

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:

Tuesday, 4 April 2006

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
Ibrahim Tommy
Ext 7248

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Exclusive
4 April 2006

Taylor Blasts ...

*Special Court Is Illegal

*I fear for my life & family

By Mohamed Kal
The former President of Liberia Charles Taylor, yesterday made his first appearance before the trial chamber of the Special Court for Sierra Leone to answer to eleven count indictment for war crimes and crimes against humanity, he allegedly committed during the decade long conflict in Si-

Contd. page 2

Taylor Blasts ...

From front page

erra Leone. Responding to the charge, Mr Taylor said: "I cannot and could not have committed all the charge preferred against me during Sierra Leone's decade long civil catastrophe."

Mr. Taylor further told the trial chamber that he does not recognise the jurisdiction of the Special Court to try him and that there are fundamental issues relating to the setting up of the court which he would like to bring to the notice of the trial chamber.

He however said he would prefer to face trial in Sierra Leone rather than the proposed venue in the Hague, adding that, the Special Court is intended to divide Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The Chief Legal Adviser to the court, Mr. Vincent Nmieheille, also expressed concern over issues raised by Mr. Taylor that, he would like the court to provide certain facilities for his family members, such as guaranteeing their protection and of course those at his detention centre. He made reference to Slobodan Melosovic, who died in detention in the Hague for war crimes.

The presiding judge, Richard Lussick, explained to Mr. Taylor that he is still innocent until proven guilty of the eleven count charge noting that the trial chamber will observe his rights in accordance with the statute of the court.

Mr. Taylor is facing eleven count charge for aiding and abetting members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and of course exporting to Sierra Leone, members of his National patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) who committed rape, arson, murder, abduction, mutilation, sexual slavery and the conscription of children under the age of fifteen in Sierra Leone's civil conflict contrary to the provisions of the Geneva Convention and international humanitarian law.

The court proceedings was witnessed by officials of the office of the President and Mr. Taylor's family members including national and international journalists.

A date is yet to be set for the commencement of trial.

Awoko
4 April 2006

Definitely Not Guilty



Sister of Charles Taylor who came from Ghana
By Betty Milton & Kelvin Lewis

Immaculately dressed in a black double breasted suit with a

who showed him to his seat. He sat quietly and took in the surroundings of the court before his searching gaze became



Presiding Judge Justice Richard Lussic

water.
The Samoan born Judge, Justice Richard Lussic promptly entered the court at three o'clock. He then went on to inform Mr Taylor of the rights he has in the court which are that he is presumed innocent until found guilty, and that he will be given enough time to prepare his defence along with a trial without delay ending with his right to

reading the eleven-count indictment. This went on for the next thirty minutes during which Mr Taylor would clasp and unclasp his hands, rock his head from left to right as if he had a strain in his neck and take a sip of water, which he swirled in his mouth before swallowing.

By the time the seventh indictment was being read



Charles Taylor in Court

Mr Taylor seemed fighting to stay awake. He kept batting his eyelids which common of

people who don't want to be seen to be sleeping but whose
Contd. Page 4

line four

From Front Page

eyes are apparently so heavy with sleep that they find it hard to keep them open. It was in this state that Mr Taylor was suddenly asked by the judge, "Mr Taylor did you understand what has been read to you?" there was no response from him. Asked again "I don't know whether you heard my question but I'm simply asking whether you understand the charges brought against you in the indictment" Mr Taylor did not respond but he was then prompted to stand up by the guards. Asked again "Can you hear what I am saying can you hear" Mr Taylor stood straight up but did not respond. This was beginning to look like a replay of Foday Sankoh's trial in which he was asked to plead guilty but kept looking at the judge without answering. However with the help of his prison guards by his side, he fidgeted the earphones, before he was asked again by the Judge, "The indictment which has just been read out did you understand the charges that have been brought against you.". Then Mr Taylor answered, "Yes I do."

Justice Lussick then went on "Now I'm going to give you the chance to answer those charges by entering a plea of either guilty or not guilty. I'll go through each of the counts one by one and perhaps if you would be good enough to tell me whether you plead guilty or not guilty. The first count is count number one - terrorizing the civilian population namely acts of terrorism- how do you plead to that Mr Taylor Guilty or Not Guilty?"

At this point Mr Taylor suddenly came to life and in his usual eloquent style he said "If it pleases the court I will like to respond to all eleven counts at the end, because there are some issues which I would like to mention here about the recognition of this court, and other issues that I would not be able to call into play here at this particular time. There is the issue here regarding this court, its right to exercise jurisdiction over me, as the 21st President of the republic of Liberia, there are other issues of how I got here, if it pleases you your honour, these are fundamental issues, so for me its not the matter now of entering a plea, because I do not recognize the jurisdiction of this court."

Seeming slightly taken aback the Judge then went on to educate Mr Taylor about the court procedures.

He said "Mr Taylor I don't know what advice you've been given, but two things firstly this matter has already been thrashed out in the appeals chamber which found against you and secondly until such time as your initial appearance is completed you do not have the right to bring any motions before this court so what I would suggest is that you enter pleas today, and then whatever objections you might have you can bring them by a motion and that would need to be decided by the full bench of the trial chamber, so they won't be dealt with today in any event and if you don't complete your initial appearance today under the rules of our court, you cannot bring a motion before the court so I think you should enter pleas now and you can then if you chose bring your motions whatever they may be."

Mr Taylor then replied "Most definitely your honour I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone I think that this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone and so most definitely I am not guilty."

The issue of finding a lawyer for Mr Taylor was then thrashed out as the Principal Defender of the Court Vincent Nmehielle who is acting as counsel for Mr Taylor at this stage, revealed that the former Liberian President had "filed a declaration of means" in which Taylor "made a request for legal representation" Mr Nmehielle stated that Mr Taylor "could be deemed partially indigent."

It was after this exchange that the Principal Defender asked the judge whether he could allow Taylor to disclose some concerns he might have. The Judge strictly emphasised the rules stating that it is counsel for the accused who should put his case before the court. Principal Defender Nmehielle then went on "Your honour the accused person wants to inform the court that he fears for his life and therefore would express that to the court as a concern that he has particularly according to him in view of the fact that Mr Foday Sankoh died in detention while at this court and also in view of the fact that recently Mr Milosevic died in detention and therefore fears for his life and would love that necessary facilities in terms of his health and to ensure his safety be provided."

"Secondly the accused person fears that not being in

Liberia his family is not here and has some concerns as to him needing the moral support of his family in Sierra Leone and therefore every necessary facility in that regard to facilitate his family having access to him be provided. That is it your honour."

Not ending he further added that "this would of course also be subjected to some other procedure, My Lord the accused person want me to bring this to the attention of the court as to his concern that he wants to be tried in Sierra Leone and nowhere else. Thank you your honour that is the concern he has in terms of the logistics his possible witnesses and the fact that this is a domestically based trial for him within the sub-region to facilitate his family from Liberia to come to Sierra Leone he feels that the most appropriate venue for him if the trial must go on is in Sierra Leone he raises that concern before the court."

Conferring with Mr Taylor briefly, he went on to stress "I just try to emphasize the last point I made that he needs the trial here if it is to go on principally because his witnesses are based here, the logistics - the tendency that there may be the deprivation of access by his witnesses to countries that he hears are being proposed and they could easily be denied visas to get to that place which is being proposed and so that way he believes that for the logistics of his case Sierra Leone would be the most appropriate venue." The judge then adjourned the trial to a date to be fixed by the Court's Registrar.

Earlier four lawyers two from Liberia and two from Ghana had gone into to see Mr Taylor. Speaking to Mr Azanne

Kofi Akaiyah (Ghana) after their one hour meeting with Mr Taylor, he explained to Awoko that Mr Taylor "asked us to come and visit him so that we can give advice as to how he should prepare for this case, - we are not his lawyers as such, he just wanted us to come across and give him advice prior to the first hearing. After the first hearing he would make arrangements to constitute his own legal team - he hasn't done that as yet." He disclosed that the lead counsel in their four-man team is Mr Francis Y.S Galawulo, former senator from Liberia, and Mr Taylor's personal counsel Theophilus C. Gould along with Mr Nana Ato Dadzie a former Presidential advisor and Chief of Staff in Ghana.

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New Citizen
4 April 2006

TAYLOR VERSUS SPECIAL COURT

By Antoinette Moseray who made his first
Former President of appearance at the Spe-
Liberia, Charles Taylor cial Court in Freetown



Charles Taylor

yesterday pleaded not guilty to all eleven amended charges preferred against him but stated before Presiding Judge Richard Lussick at Special Court Room

Cont. page 8

TAYLOR VERSUS SPECIAL COURT

From page 1

No. 2 that he does not recognize the jurisdiction of the Court and that he would love to be tried in Sierra Leone and nowhere else.

Charles Taylor's matter is listed as Case No: SCSL 2003 01/R which also called the "Prosecutor versus Charles Taylor".

The eleven-count charges levied against Charles Taylor include: terrorizing of the civil populace, unlawful killings, violence to life, rape, sexual slavery, disrespect for personal dignity, physical violence to life, recruiting child soldiers, forced labor/enslavement and looting.

After the reading of the indictment, the individual criminal responsibility was also read which included crimes that Charles Taylor planned, instigated, ordered, commanded, aided and abated the war in Sierra Leone.

The presiding judge told the court that the accused can be responsible for the criminal acts if his subordinates carried out unlawful acts and the accused thereby failed to correct his subordinates or reprimand them for such acts.

Charles Taylor was then asked by the judge, "do you understand the charges levied against you, Mr. Taylor?" to which he responded, "yes I do".

Charles Taylor was then asked to plead guilty or not guilty to all the eleven-count charges one by one.

Charles Taylor responded saying, "I do not recognize the jurisdiction of this court but as it pleases the court, I would like to respond to all the eleven counts, not guilty.

He added, "I did not and could not have committed these crimes to a sister country like Sierra Leone. I think it is a plan to keep the people of Sierra

Leone and Liberia divided".

The Principal defender of the Special Court stated that the accused person required legal representation and asked whether the court would permit the accused to express certain concerns that he had already explained to him. He was asked to express the concerns on Charles Taylor's behalf.

The Principal defender then stated that the accused's fears for his life was much as Foday Sankoh, Milosevic had died in detention and since he is not in Liberia and members of his family are not here, he asked that facilities for members of his family to have access to him be provided.

The principal defender further disclosed that Charles Taylor said he would prefer to be tried in Sierra Leone and nowhere else.

Democrat
4 April 2006

Taylor wants Trial In Salone

Former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, said during his initial appearance before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone yesterday that he would like his trial to be held in Sierra Leone instead of The Hague.

Among the reasons forwarded by the former NPFL strongman was that his family would have easy access to him if the trial were held here.

Taylor, clad in a black suit with a red neck tie, initially refused to make a plea saying he did not recognise the jurisdiction of the court. He however later pleaded not



guilty to all the 11 count charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity that he is alleged to have committed during the country's bloody decade-long civil war.

News
4 April 2006

Taylor pleads

not guilty

By Gracie Bagrey

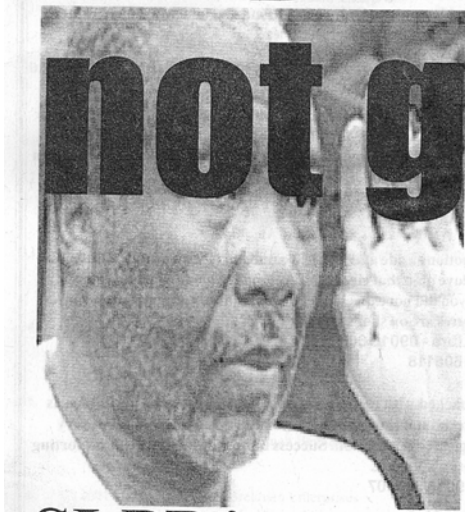
Former president of the Republic of Liberia who faced the Special Court of

Sierra Leone
yesterday has
pleaded not guilty to
all eleven charges
brought against
him.

He says he prefers
standing trial in Sierra
Leone as he will have
the opportunity to see
his family members
and friends than tried

elsewhere.

One of the charges
accused Taylor of
supporting the then
Armed Forces Ruling
Forces in Sierra
Leone. He is accused
of committing crimes
against humanity such
as sexual slavery,
unlawful killing, rape
other offences



Spectator
4 April 2006

12 lawyers for Charles Taylor

By Joseph Turay
& Alford Dillet

In his first appearance before the Special Court for Sierra Leone on Monday 3rd April 2006, former Liberian President Charles Taylor who pleaded not guilty to the charges levied

against him, and called for his trials to take place in Sierra Leone, would be defended by twelve lawyers, a senior member of the defence team confided in the Spectator. Former minister of Justice and Attorney General Francis Y.S.

Garalawolu and head of defence team said former solicitor general of Liberia Mr. Theophilus Gould and 3 other lawyers, one from Ghana and 2 from USA had all flown in to beef up the Charles Taylor defence and seven more would soon join them.

Taking his plea, Mr Taylor denied the charges against him, while calling for his trials to take place in Sierra Leone.

"I could not and did not commit these acts on the sister republic of Sierra Leone", he told the crowded courtroom.

Supporting Mr Taylor's insistence

on being tried here rather than at The Hague, Principal Defence Counsel argued that Mr Taylor was afraid for his life, citing the fate of former Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosovich who died while in custody of the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Standard Times
4 April 2006

Parliament welcomes Charles Taylor's arrival

BY EDWARD MARAH

Members of Parliament last week Thursday welcomed the arrival of former Liberian president and United Nation backed Special Court for Sierra Leone war crimes indictee, Charles Taylor to Freetown, following his extradition to Sierra Leone from Nigeria to stand trial for crimes against humanity.

The chairman, Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Dr. Alusine Fofanah said Charles Taylor's arrival in Sierra Leone is a victory

not only for Sierra Leoneans but for international justice, noting that the country, having tasted the bitterness of the war, is ready to taste the sweetness of justice with Charles Taylor who supported the rebels is tried for his actions.

Dr. Alusine Fofanah thanked the United States, Liberian and Nigeria governments, Britain and above all the United Nations for bringing Taylor to justice.

Dr. Fofannah, called on Sierra Leoneans to continue

respecting human rights, rule of law and democracy, adding that the eyes of the international committee is now on us.

Hon. Dauda Kamara of APC said the arrival of Charles Taylor to face the Special Court is in fulfillment of world justice, and stated that the dream of all Sierra Leone is to see Charles Taylor face justice and other leaders to see Charles as an example that no matter how powerful one is, human rights has to be respected.

FOC calls for Taylor and others to be taken to The Hague

As we wait to witness the Court appearance today of War Crimes indicted Charles Taylor, Forum of Conscience (FOC) welcomes the request by the President of the Special Court Justice A. Raja N. Fernando to the Government of the Netherlands and the President of International Criminal Court asking for physical facilities, the use of a Courtroom and a cell to facilitate the conduct of the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor by the Special Court in The Hague.

Forum of Conscience noted with concern the fact for the first time

the International Community, including the President of the United States, Mr. G.W. Bush and the President of the Special Court Justice Fernando are speaking with one voice, referring to concerns about the stability in the region should Taylor be tried in Freetown.

Forum of Conscience is asking for an extension of the security assessment done for War Crimes indictee Charles Taylor to be extended to other War Crimes indictees currently undergoing trial in Freetown taking into con-

sideration the fact that the Special Court promised the People of Sierra Leone the everyone is equal before the law. Therefore, in order to ensure fair trail for all the indictees, they should be kept in the same detention facility- Freetown or The Hague.

The Executive Director Forum of Conscience, Mr. Caulker today said; The request by the President of Special Court to the Government of the Netherlands, confirms the views of most Sierra Leoneans that the continued presence of the Special Court in Sierra Leone is a security threat to the Nation par-

ticularly as we approach 2007 Parliamentary and Presidential elections.

Consequently, Forum of Conscience is requesting the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) led government of President Alhaji Tejan Kabba to make a formal request to the President of Special Court for Sierra Leone to consider relocating the seat of the Court in Freetown to another Country under 'rule 4 of the Special Court's rules of procedures and evidence', which empowers the President of the Special Court to authorize a Trial Chamber to exercise its functions away from the seat of the court in Freetown.

It is important to note the awaited ruling by the Special Court on an

application by War Crimes indictee Chief Ruling Norman for the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone Dr. Tejan Kabbah to be compelled to testify before the Special Court and recent arrival of Charles Taylor to Sierra Leone make the nation vulnerable to conflict.

Finally, Forum of Conscience is appealing to the Special Court to make adequate provision for Representatives of National Media house/Journalist in Sierra Leone to cover the trials of all the indictees within and or outside of Sierra Leone or the benefit of Sierra Leoneans who rely heavily on our national news.

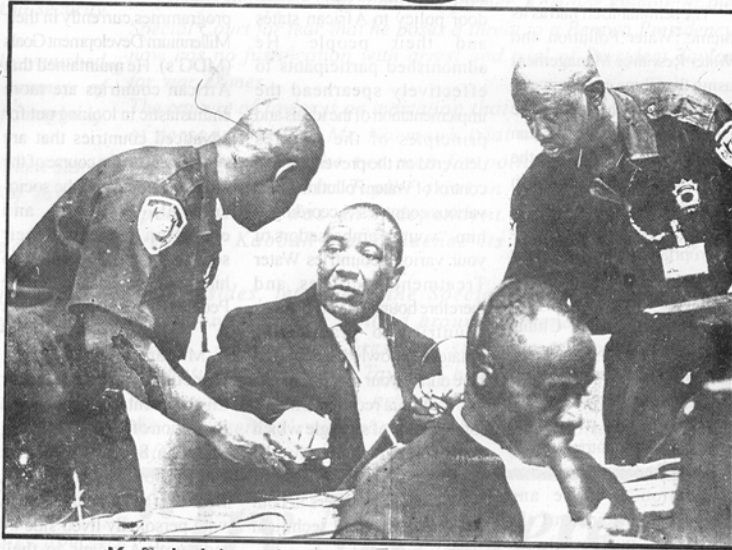
New Vision
4 April 2006

“Try Me Here Not The Hague”

Charles Taylor

Erstwhile President of Liberia Charles G. Taylor has said in Freetown that he would like the United Nations backed

Special Court for Sierra Leone to try him in Freetown and not The Hague. Mr. Taylor was speaking yesterday at the Special Court where he made his first
Contd. Page 3



Mr. Taylor being assisted by two security guards in Court yesterday

“Try Me Here...”

appearance to answer to eleven-court charge of genocide and crimes against humanity during the eleven-year brutal civil war in Sierra Leone. He said if he is tried in Freetown he will have access to his family and friends and that witnesses for his defence shall find it difficult to travel to The Hague or elsewhere as they would be denied visas

Mr. Taylor who was flown to Freetown last Wednesday evening, earlier told the court that as twenty first

noting that the former RUF leader died in prison cell of the Special Court

However when the trial judge asked whether he was guilty or not guilty, the former war lord said: “I did not and could have committed those offences”

Mr. Charles Taylor has long been accused of supporting the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels during the war in country. The former RUF rebels were accused of killing, maiming, raping, abducting and burning down of houses in the country.

New Vision

4 April 2006

The excruciating news of the dramatic escape last Tuesday of the former Liberian warlord, Charles Taylor from his posh mansion in Calabar in Nigeria almost shatter the successful outcome of the first ever International Investment Forum in Sierra Leone as delegates stood in bewilderment. Only God knows why Taylor chooses to escape or why news of his escape was broken on the first day of the conference, which was aimed at promoting private sector investment in the country.

In part, Sierra Leone's problem can be attributed to the lack of growth in the private sector due to the eleven years of civil conflict which Mr. Taylor's NPFL rebels exported to this country and which destroyed every facets of society. The News of his escape therefore overshadowed the absent of opposition politicians, including the mayor of Freetown who was due to address the Forum at its opening session. The only conspicuous absentee was the Nigerian Head of State Olusegun Obasanjo who was also a due to address the forum, but who according to president Kabbah had an emergency call to Washington. It was later reported that the Nigerian leader was to address three key issues with his US counterpart, one of which was the possible transfer of Mr. Taylor to Freetown to face justice.

The international business community that was here to explore possible investment opportunities understandably became perturbed with the news. If anything, Taylor represents a threat to security in sub-Saharan Africa.

If Taylor, according to his Spiritual Adviser had actually vanished into the forest of Liberia in partial fulfillment of his promise of returning to Liberia, the security repercussions, real or imaginary would have been felt right across that country.

In the mean time, three African governments and the United States particularly were far more tormented with the news of Taylor's escape than any other country.

President Obasanjo who was in the US was about to face a personal diplomatic embarrassment. Besides the 'serious and unspecified consequences', which the US had threatened, Mr. Taylor's escape would have dealt a devastating blow to Mr. Obasanjo's third term presidential bidding.

As for neighbouring Liberia, Taylor's escape was more of a psychological threat than a security. Liberia currently hosts thousands of UN troops whose mandate could be extended as long as Taylor had remained at large.

The United States wants Taylor tried for various reasons ranging from the war crimes he is alleged to have committed during the civil conflict in this country, his escape two decades ago from a US federal Prison and more importantly his alleged link with Al Qaeda.

The security hype that accompanied the news of the escape of Mr. Taylor as mentioned earlier would have grounded new potential investment in the country. However, the enormous political undertone would have been tormenting for both President Tejan Kabbah and his Vice-President, Solomon Berewa. Check this: When Sierra Leone's civil war ended, it was agreed locally and international that in order to deter future violations of heinous crimes, a post conflict justice system should be put in place to address impunity. The Special Court and the TRC thus came in to being by an act of Parliament.

The first high portfolio arrest that was ever effected by the court was done three years ago when Chief Sam Hinga Norman, the former member of government who was the National Coordinator of the Civil Defence Force was picked up in his office. Mr. Norman's arrest instantly sparked off

Taylor's Trial: Kabbah, Berewa Vindicated?

controversy in the country and even within the ruling party and put both President Kabbah and Solomon Berewa on the firing line.

Opponents accused Mr. Kabbah and Mr. Berewa who as Attorney General drafted the legal instrument and who now intends to succeed his boss. They have left stone on turn in laying the blame of Norman's arrest squarely on the two men. Initially, there were reports that some politicians were inciting the ex-combatants to disrupt a meeting in Bo where President Kabbah and his Vice were due to attend.

They were branded as people who plotted to disgrace Norman because of his popularity within the party and influence in the country.

This is why both Kabbah and Berewa at some point became the most hated politicians in the South East of the country.

President Obasanjo who had had his meeting with President Bush scheduled that Wednesday morning postponed, so that he can in the words of a Congress woman 'answer some awkward questions' relating to the escape of his guest, said afterwards that he felt vindicated when Taylor was finally captured.

Subsequently he was spared the embarrassment and the allegations of having wittingly or unwittingly masterminded the escape of one of the world's most wanted criminals.

As for Kabbah and Berewa, the allegations that they both connived to betray, entrapped and dump the former, Kamajor kingpin at the Special Court for fear that he poses a threat to a Berewa Presidency now has no justification with arrest and trial of President Taylor for war crimes.

The capture of Taylor is an indication that the law is no respecter of persons and that Mr. Norman's trial was neither instigated nor influenced by the two men for political reasons as have been remoured. Mr. Taylor trial in effect shows that the Special Court was an independent body which not even president Kabbah can influence its decision of whatever nature.

That besides, let face it the Special Court since it started operations has been centred around personality. Quite a few Sierra Leoneans are presently standing trial at the Court, but until the capture of Taylor, Chief Hinga Norman has been the newsmaker. He has now been over taken by Mr. Taylor, the 'evil genius' who has caused Sierra Leoneans so much suffering.

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, 3rd April 2006

Chief Prosecutor Welcomes the Successful Initial Appearance of Charles Taylor in Freetown, Sierra Leone

The Prosecutor, Desmond de Silva QC, today stated:

“Today marks the first phase of the trial of Charles Taylor. Today he appeared in the courtroom of the Special Court here in Freetown, to face the people of Sierra Leone against whom he is accused of committing heinous atrocities.

“The people of Sierra Leone have been waiting patiently for three years to see the Accused finally face the Trial Chamber here at the Special Court. Today this has happened. Many voices have come together to uphold the Rule of Law and Justice. The voice of the people of Sierra Leone was the loudest and I commend them for their courage, conviction and persistence. With their resolve I have been able to move forward over the last four years and finally see Charles Taylor in the Special Court.

“Today also marks an important step in the administration of international criminal justice. Those who commit atrocities and violate international humanitarian law will be held accountable. No matter how rich, powerful or feared people may be – no one is above the law.

“Now that the Defendant has pleaded not guilty to all counts, it is up to the Prosecution to prove its case.”

#END

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted thirteen persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Two indictments were withdrawn following the deaths of the accused. Ten indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

BBC

3 April 2006

Taylor pleads not guilty at trial

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has pleaded not guilty to all charges in his first appearance at a war crimes court in Sierra Leone.

He initially refused to plead, saying the UN-backed special court in Freetown had no authority to try him.

He faces charges for allegedly backing Revolutionary United Front rebels in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.



Charles Taylor listened impassively as the charges were read out

They committed widespread atrocities, such as chopping off people's limbs, as they fought to topple the government.

Mr Taylor was transferred to Sierra Leone last week after being arrested in Nigeria.

Nigeria had given him asylum under an agreement to end Liberia's own civil war in 2003.

Detailed charge sheet

Security was tight at the court in Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, as Mr Taylor arrived for his first appearance.

Wearing a dark suit and red tie, Mr Taylor listened impassively as 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity were read out, the BBC's Mark Doyle in Freetown says.

Before pleading not guilty, Mr Taylor told the judge: "I do not recognise the jurisdiction of this court."

The judge dismissed this argument and asked again how he pleaded. Mr Taylor responded: "Most definitely, I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone."

Mr Taylor has not yet picked his own defence team so was represented by court-appointed lawyers.

Shortly after pleading he was taken back under heavy security to his cell within the court compound.

“
not have committed these acts
 ”

Charles Taylor

**The charges against Taylor
 In pictures: Taylor trial**

TAYLOR TIMELINE

1989: Launches rebellion
1991: RUF rebellion starts in Sierra Leone
1995: Peace deal signed
1997: Elected president
1999: Lurd starts rebellion to oust Taylor
June 2003: Arrest warrant issued

This trial is now likely to be transferred to The Hague in the Netherlands where the Sierra Leone court will sit in special session, our correspondent says.

August 2003: Steps down, goes into exile in Nigeria
March 2006: Arrested, sent to Sierra Leone

It has been decided that it is simply too dangerous for Mr Taylor to be tried in Sierra Leone because of his connections and continuing influence in the region, he adds.

Profile: Charles Taylor
[Send us your comments](#)

The chief prosecutor at the court describes 58-year-old Mr Taylor as one of the three worst war criminals in the world, alongside the Serbian fugitives Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic.

The indictment he faces has been shortened and simplified, but is still a lengthy document.

The charges against him include murder, rape, sexual slavery, physical violence and cruel treatment, recruiting child soldiers and terrorising the civilian population.

In every case the charge sheet gives specific dates and places where these crimes were committed in Sierra Leone.

Analysts say trials on similar charges are already going on at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, but what sets Mr Taylor's case apart is that he was in neighbouring Liberia when the events were taking place.

A second part of the indictment attempts to link Mr Taylor to the rebellion in Sierra Leone.

Diamond deal

The prosecution claims that Mr Taylor provided the RUF leader Foday Sankoh with training, money, arms and ammunition to start his rebellion in Sierra Leone, and even lent him fighters to take part in the initial attack.

It is alleged that he shared a common plan with the rebel commanders to gain power and control over Sierra Leone, so he could gain access to its diamonds and have a government in Freetown which would support his aims, our correspondent says.

Lawyers advising Mr Taylor argue that the UN-backed court in Sierra Leone, has no right to try him and that it has no jurisdiction over Liberia or its former president.



The trial may be moved from the Freetown court to The Hague

The Special Court was set up to try to bring to justice those responsible for crimes during the country's decade-long civil war which officially ended in 2002.

The tribunal operates under both Sierra Leone domestic law and international humanitarian law.

The UN Security Council is considering a resolution to move Mr Taylor's trial to The Hague.

BBC

3 April 2006

A sombre Charles Taylor faces court

By James Copnall

BBC News, Freetown

Outside the special war crimes court, members of civil society in their Sunday best and war victims with amputated limbs queued up to watch Charles Taylor come face-to-face with justice.

Then the blue-helmeted UN soldiers from Mongolia sprinted to take up their places and the armoured car that glittered in the sun revved its engine nervously.

A white car with smoke-tinted windows pulled out of the prison gates and slowly drove the short distance to the court room.



Many Sierra Leoneans had been waiting for this moment

Charles Taylor arrived in court under heavy security, as befits a man who once escaped from a US jail and who attempted to flee his Nigerian exile only last week.

In the court, Mr Taylor, who is known for his flamboyant dress sense and charismatic speech, appeared as sombre as his dark suit.

He listened, betraying little emotion, as the 11 charges were read out against him.

Mr Taylor is accused of bearing responsibility for murder and rape, as well as using child soldiers and forced labour, among other accusations.

“
not have committed these acts
”

Charles Taylor

**The charges against Taylor
In pictures: Taylor trial**

The charges were detailed, and the detail was terrifying as places and times of murder and rape were read out to the hushed court.

All the charges relate to the Sierra Leone civil war and Mr Taylor's alleged support for the Revolutionary United Front rebels.

'Miracle' court appearance

The former Liberian president got more animated after the charges were read, most notably when the judge asked him how he wanted to plead.

"There is an issue with this court regarding its right to exercise jurisdiction over me as president of Liberia," he said.

"There are issues of how I got here. It is not a matter of me entering a plea as I do not recognise the jurisdiction of this court."



Charles Taylor was in court for little more than an hour

Mr Taylor was eventually persuaded to enter a plea after it was explained to him that the issue of the court's jurisdiction had already been dealt with in the appeal court.

Mr Taylor claimed he was innocent of all charges. "Most definitely, your honour, I could not have committed these acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone," he said.

"I think this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone, so most definitely I am not guilty."

Shortly afterwards, Mr Taylor left court and was driven with little ceremony back to his solitary prison cell.

His long-awaited day in court had in fact lasted little more than an hour.

But for many Sierra Leoneans it seemed a miracle that the man they accuse of concocting the brutal civil war, that all but destroyed their country, had been dragged before a court at all.

Voice of America

3 April 2006

Charles Taylor Appears Before The UN Special Court In Sierra Leone

By Ashenafi Abedje

Washington, DC

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor made his first appearance before the UN-backed Special Court in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He is facing 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for helping launch and promote more than a decade of conflict in Sierra Leone. In his own country, Liberia, Taylor started a rebellion to overthrow then-president Samuel Doe in 1989. The uprising turned into a 14-year off-and-on civil war in which 250 000 people were killed.

VOA West Africa reporter Joe Bavier is covering the trial in Freetown. In an interview with English to Africa reporter Ashenafi Abedje, Bavier said there is “quite a bit of excitement among those gathered to witness Taylor’s trial, and there is quite a media buzz surrounding this whole thing.” He says Sierra Leoneans have conflicting reactions to seeing Charles Taylor on their soil. “Some don’t take any interest in his trial and wish to put their violent history behind them. Others feel he is a security risk in a region that isn’t entirely stable yet.”

On the issue of where Charles Taylor should be tried, Bavier says some Sierra Leoneans feel their country “lacks the security capacity to keep this guy who has in the past broken out of prison in the United States.” He says others question how Sierra Leoneans will be able to follow the trial from so far away if Taylor is moved to the Hague. Bavier says the Taylor trial may put closure to some war victims, but others wish “to simply forget the war because they live with it every day.”

Later reporter Joe Bavier did a live debriefer with English to Africa reporter Kim Lewis on Africa News Tonight. He updated the story with the news that Taylor, who had refused to enter a plea, had agreed to plead not guilty.

Voice of America

3 April 2006

Former Liberian Leader Makes First War Crimes Court Appearance

By VOA News

03 April 2006



Courtroom where Charles Taylor appeared in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Monday

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor has appeared before an U.N.-backed tribunal to face charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Security was tight as Taylor's appearance before the Freetown, Sierra Leone court began Monday. He will be asked to enter a plea to the 11 charges that the court has filed against him.

The indictments stem from his alleged support for Sierra Leone rebels, accused of widespread atrocities during that country's civil war.

Taylor is being represented today by the court's defense attorneys, but has reportedly asked for the services of American lawyer Alan

Dershowitz, a Harvard University law professor.

Members of Taylor's family have said they do not think he can get a fair trial in Sierra Leone.

The court has asked to move the proceedings to the Netherlands, citing concerns that Taylor's presence could spark unrest in both Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Last week, Britain sponsored a draft resolution at the U.N. Security Council that would authorize the move.

If approved, the proceedings would likely take place in The Hague, under the jurisdiction of the Sierra Leone court.

Taylor was handed over to the court last week after Nigerian officials detained him trying to flee the country, where he lived in exile for three years.

Some information for this report was provided by AP and Reuters.

Associated Press

4 April 2006

Taylor Arraigned in Sierra Leone Court

The former Liberian president rejects charges of responsibility for war crimes in the adjacent nation. He resists a move to change trial location.

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone — The man who once was Africa's most feared warlord listened impassively to a litany of horrors couched in dispassionate legal language: the severing of limbs and other body parts, rape, abduction, sexual slavery, pillaging and conscription of boys and girls.

Then Charles Taylor, whose war to rule Liberia dragged in nations across West Africa, firmly told a war tribunal: "I did not and could not have committed these acts."

The judge accepted that as a not-guilty plea, officially arraigning the first African former president to be brought before a human rights tribunal. As the hourlong hearing ended, Taylor stood and smiled and blew kisses to relatives.

Taylor's appearance — three years after he was indicted and a week after he tried to escape extradition from Nigeria — forced him "to face the people of Sierra Leone, against whom he is accused of committing heinous atrocities," the court's chief prosecutor, Desmond de Silva, said in a statement Monday.

Taylor's defense lawyer asked that the case remain at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, established by the government and the United Nations to try those responsible for atrocities during the country's 1991-2002 civil war.

Court officials have asked that the trial be moved to an international tribunal at The Hague, in the Netherlands, because of fears the 58-year-old Taylor could still destabilize West Africa.

Taylor said through his lawyer that he feared for his safety in Sierra Leone but wanted to be tried in the region, in part because it would be easier for defense witnesses to testify. The court's chief prosecutor has said Taylor has no reason to fear for his safety.

No date has been set for the trial.

Associated Press

4 April 2006

Liberia's Taylor denies atrocities

Accused of masterminding reign of terror Security tight at hearing in

MICHELLE FAUL

ASSOCIATED PRESS

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone—Charles Taylor beamed and blew kisses after pleading not guilty to war crimes yesterday, appearing confident before an international tribunal intent on sending a message to the world's despots that no one is above the law.

The former Liberian president initially said he could not plead on the charges, which stem from his alleged role in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war, because he did not recognize the court.

Taylor — once one of Africa's most feared warlords — faces 11 counts of helping destabilize West Africa through killings, mutilations, sexual slavery and sending children into combat.

But after Justice Richard Lussick insisted, Taylor said calmly: "Most definitely, your honour, I did not and could not have committed those acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone."

The hearing was adjourned but no new date was set for Taylor's next court appearance.

He was flown in handcuffs to Freetown last week, after Nigerian police thwarted his attempt to flee to Cameroon after nearly three years in exile in Nigeria.

By the time Taylor was pushed from power in 2003, more than 300,000 people had died in conflicts he ignited in West Africa. From Liberia alone he is believed to have stolen at least \$100 million (U.S.) as president between 1997 and 2003.

"Taylor had a map he carried around with him called Greater Liberia," said Douglas Farah, an analyst and author. "It included parts of Guinea, diamond fields in Sierra Leone. It wasn't something abstract to him. He had a very clear idea of what he was trying to achieve. He had a grandiose plan, and he almost succeeded."

At the heart of Taylor's horrific genius, writes the New York Times' Lydia Polgreen, was an ability to manipulate West Africa's political, social and cultural values, seeming to smash deep taboos while subtly co-opting them for his purposes. In societies where power had always come with age and young people grew frustrated under the authority of elders, he espoused a smash-and-grab philosophy.

His commanders would force boys to kill their parents or other family members, breaking the ultimate taboo, then ply them with methamphetamines, marijuana and other drugs to keep their killing instincts keen. Often their pay came in the form of a licence to rape and plunder.

Yet even as he undermined traditional respect for elders, he subtly substituted himself in those elders' place, simultaneously enthralling and enslaving a generation of young boys who slaughtered on his behalf.

This explains his supporters' chilling election campaign cry in 1997: "He killed my ma, he killed my pa, I'll vote for him."

Taylor also co-opted the secret societies that dominate life in many West African countries, like the Poro hunting society in Liberia. This gave him access to a world of unseen power and allowed him to project an aura of mystery and invincibility. Rumours that he practised cannibalism, human sacrifice and blood atonement rituals merely added to his mystique.

But mostly he ruled through fear. Even now, in a jail cell here, he made West Africans tremble. Liberia and Sierra Leone asked that he be transferred to The Hague for trial.

Tamba Ngawucha, whose hands were amputated by rebels backed by Taylor during the war in Sierra Leone, said he was glad the tyrant was arrested. But when asked if he should be tried here, Ngawucha's eyes widened.

"We don't want any Charles Taylor here," Ngawucha said, flailing the stumps where his hands once were for emphasis. "We are too afraid he will hurt us again. We just want peace."

In a statement released yesterday, the court's chief prosecutor, Desmond de Silva, said Taylor's appearance was a watershed, proving that "those who commit atrocities and violate international humanitarian law will be held accountable, no matter how rich, powerful or feared people may be — no one is above the law."

Security for the hearing was tight. Taylor — and court officials who have received death threats — were protected by bullet-proof glass and by dozens of UN peacekeepers. A UN armoured vehicle stood guard outside the compound gates.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has expressed fear that Taylor's supporters could use the trial as an excuse to mount another insurgency.

With files from The New York Times

Reuters

3 April 2006

The Special Court - one of many tools for a lasting peace

FREETOWN, 3 April (IRIN) - After a decade of war 1991-2002, Sierra Leoneans asked the world for help in bringing to justice those responsible for crimes during the fighting, says a document explaining the Special Court for Sierra Leone. "The international community answered that call because they believed that only by holding people accountable will Sierra Leone truly know lasting peace."

The UN-backed Court, set up in 2002, marked the first time a war crimes tribunal was to be held in the country where the atrocities were committed. In this case such crimes included systematic murder, rape and sexual slavery, and mutilation - namely the hacking off of limbs.

Also unique was that the Court operated simultaneously with a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which wrapped up its work in 2004, handing a series of recommendations to the Sierra Leone government. Debate lingers over whether running the two institutions parallel is the best approach to post-war peace and justice.

Another key distinction was the Court's "hybrid" nature, with judges and staff from both in and outside Sierra Leone trying violations of both local and international law. Its 11 judges are appointed by both the United Nations and the Sierra Leone government. The current UN-appointed chief prosecutor is Desmond de Silva, a 67-year-old British lawyer who had been nominated by the Sierra Leone government in 2002 as deputy prosecutor.

Seated in the capital Freetown in its own specially built premises, the Special Court was created in 2002 by an agreement between the UN and the Sierra Leonean government. In 2000, while the country was still in the throes of war, the Sierra Leonean government had asked the UN to establish a war crimes tribunal and the UN had passed a resolution authorising this in August 2000.

The Special Court has been at work on three trials, concerning the three parties to the conflict – the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), a militia fighting alongside the Sierra Leone army; the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels; and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) rebels.

But the courthouse built in the New England area of Freetown came under the international media spotlight in recent days with the arrest and detention of its most prominent indictee - former Liberian President Charles Taylor, who in his first appearance before the court on 3 April pleaded not guilty to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He will be the first former African leader to face trial before an international tribunal for crimes allegedly perpetrated while in office.

The Court was mandated to try not all those who carried out war crimes, but "those bearing the greatest responsibility". Sierra Leone's war pitted RUF rebels against the government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. AFRC rebels seized power in 1997 but were later put down by regional forces and subsequently aligned with the RUF.

The Court can prosecute for war crimes and crimes against humanity under the Geneva Convention, international humanitarian law, and Sierra Leonean law; including murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, imprisonment, torture, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy and any other form of sexual violence, persecution on political, racial, ethnic or religious grounds, and other inhumane acts.

It has jurisdiction over acts committed only after 30 November 1996, when an initial comprehensive peace agreement was signed between the government and the RUF, only to be followed by more war.

Those convicted are to receive jail sentences; the Court does not sentence to death.

The Court has indicted 13 people from all sides in Sierra Leone's civil war, most notably Taylor - the only non-Sierra Leonean to be indicted (though Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi is mentioned in the indictment). Indictees included: From RUF - Foday Sankoh, Issa Sesay, Augustine Gbao, Maurice Kallon, Sam Bockarie From AFRC - Johnny Paul Koroma, Santigie Borbor Kanu, Alex Tamba Brima, Ibrahim Bazy Kamara From CDF - Samuel Hinga Norman, Moinina Fofanah, Alieu Kondewa

Two of the indictees - Foday Sankoh and Sam Bockarie - have since died. With Taylor's arrest on 29 March all but one of the indictees are in custody; Johnny Paul Koroma is still at large, believed by some to have died.

Prosecution has rested in the CDF and AFRC trials, which are now at the defence stage. In the CDF case, 75 prosecution witnesses have testified, 41 in the AFRC trial.

One of the most prominent and controversial figures to be indicted is Samuel Hinga Norman, head of the CDF. Many Sierra Leoneans see him as a hero who defended the government and resent that he is being brought up on war crimes. Both Fofanah and Hinga Norman of the CDF have argued that President Kabbah should be called to testify; their motion is pending in the Court.

The document explaining the court, 'Wetin Na Di Sheshal Kot?' - 'what is the Special Court' in Sierra Leone's Krio language, was produced by the Court's outreach section, which human rights advocates say is crucial to the Court's mission.

"One of the most important aspects of the Court has been its robust outreach effort," Elise Keppler of the Human Rights Watch international justice programme told IRIN from New York. "The Court has really gone out of its way to be accessible and relevant to the community affected by the crimes." Outreach has included town hall meetings, video showings of hearings and the distribution of booklets and films explaining the Court in simple terms.

Keppler says the Taylor trial points to the need for robust funding for the Court, which now depends on voluntary contributions from the international community – particularly for continued effective outreach should his trial be transferred to a courtroom in The Hague as the Court has requested. The Court – which has been expected to close in mid 2007 – is already facing a funding crisis. But with the arrest of Taylor, donors are expected to put up the cash necessary to carry out his trial, which could also require an extension of the Court's term.

The Court says perpetrators of war crimes must be held accountable for the country to "truly know lasting peace." But observers and members of civil society in Sierra Leone say a number of

other factors are as important for peace to take hold - reducing the country's crippling poverty, bolstering human rights protections, tackling mass youth unemployment and beating corruption.

Human rights groups say one of the most important roles for the court is to revitalise citizens' belief in the rule of law. "The Court has the potential for generating an attitudinal shift - puncturing the notion of politically powerful figures as being untouchable or above the law," says Corinne Dufka of Human Rights Watch West Africa office.

The hope, human rights groups say, is that the Court's outcome will go beyond international law and be an instrument for reinforcing national judicial systems.

The outreach booklet designed for Sierra Leonean citizens says, "One day the Court will finish its job. By then, if people are found guilty of the crimes alleged they will be punished. The Court hopes that in the future, leaders will be afraid to order people to commit serious crimes. This will help to create respect for human rights and respect for the rule of law."

Reuters

4 April 2006

Taylor denies war crimes, spurns court

From: Reuters By Nick Tattersall in Freetown, Sierra Leone

FORMER Liberia President Charles Taylor pleaded not guilty to war crimes in Sierra Leone and challenged the legality of the international court set to try him.

Making his first appearance since his arrest before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, Taylor listened stony-faced as the list of 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other charges was read out.

Asked to plead, the man who was once one of Africa's most feared warlords and known as "Pappy" to his child soldiers told the judge, Samoan Justice Richard Lussick, that he did not recognise the jurisdiction of the court.

"Most definitely, your honour, I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone," he said, flanked by police officers and wearing a dark blue suit and a red tie.

Taylor said he understood the charges against him, which accuse him of involvement in acts of terrorism, murder, rape, enslavement and use of child soldiers in Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

"I think that this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone and so most definitely I am not guilty," Taylor said.

The hearing was adjourned but no new date was set for Taylor's next court appearance. Remaining deadpan inside the court, he blew a kiss to family members as he left.

AFP

4 April 2006

Taylor pleads not guilty to crimes against humanity

Liberian former president Charles Taylor, once one of Africa's most feared men, has pleaded not guilty to charges of crimes against humanity during years of atrocities in Sierra Leone.

He was remanded in custody to a date yet to be fixed. He did not apply for bail during the landmark hearing but said he preferred to be tried in Sierra Leone.

"Most definitely, I'm not guilty," Taylor told Judge Richard Lussick at the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

"Most definitely, I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone," he insisted, after Krystal Thompson, the court's manager, read out the 11-count indictment against Taylor related to murder, sexual slavery, use of child soldiers and mutilation.

It was the first court appearance of the ex-warlord, and a landmark one making him the first former African president to answer charges of crimes against humanity.

"I think this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone," said Taylor after he questioned the authority of the court to try him.

The former strongman questioned the jurisdiction of the court but later said he preferred the trial to take place in Sierra Leone. The Special Court has sought to have the trial moved to The Hague due to security concerns.

"I do not recognise the jurisdiction of this court... its right to exercise jurisdiction over me as the 21st president of the republic of Liberia," said Taylor.

Taylor was last month reportedly in favour of facing trial in The Hague. His victims said they would like to see him tried here "to face the bitterness of the war" in Sierra Leone.

Principal court defender Vincent Nmehielle said Taylor preferred to have the "domestically-based trial" take place in the region for ease of logistics.

"He wants to be tried in Sierra Leone and nowhere else," to facilitate his witnesses and family from Liberia to attend, said Nmehielle.

Nmehielle, a Nigerian, later told journalists he was not clear what the next step would be with regards to the request to have The Hague host the high profile trial.

Taylor also expressed reservations about the way he was brought to Sierra Leone as his party stalwarts announced in Monrovia they were considering legal action against Liberia and Nigeria over Taylor's arrest.

The National Patriotic Party said Monday it viewed Taylor's deportation from Nigeria to Liberia and his subsequent transfer to Sierra Leone "as not only illegal, but a flagrant violation of cardinal constitutional rights of a Liberian citizen, and especially a breach of the Liberian constitution as it

relates to a former president who was never charged with any crime(s) while serving as president."

Taylor, 58, who is considered the single most powerful figure behind a series of civil wars in Liberia and neighbouring Sierra Leone between 1989 and 2003, which between them left around 400,000 people dead, said he feared for his life in detention.

"He fears for his life and therefore would express that as a concern: particularly, according to him, in view of the fact that Mr Foday Sankoh (former Sierra Leonean rebel leader) died in detention while at this court, and also in view of the fact that recently Mr (former Yugoslav president Slobodan) Milosevic died in detention and therefore he fears for his life," said Nmehielle.

Taylor's sister told AFP by telephone from Ghana that his life was their greatest worry.

"We would like as family to see that Mr Taylor has a fair and impartial trial. We are also concerned about his safety... two people have died in the custody of these UN courts, that's our biggest concern," said Thelma Taylor Saye.

Nmehielle, the court's chief defender, said Taylor, who allegedly sponsored the rebellion in Sierra Leone in exchange for so called 'blood diamonds', was unable to pay for legal representation.

"From the information contained in the declaration of means, as at present, the accused person will require legal assistance because he could be deemed partially indigent," he said. Taylor received advice Monday from six lawyers from the US, Liberia and Ghana.

Taylor, who appeared wearing a dark suit and brown tie, blew kisses to the public and smiled broadly as he left the courtroom at the end of the first court appearance.

If convicted Taylor faces a lengthy prison term, but there is no death penalty, according to court officials.

The actual trial is not expected to begin for months at least, as the court has said it wants the proceedings moved to The Hague. It has also cited lack of adequate space this year at the courthouse in Freetown.

DPA

4 April 2006

Taylor denies war crimes charges

Freetown/Nairobi (dpa) - Former Liberian president Charles Taylor appeared before the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone Monday which is trying him on war crimes charges and pleaded "not guilty", a spokesman for Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in New York.

The prosecution has accused the 58-year-old of war crimes and crimes against humanity in 11 cases including murder, rape and mutilation.

Appearing before the court for the first time since being flown to Freetown last week, Taylor listened to 21 pages of charges against him before pleading not guilty.

"Most definitely I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone," he said. After the almost one-hour hearing Taylor was returned to his cell.

The 58-year-old arrived in Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, immediately after being repatriated from Nigeria last Wednesday where he had been in exile since August 2003.

Taylor allegedly backed Sierra Leone's notorious Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel force which trained drug-addicted child soldiers to rape, torture, and in thousands of cases, cut off the hands and feet of civilians.

He allegedly accumulated huge wealth with the illegal trade of blood diamonds.

In Liberia Monday, the party founded by Taylor, the National Patriotic Party (NPP), described his extradition to Liberia from Nigeria and his subsequent transfer to Sierra Leone as "international deceit at the highest level" and a violation of the former president's constitutional rights.

"There is no legal justification for the turnover of ex-president Taylor who was not charged with crime by the Liberian government," NPP secretary-general John Whitfield told a press conference in Monrovia.

Taylor had been living in exile in Nigeria for the past three years as part of a deal aimed at ending Liberia's own 14-year internal conflict.

However, Nigeria lifted his asylum status upon the request of Liberia's recently elected President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Taylor then fled his home before being arrested attempting to cross the border into neighbouring Cameroon.

The Special Court in Sierra Leone has reinforced security around its compound since Taylor's arrival, bringing in Swedish and Irish peacekeepers from the UN mission in neighbouring Liberia.

Last week, Johnson-Sirleaf, citing regional security concerns, said Taylor should be transferred to The Hague to stand trial there. Great Britain has drafted a UN Security Council resolution that would do just that and a vote on it is expected early this week.

However, a reply from the International Criminal Court and Dutch authorities was still awaited, Annan's spokesman said Monday.

Xinhua
4 April 2006

Liberia's Taylor appears in Freetown's court for first time

www.chinaview.cn 2006-04-04 06:37:12

LAGOS, April 3 (Xinhua) -- Former Liberian leader Charles Taylor, who on Monday became the first African ex-president to answer war crimes charges in the UN-backed special court in Sierra Leone, pleaded not guilty to all the indictments.



This picture combo shows former Liberian President Charles Taylor during his first appearance at the Special Court in Freetown. (AFP)

The first court appearance of the 58-year-old ex-warlord, who was arrested and transferred to Freetown last week barely 36 hours after escaping from his villa in exile in Nigeria, started at about 3:00 p.m. (1500 GMT) and lasted about one hour.

Taylor, wearing a dark suit and brown tie, pleaded not guilty to the 11 indictments for atrocities committed during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war, which were read to him by Judge Richard Lussick.

He is accused by the special court of arming Sierra Leone's rebels, notorious for recruiting child soldiers and amputating the limbs of innocent women and children, in return for "blood diamonds."

"Most definitely, your honor, I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone," he said, according to television footages.

"I think that this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone and so most definitely I am not guilty," Taylor added.

Chief Prosecutor of the court, Desmond de Silva, said in a statement that Monday's court appearance of Taylor marked the first phase of the trial.

"The people of Sierra Leone have been waiting patiently for three years to see the accused finally face the Trial Chamber here at the Special Court. Today this has happened," he said.

"Today also marks an important step in the administration of international criminal justice. Those who commit atrocities and violate international humanitarian law will be held accountable."

"Now that the Defendant has pleaded not guilty to all counts, it is up to the Prosecution to prove its case," Silva added.

The court's spokesman, Peter Andersen, in an e-mail to Xinhua said Taylor required legal aid as he is broke to the wide now.

"Now the Defense Office will work to secure defense lawyers for him. He filed a declaration of means and, based on that, the Principal Defender has concluded that he is partially indigent," Andersen said.

The actual trial, however, is expected to begin at least months later, as the court had called for a change of the trial venue to The Hague for the west African region's stability.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf had also said that the court in The Hague would be a "more conducive environment" for Taylor's trial. But Taylor reportedly preferred to be tried in Sierra Leone.

Taylor accepted Nigeria's offer of safe exile in August 2003 when rebels besieged Monrovia, as part of a deal to end his homeland's 14-year-old civil war that claimed about 250,000 lives. His attempt to flee last week after Nigeria agreed to return him to Liberia was soon aborted. Enditem

Guardian (UK)

4 April 2006

As mutilated victims look on, Liberian warlord is accused of crimes against humanity

- Taylor is first of Africa's 'big men' to face trial
- Fugitive leader denies charges in UN court

Xan Rice

It was a day that they never thought would arrive; not the handless and one-legged victims of the brutal war in Sierra Leone, not the child soldiers who called him "Pappy", and certainly not the former warlord as he enjoyed his comfortable exile on the Nigerian coast.

But at 3pm yesterday, in a Freetown courthouse lined with barbed wire and guarded by UN troops and local soldiers, international justice finally caught up with Charles Taylor.

The former Liberian leader and strongman, who is accused of backing a rebel group that mutilated and raped thousands of civilians in Sierra Leone, was flanked by police as he was led into the United Nations-backed special court.

Wearing a suit and tie, he remained largely expressionless as 11 counts of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity were read out by the Samoan judge, Richard Lussick. When he was asked to plead, Mr Taylor, who was represented by a court-appointed lawyer, refused. "I do not recognise the jurisdiction of this court," he said.

But shortly afterwards he told the judge that he was not guilty, saying: "Most definitely, I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone. I think this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone."

Mr Taylor was brought to the Sierra Leone capital last Wednesday, having been captured at the Nigeria-Cameroon border. He had fled his home two days earlier after Nigeria, which had granted him exile under a 2003 peace deal, agreed to give him up. After being deported to Liberia, he was flown directly to Freetown by UN troops.

"This is a good day. I am so glad and happy that he is being tried," Ali Tullah, 18, who helps run a youth training centre opposite the court gates, told Reuters yesterday, shortly before the hearing. "He is a west African terrorist."

It is a sentiment echoed across the region, even if the relief is tinged with fear of retribution from Mr Taylor's supporters. Citing concerns over security, the special court in Freetown has requested that the trial be moved to The Hague in the Netherlands. The main trial is not expected to begin for months, to give Mr Taylor time to organise a defence.

The arrest and prosecution of the first former African leader to be tried for war crimes has been hailed as a fillip for peace in West Africa. It has also been seen as a clear signal to other African "big men" that they should not expect sanctuary from neighbours when they leave office.

Mr Taylor, 58, rose to prominence in Liberia in the early 1980s when he ran a government agency under President Samuel Doe, but fled the country when he was accused of stealing nearly \$1m.

According to prosecution documents, he received training from the Gadafy regime in Libya, where he met Foday Sankoh, a rebel from Sierra Leone. The two men agreed to help each other rise to power in their respective countries. Mr Taylor returned to Liberia in 1989 to launch a rebellion, and for the next eight years was a major player in the civil war that claimed up to 200,000 lives.

In 1997 he was elected president of Liberia, and set about helping his old friend Mr Sankoh, whose Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels were trying to oust the government. Mr Taylor is accused of helping the RUF rebels "terrorise the civilian population of Sierra Leone", in return for blood diamonds. The conflict, which lasted until 2002, was one of the most brutal in recent African history.

Amputation was the rebels' preferred method of intimidation. Rape and sexual violence were others. Men who tried to escape had "RUF" carved on their bodies. Child soldiers were organised into special divisions known as Small Boy Units.

Such was Mr Taylor's alleged influence over the RUF that prosecutors have charged him as "co-perpetrator" of acts including murder and rape.

Some members of Mr Taylor's family, who had flown in for the court hearing, expressed doubt that the trial would be fair, saying that he been tried in the media.

The charges: atrocity in 11 forms

In March 2003, while still president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, right, was indicted on 17 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious breaches of international law by the special court in Sierra Leone.

Prosecutors at the UN-backed tribunal, established to prosecute the main perpetrators of atrocities in the Sierra Leone civil war, later reduced the number of counts to 11.

This would allow for a "more focused trial", said Desmond de Silva QC, the court's chief prosecutor, who added: "The thrust and gravity of the former indictment is in no way diminished."

The prosecution's 12-page summary of the case against Mr Taylor details the horrors inflicted on civilians by the Revolutionary United Front rebels, whom he is accused of helping to arm and train in return for blood diamonds.

Mr Taylor is described as a "co-perpetrator" who "shared the intent to commit the crimes and participated in the common plan, design or purpose ..."

The first count against Mr Taylor is "acts of terrorism", relating to burning of civilians' homes. Next is murder and "violence to life, health and physical or mental wellbeing of persons". Other charges include outrages against personal dignity, rape, sexual slavery, physical violence, pillaging and enslavement. He is accused of conscripting children aged under 15 into the armed forces.

Guardian (UK)

4 April 2006

Ending African impunity

Slobodan Milosevic's death in custody at the UN's war crimes tribunal in The Hague last month marked an abrupt end to hopes for justice for the thousands of victims of the Balkan conflicts that the former Yugoslav leader unleashed. That was a grave blow to the evolution of international humanitarian law under which former heads of state who perpetrate atrocities can no longer shelter behind the outdated doctrine of "sovereign immunity". But now another Dutch prison cell is being prepared for Charles Taylor, the ex-president of Liberia, held responsible for some of Africa's most savage bloodletting of recent years.

Taylor is facing justice only because Nigeria, under diplomatic pressure, reluctantly allowed his delivery to the Special Court in Sierra Leone, where the flamboyant warlord wreaked bloody havoc during the 11-year diamond-fuelled civil war by supporting and arming the Revolutionary United Front, a rebel group notorious for hacking off the limbs, lips and ears of civilians, including children. Charges include crimes against humanity, sexual violence and the conscription of child soldiers who were kidnapped, drugged and turned into sadistic killers. Nigeria allowed Taylor a comfortable exile in return for stepping down as president; that helped bring peace to Liberia after 14 years of war and 250,000 dead, but the new government of Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf rightly insisted he be surrendered. Still, the difficulties of avoiding impunity have been underlined by the request that the trial be held in The Hague, home to the fledgling International Criminal Court, since proceedings against him in Monrovia or Freetown could undermine the region's tenuous peace and stability. That is unfortunate because there are strong political and practical arguments for trying the perpetrators of atrocities close to where they were committed, not in some distant foreign capital.

Still it is good for Africa that justice has not lost out in a false argument between justice and stability. Both matter. The Sierra Leone tribunal, unlike the UN tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda, uses a mixture of domestic and international law. It has indicted only a dozen people but has yet to convict any of them. The Rwanda tribunal has completed just 26 cases in 10 years. Taylor will now join the ranks of Milosevic and Saddam Hussein - a lesson that should make other African despots think twice before unleashing mass murder and systematic mutilation. But his trial needs to be efficient as well as fair. Asylum and amnesty cannot be the right end to such terrible stories.

Independent Online (South Africa)

3 April 2006

Taylor's family fear for his safety

By Kwasi Kpodo

Relatives of war crimes suspect and toppled Liberian President Charles Taylor fear for his safety, citing the deaths in custody of a rebel held for trial before the same court that is to hear Taylor's case and of former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic while detained at The Hague.

"Now we look at that as a record of the United Nations-backed court," Taylor's younger sister, Thelma Taylor-Saye, said in an interview later Sunday in the Ghanaian capital, Accra, where she lives.

"I don't know what they do before the victims die, but I know they usually come out to say the victims die of natural causes, so that's why we are raising the concern."

'Might not take their (African mediators') words seriously'
Desmond de Silva, chief prosecutor of the independent, UN-backed war crimes court trying Taylor, had dismissed such concerns, saying in an interview last week, "We don't go around killing people."

De Silva also said it would be difficult for anyone who might want to harm Taylor to get to him in detention in the court complex in Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone. Taylor is accused of helping foment Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

Sierra Leone guerrilla leader Foday Sankoh, whose group Taylor is accused of backing, died in UN custody in 2003 of natural causes. Sankoh spent his last days mostly deranged and incomprehensible.

Former Yugoslav President Milosevic died March 11 in his prison cell near The Hague, where he was on trial on war crimes charges for his part in the bloody breakup of his country in the 1990s.

Taylor is accused of backing Sierra Leonean rebels notorious for maiming civilians by chopping off their arms, legs, ears and lips.

In return for supporting them, he allegedly got a share of Sierra Leone's diamond wealth, which he used to fund his ambitions in Liberia.

Taylor launched an insurgency in Liberia in 1989 that led to the deaths of an estimated 200 000. Taylor won a disputed election in Liberia in 1997 - some say Liberians voted for him out of fear of what he would do if he lost.

Many former allies took up arms against him in 2000 and attacked Monrovia in 2003.

Taylor fled to exile in Nigeria in August of 2003 as part of a deal to end fighting in Liberia.

Nigeria, under pressure from the United States and others, said last week it would hand over Taylor, but made no move to arrest him, and he fled. He was captured within a day, flown to Liberia and then by helicopter to Sierra Leone.

Taylor's sister said his handover set a bad precedent and may negatively affect efforts to resolve other African wars.

"Rebel leaders might not take their (African mediators') words seriously when they ask them to step down in the name of peace and reconciliation," Taylor-Saye said.

"I thought they were going to use Mr Taylor (as) a good example to the others to put their guns down, but it seems they have missed that opportunity now."

She also criticised Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who had pressed for Taylor to be brought before the war crimes tribunal. She urged Sirleaf to pursue a course of reconciliation. - Sapa-AP

Times (UK)

4 April 2006

Ex-president is defiant as he faces trial for war crimes

FROM KATHARINE HOURELD IN FREETOWN

HE SMILED and blew kisses to relatives in the courtroom like a man without a care in the world.

But yesterday Charles Taylor, one of Africa's most tyrannical despots, stood accused of crimes against humanity in a court in Sierra Leone.



Public visitors to the trial of Charles Taylor, included those wounded in the rebellions (PHOTO: GEORGE OSODI/AP)

Mr Taylor, who wore a dark suit and red tie but had discarded his usual dark glasses, listened quietly as the charges were read out, and fiddled with his earphones before replying: "I do not recognise the jurisdiction of the court."

Eventually he entered a plea, saying: "I did not and could not have committed those acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone. I think this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone, so most definitely I am not guilty."

Mr Taylor faces 11 counts of crimes against humanity brought by a UN-backed special court. The indictments include sexual slavery, the recruitment of child soldiers and the murder of civilians.

He is also charged with responsibility for "mutilations, including the cutting off of limbs and other body parts, and carving the initials (of rebel groups) AFRC and RUF into the bodies of civilians". The charges relate to Mr Taylor's alleged backing for a rebel group in Sierra Leone, the diamond-rich country next to Liberia on the West African coast.

Vincent Nmehielle, his principal defence lawyer, confirmed that Mr Taylor, once thought to possess hundreds of millions of dollars looted from the Liberian treasury, had applied for legal aid. He also raised fears that his client might be killed, pointing to the deaths in custody of Slobodan Milosevic and Foday Sankoh, the former head of the

Revolutionary United Front, a rebel group that Mr Taylor is accused of backing. Mr Nmeielle also said that Mr Taylor was opposed to the proposed relocation of the court to The Hague.

Security around the courtroom was tight yesterday, with Mongolian, Irish and Swedish troops backing up the local police force. Mr Taylor was driven 150 yards from the court to prison in an armoured SUV with blacked-out windows.

He escaped from prison in America in 1985 and last week tried to flee Nigeria, where he had been living for 2½ years. Four days after President Obasanjo of Nigeria agreed to extradite him, Mr Taylor was apprehended at the border after a customs guard found sacks full of cash in his vehicle.

Desmond de Silva, QC, the court's chief prosecutor, hopes that the trial will serve as a warning to other repressive heads of state. "The lesson is going out. Impunity is giving way to accountability," he said.

Mr Taylor is the first African head of state to appear before the international justice system. His 14-year trail of destruction began in 1989, when he invaded Liberia with about 150 men. The country, which had been ruled by the murderously corrupt President Doe, fell apart and Mr Taylor spent the next seven years terrorising civilians before they finally voted him into the presidency.

His campaign slogan — "He kill my pa, he kill my ma, I vote for him", was a grim reminder of what they could look forward to if his ambitions were thwarted.

As head of state, Mr Taylor used his powers to sponsor rebellions in neighbouring countries, most notably Sierra Leone, where he allegedly backed rebels who hacked the limbs from civilians and carved the names of militias into the chests of girls they had raped.

The charges he faces relate to the civil war there, rather than the hundreds of thousands of civilians who were raped, mutilated or murdered in Liberia before he fled to Nigeria in 2003.

UN News Service

3 April 2006

Former Liberian President Taylor Pleads Not Guilty At Trial - UN

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor pleaded "not guilty" today to all charges, including crimes against humanity and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, in his first appearance at a special war crimes court in Sierra Leone, a United Nations spokesman said.

The UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone has indicted Mr. Taylor on 11 counts of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, including sexual slavery and mutilations allegedly committed during Sierra Leone's brutal civil war.

The Court has requested that Mr. Taylor be tried at The Hague because of safety concerns. A draft resolution was circulated in the Security Council last Friday regarding the possible transfer, but the spokesman said the Court had not yet received a response to its request.

In addition to a Security Council resolution to facilitate the proposal, there needs to be a Headquarters Agreement the Government of the Netherlands must provide the legal basis for the Court to sit within its national jurisdiction.

Also last Friday, Secretary-General Kofi Annan told reporters that "everybody agrees it to be wiser" to move the trial to The Hague and noted that the Security Council had been following developments relating to Mr. Taylor "very, very closely.½

Mr. Taylor arrived in Sierra Leone by UN helicopter on Wednesday, after being recaptured in Nigeria, where he had been exiled three years ago as part of a peace deal that helped bring an end to Liberia's decade of civil war.

Scotsman

4 April 2006

Taylor trial makes history

CHRIS STEPHEN

CHARLES Taylor made history yesterday by becoming the first African head of state to be tried for war crimes by a UN court.

The former Liberian president, blamed for a decade of savagery that left more than 200,000 dead, pleaded not guilty during his hearing in the Sierra Leone special court.

"I do not recognise the jurisdiction of this court," Taylor told the judge, Justice Richard Lussick, from Samoa.

After the 11 counts - which include charges of acts of terrorism, murder, rape, enslavement and use of child soldiers - were read out, Taylor was asked whether he understood them.

"Yes, I do," he replied.

Taylor, dressed in a dark suit and maroon tie, spoke slowly. "I think that this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone and so most definitely I am not guilty," he said.

His trial, for crimes against humanity, promises to lift the lid on the career of a man who became the scourge of West Africa.

Taylor's wars became infamous for reports of his troops wearing wedding dresses, pink and green wigs and even Donald Duck or Mickey Mouse masks which they believed gave them magical powers. But there was nothing funny about the horrors these heavily armed, drug-taking men inflicted: tens of thousands of people, mostly civilians, were hacked to death, with Taylor's soldiers specialising in severing arms, legs, noses and even the lips from their victim's faces.

Taylor also became infamous for his use of brain-washed child soldiers, some as young as seven and barely able to hold a rifle, who would kill without conscience. So many children took part that special units were formed for them, one of them was known as the Small Boys Unit.

His troops practiced cannibalism and human sacrifice, and Taylor encouraged mysticism to breed an aura of invincibility in his forces.

Yet while his methods were wild and savage, his purpose had an icy logic. He wanted the diamond fields.

West Africa is rich in minerals, most of all the diamond fields of Sierra Leone, and prosecutors will argue that Taylor used nationalism, superstition and even witchcraft as a cover for wars that were all about money.

His warriors, financed with the cash from sales of diamonds, invaded Sierra Leone and Guinea in 1991, with backers including Libya's Muammar al-Gaddafi who plotted Africa-wide revolutionary movements.

Taylor's dream was to form a "Greater Liberia", a new state conveniently enlarged to encompass other people's diamond fields. He acquired a \$100 million fortune, but in 2003 some of his former allies turned on him.

Besieged in his capital, Monrovia, Taylor struck a deal with Nigeria which agreed to offer him exile in return for an end to the war. However, once he was isolated from his warriors, the UN court in Sierra Leone demanded Nigeria hand him over.

The United States has made the crucial difference. Liberia was established as an African homeland for slaves freed by the US after the Civil War, and the US has of late been keen to show it supports democracy and the rule of law here.

Washington last week told Olusegun Obasanjo, the Nigerian president, that further support for his drive against corruption would depend on Taylor being handed over. When Taylor escaped the villa he was living in, Nigeria recaptured him as he tried to enter neighbouring Cameroon.

"This is an extraordinary moment for the people of West Africa," said Richard Dicker of New York-based Human Rights Watch. "Taylor's trial should bring long-awaited justice."

Meanwhile, some of the firms that financed Taylor through paying for his so-called "blood diamonds" may now be sweating. Human rights groups have already pointed the finger at several international mining and banking firms for their role in financing war crimes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and a similar investigation is now likely for West Africa.

Insiders in the international justice community say that the Taylor prosecution will try and avoid the mistakes of the recent trials of the late Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein.

Milosevic's indictment was so long that he died with the case, in its fifth year, still unfinished.

And the decision to hold Hussein's trial in the midst of a war zone means that the lawyers and judges face daily dangers to their lives.

Taylor's prosecutors will make no such mistakes. His case is hefty, but not the monster trial that swamped Milosevic. And it is likely to be transferred from the Sierra Leone courthouse to The Hague to avoid the risks that staff will be attacked or intimidated.

Taylor is being tried not for committing crimes himself, but for providing weapons, fuel, cash and soldiers for war in neighbouring Sierra Leone.

The trial is also expected to send a shudder down the spines of men like Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and Sudan's Omer al Bashir - men who now know that even a head of state can be tried for war crimes.

Even a decade ago, the chances of such a prosecution working would have been doubtful. But since then, nearly 200 warlords, generals and politicians have been tried in UN courts around the world, setting a string of precedents.

Almost unnoticed in the furore over Mr Taylor's arrest is the astonishing role played by African human rights groups: underfunded and under immense political pressure, more than 30 groups of

lawyers and activists from Liberia and Nigeria have fought a three-year campaign to have Taylor handed over.

They did this not with street protests but with a grinding push through Nigeria's courts, using the law as a weapon. Under Nigeria's constitution, the government is bound to hand over for trial anyone indicted by a UN court and these groups had vowed to take the case all the way to the country's supreme court.

In the end, pressure from the US brought a result many years earlier, but the commitment and courage of these activists will be seen locally as a tremendous victory for African justice.

The hearing was adjourned but no new date was set for Taylor's next appearance in court.

Citing security and logistics concerns, the Special Court's president has asked the Netherlands to host the bulk of the trial in The Hague.

- Chris Stephen is the author of *Judgement Day: The Trial of Slobodan Milosevic*, published by Atlantic Books.

CBC

3 April 2006

Former Liberian president pleads not guilty to war crimes

Last Updated Mon, 03 Apr 2006 20:18:07 EDT

CBC News

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor has pleaded not guilty to war crimes involving murder, sexual slavery and the use of child soldiers in combat.

- INDEPTH: [Liberia](#)

The ousted West African leader appeared before a UN international court on Monday in Freetown, Sierra Leone, where he was accused of backing rebels during a protracted civil war.

"I did not and could not have committed those acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone," said Taylor, who initially refused to recognize the court. "I think this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone. So most definitely I am not guilty."

- FROM APRIL 1, 2006: [Liberian ex-president to plead not guilty to war crimes](#)

Taylor, 58, listened quietly as he was charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone that ended in 2002.

He was also charged with training, financing and arming rebels in exchange for diamonds. Many of the rebels were child soldiers that he trained and equipped with modern machine-guns.

Ex-president objects to trial relocation

Court was told rebels who were members of the Revolutionary United Front carved their initials into the bodies of dead civilians after mutilating them.

Taylor objected to plans to move his trial to a UN war-crimes court in The Hague, according to his lawyer, Vincent Nmehielle. Local officials had requested the move because Taylor's presence in Sierra Leone was expected to provoke unrest.

He is being defended by court-appointed lawyers because he claims he is penniless.

Taylor has been held by UN troops in Freetown since his capture by a Nigerian border patrol last week as he tried to smuggle his family into Cameroon. He has been living in exile in Nigeria since he was deposed in 2003.

His four-wheel-drive vehicle reportedly had a trunk full of cash that he had looted during his presidency.

Taylor rose to power in Liberia in 1989 when he led a rebellion that ousted then-leader Sam Doe. The uprising turned into a bloody civil war in Liberia and later in Sierra Leone. About 250,000 people reportedly died.



Liberians playing soccer in Freetown, Sierra Leone on Saturday were reportedly mutilated by soldiers under then president Charles Taylor. (George Osodi/ Associated Press)

Independent

4 April 2006

Taylor finally takes the stand in Sierra Leone to deny war crimes

By Anne Penketh, Diplomatic Editor

Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia, has appeared in the dock at a UN-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone in a historic precedent for Africa.

It is the first time a former African president has been brought to trial to face charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes on a continent notoriously reluctant to judge its own leaders. "The people of Sierra Leone have waited a long time to see this man brought to trial," the chief prosecutor, Desmond de Silva, said.

Mr Taylor, who had been given asylum in Nigeria for the past three years, is accused of exporting Liberia's civil war into neighbouring Sierra Leone between 1991 and 2002.

Dressed in a dark suit and red tie, he pleaded not guilty to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual slavery and mutilation, over his alleged backing of Sierra Leonean rebels. "I think this is an attempt to continue to divide and rule the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone, so most definitely I am not guilty," he said.

The war in Sierra Leone, which left 50,000 dead, was marked by atrocities against civilians, who were hacked to death or had their limbs amputated by child soldiers high on drugs. Although Mr Taylor is not directly accused of participation, the prosecution says he gave military and financial assistance to Foday Sankoh, the rebel leader of the Revolutionary United Front, in return for diamonds.

Sankoh died in custody in 2003 a few months after his former top lieutenant Sam Bockarie, also indicted, was shot dead in Liberia. The same year, the third rebel leader, Johnny Paul Koroma, was declared dead in mysterious circumstances in Liberia, allegedly murdered.

Mr Taylor, who spent the years in Nigeria under house arrest as part of a peace deal, said he did not recognise the court in Freetown. "Most definitely, I did not and could not have committed these acts against the sister republic of Sierra Leone," he said.

His extradition to Sierra Leone became possible after the election last November of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia, who formally approached the Nigerian President Olesegun Obasanjo to ensure his transfer.

He managed to slip out of his guarded residence in Calabar on the eve of his arrest, but was recaptured on the border with Cameroon just before Mr Obasanjo met with President George Bush at the White House last week. There are fears that Mr Taylor's presence in Freetown could trigger unrest, both in Sierra Leone and in Liberia, where Mr Taylor remains an influential figure. Some of his supporters, who call him "Pappy", have threatened violence if he is tried.

The special court, which adjourned yesterday after hearing Mr Taylor's plea, has requested the possible transfer of the trial to The Hague. The UN Security Council is considering a UK-drafted resolution, which has the backing of the US, and is expected to be adopted in the coming days.

Reed Brody of Human Rights Watch said that Mr Taylor's court appearance meant that "perhaps a psychological barrier has been broken in Africa".

He added: "The next test case for African leaders is that of the former dictator of Chad, Hissène Habré, who is accused of thousands of political killings and systematic torture during his 1982-1990 one-party rule."

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Irish Examiner

4 April 2006

Former Liberian president tried for war crimes

By John Mortmer

FORMER Liberian President Charles Taylor appeared before an international war crimes court yesterday.

The former warlord pleaded not guilty to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual slavery, mutilation and sending children into combat in connection with alleged backing of Sierra Leonean rebels.

Many hope the trial of Taylor, the first former African president to face such charges, will firmly establish the principle that Africa's despots are not above the law.

Security was tight at the Special Court in Sierra Leone, the country to which Taylor is accused of exporting his own civil war.

Taylor, and court officials who received death threats, will be protected by bullet-proof glass and by dozens of UN peacekeepers from Ireland and Mongolia.

Taylor is to be judged by the international tribunal established to try those seen as bearing greatest responsibility for atrocities during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

A Liberian lawyer had said the defence strategy would be to argue that the Sierra Leone court had no jurisdiction over Liberia or its head of state and so had no right to try Taylor, who was president when he was indicted in 2003.

The court's appeals chamber had rejected a similar argument made soon after the indictment was filed.

Taylor is making his initial appearance in Sierra Leone, but court officials have requested that an international court in The Hague, Netherlands, host the trial, which would remain under Special Court auspices.

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has expressed fear that Taylor's supporters could use a trial held in the region as an excuse to mount another insurgency in her country.

Taylor won a disputed election in Liberia in 1997. Many former allies in an insurgency he had launched in 1989 took up arms against him in 2000 and attacked Monrovia in 2003.

Taylor is accused of backing Sierra Leonean rebels notorious for maiming civilians by chopping off their arms, legs, ears and lips. In return for supporting them, he allegedly got a share of Sierra Leone's diamond wealth and used it to fund his ambitions in Liberia.

Taylor disappeared last week days after Nigeria reluctantly agreed to hand him over from the exile he had been offered under a peace agreement ending Liberia's 14-year civil war.

He was captured within a day by Nigerian police and later protested that Nigerian security forces had encouraged him to flee.

African News Dimension

4 April 2006

Liberia : Taylor's Party Voices Its Opinion

Monrovia (AND) For the first time since his arrest and subsequent transferral to the United Nations Special War Crime Court in Sierra Leone, the party of the former Liberian leader Charles Taylor has issued its official position on the detention and trial of the former President.

The party views the arrest and subsequent transfer of the former President by the Nigeria and Liberian governments, as well as the United Nations, as an infringement of his rights.

Addressing a press conference yesterday at the party's headquarters, where the party issued what they described as their official position, NPP's Secretary General John Whitfield, criticized the Liberian and Nigeria governments for their role in turning over the former Liberian leader, describing the action as a violation of the rights of the former Liberian leader.

He said "It is the quest of the NPP to ensure that the rights of Mr. Taylor are guaranteed in the ongoing scenario. The NPP vows to use all [the] resources and energies that it has available to pursue a legal process against the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf led government. The NPP will not be a spectator to the injustice being meted out against Mr. Taylor under the colour of vague and unfounded international pressure, nor will we be silent on any unjust treatment that shall be executed by the government against any Liberian citizen irrespective of status."

Mr. Whitfield who was flanked by the executive of the party including former parliament speaker Nyuadeh Markomona, former Vice President John Gray, the party's former National Chairman Cyril Allen, said, "The party view s the current situation of the former President as a breach of the spirit and intent of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on Liberia and other national and international protocols which ended the Liberian civil war and facilitated by the former detained President."

According to him, the present situation of Mr. Taylor is a representative of international deception at the highest level, which sends a signal that could make it difficult for the National leaders in the future who will find themselves in the position as former President Taylor was, to accord international peace brokers the kind of cooperation.

He added that the NPP further views the current position of the Nigeria government regarding Mr. Taylor as a contradiction, which presents a pretext to justify the inhumane action of that government against Mr. Taylor.

Whitfield said, "The NPP views the deportation of Mr. Taylor from Nigeria to Liberia and the Liberian government subsequent transfer of Mr. Taylor from the Liberian soil to Sierra Leone as not only illegal, but a flagrant violation of a cardinal constitutional rights of a Liberian citizen, and especially a breach of the Liberian constitution as it relates to a former President who was never charged with any crime(s) while serving as President of the Republic."

On the deportation of Mr. Taylor, the NPP Chief Scribe and Acting National Chairman said "information available to the NPP shows that Liberia has no extradition treaty with the Federal Republic of Nigeria and therefore wonders what is the legal basis behind Nigeria's decision to transfer Mr. Taylor as a criminal to the custody of the Liberian government."

He added, “Nigeria has no foundation upon which to justify the deportation of Mr. Taylor based on any resolution of the United Nations dealing with the transfer of Mr. Taylor to the court in Sierra Leone. The court in Sierra Leone is a treaty based court and not the chapter seven court of the United Nations. Members of the UN are required to enforce resolutions of benefits to the International Court of Justice. They do not have obligation to a court like the one in Sierra Leone, which has concurrent jurisdiction equivalent to Sierra Leone’s domestic magisterial level courts.”

By Patrick Wrokpoh

United Nations



Nations Unies

United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 3 April 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia

Taylor Pleads Not Guilty to War Crimes

By MICHELLE FAUL

Source: AP Online Regional - Africa

Date: April 03, 2006

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone _Former Liberian President Charles Taylor pleaded not guilty Monday before an international war crimes tribunal, denying 11 counts of helping destabilize West Africa through killings, sexual slavery and sending children into combat. Taylor at first told the court he could not enter a plea because he did not recognize its right to try him. But he went on to tell Justice Richard Lussick "I did not and could not have" committed the atrocities that allegedly occurred during Sierra Leone's civil war. The court accepted his comment as a formal plea of not guilty. Taylor, wearing a dark suit and maroon tie, spoke calmly and slowly.

The Guardian 3 April 2006

Former Liberian leader due before special court

Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president, is due to appear in Sierra Leone's UN-backed special court today, when he is expected to plead not guilty to 11 indictments for atrocities committed during Liberia's civil war. But fears that his presence could undermine stability in the region have led the court to ask the Netherlands if it could host the main part of the trial in The Hague. A UN Security Council resolution that would authorize the transfer is expected to be adopted early next week, but a move could take several weeks and would be expensive. Reuters, Freetown.

BBC Last Updated: Monday, 3 April 2006, 07:43 GMT 08:43 UK

Taylor defence to fight charges

Lawyers acting for former Liberian President Charles Taylor say they are to ask for war crimes charges against him to be dismissed. They argue that the UN-backed court in Sierra Leone has no right try him, and that it has no jurisdiction over Liberia or its former president. Mr Taylor, 58, who was arrested last week, is due to appear in court in Freetown for the first time on Monday. He faces 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He was transferred to Sierra Leone after being arrested in Nigeria. Nigeria had given him asylum under an agreement to end Liberia's civil war in 2003.

Taylor Trial Spurs International Justice

By ANTHONY DEUTSCH

Source: AP Online Regional – Europe Date: April 03, 2006

THE HAGUE, Netherlands Less than a month after former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic died in custody, bringing his war crimes trial to a sudden halt, a cell is being prepared at the same Dutch prison for another notorious former leader. The case against former Liberian President Charles Taylor, legal experts say, is spurring the evolution of international justice and increasing accountability for leaders accused of atrocities against civilians. They say more cases will follow, and it likely will be sooner rather than later.

Adviser: Nigerians Told Taylor to Flee

By MICHELLE FAUL

Source: AP Online Regional - Africa
Date: April 03, 2006

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone Nigerian security forces encouraged former Liberian President Charles Taylor to flee and helped him get to the Cameroon border before the same agents turned around and arrested him in a double-cross, his spiritual adviser said.

International Clips on West Africa

The Age 1 April 2006

Patience pays off for legal team

Martin Daly

WHEN Chris Staker stood in a heavily fortified compound in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on Wednesday, he thought that of all the things he had experienced in his professional career, this was a defining moment. Dr Staker is the deputy prosecutor for the Special Court of Sierra Leone, set up to bring to trial those accused of crimes against humanity during a notoriously savage period in the country's history, in which innocent men, women and children were butchered in civil wars allegedly orchestrated by the alleged war criminal and former president of Liberia, Charles Taylor. "It was an historic day for international law, an extremely historic day for Sierra Leone, a moment that some may have doubted we would ever see," he said.

Local Media – Newspapers

Taylor's Trial Opens Today

(Daily Observer, The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst, Heritage New Democrat, New Vision and The Informer)

- Former President Charles Taylor will make his first appearance before the Special Court for Sierra Leone today, a spokesperson for the court said over the weekend. He is expected plead not guilty to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity,

Former Close Associates to Testify Against Taylor

(Liberian Express)

- An unnamed western diplomat has reportedly revealed that several former cabinet ministers and close associates of former President Taylor are being enlisted to testify against him in the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Those already contacted are former Foreign Minister Monie Captan, former President Pro Tempore of the Senate Grace Minor and former Defense Spokesman of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and Labor Minister Tom Woewiyou, who has reportedly agreed in principle. Efforts are said

to be underway to enlist former Special Security Service Director Benjamin Yeaten to testify against his former boss.

Taylor's Son Arrested in U.S.

(Daily Observer, The News, The Inquirer, The Analyst, New Democrat, Heritage, Liberian Express, New Vision, The National Chronicle and The Informer)

- Former President Taylor's son, Charles McArthur Emmanuel, alias "Chuckie," was arrested by U.S. immigration authorities on Thursday night at the Miami International Airport upon arrival from Trinidad, his mother's country. He appeared in federal court on Friday on a charge of passport fraud, according to U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement spokeswoman who added that he had lied about his father's identity in his application to renew his U.S. passport.

Rights Group decries "Mass Arrests"

(The News)

- The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) recently expressed concern over the recent wave of arrests by state security of individuals believed to be close associates of former President Taylor. The JPC said that guilt by association should be discouraged at all levels of the government.

UNMIL Mandate Extended

(The News, The Analyst, The Informer, New Vision, Liberian Express)

- The Security Council, acting under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter, has extended the mandate of UNMIL until 30 September.

Man Kills Two Armed Robbers

(The Inquirer and New Democrat)

- A would-be victim of armed robbery, Jeffrey George, on Sunday managed to disarm one of several armed robbers and then used the gun to kill two of his attackers in Paynesville, a neighborhood of Monrovia notorious for armed robbery.

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

President Sets Weekly Meetings with Cabinet

- According to an Executive Mansion press statement yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has earmarked Thursdays every week to hold cabinet meetings at which the ministers of government would brief the President on work done to revive the economy.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

President Hails Nigeria for Peace in Liberia

- Speaking at an honoring ceremony for departing Nigerian Presidential Guards yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf lauded Nigeria for helping to restore peace to Liberia, adding that Nigerians have made sacrifices with their lives and resources to resolve the crisis in Liberia.

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Former President Taylor Arraignment Today

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Special Court Details Judges to Try Taylor

- The Special Court for Sierra Leone said that it has identified three judges from Uganda, the Pacific and Northern Ireland to sit on the trial of former President Charles Taylor and discounted the sitting of a jury on the case.
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Sierra Leonean Student of Law Volunteers to Defend Taylor

- A Sierra Leonean student of Law in the United States, Hassan Abu Kamara, said that he was voluntarily giving his services to the defense team of former President Charles Taylor, journalists covering the trial said.
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Government to Review Activities of Non-Governmental Organizations

- In an interview over the weekend, Economic and Planning Minister Toga McIntosh said that the ministry would conduct an assessment of the activities of non-governmental organizations operating in Liberia in order to incorporate their programs into government's national development agenda.
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

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.

Dispatch (South Africa)

4 April 2006

Opinion

End of era of untouchables

The trial of Liberia's former strongman president Charles Taylor began in Sierra Leone yesterday, introducing what many regard as an important chapter in the story of our continent.

Taylor has reportedly become the first former African head of state to face trial at a United Nations-sponsored international tribunal as he faces 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual slavery and mutilation.

The trial is significant, not only as an historic milestone, but also because it is seen as an opportunity to provide some answers and justice for millions of Africans whose lives were shattered by a series of civil wars in the region.

Taylor is blamed for being the key figure in conflicts in Liberia, where he led a rebellion which saw the overthrow and execution of Samuel Doe in 1990, and also for the civil war in Sierra Leone between 1989 and 2003. Both wars claimed some 400 000 lives.

Further, Taylor can also lay claim to the dubious distinction of having introduced to Africa the terrifying legacy of child soldiers, some as young as seven, which he used to fight his battles.

The start of the tribunal in Sierra Leone suggests the beginning of an era of accountability for those evil leaders who have wreaked havoc on their populations and those of their neighbours.

The tribunal, of course, will have to live up to expectations and deliver justice. Already sceptics argue that it has little to show to date for its \$25,8m budget and some three years of work.

Nevertheless, that the tribunal is sitting and that Taylor is appearing - after being captured trying to sneak away while in exile in Nigeria - are all signs to be applauded.

They are also signs that might make other leaders on the continent nervous.

Zimbabwe's president Robert Mugabe, in the wake of his controversial Operation Drive Out Trash slum removal in which 700 000 people lost their homes, might look at Taylor's trial with some discomfort.

Sudan's government leaders accused of backing the Janjaweed militia who are blamed for the "cleansing" of black Sudanese in Darfur might also have cause for concern.

For Taylor's trial sends a powerful message: that those whose policies wreak terror and havoc will one day have to account for their actions. No more Idi Amins being allowed to skulk off into unimpeded exile in friendly host nations.

It's an idea which has echoes in South Africa as we watch our former deputy president taking the stand in court this week to answer charges of rape.

If this is the start of the end of the era of untouchables it is indeed a moment to celebrate.

Christian Science Monitor

4 April 2006

Opinion

Africa mustn't stop with Charles Taylor

The Monitor's View

African leaders, like some police officers who won't cross a "thin blue line" to help nab a bad cop, have long coddled the continent's dictators. That code of inaction, however, broke last week when Nigeria handed over Africa's worst war-crimes suspect.

Charles Taylor, a former rebel and Liberian president who unleashed 14 years of savage war and atrocities in West Africa, was captured in Nigeria as he tried to flee and was sent to a special international court in Sierra Leone. He was arraigned Monday on 11 charges, ranging from murder to unlawful use of child soldiers.

It should be a historic marker that Mr. Taylor is the first former African head of state to face international justice. But that symbolic step must not overshadow the fact that Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo - albeit under strong pressure from the United States - helped put him in the dock.

The risks for such actions are still high in Africa. The US-educated Taylor, who is largely responsible for wars that led to an estimated 400,000 deaths, is still so revered by his former militias that his trial must be held in The Hague in the Netherlands for fear of a rescue attempt in Sierra Leone or renewed violence.

Nigeria's breakthrough move should send a message to African leaders in Zimbabwe, Sudan, and elsewhere that their days of impunity for brutalities and the harboring of war-crimes suspects may not last. The world has seen how international interventions have put Yugoslavia's Slobodan Milosevic and Iraq's Saddam Hussein on trial (and, maybe soon, Cambodia's former Khmer Rouge leaders). Africa's despots cannot remain immune to a global trend toward making sure war atrocities don't go unanswered in court.

Rwanda's 1994 genocide is being handled in a special international tribunal in Tanzania. And last month, the Democratic Republic of Congo transferred a militia leader, Thomas Lubanga, to the International Criminal Court in The Hague to face warcrimes charges. That court also has arrest warrants for leaders of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda.

Holding Africa's leaders and warlords accountable, either by democracy or foreign sanction, is necessary if the region's many problems, from AIDS to famine, can ever be fully addressed. Recent attempts by the G-8 industrialized nations to tie their aid and trade to better governance in Africa are off to a rough start. Only two nations, Ghana and Rwanda, have been closely examined by other African nations under a "peer review mechanism."

Just as the US attempt to reform the Middle East requires Arab leaders to stand up for human rights in other Arab nations, reform in Africa demands courage at the top. South Africa's Thabo Mbeki, for instance, needs to be more outspoken about authoritarian rule in Zimbabwe.

International pressure on an Africa still prickly over its colonial past can often backfire. But US nudging of Nigeria to hand over Taylor was pressure well spent. A stronger US hand is also needed on Sudan to resolve the Darfur conflict. Many African leaders know what course they need to take to end wars, achieve justice, and solve social ills. A right mix of carrots and sticks should generate reforms that actually stick.

Mail and Guardian Online

3 April 2006

Opinion

How Machiavellian are African leaders?

John Matshikiza: WITH THE LID OFF

The International Scallywags' Network (known as the ISN) has been dealt a relatively severe blow with the death of Slobodan Milosevic of a heart attack days before his sentencing at the International Criminal Court at The Hague in The Netherlands, and the arrest of Charles Taylor as he tried to flee into Cameroon from his luxurious exile retreat in southern Nigeria.

Milosevic was on the point of being convicted of various counts of genocide in the remnants of Josip Broz Tito's Yugoslavia. The numbers killed in the name of ethnic cleansing were horrific and the manner of their killing unbearable to contemplate. Milosevic's death cheated the survivors of some sense of vengeance and justice being played out for their emotional relief.

I don't know if one can compare atrocities and genocides, but Charles Taylor was responsible for equally horrific acts of human cruelty in Liberia and Sierra Leone. He directed a civil war that drew hundreds of thousands of impressionable youths into an orgy of shooting, looting, rape and mutilation of innocents, left to limp off into whatever sanctuary they could find if they did not die of their injuries. These were among the most widely reported activities of this modern-day African holocaust.

It took months of bloodletting for the United Nations to kick in and do something about what was happening in Yugoslavia. The American and British armies finally went in (as they do all over the place) and kicked sufficient ass for the genocide to come to a halt.

It took critical weeks for the same UN to wake up and belatedly send a multinational force into Rwanda to try to end a colonially invented tribal genocide from running its course — but not before almost a million Hutus and Tutsis had slaughtered each other with the most appalling brutality, led by the agricultural panga (cheaper than the Gatling gun) introduced by King Leopold of the Belgians, himself responsible for introducing this form of mass genocide into Central Africa.

Up in Liberia and Sierra Leone, for reasons best known to themselves (and the CIA) Taylor, Prince Johnson and Sankoh Fode, among others, were bringing a similar kind of holocaust into the already impoverished wastes of their own black African population. This went on, under the appreciative camera eyes of CNN, the BBC and others for a number of years.

If I remember correctly, a number of African heads of state, led by presidents Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, had taken a personal interest in gently easing Taylor out of this holocaust of his own creation, operating on the principles of the newly formed African Union's so-called "Peer Review Mechanism" to get the man a quiet retirement home in Nigeria, rather than face the inevitable vengeful mobs that had tortured other African chancers like one of his predecessors, former Liberian president and murderous despot on his own account, Samuel Doe, to death.

Both the above African presidents, looking serious about their important business, saw the odious Taylor off to Abuja and presumably agreed that he would have a safe and quiet life, so long as he kept out of Liberian politics. (It somewhat helped his cause that Taylor has been described in some circles as Obasanjo's brother-in-law. Smart move.)

But how Machiavellian are our African leaders? How long would it take before whatever their promises to Taylor, no doubt backed up by dollar accounts at various international shopping outlets to keep himself and his entourage in comfort (while people are starving in Darfur and the Northern Cape, for example), would be forgotten and his overdue date with the International Criminal Court at The Hague, let alone the far more important appearance before a people's tribunal in Liberia or Sierra Leone, or both, would become inevitable?

Sinister stuff. Stuff best left forgotten.

But if you've lost an arm, a leg or a loved one in some sinister war that no one cares to explain, how can you forget? Why should you forget? How can you forget the pious promises of the African dream?

When it was announced that Taylor was to be extradited from Nigeria, after all those political charades, I was certain he would snake his way out of the problem in one way or another. After all, a man who had escaped from prison in the United States and then gone on to become a warlord and finally president of an independent African state, without the US cavalry bothering to come and get him, can hardly be expected to sit around in his villa in Calabar, waiting for his brother-in-law's cops to come and escort him to a military plane to fly back to face the music in a mere banana republic such as Liberia.

And so, indeed, Taylor, aided and abetted by someone high up in the Nigerian state apparatus, jumped into a limousine and headed deeper into Africa. Someone, somewhere, blew the whistle and he was apprehended as he tried to cross into yet another unmonitored African dictatorship: the former German/French/British territory of Cameroon, run as an unmonitored one-man show by Paul Biya.

It will be interesting to see how the AU's Peer Review Mechanism deals with the next stage of the process. It is curious that so few African leaders who have signed up to this protocol have had anything to say about the Taylor affair, and indeed about the atrocities committed during his tenure as president of an African republic. And it will be very interesting to see if an African leader, Charles Taylor or anyone else, is ever forced to face the consequences of a rule of arrogance and unaccountability.