

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



Journalists and members of the public watch the Taylor Status Conference, streamed to Courtroom II from The Hague. See more in today's *'Special Court Supplement'*.

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 at:

Tuesday, 21 August 2007

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
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Awoko

Tuesday, 21 August 2007

Four months delay in Taylor's trial

By Betty Milton

The trial of the ex-Liberia President Charles Taylor has been adjourned to January 2008 at a Status Conference held in The Hague yesterday.

In his argument the lead defence counsel for Mr Taylor, Courtenay Griffiths QC, submitted that they needed more time to prepare for the star of the trial as they had gone through the entire document concerning the trial.

The defence counsel further submitted to the Chamber that they too had to look at the circumstances and that "the court is also operating on finance as the longer the trial takes the more money is used".

Mr Griffiths explained that his team had no prior knowledge of the case before their appointment and it was only in August that they signed an agreement with the Registry of the court.

Making reference to the

documents, the defence counsel said they had received 40,000 pages of documents and that when the team went to Liberia they were also provided with 50 boxes of materials and that they needed to peruse before the start of the case.

Courtenay Griffiths also submitted to the Chamber that among the documents found in Liberia there was a letter from Jimmy Carter which meant that his client was involved in the negotiation of peace in Sierra Leone.

"So we will want to take a look at the case comprehensively and we are not ready to do it now. We are anxious to get on with the trial as our client has spent a long time in detention. And we are going to start from ground zero," Mr Griffiths said.

Stressing that they would need at least four months delay so that they would have enough time to prepare their case.

In response the prosecution submitted that they had prepared considerable for the case but that they agree with the defence for the delay in

the trial.

Brenda Holis, a member of the prosecution, further stated that they disagreed with the defence on the grounds that they were going to start from ground zero because they [defence] should build on the previous defence work as the reason for the delay the prosecution said, was for a fair trial and that will provide any material needed by the defence for the case.

In their ruling the Trial Chamber, presided by Justice Julia Sebutinda, submitted that in as much the prosecution did not have any objection to the discretion entirely lay with the Trial Chamber. Justice Sebutinda ruled that the four months asked for by the defence was a considerable time as they would need adequate time to go through the materials and the other material received from Liberia.

"The four-month period is indeed a reasonable time and so we have granted their motion and orders that the trial be adjourned to Monday January 4th for hearing," the judges ruled.

The News

Tuesday, 21 August 2007

Taylor trial delayed until 2008

The court trying ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes has postponed the case until January 2008.

His defence team had asked for a delay until 7 January saying it needed more time to evaluate new evidence. Charles Taylor is the first former African head of state to face an international war crimes court.

He is accused of responsibility for atrocities committed by rebels during the war in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

Mr Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, said he had discovered an archive of the former president's papers packed into 20 boxes.

"Already we've encountered personal letters, or a personal letter, from former President Jimmy Carter to President Taylor," Mr Griffiths told the BBC.

"If that's the sort of



material that's in there it could be vital," he said.

Mr Griffiths was only appointed to the case a few weeks ago while the prosecution have had several years to build their case.

The prosecution had also supported the move to delay the proceedings.

Despite delays in the past - often due to Mr Taylor's insistence that he have a senior lawyer represent him - Mr Griffiths said that Mr Taylor is keen for the

trial to start.

"When last I saw him he was in good spirits," Mr Griffiths told the BBC's correspondent Mark Doyle.

"He's anxious to have this case come on as

soon as possible because he's confident that it will soon be demonstrated that this particular prosecution is based on very shaky ground indeed."

Mr Taylor is accused

of responsibility for the actions of rebels during the 1991-2001 civil war in Sierra Leone.

That includes, among other crimes, unlawful killings, sexual slavery, use of child soldiers and looting.

Mr Taylor has pleaded not guilty to all 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Our correspondent says that the main issue in the trial will not be so much whether these crimes were committed but whether the prosecution can prove that Mr Taylor was responsible for them.

The Exclusive
 Tuesday, 21 August 2007

Taylor's lawyer damns US and Britain

By Musa Sesay

Newly appointed Defence Counsel for Charles G. Taylor, Courtenay Griffins has said that the court in The Hague is only meant to try African leaders and their associates.

Mr. Griffins who was speaking to the media and civil societies last weekend emphasized that no United States citizen or Europeans have ever been tried in The Hague.

He said there is danger that the experiment in International Criminal Justice, which special Court for Sierra Leone represents may be seen by many Africans

to be yet another example of cultural imperialism, which for centuries has set brother against brother, African against African, an imperialism which sets Africans apart as warring factions rather than neighbours.

He calls on the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia to unite and strive together to ensure former Liberian President Charles Taylor, receives a fair trial in The Hague. "No one denies that terrible and heinous crimes were committed during the war which ripped Sierra Leone apart leaving limbless citizens, degradation,

sexual slavery etc. while there were undoubtedly Liberians, involved in the civil war. The question is, "who sent them?" he queried.

He emphasized that remarks made by prosecutors of the Special Court undermined ex-president Taylor's chances of a fair trial. Highlighting remarks made by Stephen Rapp that the case against Taylor was very strong and compelling, he said Rapp the successor to David Crane had claimed that the court; "cannot leave Taylor acquitted," while his successor Desmond da Silva QC branded Taylor as, "Africa's Hitler".

The Spectator
Tuesday, 21 August 2007

Taylor's trail adjourned



Charles Taylor

The court trying former Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes is to discuss a request to further postpone proceedings. The report states that his defence team have disclosed that it needed more time to evaluate new evidence, possibly until January 7 2008. Charles Taylor is the first former African head of state to face

Continued page 2

Taylor's trail adjourned

from front page

an international war crimes court. Mr. Taylor is accused of responsibility for atrocities committed by rebels during the war in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, said he had discovered an archive of the former president's papers packed into 20 boxes. "Already we've encountered personal letters, or a personal letter from former

President Jimmy Carter to President Taylor." Mr. Griffiths told the BBC. "If that's the sort of material that's there it could be vital," he said.

Mr. Griffiths was only appointed to the case a few weeks ago while the prosecution has had several years to build their case.

The prosecution has also supported the move to delay the proceedings, but said judges should decide by how much.

Despite delays in the past—often due to Mr. Taylor's insistence that he have a

senior lawyer represent him, Mr. Griffiths said that Mr. Taylor is keen for the trial to start.

"When last I saw him he was in good spirits," Mr. Griffiths told the BBC's correspondent Mark Doyle.

"He's anxious to have this case come on as soon as possible because he's confident that it will soon be demonstrated that this particular prosecution is based on very shaky ground indeed".

Mr. Taylor is accused of responsibility for the actions of rebels during the 1991-2001 civil war in Sierra Leone. That includes, among other crimes, unlawful killings, sexual slavery, use of child soldiers and looting.

Mr. Taylor has pleaded not guilty to all 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

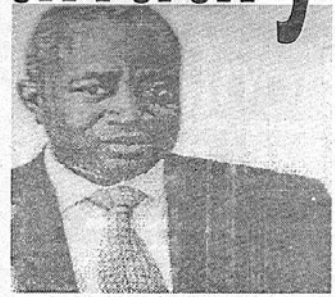
Our correspondent says that the main issue in the trial will not be so much whether these crimes were committed but whether the prosecution can prove that Mr. Taylor was responsible for them.

Charles Taylor's trial stands adjourned to January 7, 2008

Trial Chamber II in The Hague yesterday adjourned Charles Taylor's war crimes trial to January 7, 2008 at the request of the accused's new defence team. Courtenay Griffiths QC, a Jamaican-born British lawyer, leading the Taylor defence team asked the court for sufficient time to

enable him study the indictments against his client and prepare his defence. He took over from another British lawyer Karim Khan who stepped down over a month ago after Taylor had told him his services were no longer needed. At yesterday's Status Conference in The Hague which as usual precede the start of trial's the

Judge enquired from the Registrar and Principal Defender respectively whether concerns raised by Mr. Taylor, who boycotted court sessions on two previous occasions in protest, have been met. Griffiths was in Sierra Leone last week where he addressed a press conference at the weekend before flying out to The Hague. See page 4



Courtenay Griffiths, Charles Taylor's new lawyer

Taylor QC-Trial Must Not Divide Sierra Leoneans And Liberians

In remarks made to the press in Freetown on Saturday, newly appointed Defence Counsel Courtenay Griffiths QC called on the People of Sierra Leone and Liberia to unite and strive together to ensure that Former Liberian President Charles Taylor receives a fair trial in the Hague. "We who represent ex-President Charles Taylor are aware that the proceedings brought against him could have a divisive effect in this part of West Africa. However, it should be remembered that Liberia and Sierra Leone have a common heritage spanning many generations. Both countries provided refuge for returning African slaves taken against their will across the Atlantic into servitude for the enrichment of the United States of America, Great Britain and other European countries. There is a danger that this experiment in International criminal justice, which the Special Court for Sierra Leone represents, may be seen by many Africans to be yet another example of cultural imperialism, which for centuries has set brother against brother, African against African an imperialism which sets them apart as warring factions rather than neighbors.

"No one denies that terrible and heinous crimes were committed during the devastating civil war which ripped this country apart, leaving limbless citizens, women traumatized by the terror of rape and the degrading of sexual slavery, children robbed of their childhood in the most cruel and inhuman way, properly needlessly and wantonly destroyed. Furthermore while were undoubtedly Liberians involved in the civil war in Sierra Leone, the question is: who sent them? It ex-president Charles Taylor responsible for the problem faced by Sierra Leone? It is much too easy to blame these troubles on the "outsider", ex-President Taylor, rather than to examine critically the responsibilities that Sierra Leone and other countries in the region and aboard must bear." Prejudicial remarks made by Prosecutors of the Special Court undermined ex-President Taylor's chances of a fair hearing, Mr. Griffiths said, highlighting remarks made by Stephen Rapp that the case against ex-President Taylor was "very strong and compelling". Earlier, Rapp's predecessor David Crain had controversially claimed that the Court "can not have Taylor acquitted" while, his successor, Desmond da Silva QC, branded ex-President Taylor

"Africa's Hitler." "These are very strong statements by the Chief Prosecutors uttered before even a word of evidence has been presented before the Tribunal. Now that proceedings have been initiated, the question on who bears the "greatest responsibility" for these events should be determined in court with admissible and credible evidence, if such evidence is truly available. It certainly should not be answered by public pronouncements by Prosecutors perhaps anxious about the quality of the proof available to them." Mr. Griffiths went on to say that the Defence "have good cause to ask: why have representatives of the Office of the Prosecutor repeatedly been making gratuitous and prejudicial statements to the media as to his character and guilt before a word of evidence has been placed before a court of law? Why have they sought to pre-judge the issue they themselves have created by bringing this indictment against him, by seeking though their pre-trial public statements to poison the global public's mind against them? Do they not have faith in their evidence? "Due process and fair trial procedures require a complete understanding of the facts that purportedly serve as a basis of the Prosecutor's allegations. Furthermore, Prosecutors must exercise restraint if they are truly ministers of justice as opposed to agents of an imperialist cause. It requires proper evidence not conjecture, for even an alleged war criminal is to be treated as innocent until proven guilty. It is for the people of West Africa to determine if this demand for justice lives up to its promise." "As Sierra Leoneans, you can assist us in the search for the truth about the causes of this conflict. You can provide evidence to counter that of the Prosecutor's. Despite the distant location of the trial itself, the Sierra Leonean people have a vital role to play in this process. I therefore invite any Sierra Leonean with information regarding the defence of the ex-President Charles Taylor to come forward and contact the Defence."

PROFILE

Courtenay Griffiths QC



Courtenay Griffiths QC is joint Head of Chambers with Owen Davies QC.

BACKGROUND

The criminal law was never far away from Courtenay Griffiths' upbringing: being the second youngest of a family of eight boys and one girl, born in Kingston, Jamaica, and growing up in a Coventry not yet used to the presence of a community different in colour and experience. The criminal law was an integral part of his experience and the process of his acculturation into British society.

Courtenay came to the Bar directly from the university. He soon realized that a law degree was not the most appropriate qualification for a criminal barrister. He was always interested in politics and had long understood that black-letter law was not, in itself, a sufficient grounding for a proper application of the criminal law. Time spent as Legal Assistant to the Greater London Council's Police Support Committee, and as a Revson Fellow at the City College in New York, completed his education. He returned to full time practice now able to articulate what hitherto had only been understood viscerally.

AREAS OF PRACTICE

On his return from the USA, Courtenay spent a large pro-

portion of his time practising in the provinces, particularly in West Yorkshire, Leeds and Bradford. That experience taught him the social importance of practice in the provinces, where the sight of a black man in a white wig and black gown then often generated looks and sentiments of amazement. He still practices a great deal out on circuit, particularly in Manchester and Birmingham.

He specializes in all aspects of criminal justice, including the criminal law, civil actions against the police and inquests. His practice has remained national and he has appeared in most major Crown Court in England. His criminal practice ranges from fraud to terrorism, murder and serious public order to drugs. His appellate work has included the 'M25' appeal (Johnson, Davis and Rowe). His practice has recently taken him to Sierra Leone wherein he was due to appear before the Special War Crimes Tribunal in that country. He strongly believes that International Criminal Law will be one of the expanding areas of law in the 21st Century. More recently Courtenay has been practicing in the Caribbean and Bermuda. Courtenay has always been particularly interested in civil liberties. He views the introduc-

tion of the European Convention on Human Rights into English law as a unique opportunity for him to bring his unique experience as an outsider to the development of the law in his roles as Queen's Counsel and Recorder.

NOTABLE CASES

Amongst the many notable cases in which Courtenay has been involved, he regards the following as being the most note-worthy: R v Silcott & others (The Blakelock murder trial); The Brighton Bombing; The Harrods Bombing; The Canary Wharf bombing, The Risely Riot; The Dartmoor Riot; Johnson, Davis and Rowe, Goswell v Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis (for a while the highest award of damages made by a jury against a police force); and the Damiola Taylor murder trial. R-V-White and Hanson (The murder of the Chelsea banker) and R-V-Brown and Carty (The murder of the City solicitor)

PUBLICATIONS

Courtenay has written and lectured extensively on all aspects of the criminal justice system. He has debated these issues on television and radio, in both the United Kingdom and the USA. He has addressed these issues at the Norwegian Bar Association's annual conference. More recently he has addressed audiences at Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Legal Assistant Greater London Council Police Committee Support Unit 1981-1984 (on sabbatical level from Chambers). Revson fellow on the urban legal Studies programme at City College, City University, New York 1984-1985. He has lectured at many academic institutions around the country. He was a speaker at the American Bar Association Conference 2000 on the topic of trial by jury, and again in 2002 in Washington DC, and again in 2003 in San Francisco. He was chair of the Public Affairs committee of the Bar

Council, and was for several years chair of its Race Relations Committee. He retains many community interest and is currently a Trustee of the Bernie Grant Trust.

PERSONAL

Courtenay is married to Angéla. They have two boys, Marcus and Adam. He is a long-suffering Liverpool supporter. Clive

BBC Online

Monday, 20 August 2007

Taylor trial delayed until 2008

The court trying ex-Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes has postponed the case until January 2008.

His defence team had asked for a delay until 7 January saying it needed more time to evaluate new evidence

Charles Taylor is the first former African head of state to face an international war crimes court.

He is accused of responsibility for atrocities committed by rebels during the war in neighbouring Sierra Leone.



Charles Taylor has denied war crimes charges

Mr Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, said he had discovered an archive of the former president's papers packed into 20 boxes.

"Already we've encountered personal letters, or a personal letter, from former President Jimmy Carter to President Taylor," Mr Griffiths told the BBC.

"If that's the sort of material that's in there it could be vital," he said.

Mr Griffiths was only appointed to the case a few weeks ago while the prosecution have had several years to build their case.

The prosecution had also supported the move to delay the proceedings.

'Good spirits'

Despite delays in the past - often due to Mr Taylor's insistence that he have a senior lawyer represent him - Mr Griffiths said that Mr Taylor is keen for the trial to start.

"When last I saw him he was in good spirits," Mr Griffiths told the BBC's correspondent Mark Doyle.

"He's anxious to have this case come on as soon as possible because he's confident that it will soon be demonstrated that this particular prosecution is based on very shaky ground indeed."

Mr Taylor is accused of responsibility for the actions of rebels during the 1991-2001 civil war in Sierra Leone.

That includes, among other crimes, unlawful killings, sexual slavery, use of child soldiers and looting.

Mr Taylor has pleaded not guilty to all 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Our correspondent says that the main issue in the trial will not be so much whether these crimes were committed but whether the prosecution can prove that Mr Taylor was responsible for them.

The trial began on 4 June.

BBC African News

Monday, 20 August 2007

The Netherlands-based court trying the former Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes is postponing his trial until January next year. Mr. Taylor's new Defence team had asked for more time to evaluate fresh evidence. His lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, said efforts to prepare a defence were being hampered because the fear of UN sanctions was preventing potential witnesses from coming forward.

GRIFFITHS: They're frightened because by so doing they might be targeted to be put on the list of people in Liberia who currently suffer from being banned from traveling and having their assets frozen.

[Transcribed by the Press and Public Affairs Office]

Focus on Africa

Monday, 20 August 2007

The trial of the former Liberian President Charles Taylor, which is taking place at The Hague, has been adjourned till January next year. Presiding Judge Lady Justice Julia Sebutinde said this was to allow adequate time for Mr. Taylor's Defence team to prepare its case.

JUSTICE SEBUTINDE: The Trial Chamber is of the view that the new Defence team is entitled to adequate time. The period of four months that has been requested by the Defence is indeed a reasonable period, given the complexity of the case. Accordingly, the Trial Chamber grants the Defence motion and orders that the trial be adjourned to Monday the 7th of January.

Mr. Taylor, who is standing trial at the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra

SMS TEXT OF THE DAY

Majer Goch Wuoi, Uganda
This is really annoying! Why is the ICC always adjourning Mr Taylor's trial? We want justice to prevail.

Leone is accused of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. The trial has progressed in fits and starts after Mr. Taylor initially complained about the inadequacy of his Defence team. My colleague Josephine Hazeley is at The Hague to cover the trial, and I asked her if Mr. Taylor was in court.

HAZELEY: Yes he was in court. He came, he was dressed in a light gray suit. He had a somber face on, white shirt – you know, he was sporting some gray stubbles. He had tinted glasses on and kept, you know, when the Judge said something that he quite liked the sound of he would nod his head in agreement. At the adjournment, he seemed quite happy. He was shaking hands with his Defence team and I spotted a smile, or little smile, on his face.

Now Jo, that brings me to the next question: What exactly was the reaction from the Defence and the Prosecution team to this adjournment?

HAZELEY: The Prosecution was happy for the adjournment. The Defence also said that they too are elated and that they needed the time to do that and also to find more witnesses as Mr. Griffiths, the lead Defence counsel, told me.

GRIFFITHS: It's not a case of people not coming forward. People are reluctant to stick their head up above the parapet because they're frightened that by so doing they might be targeted to be put on the list of people in Liberia who currently suffer from being banned from traveling and having their assets frozen. That is, and those are the results of two directives from the United Nations Security Council which has had a chilling effect on our ability to properly prepare Mr. Taylor's defence.

HAZELEY: But are you saying you haven't got any witness whatsoever for the Defence?

GRIFFITHS: Oh yeah, we've taken several witness statements have been taken, and we are in the process of taking more.

HAZELEY: Well with all these stumbling blocks that you have spoken about, are you sure you will go ahead with the case come January the 7th?

GRIFFITHS: Despite those difficulties I am confident that we'll be able to embark on the Prosecution's case in January next year. I'm confident that we can do that.

So Josephine, that's the lead Defence counsel to Mr. Taylor, Courtenay Griffiths. We have a start date now, but do we know how long this trial will take?

HAZELEY: Well no, but in the Court documents they've given themselves an original time of between 12 and 18 months, but because of the delay now of some six months since it first started in January (sic.) this year, we may have to wait for another, what, by the end of next year perhaps.

Josephine Hazeley at The Hague

Well as you just heard there, Charles Taylor's legal Defence team wants the Liberian government to lobby the UN Security Council to lift the travel ban imposed on certain Liberians so that Defence witnesses will be able to attend the trial. In Monrovia our correspondent Jonathan Paye-Layleh asked Liberia's Solicitor-General, Tiawon Gongloe, if he would do this.

GONGLOE: The decision by the UN Security Council to impose travel ban and to impose seizure of assets were intended for promoting international peace and security. We are a big beneficiary of this decision, so we should do everything to strengthen that decision, to enforce that decision.

PAYE-LAYLEH: But the lawyer is looking at the fact that some of the people are possible witnesses in the trial, and if the ban is not lifted they will not be able to travel to The Hague.

GONGLOE: I don't think that's a credible argument because under the UN Security Council travel ban there are exceptions. In special cases permissions can be granted, so I don't think it's fair to make a general conclusion that the travel ban will affect the ability of witnesses who may be on travel ban to testify for the defendant.

PAYE-LAYLEH: The lawyer is also saying that the government should be represented at the trial; at least send somebody there to watch the trial proceedings because, after all, Taylor is a Liberian and a former president.

GONGLOE: One of our citizens has been accused of committing crimes against humanity in a neighbouring country. He's facing trial. We have full confidence in the Special Court.

PAYE-LAYLEH: You don't have to be there.

GONGLOE: We don't have to be there. You live in this country. You see the enormous task that the government has in terms of providing social services, in terms of providing other needs of the country, and I'm not sure whether getting a Liberian government representative at the trial where the government would be paying hotel bills and everything for that person is the best use of the meager resources that the government has.

Liberia's Solicitor-General, Tiawon Gongloe.

[Transcribed by the Press and Public Affairs Office]

Voice of America

Monday, 20 August 2007

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor, Awaiting Justice

By Aida Akl
Washington, D.C.

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor awaits trial in The Hague for his role in a brutal war in neighboring Sierra Leone during the 1990s. He is accused of supporting rebels who carried out widespread atrocities. Mr. Taylor is the first African president to be indicted for atrocities by an international criminal court. His trial, originally scheduled for August 20, has been postponed to give his lawyers time to prepare his defense. In Focus, VOA's Aida Akl looks at the significance of Charles Taylor's trial.

After many years as a rebel leader, Charles Taylor was elected president of Liberia in 1997. But his presidency was as turbulent as his rebel career. There were accusations that he was trading diamonds for weapons and sold arms to rebels in Sierra Leone. Charges of war crimes dating back to his role in the fighting in Sierra Leone, combined with mounting domestic and international pressure, forced Taylor to step down in 2003.

That same year a Special Court for Sierra Leone, a joint effort of the United Nations and Sierra Leone's government, indicted him on charges of war crimes relating to the civil war in the country that lasted from 1991 to 2003. The court accused him of supporting rebels blamed for killing and maiming thousands of people, including women and children.

Captured

Mr. Taylor managed to avoid arrest until last year, when he was finally detained by the Special Court for Sierra Leone. He first tried to boycott his trial, pleading not guilty to all counts. He later fired his lawyers, arguing that he did not have sufficient resources to mount a good defense. The court has since increased his funds and assigned him a new defense team.

In 2002, the United Nations appointed David Crane to serve as the chief prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Crane, who is currently a law professor at Syracuse University, says, in Sierra Leone and in Liberia, Mr. Taylor has much to answer for.

"Charles Taylor's crimes are very grave, if he is in fact found guilty of those," said Crane. "He is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, which resulted in, just in Sierra Leone, the murder, rape, maiming and mutilation of over 500,000 Sierra Leoneans.

"And if you add the destruction of Liberia, we're looking at 1.2 million human beings who were murdered, raped, maimed and mutilated," continued Crane, "and if he's convicted, he will be incarcerated in England and most likely, because of the seriousness of his crimes, he'll never set foot on African soil again."

Many legal analysts view Charles Taylor's trial, the first for an African head of state, as an important precedent. Elise Keppler is a



Former Liberian President Charles Taylor



David Crane

Human Rights Watch lawyer whose specialty is international justice.

"From all perspectives, from Human Rights Watch's perspective, this trial sends a powerful signal that no one is above the law, and the trial really represents a break from the past where impunity has all too often prevailed in West Africa," said Keppler. "It signals that impunity for these kinds of crimes is not going to be permissible, and it will hopefully build respect for rule of law in West Africa, in Sierra Leone, in Liberia and elsewhere throughout Africa."

Prosecuting a Warlord

The trial, many experts argue, could determine the shape of future international criminal tribunals. In Wisconsin, Beloit College professor of international relations Beth Dougherty believes Charles Taylor's trial will succeed where others have failed.



Prosecutors and clerks in Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague

"There have been a series of high-profile trials of former heads of state: Serbian Slobodan Milosevic at the Yugoslav tribunal and Saddam Hussein at the Iraq High Tribunal," noted Dougherty. "Neither of those proceedings went as people had hoped. So everyone is hoping that the Charles Taylor trial first will be viewed as legitimate and secondly that the courtroom proceedings will run in a very dignified and restrained manner."

Previous tribunals set up in the 1990s in the Balkans and Rwanda have been criticized for running too long, wasting funds, or becoming pulpits for high-profile defendants. Many experts say fair, credible proceedings at the Special Court for Sierra Leone could serve as a model for future international trials.

But the Special Court for Sierra Leone also has its critics. Some analysts say his trial should have taken place in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, and not The Hague. However, Caitlin Reiger, of the International Center for Transitional Justice in New York, says trying Charles Taylor in West Africa, where he still wields considerable influence, could destabilize the region.

"The decision was made on the basis of security concerns which were not just within Sierra Leone, but were about the geopolitical stability of the whole West African region," said Reiger. "And that I think had much to do with the fragility of the situation in Liberia, with a newly elected government who had agreed to the request to transfer Taylor to Sierra Leone. So it's a much, much more of a regional question."

Many of Charles Taylor's former soldiers remain armed and active throughout the region, although most experts expect his influence to fade as the trial progresses. What is important, says Syracuse University's David Crane, is what the trial represents for Sierra Leoneans and Africans in general.

"It tells the people of Africa that their lives matter, that the most powerful warlord in Africa, Charles Taylor, was humbled before the law. And at the stroke of my pen back in 2003, I was able to show the people of Africa that, truly, the rule of law is more powerful than the rule of the gun and that no one is above the law," said Crane.

Charles Taylor's lawyers have asked the court to delay the trial until next January. Once it starts, it is expected to last at least 18 months. And some analysts say Liberia is likely to press charges against its former president once this trial concludes.

Voice of America
Monday, 20 August 2007

Court Delays Charles Taylor's War Crimes Trial Until 2008

By Phuong Tran
Dakar

Judges presiding over the war crimes trial of ex-Liberian leader Charles Taylor have postponed the trial until January 7 to give new defense lawyers time to prepare their case. Taylor dismissed his previous lawyer because he said he could not receive a fair hearing. Human rights lobbyists and victim associations are impatient for the trial to begin, but agree more time is needed for a fair trial. Phuong Tran brings us this report from VOA's West African Bureau in Dakar.

Taylor's new defense lawyer, Courtney Griffiths, had urged the court to postpone the trial saying a focus on a speedy outcome could hurt Taylor's chances for a fair trial.

Geraldine Mattioli with the lobby group Human Rights Watch says it is fair to give the new defense team more time. She says the prosecution has had years to gather evidence and prepare its case.

The new defense team was installed on August 1. It has said it still needs to review tens of thousands of pages of evidence.

"We, in a way, expected they would request more time to prepare what will be a very complex case, the first to involve the president of an African state charged with 11 counts of very serious crimes," said Mattioli. "It is fair to grant them a delay so they can prepare their case properly."

Taylor is charged with arming and supporting rebels who murdered thousands of civilians and hacked off the limbs of thousands more during Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war, which ended in 2002. Prosecutors plan to call at least 10 such victims as witnesses.

The former leader refused to appear in court when the case opened on June 4, and initially said he wanted to defend himself, throwing the process into turmoil. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Mattioli urges the court to stay firm with Taylor to prevent any more delays.

"It is totally appropriate that he [Mr. Taylor] receives a fair trial, but that does not mean he can block the trial," she said. "We look to the trial chamber to continue being firm to balance the rights of Mr. Taylor with the interest of justice and efficiency in carrying out this trial."

Defense lawyers visited Sierra Leone and Liberia last week in search of witnesses to help their case. Mr. Taylor's defense team has said that U.N. travel bans against his family and close friends are preventing others from coming forward to support the former leader.



**Prosecutors and clerks in
Special Court for Sierra Leone in
The Hague, 04 Jun 2007**

Associated Press

Monday, 20 August 2007

Charles Taylor's new defense team gets more time to prepare

THE HAGUE, Netherlands: Charles Taylor's new defense team on Monday won more time to prepare and said it sees no reason for victims mutilated in Sierra Leone's brutal civil war to testify at the former Liberian president's war crimes trial.

"At first sight, we are unable to see the relevance of the crime-based witnesses ... unless of course the prosecution wants the emotional impact of transporting limbless individuals from West Africa," Taylor's chief defense attorney, Courtenay Griffiths, told judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

At Griffiths' request, the judges adjourned the trial until Jan. 7, 2008.

Griffiths told the judges that "a myopic insistence on expeditiousness" would turn Taylor's right to a fair trial into "an empty formality."

Presiding judge Julia Sebutinde agreed, saying the delay was reasonable "given the complexity of the case with which the new defense team now has to grapple." Prosecutors did not object.

Griffiths, a British lawyer who appeared in court wearing a traditional wig, was appointed to defend Taylor at the beginning of August after Taylor fired his previous court-appointed attorney.

Taylor is charged with arming and supporting rebels who murdered thousands of civilians and hacked off the limbs of thousands more during Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war, which ended in 2002. Prosecutors plan to call at least 10 such victims as witnesses.

Prosecution trial attorney Brenda Hollis said the victims were crucial to the case.

"The crime-base evidence of course is relevant because we are required to prove the crime base beyond reasonable doubt," Hollis said.

Speaking to reporters after the hearing, Griffiths said that key to the prosecution case was whether Taylor ordered the atrocities from his base in Liberia.

"Nobody is denying that horrific acts were committed ... the question is were those horrible things done at the behest of, under the orders of, within the knowledge of this defendant," he said.

"So let's concentrate on that issue and get rid of all this emotional baggage," he added.

Griffiths said a major problem facing the defense was the unwillingness of witnesses to testify for Taylor because of fears of United Nations sanctions. The U.N. has frozen the assets of several of Taylor's family members and associates and banned them from traveling.

"It seems to us something of a contradiction that on the one hand you have us here appearing before a United Nations sponsored tribunal yet a part of that same organization is behaving in a way which has a chilling effect on the possibility of this defendant having a fair trial," Griffiths said.

In Monrovia on Monday, the Liberian government said it would not support any move to lift the restrictions on about 30 of Taylor's associates.

"The decision by the Security Council to impose a travel ban and to impose seizure of assets was intended for promoting international peace and security. We are a big beneficiary of this decision," said Tiawan Gongloe, Liberia's Solicitor-General.

However, Gongloe noted that the ban does allow for exceptions under certain circumstances, and said travel for the trial could be handled as one of these exceptions.

Taylor, the first African leader to face an international tribunal, boycotted the start of his trial June 4 and initially said he wanted to defend himself, throwing the process into turmoil. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Griffiths said one reason he required a delay was that his team was given access to Taylor's personal archive only last week and needed time to assess its contents.

Among its tens of thousands of documents was a personal letter from former U.S. President Jimmy Carter to Taylor, but Griffiths did not reveal its contents.

The trial, at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, is being held in The Hague because of fears it could ignite violence if it were held in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital.

Prosecutors allege that Taylor trained Sierra Leone's rebels and shipped them arms, alcohol and drugs — often used to desensitize child soldiers before they were sent to the front lines — in return for diamonds often mined by slave laborers.

Reuters

Monday, 20 August 2007

Taylor war crimes trial delayed

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (Reuters) -- Judges on Monday postponed until January 2008 the war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor on charges of directing atrocities in Sierra Leone after his defense asked for more time to prepare.

Taylor, accused of instigating murder, rape and mutilation in a quest for diamonds during the West African country's civil war, boycotted the opening of his trial in June in a dispute over the resources allocated his defense, prompting weeks of legal wrangling and repeated delays.

More funds were eventually made available to Taylor with which a new defense team was appointed last month. The team requested a delay until next January to prepare their case.

"In the chamber's view the period of four months is indeed a reasonable time ... to grapple with a complicated case," said Judge Julia Sebutinde, who noted the prosecution had not opposed the request for more time.

Taylor's chief defense counsel Courtenay Griffiths said: "We are anxious to get on with this trial. We appreciate the accused has spent a considerable amount of time in custody and we appreciate that there are other pressures on this court.

"Time allowed now will help reduce the length of the trial in due course and save money," he added.

Judges agreed and granted the four-month postponement the defense had requested.

Taylor attended the hearing, wearing a smart double-breasted gray suit with gold cufflinks. During proceedings he listened attentively and took notes.

Griffiths said there were some 40,000 pages of material submitted by prosecutors to be examined, and a further 50,000 pages of material from Taylor's personal archives had surfaced in Monrovia which could be crucial to the case.

The Special Court was set up with United Nations backing to try some of those deemed most culpable for crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 war.

Drugged up rebels and militia fighters, often only children themselves, killed, raped and maimed men, women and children.

Taylor's trial is being held in The Hague because of fears it could spur instability if held in Freetown, Sierra Leone. On Saturday, the country held its first elections since the departure of U.N. peacekeepers two years ago.

The trial will resume on January 7, 2008.

Al Jazeera

Monday, 20 August 2007

Taylor war crimes trial postponed

Judges have postponed the war crimes trial of Charles Taylor, Liberia's former president, until January, giving his defence more time to prepare a case.

Taylor, who is accused of instigating murder and rape during Sierra Leone's civil war, boycotted the beginning of his trial in The Hague in June, saying his defence was under-resourced.

Taylor appointed a replacement defence team last month after he was granted funding. The team requested four more months to prepare Taylor's case.

"In the chamber's view, the period of four months is indeed a reasonable time... to grapple with a complicated case," said Julia Sebutinde, a judge.

The Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up with UN support to try individuals for crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 war.



Child soldiers fought in Sierra Leone's bitter conflict [AP]

Sebutinde took into account that the prosecution had not opposed the defence team's request for more time.

"We are anxious to get on with this trial," Courtenay Griffiths, Taylor's chief defence counsel, said.

"We appreciate the accused has spent a considerable amount of time in custody and we appreciate that there are other pressures on this court." Taylor was present at the hearing.

Extra evidence

Griffiths said there were about 40,000 pages of material submitted by prosecutors to be examined.

He said 50,000 pages of material from Taylor's personal archives had also been found in Monrovia which could be crucial to the case.

During the conflict, hundreds of civilians had limbs cut off by fighters wielding machetes. Many of the fighters were children.

The charges against Taylor says he aimed to take control of Sierra Leone's mineral wealth, particularly its diamond mines, and destabilise the Freetown government to boost his own influence across West Africa.

The indictment focuses on abuses committed between 1996 and 2002, and catalogues the violent practices of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which the prosecution says was backed and supplied by Taylor.

Taylor's trial is being held in The Hague because of concerns it could spark unrest if held in Sierra Leone.

On Saturday, Sierra Leone held its first elections since the departure of UN peacekeepers two years ago.

Guardian Unlimited

Monday, 20 August 2007

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/westafrica/story/0,,2152681,00.html>

Taylor war crimes trial postponed until January

Mark Tran

Guardian Unlimited



The former Liberian president Charles Taylor. Photograph: Ben Curtis/AP

Judges today agreed to delay until January the trial of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor on war crimes charges.

The trial at The Hague - the first time an African leader has faced an international tribunal - was to have restarted this month.

Mr Taylor faces 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity for allegedly backing the Revolutionary United Front, a rebel group that killed, maimed and raped thousands of people in neighbouring Sierra Leone during a war that lasted 11 years.

The conflict ended in 2002 after Tony Blair sent British troops to help the government in Freetown.

Mr Taylor, who attended today's hearing, sacked his defence team when his trial opened in June and boycotted the special UN-backed court, saying he wanted stronger legal representation.

Judge Julia Sebutinde said the demand was a fair one, noting that the prosecution had left it unchallenged.

"In the chamber's view, the period of four months is indeed a reasonable time ... to grapple with a complicated case," she said.

Mr Taylor's new chief defence counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, a British lawyer, said: "We are anxious to get on with this trial. We appreciate the accused has spent a considerable amount of time in custody and we appreciate that there are other pressures on this court. Time allowed now will help reduce the length of the trial in due course, and save money."

Since the trial opened, the special court has agreed to a new "financial package" of \$100,000 (£50,000) a month so that Mr Taylor can hire a top legal team for his defence.

The 59-year-old could spend up to \$2m, depending on how long his trial takes. Estimates range from 12 to 18 months.

Mr Griffiths said prosecutors had submitted some 40,000 pages of material for examination, and a further 50,000 pages of potentially crucial material from Mr Taylor's personal archives had surfaced in Liberia.

If Mr Taylor is found guilty, he is likely to spend the rest of his life in a British jail.

The court has been criticised for being too expensive and too slow in bringing people to trial. Set up in 2002, the ad hoc court, consisting of international and Sierra Leonean judges, issued its first verdicts in June, when it found three militia leaders guilty of war crimes including mutilation, rape and the use of child soldiers in Sierra Leone's civil war.

In doing so, it made legal history. It was the first time an international tribunal had ruled on the charge of recruitment of child soldiers.

Mr Taylor's trial is being held at The Hague because of fears it could lead to instability if held in Freetown. On Saturday, Sierra Leone held its first elections since UN peacekeepers left, two years ago.

United Nations News Service

Monday, 20 August 2007

War Crimes Trial of Former Leader Postponed By UN-Backed Court

The war crimes trial of former Liberian president Charles Taylor has been postponed until early next year after judges at the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) agreed today to give defence lawyers more time to study the evidence.

Mr. Taylor's counsel applied for a delay until 7 January so they could evaluate some 40,000 pages of evidence recently disclosed by prosecutors, SCSL spokesperson Solomon Moriba told the UN News Service from The Hague, where the trial is being held.

Justices Julia Sebutinde (presiding), Teresa Doherty and Richard Lussick approved the application during a status conference, one in a series that will be held over the next few months to assess the progress of the prosecution and the defence in presenting their cases.

Mr. Taylor is facing 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including mass murder, mutilations, rape, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers, for his role in the decade-long civil war that engulfed Sierra Leone, which borders Liberia.

A year ago the Security Council authorized the staging of Mr. Taylor's trial at The Hague, citing reasons of security and expediency. Although the trial will be held at the premises of the International Criminal Court (ICC), it will remain under the exclusive jurisdiction of the SCSL.

The Special Court, established in January 2002 by an agreement between the Sierra Leonean Government and the UN, is mandated to try "those who bear greatest responsibility" for war crimes and crimes against community committed in the country after 30 November 1996.

Last month it reached an agreement with the United Kingdom that will mean Mr. Taylor will be imprisoned in the UK if he is convicted.

AllAfrica.com

Monday, 20 August 2007

Taylor Trial Adjourned to 2008

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor's war crimes trial in The Hague, Netherlands was adjourned until January 7, 2008 at a hearing Monday.

This was confirmed to allAfrica by Peter Andersen, a spokesperson for the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Taylor's new defense team told the hearing they have discovered new evidence and need time to evaluate it. According to Andersen, the prosecution supported the motion and the judges agreed that [the delay] was a reasonable amount of time.

The BBC reported that Taylor's lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, said the evidence included an archive of the former president's papers. Griffiths has represented Taylor since June 17.

"Time allowed now will help reduce the length of the trial in due course and save more," Griffiths told a hearing of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, according to a Reuters report.

Parties to the Taylor trial will meet again on September 20 for a status conference to deal with any issues that need to be dealt with before the trial, Andersen said, adding that there will be a number of status conferences before the trial begins.

Taylor is facing 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for alleged atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's decade-long civil war.

The Inquirer (Monrovia)

Monday, 20 August 2007

GOL Replies Taylor's Lawyers

By Patrick K. Wrokpoh

The Liberian Government has reacted to calls made by defense lawyers of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor that the former should sponsor a trial monitoring group to the Hague to follow developments in the Taylor case.

Mr. Taylor's lead defense lawyer, Courtenay Griffiths, at a news conference last Thursday held in Monrovia, called on the Liberian Government to ensure that television coverage of the trial be placed in public places across the country so that the average Liberian can have access to the proceedings as they unfold in court.

Mr. Griffiths who was accompanied to the country by two other defense lawyers in the case, said the government is not showing any interest in the matter; stressing that the trial of the former leader is for Liberians since the accused is their former leader and a citizen of the country.

But in its official reaction made over the weekend to Mr. Taylor's lawyers' statements, the Government of Liberia said it has nothing to do with the trial of the former leader.

Giving government's position on the issue over the weekend when he addressed the press on a number of national issues, Deputy Information Minister for Public Affairs, Gabriel Williams said, the Taylor trial goes beyond this government and as such, it has absolutely nothing to do with the proceedings.

He said the Taylor trial sprang out as a result of a resolution of the United Nations Security Council; stressing that all the government is trying to do, as a member of the world body is to conform to the United Nations' resolution, which he noted is binding on all member countries.

"Here in Liberia, we are talking about beach erosion; our people are being displaced and we are talking about building a broken country destroyed by war at the benefit of few people. We have a nation that is 160 years, that is equivalent of being a great grandfather of other countries like Ghana and Nigeria, but is so backward, unlike in Ghana, where they are doing heart surgery and you can not have enough money here in Liberia to treat malaria then you telling me about putting video scream up?" he asked.

He said where will the government get the money from to do what Mr. Taylor's lawyers have proposed when it has all of these things on its head to do for a post-war nation like ours.

He added that the assertion by Mr. Taylor's defense team is their opinion but the fact is that the government just does not have the funds to do so.

Thisday (Nigeria)

Tuesday, 21 August 2007

Opinion

Revoked Asylum: Why Taylor Can't Sue Nigeria

From Constance Ikokwu in Washington DC, 08.21.2007

Former Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra-Leone (SCSL), Prof David Crane has said the 2003 peace deal that granted asylum to former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor in Nigeria, had no legal effect under international law and cannot be a basis for instituting legal proceedings against the country.

According to the Distinguished Professor of Practice at the College of Law, Syracuse University, United States (US), the Nigerian government took the right step by handing over Taylor, as international law requires all state parties who have signed various conventions to turn over individuals indicted for international crimes to the appropriate authorities, in spite of any previous agreements made between states.

Responding to a question on whether Taylor's lawyers could institute legal proceedings against Nigeria claiming a breach of an existing agreement, Crane said "no, not all. There's no legal effect to that agreement at all, it ...that's a political arrangement not a legal one so Charles Taylor's lawyer in my opinion would not have the legal standing by which to sue anybody."

The hand over of Taylor does not amount to a betrayal of trust because Nigeria had no legal authority to convey immunity for crimes against humanity on behalf of the international community, says acting Associate Clinical Professor, Vanderbilt University Law School, US, Mike Newton.

"So whatever agreement he (Taylor) signs is between him and domestic governments. The jurisdictional authority of the tribunal springs from the UN and another government. That's why there's no immunity because the government of Nigeria does not have authority to grant immunity for those crimes vis-à-vis the UN or the government of Sierra-Leone," he adds.

Crane further stated that Taylor's trial would set the tone for the rule of law in African countries where the leaders hitherto governed for personal gain. He observed that the recent effort by the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to seize Taylor's assets is a proper move on behalf of the Liberian people.

Asked if the US had the moral standing to ask for Taylor's extradition when it strongly opposed and still opposes similar international tribunals such as the International Criminal Court (ICC), Crane answered in the negative.

His words: "Certainly the United States and its moral standing in the world is rather low right now so certainly from a practical and a political point of view, the US does not have a great deal of standing arguing these types of things. But again... the bottom legal principle is that all state parties and members of the UN must turn over indicted war criminals for an appropriate and fair trial. Certainly the US and Nigeria were mandated to do that."

When quizzed about the continued existence of Guantanamo Bay prison set up by the US and its effect on international law, Crane had this to say: “Certainly the Guantanamo Bay is an embarrassment to the United States of America (USA). Under international law it is probably violating various conventions, treaties and other types of law within the international scheme. Under the US domestic law, the Guantanamo Bay is legal but under international law it is not. Some of the things that are going on in Guantanamo are also potential violation of US law but again under international law, Guantanamo is certainly practically politically and legally a disaster for the US.”

Taylor who is currently facing trial for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra-Leone caused a stir last year when he escaped his asylum home in Nigeria in an attempt to evade trial. He was later captured and was handed over to the tribunal for trial. He is the first African Head of State and second in the world, after Slobodan Miliesovic, to stand trial at an international tribunal.

Taylor’s supporters say his hand-over was clearly a breach of the agreement that saw him voluntarily leave Liberia in order to end the 14-year civil war in that country.

UNMIL Public Information Office
Press Clips 20 August 2007

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

International Clips on Liberia

08/20/2007 10:34:46

UPDATE 3-Trial of Liberia's Taylor delayed to January

By Alexandra Hudson

THE HAGUE, Aug 20 (Reuters) - Judges on Monday postponed until January the war crimes trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor as lawyers argued over whether victims of the atrocities in Sierra Leone need be called to testify. Taylor is accused of instigating murder, rape and mutilation in a quest for diamonds during the civil war in Sierra Leone.

His chief defence counsel, Courtenay Griffiths, said he saw no reason why victims of the war need testify unless the prosecution was trying to make an "emotional impact". Prosecutors replied that their testimony was required.

Taylor, 59, boycotted the opening of his trial in June in a dispute over the resources allocated to his defence, prompting weeks of legal wrangling and repeated delays.

More funds were made available to Taylor and a new defence team was appointed last month.

The team requested a delay until January to prepare the case. "Time allowed now will help reduce the length of the trial in due course and save money," Griffiths said in his plea.

"In the chamber's view, the period of four months is indeed a reasonable time ... to grapple with a complicated case," said Judge Julia Sebutinde, who noted the prosecution had not opposed the request.

Taylor, 59, attended the hearing, wearing a double-breasted grey suit with gold cufflinks. His lawyer said the former president, who has pleaded not guilty to all charges, was also anxious to begin his trial as soon as possible.

NEW ARCHIVE MATERIAL

Griffiths said there were some 40,000 pages of material submitted by prosecutors to be examined, and 50,000 pages of material from Taylor's personal archives had surfaced in Monrovia which could be crucial to the case.

But bringing victims to The Hague to testify was unnecessary, he said.

"No one is denying that horrific acts were committed ... the question is: were those horrible things done at the behest of or in the knowledge of this defendant?" Griffiths asked.

"Let's get rid of all this emotional baggage which the prosecutor is seeking to bring before the court," he told journalists afterwards.

In Sierra Leone, a generation of civilian amputees -- their hands or legs hacked off by rebels -- are a painful reminder of the cruelty of the conflict.

Drugged rebels and militia fighters, often only children themselves, killed, raped and maimed men, women and children.

Prosecutors say in the indictment that Taylor tried to gain control of Sierra Leone's mineral wealth, particularly its diamond mines, and destabilise the Freetown government to boost his own influence throughout West Africa.

The indictment focuses on abuses between 1996 and 2002, and catalogues the horrific practices of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels, who it says Taylor supported and supplied.

Taylor's trial is being held in The Hague because of fears it could spur instability if held in Sierra Leone. On Saturday, the country held its first elections since the departure of U.N. peacekeepers two years ago. The trial will resume on Jan. 7.

08/20/2007 07:13:47

Charles Taylor's new defense team objects to bringing victims to testify at

MIKE CORDER

Associated Press Writer

Source: AP Alert - Crime

Date: August 20, 2007

THE HAGUE, Netherlands—Charles Taylor's new defense team said Monday it sees no reason for victims mutilated in Sierra Leone's brutal civil war to testify at the former Liberian president's war crimes trial. "At first sight, we are unable to see the relevance of the crime-based witnesses ... unless of course the prosecution wants the emotional impact of transporting limbless individuals from West Africa," Taylor's chief defense attorney, Courtenay Griffiths, told judges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Seeking a delay in the resumption of the trial until January, Griffiths told the judges that "a myopic insistence on expeditiousness" would turn Taylor's right to a fair trial into "an empty formality."

Griffiths, a British lawyer who appeared in court wearing a traditional wig, was appointed to defend Taylor at the beginning of August after Taylor fired his previous court-appointed attorney.

Prosecutors at the U.N.-backed court did not object to the request for an adjournment. The judges did not immediately rule on the request.

Taylor is charged with arming and supporting rebels who murdered thousands of civilians and hacked off the limbs of thousands more during Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war, which ended in 2002. Prosecutors plan to call at least 10 such victims as witnesses.

Prosecution trial attorney Brenda Hollis said the victims were crucial to the case.

"The crime-base evidence of course is relevant because we are required to prove the crime base beyond reasonable doubt," Hollis said.

Taylor, the first African leader to face an international tribunal, boycotted the start of his trial June 4 and initially said he wanted to defend himself, throwing the process into turmoil. He has pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Griffiths said one reason he required a delay was that his team was given access to Taylor's personal archive only last week and needed time to assess its contents.

Among its tens of thousands of documents was a personal letter from former U.S. President Jimmy Carter to Taylor, but Griffiths did not reveal its contents.

The trial, at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, is being held in The Hague because of fears it could ignite violence if it were held in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital.

Prosecutors allege that Taylor trained Sierra Leone's rebels and shipped them arms, alcohol and drugs _ often used to desensitize child soldiers before they were sent to the front lines _ in return for diamonds often mined by slave labourers.

International Clips on West Africa

08/20/2007 12:24:58

Si Leone opposition rallies against ruling party in expected vote run-off

Source: Agence France-Presse English Wire Date: August 20, 2007

by Rod MacJohnson

FREETOWN, Aug 20, 2007 (AFP) - Sierra Leone's ruling party presidential candidate and Vice President Solomon Berewa said Monday two main opposition parties have banded against him for a highly likely election run-off.

Berewa, who is trailing behind the main opposition All People's Congress (APC) party's Ernest Koroma, said he was aware of a decision by the opposition to team up to curtail his chances of winning.

Charles Margai, leader of the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC), an offshoot of the ruling party, Sunday night told guests at his birthday celebrations that he would support the APC, according to two independent FM radio stations.

No PMDC official could be immediately reached for comment.

With more than 80 percent of the results in, the APC's Koroma is leading with more than 41 percent of the ballots cast, followed by Berewa at around 35 percent, and Margai is in the third position with 13 percent of the votes.

Asked for his reaction by reporters on Monday, the ruling Sierra Leone's People's Party (SLPP)'s Berewa put up a brave face, saying he had heard about the planned alliance, but "the fact that the APC has taken the lead so far does not mean it has won".

"If there is going to be a runoff, I am going with the same spiritual hope to win the election at all cost," he said.

Neither of the two front-runners in the vote is close to clinching the 55 percent absolute majority needed to avoid a run-off.

APC spokesman Alpha Kanu hailed the opposition deal as "good for Sierra Leone as it has the potential to unify the country", whose political groupings have traditionally been defined along ethnic lines.

"There is need for the regions to come together to move Sierra Leone forward and Mr Charles Margai has taken the right step," Kanu told AFP.

"It is time we take down the signs of tribalism and sectionalism in Sierra Leone," said, Kanu hinting that "other political parties are ready to come on board".

Sierra Leone voted on August 11 to pick a new president and a legislature, as President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah completes his two five-year terms, the maximum allowed by this predominantly Muslim country.

The vote was only the second since the west African country emerged from one of the most brutal wars in modern history and the first after the departure of some 17,500 United Nations peacekeepers in 2005.

The elections were closely watched to see whether the former British colony has put the violence of its 1991-2001 conflict behind it and embraced lasting democracy.

The war, funded by "blood diamonds," left around 120,000 people dead and many more mutilated and traumatised.

Kanu admitted that his party had long approached the PMDC over the possibility of forming an alliance in case of a second round of voting.

"We've been working hard over the past year or so. We agreed that we go through the elections and in case there is a runoff, we shall support each other," he said.

SLPP spokesman Victor Reider blasted Margai's decision to align with the APC.

"The rate at which he (Margai) has pitched tent with the APC shows that his intentions have been to destroy the chances of the SLPP but he will not succeed," said Reider.

08/20/2007 12:06:09

Key candidate backs vote leader in Sierra Leone election

CLARENCE ROY-MACAULAY

Associated Press Writer

Source: AP WorldStream English (all)

Date: August 20, 2007

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone_The candidate running third in Sierra Leone's presidential race threw his support behind the vote leader Monday, as the election appeared headed for a run-off.

Charles Francis Margai, a lawyer and former minister who heads a party that broke away from the ruling coalition 15 months ago, said he would support opposition leader Ernest Bai Koroma in a run-off with the ruling party candidate.

Theophilus Gbenda, spokesman for Margai's Peoples Movement for Democratic Change, said Margai was looking to move past tribal and regional divisions to the "common good of the country."

Margai has been trailing the top two candidates by a large margin, but his support could be key in a run-off, particularly because his breakaway candidacy was seen by some as pulling votes away from Vice President Solomon Berewa, of the ruling party. Berewa is trailing Koroma in partial results.

The Aug. 11 election _ the first since U.N. peacekeepers withdrew two years ago _ was seen as a chance for the diamond-rich nation to show it has established civilian rule following a 10-year war that was declared over in 2002.

A run-off will be held if no candidate garners 55 percent of the vote, which is looking increasingly likely.

In results from about 80 percent of the country's more than 6,000 polling stations, Koroma was ahead with 44 percent, compared with 38 percent for Berewa. Margai was in third place with about 14 percent.

Seven candidates had vied to succeed President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, who is prevented by term limits from running for a third, five-year term. Berewa was generally considered the front-runner going into the vote, but Koroma has been leading since the first results started coming in.

By law, the election commission has 12 days from the balloting to compile results.

About 2.6 million of Sierra Leone's 5 million people were registered to vote in the election.

UNMIL Daily Newspaper Summary
Monday, 20 August 2007

[The newspaper summary does not necessarily represent the views of UNMIL.]

Public Gives Mixed Reactions to UNMIL's Drawdown Process

(New Democrat, The News, Liberian Express and New Democrat)

- A number of Liberians have given mixed reactions to a recent pronouncement regarding an eventual troop reduction in UNMIL. Some people are of the opinion that UNMIL will not remain in the country indefinitely and that security can only be guaranteed by Liberians. Others expressed fear that the country would not be ready to handle its own security and ensure stability if UNMIL leaves.
- The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in his fifteenth progress report on Liberia to the Security Council said it was too early to determine when the final withdrawal of UNMIL should take place and to plan for successive arrangements.
- Reports on the Secretary's-General (SG) recent recommendations to the UN Security Council for further extension of UNMIL's mandate and for the Mission to keep 9,000 troops in the country by the end of 2010 received overwhelming public commendation in the media and have restored public confidence.
- It can be recalled that the head of UNMIL Mr. Alan Doss has repeatedly said that UNMIL has no plans of pulling out of the country but is rather adjusting to a changed political context.

Coup Suspect Request for Lawyer, Says He's Broke

(The News, Heritage, Daily Observer and New Democrat)

- One of the key suspects in the treason trial has declared himself indigent. Former Speaker George Koukou said that he is not in the financial position to pay his legal fees during the trial even though he has served the nation in various capacities.
- Meanwhile, the Liberian Government has filed a six count motion of resistance to admit to bail ex-army general Charles Julu on treason charges for allegedly planning to overthrow the Government.

Teacher Fired for Sexually Harassing Pupil

(The News)

- A third grade student, 13, has been sexually harassed allegedly by her teacher, authorities at the Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS) said over the weekend. According to the administration of the MCSS, the instructor has been dismissed.
- The school's authority quoted the girl as complaining last Thursday that her teacher, Morris Nimley, took her into an empty classroom and squeezed her breast.

UNMIL Daily Radio Summary
Monrovia, 20 August 2007

Following are excerpts of select Liberian radio stations' news programs. Parts of the transcripts have been paraphrased and edited to conform to UNMIL style. The radio summary does not necessarily reflect the views of UNMIL.

Local Media – Radio Veritas *(News monitored today at 9:45 am)*

Taylor's War Crimes Trial Adjourned Until Next Year

- The war crimes trial involving former Liberian President Charles Taylor has been adjourned to January 7 next year.
- The case was adjourned after the Trial Chamber granted motion by Mr. Taylor's new defence team for time to prepare.

(Also reported on Star Radio and ELBS)

BBC Online

Monday, 20 August 2007

Uganda considers war crimes court

Uganda has begun consultations on how to deal with rebels and others responsible for atrocities during the insurgency in the north of the country.

Internal Affairs Minister Ruhakana Rugunda said they are seeking views from victims and legal experts on setting up war crime courts.

The government and Lord's Resistance Army rebels are engaged in peace talks in Sudan aimed at ending the conflict.

Some 1.7m people are living in camps in the north as a result of the fighting.

LRA leader Joseph Kony and his deputy Vincent Otti are among the five rebel commanders who have been indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes.

"The victims are the primary people concerning in this peace process, they are the ones who suffered and their views are critical in ensuring there is accountability and reconciliation," Mr Rugunda told the BBC's Network Africa programme.

Victims consulted

Mr Rugunda, who is also the government's chief negotiator at the peace talks, also hinted that there is a possibility of forming a unique legal system based on traditional values to set up local war crimes courts.

Government officials will seek views from people living in 10 towns in the north of the country where most atrocities were committed.

They will ask victims of the violence how they believe the perpetrators should be punished, not only for the killings but for the brutal mutilations and abductions carried out by Lord's Resistance Army rebels, who cut the lips and tongues from civilians and took their children off to fight or serve as sex slaves.

LRA rebels have said they may accept the idea of setting up local courts but warned the government not to take unilateral decisions.

The rebels have vowed not to sign a final peace deal unless the ICC in The Hague withdraws arrest warrants for its leaders.

The peace talks in Juba were suspended last month to allow both sides to consult with the victims on the process of reconciliation and punishing those responsible for the atrocities.



Mr Rugunda is looking at a system based on traditional values



CNN

Tuesday, 21 August 2007

Former Saddam Hussein commanders on trial

BAGHDAD, Iraq (CNN) -- Fifteen former Iraqi officials from the regime of executed dictator Saddam Hussein went on trial Tuesday for their alleged roles in the slaughter of thousands of Shiite Muslims during a 1991 uprising, court officials said.

They are charged with crimes against humanity in the case being heard by the Iraqi High Tribunal. Estimates of the Shiite death toll range from 20,000 to 100,000.

Four of the former regime members now standing trial have already been convicted for their roles in the Anfal campaign -- an Iraqi Army offensive in the 1980s that killed up to 100,000 people in Iraq's Kurdish region.

Mohammed Khaleefa, the chief Judge in the Anfal trial, will also preside over a five-judge panel in this case.

Those on trial, who were also convicted in the Anfal case, are:

Hussein's first cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majeed, nicknamed "Chemical Ali," who was sentenced to death for genocide and war crimes. He is appealing the ruling.

Sultan Hashem Ahmed, military commander of the Anfal campaign, is also appealing his death sentence.

Hussein Rashid Mohammed, deputy general commander of the Iraqi armed force, assistant chief of staff for military operations, and former Republican Guard commander. He is also appealing his death sentence.

Saber Abdel Aziz al-Douri -- director of military intelligence during the Anfal campaign -- received a life sentence.

The others on trial include:

Abdul Ghani Abdul Ghafou
Sabawi Ibrahim al-Has
Ibrahim Abdul Sattar Mohamme
Ayad Flayyeh Khaleef
Sa'edi Tou'ma Abbas
Ali Hameed Mahmoud
Ayad Taha Shehab
Lateef Muhal Hammoud
Sufyan Mahr Hasan
Waleed Hameed Tawfeeq
Qais Abdul Razzaq Mohammed

Special Court Supplement
Members of the Public and Journalists View the Taylor Status Conference in Courtroom II
Monday, 20 August 2007

