



SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

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PRESS RELEASE

The Hague, 26 April 2012

Prosecutor Hollis hails the historic conviction of Charles Taylor

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Brenda J. Hollis, today applauded the conviction of Charles Taylor, former President of Liberia, for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Sierra Leone during its eleven-year civil war. Hollis lauded the conviction as another victory in the fight against impunity.

“Today is for the people of Sierra Leone who suffered horribly because of Charles Taylor. This judgment brings some measure of justice to the many thousands of victims who paid a terrible price for Mr. Taylor’s crimes.” said Hollis.

Charles Taylor, who was indicted while he was still President of Liberia, is the first former Head of State to be convicted by an international criminal tribunal since the Nuremburg trials in 1946. He is the first Head of State at the time he was indicted to be convicted by an international criminal tribunal. Mr. Taylor was convicted on all 11 counts of the Indictment.

“Today’s historic judgment reinforces the new reality, that Heads of State will be held to account for war crimes and other international crimes,” said Hollis. “This judgment affirms that with leadership comes not just power and authority, but also responsibility and accountability. No person, no matter how powerful, is above the law.”

“The judges found that Mr. Taylor aided and abetted the crimes charged in counts 1 through 11, and that he planned with Sam Bockarie the attacks on Kono, Makeni and Freetown in late 1998 and January 1999 during which the charged crimes were committed. The Trial Chamber’s findings made clear the central role Charles Taylor played in the horrific crimes against the people of Sierra Leone.”

The Court convicted Mr. Taylor of the war crime of ‘Acts of Terrorism’ against civilians, making it clear that he participated in the deliberate targeting of innocent men, women and children. “These acts of terror victimized and traumatized the people of Sierra Leone, and spared no one,” said Hollis.

“Mr. Taylor’s conviction for murder acknowledges the thousands who were brutally killed. These men, women and children were violently taken from their family and friends, and many were killed in remote locations known only to their killers. Victims’ families were left destitute, with emotional wounds that will never heal.”

The judges convicted Mr. Taylor on all three counts of sexual violence, including rape and sexual slavery. “Sexual violence against women and girls was a key part of operations in Sierra Leone.



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Victims were savagely and repeatedly raped, and were then used as sex slaves, handed from owner to owner. The emotional and physical trauma suffered by these victims will continue for a lifetime.”

“Mr. Taylor’s conviction for physical violence acknowledges the suffering of those victims who were mutilated and maimed,” said Hollis. “Victims lost not only their limbs, but also the means to support themselves and their families. Others carry ‘RUF’ and ‘AFRC’ carved on their bodies, marking them forever as victims of Mr. Taylor’s crimes.”

The Court convicted Mr. Taylor of conscripting, enlisting or using children under the age of 15 years in hostilities. “Children were taken from their families, and not only used to fight, but also to commit crimes against their fellow Sierra Leoneans. This robbed these children of their childhood, and the judges have sent a clear message that this will never be tolerated.”

The judges convicted Mr. Taylor of enslavement. Enslavement was used to exploit Sierra Leone’s people and wealth. Men, women and children were taken from their homes and held captive – sometimes for years – at the mercy and whim of their captors.”

“I appreciate the work of the judges who have presided over the conduct of this trial. The Trial Chamber held the Prosecution to very high standards of law and procedure.” said Hollis.

“I also appreciate the courage and commitment of the witnesses who came forward to testify both for the Prosecution and the Defence.”

“As I said today is for the people of Sierra Leone. This trial would not have taken place – indeed this Court would not have existed – without their resilience and commitment,” said Hollis. The Special Court for Sierra Leone exists because the people of Sierra Leone demanded accountability for the crimes committed during the eleven-year civil war.

Following today’s judgment both parties will make submissions on sentencing, which is expected to be pronounced in the near future. The final stage in the case will be the appeals phase. The Prosecution will closely review today’s judgment to identify any potential appellate issues.

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