought to justice, even later in life," Loremikan told AFP.

"We are very happy that Charles Taylor finally will be extradited. That's something that we have been campaigning for," added Voke Ighorodje of Nigeria's Coalition for the International Criminal Court.

"The only thing that we find worrying is that no time schedule has yet been set for his extradition. Charles Taylor needs to go quickly to the court in Sierra Leone," he said.

Calls for Taylor's extradition have been made since he was forced into exile in Nigeria after quitting the Liberian capital Monrovia on August 11, 2003, under heavy international pressure and a city surrounded by two rebel groups.

His departure allowed the United Nations to oversee a peace process to bring an end to 14 years of civil war.

But Taylor is wanted for alleged war crimes committed in Sierra Leone by the Liberian-backed Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during that country's 11-year-long civil strife.

The RUF under its leader Foday Sankoh carried out a ruthless reign of terror, rape, torture, looting and hacking off limbs in a civil conflict that left some 50,000 dead and 20,000 others mutilated.

United Nations

18 March 2006

Liberian Seeks Extradition of Predecessor for Atrocities Trial

By WARREN HOGE

UNITED NATIONS, March 17 — Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the president of Liberia, said Friday that she had asked Nigeria to extradite Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president and guerrilla leader, to face war crimes charges in Sierra Leone.

Ms. Johnson Sirleaf told the Security Council that she had made a formal request to President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, where Mr. Taylor lives in exile.

Mr. Taylor claimed asylum in Nigeria in August 2003 as part of an internationally brokered peace settlement ending 14 years of civil war in Liberia. He was later indicted on 17 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity by a United Nations-backed court in Sierra Leone.

Mr. Taylor, 58, a warlord-turned-president, rampaged through his own country and much of West Africa during the 1990's, unleashing ruthless campaigns of torture, rape and dismemberment. Even from exile, he has maintained influence in Liberia, with thousands of young combatants still loyal to him, Ms. Johnson Sirleaf said, making her plea "courageous but risky."

"Please bear in mind that time is of the essence in this regard," she said at a news conference.

"Liberia's peace is fragile. There are many loyalists in our country to Mr. Taylor, there are many business interests he has. Whatever decision is taken by the African leadership must ensure that the safety of the Liberian people and the stability of our nation is not undermined."

She said Mr. Obasanjo would consult African leaders because they had been signatories to the deal that sent Mr. Taylor into exile.

She said she also wanted to "ensure that in any proceedings, there is an environment that protects all, including the accused's, fundamental human rights."

She was not seeking Mr. Taylor's extradition to Liberia, she said, because he was not under indictment there. If he is sent to Liberia, peacekeepers there have been authorized by the Security Council to transfer him to Sierra Leone.

Mr. Obasanjo has been under pressure to act on Mr. Taylor but had said he would await a request from a democratically elected Liberian president. Ms. Johnson Sirleaf was elected in November and inaugurated on Jan. 16.

She complained that the international community should have acted sooner to help Liberia free itself from Mr. Taylor's influence.

"We inherited a problem, we are faced with serious pressure, we are a small country, we have no powers that others have, we have no security forces to protect our people and the safety of our nation, so we are caught in a situation that we have to take a major decision that should have been taken long before, giving us an opportunity to pursue our development agenda," she said.

Corinne Dufka, a senior researcher for Human Rights Watch in Dakar, Senegal, who has followed the Taylor case closely, hailed the move as an "enormous step toward advancing justice in West Africa," but she said she was troubled by Mr. Obasanjo's decision to seek the approval of other African leaders.

"Obasanjo must now play his own part in the fight against impunity in West Africa," she said. Ms. Johnson Sirleaf, who served five years as an assistant secretary general with the United Nations Development Program, addressed a joint meeting of Congress on Wednesday and will see President Bush in the White House on Tuesday.

She used her appearance before the Council on Friday to thank the United Nations for helping Liberia end its debilitating conflicts and hold the election that put her in office.

The United Nations has a peacekeeping force in Liberia of 16,000 soldiers and police officers, and Ms. Johnson Sirleaf asked the Council to guarantee its continuance.

She was praised in speeches by many of the ambassadors, and her speech was greeted with applause, a rare occurrence in the chamber.

Lydia Polgreen contributed reporting from Dakar, Senegal, for this article.

Cocorioko website

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<http://www.cocorioko.com/>

CHEERS FOR AFRICA'S IRON LADY , AS SHE PULLS PLUG ON TAYLOR'S SHINDIG IN NIGERIA

By Leeroy Wilfred Kabs-Kanu , COCORIOKO EDITOR

It was a glorious and momentous week for the Queen of Africa. She continued to blaze the trail, breaking every imaginable record in her path , as she became the first African woman President ever to stand before the honoured gentlemen and women of the U.S. Senate and with a voice resounding with determination appeal to them to help her make Liberia the success story of Africa.

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf continued to tread where none in blouse and skirt has ever dared and for progressive Liberians , she delivered a double whammy !! She did not only set a record being the first African female President to address the U.S. lawmakers ; she also showed just why God allowed a whole nation to pin its destiny on her mast ---She did that which even the most stout-hearted male would have had nightmares accomplishing : Seal the fate of exiled former rebel leader and President Charles Taylor.

It took a mortal with unimpeachable integrity and sense of justice like Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to demand for Taylor to be handed in by Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo. This paper knows that Mrs.Sirleaf had to plough through an insurmountable furrow to achieve this. Even back home in Liberia, it was never going to be a popular decision as Liberians know too well that Taylor still commands tremendous clout in the country. He has his henchmen everywhere--In the press houses, in the senate, in the public corporations , among the shoe-shine boys and the yana -boys on the street , among the still fearsome soldiers of the Armed Forces of Liberia. Everywhere.

But for Ellen, a woman who has come to make West Africa, not only Liberia, see the glorious days of conscientious and committed politics , only one thing mattered. : JUSTICE MUST BE DONE. And she has played her own part well.

There was never any doubt that Ellen would do the right thing. She always does the right thing. And for that we doff our hats off once again for Africa's Iron Lady .It was not for naught that we all agreed that you were the best choice for Liberia and Africa . We only hope that the African leaders would now follow up on the bold move by Ellen to bring closure for once to this nagging Taylor saga. And we also hope the United Nations , the U.S. and all stakeholders will reciprocate by continuing to provide Liberia the best possible security.

COCORIOKO also hopes that the U.S Senate will do the right thing : Heed the appeal made by Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf on its chambers this week for help to rebuild Liberia. There can only be one outcome for all the earsplitting applause that rocked the hall when Ellen addressed the body --She must be heard. Aid to Liberia must start flowing The voice of the Queen of Africa re-echoing through the parlours of the U.S Senate deserves to be heard , for it is the only right thing to be done.

United Nations



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United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 18 March 2006

[The media summaries and press clips do not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

International Clips on Liberia

Thisday, Nigeria

FG Approves Taylor's Extradition

By Idowu Sowunmi and Justice Ilevbare with agency report, 03.17.2006

The Federal Government yesterday approved the extradition of the former Liberian President, Mr. Charles Taylor to his home country.

The approval of Taylor's extradition came on the heels of the demand by the Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to President Olusegun Obasanjo to hand over the former exiled Liberian president to face war crimes charges.

The Special Assistant to the President on Media, Mrs Oluremi Oyo yesterday said in Abuja that the extradition of former Liberian President is in line with President Obasanjo's commitment to hand over Taylor on the request from the democratically elected government of Liberia.

President Johnson-Sirleaf yesterday told newsmen in New York, USA before addressing the United Nations Security Council that "we have said to President Obasanjo, it's time to bring... the Taylor issue to closure."

Liberia seeks Taylor's extradition

Jeevan Vasagar in Nairobi

Source: THE IRISH TIMES Date: March 18, 2006

LIBERIA: Justice appeared to have caught up with Charles Taylor, the former warlord turned president of Liberia, yesterday when Nigeria confirmed it had received a request from the Liberian government to extradite him.

Taylor (58) was forced into exile in Nigeria three years ago under a peace deal ending 14 years of civil war. Shortly before he stepped down he was indicted for war crimes by an international tribunal in Sierra Leone, where he backed a rebel group notorious for hacking off the hands and feet of civilians.

Liberia's president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, has faced growing international pressure to bring to justice the man many Liberians blame for fuelling a civil war that cost a quarter of a million lives, left the country in ruins, and spilled over into neighbouring states. But the case poses a problem for Ms Johnson-Sirleaf, who took office in January, because Taylor still has supporters at home and his ex-wife is an elected senator.

The terms of Taylor's exile have never been revealed, but he is thought to have been promised that he would not face prosecution. The Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, is consulting with the African Union and regional leaders on how to respond to the request.

Nigeria has said it would only surrender Taylor if a democratically elected Liberian government requested it.

Taylor's spokesman in Nigeria, Sylvester Paasewe, accused the US of being behind what he called the "indecent proposal".

"I hope African leaders will throw off the yoke of neo-colonialism," he said. Liberia's information minister had on Monday denied any formal extradition request. Taylor, a descendant of the freed slaves who founded Liberia, led a small band of rebels into the country on December 24th, 1989, triggering a civil war which ended when he was elected president in 1997. A rebellion against his rule plunged Liberia back into war in 2000. In Sierra Leone he backed a rebel force accused of widespread torture and sexual assault. The indictment charges him with mass murder, rape and the use of child soldiers.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored yesterday at 18:45 pm)*

President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf Lauds UN for Peace in Liberia

- In her address to the UN Security Council in New York yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf thanked the UN for helping to restore peace to Liberia. She also lauded the African Union and ECOWAS, including Nigeria for their contribution to the Country's stability.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Johnson-Sirleaf Formally Requests Taylor's Extradition

- Speaking at the UN Security Council yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said that she had asked Nigeria to hand over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Liberia's former President Charles Taylor.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

UN Envoy Rejects UNMIL's Alleged Obscured Role in Rape Suspects Escape

- Responding to the unceremonious exit from Liberia of the suspected Russian gang rapists yesterday, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Alan Doss said that UNMIL plays no part in processing of passengers that travel in and out of Liberia.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

U.S. Government to End Resettlement Program for Liberian Refugees

- The United States Government said that it would by the end of September, terminate its resettlement program for Liberian refugees because Liberians' eligibility for family reunification has been suspended indefinitely, Deputy Chief of Mission Lewis Mazel said in Monrovia yesterday.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Britain Pledges Over Two Million Pounds for Police Restructuring

- Addressing a news conference in Monrovia yesterday, Mr. Alan Doss said that Britain had provided over two million pounds to help restructure the Liberian National Police (LNP).

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Police Arrest Key Associates of Former President Taylor

- Former ruling National Patriotic Party Spokesman Eric Kennedy yesterday complained that partisans Sando Johnson, David Norris and Edmund Smallwood had been arrested for questioning by the police, adding that the Party was currently meeting to address the situation.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Chief Justice Bars Unqualified Lawyers from Practicing

- During the opening of the March Term of Court in Monrovia recently, Chief Justice Johnny Lewis ordered that lawyers without formal training in law should cease to practice in the magisterial courts, saying that the judiciary would not condone incompetence.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

STAR RADIO *(News culled from website today at 09:00 am)*

Liberian Student Held in Moroccan Jails for Alleged Illegal Activities

- The government of Morocco has sentenced Liberian student Emerson Doyah to 10 years imprisonment for engaging in what it called "illegal activities in March 2005", the Liberian students in Morocco' spokesman Kollie Zayzay told Star Radio.

Aliens Troop into Mining Fields in Gbarpolu County

- Gbarpolu County Immigration Commander Col. Nathaniel Myers yesterday said that aliens from Mali, Sierra Leone and Nigeria were trooping into mineral mining sites in the County. He described the situation as a major security threat that needed government's urgent attention.

Complete versions of the UNMIL International Press Clips, UNMIL Daily Liberian Radio Summary and UNMIL Liberian Newspapers Summary are posted each day on the UNMIL Bulletin Board. If you are unable to access the UNMIL Bulletin Board or would like further information on the content of the summaries, please contact Mr. Jeddi Armah at armahj@un.org.