

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



An aerial view of a fishing village in northern Sierra Leone.

PRESS CLIPPINGS

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

as at:

Monday, 4 June 2012

Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
Any omission, comment or suggestion, please contact
Martin Royston-Wright
Ext 7217

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Special Court for Sierra Leone
Outreach and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 4 June 2012

Justice Fisher Elected President of the Special Court



Justice Shireen Avis Fisher of the United States has been elected to a one-year term as Presiding Judge of the Appeals Chamber, a post which makes her President of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. She succeeds Justice Jon Kamanda of Sierra Leone, who has served as President since 2009.

Justice Emmanuel Ayoola of Nigeria was re-elected to a third term as Vice President. Justice Ayoola previously served as President of the Special Court from 2004-2005. He has also served as Staff Appeals Judge of the court since 2009 and will remain in the position for another year.

Immediately prior to her appointment to the Special Court in May 2009, Justice Fisher was a Commissioner on the Kosovo Independent Judicial and Prosecutorial Commission. From 2005 to 2008, Justice Fisher served as an International Judge of the War Crimes Chamber, Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The cases adjudicated by

Justice Fisher at the Bosnia War Crimes Chamber included convictions for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. During her time at the Bosnia War Crimes Chamber, Justice Fisher developed the court rules for victim and witness judicial protection measures. Justice Fisher also established the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina Advanced Judicial Education Program.

Since 1986 she has also served as a Judge of General Jurisdiction Trial Courts in the U.S. state of Vermont, currently with Active-Retired Status. Justice Fisher began her legal career as a Public Defender in Vermont and founded her own litigation law firm.

She was called to the Bar in 1976.

Justice Fisher received her *Juris Doctor* from the Columbus School of Law, Catholic University of America, in 1976 and an LLM in International Human Rights Law from University College London in 2001.

She has written and lectured extensively on public and private international law in the United States, Europe and Africa.

#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.

INFORMATION FOR MEDIA - NOT FOR ADVERTISING

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Outreach and Public Affairs Office
Special Court for Sierra Leone
Mobile: 232 76 655732
Email: SCSL-pressoffice@un.org

Visit our website at www.sc-sl.org

The Torchlight

Monday, 4 June 2012

My Final Phone call with Charles Taylor

Former president of Liberia Charles Taylor called me regularly in the early 1990s when I was the director of Voice of America's English-to-Africa broadcasts. I'll never forget one strange phone call from him. Unfortunately, my hunch about Taylor's connection to Sierra Leone would prove correct.



By Gregory Alonso Pirió / May 31, 2012

Former Liberian President Charles Taylor waits for the start of his sentencing judgement in the courtroom of the Special Court for Sierra Leone near The Hague May 30. Taylor will serve his 50-year sentence for crimes against humanity in a British prison. Op-ed contributor Gregory Alonso Pirió recalls the phone interviews he conducted with Taylor as a Voice of America journalist in Africa.

Charles Taylor would call me on regular basis in the early 1990s. It's not that I was a friend of the former Liberian rebel leader and later president, whom the International Criminal Court sentenced to 50 years in prison on Wednesday for his role in the bloody Sierra Leone civil war. Rather, Mr. Taylor needed me.

I was a media gatekeeper who could give him access to an audience of millions of African listeners, including Liberians. These were the days before the advent of independent FM radio in Africa, and millions of Africans had no recourse but to tune to international broadcasters like the BBC and Voice of America as credible news alternatives to the government-monopolized radio stations.

For my part, as the director of VOA's English-to-Africa broadcasts, I pursued newsmakers like Taylor to enrich the news offerings to our listeners. The advent of satellite telephone in the 1980s revolutionized our coverage of African civil conflicts. Rebel leaders were no longer isolated in faraway bush headquarters awaiting the occasional Western reporter to arrive to get their stories out.

With the advent of direct dial, we could talk directly to murky figures within seconds, and my Rolodex quickly came to read like a Who's Who of cold war and post-cold war warriors: UNITA leader and one-time US ally, Jonas Savimbi of Angola; Renamo leader, Afonso Dlakama, of Mozambique; Rwandan Patriotic Front leader, Paul Kagame; Somali warlords, and more.

These phone relationships were professional but intense, and these leaders made strong impressions, both in person or just over the phone. Savimbi was

brilliant, personally imposing, and ruthless. Dlakama appeared meek and unprepared for media scrutiny. Kagame was highly intelligent and calculating. And Taylor seemed coarse and shifty to me over the phone.

Taylor would call me weekly or biweekly to give me updates on battlefield accomplishments or peace overtures. Sometimes I would interview him myself, but as our stable of top-notch reporters with intimate knowledge of African reality grew, I would hand Taylor over to them for interviews.

One day, I received a call with an unfamiliar voice on the other end. My memory tells me that his voice was somewhat shrill as he announced, "I am Corporal Foday Sankoh, and I am leader of the Revolutionary United Front, which has launched the liberation of Sierra Leone. I am calling you on satellite phone from RUF-liberated territory inside Sierra Leone." Sankoh proposed an interview.

My mind raced: "The only one who could have given Sankoh my phone number was Charles Taylor," and I imagined Foday Sankoh speaking on Taylor's satellite phone somewhere in neighboring Liberia with the shifty Taylor at his side.

My hunch about the Taylor connection would prove correct. Sierra Leone's RUF - which later became synonymous with terror, murder, rape, conscripting child soldiers, and thirst for the blood diamonds of Sierra Leone - acted much like a brigade of Taylor's own forces.

Taylor trained RUF fighters within Liberia, facilitated the transshipment of weapons to RUF forces, provided Liberians to fight with RUF forces, and controlled the lucrative illicit diamond trade from Sierra Leone that provides financial support for the Sierra Leone rebels.

Taylor's recent conviction of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Sierra Leone civil war appears completely justified in this regard. It was only years later that I learned that Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi had sponsored both Taylor and Sankoh, unleashing a bloodbath of civil wars in West Africa that victimized untold numbers of Africans.

I refused the RUF leader an interview for days, saying I needed to ascertain the credibility of his story. Having the ear of millions of listeners, many of whom depended on our news for life and death information, was a huge responsibility. I wasn't going to take undue risk that could have sorry consequences for innocents. Eventually, after having been satisfied that Sankoh had indeed launched his rebellion, we interviewed him.

Some months later, I received another strange phone call. I immediately recognized the voice as that of Charles Taylor, but he identified himself as a unit commander in Taylor's rebel army. The caller wanted to give an interview to refute charges that his unit had violated a truce with a rival militia. I said, "What are you talking about? You are Charles Taylor; I would know your voice anywhere."

He insisted, saying that even Taylor's wife, who was also a unit commander, would get their voices confused. I knew no Taylor subordinate would be so bold as to grab the headline from the boss: Such audacity was surely a death sentence.

I said, "No, we are not going to interview you because you are Charles Taylor, and we will only interview you under your real name." We went back and forth for some time until I ended the call. I can only guess that Taylor attempted this disguise to cast doubt on reports of the truce violation without having his lies attributed directly to

him.

In 1997, Liberians elected Taylor president in the hopes that making the ambitious warlord the head of state would bring lasting peace to the country. This gamble would prove wrong. By 2003 Taylor was driven out of power by another Liberian faction in the second Liberian civil war, which engulfed Sierra Leone and parts of Guinea as well. In that same year, he was indicted for war crimes.

OPINION: Liberia - a model for US development aid

Now Taylor sits in jail in The Hague awaiting the start of his 50-year sentence in a British prison. The falsehoods that Taylor told presiding Judge Richard Lussick in his defense reminded me of the Taylor that I knew - a shifty man, who, in his last phone call to me, pretended to be someone else in an effort to fool our listeners.

Gregory Alonso Pirio currently serves as president of EC Associates (Empowering Communications). He is the author of "The African Jihad: Bin Laden's Quest for the Horn of Africa" and editor of "Rebuilding Shattered Nations and Lives: Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development in Africa." Mr. Pirio is currently a visiting scholar at the School of Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, where he has launched the "Voices of Marginalized Youth Initiative "

Awareness Times

Monday, 4 June 2012

Charles Taylor: Sierra Leone's Scapegoat: Part 2

By Dr. Sylvia Olayinka Blyden

Paragraph 112 of the Summary Judgment against Charles Taylor as read out on April 26th 2012 by Justice Richard Lussick, the Presiding Judge states:

During a radio conversation with Foday Sankoh, following the attack on Sierra Rutile in 1994, the Accused [Charles Taylor] advised the RUF leader to send an External Delegation to Côte d'Ivoire. In Côte d'Ivoire, the delegates met Musa Cissé, an NPFL representative, who allowed them to use his radio for communications with Sankoh. The Accused, through contact with Musa Cissé, invited members of the External Delegation to Liberia, where he met them twice in 1995. In December 1995 the Accused met members of the External Delegation in Cote d'Ivoire on the occasion of the publication of "Footpaths to Democracy", at which time he gave them CFA 10 million francs for their maintenance.

So who or what was this External Delegation? And what else happened in Ivory Coast (Cote d'Ivoire) in December 1995? Mrs. Agnes Deen Jalloh (nee Bio), is elder sister of Julius Maada Bio, the Presidential candidate of the main opposition Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) which enjoys bastion of its support in South-Eastern Sierra Leone where the RUF launched its war. Currently influential SLPP members supported RUF in its initial stages. The former SLPP Leader and President, Alhaji Tejan Kabbah publicly stated at the Yamoussoukro Peace Talks that in 1991, when he first heard of Sierra Leonean RUF rebels waging a war in 1991 to remove the then APC Government of General Momoh from power, he was very happy and supported the RUF; only withdrawing his support when he disagreed with their savage methods against innocent civilians. Without a doubt, Tejan Kabbah is indeed a perfect gentleman and obviously the RUF savagery did not seat well with his conscience. However, that was Ahmad Tejan Kabbah the gentleman with a conscience; Many others continued their support for the RUF despite the savagery.

One such person was Mrs. Agnes Deen-Jalloh (nee Bio). She is much older than Julius Maada Bio. Agnes raised Maada Bio and put him through school. Her husband, Dr. Deen-Jalloh and her were reported to have been 'forced' to join the RUF in early stages of the war. Agnes and her husband were so senior in RUF rank that they became trusted to be the ones to be sent out of Sierra Leone as RUF diplomats (External Delegation) who were given posh residential

To those floating talk of Liberia & other States having to pay reparation, let me tell you it is going to be very interesting when Liberians and other accused nationalities will get Agnes Deen Jalloh (nee Bio) to be de-briefed for the international court when the SLPP's proposed 'President' Julius Maada Bio files papers at THE HAGUE. The elder sister who raised him up served as diplomatic emissary for the RUF at the time they were performing horrors against fellow Sierra Leoneans.

houses in an Ivorian town known as Danane near the border with Liberia. Members of the 'External Delegation' including Agnes Deen-Jalloh (nee Bio) lived a posh lifestyle in Ivory Coast from as far back as 1994 as now stated in the judgment against Charles Taylor. During all this time his sister was living in Danane, Ivory Coast as an RUF Diplomat, Julius Maada Bio was the Deputy Head of State in Sierra Leone and later, additionally, the Chief of Defence Staff directly supervising the war against his sister's RUF inside Sierra Leone. He never made this known to the public.

Now, let me reveal today some facts which have been classified for a long time. In December 1995 when he was Deputy Head of State and Chief of Defence Staff, Julius Maada Bio secretly sent three of his most trusted soldiers on a secret mission to meet with his RUF sister in Danane, Ivory Coast. The soldiers all wore plain clothes and posed as civilians. Unfortunately, they got arrested by Ivory Coast Government soldiers at the border when their identities were proven to be Sierra Leone soldiers camouflaged as civilians.

Such deception on the part of Sierra Leone soldiers crossing into Ivory Coast through Liberia had proven to be a diplomatic headache for Captain Valentine Strasser, the then Sierra Leone Head of State, whom it is reported, knew nothing of the mission of his Deputy!

Strasser, it is reported by my sources during my investigations, was furious and considering action against Julius Maada Bio, his Deputy. Few weeks later, the very next month, (January 1996) Strasser was abruptly overthrown by Bio. These are facts which very few Sierra Leoneans know about but which a proper examination of the war (like some of us have extensively done) will produce for Historians. There has always been a puzzle for me over the reason behind Maada Bio sending soldiers secretly into Ivory Coast in December 1995.

His reported explanation to his boss had been that he had been informed his sister was being held as a captive in Danane town in Ivory Coast and so he had sent those commandos to kidnap his sister and bring her back by road to Sierra Leone through Liberia. That was his explanation back then.

This is one of the issues I had personally asked Foday Sankoh about when I met him. His response was that he gave a request from the bush, for the Ivorian Government to release Maada Bio's soldiers and that his request was promptly adhered to and the men were released. Before the men could re-enter Sierra Leone, Maada Bio had overthrown Valentine Strasser.

To those floating the talk of Liberia and other States having to pay us *reparation*, let me tell you it is going to be very interesting when the Liberians and other accused nationalities will get Agnes Deen Jalloh (nee Bio) to be de-briefed for the international court when the SLPP's proposed 'President' Julius Maada Bio files papers at THE HAGUE. The elder sister who raised him up served as diplomatic emissary for the RUF at the time they were performing horrors against their fellow Sierra Leoneans.

Many aggrieved South Eastern Sierra Leoneans are quite right about the horrors which many of their relatives went through at the hands of the RUF but it still does not take away the fact that many other South-Easterners warmly welcomed the RUF and provided succor for them. Sama Banya is claiming "only one Paramount Chief" willingly supported the RUF and he got forgiven by the SLPP Government. That alone, is evidence of top level collaboration of at least one South-Eastern leader. However, it was not just "only one Paramount Chief".

As I have insisted before, my extensive investigations have proven to me beyond all reasonable doubts that there exists a supremacist mentality amongst a certain small group of persons (a clique) from

Contd on Page 11

Declaration made by His Excellency Professor Alpha Conde, President of the Republic of Guinea on the Yenga issue

“Considering our common stand point on the Yenga border issue as expressed in the Joint Communique promulgated in Conakry on 14th October, 2011 on the occasion of the friendly and working visit of His Excellency Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone during which we agreed that peace and security are paramount in the sustainability of our bilateral relations, and having resolved expeditiously to settle the Yenga issue through a Joint Commission Meeting as soon as possible in Freetown in order to move to the final solution.

I wish the Sierra Leonean people to know that since President Koroma’s ascension to the leadership of the country, he had taken the issue of Yenga as a core issue in his agenda.

Therefore I President Alpha Conde and President Koroma of Sierra Leone together will visit Yenga in July this year, after which a definite and final decision on the border problem will be taken.

I will like to assure the people of Kailahun District, especially those in Yenga, who have come here today that their interest will be protected by both President Koroma and myself to their full satisfaction.

I re-emphasise that the border issue between Guinea and Sierra Leone especially that of Yenga and anywhere else will never constitute a source of conflict between Guinea and Sierra Leone”.

- on the 2nd of June, 2012 at Gbalamuya, Sierra Leone at Guinea border.

Statement by H.E. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma

*“Opening of the Conakry-Freetown Highway And Joint Border Post
Marks Turning Point in Relations Between The Two Countries”*

“Words are not enough to describe the joy and sense of fulfilment I feel today on this auspicious and epoch making occasion of the commissioning of the Conakry-Freetown Highway and the opening of the joint border post. An occasion in which the presence and participation of my elder brother, colleague and friend, Professor Alpha Conde is highly appreciated. Let me therefore, on behalf of the people of the sister Republic of Sierra Leone register my personal and sovereign gratitude to Professor Alpha Conde for actually consenting to grace this historic occasion.

Common History

In days gone by, there were no physical frontiers limiting the movement of our people between and among the countries of the sub-region and especially countries within the envelope of the Mano River Basin evidenced by the fact that even the rivers that water the countries of the sub-region have their source in the Fouta Djallon mountains. This is the reason why Guinea is often referred to as “La Reservoir De l’Afrique”.

The boundaries separating the people’s of Africa, that compartmentalised it’s peoples into different nationalities baptised with alien names such as Guineans, Sierra Leoneans, Ivorians, Gambians, Liberians, Senegalese, Angolans, Nigerians, Ghanaians and so on, we’re drawn in a distant land called Berlin by strange people who had hitherto not set foot on the African soil, and quite oblivious of the tribal, cultural and traditional linkages and sensitivities, in the year 1884/85. That celebrated conference is now commonly referred to as the ‘partitioning of Africa’.

Today’s meeting of the two nations at this new border crossing will herald the corrective measures African Leaders are willing to take and must take in order to restore the dignity and unity of the people’s of Africa, in general and our sub-region, in particular.

For emphasis, let me recall the words of the late President Ahmed Sekou Toure of the Republic of Guinea to the late President Modibo Keita of the Republic of Mali when the latter threatened to annex parts of north eastern Guinea claiming it to be Malian territory. When President Sekou Toure was informed he said to the emissary, “go and tell my brother Modibo Keita that he is right. The territory is his indeed. Siguri is his and even Conakry is his. He or any of his people can come and settle here anytime for Guinea and Mali are one and the same country.”

Your Excellency, your presence and my presence here today is of great significance demonstrating to the people of our sub-region and the world at large that a journey of a thousand miles starts with one step. Your Excellency, you and I have taken the first concrete step towards the realisation of the Mano River and ECOWAS principles to facilitate the free movement of goods and people and the mutual right of citizens to live and work in any of our countries within the laws of the lands.

Your Excellency, let me thank you for making history”.

Daily Trust (Abuja)

Monday, 4 June 2012

Liberia: The Charles Taylor Verdict

Editorial

Former Liberian president, Mr Charles Taylor, was sentenced to fifty years imprisonment by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague for his role during the civil war in Sierra Leone. Taylor was charged with aiding and abetting former Sierra Leone rebel leader Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) loyalists in committing crimes including murder, recruiting child soldiers, rape and enforced amputations in return for "blood diamonds".

Taylor now holds the dubious record of being the first head of state to be convicted and sentenced for crimes against humanity since Nuremberg trials that followed World War II. His conviction is a major boost for international law and a stern warning to other leaders, particularly those in Africa, steeped in the culture of impunity that has been the bane of governance in many countries on the continent. Leaders can no longer hide under sovereignty and the principle of non-interference to do as they please to their citizens.

Reactions to the verdict have been generally positive of the work of the special court. Korto Williams, director of Action Aid Liberia said "not only is this verdict an opportunity for Sierra Leone and Liberia to move forward, it also signals the international community's clear intent that any leader who misuses their power and carries out state-sanctioned violence will be held responsible for their crimes and will be punished"

There are currently a host of African leaders awaiting trial for crimes against humanity at the International Criminal Court (ICC). They include two prominent Kenyan politicians, Uhuru Kenyatta, (son of the founding president of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta) and William Ruto; former president of Ivory Coast Laurent Gbagbo and Jean Pierre Bemba, former vice president of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The ICC has also issued warrants for the arrest of others such as Joseph Kone the Ugandan rebel leader and the president of Sudan Omar el Bashir.

It is true that aside from a few Yugoslavian leaders such as Slobodan Milosevic, Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic arraigned before the Tribunal on Yugoslavia, it is mostly Africans who have been charged for crimes against humanity at international tribunals including the ICC. This has encouraged the perception that the ICC is targeted at African leaders who refuse to kowtow to the West, and is there doing the bidding of Western neo-imperialism.

Still, this should not be an excuse for allowing African leaders to get away with misrule and policies that tolerate or even allow the killing and maiming of their own people. In any case two wrongs don't make a right. States are obliged to protect their own citizens from mass killings and crimes against humanity in keeping with the UN doctrine of responsibility to protect.

Nevertheless, big powers such as the United States would be well advised to sign up to the ICC charter and submit to its jurisdiction. This would go a long way in helping to debunk accusations of double standards and further the cause of international justice by broadening its scope and bringing those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity to justice regardless of their nationality.

The Taylor verdict has rekindled calls to bring the perpetrators of crimes committed during the Liberian civil war to justice. Indeed there are questions over why Taylor was not arraigned for war crimes during the civil wars in his native Liberia from 1989-2003.

It was perhaps no surprise that the Liberian government's response to the Taylor verdict was muted, a reflection of the divisions in the country, that the wounds from the civil wars are yet to heal. Taylor deserved his 50-year sentence, but is unlikely to bring closure to the lingering scars of the war in Sierra Leone. However, the sentence should assuage some of the anger of its victims.

New York Daily News

Monday, 4 June 2012

A monster finally faces justice

Charles Taylor will pay for his bloody rule over Liberia

There is little good news from Africa, but when it is good, it is exceptionally good.

In 2006, I wrote a column celebrating the Liberian election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who elevated the continent's morale. This time, I celebrate the conviction of Charles Taylor at The Hague, where the 64-year-old ex-president of Liberia was sentenced last week to 50 years in the tight security of a British prison. Perhaps the ghost of Richard III will hold his hand until the end.

Taylor is the first former head of state convicted in an international court since the Nazis at Nuremberg. Bad company.

Taylor's crimes are many. He trained as a guerrilla in Libya, returning to his native land in 1989 to oust Samuel Doe, thus coming to cement his own stranglehold over Liberia.

Doe was finished off thusly, as South Africa's Sunday Times reported from the pen of Festus Eriye in 2003:

"The fatal torture of former Liberian President Samuel K. Doe has been well documented. His killers — a gang of thugs led by notorious warlord Prince Yormie Johnson who, together with Charles Taylor, rose up against Doe in 1989 — captured the ghastly affair on video, edited the results, gave it a soundtrack and distributed copies among themselves.

"In Johnson's home movie, he is seated behind a massive desk, with a garland of grenades around his neck. He is drinking a can of beer and a young woman fans him with a cloth, occasionally dabbing his temple.

"Opposite the desk, in a room crowded with drunk, shouting rebels, Samuel K. Doe sits on the floor. He is naked, except for his underpants. His hands are manacled behind his back. Two rebels are shown holding him upright. Flesh hangs off his face. His legs are bleeding.

"An interrogation of sorts is taking place. Johnson threatens to kill Doe if he won't talk. 'I want information! I want information!' he shouts. All Doe can do is plead for his life.

"Suddenly, Johnson pounds the table: 'That man won't talk, bring me his ear!'

"The camera jerks around to focus on a screaming Doe, who is held down as a rebel carves off his left ear. Johnson hits the desk again, and barks out the order:

"Now the other ear, the right ear. . ."

"The torture and interrogation continues. Johnson demands to know where he has stashed the money that he stole from the Liberian people.

"The video abruptly ends.

"Doe bled to death later that night."

Taylor went on to become president, brutally twisting and turning in an ever larger pool of corruption that reduced the country to a primitive and blighted backwater. The once-bustling capital city of Monrovia then had only two places lit at night, the palace of the president and the police station.

Taylor, a nice-looking and articulate man, could hide his involvement in slavery, mutilations and rape, all while amassing his own cache of "blood diamonds."

He was instrumental in fomenting conflict in Sierra Leone, where 50,000 people died in a civil war — one in which Taylor proved to be a ruthless profiteer.

As time and rebels moved forcefully against him, Taylor became a relic of Liberia's past. By 2006, Sirleaf was in power, and Liberians wanted Taylor to account for his bloody regime.

Despite his attempts to evade justice and not end up like Doe, Taylor was captured and charged with 11 grave counts. This April came the guilty verdict.

Good always takes longer than evil to work. But when it does, our morale shoots back up. Unless we think like children, we realize that neither the good nor the bad ever really run out of troops. Civilization, anywhere in the world, is always an ongoing struggle.

crouch.stanley@gmail.com

Daily Observer (Liberia)

Thursday, 31 May 2012

Taylor Calls for Calm Terming 50-yr Sentence a Mockery to Justice, Democracy

Written by Stephen Binda



Speaking from custody in The Hague yesterday shortly after being sentenced to 50 years of imprisonment for crimes against humanity, convicted former president Charles Taylor reportedly told his family back home to tell his supporters to remain calm as his lawyers process the appeal case against his conviction.

The former warlord, who became president after leading years of brutal civil war in his homeland, reportedly urged his supporters not to stage any street demonstration in protest against his sentencing. They should rather respect the democratic process, family spokesman Senator Sando Johnson, who claimed to have spoken directly to convict Taylor after the sentence, told the *Daily Observer*.

“Mr. Taylor has asked me to inform our people to remain calm and that God was in control of the situation,” he quoted Taylor as saying yesterday. “He (Taylor) informed me that his lawyers were preparing to appeal against the 50 years sentence brought against him.”

Johnson said the standing rule of the International Court for Sierra Leone provides for the accused to file an appeal following the sentence. Taylor will remain in the UN’s detention unit in The Hague until his appeal procedure is finalized within six months.

Quoting Mr. Taylor, Sen. Johnson termed the 50 years jail sentence as a mockery to justice and democracy for both Liberia and Sierra Leone.

He asked, “While jail Mr. Taylor for 50 years for aiding and abetting war crimes when in fact the main perpetrators in Sierra Leone who were convicted went to jail for 15 to 30 years?”

According to him, Taylor said he was not surprised at the sentence, citing an international conspiracy by western powers.

“Mr. Taylor has said that there should not be any street demonstration or chaos in Liberia. We should respect the democratic peace process and pray for him and that every Liberian should remain calm,” Senator Johnson said.

Taylor (64) was convicted last month of all 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for aiding and abetting Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) during the country's brutal 1991-2001 civil war.

In return, the court said, he was paid in diamonds mined by slave labour in areas under control of the rebels, who murdered, raped and kept sex slaves, hacked off limbs and forced children under 15 to fight.

"The accused has been found responsible for aiding and abetting some of the most heinous crimes in human history," said Special Court for Sierra Leone judge Richard Lussick on Wednesday.

"The trial chamber unanimously sentences you to a single term of imprisonment for 50 years on all counts," the judge said as he announced the ruling of the court based at Leidschendam, just outside The Hague.

"The trial chamber noticed that the effects of these crimes on the families and society as a whole in Sierra Leone was devastating," Lussick said in handing down the ruling, the first sentence against a former head of state in an international court since the Nazi trials at Nuremberg in 1946.

Taylor, wearing gold-rimmed glasses and dressed in a dark suit and gold tie, listened with his eyes closed as the judge handed down the sentence, which Taylor's team, and prosecutors, have two weeks to appeal.

Early this month, chief prosecutor Brenda Hollis argued for 80 years behind bars for Taylor, once one of west Africa's most powerful men and a driving force behind Sierra Leone's decade-long war which claimed 120 000 lives.

His defense argued such a sentence would be "excessive". Throughout the trial, Taylor himself maintained his innocence and insisted he was instrumental in eventually ending Sierra Leone's civil war.

Taylor's sentence will be served in a British prison. London's offer in 2007 to host Taylor in custody if he was found guilty was part of the deal to put him on trial in the Netherlands-based court.

The trial, which lasted nearly four years, wrapped up in March 2011. It saw several high-profile witnesses testify, including supermodel Naomi Campbell, who told of a gift of "dirty diamonds" she received in 1997 at a charity ball hosted by South Africa's then president Nelson Mandela.

Handing down the verdict last month, Lussick stressed that although Taylor had substantial influence over the RUF, including its feared leader Foday Sankoh, this "fell short of command and control" of rebel forces. Sankoh died in 2003 before he could face trial.

Authorities in Nigeria arrested Taylor in March 2006 as he tried to flee from exile after being forced to quit Liberia three years earlier, under international pressure to end that country's own civil war.

He was transferred to the Hague in mid-2006 amid security fears should he go on trial in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown.

Taylor's sentencing came 66 years after the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg sentenced admiral Karl Donitz to 10 years in jail for his part in Nazi crimes during World War II.

The Inquirer (Liberia)

Monday, 4 June 2012

Taylor Gets 50-Year Sentence...But Family Terms It As Unfair

The first former head of state to be convicted of war crimes since World War II was sentenced to 50 years in prison Wednesday by an international court in The Hague, Netherlands.



Former President Charles G. Taylor

However, the spokesman of the Taylor family, Bomi County Senator Sando Johnson has reacted sharply to the sentencing of the former Liberian President.

Senator Johnson told the INQUIRER that the sentence meted out against former President Taylor is "unfair" because the nine persons from Sierra Leone were given less sentences.

He said with the nine indicted Sierra Leoneans given less sentences and President Taylor who does not bear the greater responsibility for crimes committed in Sierra Leone now given a hard sentence, the Special Court has carried its work in a way that is a mockery to Justice.

Senator Johnson said the Taylor legal team will take advantage of the six month given to file an appeal but noted that the sentencing of the former Liberian leader is the work of Britain, the United States and those he referred to as the "blue eyes boys."

The Special Court for Sierra Leone convicted former Liberian president Charles Taylor last month of supplying and encouraging rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone in a campaign of terror, involving murder, rape, sexual slavery and the conscription children younger than 15.

He was also found guilty of using Sierra Leone's diamond deposits to help fuel its civil war with arms and guns while enriching himself with what have commonly come to be known as "blood diamonds."

Taylor directed his gaze downward while Presiding Judge Richard Lussick read the sentencing statement, which began with a horror cabinet of carnage committed in Sierra Leone by rebels from the Revolutionary United Front, which the former president backed.

"The accused has been found responsible for aiding and abetting as well as planning some of the most heinous and brutal crimes recorded in human history," said Lussick, who described one RUF military operation as the "indiscriminate killing of anything that moved."

He spoke of amputations with machetes -- some carried out by child soldiers forced to do so -- and read accounts by witnesses who suffered under the violence.

"Witness TF1064 was forced to carry a bag containing human heads," Lussick said. "On the way, the rebels ordered her to laugh as she carried the bags dripping with blood."

Upon arrival, "the bag was emptied, and she saw the heads of her children." A former child soldier, conscripted at age 12, in his testimony told of "having the letters RUF carved into his chest," Lussick said. "When ordered on a food-finding mission to rape an old woman they found at a farmhouse, the boy cried and refused, for which he was punished."

The prosecution had asked the Special Court for Sierra Leone to sentence Taylor, who was president of Liberia from 1997 to 2003, to 80 years behind bars, but the judges found the recommendation "excessive," citing the "limited scope" of the conviction in key attacks.

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

There is no death penalty in international criminal law, and Taylor, 64, will serve out his sentence in a British prison.

The former Liberian president is appealing his conviction and will receive credit for time already served since his apprehension in March 2006.

The atrocities he was convicted of supporting occurred over the course of five years -- almost his entire presidency -- and reached a peak in 1998 and 1999. Sierra Leone's civil war lasted from 1991 to 2002, ultimately leaving 50,000 dead or missing.

Although Taylor was not on the battlefield in Sierra Leone, the court saw his position of power as president of the neighboring country and the use of his own military's capabilities to stoke up RUF rebels as making him directly responsible for the bloodshed he encouraged.

Taylor does not see himself as a war criminal but as a victim -- a leader wronged by corruption and a hypocritical hand of justice with a political agenda.

"I never stood a chance," he said last week during his final courtroom stand. "Only time will tell how many other African heads of state will be destroyed."

Taylor accused the United States government of throwing the trial by paying prosecutors millions of dollars and claimed that witnesses had been bought.

He has expressed no remorse and insisted his intent was far from what had been portrayed by prosecutors. He has described himself as a peacemaker, saying he should be spared a harsh sentence.

His defense attorneys pointed to the former Liberian president's role in the peace process that ended the civil war as a mitigating factor in his sentencing.

But after lengthy consideration, the panel of judges -- which in addition to Lassick included Judge Teresa Doherty and Judge Julia Sebutinde -- did not buy it.

"While Mr. Taylor publicly played a substantial role in this process ... secretly, he was fuelling hostilities," Lassick said, supplying rebels with arms and ammunition.

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

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

Taylor, 64, was found guilty of all 11 counts of aiding and abetting the deadly rebel campaign in Sierra Leone.

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

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

The Analyst (Liberia)

Monday, 4 June 2012

Liberia: Power Play or Justice -Defense Says Taylor's Trial 'Deeply Flawed'

Comment

After six years of labyrinthine trial that drew strange witnesses from halfway around the globe, the 3-man Trial Chamber II of the Special Court of Sierra Leone, late last month, sentenced former Liberian president Charles Taylor to 50 years in prison – three decades less than the prosecution had anticipated. In neighboring Sierra Leone, a country, in which Taylor is decided to have aided and abetted mayhem against innocent people, it is sweet justice – tit for tat. Just across the border in Liberia however, the reaction is split, however asymmetrically – it is either injustice or justice, depending on to whom one speaks. Some say such reactions are all about perception, interest, and nationalism. However, Taylor's defense says not quite. The Analyst adapts and presents the defense's interview with "This Is Africa – Global Perspective" as reported by Adam Robert Green.

Despite its popularity amongst western governments, human rights groups, victims, and independent observers of the Taylor trial, lead defense barrister Justice Courtenay Griffiths says the trial has exposed the political motive and power play of international law – not the acclaimed quest for justice.

Barrister Griffiths made the remarks in an interview with "This Is Africa –Global Perspective" on May 28, 2012, 24 hours before the 3-person Trial Chamber II of the Special Court of Sierra sentenced Mr. Taylor. The trial chamber comprised two men from Samoa and Uganda and one woman from Northern Ireland.

The sentencing, greeted around the world as "a landmark case in the fight against impunity for grave crimes, immortalize the former Liberian president as the first African leader to be found guilty of war crimes by an international tribunal.

It also came within weeks of the 10th Anniversary of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC, incidentally, provided trial facilities for the Sierra Leone special court after both the prosecution and defense expressed concerns that the trial might be undermined by suspected pro- and anti-Taylor biases in both Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Estimates say the trial cost the international community US \$50.0 million, an amount relief agencies contend would have been better spent providing relief for victims of the Sierra Leonean war, but which human rights advocates is well spent.

Even though the prosecution counsel believes the 50-year sentence is insufficient, the Trial Chamber contends that there is no fairer way to fight impunity by punishing Taylor for the 11 counts of aiding and abetting murder, rape, conscription of child soldiers, and sexual slavery that took place during Sierra Leone's civil war between 1996 and 2002.

Taylor's defense: "it's all about the politics of power"

The procedural and evidentiary basis of the case was deeply flawed, argues Taylor's defense barrister, Courtenay Griffiths QC.

"I am a newcomer to international criminal law. Until the Charles Taylor case I had never practiced in that field, I'd never studied it, and I was asked to take on the Charles Taylor case based solely on my background as a criminal defense advocate," says the Jamaican-born barrister Griffiths in an interview with "This is Africa".

Mr. Griffiths expresses his dismay. "One of the things that I discovered much to my alarm soon after dipping a toe into this area is that - and I will say it bluntly - international criminal law is not about law at all. It's all about the politics of power.

“If you examine all the cases before the ICC and indeed the particular case that I was involved in with Charles Taylor, you see - behind the scenes - a hidden hand or hands manipulating the legal process for their own benefit.”

Mr. Griffiths' worries are shared by others. The Special Court's reserve judge Justice El Hadji Malick Sow from Senegal even interrupted the hearing to voice opposition, but his microphone was cut off as he spoke. Sow warned that the international justice system was “in grave danger of losing all credibility”.

Meddling

Mr. Griffiths believes geostrategic interests have soiled both ad hoc war crimes tribunals such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the now de facto permanent institution for prosecuting such crimes, the International Criminal Court.

“What people do not highlight are the economic and strategic reasons as to why some people are investigated and arrest warrants are issued and not others. Take Darfur, for example. What's never mentioned is that, surprisingly, Darfur just happens to sit on a sea of oil and many Western oil companies would like to exploit that resource, and [there is] concern about Omar al-Bashir's relationship with China.

“Likewise you look at the Democratic Republic of Congo, perhaps the most minerally rich country on the planet, the sole producer of some of the rarest minerals required by Western industries, and it just so happens that by the indictment of various factional leaders within that country you keep in power a very corrupt government who is then willing to allow you to exploit the valuable resources in that country.”

In the context of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Mr. Griffiths believes a Western oil corporation indicated it was able to influence the authorities' pursuit of Liberia's former president.

“Charles Taylor told me he was playing tennis at his home in Liberia towards the end of his tenure and he had been negotiating a deal with an oil company for Liberia's offshore oil concessions. [They] weren't offering Liberia what he felt was a fair deal, and Taylor wanted to sell those oil concessions to the Chinese. Taylor tells me he received a telephone call from a very senior executive, who told him bluntly, 'Mr. President, if you can't do a deal then I'm sorry, I can't protect you any more'. That's the argument which I've not heard anybody express today. Nobody is expressing how it is that in all these instances you see Western economic and strategic interests at work,” Griffiths said.

Mr. Griffiths does not argue that Charles Taylor should not have been tried. His concerns relate to the manner in which the trial unfolded.

“In principle, I would have no difficulty with Charles Taylor being tried for crimes in Liberia. There's no doubt that unlawful killings took place, the pillaging of people's homes and properties took place. Rape was committed. Child soldiers were used. And I think then, he would have direct responsibility. He was the president of the country. He was the leader of the largest warring faction during the civil war.”

But, he claims, the West “could not afford to try Taylor in Liberia”. US interests were keen to protect current incumbent President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf from being drawn into a Liberia-focused trial for political and commercial reasons, he believes.

When pressed for details on how this interference played out, Mr. Griffiths seconds Charles Taylor's claims made in the pre-trial hearing about the 'buying' of evidence and coercion.

Money, argued Taylor in his presentation to the court, played a “corrupting, influential, significant and dominant role in this trial. Money in this case cumulatively prejudiced my rights and interests in an irreparable way.”

Mr. Griffiths elaborates on Taylor's argument. “The prosecution was given a secret fund of millions of dollars by the US government and despite repeated attempts by us, they have never been prepared to disclose who gave it to them, how much it was, or what they used it for. But we know what it was used for. The court [already] has a victim and witness service, which is funded to provide travel expenses for witnesses to come to Freetown or wherever. This fund is over and above that.

“Taylor made the point that much of the evidence against him was bought. People were paid to give evidence against him. Who was paying that money? The US [was]. They also provided 80 percent of the funding of the court.”

In the trial proceedings, the prosecution denied receipt of such funds and the judges did not evidently see fit to discharge evidence on the basis of the bribery allegations, as the case proceeded to its conclusion.

"I'm not sure I agree with you," Mr. Griffiths says in response to the interviewers' suggestion that the suspected level of interference seems somewhat far-fetched given Liberia's fairly modest resource base, especially in past years where the oil and gas reserves of the West African coast were not a major draw.

“From the US point of view, given their concerns about Iran, if I was an American president, what would I rather control? The Gulf of Guinea, right across the Atlantic from my oil refineries in Virginia, no atomic nuclear armed Iran to interfere with my supplies, or continued reliance on Middle Eastern oil which have to travel through the Straits of Hormuz? Which would make more economic and strategic sense?”

His claim about US interests wishing to protect Johnson Sirleaf is also debatable since Sirleaf took office in 2006, four years after the court was established and three years after Taylor has been indicted.

Secondly, the Special Court for Sierra Leone was set up through an agreement between then-President of Sierra Leone Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the United Nations, and not the US.

Liberia's government, meanwhile, has never sought a special court, says Peter C. Andersen, chief of outreach and public affairs at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, explaining why no trial has been pursued for crimes committed there.

But Mr. Griffiths believes the evidence tying Taylor to Sierra Leone was too tenuous for a conviction to be made. “My argument is that he didn't get a fair trial. My argument is he wasn't tried for the right crimes. My argument has never been that he should not be tried. Because it seems to me that during the civil war, which began in Liberia and spread over the border into Sierra Leone, so many heinous crimes were committed, it needed to be examined in a court of law. And I think culpability needed to be assigned. I just don't like the way it's been gone about.”

Firstly, the prosecution's narrative overstated Taylor's regional power. Prosecutors described Taylor as part of a "joint criminal enterprise" to take over West Africa, including the likes of Muammar Gaddafi, Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso, and Foday Sankoh [leader and founder of the RUF]. The judges rejected that narrative, with the eventual focus being on Taylor's culpability for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone.

Yet even here, Mr. Griffiths describes as “extremely disturbing” the quality of evidence used to link Taylor to diamond trading and criminal acts neighboring Sierra Leone.

“The US and Britain deployed a lot of military hardware in and around that part of West Africa yet we didn't have one satellite picture of lorries going over the border carrying missiles. We didn't have one radio intercept even though the technology was available. I find that extremely surprising. In fact, apart from one witness who gave evidence of being in Taylor's presence when Taylor issued an order in relation to Sierra Leone, all the evidence relied on to link Taylor with Sierra Leone was hearsay,” Griffiths claims.

While the prosecution claimed that Taylor was in command and control of the RUF and the FRC, with a guiding hand in their activities, Mr. Griffiths argued in court that Taylor aided the RUF rebels, not lead them. He was, says the barrister, “sending for the most part small amounts of arms and ammunition across the border. He did send two large shipments, one of which was used for the Freetown invasion, but that was the extent of his involvement. He was involved in that raid knowing that atrocities were being committed”.

Having acknowledged Taylor's involvement - albeit at a lesser scale than the prosecutors claimed - Mr. Griffiths says that if funding rebel groups in other countries is now established as an international crime, the US ought to be brought into the dock for actions funding 'Contras' in Nicaragua, the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) in Mozambique, and the Mujahedeen against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

“I would like to see Taylor's conviction on that basis now being used as a precedent to say to powerful countries like the US: 'You shouldn't be engaging in what is now stated to be an international crime'.”

The ICC at 10

In July, the ICC celebrates its tenth birthday. The Hague-based body emerged to consolidate and institutionalize the scattered experiences of ad hoc war crimes tribunals in Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The ICC did not take on the Taylor case, since the events had already occurred before the ICC was formed. However, it is the institution in which future such crimes may well be prosecuted.

Yet after ten years in existence, it has been criticized for everything from incompetence and tardiness to racism and neo-colonialism.

“The ICC's biggest flaw is that there is no system of accountability to the people over whom they exercise jurisdiction,” says Mr. Griffiths. “In a national court system, if you don't like the way the law is being imposed or operated, you can always demonstrate against it - as black people did in the United Kingdom against the SUS [suspected person] laws in the 1970s - and seek change through the political process. The people of Africa really don't have any control in that sense over the ICC. In the absence of that democratic accountability, you have the kind of criticisms that people like myself have voiced, that it is being used as a tool for Western neo-colonialism. It leaves itself open to that because there is no democratic way in which people can influence the way in which it operates.”

Mr. Griffiths speaks positively about earlier ad hoc tribunal models. “They concentrate on one conflict. They tend to be based close to the seat of the conflict, so that those for whom the verdicts are most important are in a position to follow the proceedings and take ownership of the proceedings, whereas the ICC is a bit remote.”

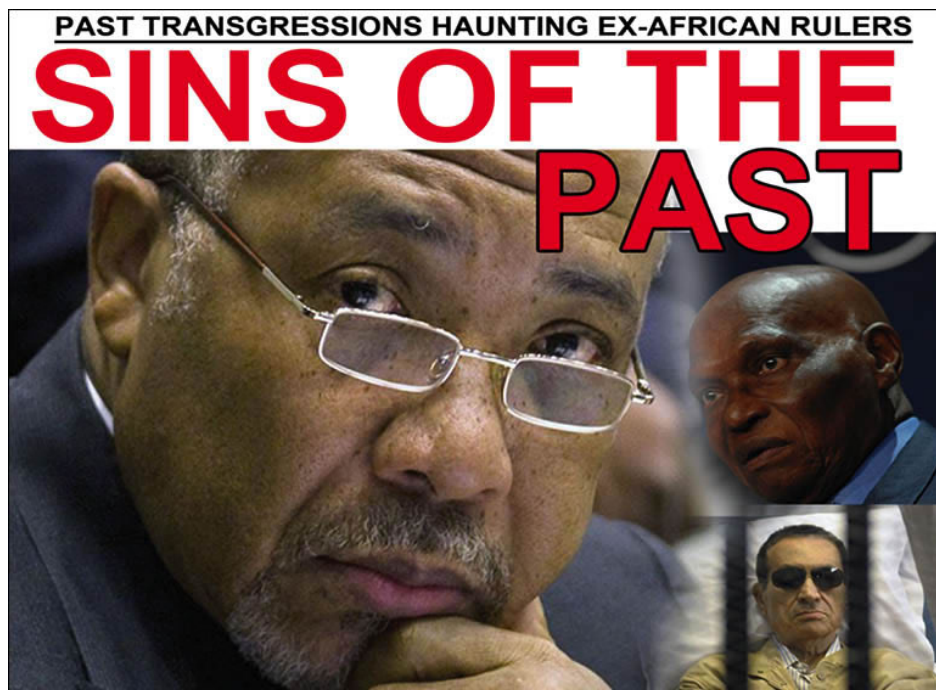
The dominance of African defendants in the ICC has also opened it up to criticism of racism, not helped by its distant locale in the Netherlands.

“Don't you think it would have been better, given the number of indictees at the ICC from Africa, to try those people somewhere in Africa? What about South Africa? It has got the infrastructure. What about Nigeria? Parts of it have the infrastructure. Nairobi certainly has. There were many ways in which, with a bit of flexibility and imagination, the ICC could have avoided accusations of providing distant 'white man's justice'. And I just don't think enough thought and imagination was applied.

“I do not support the immunity of African leaders. If you go back as far as [Hendrik] Verwoerd in South Africa or [Jean-Bédél] Bokassa of the Central African Republic - I would like to see those people prosecuted. The problem I have got with the contemporary system is that it is unfair. It applies to some and not others. And as far as I am concerned, that is not justice. That is not law,” Griffiths says.

Front Page
Monday, 4 June 2012

Sins of the Past: Past Transgressions Haunting Former African Rulers



Across the African continent, rulers and leaders are facing brushes of reality, as nations they once ruled appear determined to hold them accountable for past transgressions.

Monrovia - Battling charges that he and his inner circle made off with government-owned cars, paintings and other assets from the presidential palace at the end of his presidency, Abdoulaye Wade, the former President of Senegal has found himself brushing off charges of

corruption and nepotism during his term in office.

Last week, former Liberian president Charles Taylor was sentenced to prison for 50 years for "using so-called "blood diamonds" to fund rebels in Sierra Leone who killed and mutilated tens of thousands during that country's civil war.

The Taylor trial has prompted Senegal to press charges against Chad's former dictator Hissene Habre for war crimes, crimes against humanity and torture after being accused of dragging its feet for years. The justice ministry in Senegal is reportedly debating the practical aspects of staging the trial in line with Senegal's international commitments and with the support of the African Union.

Habre, 69, fled to Senegal after he was overthrown in 1990. A 1992 truth commission report in Chad said he had presided over up to 40,000 political and ethnic-related killings. Senegal agreed in 2006 to African Union demands that he be put on trial but failed to do anything, arguing that it lacked the resources.

A judge in Egypt last week, sentenced deposed President Hosni Mubarak and his interior minister to life in prison for the deaths of nearly 1,000 protesters during the uprising that led to Mubarak's ouster last year. Across the African continent, rulers and leaders are facing brushes of reality, as nations they once ruled appear determined to hold them accountable for past transgressions.

Shortly after leaving office, the late Zambian president Frederick Jacob Chiluba who died a year ago this week, found himself facing charges of corruption. Chiluba, Zambia's President from 1991 to 2002, was long subjected to investigation and trial regarding alleged corruption; he was eventually acquitted in 2009.

Corruption contributed to losses

The transgressions of African leaders have resulted in billions of dollars in losses.

In June 2002, President Olusegun Obasanjo, the former Nigerian President, charged that corrupt African leaders have stolen at least \$140 billion (£95 billion) from their people in the decades since independence, according to the Independent of London.

Corruption and heavy-handed rules have contributed to economic contraction and collapse in many African nations with millions, if not billions stashed away in foreign bank accounts, particularly in Switzerland. Former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in 2000 that billions of dollars of public funds continue to be stashed away by some African leaders – even while roads are crumbling, health systems have failed, schoolchildren have neither books nor desks nor teachers, and phones do not work.

In Senegal, Wade has in recent days found himself under scrutiny and forced to dismiss reports that his regime had transferred 400 billion francs (\$800 million) into foreign bank accounts. Wade was defeated at the polls in March. The new government of Senegal issued a communique last month, giving 72 hours to former administration members to return the cars.

After more than 23 years in power in Tunisia, President Ben Ali — on trial in absentia reportedly amassed a fortune in banks, telecommunications firms, real-estate companies and other businesses, giving his family control over as much as one-third of Tunisia's \$44 billion economy, according to anticorruption group Transparency International.

While his wealth remains a mystery, former Liberian President Charles Taylor was found guilty of aiding and abetting, as well as planning, some of the most heinous and brutal crimes recorded in human history. Prosecutors had asked that the U.N.-backed court sentence Taylor, who is now 64, to 80 years, and said they may appeal the shorter sentence. Taylor's lawyers, meanwhile, said they too will appeal. Taylor, currently held in the Netherlands, will serve his sentence in a British prison.

With many of the continent former leaders facing scrutiny, current ones are also being closely monitored. More recently, a judge in France brought up charges against three sitting African presidents - Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, Denis Sassou-Nguesso of Congo and Teodoro Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea - accusing them of buying luxurious homes with state funds in a move Transparency International called a historic decision that announces the end of impunity for corrupt leaders in the world.

Taking a cue; put on notice

But it is the situation in Egypt which has reignited a volatile situation in the North African nation. After Mubarak's sentencing last week, for the deaths of nearly 1,000 protesters during the uprising that led to Mubarak's ouster last year, protesters hoping for a death sentence took to the streets. Mubarak, 84, himself has been declining in health. Hours after the sentencing, government television reported Mubarak, 84, had suffered a "health crisis" aboard the helicopter that was ferrying him to prison. One report said it was a heart attack, but that couldn't be confirmed.

Besides the uprising deaths controversy, Mubarak is said to have amassed a £25 billion (or \$40 billion) fortune for his family since grabbing power. In the wake of the recent wave of actions against former African heads of states, many political observers are hoping that current African leaders will take a cue and take notice.

Shortly after Chiluba left office in Zambia, his predecessor, Levy Mwanawasa made Chiluba the target of his campaign against corruption. It was alleged that money was diverted from the Ministry of Finance into an account held at the London branch of the Zambia National Commercial Bank (Zanaco).

Chiluba said the account was used by the country's intelligence services to fund operations abroad. Investigators said it was a slush fund, used to meet Chiluba and Chungu's private and personal expenses. Most of the charges that were made against him were later dropped, but others remained. In addition, his wife Regina was arrested for receiving stolen goods.

In Nigeria, former President General Sani Abacha also faced accusations that he 'rigged' In Uganda, former head of state General Idi Amin, tipped by the British to replace the elected Ugandan government in a 1971 coup, was accused of brutalizing his people with British and US military aid and with Israeli and CIA training of his troops, allegedly murdering friends, clergy, soldiers, and ordinary Ugandans along the way.

Rulers amassed millions

In Liberia, Samuel Doe who ended decades of Americo-Liberian rule when he and a band of lowly-ranked army officers overthrew the William R. Tolbert government, allegedly received 'US aid and corporate kickbacks'. Under his regime, the gross domestic product decreased by 13%. Those who protested were jailed or killed. Doe reportedly purchased over sixty \$60,000 Mercedes Benz cars for his government ministers.

King Hassan II of Morocco also reportedly amassed millions despite being in charge of a nation with 95% of the population living in abject poverty.' In 1975, Hassan took his nation into a war in the Western Sahara that was costing the country over \$1 million a day.

The US backed Hassan 'diplomatically and financially in his war to annex the area'. The US also took an active role in stopping coup attempts against the King and opposition figures were 'arrested and tortured'.

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir "has been accused of siphoning off up to \$9 billion of his country's funds and placing it in foreign accounts, according to leaked US diplomatic cables"

While much of the travails in Africa over the years have centered on rulers' obsession with power, historians say, western super powers bear some of the blame. For example, in Zaire, the U.S. government reportedly fearing that the country's first president Patrice Lumumba, was getting too close to socialism, US companies feared they might lose control of Zaire's precious cobalt, copper, and diamonds. The end result led to an alleged U.S.-backed assassinated Lumumba, and replaced him with Mobutu Sese Seko.

Decades later, the Americans and the rest of the world are yet to find a solution to dealing with Lumumba's successor, Mobutu Sese Sekou who rose to power in 1965. As early as 1974, when the US sent \$1.4 million to assist troops fighting a civil war was accused of pocketing the entire sum.

The Globe and Mail

Saturday, 2 June 2012

Charles Taylor sentencing brings world closer to humanitarian vision of justice

ERNA PARIS

A mass murderer on his feet before the law. Such stark symbolism. The man who issued countless orders to kill, rape and mutilate human beings of all ages as he cleared a bloody trail to the diamond patch, the man who believed himself untouchable and boasted of his invincibility, had collided with the latest piece of the global system – a court of international criminal justice – and lost. His conviction and severe sentence strengthened the emerging consensus across the world that high-placed perpetrators of crimes against humanity will no longer automatically be appeased with amnesties and plane rides to safe refuge. The once undreamed-of possibility that the victims of these appalling crimes might one day know justice also was strengthened at the very moment Mr. Taylor's lower lip quivered.

We are witnessing change, but the underlying elements are not new. In fact, a fundamental conflict has been taking place in the global sphere that you are unlikely to read about in your daily newspaper. It is a meta quarrel over the meaning of justice and rights that has been with humanity since the beginnings of recorded history.

Beyond the boundaries of complex historical events, it is possible to pick out the strands of this lasting quarrel. On one side sits the ancient conviction that might makes right; the belief that the power available to a state is the only moral determinant when a government decides to pursue its interests. This view, first expressed as a philosophical doctrine in ancient Greece, was confirmed centuries later with the signing of the famous Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which concluded that international relations would henceforth be conducted between independent sovereign states. What leaders did was no one else's business, except in rare circumstances where the interests of others were threatened.

This philosophy is also rooted in world literature (think Machiavelli) and naturally in history itself (the most recent eruption being George W. Bush's Iraq war in 2003, even though the president reached for justifications). Perhaps it is history as taught in schools around the globe.

But there has always been an opposing partner in this ancient jousting match, though far less visible: the equally strong conviction that human society must be governed by universally binding norms. Here, too, the continuum of philosophy and literature goes back to the ancient Greeks and was bolstered centuries later. In the 18th century, German philosopher Immanuel Kant published his influential theory of cosmopolitanism, better known today as multilateralism. Kant believed that universal measures are the indispensable backbone of peace. If there is a United Nations today, as hampered as the Security Council is by interest-based vetoes, it is because Kant and other moderns seized upon the work of earlier thinkers and propelled the idea of universal standards into greater acceptance. The trajectory has not been steady, heaven knows, but there has been progress, in fits and starts.

Nothing is more "Kantian" than the new international criminal courts whose mandate is to confront the impunity that perpetrators of atrocities have historically enjoyed. Mr. Taylor, standing before his judges drawn from around the world, was tried and convicted according to fair standards of due process. Just two decades ago, no one would have believed this possible.

The international tribunals operating in the world today have plenty of problems. They lack a police force with which to effect arrests; they are short of funding; too many perpetrators of mass atrocities are still at

large; they are judicial institutions operating within the seething maelstrom of international politics. And yet, they are increasingly successful.

Does this suggest a shift in the old quarrel between might makes right and a more humanitarian vision of justice? Possibly, although if history is a guide, this could be merely temporary.

What we can say with certitude is that 20th-century mass murderers such as Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong and Pol Pot died comfortably in their beds of natural causes; and that in the 21st century, mass murderer Osama bin Laden was assassinated extra-judicially.

Mr. Taylor, by contrast, will die in prison after a trial that created a factual record of his deeds and sent out a message of change. His fate, not that of the others, moves the world an incremental step away from Machiavelli and toward a Kantian vision of justice.

Erna Paris is an author and the 2012 recipient of the World Federalist Movement Canada World Peace Award.

‘Liberia Too Deserves Justice’ - Mixed Views on 50 Years Sentence For ex-President Taylor

Monrovia - Since the sentencing of former Liberian President Charles Taylor to Fifty years in Prison, Liberia has not slept. There have been intensely divided views expressed by citizens on the decision of the United Nations backed, Special Court for Sierra Leone sitting in the Hague.

Now another debate is intensifying about the need for the establishment of a war crimes court to try those who also bear the greatest responsibility for the almost one decade and a half long bloody civil war that left the tiny West African nation in shambles. The views are powerful and divergent as FrontPageAfrica came to find out.



Micheal M. Torh

For me I feel that Taylor deserves what he got because Taylor declared support for the RUF in Sierra Leone for me it is an open secret that was something we witnessed over the years in Liberia and so for me I don't think the evidence gathered against Taylor was something made up. That was something that he did. I think the sentencing was fair enough, other people did not have the opportunity of going to jail.

They died miserable death; can't recover their bodies, so if he's given an opportunity to go to jail today, fine for him. I think the crime committed is worth more than the fifty years, he deserves getting fifty. I think for the people in the subregion there will be a little bit of calm because this was a very dangerous fellow, he was trained in organizing groups trained in persuading and making people to move. So if he is out of the picture, I think there will be a little bit of calm. During the war we were generally victimized.

We used to be on the sidewalks here and he used to come, we were raided on so many occasions and so to see him going to prison fine. We were once victimized here on this very street, they had security people coming here beating people up because of criticism and so what we spoke against yesterday has finally come to pass. His misrule, human rights abuses, those were things we spoke against and he didn't listen.



Jowel Handsford

If Taylor was found guilty for aiding and abetting, it does not mean that he was the one who was directly involved in the commission of the act. It means that he either provided corridor for the act to be committed. What's about those who were in the vanguard of committing that crime. It is a complete contradiction for the international community to be telling us that Taylor traded arms in Sierra Leone because he wanted diamonds. Taylor as a seated president at the time, had access to Liberia's natural resources, Taylor had diamonds here.

Taylor had gold, Taylor had Timber; there were lots of natural resources that Taylor had that if he wanted Mayonnaise jar full of diamonds, he would have gotten it from right here. It was just a matter of a cellphone call. Taylor needed not to have gone all the way to Sierra Leone to trade guns to get diamonds. As a matter of fact Taylor was under arms embargo, Taylor had LURD and MODEL fighting him, so if he even had access to weapons, I believe that Taylor would have used it in Lofa and Buchanan to fight LURD and MODEL instead of supplying men with weapons in Sierra Leone, just because of diamonds.

So it remains a fundamental contradiction on the part of the ICC; fifty years is not only harsh but it is unrealistic. It is unrealistic in the term that the fifty years cannot in anyway commensurate with the crime that was committed; for aiding and abetting. What about those guys who were in the vanguard; Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, he was never even tried, Sam Norman did not get fifty years; why will Taylor who just aided and abetted get fifty years. It is a complete mockery to justice.

If we will look at what Taylor did in Liberia, then we must also look at what Madam Sirleaf did in Liberia, we must also look at what Kromah did in Liberia; Prince Johnson, George Boley, Sekou Damate Conneh and the rest of them. Some of the major arguments that are emerging is that Liberia must pay reparations to Sierra Leone for damages; I am not a lawyer but when it comes to the issue of reparation Liberia as a nation owes Sierra Leone nothing; not even a rock will we give to them. They are all here in Liberia living freely.

The relationship between Liberia and Sierra Leone will be sour; if you follow history, we know about the Little Ben Affairs, wherein a Sierra Leonean British ship was being frozen here in Liberia for not paying duty fees at the end of the day, a boat called John Says was also frozen in Sierra Leone and it led to crisis between Liberia and Sierra Leone. Liberia and Sierra Leone has a historical crisis and this one on the issue of Taylor has further deepened this historical crisis between the two countries. So I stand to say safely that indeed if I see any Freetown man in Liberia I know I have seen another enemy.



Marcus Collins Employee Temple of Justice

I will address the issue of the sentencing of the former Liberian President Charles Taylor from two different fronts. Personally as a Liberian I feel very much disheartened, infact since the sentence was read I have been feeling uneasy as a Liberian to see my former president go to jail. But on the other end, if you ask me about my view concerning justice in the purview of the sentence, I will salute the ICC.

I am a student of law, I believe in Justice; I believe justice should be equally given and equally taken. I was an organizer of the Peace-Child Network; we did publish the child soldiers' involvement at the ATU base. I know how I was handled; I was imprisoned for 18days at the NBI underground. I couldn't see light. I maintain that the sentence in my purview is very fine, while other Liberians may argue that Taylor should not be sentenced for fifty years based upon the crime; I want to caution Liberians that those who aid and abet are equivalent to those who the physical execution of the crime under the law.

Equally so I have another qualm with the court in that the trial for former president Taylor was not yet started when his prison was being built in the UK; I see that as premeditation to justice. I want to say to the ICC that this should not be a process to witch-hunt people that disagree with the dictates of the west rather, it should be done on a fair basis, meaning that everyone should be treated fair under the law.

There are a lot of people like Taylor in Africa and Liberia, that have aided and supported war. We saw the TRC report, though people were trying to wear mask for saying the truth, but the truth was being revealed in their testimonies and that is the reason why I want to caution Liberians to see reason to embrace the war crimes court, so that those evil doers will not walk away with impunity.



Tokpa Emmanuel, Intellectual Alliance of Liberia

What I want to say here is that in my mind there is not an amount of punishment that can even measure up to the kinds of atrocities committed in Sierra Leone. I don't see any

punishment that can match the taking away of another man's life. I feel that justice must be done to all men and as such, Taylor's incrimination to the crimes in Sierra Leone and the action of Taylor at the time when he was in power is a burden of proof that Taylor actually had something to do with what happened in Sierra Leone.

To see the court being very open to the public as it relates to Taylor's indictment, subsequent investigations and prosecution that led to the sentencing today, for me, I see the trial as fair and it will serve as a lesson to would be troublemakers in West Africa. It is just a lesson for us all, that no amount of power, one can have; once you commit crime, the law will take its effect and you will be brought to justice. I buy the other idea that it should not only be Taylor, it should be extended to those who have also committed heinous crimes I Sierra Leone and Liberia, so that justice can be served at all levels.

We as Liberians can find a very unique path that can bring everlasting peace and stability to our country; if a majority of the people decides that we should have a war crimes court that will solve our problem, I think there should be a war crimes court. But as we see Liberia today just coming from war; we see there are lot of things that we can do to bring everlasting peace to our country.

For example, the millions of dollars that we want to see put into the establishment of a war crimes court can be used to build the minds of people, so that our country can move on the right path. But if the majority of the Liberian people believe that bringing a war crimes court and having people prosecuted will be the right path, then so be it. The war crimes court went to Sierra Leone because the Sierra Leoneans embraced it. So we cannot say, based on the opinion of a single person, we should bring war crimes court to Liberia; for us it should be a consensus.



Lawrence Boakai, Chairman, Margibi Concerned Youths Association

This is an issue that all Liberians have to look at critically because for one fact, Taylor served as President of Liberia and I as a Liberian seen my former president being sentenced to jail for 50 years, I think it is a bitter day. But in another sense justice must prevail, someone who lives by the sword must also die by the sword. We were here in Liberia we saw the Sierra Leoneans were given places to live in this country and once the trial was fair, justice must prevail.

On the other hand, all those who contributed to the war in Liberia must be given their day in court, so that they can give account of what happened in Liberia; if that is done then justice will prevail. We should also look at where did Taylor get his aid; Taylor did not have the money to sponsor the war he brought here, there must be some underhand supporters who aided Taylor's revolution. So those investigations must be done and those who aided Taylor must give account.



Randall Massaquoi Dobayou II, Instructor, Elizabeth Crawford School

The 50 years sentence is seriously unreasonable and I have always argued that the court in the Hague has no moral ground to continuously prosecute people as they have done because, it has lost its essence and relevance in terms of its segregative and impartial posture we have observed in past time. The chief prosecutor in that court has reduced himself to a mere arresting police officer who only chases African leaders, leaving out the leaders from the west.

George Bush, Tony Blair and other guys around the world, are all evidence of the fact that they've committed mayhem, they've killed people and looted; today they have not gone to The Hague. Only

African leaders and leaders of the subregion have been arrested. This is wrong; that was not the reason why that court was established.

Now, we say the judgment of Charles Taylor and the case in The Hague that I followed very religiously, the case was not legal; it was seriously political because there was no evidence provided before that court of competent jurisdiction to indict Charles Taylor. Every other evidence that was produced was on the basis of contemporary sentiments and political differences. Everyone that went to that Hague to testify spoke as secondary participant; not with prima facie evidence but spoke using the pronouns, he said; she said; they said and not I said.

So as a student of criminology and legal jurisprudence as well, I have understood that one way or the other Taylor may have participated in the Sierra Leonean crisis, but on the basis of the court being unable to convict him fairly, using all provable evidence; on this basis we believe that the sentence was seriously unreasonable. We question the wisdom used by the court to even derive at 50 years because if you are convinced that someone has done wrong, you should sentence the person in a reasonable fashion, that this person will one day express remorse over his wrong action.

Charles Taylor is about 64 years, you have imprisoned him for fifty years; it is almost like life time imprisonment, against your own principle that the issue about sentencing people for Lifetime should not continue to happen. So we say the court is one that does not go by policy, but dance to the drum sound of the West.

It creates a state of enmity; natural hatred has been created in my mind between the Liberians and Sierra Leoneans because we saw how the Sierra Leoneans participated in our Liberian civil war. We saw how they killed; we saw how they committed firsthand crimes but yet we forgave them. Anyway I don't blame them, I blame the Liberians because by now we should have similar court as such setup in Liberia so that those that committed heinous crimes against humanity will face similar wrath as Charles Taylor has done. Mind you, if we do not create the checkpoint and erect the necessary mechanism to deter people, this will continue to happen and Liberia today will revert to the past because impunity has become a trademark of the society.

We are hurt not on the basis of the love that we have for Charles Taylor but on the basis of the court going against justice, but rather behaving segregatively and being separative in their judgment and highly sentimental and not legal. We are downhearted, we say to the Sierra Leoneans, you have done us wrong and this is a day, an event and a situation we will not forget and we will not forgive them.



Musa S. B. Dolley, Liberian

This issue is just glaring, you know, all around the world, life is a social cycle; in order for society to move forward, in order for society to be transformed, there are histories that has to be set so that things can go right. If I can take you to biblical days there were heroes who died for their people. If I take you to Rome, it was Julius Caesar who was sacrificed for the Roman Empire to grow. Now in the bible, Jesus died before humanity could be saved.

So you see Charles Ghankay Taylor Today, everyone saw what was happening when Taylor was here, the entire world against this Charles Taylor man. Once Charles Taylor continues to be in Liberia, Liberians will continue to die. In 2003 LURD forces launched mortar rounds here and thousands died because of this same Taylor; international community bringing weapons in containers, killing our people and saying Taylor should leave. I am a sympathizer of Taylor but with the prevailing situation, it is the interest of the Liberian people that should be paramount to us.

Let us draw the political paradigm, should Charles Taylor be here and the international community and others start to send rockets here, every day for Liberians to die or Charles Taylor should go so that people can live? I believe that this sentence will serve as an ambience for Liberians to continue to live and move their lives forward. Others who are the problem one day will be identified by Liberians, but where we are now, Charles Taylor winning and getting a verdict in his favor will be a verdict against the globe.



Jacob Wannah Jr.

I think the court has done its work again and they came down with their sentence and I believe it is somehow right, though people are saying that it should have been less but the court knows its purpose.

Once you are a criminal you should expect to be treated as a criminal. Taylor got it and it is very impressive. Well I think it is fair enough that he is going to jail and well fifty years, you can't say Taylor will be gone or not. Fifty years is well appreciable. For me it should have been more. For me I wanted *lifetime*.

The Citizen Online

Monday, 4 June 2012

A warlord no more

Tears rolled down the face of double amputee Al Hadji Jusu Jarka in Freetown as he welcomed a 50-year prison term for Liberia's former leader Charles Taylor for backing the Sierra Leone rebels who mutilated him.

ROD MAC JOHNSON

“At last, justice has been done and Taylor has paid the price for the suffering and pain he caused us,” said Jarka, who wears prosthetic arms after rebels in 1999 cut off both upper limbs while pinning him to a mango tree.

“The curtain has now been drawn on Charles Taylor. I hope he will be haunted by his deeds as he languishes in jail.”

Jarka said he would have liked to see some remorse from Taylor, convicted of aiding and abetting Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for “blood diamonds”.

Taylor's lack of remorse was also highlighted by Judge Richard Lussick, who said Taylor should not benefit from any mitigation.

A stunned silence, and a few gasps, filled courtroom buildings in Freetown, where hundreds had gathered in front of giant TV screens to hear Taylor's fate, being decided at a court outside The Hague.

As the sentence was read out, those watching showed little outward joy. They had sat stonily as Lussick gave a harrowing account of the gruesome crimes committed during the 11-year conflict.

Human rights activist Charles Mambu said of the sentence: “That's excellent! It shows that it's no longer business as usual. As human rights defenders we are happy over the sentence.”

The government also welcomed the sentence.

“It is a step forward as justice has been done,” said Deputy Information Minister Sheku Tarawali, adding that he hoped victims would find relief even “though the magnitude of the sentence is not commensurate with the atrocities committed”.

Eldred Collins, a rebel spokesman during the war, is now the chairman of their political offshoot the Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF).

He has maintained it was the former RUF leader Foday Sankoh, who died in custody in 2003, who should have had his day in court.

“Taylor has been judged unfairly and (doesn't) deserve the sentence,” he said. “It was Sankoh and other Sierra Leoneans that fought the war.”

In the Kailahun district, where rebels crossed over from Liberia in 1991 and began their reign of terror on villages, reactions were of “relief that the Taylor saga is behind us”, said the paramount chief, Cyril Gando.

He recalled a phrase uttered by Taylor and often evoked in the country: an angry Taylor had warned in 1989 that Sierra Leone would “taste the bitterness of war”.

Taylor was reacting to West African troops using Sierra Leone as a base from which to head their operations in Liberia as he and his rebels invaded Liberia, sparking that country’s 13-year civil war.

“Remember that Taylor once boasted that Sierra Leone will taste the bitterness of war,” said Gando. “Now let him taste losing his freedom.

“Rebels in 1999 and 2000 killed many of my people including my sons, who were beheaded because they refused to join his rebels.”

In the eastern city of Kenema, town chief Soriba Morlai said “we are in total support of the jail term”.

The sentence, however, will have little impact on life in the crumbling, hilly capital, where people face a daily struggle to survive.

“What has Taylor got to do with me? The cost of basic foodstuffs continues to rise, and this is what interests me. Taylor got what he deserves, but it is none of my concern,” said Ina Smith.

However, taxi driver Sayo Sisay exclaimed: “50 years jail? That means Taylor is unlikely to leave jail alive.”

NeonTommy.com

Sunday, 3 June 2012

Opinion

Charles Taylor Sentencing A Step In The Right Direction

Staff Contributor



Rebels in Sierra Leone amputated people's hands to intimidate them, so they would not believe the government's slogan that "The future is in your hands." (Travl, Creative Commons)

This is an update to a previous article, "Charles Taylor Conviction Is Reminder Of Necessity Of International Law."

Convicted last month for supporting a rebel movement responsible for hundreds of thousands of brutal atrocities in Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor received his sentencing last Wednesday. The ex-Liberian president was sentenced to 50 years in prison for his involvement in the Sierra Leone conflict, which spanned a decade and left over 50,000 dead when it finally concluded in 2002.

Given that Taylor is in his sixties, a sentence of this length effectively guarantees he will die in prison. It seems that this sentence concludes a rare episode of good fortune, which began with his conviction: justice has been served for heinous crimes against humanity.

The prosecution, however, would have been happier to see an 80-year sentence. While, again, Taylor's age leaves little practical difference between the two, prosecutors found the symbolic difference enormous.

Prosecutor Brenda Hollis, in an appeal for the longer sentence, detailed the gruesome crimes to which Taylor is supposed to have led his support. She wrote:

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

However, while judges did rule that Taylor armed and supplied the rebels in full knowledge that they would likely use the weapons to commit terrible crimes, they determined that an 80-year sentence would be excessive because Taylor had been convicted only of aiding, not of committing, these crimes.

Despite the disappointment of the prosecutors, Taylor's sentence is thankfully not lenient, by any means. And it still carries a significant symbolic weight. It sends a message to both perpetrators of crimes against humanity and their victims that the world will not completely ignore atrocities. It reminds perpetrators that a decade of inaction does not mean they are in the clear: justice will still be pursued by those who care enough to see it carried out. And it promises a genuine punishment for these perpetrators: the complete surrender of a life to a prison sentence rather than a slap-on-the-wrist reprimand like a shorter prison stay or the stripping of titles or privileges.

Taylor's conviction was a victory for supporters of human rights worldwide, and his sentencing was another step on the path toward developing a more conscientious international community. If the investigative and judicial resources employed in the Taylor case can be both increased and reproduced on a global scale, then perhaps we can see justice served for the many other humanitarian crises we have seen in the past two decades.

Because Sierra Leone is unfortunately just the tip of the iceberg.