

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:

Thursday, 6 April 2006

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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Spectator
6 April 2006

Soldiers refuse to testify at Special Court

By Joseph Turay

The ongoing A.F.R.C trials involving Alex Tamba Brima, Brima Bazzy Kamara Santigue Borbor Kanu aka 55 at the Special Court, is said to be facing set backs as the Defence team Tuesday complained bitterly of non-cooperation on the side of government to release most of its potential and key witnesses to testify in the trials as the bulk number of the defence witnesses are presently serving military officers who are being intimidated if they testify in the trials.

Making his submission on behalf of the defence team on Tuesday to the Judges, the head for the counsel representing the first accused, Kojo Graham explained to the Judge that the "state" do not in any way co-operate with the entire defence team and that majority of their witnesses who had earlier agreed to testify in the trial have now turned down the request. The lawyer noted that this is what has been happening with the witnesses serving in the Republic of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF).

Making a similar submission to the Judges, Counsel for second accused Kamara, Adjibola Manley Spain told the court that most of his key witnesses in the Army whom he spoke to for over a year now have now changed their minds. "They are being intimidated" Lawyer Spain said. Amongst other serious concerns raised by the defence team was the lack of funding and other logistical problems for them to get access to their witnesses particularly in the provinces where they claimed they usually find it difficult to investigate

most of the alleged crimes against their clients.

In all of the above concerns the defence team is therefore requesting the Chamber presided over by Justice Richard Lussick to give the enough time that would enable them get all their witnesses.

The defence team further pleaded with the court to accept the proposed September date which would grant a "reasonable" period of time that would prepare them to defend the accused persons effectively.

Awoko
6 April 2006

Taylor gets a lawyer

By Kelvin Lewis
The Principal Defender of the Special Court Vincent Nmehielle yesterday assigned a lawyer to former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

This follows a request by Mr Taylor to be provided with legal assistance after he filed papers (declaration of means) with the court showing that he did not have enough money to fund his own defence.

The Principal Defender having briefly considered the papers declared Charles Taylor "partially indigent" last Monday (3rd April 2006) when he made his first appearance in court.

Acting under Article 9(B)

*Former
Liberian
President
Charles
Taylor.*



the Principal Defender yesterday provisionally assigned Mr Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, a barrister in the chambers of David Waters QC for a period

of 90 days to act as his defence counsel.

Mr Khan who is one of the lawyers on the legal assistance list maintained by the defence office has agreed

to provisionally represent Mr Taylor. Earlier four lawyers from Ghana and Liberia had flown in to give advice to Mr Taylor and the defence office has received calls from all over the world from lawyers who might want to defend

Mr Taylor.

The former Liberian President has been known to be a rich man by whatever standards and the revelation that he cannot fund his own defence comes as a shock to many people.

However it cannot be

confirmed whether Mr Taylor's finances suffered a severe setback on the border with Cameroun when he was arrested, given that he was rumoured to have been traveling with two bags full of dollars and euros.

As Special Court searches Europe for prison...

Many countries

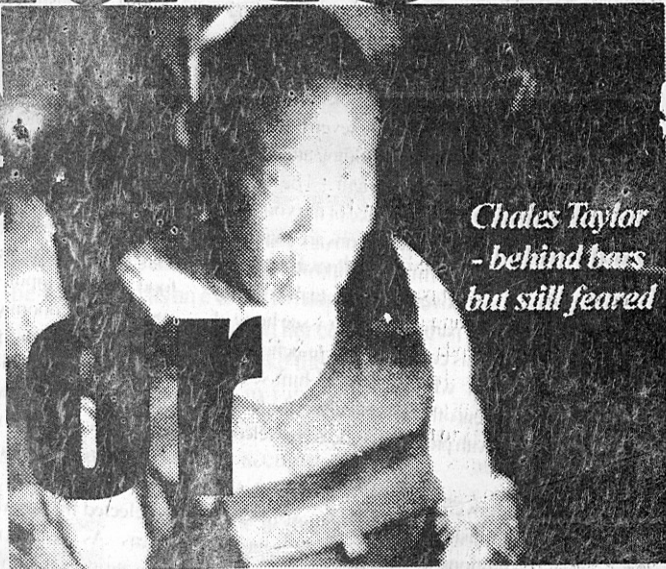
afraid to

take

Taylor

prisoner

The diplomats said the main concern was deciding where to send Taylor if he is acquitted on 11 counts alleging war crimes and crimes against humanity during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war. Sweden is the likely candidate to imprison him if he's found guilty, but is otherwise reluctant, they said. The is-



*Charles Taylor
- behind bars
but still feared*

The U.N.-backed court that would prosecute former Liberian President Charles Taylor has run into trouble

trying to persuade any government to either imprison him or give him asylum once the trial ends, diplomats said Tuesday.

sue of where to send Taylor has become a pressing one because the U.N. Security Council agreed not to pass a

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Editor's detention

Many countries afraid to take Taylor prisoner

From page 1

resolution transferring his trial to The Hague, Netherlands until a deal is arranged. "The problem is nobody wants to have this guy on their territory, in jail or not, for 20 or 30 years," said one diplomat. That diplomat and several others at the U.N. insisted on anonymity because the talks are secret and Taylor has not been convicted yet. Last week, the Special Court for Sierra Leone asked that Taylor's trial be conducted at The Hague for security reasons. He is accused of directing rebels in Sierra Leone and trafficking in guns and diamonds while in power in neighboring Liberia. In a March 29 letter made available Tuesday, Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot told the Security Council that the Netherlands would agree to hold the trial, but only on three conditions: that the legal arrangements be made; that a court at the Hague make facilities available; and that a country agreed to take Taylor in afterward. In blunt terms, Bot wrote that arrangements must be made "to ensure that Mr. Taylor is transferred to a place outside of the Netherlands immediately after the final judgment

of the Special Court."

At his first court appearance Monday before the U.N.-backed war crimes

court, Taylor had asked through his lawyer that his case remain in Sierra Leone. Taylor, who entered a plea of not guilty, argued that defense witnesses would find it difficult to travel to Europe.

But J. Victor Angelo, the top U.N. official in Sierra Leone, said the draft resolution, which he said could be adopted in the next few days, includes a clause "which means the witnesses and experts and anybody else required for a fair trial will be given all the facilities to be able to appear before the trial court."

"The international community and the Security Council seem to be very clear as far as the message is concerned that Mr. Charles Taylor should be tried in the Netherlands," Angelo said at a news conference. "The point here ... is what would be the impact on security and stability in the sub-region if Mr. Charles Taylor is kept in Freetown?"

Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf has expressed

fear that Taylor's supporters could use a trial in the region as an excuse to mount another insurgency in her country, one that could, like the war Taylor launched in Liberia in 1989, spill across the region.

Taylor is accused of backing the Sierra Leonean rebels in exchange for a share of Sierra Leone's diamond wealth, which he used to fund his ambitions in Liberia. Britain's U.N. Ambassador Emyr Jones-Pary said earlier Tuesday that the council hoped to adopt a necessary resolution by Thursday to send Taylor's trial to the Netherlands.

He said there were technical details to work out such as financing and deciding which court inside The Hague complex would handle the trial. Jones-Pary did not raise the issue of where to send Taylor.

But diplomats said that had become the main sticking point by Tuesday afternoon. The Netherlands has contacted several European nations, including Sweden and Austria, about where to send Taylor. A Swedish diplomat, also speaking on condition of anonymity, said his nation might make a decision in the next day or two. The statute creating the

Sierra Leone court says that if convicts cannot be imprisoned in that country, they can also go to countries that have so-called "enforcement of sentences" agreements with the U.N.-backed courts for Rwanda and Yugoslavia.

Countries with those agreements include at least nine European countries: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, and Sweden. The African nations of Mali, Benin and Chad also have such agreements, but are considered less likely because of the security threat Taylor poses. The Sierra Leone court is handling cases stemming from more than 10 years of fighting for control of Sierra Leone and its diamonds, a conflict that saw rebels hacking off the limbs, lips and ears of civilian victims. Meanwhile, Vice President Solomon Berewa Tuesday announced that the intention of transferring erstwhile Liberian President and Special Court indictee Charles Taylor to The Hague is not for security reasons, as earlier perceived by some sections of the public.

Berewa who was answering to questions posed by Nicholas Tattersal of Reuters at his Spur Road residence insisted that

there is enough security in the country to have Taylor tried here. "The Special Court has already mapped out its exit strategy, which involves bringing their operations to a conclusion at the end of December 2006," Berewa said and continued, "if a case of any magnitude such as Charles Taylor's were to be stated, it would mean taking the Special Court far into 2007 or even beyond."

Associated Press writer Michelle Paul contributed to this report from Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Deutsche Presse-Agentur April 5, 2006, Wednesday. A Sweden contact over prison space for Taylor. STOCKHOLM, AP (dpa) - Sweden has been contacted by the United Nations regarding a request to offer prison space for Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor if he is convicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Swedish officials said Wednesday. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Petra Hansson said Sweden was "one of several countries" recently approached by the UN in the matter.

However, the process will

"likely take time" and no decisions have been made. Hansson said, noting that the Special Court for Sierra Leone has just opened proceedings against Taylor. The 58-year-old Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, rape and mutilation.

The Justice Ministry has recommended that Sweden as of July accedes to a treaty accepting prisoners sentenced by the Sierra Leone war crimes court. There have been reports suggesting that the trial should be moved over security reasons to the Netherlands and held in the facilities of the International Criminal Court based in The Hague.

Swedish and Irish peacekeepers with the UN mission in neighbouring

Liberia were recently transferred to beef up security in Sierra Leone. At least two convicted war criminals sentenced by the United Nations war crimes tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) are currently serving sentences in Sweden. One of them is former Bosnian Serb president Biljana Plavsic.

Credit: AP with input from Concept/Time

Exclusive
6 April 2006

Taylor Awaits Second Appearance



Members of Mr Taylor's family as well as the Liberian ambassador were in court to hear the proceedings.



Judges adjourned the hearing without setting a date for Mr Taylor to return to court.



Mr Taylor is accused of backing rebels in Sierra Leone who carried out terrible atrocities during the country's civil war.



The UN is considering moving the trial to the Hague amid fears his presence in Freetown could reignite conflict in the region.

The former President of Liberia, Charles Gangay Taylor who made his first appearance before the

Trial Chamber of the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone yesterday to answer for war crimes and

crimes against humanity in the decade-long conflict in Sierra Leone, is now awaiting a sec-

ond appearance. Mr. Taylor was deported from Liberia after Nigeria handed

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Taylor Awaits Second Appearance

From front page

him over in the wake of his attempt to escape justice by fleeing to the Cameroon border. He was found in possession of an unspecified amount of money running into millions of dollars and of course precious stones believed to be diamonds. Meanwhile, The Exclusive was yesterday displayed over the BBC for a story captioned 'Taylor was Africa's richest president,' in our Monday edition. Although Mr Taylor appears to be expressing wish to be tried here in Sierra Leone, the UN Security Council is reportedly working out the necessary protocols for his transfer to the International Criminal Court. It is still not clear what the outcome would have to be.

Exclusive
6 April 2006

Special Court

*** Water Tight Security**

*** 250 Mongolian Troop Combat Ready**

*** Rapid Response Force on Alert**

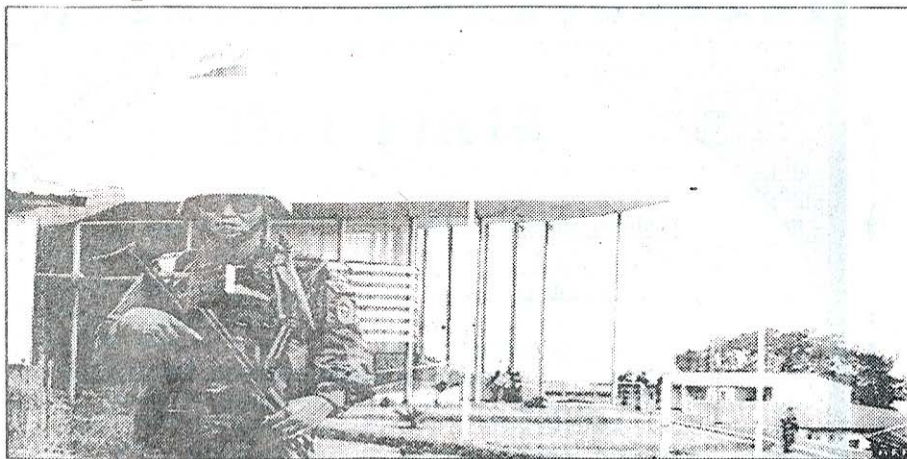
By David Alpha Jabati

Jnr.

The Executive Representative of the Secretary-General (ERSG), Mr Victor Angelo, at the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), has assured Sierra Leoneans of a water-tight security at the Special Court.

"Currently, we have 250 Mongolian troop at the Special Court, they are one of the best troop in the world," he said.

Contd. page 2



Security was tight as the tribunal

Water Tight Security

From front page

The ERSG made this statement yesterday, while addressing journalists at a press conference held at the UNIOSIL headquarters at Mammy Yoko, Aberdeen, West of Freetown.

Mr. Angelo further assured newsmen of a Quick Response force on standby to respond to any security threat.

"A Quick Rapid force is on alert to respond to any threat in less the 2 hours. They are on standby just in case there is the need," he assured.

Responding to the call for Charles Taylor to be taken to the Hague, the diplomat said that the Security Council has made a draft resolution and the protocols for the transfer are currently being worked out. Although he did not state exactly when the protocols and bureaucracies at the Security Council will be completed, he however stated that there is a provision in the draft resolution that allows witnesses and experts to the Charles Taylor trial to be available at the Hague should the trial be transferred there.

Charles Taylor made his first appearance before the Trial Chamber at the Special Court past Monday 3rd April 2006, where all the 11 count charge preferred on him were openly read to him to which he pleaded not guilty.

On whether or not he should be tried here or in the Hague which is the proposed venue, Mr Taylor chose the latter.

Majority of the people of Sierra Leone have however raised eye brows at the presence of Taylor in Sierra Leone, though some have argued otherwise.

New Vision
6 April 2006

Charles Taylor's Trial...

By Amara A. Samura

The Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of Operations, Richard Moigbeh has assured Sierra Leoneans that with the presence and trial of former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor in Sierra Leone, the security of the country has been beefed up and that there is no cause for alarm.

Addressing a news conference yesterday at police headquarters, Mr. Moigbeh disclosed that the border security between Sierra Leone

and Liberia has been strengthened with regular border patrols and else where in the country.

He said the United Nation Mission in Liberia and Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces are engaged in joint military exercise. Mr. Moigbeh also spoke about the National Security Council Coordinating group meeting held yesterday with the objective of assessing the general security situation in the country. He called on the general public to give



Taylor

Police, UN Assure Robust Security

intelligence report to the police activities that have been of any subversive moves or **Contd Page 2**

Charles Taylor's Trial...

noticed in their various localities.

The Executive Representative of the United Nations Secretary General, Victor J. Angello said there is an additional quick rapid response force on standby in neighbouring Liberia which will be called

upon within an hour if the security of the Special Court is threatened.

Mr. Angello further said there is also a strong Mongolian force deployed at the Special Court which provides security there, adding that they are very

professional soldiers. Mr. Angello said they have the capacity to mobilized additional soldiers from Liberia when the need arises, adding that these troops have the capacity to respond to security threat within an hour.

Independent Observer
6 April 2006

SLPP, APC, PLP want Taylor tried in Salone

By Ishmael Bayoh

Members of Parliament on Tuesday overwhelmingly demanded that Charles Taylor be tried here in Sierra Leone.

Proposing a private member's motion, Hon Francis S.D Tengbeh of the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) called on his colleagues to thank the United Nations, the Nigerian government and all those who contributed in various ways to the arrest and sending to Freetown of Mr. Taylor. Hon Koedoyama also of

the SLPP, who seconded the motion, referred to Charles Taylor as an enemy of peace who should not escape jus-

lice. The arrest of Taylor, Hon Dauda Kamara of the APC observed, was not an easy

task. He said Sierra Leoneans were happy for his arrest and would also love to see him tried in Sierra Leone "We have no fear should he

be tried here". He added that the trial of Taylor in Sierra Leone was an added advantage for Sierra

Leoneans to hear from the man who contributed to this country's dark period.

The House called for an increase in pressure on the International Community to let Taylor be tried in Sierra Leone. Hon Chief Bawah Kongbobe of the SLPP remarked that "This is the time for us to know those behind the conflict here. Let us not be robbed of that". He was supported by Hon Ngewoh.

420 Years Jail For 7 Westsiders

See
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2

[Not Continued]

Sierra News
6 April 2006

If Taylor's Trial is transferred to The Hague, UN will facilitate transfer of witnesses - Angelo

By Solomon G. Brima

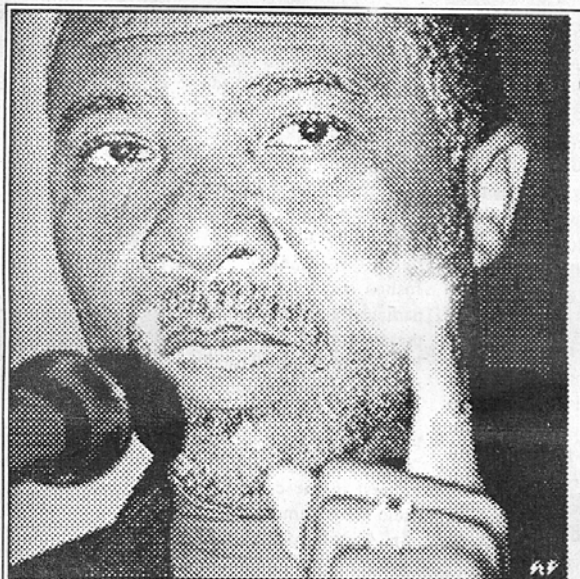
The ERSG Victor Angelo has indicated that if the Security Council approves the draft resolution for Charles Taylor's trial to be transferred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague the UN will facilitate the transfer of all witnesses.

He was speaking at a Press briefing at their Mammy Yoko Hotel Headquarter on enhanced efforts by UNIOSL in consolidating security and peace and fast tracking development.

He said the matter is currently being discussed by the Security Council and final decision on the matter will be taken.

The Executive Representative of the Secretary -General for the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone.

(UNOSIL)- Mr. J. Victor Angelo has informed Journalists that the



War Crime Indictee, Charles Taylor

general security situation in West Africa is relatively stable. Speaking at the Mammy Yoko

Hotel Conference Hall, Mr. Angelo said that now that peace has returned to the former

warring West African Countries (particularly the Mano River Union States) it is high time to consolidate

See back page

If Taylor's Trial is transferred to The Hague, UN will facilitate transfer of witnesses - Angelo

the peace and security embark on development, democratisation and human rights.

Mr. Angelo stressed the importance of peace and security within the sub-region and pointed out that instability in anyone of these countries may affect the other adversely.

Narrating the role of UNIOSIL, he said that it was formed a result of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1620 of August 2005 to help the government and people of Sierra Leone consolidate its hard won peace, strengthen its security system, set up a workable democratic process, and fast-track development.

"National Electoral Commission (NEC) has been restructured and working assiduously to fully complete the registration of the 28 political parties" he went on and general elections will take place between February and May 2007. He expressed UNIOSIL's intention to see a free and fair successful election.

Mr. Angelo pointed out that it is UNIOSIL's aim to ensure the speedy growth of the private sector youth empowerment and decentralization to move fast and effectively so that the people in the towns, and villages will not feel neglected. And to see results, he went further corruption would be eradicated from every fabric of the Sierra Leonean Society.

He emphasized that UNIOSIL is ready to defend the Special Court in everyway. He assured his audience that a contingents of 250 Mongolian army presently in this country are well equipped and capable to handle any eventuality, and that additional forces can be brought to beef up the team should the need arises.

Speaking about the transfer of Charles Taylor's trial to The Hague, he maintained that a draft Resolution is presently in discussion process in the Security Council.

And should Taylor's trial be transferred all witnesses will be given all the facilities to take part in the trial.

Sierra News
6 April 2006

...At Special Court pleads not guilty

The war crimes suspect and former President of Liberia Charles Taylor pleaded not guilty to eleven counts charge before the UN backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.

'I did not and could not commit these crimes against a sister nation and so I am definitely not guilty' he pleaded.

Mr. Taylor who made his first appearance Monday in dark suit, white shirt and red tie, is the first ever former African President to appear before a war crimes tribunal.

The trial Chamber of the Special Court read out the charges to the accused.

When asked to respond to the charges, Mr. Charles Taylor pleaded not guilty and said he did not recognize the jurisdiction of the court to try him as the twenty first president of the Republic of Liberia.

He said he would like to be tried in Sierra Leone and no where else in order to ease logistical and travelling arrangement for his witnesses and family.

Mr. Taylor is charged with crimes ranging from terrorizing the civilian population, unlawful killings, recruiting child soldiers amputations and sexual violence.

The case was adjourned to a date to be determined by the Registrar of the Special Court Robin Vincent.

Spectator
6 April 2006

Parliament endorses Taylor's trial in Freetown

By Abu Whyte Fofanah

The House Parliament has endorsed the former President of the Republic of Liberia Charles Taylor's trial in Freetown.

Moving the motion in Parliament, Hon. Francis S.D Tengbeh of the Sierra Leone People Party (SLPP) said many Sierra Leoneans are very much concerned about Charles Taylor's involvement in the 11 year old civil war in Sierra Leone.

He said Charles Taylor once said that Sierra Leone will taste the bitterness of war. Maintaining that lives and property were lost and must now taste the sweetness of Justice in Sierra Leone.

Honourable Eric Komba Koedoyama who supported the motion, stated that when he heard that Charles Taylor has disappeared from his asylum home in Calaba and he was nowhere to be seen. "I was a bit worried because he is from the far east of the border where Taylor terrorised the people". He maintained that he wonder how Taylor would feel about his arrest and the handing him over to the Special Court

in Sierra Leone, when he boasted that he would never face the Special Court. "Today Charles Taylor finds himself in the net of the Special Court in order for Justice to prevail," he emphasized.

According to Hon. Danda Kamara of the All Peoples Congress (APC) he strongly supported the motion. He said the House of Parliament has to honour the arrival of Charles Taylor. "We are thanking the United Nations, the Nigerian government, the Liberian authority and other stakeholders that contributed immensely for the arrest of Charles Taylor".

Hon. Dauda Kamara revealed that there should be no amount of fear because Taylor committed atrocities to the people of this country. He maintained that the international community should strengthen security in the country and the trial of Taylor to be conducted in Sierra Leone.

Paramount Chief Gbongobah of Kono who spoke on behalf of the Paramount Chiefs said it is good that Charles Taylor be tried in Sierra Leone. "I was in Johannesburg few days after watching Taylor's arrest on the CNN

they usually don't attempt to investigate persons discreetly. a friend of mine asked how I feel about Charles Taylor. I said it is nice because Sierra Leone is a blessed country and all those that are involved in selling their country will one day expose in the day light," he concluded.

BY EDWARD MARAH

THIS WEEK IN Parliamentarians Taylor to be tried

Members of Parliament paid their respect this week to the United Nations, the Nigerian government and all those who contributed in one way or the other to the quick apprehension of former president Charles Taylor of Liberia to appear before the Special Court, where he is to answer to various charges against him relating to his involvement in the Sierra Leone civil war, while at the same time demanding that the trials be speedily carried out in Sierra Leone and not The Hague.

In a debate on the private member's motion, Hon. Francis S.D. Tengbeh said Sierra Leoneans are concerned about the apprehension of Charles Taylor whom they have all longed to see face justice as he is believed to be responsible for the ten years civil war in the country.

He recalled Charles Taylor's statement that Sierra Leone will one day taste the bitterness of war, which he said indeed came to reality with the rebel war led by Foday Sankoh, adding that it was clear that all through the war Charles Taylor continued to support the rebels to destabilize the country.

He therefore expressed his delight to see the same Taylor face the Special Court for Si-

erra Leone for these crimes and offences against the people of this country and all humanity.

He thanked the international community particular the

Rights, Dr. Alusine Fofinah said that Charles Taylor's arrival is a victory not only for Sierra Leone but for international justice, noting that Taylor needs to have a taste of the

*Meanwhile the Attorney General
Ministry of Justice Fred Carew
this week laid in parliament the
(amendment) rules 2006, the
Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6
the constitutional instrument N*

United Nations, government of Liberia, United States, United Kingdom and Nigeria for bringing Charles Taylor to face justice.

The Chairman for the Parliamentary Committee on Human

sweetness of justice for supporting the rebels and their actions.

He called on Sierra Leoneans to continue respecting human rights, good governance and the rule of law, adding that the eyes of the international community are on us to promote human rights and the rule of law.

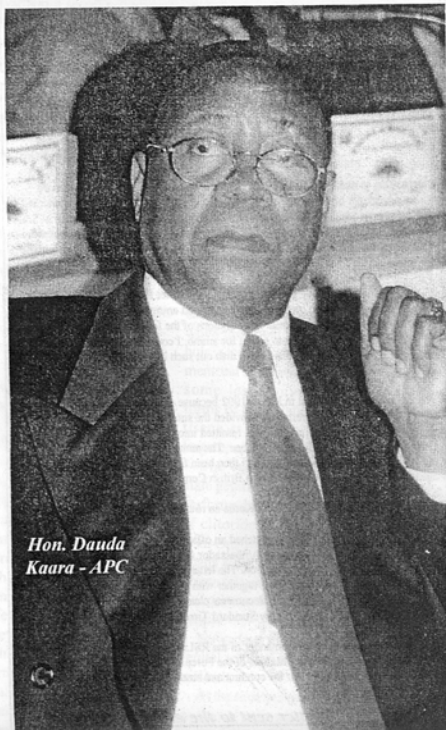
Hon. John Ngewai Moriba of SLPP in his contribution thanked all actors that brought Charles Taylor to face justice at the Special Court, adding that Charles Taylor's arrival at the court would give Sierra Leoneans the opportunity to know the truth about the war.

He said the focus of the Court is to try those that bear the greatest responsibility for the war but sadly, he lamented, most of the top leaders are today dead.

He however expressed the hope that with Charles Taylor now at the court the country and the international community will get the truth of what went on during the country's civil war.

Hon. Dauda Kamara of the APC said the arrival of Charles Taylor to the Court is in fulfillment of world justice and stated that the dream of all Sierra Leone is to see Taylor face justice.

He appealed to the international community to increase the security for the trial of



Hon. Dauda
Kaara - APC

PARLIAMENT

is want Charles d here

Charles Taylor, which should be held in Sierra Leone.

Hon. Eric Komba Koedoyema described Charles Taylor as the enemy of the people, adding that he must be

General and rew on Tuesday the high court constitution of of 1991) and No. 3 of 2006

made to answer for the crimes he committed in Sierra Leone.

In another development, parliament last week approved the government's motion for the construction of the Hill Side bye-pass road, which was tabled by the minister of land,

housing and the environment, Dr. Alfred Bobson Sesay.

Dr. Alfred Bobson Sesay explained to parliament the importance of the project among which are to enhance the free flow of traffic between the eastend and westend of the city, create employment, and above all serve as an eye opener to the international community that the country is ready for development.

He said that his ministry has completed an assessment of the Hill side road project, for which he said five hundred houses have been affected and will be demolished to allow the construction to carry on adding that houses affected would be relocated as compensation for their own and appeal to the public to support the project.

Meanwhile the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice Fred Carew on Tuesday this week laid in parliament the high court (amendment) rules 2006, the constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991 (Act No. 6 of 1991) and the constitutional instrument No. 3 of 2006.

Parliament continues its sittings today.



Standard Times

6 April 2006

Opinion

While praising those who negotiated the arrest and judicial transfer of former Liberian president and warlord, Charles Taylor, the ICTJ has that his trial should not be moved from the Special Court for Sierra Leone without careful consideration of all the relevant factors and a transparent decision-making process.

The arrest and transfer of Charles Taylor to the custody of the Special Court last week marked an important victory for justice in conflict-ridden West Africa. Putting on trial the former president and warlord-accused of fueling a deadly conflict that has left nearly 100,000 dead and tens of thousands displaced in Sierra Leone alone- sets a tremendous precedent for the region and made possible by the efforts and courage of activists and leaders, including Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and the Special Court itself. Taylor's appearance in Freetown today particularly symbolic significance.

A trial of this magnitude requires carefully planned and robust security measures. Although discussions about the transfer of Taylor's trial venue to The Hague constitute prudent precautions, the decision to move him from the region should not be made prematurely and should only be undertaken as a last resort, should the security situation so dictate.

The international center for transitional justice stresses that trying Taylor in Freetown on the Special Court's premises is preferable than to try him in The Hague, for the following reasons.

- Local Accessibility and Participation. Most importantly, a trial in Freetown will be more accessible to the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia who were most affected by the crimes alleged to have been committed by Taylor. Ten years of experience with trials for war crimes and crimes against humanity have clearly demonstrated the importance of involving affected population and the steep price of adequately engaging them. One of the primary motivations behind the establishment of the Special Court in Freetown- hailed as a new model precisely because of its location- was to make it more accessible and to allow for participation by Sierra Leoneans and others from the region.
- Special Court was Designed for this Purpose. From the outset, the Special Court has been designed and built to

Taylor's trial should only be moved from Sierra Leone as last resort

conduct politically sensitive trials in the country. It has already proven its ability to manage difficult security issues in indicting and trying several individuals with the potential to cause instability in Sierra Leone, including Foday Sankoh, the former leader of the Revolutionary United Front, Sam Hinga Norman, the leader of the Civil Defence Forces and Interior Minister at the time of his arrest. Even though the full-fledge United Nations peacekeeping force that was operating in Sierra

concurrently, as it now being done by Trail Chamber I. Trail Chamber II could take on the Taylor trial. The ability of the Court to accommodate the logistics of such a high profile trial has been demonstrated by Taylor's initial appearance one of the most highly publicized occasions of the proceedings.

Relocating the trial to The Hague raises the specter of new costs and complication, including the establishment of a secondary Special Court presence there, the constant

transitional justice, Sierra Leone and international justice programs. "For all of these reasons, the decision to remove Charles Taylor to The Hague should not be made lightly but should be evaluated carefully over time, and the full reasons behind it should be weighed thoroughly and made known to the public.

The Special Court should make the final decision on whether to relocate the trial and should do so in a transparent and consultative manner, after careful consideration of all

weighed against the long-term benefits of holding in-country trials and the opposition to the removal of Charles Taylor voiced by civil society organizations in Sierra Leone and Liberia. If security concern can be addressed, a fair trial held in Sierra Leone could make a more significant contribution to future stability and to the transitions to democracy and the rule of law in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The process by which the Special Court arrives at this decisions and the mechanism it puts into place to address the real challenges posed by relocation will affect how it is perceived in Sierra Leone and in the region. If the security concerns being voiced now are adequately substantiated and found to outweigh competing factors and the decision to relocate the trial to The Hague is made, the Special Court and those who support it must.

- Fully explain the reasons its decision to the public at large through specially designed outreach events.
- Make every effort to take all measures necessary to ensure that the proceedings will be accessible to the local populations in the region, particularly in Sierra Leone and Liberia. To this end, countries that support the Special Court should be prepared to set aside additional resources to supplement the higher cost of relocating to The Hague and to allow Sierra Leonean and Liberian organizations and individuals to attend the proceedings at The Hague. Provision should also be made for the live transmission of the trial to people in Sierra Leone and Liberia through various broadcast channels. Consideration should also be given to translating the trials into French for the French-speaking West African countries affected by Taylor's alleged destabilizing activities. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is equipped to meet some of these challenges.

"The trial of Charles Taylor will have tremendous significance wherever it is conducted, but only if his trial is witnessed and understood at the local level will justice be seen to be done in West Africa," said Wierda,

Most importantly, a trial in Freetown will be more accessible to the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia who were most affected by the crimes alleged to have been committed by Taylor

Leone during those proceedings is no longer available, a range of other robust security measures-which the UN should be centrally involved in and contribute to-could be used to supplement the Special Court's current

- **Capacity to Hold Fair Trial.** The Special Court's trials in Freetown are generally considered to meet international standards of fairness. The Court's Trial Chambers are able to each handle two cases

transportation of staff, key witnesses, and evidence.

"Holding the trial in The Hague could dilute some of the Court's biggest strengths: its hybrid nature that blends international legal standards with local participation, as well as its accessibility. It is likely to reduce Sierra Leonean participation in the trial and will make it easier for those who do not support the trial to distance themselves from the outcome," said Marieke Wierda, Senior Associate and head of the international center for

relevant factors. Current impression are that an agreement has already been made between several governments, and that it paved the way for Taylor's transfer from Nigeria. However, this process has not been transparent and has neglected to involve the scores of Sierra Leoneans and Liberians who were victimized by Taylor and have interest in this trial.

While broader political considerations such as regional stability must be taken into account, these should be

"The trial of Charles Taylor will have tremendous significance wherever it is conducted, but only if his trial is witnessed and understood at the local level will justice be seen to be done in West Africa"

MEN AND THINGS

By Joe Tokpoima

HAGUE OR NO HAGUE BEWARE THE OLD FOX

It is said that the unexpected always happens. This is the wonder among Sierra Leoneans who never believed that the man would ever step foot on Sierra Leonean soil. They argue that he is a demi-god and why not. The man who can go to the bush and overthrow a military regime must be some sort of a super-man.

In spite of all this they are still jittery. The fear of some people which is legitimate is for security. No one in his/her right senses would like to go through the motions of the rebel war a second time.

The Special Court was created, pursuant to Security Council Resolution No. 1315 (2000) of 14 August 2000 by the Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone on the establishment of a Special Court for Sierra Leone ("Agreement") dated 16 January, 2002, to which is annexed the statute of the Special Court for Sierra Leone ("Statute") thereby forming an integral part of the Agreement.

There was a timely phone-in programme on the eve of arrival of the country's welcome/unwelcome guest at the Special Court. The overwhelming opinion was about the security situation. Here is what the Special Court has prepared in terms of security.

SECURITY

The location of the Special Court in the country where the conflict under review took place represents one of the major challenges to the organisation. While no specific threat by an organised group against the court's site or staff was identified throughout 2003 the Special Court has become more visible within the community and has

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emerged in some people's eyes as the most controversial and contentious organisation within the country.

Six major events raised the visibility of the court and concomitantly have affected its security position: (i) In January 2003, the New England site near Central Freetown was occupied by the Registry (ii) In March 2003, the announcement of the indictments and arrests of the first five indictees, particularly the arrest of the serving Minister of Interior Sam Hinga Norman, further reinforced the reality that the Court would fulfill its mandate to try those alleged to bear the greatest responsibility for the crimes committed during the conflict (iii) similarly the second round of arrests conducted in the countryside in May 2003; (iv) and the unsealing of the indictment against Charles Taylor in June 2003 resulted in the Court becoming the focus of attention within the region as well as in Sierra Leone; (v) In August 2003, the completion of the Detention Facility in the New England site allowed the transfer of the detainees from the temporary facility at Bonthe on Sherbro Island to Freetown.

As the security situation evolved over the year, security plans were developed and modified in collaboration with UNAMSIL and host nation security organizations. A programme of periodic exercise to test the contingency plans were implemented, including an activation of the Bonthe facility and movement of the detainees to Bonthe should the situation at New England site become untenable. Communications between the security forces tasked to support the Court have been integrated and a joint communications and operations centre established at the New England Courts site.

In addition to security of the court's facilities, the security section has implemented a programme of residential security inspections and has established night time patrols of selected residences to ensure staff security. A programme of security awareness training based on the United Nations recently established programme has been implemented on a recurring basis for all staff.

As the security situation in some areas of the countryside remained problematic security staff provided escorts to selected missions out of Freetown and have provided security escorts for missions to Liberia.

As noted, no specific threat by an organised group against the Court or Court staff has been developed; however, various elements have articulated their animosity toward the Court through the media.

Threat analyses were conducted in conjunction with UNAMSIL, international missions and the Sierra Leone Police and military officers. Whilst there continue to be elements within the Sierra Leonean population who have adopted aggressive stance against the Court, it is not felt that there is any significant capability to disrupt the functions of the Court.

Nevertheless, the overall situation within Sierra Leone remains tense in many areas requiring continuing security precautions. In addition to domestic problems such as rising fuel and food prices, instability in the region during 2002 adversely affected the security situation. The stability that has been enjoyed in Sierra Leone was principally attribute to the presence of UNAMSIL troops. In

As the security situation in some areas of the countryside remained problematic security staff provided escorts to selected missions out of Freetown and have provided security escorts for missions to Liberia.

2003 security preparedness prevented any serious incident involving Court facilities or staff. However as UNAMSIL has left there is a new dimension to the situation.

DETENTION FACILITY

The Detention Facility which comprises 18 cells, an exercise area, visiting rooms, a clinic, a small library and several common areas is now fully operational. It is headed by a Chief of Detention supported by highly experienced international supervisors, a medical officer and nursing staff and Sierra Leonean correctional officers seconded from the Sierra Leone Prison Service.

Amnesty International

5 April 2006

Special Court for Sierra Leone

Issues for consideration regarding the location of the trial of Charles Taylor

Introduction

The surrender of Charles Taylor to the Special Court of Sierra Leone (Special Court) on 29 March 2006 marks a major step forward in the Special Court's work to bring to justice some of those responsible for the tens of thousands of crimes committed in Sierra Leone.

The United Nations Security Council is currently considering whether to adopt a resolution to transfer Charles Taylor's case outside Sierra Leone. The initiative reflects a request by the Special Court to move the case to the International Criminal Court facilities in The Hague. Security concerns have been cited as a reason to move the trial. There are a number of positive elements in the draft resolution (annexed to this paper) now under consideration by the Security Council, including statements in the Preamble recalling the Security Council's "determination to end impunity, establish the rule of law and promote and encourage respect for human rights" and "[r]ecognizing that Charles Taylor facing the charges against him in the Special Court for Sierra Leone will contribute to achieving truth and reconciliation in Liberia and the wider sub-region". However, Amnesty International has a number of concerns about this draft resolution. The organization is urging Security Council members to resolve these concerns before they decide whether to authorize the Special Court to transfer the criminal proceedings to The Hague.

I. The transfer of criminal proceedings should take place if, and only if the international community cannot provide effective security for proceedings in Sierra Leone.

Amnesty International is not in a position to determine the severity of the threat to the security of proceedings if they continue to be conducted in Sierra Leone. Amnesty International, however, notes that the location of the Special Court in the country where the crimes were committed is an important and deliberate characteristic which forms part of broader initiatives to re-establish the rule of law in Sierra Leone, rebuild the national justice system and to ensure that justice is accessible and visible for the Sierra Leonean people. Amnesty International recognizes that conducting trials in Sierra Leone ensures that justice is witnessed by all sectors of the population who have been affected by the crimes and acts as a deterrent to future crimes. The organization believes that moving the trial would have the negative effect of distancing the justice process from the Sierra Leonean people who have suffered directly as a result of the crimes for which Charles Taylor is indicted. In deciding this issue, the Security Council is urged to first of all consider whether effective security can be provided to enable the trial to continue in Freetown, and not to consider other political issues. It appears as if the Security Council has not conducted a comprehensive review of the security situation and what possible security measures could be taken to ensure that the proceedings could take place in Sierra Leone.

Amnesty International urges the Security Council to conduct this review and to decide to move the trial if, and only if, it is satisfied that the security concerns cannot be addressed by other measures – including greater investment in the existing security systems. Indeed, it is likely that Charles Taylor may need to remain in Freetown for some time until a transfer of the case is organized and a review of the effectiveness of the existing security arrangements should be taken into account in the Security Council's consideration. The security situation should also be kept under constant review. If the case is moved and the security risk subsequently diminishes, the trial should be returned to Freetown. The draft resolution does not address these concerns.

II. If a change of venue is necessary, the Security Council should consider other venues in Africa.

Amnesty International encourages the Security Council to consider whether there are alternative locations for the trial other than The Hague which can provide secure facilities to conduct the trial. The organization

recognizes that locating the trial within Africa would have a number of positive elements, in particular, it would reinforce that the Special Court for Sierra Leone is an African court, which has been created by African states to address crimes against African people. Given the symbolism of moving the criminal proceedings out of Africa, any transfer should only be taken after the most careful scrutiny in accordance with strictly neutral criteria and after determining that there is no other courtroom available closer to the scene of the crimes. Amnesty International understands that the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda has been consulted and that it does not have a free courtroom, but it is not clear whether any African governments have been contacted to see if they have courtroom facilities that would be effective alternatives.

III. If the venue is changed, steps must be taken to minimize delays in transferring the case.

The process of allowing the Special Court to operate in another state must be expedited. In order to function effectively and without hindrance in another state, the Special Court will need to enter into a host state agreement with the state to which the trial will be transferred. Such an agreement should be consistent with the basic principles concerning a headquarters agreement for the International Criminal Court and the headquarters agreement of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. The draft resolution fails to address this issue fully merely requiring (in operative paragraph 6) that "the Netherlands shall facilitate the implementation of the decision of the Special Court for Sierra Leone to conduct the trial of former President Charles Taylor in the Netherlands" by taking a number of specified steps, including "[e]nabling the appearance of witnesses, experts and other persons required to be at Special Court for Sierra Leone under the same conditions and according to the same procedures as applicable to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia".

The government of the state must also grant a full range of privileges and immunities allowing the Special Court and its staff, as well as defence lawyers, representatives of victims and non-governmental organizations to work, without hindrance, in that country. A number of other agreements on detention facilities and other technical issues will need to be adopted without delay. Ensuring the prompt adoption of these measures will require the full support of the United Nations and the fullest cooperation of the venue state. The draft resolution does not address these concerns.

In addition, as set out below, the Special Court will require a significant increase in its budget to transfer the trial promptly and effectively to another state. It is essential that the Special Court does not encounter the same financial problems it has experienced throughout its history arising from states failing to make voluntary contributions. Amnesty International recommends that an increased budget to meet the expenses should be made available at the same time as a decision is made to transfer the case. Instead of doing so, the draft resolution (operative paragraph 8) merely "[r]ecalls that the costs to be incurred as a result of the trial of former President Taylor in the Netherlands are expenses of the Special Court for Sierra Leone in the sense of article 6 of the Agreement and that no additional cost shall be incurred by the United Nations or the Netherlands without their consent".

Moving the trial will no doubt delay it. There is the potential that this delay could be a substantial amount of time. Delays must be minimized to ensure Charles Taylor's right to a fair trial. Apart from the encouragement to all states (in operative paragraph 3) "to ensure that any evidence or witnesses are, upon the request of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, promptly made available to the Special Court", there are no concrete steps spelled out in the resolution to minimize the delays. In addition, instead of using the mandatory formulation "requests", as it does with regard to ensuring the appearance of Charles Taylor in the Netherlands, the Security Council simply "encourages" states to make evidence and witnesses available. This is in marked contrast to the approach of the Security Council acting also under Chapter VII to state cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

IV. If the venue is changed, significant investment will be required to relocate the trial effectively.

As set out below, a change of venue of the trial will incur significant costs. However, the draft resolution does nothing to address this issue. On the contrary, it requires these very substantial costs to be borne solely by the Special Court itself. If these costs are drawn from the existing budget of the Special Court it will undoubtedly seriously undermine its work, resulting in another financial crisis which will cause delays and undermine the Charles Taylor trial and the other cases in Freetown. If the Security Council decides that it is better to invest in the transfer of the case rather than in strengthening the existing infrastructure of the Special Court to try Charles Taylor in Freetown, it should ensure that funds will be immediately available to relocate the trial. Furthermore, the Security Council should take steps to guarantee consistent resources over a number of years for the Special Court to conduct the trial and any resulting appeals.

The Special Court will need its own secure premises. Although the Special Court may be able to use the courtroom of other courts, the Special Court will require its own premises where its staff can conduct their work. In particular, regarding the proposal to use the premises of the International Criminal Court, it should be noted that existing space shortages at its interim premises would likely make it impossible for the Special Court to use their office facilities. Additional investment in premises, facilities and security will be necessary. The Security Council does not appear to have conducted a review of the facilities in The Hague or elsewhere in the Netherlands and the draft resolution appears to assume that the facilities of the International Criminal Court (which is not mentioned) will be available and adequate.

The Special Court will need additional staff and other resources in the state where the trial is located. Significant investment will need to be made in recruiting staff to perform the range of tasks required to conduct the criminal proceedings including the trial and appeal in another state, a process that could take a number of years. These tasks include protection and support to victims and witnesses, outreach, assistance to defence counsel, interpretation, security, administration etc. As an independent institution with its own caseload, the International Criminal Court or any other international criminal court or national court system should not be requested to take on any of these tasks. It is particularly important that a transfer of the case does not result in draining the staff and resources from the Special Court in Freetown where other important trials are taking place. Significant investment in additional staff will be required. Recruitments will need to take place promptly to avoid delays. The Security Council does not appear to have considered these questions and the draft resolution is silent on these matters.

Resources will be required to ensure that the trial is accessible to the people of Sierra Leone. As stated above, a major concern of moving the trial from Freetown is that the process will become too far removed from the people of Sierra Leone. There is little indication that the Special Court or the governments concerned have consulted civil society on the question whether the criminal proceedings should be transferred. To address this concern, resources for outreach should be increased significantly. Communicating the trial process in another country to all regions of Sierra Leone will be a major challenge. The Special Court will need to revise its outreach strategy significantly to ensure that day to day developments in the trial are communicated promptly and accurately through a range of media such as radio, television, local newspapers and other media including, community outreach programs. This will require investment in technical equipment and staff in the country where the trial is taking place and other resources. The Security Council does not appear to have considered these questions and the draft resolution is silent on these matters.

V. If the venue is changed, the activities of the Special Court must not interfere with the equally important work of the International Criminal Court or other international courts.

It is important to recognize that the International Criminal Court is advancing in three investigations into grave crimes committed in northern Uganda, Darfur and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Other international courts have significant workloads and limited courtroom availability. If the trial is transferred to use the facilities of another international court, it is important that the work of either court is not compromised by the sharing of the facilities. It will be essential to promptly adopt an agreement setting out a clear division between the work of the Special Court and the other international court or national courts, which guarantees their independence and their ability to share courtroom facilities. The Security Council

does not appear to have considered these questions and the draft resolution is silent on these matters. Indeed, it leaves these questions entirely to the United Nations Secretary-General and the Netherlands, neither of which can decide what facilities the International Criminal Court can provide.

VI. The Security Council should not seek to prevent the courts of the Netherlands from exercising jurisdiction over Charles Taylor.

Any attempt by the Security Council to prevent national courts from exercising jurisdiction over Charles Taylor, except to protect the jurisdiction of the Special Court, an international court, would be inconsistent with the jus cogens prohibitions of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Although the recognition that the Netherlands can exercise universal jurisdiction over Charles Taylor is to be welcomed, the Security Council should not seek to prevent the courts of the Netherlands from exercising jurisdiction over him by opening a criminal investigation while he is in that country (see operative paragraph 5). Charles Taylor is suspected of committing crimes against humanity and war crimes in Liberia and the Netherlands should be permitted to open a criminal investigation of allegations of such crimes while the criminal proceedings are pending against him in the Special Court so that, if there is sufficient evidence against him to prosecute, the Netherlands can arrest him at the close of criminal proceedings before he can leave the country. Otherwise, the Netherlands would be precluded from taking these precautionary steps, without the agreement of the Special Court.

Conclusion

Before adopting the draft resolution, Amnesty International hopes that the Security Council will give its full attention to the serious issues of security and consider options for increasing security to allow the trial to continue in Sierra Leone. If, and only if, that is not possible, the organization urges the Security Council to consider relocating the trial to another African state or, if that is not possible, to a state in another region. A decision to move the trial will raise a number of significant challenges that must be addressed immediately to minimize delay in relocating the case. In particular, the Special Court will require immediate additional resources essential to conduct the trial outside Sierra Leone. The issues are not adequately addressed in the draft resolution.

Amnesty International hopes that the Security Council will take effective measures to ensure justice for the people of Sierra Leone.

OPEN SOCIETY
JUSTICE INITIATIVE



SECURITY COUNCIL MUST ADDRESS COSTS OF MOVING TAYLOR TRIAL TO THE HAGUE

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Date: 4 April 2006

For immediate release

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SECURITY COUNCIL MUST ADDRESS COSTS OF MOVING TAYLOR TRIAL TO THE HAGUE

New York, April 4, 2006—If the war crimes trial of Liberia's ex-president Charles Taylor is moved from Sierra Leone to the Hague, the international community must shoulder the increased financial costs and address the likely negative impacts for Taylor's victims, the Open Society Justice Initiative warned today.

The warning comes as the UN Security Council is widely expected to consider a resolution to relocate the trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Freetown because of concerns over the potential impact of the trial on security and peace in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

"Moving the trial from Freetown to The Hague will impose considerable burdens on victims and witnesses, and increase the challenge of ensuring broad public engagement in Taylor's trial," said James A. Goldston, executive director of the Justice Initiative. "The Security Council must do everything in its power to overcome these costs."

The Special Court for Sierra Leone mixes international and local elements and has rightly been praised for successfully prosecuting serious crimes in the place where they occurred. Among other benefits, this has permitted public interaction with the Court and its officials, facilitated access for victims and witnesses, and directly confronted impunity in West Africa. Any relocation of the trial must ensure that the positive message of prosecution is not undermined by its removal from the Mano River region.

"The victims of Taylor's crimes are the Special Court's primary constituency," said Chidi Anselm Odinkalu, the Justice Initiative's senior legal officer for Africa. "The Security Council must ensure that a decision to move the trial does not overlook their interests as witnesses, participants, and advocates."

According to the Justice Initiative, the extra costs of holding Taylor's trial in The Hague would include: the need to relocate judges, prosecutors and court staff; the need to transport witnesses and victims, many of whom are physically disabled and psychologically traumatized; the impossibility for a significant number of Sierra Leoneans to be physically present in the courtroom; the diluted impact of the trial on political leaders and the general public in West Africa; difficulty for Mano River Union media to cover the proceedings; and the risk that the move might delay and/or prolong the trial.

It is therefore essential that if the trial is relocated, the Security Council should plan for, and minimize, these costs by identifying and providing extra financial resources, above and beyond the existing Special Court budget, from United Nations assessed funds to pay for these needs. The move to The Hague should not be paid for with voluntary contributions from UN member states.

Specifically, the Security Council should accept responsibility for funding or facilitating the following measures:

- Broadcast of the trial throughout West Africa, including on television, radio, the internet, and on video disk. The scarcity of electricity and appropriate equipment in much of the region will require additional investments in facilities and technology. Funding should also be made available to ensure presence of Sierra Leonean and Liberian media at The Hague.
- Provision of fast-tracked visa applications, transportation, and accommodation in The Hague, to allow witnesses and victims to attend the trial.
- Arrangements to meet the special needs of victims and witnesses attending the trial who are without limbs, otherwise physically disabled, and/or in need of psychological support services.
- Maintaining the Court's expeditious pace, so the move to The Hague does not compromise the defendant's right to speedy trial or the victims' interest in seeing justice as promptly as possible.

Trials held at the Special Court for Sierra Leone are intended to send a clear message to the people of West Africa and beyond that anyone who commits mass crimes will be held legally accountable. Any relocation of the trial of Charles Taylor must ensure that this positive legacy of the judicial process for the peoples of the region is preserved.

The URL for this page is: http://www.justiceinitiative.org/db/resource2?res_id=103165

Associated Press (in the Washington Post)

6 April 2006

Prison Site Sought for Taylor

Sweden, Austria Asked to Take Liberian if He Is Convicted

STOCKHOLM, April 5 -- Sweden and Austria have received requests to imprison former Liberian president Charles Taylor if he is convicted of war crimes by a U.N.-backed court, government officials said Wednesday.

A positive answer by the Scandinavian country would remove a key obstacle to transferring Taylor's trial from the U.N.-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone to The Hague.

Several diplomats at the United Nations said Tuesday that no country wanted to have Taylor for 20 or 30 years -- either in jail or in exile.

Court officials have asked that the trial be moved because of fears that Taylor, 58, who has been charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone and was once among the most feared warlords in the region, could still spark unrest in West Africa.

In Vienna, Foreign Ministry spokesman Georg Schnetzer said Austria had been asked about accepting Taylor but noted that "the legal basis for this to happen does not exist at the moment." He declined to say specifically whether Austria had refused the request and did not clarify what the needed legal basis would be.

Sweden, a strong supporter of U.N.-backed international justice and a country that has been willing before to accept and incarcerate convicted war criminals, confirmed that it had received a request to take Taylor.

"Sweden and other countries have been asked" by the United Nations whether they would be willing to have Taylor serve a prison sentence there, said Hans Dahlgren, Sweden's Foreign Ministry cabinet secretary.

Dahlgren declined to reveal which other countries had been contacted or what Sweden's position was, saying only that the request was being reviewed.

A Swedish diplomat in New York said Sweden was likely to make an announcement about Taylor on Thursday, the same day the U.N. Security Council is to consider the resolution that would transfer his trial to The Hague. The diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the talks about Taylor's future were secret, would not give any indication about what Sweden's decision would be.

A Dutch Foreign Ministry spokesman said his government was in contact with only one country about accepting Taylor, but would not confirm that it was Sweden. The Dutch government has insisted that it will allow the trial to take place in The Hague only if Taylor is transferred to another country after the verdict, whether a conviction or an acquittal.

Taylor is accused of backing brutal rebels in Sierra Leone during a 1991-2002 civil war and trafficking in guns and diamonds while president of Liberia from 1997 to 2003.

Meanwhile in Miami, Taylor's son was ordered held without bail Wednesday on U.S. passport fraud charges. Charles McArthur Emmanuel, 29, a U.S. citizen, was arrested last week at Miami International Airport. U.S. immigration officials said he lied about the identity of his father on his application for the passport.

Chicago Tribune

5 April 2006

Court trying to find nation to take Taylor

Items compiled from Tribune news services

The UN-backed court that would prosecute former Liberian President Charles Taylor has run into trouble trying to persuade any government to either imprison him or give him asylum after the trial ends, diplomats said Tuesday.

The diplomats said the main concern was deciding where to send Taylor if he is acquitted on 11 counts alleging war crimes and crimes against humanity during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war. Sweden is the likely candidate to imprison him if he is found guilty, but is otherwise reluctant, they said.

The issue of where to send Taylor has become a pressing one because the UN Security Council agreed not to pass a resolution transferring his trial to The Hague until a deal is set.

Deutsche Presse-Agentur

5 April 2006

Sweden contacted over prison space for Taylor

Stockholm - Sweden has been contacted by the United Nations regarding a request to offer prison space for Liberian ex-president Charles Taylor if he is convicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity, Swedish officials said Wednesday.

Foreign Ministry spokesperson Petra Hansson said Sweden was 'one of several countries' recently approached by the UN in the matter.

However, the process will 'likely take time' and no decisions have been made, Hansson said, noting that the Special Court for Sierra Leone has just opened proceedings against Taylor.

The 58-year-old Taylor is charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity including murder, rape and mutilation.

The Justice Ministry has recommended that Sweden as of July accedes to a treaty accepting prisoners sentenced by the Sierra Leone war crimes court.

There have been reports suggesting that the trial should be moved over security reasons to the Netherlands and held in the facilities of the International Criminal Court based in The Hague.

Swedish and Irish peacekeepers with the UN mission in neighbouring Liberia were recently transferred to beef up security in Sierra Leone.

At least two convicted war criminals sentenced by the United Nations war crimes tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) are currently serving sentences in Sweden. one of them is former Bosnian Serb president Biljana Plavsic.

Voice of America

5 April 2006

Taylor Seeks Lawyers, Activists Want Useful Trial

By Nico Colombant
Abidjan
05 April 2006

As former West African warlord Charles Taylor seeks a defense team for his trial at the special war crimes court for Sierra Leone, human rights activists are calling for a fair and useful trial.

The Freetown director for London-based Amnesty International, Brima Sheriff, called Wednesday for a fair trial for Charles Taylor and that he be treated as humanely as possible.

Another prominent Freetown human rights activist, Abu Brima, tells VOA, he believes Taylor could provide information that could help bring to justice those responsible for Sierra Leone's decade long civil war.

"Bringing him to face the music that he created [Bringing him to trial for the situation he created] is certainly a welcoming thing. But of course, we believe that Taylor has a lot of information: Who was involved? Who was sponsoring him? To whom was he selling diamonds? Those are all people who were part of this equation and we think that they must be brought to book," said Brima. "Taylor has answers and he can help us to bring them to book [to justice]."

When he pleaded not guilty to 11 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity earlier this week, Taylor presented himself as an African victim of an international conspiracy. Brima, for his part, does not believe that kind of defense will help Sierra Leone or Taylor.

Relatives and advisers to the former Liberian president continue to arrive in Freetown, trying to find a good team of lawyers to defend him and money to pay them.

Taylor is believed to have amassed a fortune while coming to power in Liberia and spreading instability throughout West Africa, charges he repeatedly denied before the court proceedings began.

Meanwhile, Swedish officials say the United Nations has been asking Sweden and other countries to consider jailing Taylor if he is convicted. The trial is expected to be moved to the Netherlands for security reasons after a Security Council resolution on the matter is passed.



Charles Taylor makes his first appearance at Special Court in Freetown, April 3, 2006

ZNet

4 April 2006

<http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=2&ItemID=10040>

Charles Taylor on Trial

by Lansana Gberie

Inside the UN-Sierra Leone Special Court's massive fortification, at a spot close to its small detention centre, is a helicopter landing strip. The strip was furtively constructed about two years ago. When a foreign visitor wondered aloud at the time whether the strip was constructed in preparation for the reception of a certain alleged war criminal at large – Court officials always cannily stoked up such speculation whenever the Court's annual budget was being prepared (the Court subsists on voluntary contributions from UN members, since it lacks the Security Council's Article VII mandate) – officials bridled. Except for the occasional use by the troops guarding the Court, the strip remained derelict, and almost forgotten. When I passed by it in January, I noticed that the grass around it was untamed.

In the last week of March, however, activities mounted around the strip. Senior Court officials confidently asserted that Charles Taylor, the former Liberian President indicted on seventeen (later reduced to eleven) counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the Court, will “in a matter of days” be landed at the strip, and placed in cell Number Three of the adjacent detention centre. It was vertiginous all around the Court's premises, and indeed throughout the sub-region.

This time they were right. At exactly 7 pm, on 29 March, two UN helicopters, which had taken off from Liberia's Robertsfield International airport, hovered over the Special Court compound. One landed immediately on the strip, and the other continued to hover above. Charles Taylor, formerly most feared warlord (and subsequently Liberia's maximum president), handcuffed and dressed in a white flowing gown partly covered by a bullet-proof vest, descended from the helicopter flanked by UN soldiers. He looked visibly dazed, and his eyes were downcast. As he walked towards the detention centre, Sierra Leone's Deputy Inspector General of Police, Oliver Somasa, formally arrested Taylor. Two other Sierra Leonean senior police officers joined Somasa, and in a brief ceremony read out the charges against Taylor, along with his rights. Taylor looked glumly on. He was then handed over to the Special Court (this formality necessary because the Court is, at least on paper, a collaborative effort between the Sierra Leone government and the UN) and promptly taken inside the detention centre, from where loud shouts (of welcome?) could be heard from the other detainees, nine Sierra Leoneans who have been there since 2003.

The scene was steeped in bathos: Taylor, once so raffish and forbidding, was now lodged in a small cell in this fortified compound where he had to be told what his rights were. “Today is a momentous occasion and an important day for international justice, the international community, and above all, the people of Sierra Leone,” declared the Special Court's Chief Prosecutor, British barrister Desmond del Silva. No, Joseph Conrad's cynical aside (in the *Heart of Darkness*) about the “outraged justice” coming from the high seas to strike in an improbable place did not immediately suggest itself: this moment had been awaited for long.

Taylor's journey to this detention centre began in June 2003 after the Special Court unveiled a long-sealed indictment accusing him of bearing the ‘greatest responsibility’ for heinous offences committed in Sierra Leone's decade-long (1991-2002) war. At the time the indictment drew

outrage, both for the manner in which it was delivered, and for its singularly unhelpful timing. Taylor was then in Ghana, the host of the Ghanaian government, and was engaged in peace talks, aimed at ending Liberia's then ever-widening humanitarian catastrophe, which were sponsored by the African Union and the UN. Other leaders at the talks included South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki and Nigeria's Obasanjo. Slighting this august gathering, the Special Court sent the indictment to the Ghanaian authorities via email, and then organized a press conference in Freetown to announce it. Chagrined, Ghana's President John Kuffour put Taylor in a Ghanaian presidential jet, and flew him back to Monrovia. The talks continued, however, and in August Taylor relinquished power and went into self-exile in Nigeria. The understanding was that Taylor would continue to be protected by the Nigerian government, and would not be handed over to the Court.

The Special Court and the world's human rights community mounted a public relations campaign to force Nigeria to hand over Taylor. Law suits were hastily arranged in Nigeria, and Obasanjo, facing unpopularity at home for his plan to seek a third term (illegal under the present constitutional settlement), began to bow to media campaigns by making one fateful promise: he would only hand over Taylor to an elected Liberian president who makes the request. This promise was both characteristically insincere and immensely stupid. Nigeria is a member of the Management Committee (chaired by Canada) which runs the Special Court and has invested billions of dollars and hundreds of its own soldiers' lives in the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia. It therefore surely had the morale authority (more than the US, more than the so-called international community, more than the human rights brigade) either to reject outright any pressure to hand in Taylor, or simply comply with the demand. Instead, Obasanjo gambled that a deal would be struck with any incoming Liberian leader, since such a leader would surely feel beholden to the Nigerian leadership.

In the event Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who had initially stated, correctly, that the Taylor issue was none of her business, came under intense pressure from the human rights community as her visit to the US loomed. Being Liberian, the enticement to make the request for the handing in of Taylor – a welcome to the White House, dinner with the President, perhaps an address to the Congress, and all the usual blandishments about that historical cord tying Liberia to the US (even though the Americans would end up giving the struggling new Liberian government only \$50 million) – was irresistible. Johnson-Sirleaf now said, again correctly, that the fate of one Liberian should not hold a nation of three million hostage, and she formally made the request to Obasanjo. It was a courageous – some would say, foolhardy – decision. Almost immediately, funny things began to happen.

I arrived in Liberia shortly after Johnson-Sirleaf made the request. The President had left for the US, and was due to arrive a day after I did. The Liberian papers were proclaiming her visit a triumph, and the nation waited to welcome her. My friend Conmany Wesseh (the Deputy Foreign Minister) told me that she would be landing at Springs Payne airport, at the outskirts of the city, at about 10:00 am. By that time, hundreds of colourfully-dressed Liberians, some masked dancers, and UN troops, stood waiting at the tiny, bare airport. Then word came that the president would be landing at Robertsfield – several miles from the city – instead. All the colourful welcome ceremonies were ditched. When she landed, Johnson-Sirleaf was taken by helicopter and flown straight to the Executive mansion, the presidential palace. There, surrounded by US marines wearing armoured flaks, she delivered a short speech, and all was over.

It transpired that the Liberian government was gripped by security anxieties. It had earlier preemptively arrested a number of people associated with Taylor and his party. But Taylor undoubtedly still commands loyalty and support in Liberia; this support was thrown behind

Johnson-Sirleaf during her run-off contest with football star George Weah (Taylor and his wife Jewel, now a senior senator, calculated that Johnson-Sirleaf, with her previous links with Taylor, will be relied upon not to ask for Taylor's handing over to the Court.) The speaker of the Liberian House of Representatives is Edwin Snowe, a former Taylor aide; and a former Taylor General with the wonderfully delicious name Peanut Butter is a member of the Senate. Taylor still has substantial business and other interests in Liberia. Now, for doing something that she was totally reluctant to so prematurely – ask for Taylor's handing over – Johnson-Sirleaf, so charismatic and colourful and populist, was now hiding from her own people and ordering arrests that are, while understandable, clearly extra-legal. Liberians spoke darkly of a return to the bad-old-days of lawlessness and tyranny.

I felt angry, sad, confused; I felt gripped by a kind of melancholy. I felt that a President who held so much promise only a few weeks before had now been railroaded into a decision that, I fear, may well change the trajectory of her presidency for good.

It is not that Taylor does not deserve to be behind bars; of all people he eminently deserves to face justice for the wars he instigated in the region and for which he gained immensely. I have myself documented Taylor's criminal role in the Sierra Leone war in various publications, including most recently my book, *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone* (Hurst/University of Indiana Press, 2005). No one that I know has any doubt about Taylor's capriciousness, his ruthlessness and brutality, the great depredations he caused in Liberia and in the sub-region from 1989 (when he launched a brutal insurgency against Liberian President Samuel Doe) through to his involvement in violent upheavals in Sierra Leone (in particular his support for the uniquely brutal Revolutionary United Front, or RUF, of Sierra Leone), Guinea and Ivory Coast. These are well-documented by independent researchers and various UN panels. The question is: was this the right time to have to throw Liberia (and Sierra Leone for that matter) into such levels of anxiety and emergency?

No doubt, for those principled advocates of humanitarian law and human rights, this question is beside the point. The point is that an indicted war criminal has now been captured. I envy them their simplicity, their moral clarity; I envy Richard Dicker (of the Human Rights Watch), David Crane (formerly the Special Prosecutor of the Special Court now a humanitarian law professor in the US) and all those of the human rights brigade who have the luxury of substituting some vogue doctrines for knowledge, the people who, sucked into a form of narcissism, in the end – to quote VS Naipaul writing about such people in another context – do little more than celebrate their own security...

Obansajo did not hand over Taylor promptly after Johnson-Sirleaf's request as he had promised. Instead, his office peevishly declared that the Liberians were free to go take Taylor in Nigeria: Taylor, the Nigerians said, was a refugee, not a detainee, implying that the indicted war criminal was free to go where he pleased. This was, of course, a tad disingenuous; and when a day later Taylor was reported to have 'disappeared' from the Calabar villa where he had been living since he left Liberia, there was understandable outrage. The 'escape' was clumsily choreographed: two days later, the Nigerians announced that Taylor had been arrested trying to enter Cameroon in a 'diplomatic car' (Desperation can lead to foolishness but it is hard to imagine the wily Taylor thinking that traveling in a car with a diplomatic plate confers anonymity.)

Taylor was then flown to Robertsfield airport in Liberia, and handed over to the UN authorities – fulfilling, in a way, his last wish upon relinquishing power: "God willing, I will be back!" In a few hours he was headed for Sierra Leone. A woman in the crowd outside the Special Court building after Taylor was sent to his cell turned to me and said, apropos of a statement made by

Taylor in 1990, “He told us that we in Sierra Leone will taste the bitterness of war. We did. But now he is enjoying the sweetness of justice.”

A few days later, on 3 April, Taylor was formally charged in court. The case, with the delicately inclusive title “The Prosecutor against Charles Ghankay Taylor also known as Dankpannah Charles Ghankay Taylor also known as Dankpannah Charles Ghankay Macarthur Taylor”, alleges that from 1996 to 2002 Taylor committed “crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of additional Protocol II and other serious violations of international humanitarian law” in Sierra Leone. The indictment states that throughout Sierra Leone’s war, “Liberian fighters...under [Taylor’s] control and/or operating in Sierra Leone with [Taylor’s] consent” fought alongside the RUF, causing enormous destruction and rights violation, perpetuating terrorist violence, looting the country’s resources, and raping women. The indictment states that Taylor was a mentor and sponsor of the RUF, and did so for personal enrichment, in particular the stealing of Sierra Leone’s mineral resources, especially diamonds.

Taylor, therefore, bears “the greatest responsibility” for the war and for the atrocities that characterized it. While most of the charges have been already independently arrived at by others, the notion of ‘greatest responsibility’ creates a kind of linguistic and philosophical tangle. Twelve others have been similarly alleged to bear such responsibility. By alleging each of them to bear the ‘greatest’ responsibility, observers say, the word ‘greatest’ itself loses its heuristic value. This will likely be a point of contest in the coming months.

Earlier, the Special Court, acting on the request President Johnson-Sirleaf, had sought to transfer the trial to The Hague. Provision is made for this in the statute setting up the Court. Its Article 9 states that “The Special Court shall have its seat in Sierra Leone. The Court may meet away from its seat if it considers it necessary for the efficient exercise of its functions, and may be relocated outside Sierra Leone, if circumstances so require.” Court officials say that the widespread fear that Taylor’s trial in Sierra Leone may undermine regional security has made it necessary for the trial to be conducted in Europe.

In Court, Taylor, appearing impeccably dressed in a black suit and maroon tie, and fidgeting with his fingers while the charges were read, rejected this option, stating that if the venue were moved out of Sierra Leone, his relatives and friends won’t be able to visit him. He began, unsurprisingly, by challenging the right of the Court to try him, stating that while he “did not and could not have committed [the crimes]” in the indictment, he would not be responding to the charges. The Court took it that it was a plea of not guilty. Then his lawyers added, surprisingly, that Taylor was “indigent” and would therefore be relying on the lawyers provided by the Court to defend him. Everyone appeared stunned. After a few lugubrious technical exchanges, the matter was adjourned. Taylor was on trial.

I wanted badly to feel elated, and in a fleeting moment I did: here was a man who I and many others – mainly Liberian comrades – have been pursuing for years – here was he now, though defiant, quite clearly humbled, confined to a small cell in a barricaded compound. It had been a long struggle, and I, as well as many countless others, have a right to self-congratulation. Yet I felt I have to suspend the celebration; I had to wait and see how it all plays out in this volatile region of ours.

Reuters

5 April 2006

Nigeria rejects Taylor death plot allegation

By Felix Onuah

ABUJA, April 5 (Reuters) - Nigeria dismissed as "an absolute falsehood" on Wednesday accusations by a spiritual adviser of former Liberian President Charles Taylor that the Nigerian president plotted to have Taylor assassinated.

Taylor, now held for trial for war crimes in Sierra Leone, was in exile in Nigeria from 2003 until last week, when he briefly disappeared before Nigerian police arrested him at a remote border post as he tried to flee into Cameroon.

Indian-American evangelical preacher Kilari Anand Paul, who helped persuade Taylor to leave office in 2003 as part of a deal to end 14 years of civil war in Liberia, has repeatedly accused the Nigerian government of "betraying" Taylor.

In interviews with international media, he has said Nigeria deliberately let Taylor leave his exile residence.

Paul, who says he has spoken several times to Taylor since he was handed over to the Sierra Leone court last Wednesday, said he had sent a letter to Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo calling on him to resign over the Taylor saga.

"Mr. Taylor was set up to be assassinated ... They hatched a plan of letting Mr. Taylor escape so they could gun him down," he told Reuters by phone from Washington.

Obasanjo's spokeswoman, Remi Oyo, dismissed this: "This allegation is an absolute falsehood and completely unfounded".

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

The lack of a clear explanation from Nigerian authorities of how Taylor got away and was then arrested has given rise to numerous conspiracy theories. Nigeria has denied it played a part in his brief disappearance.

Taylor pleaded not guilty on Monday to 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role backing rebels who raped and mutilated civilians and recruited child soldiers during Sierra Leone's 1991-2002 civil war.

After Nigeria said last month it was ready to give up Taylor to Liberian custody, the two governments appeared for a while to be at odds over the handover. Despite international calls for security around his residence to be tightened, Taylor got away and then was caught.

Nigeria arrested 22 of its security officers attached to Taylor, but as soon as he was detained it disbanded an official panel of inquiry into his disappearance.

The U.N.-backed Freetown court has asked the Netherlands to hold his trial in The Hague, citing fears keeping him in Sierra Leone could provoke unrest there and in Liberia.

Dutch officials say if the venue is switched to The Hague, Taylor would have to leave the Netherlands after the verdict.

The Swedish news agency TT reported on Wednesday the United Nations had asked Sweden, among other countries, to consider hosting Taylor in one of its prisons if he was convicted.
(Additional reporting by Nick Tattersall in Freetown)

The Guardian (Lagos)

5 April 2006

Taylor shops for lawyers, cleric protests warlord's arrest

By AND West Africa

UNITED States (U.S.)-based renowned evangelist and peace advocate Kilari A. Paul is still furious about the circumstances surrounding the arrest of Liberia's former President Charles Taylor in Nigeria.

He has also narrated the circumstances surrounding the decision by the former warlord to quit power and accept asylum in Nigeria in 2003.

Taylor is now making frantic efforts to get defence at the United Nations-backed war crimes court in Sierra Leone where he is being tried.

The former leader had on Monday pleaded not guilty to an 11-count charge of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in backing rebels who raped and mutilated civilians and recruited child soldiers during Sierra Leone's civil war.

Paul, an Indian-born pastor, said he was heading to the Nigerian embassy in Washington yesterday morning to submit a letter of protest on how President Olusegun Obasanjo handled the Taylor matter while speaking with The Guardian from his hotel room in Washington D.C.

The cleric explained that it was at the Revd. Sullivan Summit in Abuja that he got involved with the Taylor case.

The summit, which was hosted by Nigeria in July 2003, was attended by several African heads of states and top government and business leaders from around the world including U.S. President George W. Bush, who was then visiting Nigeria.

According to Paul, who alleged that the Federal Government manipulated Taylor's "escape and arrest," disclosed that he was invited as a keynote speaker to the summit and spoke at two of its sessions.

During the summit, he recalled, "10 Liberian bishops and religious leaders wanted to meet and discuss the problems of Liberia with Bush and Condoleezza Rice but were refused and Archbishop Sunday Mbang asked that I meet them."

As he recalled, the meeting that was meant to be a 30-minute discussion went on for as long as 17 hours. Paul said Mbang and another Nigerian pastor, Samson Ayorinde, were present.

"I wept bitterly," he stated as he heard about the horrors and suffering of the Liberian people who were caught in the middle of the neighbouring West African country's war. The cleric said that it was during the meeting that he received a call on the phone from then President Charles Taylor.

"He pleaded with me that I should come to Liberia and I put a condition that if I came, he would have to leave Liberia. He was silent for two minutes and I was on my knees praying having heard

that hundreds of thousands of Liberians had died already in the long years of civil war," Paul stated.

It was the time the U.S. was leading the international community to demand that Taylor step down as president to avert further bloodshed.

Bush had then repeatedly said that before the U.S. could support any intervention in Liberia, Taylor would have to step down as president. Also Taylor had already been indicted by the United Nations (UN) Special Court in Sierra Leone on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Paul continued: "So he (Taylor) answered after a long pause and said 'if you think I must leave when you come I will leave, but please come.'"

It was on this guarantee that Paul said he started making plans with his officials to charter a flight and fly to Liberia. He said Obasanjo offered him a presidential jet to go to Liberia, "but I refused."

Paul said he went to Liberia taking a series of commercial charter flights, one from Abuja to Lagos, another from Lagos to Abidjan and then chartered "an old Russian plane to Monrovia." He said the flight that should have taken two to three hours direct from Abuja took him and his team 48 hours. His team included two former U.S. Congressmen who were then working with him -- Bob Clement, a Democrat from the State of Tennessee and Ronnie Shows, another Democrat from the State of Mississippi. He said the Liberian religious leaders also followed.

On July 15, 2003, Paul who said he never called Taylor a saint, recalled spending 18 hours with the former Liberian leader, who "got on his knees and told his story." The next day, he stated that Liberian religious leaders quickly organised a mass rally at the Monrovia Stadium where he spoke and Taylor was present. The situation in Monrovia then was very tense, he said, adding that there were many fighters on the streets, but people thronged to the rally.

Said he: "I still have a copy of the Washington Times front page photo of Taylor on his knees at that rally."

What Paul said that struck him about Taylor was that many people in Liberia still loved him as at that time. "Look, I have travelled to several countries on peace missions: Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Cuba and Yugoslavia. I met Saddam, Milosevic and Castro, but in Liberia, the people there were saying good things about Taylor. He had support in Liberia, so I couldn't ask him immediately to step down. Don't forget he won the election by an 80 per cent majority."

But then, he stated, Condoleezza Rice's assistant, who is now the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs at the State Department "called me and said he was calling on behalf of President Bush, that we should ask Taylor to step down." He said at this time he was now speaking and dealing with U.S. officials at the State Department, Ghana's President John Kuffour and leaders of the different factions and rebel groups in Liberia for the next weeks.

Paul explained when he asked Taylor to go to Nigeria he refused, saying his troops killed 2,000 of Nigerian troops, but he persuaded him to leave. He made available a letter signed by Taylor dated August 16, 2003 where the former ruler credited his decision to leave Liberia for Nigeria on the influence of Paul.

On the rebuttal of his claims that Taylor accused Nigeria of betrayal, Paul said he had been to Nigeria before and conducted five rallies including the one in Lagos from November 1-4 2001. It was attended by millions of Nigerians and top religious leaders including Pastor Enoch Adeboye, Pastor William Kumuyi, and Bishop David Oyedepo, among others.

Paul said: "I have travelled to over 108 countries, but do not own a \$100 property anywhere in the world. I have no political or personal agenda, except peace in Liberia, Africa and the world." The cleric said his ministry had rescued 310,000 orphans all over the world, preaching the gospel without taking a single offering in any rally. "It breaks my heart," he lamented, "to see Africa still bleeding with man-made wars."

From his heavily-guarded cell in the Special Court compound, nestled among the shanty-covered hills of the capital Freetown, Taylor has been receiving legal advisers from around the region but has yet to decide who should defend him, lawyers said.

"We were able to see him and give him our advice. He will consider it and act on it but he has not yet chosen his own defence team," said Azanne Kofi Akainyah, a lawyer from Ghana who came to Freetown at Taylor's request and met him on Monday.

"He was resolute, not downhearted, fully aware of the political machinations behind everything," Akainyah told Reuters late on Monday.

Taylor's aides have said he would like Harvard law professor, Alan Dershowitz, to lead his defence.

Taylor was defended at Monday's hearing by a staff lawyer from the tribunal, Vincent Nmehielle, who told the court the embattled leader did not currently have sufficient funds to employ his own defence team.

"Mr. Taylor has made it clear that he has no money," Nmehielle said after the hearing. "But he has not hidden the fact that if he is able to raise the necessary money, he would love to defend himself with a legal team of his choice."

From Laolu Akande, The Guardian (Lagos)

The Analyst (Monrovia)

5 April 2006

Former Associate Justice Distances Himself

Former Associate Justice, Cllr. Micah Wilkins Wright has dissociated himself from recent reports in Monrovia that he is one of the Liberian lawyers forming the defense team to represent the legal interest of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, at the war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone.

Cllr. Wright said he neither met Mr. Taylor nor did his defense team contact him to form part of his defense lawyers for the purpose of representing the legal interest of Mr. Taylor at the war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone.

Cllr. Wright pointed out that he previously was contracted to render legal services for Mr. Taylor when the search warrant from the Special Court was issued at the time.

He said he then assisted to search Mr. Taylor's premises, but that service does not indicate that he is a permanently retained lawyer for the former Liberian leader.

He, however, indicated that in the event he is approached on the issue of providing legal representation for Mr. Taylor in Sierra Leone, he would critically study the matter and use his professional discretion either to do so or not.

It was recently reported in Monrovia that former Associate Justice, Cllr. Wilkins Wright was part of the defense team contracted by former Liberian leader, Charles Taylor, to represent his legal interest at the war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone during his trial there on eleven count war crimes charges ranging from murder to rape.

News filtering in says the legal counsel of the National Patriotic Party, one time Solicitor General, Cllr. Theophilus C. Gould and one time lawmaker, Cllr. Francis Galawulo have already left the country for Sierra Leone to beef up Mr. Taylor's defense team during the trial.

Cocorioko website

6 April 2006

4 Lawyers In Town To Defend Taylor

By Chernor Ojuku Sesay

Four foreign lawyers , two from Ghana and two from Liberia have arrived in town to prepare and put modalities in place to defend former Liberia President, Charles Taylor who is presently standing trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

The four are Azanne Kofi Akainyah and Nana Ato Dadzie all from Ghana and the latter was a former presidential adviser to Jerry Rawlings and Chief of Staff. The two Liberian lawyers are Francis Y.S. Galawulo a former Senator from Liberia and Theophillus C. Gould who was an Attorney General in Taylor's regime and his personal counsel.

Meanwhile, Taylor made his initial appearance at the Special Court on Monday at exactly 3pm. He was driven to the court in a white, tinted jeep amidst tight security mounted by the UN Mongolian forces and the Sierra Leone Police.

After the charges had been read to him, Taylor stated that he did not recognise the legality of the Special Court to stand trial before them, since he was the 21st President of the Republic of Liberia and enjoys immunity from prosecution. Taylor also requested that his trial be done in Sierra Leone rather than at The Hague, so that he can have easy access to his family members in Liberia and his witnesses. "I need the support of my family," he stated.

The presiding judge however, dismissed Taylor's assertion that he did not recognise the legality of the Special Court and repeated his earlier question to Taylor as to whether he is guilty of the charges against him. "Not guilty," Taylor replied.

On his second request to have the trial held in Freetown, the Trial Judge asked the Court Registrar to write it down.

Cocorioko website

6 April 2006

Opinion

Charles Taylor Should be Tried in Sierra Leone

By John Leigh

The recent arrest, transportation, detention and arraignment of Liberian ex-President Charles Taylor at the UN-backed Special Court in Freetown, are a most welcomed development in the on-going struggle to come to grips with warlord impunity, the criminalization of state power and answering the cry of the people of Africa for justice.

On the other hand, the current chorus of calls to have Taylor's forthcoming war crimes trial transferred to The Hague is misguided because transferring Taylor's trial to Europe would defeat a cardinal reason underpinning the establishment of the Special Court.

A key objective in setting up the court to try those most responsible for war crimes in Sierra Leone is to teach Africans first hand in their own country, the fundamentals of true justice - procedural and substantive - and to drive home the fundamental democratic principle that no one is above the law; with each person, no matter how high his position in society, shall be held accountable for his/her unlawful deeds.

Demonstrating the proper administration of justice in a country widely known for its kleptocratic elite, military elements notorious for unspeakable brutality and prone to subject females to sexual servitude; and where might is deemed right is probably unbeatable as a nation-building tool. The actual practice of accountability, transparency, fairness, objectivity in securing indictments against genuinely culpable persons only and treating each and every defendant humanely and with dignity, are fundamental democratic principles that African leaders must learn to live by.

These are the things the Special Court was set up to inculcate into the thinking processes of us Sierra Leoneans, and which the Court has sought to accomplish since it commenced operations in late 2002.

Should the trial of Taylor, the prime defendant among those charged with war crimes, be transferred to the distant Hague for trial, these key benefits would be lost to the people of Sierra Leone and her neighbors - benefits sorely needed to help countries such as Sierra Leone and Liberia move forward with genuine democratic nation-building.

As it is, our country is still unstable, reeling from the consequences of Taylor's war. Additionally, it continues to suffer from poor governance, deep poverty and shocking superstitions - the very weaknesses that Taylor exploited in crafting his plunder of Sierra Leone and Liberia. The lessons being taught by the on-going war crimes trials are still insufficient to generate lasting benefits to the people of the region.

Transferring the trial of the most notorious defendant to far away Netherlands would render worthless the little that has been learned so far. Absent the effective containment of impunity and the criminal abuse of state power, nation-building efforts in several locales in Africa, including Sierra Leone, will be stymied for years to come.

By learning live the benefits of properly administered justice, we Sierra Leoneans are better able to protect our rights, deal more effectively with abusive authority, reduce our reliance on superstitious beliefs and thus better able to develop our countries on sound democratic principles. Our leaders, civilian and military, observing firsthand how one of their own is compelled to account before the bar of justice for his crimes in plain view of his victims, may be better able to behave themselves by understanding the consequences of unconscionable wrongdoing.

Furthermore, it also does not seem right to have the real king pin among the defendant war criminals spirited away to Europe while his fellow accused are held back to be tried locally. Taylor's proposed transfer from Sierra Leone to The Hague will in itself inflate his prestige among those prone to violence since his admirers would conclude that the whole world deems Taylor as too big a fish to be tried locally.

This situation could easily be misconstrued by his supporters to mean that the more abusive one is the more respect he garners from the international community.

To such people, Taylor's transfer abroad would seem like favored treatment, specially concocted for the benefit of the most brutal of warlords out of perverse respect for the extreme horrors he perpetrated. Popular perception in Africa is that conditions abroad are a lot superior to those at home. Such pandering may even embolden some of his supporters into believing that the international community deems Taylor to be a demigod who still retains the power to watch over them should they decide to unleash another reign of terror.

In order to drive home the true benefits of properly administered justice, Taylor, like his fellow war criminal defendants, should be held in the same humid place of detention, eat the same food and tried by the same judges in the same courthouse nearest the scene of his crimes. All this, of course, should be done in plain view of his victims, the corrupt members of the elite and our military brutes.

Taylor's attorney, Mr. Vincent Nmehielle, wants the court to believe that Taylor would like to be tried in Sierra Leone. Those of us who are familiar with Taylor's tactics know better: Taylor is faking it. Taylor would rather be in Europe, as far away from his victims as possible. By pretending he wants to be tried in Sierra Leone, Taylor is hoping that the court would deny his request and, instead, be more motivated to ship him to Europe.

As an "escapologist", Taylor knows he is better off in Europe than in Sierra Leone where thousands of people are literally looking for the opportunity to administer vigilante justice. Taylor knows that any escape from the protection of the United Nations detention facility would most likely result in a self-imposed death sentence. Taylor also knows it would be a lot safer to attempt escapes in Europe in case of any failed attempt.

Fears that Taylor's trial in Freetown may cause instability in Sierra Leone and Liberia and even elsewhere in the sub-region clearly have substantial merit. There are thousands of ex-combatants, including many Taylor loyalists and admirers, walking the streets and byways of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast. Some even hold lawful public office in Liberia. Many of these people are disenchanted with the status quo. It is quite possible that a number of them may get violent again once the trial date approaches.

But the solution is not to rob Africans of the benefits of experiencing real justice administered live involving their most powerful tormentor in front of their eyes in their own backyard; nor should Africans be prevented from seeing a fearsome warlord-president compelled to account for his crimes and learning key principles of justice and democracy from such a novel experience.

It is also not fair to deny the people the hope that our civilian and military leaders, too, are getting an education from Taylor's in-country trial as the same thing could happen to them should they step out of line in any significant way.

The appropriate solution to the instability issue is to tighten security in both Sierra Leone and Liberia under a robust UN peacemaking mandate rather than pander to thuggish elements by shifting the trial venue to a far away place. Then let those who believe that they are above the law rear up their ugly heads once again and be dealt with under the rules of civilization.

Already, during the first two years of this Millennium, the United States most graciously spent approximately \$100 million to train at least seven ECOMOG battalions to help secure the peace in Sierra Leone. In addition, there are a British Military Mission and British-trained security forces in Sierra Leone, plus 15,000 UN Peacekeepers in Liberia. It is clear that the benefits of trying Taylor in Freetown, including teaching Africans and their leaders firsthand the proper administration of justice far outweigh the costs of activating internationally-trained security forces to help maintain short term stability.

I submit, therefore, that Freetown is certainly the appropriate venue to hold Taylor and his fellow accused war criminals accountable for their egregious crimes against the people of Sierra Leone.

Rather than concerning themselves with trying Taylor in Europe, world leaders should consider doing FOUR things:

- (i) Get active immediately in securing a suitable place for the long term incarceration of Africa's most notorious warlord should he be convicted because Sierra Leone is going to remain a weak and a relatively unstable state for some time to come unless a sea change in governance standards and practice occurs soon.
- (ii) Send forth the word to those officeholders and others in Liberia who threaten to make trouble for the duly elected government face investigation and possible indictment for war crimes, crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law.
- (iii) Consider making the Special Court as the permanent African branch of the International Criminal Court because teaching Africans the means and ways of genuine justice cannot be based on an ad hoc Special Court that depends on voluntary funding.
- (iv) Press the Sierra Leone Government to institute civil legal action in a suitable democratic country abroad on behalf of war victims and those who lost property as a result of war action for loss of life, bodily injuries, violation of civil rights, pain and suffering as well as for damage, destruction or the plunder of property, against those who profited from the war.

I had done work on instituting civil action in Washington but shortly after my recall as ambassador, the law firm that had agreed to represent Sierra Leone suddenly withdrew from the case, allegedly because of corrupt demands. Sierra Leone's war damage claims are still viable and ought to be pursued if victims are ever to gain closure in this matter. Thank you.

UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 5 April 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia

Nigeria rejects Taylor death plot allegation

By Felix Onuah

ABUJA, April 5 (Reuters) - Nigeria dismissed as "an absolute falsehood" on Wednesday accusations by a spiritual adviser of former Liberian President Charles Taylor that the Nigerian president plotted to have Taylor assassinated. Indian-American evangelical preacher Kilari Anand Paul, who helped persuade Taylor to leave office in 2003 as part of a deal to end 14 years of civil war in Liberia, has repeatedly accused the Nigerian government of "betraying" Taylor.

Rights group says Taylor must get fair trial

By Rod MacJohnson

FREETOWN, April 5, 2006 (AFP) - Former West African warlord Charles Taylor must be treated humanely and given a fair trial for crimes against humanity, rights group Amnesty said Wednesday as the Liberian ex-president sought out a defence team.

U.N. court struggling to find country to take Charles Taylor after trial

By NICK WADHAMS

Source: AP WorldStream Date: April 04, 2006

UNITED NATIONS_The U.N.-backed court that would prosecute former Liberian President Charles Taylor has run into trouble trying to persuade any government to either imprison him or give him asylum once the trial ends, diplomats said.

International Clips on West Africa

Maimed victims of Sierra Leone's war say they still are victimized

By MICHELLE FAUL

Source: AP Alert - Medical Date: April 05, 2006

JUI, Sierra Leone_Rebels who hacked off the hands of civilians have scholarships and tool kits to help rebuild their lives, but their victims say they have been cast aside by a society keen to forget a savage war, taunted and left to beg on street corners. Even getting a bus driver to stop is a problem. "They just drive by us because they say we are useless 'cut men' with no money to pay them," said Maxwell Kornah, who was shot by rebels and had to have his leg amputated 10 years ago.

Sierra Leone war crimes court _ an experiment in international justice

By HEIDI VOGT

Source: AP DataStream Date: April 04, 2006

DAKAR, Senegal_The Sierra Leone court that made Charles Taylor the first African president to answer war crimes charges is an experiment in international justice, a hybrid tribunal being tested by the debate over where the former Liberian president should be tried.

INTERVIEW-Sierra Leone happy to send Taylor to The Hague

By Nick Tattersall

FREETOWN, April 4 (Reuters) - Sierra Leone is happy for former Liberian leader Charles Taylor to be tried in The Hague for war crimes committed during the West African country's civil war, its vice president said in an interview on Tuesday.

Cote d'Ivoire: Disarmament talks on track at last

[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations]

Bouke, 4 Apr 2006 (IRIN) - Rebel and army chiefs completed a first full round of working talks on Tuesday in Cote d'Ivoire's rebel stronghold of Bouake in what was described by the government as a sign of progress in efforts to reach an agreement over disarmament. "The talks were fruitful and focused on the concerns of both forces and the establishment of a structural framework," said a joint statement issued by Ivorian chief of staff Philippe Mangou and rebel military leader Soumaila Bakayoko.

Local Media – Newspapers

Senate President Pro Tempore Rebuffs Claims of Silence on Taylor Surrender

(Heritage)

- Addressing journalists in Monrovia yesterday, Senate President Pro Tempore Isaac Nyenabo rejected claims by the National Patriotic Party (NPP) that the National Legislature was mute on the transfer to Freetown of former President Charles Taylor, asserting that the issue was beyond the authority and mandate of the Liberian government.

Peacekeepers Appease Taylor Loyalists

(Daily Observer)

- The UNMIL Bangladeshi Contingent Commander in Ganta, Nimba County, Lt.-Col. Abdul Hoque, recently held a meeting over the weekend with ex-fighters loyal to former President Taylor on ways to secure the peace in Liberia, amid fears that Liberia could become unstable due to the trial of Mr. Taylor.

Political Party Says Taylor's Transfer Infringed Peace Agreement

(The Analyst)

- NPP Secretary-General John Whitfield told a news conference in Monrovia recently that developments surrounding the termination of former President Taylor's exile and hasty transfer to Sierra Leone were a breach of the spirit and intent of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Relatives Say Sierra Leoneans Are Not Hostile to Taylor

(The Informer)

- Sierra Leoneans have not shown any hostile attitude toward relatives of former President Taylor, a family spokesman, Sando Johnson, said, adding that Sierra Leoneans were going about their normal businesses as if they did not care about the former president's trial.

Taylor's Son May Get 10-Year Jail Term

(National Chronicle)

- "Chuckie" Taylor, the son of former President Charles Taylor, would get a jail sentence of 10 years if found guilty of passport fraud, a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesman said in a BBC report yesterday.

Former Foreign Minister Denies Having Role in Taylor's Trial

(National Chronicle)

- Contrary to a recent *Liberian Express* report, former Foreign Minister Monie Captan has categorically denied even being contacted by the UN or any other group to serve as a witness in the trial of former President Taylor. In his reaction via telephone and email from Ghana, Mr. Captan said that neither he nor former Senate President Pro Tempore Grace Minor—his mother-in-law—had any intention of playing any role in Mr. Taylor's trial.

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

UN Security Council Extends Travel Ban on Lawmakers

- A United Nations press statement issued in New York yesterday shows that the Security Council is maintaining its travel ban on former First Lady and Bong County Senator Jewel Howard-Taylor and House of Representatives Speaker Edwin Snowe.
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Senate President Pro Tempore Rebuffs Claims of Silence on Taylor Surrender

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Finance Minister to Review Policy on Airport Immunity

- Finance Minister Antoinette Saryeh said that plans were underway to review the immunities granted to some users of the Roberts International Airport (RIA).
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Sierra Leoneans Not Hostile toward Taylor Says Taylor's Family

(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Nigerian Government Denies Betraying Taylor

- Nigerian Government Spokesman Fani Kayode has dismissed claims that Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo had betrayed former President Taylor.
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

ELBS RADIO *(News monitored yesterday at 19:00 pm)*

Ruling Party Legislative Caucus Supports Taylor Turnover

- The ruling Unity Party Legislative Caucus Chairman Dr. Bhofal Chambers told journalists yesterday that the arrest and surrender of former President Charles Taylor was constitutional and legal because it was sanctioned by the international community of which Liberia is a member.

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

Methodist Relief Group Distributes School kits

- The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Program Officer Sheku Selah told Star Radio yesterday that the organization has commenced the distribution of school kits, medical equipment and sewing kits worth more than US\$250,000 to over 60 institutions in Monrovia including the Group of 77, National Old Folks Home, Christian Association of the Blind and the School of the Blind.

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.

(1)

PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL PATRIOTIC PARTY (NPP) ON THE DEPORTATION AND SUBSEQUENT TRANSFER OF THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF LIBERIA, MR. CHARLES G. TAYLOR, FROM THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA TO SIERRA LEONE VIA LIBERIA.

Monrovia, Liberia
April 3, 2006


REPRESENTATIVES OF MEDIA INSTITUTIONS PRESENT HERE,
DISTINGUISHED LIBERIANS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

The NPP recognizes and expresses gratitude for the phenomenal role played by the Federal Republic of Nigeria, The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), The African Union (AU), The European Union (EU), The United States of America (USA), The United Nations (UN) and all friendly and peace loving nations and people, for finally restoring peace to Liberia through the democratic process, following a protracted period of civil conflict in the Country. The NPP encourages these entities to continue to work with the Government of Liberia and all national stakeholders with a view to nurture and sustain our infant democracy. The National Patriotic Party (NPP) pledges to remain a constructive partner in this process:

Distinguished members of the Press, Fellow Liberians:

About three weeks ago, the NPP issued a Press Statement in which we informed the Nation that the Government of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf had communicated formally with the Government of President Olusegun Obasanjo of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to end the exile of Mr. Charles G. Taylor, Former President of the Republic of Liberia, and to have him turned over to the custody of the Government of Liberia for transfer to the Sierra Leonean War Crimes Court in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Immediately upon the issuance of the statement by the NPP, the Government of Liberia quickly published a contrary statement denying the claims of the NPP. But the Liberian Government later agreed that it did communicate with the Nigerian Government, consistent with the claims of the NPP. The Government of Liberia cited international pressure as the logic behind its



action. We concluded that the confirmation by the Government regarding this issue was due only to the persistent inquiries by the NPP and the public on the matter. From all indications, the Government intended to keep the communication to President Obasanjo classified, and thereby surprise the Liberian people and nation on the event of the transfer of former President Charles G. Taylor.

The Liberian Government on the subject vindicates the NPP by its confirmation. The NPP is vindicated because when we first published the information concerning what the Government had done in the premise, the Government first reaction sought to render the NPP an Organization of agitators, doomsayers and tellers of falsehood. At least, at this point in time, both the Liberian public and International observers know who is bent on manipulating the public by employing falsehood as a cardinal regime instrument.

On Wednesday, 28th March 2006, contingent upon President Sirleaf's communication referred to supra, the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria dramatically terminated the three-year asylum of the former Liberian President, and subsequently deported him to Liberia and delivered him to the Liberian Government at the Roberts International Airport. The Government of Liberia immediately arrested Mr. Taylor and turned him over to the custody of UNIMIL for transfer to the War Crimes Court for Sierra Leone, without any iota of regard for the due process of law or the dictates of the Liberian-constitution. Mr. Taylor is presently in custody in Sierra Leone.

Amongst other things, the Nigerian Government, in its reasons for summarily ending the exile in Nigeria of Mr. Taylor, claimed that the former Liberian President had "absconded" from his asylum home in Calabar on Monday, 26th March 2006 to a destination unknown to the Federal Government with an intention to flee justice at the court in Sierra Leone.

Distinguished members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen, based upon the developments surrounding the harsh termination of Mr. Taylor's exile and his hasty transfer to Sierra Leone, the National Executive Committee of the NPP, a significant stakeholder in the body politics of Liberia, convened on Thursday, 29th March 2006, with a view to examine the issue, and to establish a position on these developments.





Accordingly, the National Executive Committee of the NPP in its meeting determined the following positions:

1. Infringement of the Liberian Peace Agreement

First and foremost, the NPP views the current situation of the former Liberian President as a breach of the spirit and intent of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and other National and International protocols which ended the Liberian civil war and facilitated the exile of former President Taylor to Nigeria.

It was determined by these agreements and protocols that Mr. Taylor would voluntarily resign his position as President of Liberia for the purpose of peace in the country and go into a peaceful exile where he would not be harassed.

Therefore, the present situation of Mr. Taylor is representative of International deception at the highest level, which sends a signal that could make it difficult for 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. consequently, the NPP views the current position of the Nigerian Government regarding Mr. Taylor as a contradiction, which presents a pretext to justify the inhumane action of that Government against Mr. Taylor.

2. The Escape of Mr. Taylor from Calabar

We wonder how could Mr. Taylor momentarily be declared a fugitive for arrest less than twenty-four hours after the Nigerian Authorities reiterated that their position on Mr. Taylor was one of host – guest relationship. So how did Mr. Taylor become a fugitive fleeing justice?

Information reveals that at no time did Mr. Taylor voluntarily and/or covertly plan to leave his home in Calabar. The NPP is informed by unimpeachable sources that Mr. Taylor was invited by a high-profile official in the State Government of Calabar to discuss the issue of his leaving Calabar in an under cover fashion. Mr. Taylor in the conversation with the official on the topic told him that he had no intention to run away or to flee justice. But the State Official insisted that it was imperative that Mr. Taylor should decide leaving Nigeria because the Federal Government was under




immense pressure from the International Community to have him (Mr. Taylor) turned over to Liberia.

Mr. Taylor then told the official that if the Nigerian Government had decided to end his sanctuary, the best thing they could do was to send him back to Liberia. Below is the verbatim account of Mr. Taylor's statement to the official regarding the temptation for him to escape:

IF AT ANYTIME MY STAY IN NIGERIA BECOMES AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT, I PREFER TO BE TAKEN BACK HOME TO MEET MY FATE, BECAUSE I HAVE MADE MY CONSCIENCE RIGHT WITH MY GOD.

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Press, for the period we have known Mr. Taylor, we have found him to be a character of extreme will power and remarkable valor. He is not one to flee justice, or one that will entertain the posture of a vagabond.

Our source further informed us that at the close of the meeting between Mr. Taylor and the State Official, Mr. Taylor left the home of the official for his residence. *After the elapse of about three hours following their first meeting, later the same night, that is early on Tuesday morning, the same official went to Mr. Taylor's house and again urged him to consider leaving immediately, and presented him (Mr. Taylor) with some gifts which the State Official claimed had been sent to him by a high ranking Federal Government Official. The State Official informed him (Mr. Taylor) further that the High Ranking Federal Official wanted him to convey to Mr. Taylor that Nigeria had no intention of turning him over to Liberia, but was instead going to give him safe passage to a new location. The State Official again solicited the cooperation of Mr. Taylor to go with escorts to see his new place of sanctuary. Accordingly, Mr. Taylor decided to reluctantly cooperate and thereby joined the escorts to go and see his new home. Our source furthered that whilst in route to the new location under the safe passage policy presented to Mr. Taylor by the State Official, at a distance of about 250 to 300km away from his home in Calabar, Mr. Taylor turned on the radio in the car conveying him and to his amazement, learned that he was a fugitive fleeing from his asylum home in Calabar. Immediately upon hearing the information, Mr. Taylor opted for a return to his home. But those escorting him insisted that they had orders to give him safe passage*



(5)

and could not turn back. Consequently, Mr. Taylor became a victim of deception, and was thereby looted and molested, and delivered as A LAMB UNTO THE SLAUGHTER!

3. *The Deportation and Transfer of Mr. Taylor*

The NPP views the deportation of Mr. Taylor from Nigeria to Liberia, and the Liberian Government's subsequent transfer of Mr. Taylor from the Liberian soil to Sierra Leone as not only illegal, but a flagrant violation of a cardinal constitutional right 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.

a. *Deportation*

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. Secondly, what was the legal process and where was it performed in any case regarding the deportation of the former Liberian President? Thirdly, 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 (VII) Court of the United Nations. Members of the UN are required to enforce resolutions of benefit 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.

b. *Transfer*

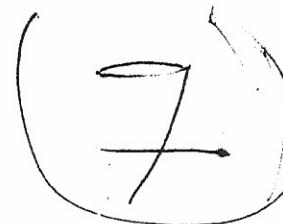
The NPP views the early days of office of the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Led-Government to be replete not only with the violation of the rights of Liberian citizens, but ones that are plagued by a flagrant abuse of sections of the Liberian Constitution engendering the protection of human rights and the rights of Liberian citizens under the doctrine of due process of law. The Government's handling of Mr. Taylor's issue is clear evidence in the premise.



The Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Led-Government has no legal explanation today and will never have one tomorrow, justifying the turnover of Mr. Taylor to the custody of UNMIL for handover to Sierra Leone. Mr. Taylor, a former President of Liberia, was never charged with a crime or impeached during his presidency. Even if Mr. Taylor were charged with crime during his presidency, under our laws he would have had his day in court. Therefore the Liberian Government's recent action against Mr. Taylor, a former President and a citizen of Liberia, amounts firstly to a legal and constitutional breach, and is further exemplary of a criminal act tantamount to a collaborative kidnap by the Government of Liberia and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The Government's deliberate overlook of the due process of law in this matter amplifies so easily how those who condemned regimes of yesterday for similar acts are now so quickly becoming the masters of the very acts. We further call the attention of the Liberian public and International Community to the double standard of Mrs. Sirleaf and her government on the Taylor issue: On her recent visit to Washington, the United States of America, Mrs. Sirleaf, in her speech to the US Congress, called Mr. Taylor a tyrant, despot, and a dictator; upon her return to Monrovia from Washington, she delivered a speech to the nation in which she referred to Mr. Taylor as a Statesman. What trust can we accord a government with such double dealing?

Distinguished members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen, the NPP being a Stakeholder in the body politic of the Republic of Liberia, is resolved to ensure that injustice is not permitted to parade our national corridors and have its will any longer, irrespective of who the perpetrators will be, or from which quarters a determination bent on injustice will spring.

Therefore, in our quest to ensure that the rights of Mr. Taylor is guaranteed in the ongoing scenario, the NPP vows to use all 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 color 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 their status.



4. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention of Liberians and Residents

The NPP has sufficient information to bear testimony that the Government and some international security units are operating a policy of arbitrary arrest and detention of some citizens and residents. They are using the Taylor issue as a guise to justify their arbitrary security policy. Excessive force involving molestation and looting are employed in this new draconian approach, which is carried out mainly after midnight and in the early hours of the morning. After going through their ordeals of molestation and irrelevant cross-examinations, some victims are let to go without any legal redress, while others remain in unexplained custody without access to legal counsel. The NPP hereby announces to the public in general that anyone being held or who shall fall victim to this unwholesome arrest and detention policy should *immediately notify the NPP*. The Party will be disposed to make the relevant interventions. Meanwhile, the NPP extends gratitude to the many human rights and pro-democracy institutions that have raised concern on this matter.

5. Silence of the National Legislature

The NPP observes that the National Legislature has exhibited absolute and unexplained silence on the matter regarding the illegal deportation to Liberia and the subsequent kidnap and transfer of the former President, Charles G. Taylor by the Government and UNMIL. The NPP reminds the National Legislature that as a representative body of the citizens, it remains the only guarantor of the rights and security of all citizens, irrespective of their status, creed, color, religion, ethnicity, etc. The current situation confronting Mr. Taylor, a former President and a citizen of Liberia must be seen in this context by the National Legislature. The extremely mute posture by the Liberian Law Makers on the Taylor issue is being viewed by a significant membership of the Liberian electorate as a **CONSPIRATORIAL SILENCE**, an act that amounts to **A BREACH OF PUBLIC TRUST**, which demands an explanation. We question whether the Liberian Electorate, through their elected representatives, have recognized any treaty or any instruments enforceable to the benefit of that illegal court in Sierra Leone, which is neither a Sierra Leonean Court because it does not form part of the judiciary of Sierra Leone, nor a United Nations Court because it is not a Chapter VII Court.

6. Transparency: The United Nations and the Sub-Regional Crises

From all indications, it appears as if some very powerful members of the United Nations Security Council have a special bone to pick with Mr. Taylor directly, and the People of Liberia covertly. We believe that if the United Nations wants to exercise justice and fair play regarding conflicts in the West African Sub Region, and accordingly enhance lasting regional peace, it should spearhead a holistic investigation which will seek to examine the conflict in the entire region, and thereby indicate the nations and the people who have been offended. Mr. Taylor should not be sacrificed as the black sheep upon whom is imposed the liability for all the crises in the region, while others who have perpetrated or sponsored the perpetration of similar or worst crimes in the region are permitted walk freely. We believe national, regional, *continental and global justice will prevail under the United Nations system* if investigations are conducted by the United Nations to discover, if they do not already know how the following occurred:

- The alleged escape of Mr. Taylor from the Boston Prison in the United States to commence the civil crisis in Liberia and the source of his funding that effectively sponsored his insurrection against the Government of President Samuel K. Doe, who was being conceived by the United States to be arrogant and stiff necked towards the U.S. Government Policy in the region at the time.
- The training and sponsorship of the leadership of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) prior to the launch of the insurgency in Sierra Leone.
- The roles of the Executive Outcomes and the British Corporate conglomerate, Sandlines in the Sierra Leonean Civil war.
- The creation and sponsorship of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO) and the Liberian Peace Council out of the Republics of Sierra Leone, Guinea and the Ivory Coast in early 1991.
- The creation and sponsorship of the rebel Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy and the rebel Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) out of Republics of Sierra Leone, Guinea and the Ivory Coast in 1998.
- An impartial investigation of the crisis in the Ivory Coast.



7. Caution to the Liberian Media

It is troubling to note that in the absence of due process of law, some media institutions and Human Rights Groups in the country continue to refer to Mr. Taylor as a **WAR CRIMES CRIMINAL**. This situation is not only pathetic and unfortunate, but also unprofessional, as it reflects a lack of a sense of social responsibility by these institutions. We therefore urge these institutions to desist from this objectionable habit and ameliorate their professional posture.

Conclusion

Distinguished representatives of media institutions, fellow Liberians, Ladies and Gentlemen: In conclusion, the National Patriotic Party (NPP) wishes to assure the Government and the people of Liberia and our International Partners, that it will remain a constructive partner in our nation's collective determination to build a vibrant democracy. Accordingly, the NPP calls upon the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Led-Government to be reminded that democracy cannot thrive successfully in an environment where injustice and its accompanying odds exist. Some of these odds, which careful observers are beginning to witness gradually evolving in our fragile Liberian democracy, are: Government sponsored suppression, molestation and intimidation, arbitrary arrests and detentions, encroachments, nepotism, sectionalism, self-righteous arrogance and posturing, vindictiveness, deliberate cruelty and unfairness. It is imperative that all citizens, irrespective of their political or other affiliations, are protected under the Government of the day. In her most recent speech to the Nation, the Liberian President, H.E. Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf assured the Liberian nation and people that her government will be a respecter of the constitutional rights of all Liberians. We wait to see this doctrine becoming a truth.

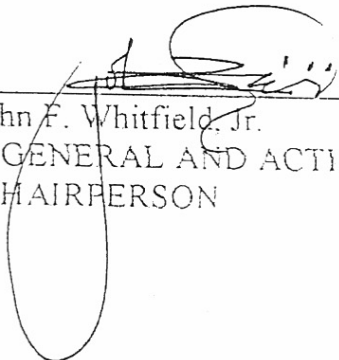
Meanwhile, we call upon all partisans of the National Patriotic Party, its well-wishers and sympathizers, and all peace-loving Liberians concerned with the principles of justice, fair play and nation building, to remain law abiding and continue to support the growth of the infant Liberian democracy.)

(10)

GOD BLESS LIBERIA! I THANK YOU.

ISSUED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE, NATIONAL PATRIOTIC PARTY.

Signed: _____


John F. Whitfield, Jr.

SECRETARY GENERAL AND ACTING NATIONAL
CHAIRPERSON

IRIN
29 March 2006

LIBERIA: Taylor, stubborn since his childhood

[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations]



© AP Photo

**Former Liberian president,
Charles Taylor**

MONROVIA, 29 Mar 2006 (IRIN) - A year after Charles Taylor launched his rebellion from deep in the Liberian forest sparking war across the region that cost more than 300,000 lives, his mother said that he had always been a stubborn child.

"I borne Charles, and among all my children Charles' attitude is just different. He is a very stubborn person - since his childhood days," Taylor's mother, Yassa Zoe Taylor told reporters in 1990.

Charles Taylor, charismatic and charming, a showman with a zeal for costume and dramatic effect, was born on 28 January 1948 in the small riverbank town of Arthington, some 25 kilometres outside the Liberian capital Monrovia.

The poor boy born of American slave-stock that carved out Liberia in the 1800s was educated in the United States, studying economics at Bentley College in Boston, Massachusetts. While there Taylor joined the Union of Liberian Associations in The Americas and was highly critical of the Liberian government, in which current Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf was Finance Minister.

Taylor, or Charlie to his friends, returned to Liberia in the late 1970s, shortly after the country's first bloody military coup d'état staged by semi-literate Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe. Executions and reprisals followed the military takeover, including the killing of President William R Tolbert on grounds of rampant corruption and mismanagement.

Doe appointed Taylor as Director General of the General Services Agency - essentially the leader's logistics man. But three years on, Taylor was accused of stealing US \$1 million of government money and he bolted to the United States.

Despite his bloody military background, Doe was a frequent White House guest under US President Ronald Reagan and the Liberian leader filed an extradition suit for Taylor's arrest and deportation.

The United States arrested and detained Taylor and sent him to Plymouth County House of Correction in Massachusetts but after 15 months Taylor

broke jail in September 1985; the circumstances of his escape remain murky. While in prison, Taylor turned to former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who is currently leading the defence in the trial of former Iraq president Saddam Hussein.

After his jail-break, Taylor resurfaced in Libya, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire where he mustered financial support and men to launch his rebel movement. Below is a chronology of Taylor's rise and fall:

1989

December 24, 1989 - Civil war begins as Charles Taylor's new rebel movement, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), launches its anti-government crusade from neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire. The first territory to fall is the border town of Butuo in Nimba County, helped by guerrilla fighters trained in Libya. Taylor dubs himself "Tatay" meaning father in the local Gio language, and many of the fighters he brought in were children.

1990

June 1990 - Charles Taylor's rebels and Doe's army battle in Monrovia leading to indiscriminate killings of civilians and mass displacement.

1991

January 1991 - Rebel leader Charles Taylor throws out previously signed peace deals and forms a government based in the central Liberian town of Gbarnga. At this stage his forces control 90 percent of the country.

1997

July 19, 1997 - Charles Taylor is elected president during a break in the fighting, winning 75 percent of votes cast. His victory is widely seen as a desperate bid to bring an end to the fighting.

August 2, 1997 - Charles Taylor is sworn in for a six-year term as president before six West African heads of state, including former-soldier presidents Lansana Conte of neighbouring Guinea and Sani Abacha of Nigeria.

1998

June 28, 1998 - Charles Taylor urges nationals involved in a conflict in Sierra Leone to return home. The appeal by Taylor followed an agreement in Abuja, Nigeria with his Sierra Leone counterpart, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, in which they agreed to stop supporting each other's rivals.

1999

July 1999 - A rebel group of exiled Liberians form a rebel faction in Freetown, Sierra Leone, named Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) to oppose Taylor's regime.

2000

May 15, 2000 - Sierra Leonean rebels, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), hand over 124 UN peacekeepers held hostage for several weeks, after the intervention of Charles Taylor. The UN petitions Taylor to use his influence to intervene after 500 UN troops are captured by the flip-flop clad, gun-toting rebels.

May 19, 2000 - A US government delegation headed by the Reverend Jesse Jackson and accompanied by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Howard Jeter, the former special envoy to Liberia, arrive in Monrovia to discuss with President Charles Taylor how the crisis in neighbouring Sierra Leone might be ended.

June 13, 2000 - European Union foreign ministers agree to a British request to suspend millions of dollars in aid to Liberia over its support for rebels in neighbouring Sierra Leone. The British government accuses Taylor of selling guns to the RUF in exchange of diamonds.

July 19, 2000 - Charles Taylor admits that his government has links with Sierra Leone's RUF rebels, saying the ties are "constructive and should be used in a positive way as in the case of the release of over 500 UN personnel taken hostage by the rebels. I have always told the RUF that next to God is the United Nations. It is terribly stupid to take UN personnel hostage."

July 17, 2000 - US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering meets with Taylor in Monrovia, and expresses Washington's displeasure over Liberia's alleged role in the war in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Pickering said, "satisfied with the evidence it has seen regarding Liberia's involvement in Sierra Leone and that if Liberia fails to act positively it would mean severe consequences for bilateral relations between Monrovia and Washington, and possibly the entire international community". Taylor remained indignant: "We refuse to accept and reject efforts on the part of any nation to muffle this country."

2001

February 7, 2001 - The Government of Liberia announces the departure from Liberia of Sierra Leonean warlord Sam Bockarie and the closure of the RUF liaison office in Liberia. Bockarie was a notorious guerrilla fighter, nicknamed 'Mosquito' for his ability to catch victims off guard and an alleged advocate of the RUF tactic of hacking off the hands and feet of civilians.

March 7, 2001 - The UN Security Council in Resolution 1343 demands the government of Liberia immediately cease support for the RUF in Sierra Leone and for other armed rebel groups in the region and take the following steps: expel all RUF members from Liberia, prohibit all RUF activities on Liberian territory, order the RUF to release all abductees, weapons and equipment seized from UN peacekeepers.

April 12, 2001 - Liberian government says a letter from the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Liberia to the Minister of Justice confirmed the non-existence of RUF accounts in commercial banks in Liberia (with the exception of former RUF leader Foday Sankoh's personal account with the Liberian Bank for Development and Investment credited with US\$ 500).

2002

February 8, 2002 - Charles Taylor declares a state of emergency in Liberia placing a ban on all mass political rallies following clashes between government troops and rebel fighters in the interior. After several months, he lifts the ban on September 16.

2003

March 7, 2003 - The judge of the Special Court for Sierra Leone approves an arrest warrant and indictment on 17 counts of war crimes charges against Charles Taylor.

May 6, 2003 - Taylor's government announces that notorious Sierra Leonean rebel leader Sam Bockarie, wanted for war crimes by a UN-backed special court, has been killed in a shoot-out on the Liberian border with Cote d'Ivoire. Bockarie had been living in Monrovia up to his death.

June 4, 2003 - At the formal opening ceremony of Liberian peace talks in Accra, Ghana - attended by Taylor and rebel leaders - the Special Court issues Charles Taylor's arrest warrant, but the Ghanaian government denied receiving the warrant and indictment. Before returning home, Taylor makes a formal declaration to step down as Liberian president to make way for peace.

June 12, 2003 - Taylor demands in a hastily arranged news conference in Monrovia that his indictment for war crimes by a Special Court in Sierra Leone be rescinded as a condition for peace in Liberia and the sub-region saying, "Peace in Liberia is dependent and hangs upon that particular situation [the indictment]. It has to be removed," He described his indictment as "racist, politically motivated and aimed at disgracing an African leader...Washington, London did it. They can help to fix it. It is not about Taylor, it is about the question can Africa be free. It sets an unhealthy precedent. Tomorrow it could be Museveni, Kagame, Mugabe, Gbagbo," he added, referring to the presidents of Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe and Cote d'Ivoire.

July 6, 2003 - Charles Taylor buckles under US-led international pressure and agrees to leave Liberia and take up asylum in Nigeria after being offered shelter by Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo.

July 23, 2003 - Taylor's lawyers and the Liberian government file an application to the Sierra Leone Special Court to quash the indictment against him citing "immunity as head of state". Court prosecutors throw out Taylor's application.

August 10, 2003 - Charles Taylor, in a live radio address announces his resignation the following day, handing power to vice president, Moses Blah. Taylor criticises US President George Bush on his insistence that he leave the country which he calls "a foolish policy that would hurt Liberia".

August 11, 2003 - Charles Taylor steps down handing over power to his vice president. Three African leaders travel to Monrovia to watch the ceremony. Taylor, dressed head to toe in white, makes an impassioned speech, closing with: "God willing, I will be back."

December 4, 2003 - At the request of the Special Court, Interpol issues a Red Notice from Lyon, France for Charles Taylor declaring him as wanted. The arrest warrant follows a cooperative agreement signed between the Court and Interpol on November 3, 2003.

2004

March 7, 2004 - Special Court investigators search the private residence of Charles Taylor in Monrovia to find information for the court prosecution.

March 12, 2004 - UN Security Council in resolution 1532 orders the freeze of Charles Taylor's economic and financial assets - including those of his wife, children and some of his senior officials - to prevent them from engaging in activities that might undermine peace and stability in Liberia and the region.

March 16, 2004 - Taylor's lawyers file an application to Liberia's Supreme Court to restrain investigators from searching Taylor's home, but the Court denies the application.

April 12, 2004 - Liberia's transitional leader, Gyude Bryant says Taylor should remain in Nigeria, "This transitional government will not request that Taylor be removed from Nigeria. His presence there is part of the peace process."

May 31, 2004 - Special Court rules against an application by Charles Taylor's lawyers to dismiss the indictment against him.

June 24, 2004 - Emyr Jones Parry, head of a UN Security Council delegation touring West Africa says in Monrovia, "It is a matter of time, in due course, Taylor will face justice. There cannot be impunity for Charles Taylor."

July 6, 2004 - Liberia's transitional government rejects a petition from local human rights groups to pressure the Nigerian government to hand over Charles Taylor to face war crimes charges in Sierra Leone. The parliament said, "Allowing Taylor to face the Court in Freetown, Sierra Leone, will hamper the [Liberian] peace process."

2005

July 4, 2005 - Liberia's interim government calls for the exile agreement of former president Charles Taylor to be reviewed, after accusing him of repeatedly breaking the terms of his asylum in Nigeria with daily phonecalls back home issuing orders to supporters that could threaten peace in Liberia and beyond.

July 28, 2005 - Liberian interim leader Gyude Bryant, Guinean Prime Minister Cellou Diallo

and Sierra Leonean President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah in a joint statement call for the review of Charles Taylor's asylum deal in Nigeria, citing interference that could undermine regional peace.

2006

March 5, 2006 – Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf sends a communication to the Nigerian government requesting Charles Taylor be turned over for transmission to the Special Court for trial.

March 17, 2006 – Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo's office confirms in a statement that President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf had made a "formal request" for the extradition of former warlord Charles Taylor.

March 25, 2006 - President Olusegun Obasanjo sends a Special Envoy to Liberia to inform President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf that the "Government of Liberia is free to take former President Charles Taylor into its custody."

March 27, 2006 - Liberia's President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf tells religious leaders in Monrovia that her government does not have the capacity to bring Charles Taylor to Monrovia, but rather the Court which indicted him has the responsibility to do so.

March 28, 2006 - A statement from the Nigerian presidency announces that Charles Taylor has disappeared from his luxurious exiled mansion in Calabar, southeastern Nigeria.

March 29, 2006 – Nigerian police confirm the arrest of Charles Taylor in northern Nigeria, near the border with Cameroon. Taylor is rapidly put on a plane for the capital Abuja, before departing for Liberia. UN forces arrest and handcuff Charles Taylor on the runway in Monrovia, Liberia, before taking him by helicopter to the custody of the Special Court in Sierra Leone.

IRIN

4 April 2006

Cote d'Ivoire: Disarmament talks on track at last

[This report does not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations]

BOUAKE, 4 Apr 2006 (IRIN) - Rebel and army chiefs completed a first full round of working talks on Tuesday in Cote d'Ivoire's rebel stronghold of Bouake in what was described by the government as a sign of progress in efforts to reach an agreement over disarmament.

"The talks were fruitful and focused on the concerns of both forces and the establishment of a structural framework," said a joint statement issued by Ivorian chief of staff Philippe Mangou and rebel military leader Soumaila Bakayoko.

"The atmosphere was so joyful that it was difficult to imagine that there have been disagreements between the two forces," Ivorian Defence Minister Rene Apling said after the talks. "We have clearly turned the page."

The five key political players of the conflict in Cote d'Ivoire agreed in March that regular talks between loyalist and rebel forces should resume as part of a new peace deal designed to reunite the war-divided nation and prepare for presidential elections planned for October.

Analysts say that trust between both forces must be restored before the long-awaited disarmament process can begin. There has been no fighting since Ivorian planes broke the cease-fire agreement and bombed rebel targets in 2004, but neither has there been reconciliation.

42,000 ex combatants of the New Forces movement, 5000 members of the regular army, and 12,000 militia members loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo in the west of the country must all be disarmed.

The newly appointed chairman of the national disarmament commission, Gaston Ouassenan Kone, a retired general and ally of Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny, demanded the necessary cooperation to accomplish this mission.

"It is a difficult mission to disarm, demobilise, reinsert and rehabilitate the groups that have suffered and continue to suffer over three years of crisis. We will do everything to win the confidence of the Prime Minister that it is possible," said Kone.

Talks will continue next week when the parties will discuss a timetable for disarmament. Other key issues may also be tabled including a shared military command and the creation of a new national army.