

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Prosecutor Welcomes UN Security Council Resolution Granting the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Chapter VII Powers to Arrest Charles Taylor

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone welcomed the United Nations Security Council Resolution (1638), passed unanimously on 11 November 2005, which grants the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) a Chapter VII mandate to arrest Charles Taylor, the former Liberian President, if he returns to his country.

Charles Taylor was indicted on 3 March 2003 by the Special Court for Sierra Leone on a 17-count indictment for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the brutal decade-long conflict in Sierra Leone. However, he has evaded arrest and since August 2003 has been in exile in Nigeria, where he was granted asylum. The charges against him include terrorising the civilian population, unlawful killings, sexual violence, physical violence, forced conscription of child soldiers, abductions, forced labour, looting and burning, and attacks on United Nations peacekeeping personnel.

Following last Friday's unanimous resolution, Desmond de Silva QC, Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court, stated:

“The United Nations Security Council Resolution made two important points:

1. Taylor's stay in Nigeria is temporary and was always intended to be so;
2. He should be in detention awaiting trial in Freetown, at the Special Court.

“Nigeria played a leadership role in 2003 by removing Taylor from Liberia so that the war could come to an end. President Obasanjo now needs to play an even greater regional leadership role by supporting the development of the rule of law and justice in the region by transferring Taylor to the Special Court to face justice immediately.”

The Security Council Resolution underscores the international community's commitment to see Charles Taylor stand trial before the international criminal tribunal in Sierra Leone. This resolution follows previous European Parliament and U.S. Congress resolutions calling for the transfer of Taylor to the Court. The fact that it was passed in the immediate aftermath of the successful parliamentary and Presidential elections in Liberia is also significant, and highlights the importance of ensuring that the former head of state remains out of Liberia to allow the country to move toward stability under the leadership of a new democratically-elected President.

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