Flashback to 2003: Architect’s sketch of the courthouse.

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 at:

Monday, 26 June 2006

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AFTER CHARLES TAYLOR, SNATCH QADDAFI

by destabilizing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. While Qaddafi’s strategy dated back to the 1970s, when he first used his oil wealth to fund terrorist groups and violent insurgencies, it was redoubled after the U.N. sanctions imposed on Libya following the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. Libya, had turned the Libyan leader into even more of an international pariah. Former prosecutor Crane has attested to a detailed Libyan plan for West Africa that involved taking down Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire—all of which have seen civil war—and then moving on to Guinea and elsewhere. The strategy was to use surrogates that were beholden to Libya. Introducing to Qaddafi by Burton Faso’s military ruler, Blaise Compaore, Taylor and his followers received training in Libya, at the Tatah military base, a school of terrorism whose graduates have wreaked havoc across Africa from Angola to Zimbabwe. While under Qaddafi’s tutelage, Taylor met and formed an alliance with Foday Sankoh, whose Revolutionary United Front would plunge Sierra Leone into the hell graphically documented in Sorious Samura’s award-winning documentary Cry Freetown. During the ensuing conflicts, Qaddafi facilitated the transfer of illegal arms to his proteges and allowed Libya to be used as a trans-shipment point for the natural resources they plundered from their war-torn countries—a debt acknowledged by Taylor, whose first national budget after he ascended to the Libyan presidency, in 1997, included $25 million to repay “war debts” to Libya. Recently, the “Guide of the Libyan Revolution” has been trying to burnish Qaddafi’s international reputation. Last month, Qaddafi even funded a “Libyan-American Dialogue” at Columbia University, addressing the participants via video conference. In the wake of the Iraq war, it is completely understandable that Qaddafi should try to mollify the West by dismantling his nuclear-, chemical- and biological-weapons programs, as well as by talking about democracy and human rights. That the West should be seduced by this charade is not only pathetic; it also betrays an ill-disguised double standard that smacks of racism. If the international community was willing to hold Qaddafi to account for the lives of the 270 mainly American and European victims killed by the Libyan agents who carried out the Lockerbie bombing, does it not owe the same regard for the more than 250,000 Libyans, 60,000 Sierra Leoneans, and thousands of Guineans and Ivorians killed by the African surrogates of Qaddafi?

If Charles Taylor must now face an international war-crimes tribunal—as one of those who, in the legal phrase, bore “the greatest responsibility for crimes against humanity” in the Sierra Leonean conflict—then shouldn’t Moammar Qaddafi be standing next to him at the defendant’s bar?

J. Peter Pham is director of the Nelson Institute for International and Public Affairs at James Madison University, in Harrisonburg, Va., and an academic fellow of the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. More headlines:

Ken Weber: Life and death in the marsch
Karina Lutz and Jo Lee: How Enron conned Rhode Island, and how we’re paying for it
**Kadhafi, Bongo denounce Taylor’s extradition**

Libyan leader, Moammar Kadhafi and Gabon’s president, Omar Bongo Ondimba have warned the extradition of former president Charles Taylor for trial by a special tribunal in Europe represents an "extremely serious precedent" for Africa.

In a joint communiqué issued Thursday in Tripoli following Bongo’s 48-hour working and friendly visit, both leaders mentioned the case of Taylor, who was transferred Tuesday from Freetown (Sierra Leone) to The Hague to answer charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious human rights violations.

"Taylor’s extradition is breach of the inviolability of the right to political asylum, depreciates the values that served as a basis for such a right and stands as an immoral gesture totally disconnected with African traditions," the two leaders point out in the communiqué.

The statement recalled that the former Liberian leaders’ departure for asylum in Nigeria was based on a solution aimed at fostering national reconciliation and an end to the civil war in Liberia, with Taylor’s decision to step down from power being part of that solution.

It stresses that this process was launched following the decision taken on 11 August 2003, in Accra, Ghana, by ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States), with the participation of Taylor himself.

Therefore, it would have been advisable, to respect the principle of parallelism of forms, that the person who handed Charles Taylor over (editor’s note: Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo), turn to a similar organisation instead of taking an individual decision, it explains.

Charles Taylor’s trial for the acts or crimes he is accused of having committed when in power should take place in Africa, with the use of African legal instruments and under the aegis of the African Union (AU) institutions, Kadhafi and Bongo Ondimba insisted.

They further insisted that Charles Taylor’s extradition and his appearance before the court at The Hague represent both an insult and a humiliation to Africa, as they ruin the continent’s credibility and prestige in the face of the world.

"It is not a question of assessing the experience of a power or the way the situation had been managed in a civil war-torn country, but rather to stand by principles that should not be taken for granted, especially when dealing with the extradition of an African president to be tried outside his country by a non-African court, with all that such a situation entails in terms of insult to Africa and its traditions," the communiqué explains.

In the course of their discussions and consultations on Wednesday and Thursday, leaders Kadhafi and Bongo insisted on the necessity to activate the AU mechanisms and cooperation between Union member States in order to promote Africa’s dignity and interests.

They also dealt with preparations for the seventh Ordinary Assembly of AU leaders, scheduled 1-2 July, in Banjul, Gambia.
The Perspective
Saturday, 24 June 2006

Charles Taylor Goes To The Hague --- London Awaits

The latest episode in the Charles Taylor saga brings us news that Great Britain has agreed to provide prison for him (Charles Taylor) if he is convicted of the charges brought against him. This revelation has cleared the way for the trial to be held at The Hague, Netherlands. Earlier, the Netherlands declared that the country would only agree to hold the trial if another country agreed to provide facilities for imprisonment should the principal defendant be found guilty after trial.

Charles Taylor, the former Liberian President who has been indicted by a Special Court of the United Nations on charges of crimes against humanity, has been held in a prison in Freetown, Sierra Leone, while the world decides where to try him and where to imprison him should he be found guilty. The West African region has maintained that given Mr. Taylor’s reputation, it would be precarious to hold the trial in the region and dangerous to hold him afterwards as a prisoner. Given Mr. Taylor’s nefarious reputation, it would seem elementary to support these points of view; yet the world was haggling over where to try him and where to imprison him. Duh!

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Anan upon hearing the British pronouncement purportedly hailed it as “another step forward in our battle against impunity for the most heinous crimes.”

Well, like the Secretary General, I too am thrilled that the British government has decided to make available a suitable prison suite for our ex-dictator. The thing I simply can’t reconcile in my mind is why did such a simple and necessary decision take so long? And why should the British who consider themselves leaders of the civilized world be praised for taking this elementary decision in the name of “humanity”? I find these developments quite perplexing and a bit disturbing. Here’s why.

The United Nations’ Special Court for Sierra Leone indicted Charles Taylor on crimes against humanity. Any student of history should understand the significance of these words: Crimes against humanity. After being indicted, Charles Taylor was allowed to leave Liberia and become a guest of Nigerian President Obasanjo. He lived in a palace and enjoyed a privileged lifestyle including having henchmen, servants and concubines. His victims and concerned citizens looked on in disbelief, helplessly.

Eventually, when his host was faced with the reality of denouncing him or losing face in Washington, DC, he denounced him, although he had vigorously defended him and vowed never to ‘throw him to the wolves’. President Obasanjo made a u-turn; he said Taylor wasn’t his friend and had never been his friend. Upon hearing that Taylor officially made himself a fugitive. He left the residence provided for him and decided to run for the border. He was captured and became a prisoner of the United Nations, finally.

A prudent mind would think Mr. Taylor had reached the end of his rope. But the struggle of determining where he would be tried and who to host him after trial became the new points of contention.
I have wondered why the Netherlands boldly refused to consider holding the trial in The Hague unless some other country first agreed to keep him as prisoner should he be found guilty. One would think that in the name of world solidarity, the Netherlands or some other competent country would have jumped to the chance of boosting the image of the United Nations and working for justice. The issue of where Charles Taylor should serve his prison term, if convicted, should not have held up the trial at all, yet it did.

In my mind, this was another grievous example of playing Africa cheap. Charles Taylor was indicted for crimes against humanity. Although his victims were Africans, his crimes were against humanity – the entire human race. Can you imagine a European country putting the Nuremberg Trial on hold until it was decided which country would hold those found guilty? No. No such thought would have occurred to the civilized world after the atrocities committed against humanity by the Nazis. But when it comes to poor Africans, we are marginalized. The delay of justice for such unimportant considerations should not have occurred. Unfortunately, it did.

I join those who applaud the British for agreeing to provide a suitable prison space for Charles Taylor should he be convicted of the serious charges brought against him. I’m quite sure a great country like Great Britain will provide such a suitable accommodation. There are a number of countries that could equally do us the favour of hosting Mr. Taylor; just don’t send him to Boston, Massachusetts.
Taylor’s Past with US Could Haunt his trial

As he arrived in the Netherlands last week to face charges of committing crimes against humanity, Charles Taylor, the former leader of Liberia, could not help but wonder whether he was in for a repeat of what happened to him the last time he was incarcerated -- 20 years ago, in a Boston prison.

Taylor has been accused by a court of the United Nations whose job it is to bring to justice the killers and torturers of Sierra Leone, a small West African country that sits beside Liberia. Taylor, who seized control of Liberia in 1997, is accused of directing the slaughter and maiming civilians in neighbouring Sierra Leone. The two countries are both former colonies of freed slaves, founded in the 1800s by the British (Sierra Leone) and the U.S. (Liberia) governments.

Taylor is a particularly bad character, the sort of moral monster who gives rise to caricatures of the African continent that serve as a dark parallel to more benign stereotypes such as: Italy creates fashion designers, Germany spawns automobile engineers, Brazil builds soccer players and the United States produces entrepreneurs.

During the days when European powers carved up Africa and carried off its natural resources, the imperialists commonly dismissed Africans as brutes and painted Africa as a place of debasement, where even a cultivated white man (see Col. Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's novella, "The Heart of Darkness") would be overwhelmed by his brutish impulses and turned into a bloodthirsty killer. Conrad's logic at once blamed Africans and African-ness for making whites run amok and exposed the bad behaviour of whites in Africa that turned them into a kind of moral monsters.

With the exodus of white colonialists from Africa, starting in the late 1950s, some Africans emerged as the continent's moral monsters. Famously, there was Idi Amin in Uganda with his penchant for eating the flesh of his enemies at dinner parties. In Rwanda, the Hutu militias slaughtered hundreds of thousands of people in weeks, posting a record for genocidal efficiency. In Sudan, Islamic supremacists enslaved or killed Christians. In Sierra Leone, Foday Sankoh hacked off the arms of countless civilians.

Nowhere in Africa, however, has evil seemed so naked as in Liberia. During the 20th century, Liberia was the U.S. government's most reliable ally in black Africa and a source of low-cost rubber. But the society created by freed slaves was brutally unequal. The black American newcomers formed an America-Liberian aristocracy built on discrimination and exploitation of Liberia's people. In 1980, corrupt America-Liberian U.S. puppet William Tolbert was overthrown by a ruthless soldier named Samuel Doe. Brutish and ignorant, Doe embodied the rage of the natives who for so long were denied opportunity and dignity in Liberia.

At first, the U.S. government tolerated Doe, mindful of the outrages committed by Tolbert and his America-Liberian elite. But Doe ultimately became an embarrassment to U.S. officials. And that brings us to the circumstances leading up to Taylor's first stay in prison.

Taylor attended Bentley College in Massachusetts in the 1970s, studying economics, and returned to Liberia soon after Doe seized power. He got a plum job in Doe's government, overseeing a great deal of spending for Liberia's General Services Agency.
In 1985, Taylor, by then accused of stealing public money, fled Liberia for the United States and was arrested in Massachusetts. While being held in the Plymouth County House of Corrections under a Liberian extradition warrant, Taylor allegedly sawed his way through cell bars and escaped, turning up in West Africa. Next, he seemed to vanish, reappearing several years later with aid from West African allies and a shadowy connection to Libya's Moammar Khadafy, who then harboured a motley crew of international terrorists and mercenaries.

African insiders have long speculated that Taylor's escape was made possible by agents of the U.S. government, which needed a leader both to overthrow Doe and bring Liberia back into line. Taylor did the former, but not the latter. In 1997, after winning a bloody rebellion that toppled Doe's government, Taylor won an election largely on the strength of the fear he inspired. His electoral slogan was chilling: "I killed your Pa, I killed your Ma. Vote for me."

Once in power, Taylor looted Liberia's assets, selling off logging rights to its huge forests and letting drug runners and arms smugglers benefit from the cover of Liberian sovereignty. Taylor also fomented civil war in diamond-rich Sierra Leone, taking a cut of the pillage. He was deposed in 2003, after being promised safe haven in Nigeria. The United Nations accuses him of essentially directing Sankoh's murderous rampages.

Last week, Taylor, 58, was taken to The Hague, the capital of the Netherlands, from a Sierra Leone jail.

The case against Taylor is no slam dunk. The indictment against him provides legions of examples of horrors committed in Sierra Leone against innocent civilians, but in instance after instance the prosecutor claims that the acts committed by others were ordered by Taylor. That means the most convincing evidence must be provided by the killers themselves or surviving victims brave enough to speak against him.

While awaiting his fate, Taylor must be pondering what might have been. Until recently, he was protected by Nigeria's president, Olesugon Obasanjo. Obasanjo persuaded Taylor to leave power three years ago, promising that he could live out his life quietly in the colonial capital of Calabar.

But the United Nations insisted on indicting Taylor for war crimes, both to set an example for other African butchers and to seek justice for the victims of violence in Sierra Leone.

For a long time, Obasanjo resisted letting Taylor go. Earlier this year, the Bush administration increased pressure on Nigeria's president, threatening to cancel a meeting between him and Bush in Washington. The day before Obasanjo met Bush in March, he turned Taylor over to authorities. A grateful American president was photographed with Obasanjo.

Any photographs of Taylor and prominent Americans, or secret dealings with the U.S. government, are now conveniently forgotten by U.S. policymakers.

But Taylor should be remembered as an example of the regrettable liaisons that too often animate American foreign policy. That might haunt U.S. officials as Taylor's trial unfolds in the deliberate, even baroque, manner of most U.N. proceedings. Will the subplot of U.S.-Taylor relations make Americans wince and wonder by what compass our government charts the nation's foreign entanglements? And will Taylor, through another hidden deal or through a dearth of convincing evidence, receive another get out-of-jail free card?
Taylor arrives in Netherlands to stand trial for war crimes

LIBERIA’S former president, Charles Taylor, who was once one of Africa’s most feared warlords, arrived in The Hague in June for his long-awaited war crimes trial for some of the worst atrocities committed in Africa.

Taylor landed in the Netherlands about 7pm and was led from the airplane, his hands tied to a convoy of vans waiting to take him to a detention centre in The Hague, about 20km away, where he arrived about 30 minutes later.

The warlord-turned-president will eventually be tried by a branch of the Sierra Leone tribunal using the premises of the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

He is being held in the same detention centre that housed former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic, who died there in March while on trial for war crimes, charged before the United Nations (UN) court for the former Yugoslavia.

It is not clear what will happen next but an International Criminal Court spokesman said the Sierra Leone court would hold a press conference in late June “explaining the procedures that will follow”.

Taylor was moved under tight security from his cell in Freetown, Sierra Leone, to Lungi international airport, from where the UN-chartered jet took him to the Netherlands.

Airport workers who saw Taylor escorted to the aircraft said he was wearing a dark brown suit and appeared “sombre”. Taylor had been detained in Freetown since late March after his capture in Nigeria, where he had been living in exile since August 2003.

He has been indicted on charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes and violations of human rights.

Specifically, he is accused of sponsoring and aiding rebel groups in Sierra Leone’s civil war in exchange for a share in the lucrative diamond trade.BUSINESSDAY.CO.ZA.
Taylor Arrives in The Hague

The former Liberian president Charles Taylor has arrived in The Hague to face trial on charges stemming from his alleged role in the civil war in Sierra Leone.

Taylor’s case will be heard by judges from the United Nations-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, SCSL, which originally indicted him in 2003. But the proceedings will be conducted using the courtroom and detention facilities of the International Criminal Court, ICC, in The Hague.

SCSL officials have expressed concerns about stability in west Africa should the trial be conducted there.

Taylor’s transfer to The Hague came after the United Kingdom offered to host him for the duration of any jail term that he might have to serve if convicted. The Dutch government had said his trial could only go ahead there if a third country agreed to shoulder this responsibility.

The former warlord and president is charged with 11 counts of crimes against humanity, violations of the Geneva conventions and other serious violations of international law. The charges relate to his alleged relationship with organisations operating in Sierra Leone, like the rebel Revolutionary United Front, which were responsible for atrocities including murders and widespread sexual violence.
New poster boy for international justice

By Christopher Stephen in Sierra Leone for ISN Security Watch (23/06/06)

The departure of Charles Taylor, Liberia’s former president, to The Hague to face trial for war crimes this week was a cause of rejoicing among supporters of international justice around the world.

Firstly, Taylor is the first former African president ever indicted for war crimes, and on a continent where the "Big Man" has long enjoyed immunity, advocates hope it will send a clear message to other warlords.

Secondly, it marks a victory for one of the continent’s most successful human rights campaigns ever conducted. Since Taylor first fled Liberia for asylum in Nigeria in 2003, more than 300 groups have come together to get him put on trial.

But most importantly, many hope that the cause of international justice has found a poster-boy. After the problems of the trial of Slobodan Milosevic, who died of heart failure, and with the trial of Saddam Hussein in trouble, many hope the Taylor case will put international justice back on the rails.

The trial will certainly be epic. Since seizing control of Liberia in 1989, Taylor has brought death and terror to West Africa. He is accused by prosecutors of controlling Sierra Leone’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which in 1991 seized control of the country’s diamond fields. Revolutionary fervor was soon dropped as the RUF reverted to gangster methods to extract and sell the diamonds, the second purest gems in the world.

To mine the gems, slavery was reintroduced to this region for the first time in more than a century.

One of the RUF’s slaves was Sahrbona Tombudu, a 45-year-old mechanic from Sierra Leone’s north eastern Kono region. Standing on a river bank he points to a patch of muddy water where, eight years ago, his RUF captors ordered him to mine diamonds. The rules were very simple. Mine, or die.

“They would flog us, beat us, shoot us,” he told ISN Security Watch. Sahrbona managed to escape one day, darting into the bush after asking to go to the water barrel for a drink. He dodged RUF patrols and survived long enough to find his way to UN lines. Many were not so lucky.

Elsewhere, the RUF drugged groups of child soldiers and sent them into battle. Women were corralled into rape camps, most infamously at Kissi, a suburb of Freetown. And when president Ahmad Kabbah called on all sides to “join hands” during abortive peace talks in 1996, the RUF began slicing off the hands of government supporters - and innocent villagers who got in the way.

The UN ended the war with one of its biggest ever deployments in 2000, and three years later, Taylor, now facing rebellion at home, fled Liberia for asylum in Nigeria.

By then he had been indicted by the Special Court, set up by the Sierra Leone government and the UN in Freetown, and human rights groups saw their chance.
In a continent famous for the impunity of the Big Men, rights groups saw a sliver of hope that one warlord could be charged.

“The object of this campaign was a deterrent,” Voke Ighorodje of the Nigerian Coalition for an International Criminal Court tells ISN Security Watch. “We wanted leaders to see that a man like Taylor can be tried.”

In 2004, Nigerian groups threatened to take their own government to court for refusing to hand over a man indicted by a UN court - as the constitution says.

Meanwhile, Sierra Leone rights groups appealed to the former colonial power, Britain, to add its pressure to Nigeria. In Addis Ababa, other groups petitioned the African Union (AU) to make its own voice felt. The campaigners were galvanized by the possibilities of the internet: Activists with no budgets found they could coordinate complex campaigns spanning continents with nothing more than a computer terminal.

Nevertheless, it was a slow start. Nigeria dug in its heels, insisting that giving Taylor asylum had ended the Liberian civil war. But even in Lagos there was concern at reports that Taylor, rumored to control a criminal empire spanning West Africa, was continuing to fund diamond smuggling.

Then in January, Liberia’s new president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, asked Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo to hand Taylor over. The EU then added its voice, with the US following suit in March.

“There was a lot of pressure form everywhere and Obasanjo knew it,” says Ighorodje “Bush and Blair were hearing what the NGOs were saying.”

At that point, Nigeria announced that Taylor had absconded. The US said that unless he was found, it would scrub an imminent visit by Obasanjo to Washington. Hours later, Taylor was magically found and arrested. In fact, Nigeria knew where he was all along. “We were tracking Taylor through his mobile phone as he moved across the country,” said one source.

When the UN helicopter carrying Taylor clattered into view over Freetown, a city that had suffered from his soldiers, people lined streets and rooftops to cheer the arrival: International justice has seldom seen such support.

Once inside the court, however, officials began to worry. Despite being a virtual fortress, garrisoned by UN troops with machine guns, the Special Court felt vulnerable. It requested the UN to move the trial out of Sierra Leone. The only other African war crimes court, in Arusha, was full, and no other states wanted to volunteer for such a complex trial. So the UN asked that it be moved to the premises of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague. The ICC is a completely separate organization to the Special Court, but it is the only international court in the world with spare facilities, as its own cases are yet to start.

The US and Britain backed the move, as did Sirleaf, who worried that a trial close to home could destabilize her own position. In Liberia, Taylor’s supporters have powerful positions, including his brother-in-law who is a member of parliament.

The call split the ranks of the human rights movement. “The trial should be in Freetown,” said James Matthew, head of the National Movement for Democracy and Human Rights. “This is a signal to Africans that there is the law.”

Then came another problem. The Netherlands refused to sanction the trial on its territory unless someone else agreed to take Taylor if he was found guilty.

Nobody volunteered. Approaches to Austria, Denmark and then Sweden fell flat. Other UN states asked why, if Britain and the US were so keen to have the trial in The Hague, they did not offer to jail him themselves.
In May, Taylor’s defense lawyer, Karim Khan, petitioned the court to keep the trial in Sierra Leone, and this month, civil rights groups wrote to the UN demanding that Taylor stay in Africa. Meanwhile, six Sierra Leone human rights groups signed an open letter to the UN Security Council requesting that the trial be held in Freetown, arguing that a move would defeat the purpose of the court.

With the crisis deepening, London broke the deadlock, offering to hold Taylor in its maximum security Belmarsh prison. On Friday, 16 June, the UN Security Council made the move official, and four days later, Taylor was flown out of Africa, possibly for the last time - if found guilty the 58-year-old faces at least 20 years in jail.

“We worked hard for two years to get him here, a lot of behind the scenes diplomacy went on,” the Special Court’s retiring Chief Prosecutor Desmond de Silva told ISN Security Watch. “The world is moving from impunity to accountability.”

A long and difficult trial still lies ahead. Taylor is accused of responsibility for crimes not in his own country but in Sierra Leone. Proving this will mean tracing a chain of command stretching from the muddy diamond fields of Kono province all the way to Liberia’s presidential palace - no easy feat.

De Silva says he has learned from other war crimes trials. The case of Milosevic ballooned into a trial that was four years old, and still not finished, when the former Yugoslav president died of heart failure earlier this year. Taylor’s case has been streamlined, from 17 to 11 counts, although a look at the indictment posted on the court’s website shows that the charges remain gruesome.

Human rights groups have expressed concerns that the trial be kept accessible to ordinary people: “From our perspective there is a need for greater transparency,” Elise Keppler of the New York based Human Rights Watch told ISN Security Watch. “If the trial is happening in The Hague Sierra Leonians are not going to have access to it.”

The Special Court, now wrestling with the problems of setting up a parallel operation in Holland, insists that provision for publicity will be made. Plans are underway to beam the trial, via the internet, to the Freetown court to allow local journalists to report on it.

There is certainly no shortage of interest. “The Special Court was maybe not so important for us a while before,” Matthew said. “But when Taylor was arrested, that changed.”

In Koidu Town, Kono Province, the few televisions powered by generators that now serve the appetite for football will be used to show slices of the Taylor case to his former victims.

Sahrbona intends to reserve a front row seat. “It will be good to see him tried,” he said. “He brought all these problems on us.”

Calabar to the Hague Via Freetown

Nearly sixteen years ago on Dec. 24, 1989, Charles Taylor started his bush war. He got the support but conditions metamorphosed, and with them, he became a monster. Not only did he not torment his own Liberian people, but he also allegedly transported violence into neighboring Sierra Leone. He tried, in vain, to brush off international criticism and allegation of exporting violence but was forced by the turn of events in 2003 to take asylum in Calabar, Nigeria.

Notwithstanding that smart move, Taylor lost his bearings and soon found himself in the last city on earth where he ever wanted to be: Freetown. Here, he challenged the Special Court and pleaded not guilty.

Now from Freetown yesterday, the number one defendant at the Special Court was flown to The Hague where is he expected to answer to an 11-count indictment of crime against humanity. "But is the transfer a new monkey's wrench against fair trial or a move to expedite the process and guarantee fair trial?" is the question observers are asking. With B. Ignatius George, Gibson W. Jerue reports that observers believe defense paranoia is now weighed against justice and the eradication of impunity.

The Cable News Network (CNN) ran a "breaking news" clip, yesterday, disclosing that former Liberian President Charles Taylor had been flown to The Hague, where he will now be obliged to defend himself against war crimes charges.

The news of Taylor's transfer to The Netherlands did not come as a surprise but it came rather earlier than expected.

That the former Liberian President was bound for The Hague was a foregone conclusion the minute Sweden and then the UK, last week, announced that it was putting their prison facilities at the disposal of the Special Court and the International Criminal Court (ICC) upon the request of the United Nations.

For five months, authorities at the Special Court in Freetown and some influential members of the UN Security Council had argued that the presence of the Taylor in the subregion would encourage supporters to mount destabilizing campaign for his premature release.

Some, mainly relatives and counsels of Mr. Taylor, had argued that the suggestion for Taylor's transfer to The Hague was unwarranted because according to them, neither UNMIL in Liberia nor the UK-backed UNOMSIL in Sierra Leone gave any indication that security was inadequate to prevent any such destabilizing campaign. But that argument did not change the situation.

Last Friday, June 16, officials of the Special Court for Sierra Leone told Liberian journalists in Freetown that all was set for the prosecution and the defense counsels to submit to a pre-trial conference that would mark the commencement of a full trial for Taylor.
At least 30,000 pages of evidence against Mr. Taylor were already in the hands of defendant's provisional counsel, British lawyer Karim Ahymad Khan, who is said to have responded accordingly.

Khan had the vowed to protect his client's interest through the disposition of law issues at the Special Court following the pretrial conference which was scheduled for today's session of the court that was to be presided over by three trial judges.

Taylor had told the principal defender of the Special Court that he was broke and could not foot his legal fees, based on which he was partially declared indigent and assigned a provisional counsel to represent his legal interest.

Special Court's acting prosecutor Christopher Staker had said at the press conference in the conference room of the registrar of the Special Court that although "the court is playing its role in the region and it is important that people in the region know and take an interest", there were inevitable signs that the war crimes indictee was bound for The Hague.

Former President Taylor is among 13 suspects who were indicted. There was an 11-count indictment of war crimes and crimes against humanity him.

He is being prosecuted for rape, assaults, abduction, torture and dismemberment of victims, sexual violence, and drugging and conscripting child soldiers, among other charges.

The 13 indictees are Charles Taylor, Foday Saybana Sankoh, Johnny Paul Koroma, Sam Bockarie, Issa Hassan Sesay and Alex Tamba Brima.

Others are Morris Kallon, Samuel Hinga Norman, Augustine Gbao, Brima Bazzy Kamara, Moinina Fofana, allieu Kondwa and Santigie Borbor Kanu.

Taylor, Sesay, Brima, Kallon, Norman, Gbao, Kamara, Fofana, Kondewa, and Kanu are already in the custody of the Special Court.

Johnny Paul Koroma is said to at large while the indictments of Sam Bockarie and Sankoh were withdrawn on December 8, 2003 due to death.

Taylor's transfer to Freetown follows diplomatic pressure mounted on Nigeria to turn him over, though Nigerian President Olusengon Obasanjo had hesitated on grounds that there was an arrangement that pleaded with him to take Taylor away to allow for peace in Liberia.

The UN, US and UK governments, and dozens of human rights organizations, using the victims of Taylor's alleged military adventure in Sierra Leone to prod the sympathy of the Obasanjo administration, pressed for Taylor's transfer, but their campaign came to naught.

Not only did the US and UK briefly deviate, at one point, from normal international diplomacy to offering ransom for Taylor's secret abduction, but they also supported the legal efforts of dozens of human rights groups in the federal high court in Abuja to compel the government to extradite Taylor.

But for a moment, the political interest of that West African giant outweighed the force of the law, prompting gossips and suspicion that higher-ups in the Obasanjo administration including
the governor of River State who allegedly gave his daughter to Mr. Taylor as his umpteenth wife may have benefited from Taylor's asylum.

There was a near impasse that worked negatively against the economic interest of Nigeria including threats from the U.S. that Nigeria's debt to that country would neither be forgiven or rescheduled.

Obasanjo seemed not to have minded the threat, though. Nigeria would endure any "international conspiracy" in order to maintain its credibility, insisted foreign ministry officials in Abuja.

For two years, the Nigerian authorities argued that Taylor was not a fugitive running from justice in Liberia but a guest of the Nigerian government of a sort.

Even though he was a guest of clean character and conscience, the Obasanjo administration cleverly removed the burden of international limelight on Nigeria by insisted that it would turn Taylor over to an elected government in Liberia.

If that was a ruse based on the conviction that a new insecure government in Monrovia that would be under citizens' pressure for reconciliation and peace would not push for the extradition of Taylor, it turned out a miscalculation.

No sooner had Mrs. Sirleaf emerged as president in Liberia than she ran under direct pressure from the U.S. Congress, EU, and the British government to request for Taylor's expeditors.

She did almost immediately on her first visit to the US to push for support for Liberia's reconstruction.

Meanwhile, Taylor broke the protective shield Obasanjo placed around him when he attempted to abscond from his then exile home in Calabar.

That Taylor's attempt to flee Nigeria coincided with the state visit of Mr. Obasanjo to the US to push for economic assistance prompted critics to believe that a fake escape that would present as breach of asylum may have been arranged for Taylor so Nigeria would use his arrest to save face.

If he were arrested in Calabar and transferred to Sierra Leone as was demanded by the U.S. Congress and foreign ministry officials in Washington D.C., Nigeria could have been seen as reneging on its promise to protect Taylor and to protect its own credibility that it had sworn to protect at any cost.

So Taylor was arrested by Nigerian customs and border officials and whisked off in a security flight to the federal capital, Abuja, while allegedly "attempting to cross into Cameroon." That was what decided Taylor's fate and he was flown to Freetown via Liberia in handcuffs.

With the news that he has been flown to The Hague a group of lawyers organized for his legal defense have raise alarm saying, "This association was greatly shocked by the clandestine and sudden transfer of former president Charles Taylor from his cell in Sierra Leone to a yet undisclosed destination".

The lawyers, who did not identify themselves to the surprise of observers, said in a release yesterday that they were taken aback that when Mr. Taylor was informed of a pretrial hearing
scheduled for Wednesday 21 June 2006 and after having made the necessary arrangements for his defense team's presence in Freetown, he was flown out without prior notice.

According to the lawyers, the act by the Special Court to allow Taylor to be flown to The Hague even while a pretrial conference was pending denied him any last minute contact with his lawyers or his family.

"We view this once more as inimical of attempts by some to deny justice and a fair trial to Mr. Taylor," said the group's release signed by Mr. John T. Richardson as executive director of the Association for the Legal Defense of Charles Taylor Inc.

The group's release noted: "For the Government of Great Britain and not the Court to secretly charter an airplane to ferry Mr. Taylor is quite suspicious and raises questions regarding their intent to host Mr. Taylor 'if he is found guilty'." They believe "his secret transfer without prior knowledge of his counsel is exemplary of the illegal extremes some are willing to pursue in their diabolic conspiracy." President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has responded cautiously to the transfer of Mr. Taylor saying that the Government of Liberia believes the United Nations is capable of ensuring a fair trial for the former Liberian President.

But several Liberians have welcomed the news of Taylor's transfer to The Hague. Some say his transfer has removed an "imminent threat" of chaos in the sub-region.

"But isn't the transfer a new monkey's wrench against the fair trial of Mr. Taylor especially where would not have free access to family members and free legal counsels given his alleged indigence?" is the question observers continue to muse over.

"It will rather expedite the process and guarantee fair trial. The trial will go on away from the thousands of living images of the atrocity they say Taylor committed. There will be no amputees demonstrating for summary justice. In West Africa, the sentiment against Taylor is bound to militate against fair trial," said school teacher Joe Palmer of Sinkor Old-Road.

Notwithstanding defense paranoia, according to analysts, the trial of Taylor is bound to go ahead as planned since proponents of the application of international justice to eradicate impunity and regional security are convinced that the trial would be a test case.

But to what extent, observers say, is the question that will be begging answers in the next several months and perhaps years.
UNMIL Public Information Office Media Summary 24 June 2006

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

International Clips on Liberia

The Economist (UK) [Editorial] 06/24/2006
Out of Africa, into The Hague - International justice

LIBERIA’S former president, one of Africa's most brutal warlords, is finally out of West Africa, the region he terrorised for 14 years. This week Charles Taylor was transferred from his jail in Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone, to The Hague to stand trial for war crimes and other heinous violations of international law carried out during Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war. Britain has agreed to allow him to serve any sentence in a British jail.

International Clips on West Africa

AP 06/23/2006 23:22:40
New U.N. Peacebuilding Commission will initially try to keep Sierra Leone and Burundi from backsliding into war
By EDITH M. LEDERER

UNITED NATIONS_ The new U.N. Peacebuilding Commission met for the first time Friday and pledged to try to prevent countries emerging from conflict from backsliding into war by promoting economic growth and democratic government _ initially in Sierra Leone and Burundi. World leaders decided to establish the commission at last September's U.N. summit to bring together all the key international players involved in ending conflicts and promoting reconstruction and economic development of countries ravaged by war.

Deputies end boycott of Ivory Coast assembly

ABIDJAN, June 23, 2006 (AFP) - Opposition deputies in the Ivory Coast said on Friday they had ended their boycott of parliament and were returning to work, on condition. The deputies, who have been boycotting parliament because they say the current session is being held illegally, said the "national assembly will carry out its duties in conformity with the constitution and resolution 1633 of the (UN) Security Councils until the next legislative elections".

Local Media – Radio Veritas (News monitored yesterday at 6:45 pm)

President Hosts Informal Budget Review Session for Lawmakers
• Briefing journalists after an informal budget review session which was organized by President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, House of Representatives Speaker Edwin Snowe said that he was delighted that the executive and legislative branches were able to review government's revenue generation capacity. Speaker Snowe said that he was overwhelmed by the immense consideration given to civil servants in the fiscal budget for 2006/2007, projecting US$120 million.
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

Women Crave for Stringent Measures for Convicted Rapists
More than 100 women yesterday converged at the Temple of Justice in Monrovia to demand stringent measures for convicted rapists, carrying placards some of which ridiculed the justice system for being lenient with rapists.

Speaking to journalists at the grounds of the Ministry of Justice yesterday, the women added that they were frustrated by a recent court sentencing of a 42-year-old man to 7 years in jail instead of life in prison for raping an 8-year-old girl. Solicitor-General Tiawon Gongloe assured the women that the government would study the possibility of setting up such a court.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

**European Union Secures Water Pumps for Monrovia Water Plant**

- The European Union said that it will today deliver two water pumps to the Liberia Water and Sewer Corporation’s water treatment plant at Mount Coffee outside Monrovia. The EU office in Liberia said that the pumps which would be flown by UNMIL helicopters to the water treatment plant have been secured under the Union’s Water Rehabilitation Project for Liberia.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

**U.S. State Department Welcomes Transfer of Taylor to The Hague**

- A U.S. State Department official, Adam Ereli, said that the transfer to The Hague of former President Charles Taylor is an important step toward justice and accountability in West Africa. Mr. Ereli said that the arrest and trial of Mr. Taylor demonstrate the international community’s commitment to hold individuals responsible for their actions.

(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

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

**Defence Minister Assures Public of New Army of International Standards**

- The Minister of National Defense Brownie Samukai said that Liberians should expect a new national army which would meet international standards, adding that this time around, Liberians should look forward for a trained and professional Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) that would respect civilian authority.
- In an interview with Star Radio yesterday, Minister Samukai said that the new army would refrain from acts that could undermine its credibility.
International Clips on Liberia

Liberia's truth commission starts probing atrocities
By Zoom Dosso
MONROVIA, June 23, 2006 (AFP) - Liberia's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has opened its doors to start documenting evidence on wartime atrocities, its chairman said in a statement issued Friday. "The TRC is now formally opened to the public. We are awaiting Liberians who were victims of perpetrators of atrocities in the civil crisis," Jerome Verdier said. Tasked with investigating abuses during Liberia's successive civil wars, the TRC is expected to hear both the perpetrators and victims of human rights violations during 24 years of conflict, to lay the groundwork for reconciliation.

Liberia launches panel to delve into atrocities
MONROVIA, Liberia -- President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf officially launched Liberia's truth commission Thursday, saying a full accounting of atrocities committed during nearly a quarter-century of conflict will set the stage for long-term peace. Johnson-Sirleaf's inauguration in January formally ended a transitional period meant to ease Liberia toward peace after years of strife and war that began in 1979.

Out of Africa, into The Hague - International justice
LIBERIA'S former president, one of Africa's most brutal warlords, is finally out of west Africa, the region he terrorised for 14 years. This week Charles Taylor was transferred from his jail in Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone, to The Hague to stand trial for war crimes and other heinous violations of international law carried out during Sierra Leone's 11-year civil war. Britain has agreed to allow him to serve any sentence in a British jail. Few believed Mr Taylor would ever face justice. Indicted three years ago by the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, he fled to Nigeria after being toppled from power in Liberia in August 2003. There he lived in luxury until President Olusegun Obasanjo, under intense international pressure, agreed in March to extradite him to Liberia. Even then, he almost escaped, being caught trying to sneak over the Nigerian border en route, probably, to Libya. He was arrested and flown to Sierra Leone.

International Clips on West Africa

Envoys to Ivory Coast take stock of peace process
ABIDJAN, June 23, 2006 (AFP) - International envoys working for peace in Ivory Coast started meeting Friday to take stock of the fragile process just four months away from a UN deadline to hold elections. The routine monthly meeting of the UN-backed International Working Group on Ivory Coast is taking place as initial steps to disarm armed groups in the country and conduct an identification census have been launched.
Local Media - Newspapers

Truth Commission Officially Launched

- Launching the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Monrovia yesterday, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf called on people who committed wrongful acts during the Liberian civil war to come forward and tell the truth. Stepping out and telling the truth is the greatest contribution any Liberian can make to peace and reconciliation, she added.

UN Envoy Appeals for National Healing Among Liberians
(The Inquirer, The Analyst and Heritage)

- Liberians must never again allow their communities to be turned into killing fields and their homes into graveyards, UNMIL Officer-in-Charge Luiz Carlos da Costa said yesterday in Monrovia during the launching of the TRC.

U.S. Donates US$500,000 to Truth Commission
(The News and The Informer)

- U.S. Ambassador Donald Booth said in Monrovia yesterday that the U.S government had earmarked US$500,000 as its initial contribution to the work of the TRC, promising that the U.S. will continue financial support to the TRC to achieve its goals.

Taylor’s Trial Commences Next Year
(Daily Observer and Heritage)

- A spokesperson for the Special Court for Sierra Leone Harpinder Athwal told the BBC yesterday that preparations were underway for the commenced of the trial of former President Charles Taylor in January next year. However, she said that the date may change depending on how quickly the defense prepares its case and whether new judges are needed.

Civil Servants Plan Strike
(The News, The Inquirer and The Analyst)

- The Civil Servants Association of Liberia issued a press release yesterday calling on all civil servants to stay home on 3 July to press government to address several concerns, including wage increases, incentives and insurance policies for public servants.

Public Vetting for Army Recruits Next Week
(The Inquirer and The Analyst)

- Defense Minister Brownie Samukai told The Inquirer yesterday that the public vetting of army recruits would start in Monrovia on Monday with 110 recruits who constitute the first class of trainees. The process is meant to ensure public participation in enlisting into the new army individuals with clean human rights record.

Global Witness Protests Lifting of Timber Ban
(New Democrat)

- In a press release issued yesterday, the international environmental rights group, Global Witness, protested against the UN Security Council’s decision to lift the sanctions on Liberian timber, arguing that the current government had not instituted sufficient reforms to warrant the lifting of the ban.
Local Media – Radio Veritas (News monitored yesterday at 6:45pm)

Liberia’s Truth Commission Begins Probing Atrocities
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

U.S. Commits $500,000 to Support Liberia’s Truth Commission
(Also reported on ELBS Radio and Star Radio)

Liberian Government to Repeal Unfair Labour Laws
- Labour Minister Samuel Kofi Woods said that several unfair Liberian labour laws have been sent to the Executive Mansion for onward transmission to the Legislature to be repealed.
(Also reported on ELBS and Star Radio)

U.S.-Based Group Concludes Free Medical Service to Liberians
- A team of medical personnel has ended two weeks of free medical operations at the JFK Medical Center in Sinkor. The medical group based in Connecticut, U.S.A., and headed by Dr. Adama Sirleaf operated on twenty-two critical cases.

Researcher wants Graduate Program in Peace Studies
- A researcher at the Liberian Senate, McCarthy Wheh, has petitioned legislators to sponsor a bill for the establishment of a graduate program in peace studies at the University of Liberia in honor of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

STAR RADIO (News culled from website yesterday at 12:32 pm)

Associate Justice Emmanuel Wureh is dead
- Liberia’s Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Counsellor Emmanuel Wureh, is dead. Justice Wureh died last night in Ghana where he had been flown to seek medical attention.

Man 34 Detained for Raping 3-Year Old Girl
- A 34-year-old man has been detained for allegedly sexually abusing a three-year-old girl. Police arrested K.P. Kpannah on 21 June, eleven days after the crime was allegedly committed in Sonie Town, Todee District in Montserrado County.

Forestry Authority Restrains Timber Exports Until further Order
- The Forestry Development Authority (FDA) has banned the production of logs for export until further order. The FDA said its decision is based on the fact that no one currently owns forest concessions in Liberia.

Health Ministry to Launch Tetanus Elimination campaign Sunday
- The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with its partners, will on Sunday launch a maternal and neo-natal tetanus elimination campaign.

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.
Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission formally launched; Deputy UN Envoy urges continued international support to the Commission

Monrovia, Liberia – The President of Liberia, H. E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, yesterday formally launched Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) at a colourful ceremony held at the Centennial Pavilion in Monrovia. Similarly, ceremonies were held in all the 15 counties to involve Liberians throughout the country in the launch of this important process of truth seeking and reconciliation.

Highlighting the importance of healing and uniting the people of Liberia, the Chairman of the TRC, Cllr Jerome Verdier, explained the TRC’s principle objective: “to find out the truth of the past and establish a firm basis for reconciliation, lasting peace and development in Liberia,” and added that the process will be open, transparent and accountable. To aid the work of the Commission, he called on all Liberians and non-Liberians to submit memorandums and petitions on the root causes of the Liberian conflict; historical issues in need of public discourse and clarifications; human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws. He also asked the people to come forward with recommendations on issues and approaches for reconciliation and how Liberia can transcend its bitter past and build a future of sustained peace, unity and development based on the rule of law.

Speaking on behalf of the United Nations family in Liberia, UNMIL Officer-in-Charge and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Operations and the Rule of Law, Mr. Luiz Carlos da Costa said: “today is another landmark in the process of seeking truth and justice, both of which are necessary for genuine peace and reconciliation in Liberia.” He stressed the importance of delving into the past to find out the root causes of the conflict so that a relapse into war can be prevented. While commending civil society for their relentless efforts to set up the TRC, Mr. da Costa appealed to the international community to provide necessary support towards the successful completion of the Commission’s mandate.

Before she formally launched the Truth Commission, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said: “Today marks a historic and defining moment in our effort to rebuild, reunite, reconcile and heal our nation. No matter how successful our efforts to restore basic infrastructure, provide jobs and establish good governance, the future and the stability of our country will remain in doubt unless we face ourselves as a people, unless we tell the truth of what we did to ourselves and to our nation.” She urged all Liberians to “come forward and tell the truth. This is the greatest contribution that anyone can make to peace, reconciliation, unity and progress in Liberia.” She commended the Commissioners for their commitment, and added: “We have chosen you not only to stop at narrating the truth, we also need for you to take action that will create a healthy balance between restorative and retributive justice.” “The TRC is an unprecedented and exemplary testament to the courage we have summoned as a nation and a people, to reckon with our shameful past and to establish a consensus on national truth”, the President said.
The launching ceremony was attended by Ministers and senior government officials, members of the international community and representatives of civil society organizations. UNMIL, through its Human Rights and Protection Section supported the drafting of the Act to establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and worked closely with the Transitional Justice Working Group on the Commission’s establishment. The United Nations Development Programme was the first organization to provide substantial funding of US$600,000, to ensure the success of the TRC.
Former Chadian leader's fate to be decided by AU

By A CORRESPONDENT

Now that former Liberian president Charles Taylor has been flown off the continent to face charges of war crimes at The Hague, West Africans are turning their attention to another African leader who could face prosecution away from home.

Ex Chadian President Hissene Habre, who has been living in exile in Senegal since 1990, is waiting for the African Union (AU) to determine his fate during its annual summit next month in the Gambian capital of Banjul.

Alleged victims of Habre’s eight-year regime filed charges of war crimes against him in Senegal and he was indicted in 2000. But then Senegalese courts ruled that he must be tried elsewhere. Habre’s alleged victims then turned to Belgium, where some of them lived, and Belgium indicted him last September.

But a Senegalese court early this year said it was not competent to rule on the case and turned the decision over to the AU.

Western nations and international donors are increasingly conditioning aid on respect for human rights and good governance. Analysts consider impunity to be a major impediment to development. They say without justice, there is no security, no rule of law, no transparency and little respect for human rights.

Governments, including those in Africa, appear to have taken note.

"I think there has been a real sea change," said Reed Brody, special counsel for the New York-based Human Rights Watch. "There’s no doubt that, around the world, justice is on the march."

He pointed to Charles Taylor as an example of leaders facing justice. Others are former Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein and Chile’s Augusto Pinochet.

Some have dubbed Habre the "Pinochet of Africa." Pinochet presided over a military dictatorship for nearly 20 years, during which time thousands of government opponents were killed or disappeared. Habre is accused of murder, torture and other atrocities inflicted on thousands of people.

"I think the days when tyrants could brutalise their people and pillage their treasury and then meet up with their bank accounts in some other country is gone," Brody said.

"The question of justice is always on the table. One of the big resistances has been that of African leaders."

But Brody said that the decision by Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and Liberian President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf to hand Taylor over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone last year might
have broken a psychological barrier in terms of impunity for African leaders. Taylor had been living in exile in Nigeria since he was deposed in August 2003.

Local human rights advocates are more cynical.

"For the moment, we can’t say that things have changed regarding the violation of human rights in Africa. There has been no court decision yet regarding Charles Taylor and the case of Hissene Habre is still being discussed," said Fatou Kama, a lawyer with the Dakar-based African Meeting for the Defense of Human Rights (RADDHO).

"We can say there is an awareness – at least there is that. Today, African leaders know that they might appear in court and answer to accusations of human rights abuses," Kama said.

The momentum for ending impunity in Africa began in 1994 with two pivotal events: the Rwanda genocide and the end of apartheid in South Africa.

South Africans established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which in 1996 began hearing cases of racial crimes committed by all sectors of society during the period of white minority rule. There were no prosecutions in an effort to promote reconciliation.

Rwanda and the United Nations formed the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to try suspected perpetrators of the genocide.

**Other nations took note.**

Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia and Sierra Leone are among countries that established truth commissions to either heal the wounds inflicted under military regimes or during civil wars. With the backing of the United Nations, the Special Court for Sierra Leone was established. It indicted Charles Taylor and retains jurisdiction, but the trial will be held at The Hague because of fears that Taylor might attempt to destabilise the West African sub-region from his jail cell.

Although Taylor and Habre have recently grabbed headlines because of the international angle to their cases, they are not the only African leaders to face the courts.

Others have been summoned to tribunals in their own countries. They include Moussa Traore of Mali and Jean-Bedel Bokassa of the Central African Republic.

Traore was jailed for 11 years with his wife, Mariam, on corruption charges. They had been sentenced to death but their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment.

**They were pardoned in 2002.**

Bokassa was arrested in 1986 and tried for treason, murder and embezzlement. He was sentenced to death, but the sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment and then to 20 years. Bokassa was released in 1993 under a general amnesty.

Ethiopia has been trying former leader Mengistu Haile Mariam in absentia on charges of genocide. A verdict has been postponed until next year. Mengistu has been living in exile in Zimbabwe since 1991.
Other long-serving African leaders repeatedly accused of human rights abuse include Uganda’s Idi Amin, who died in exile in Saudi Arabia in 2003, Zaire’s Mobutu Sese Seko, who died in exile in Morocco in 1997, and Togo’s Gnassingbe Eyadema, who died last year after nearly four decades in power.

As the reformed Organisation of African Unity, the AU has sought to distance itself from its post-colonial predecessor’s reputation as a 'dictators' club.'

The AU is currently establishing an African Court on Human and People’s Rights, based in Arusha, Tanzania, comprised of 11 judges from around the continent. They will be sworn in during the AU summit in July. The court is not designed to try criminal cases or hold individuals accountable; its aim is to address human-rights complaints against governments.

The AU chose seven jurists in June to study the Habre case and present recommendations at the AU summit. African heads of state will then determine Habre’s fate. Possible outcomes include a trial in Belgium, Senegal or another African country. Or, Habre could escape facing court altogether. Human Rights Watch says Habre would be unlikely to get a fair trial in Chad because the judiciary is weak and subject to executive influence. In addition, Habre's security could not be guaranteed.

"I think this is a chance for the AU to speak up for justice and against impunity," said Brody. "Obviously, there is a reluctance by African leaders to send a former leader to Europe" to be tried, he said, alluding to Europe’s colonial legacy in Africa. "We think that if the African Union insists that Habre be tried in Africa that the best solution is to request Senegal to reverse itself and allow Habre to be tried there."

But, he said, that is no guarantee that justice will be served. Brody said Habre has used millions of dollars that he allegedly took from the Chadian treasury to create a shield of protection in Senegal.

"It’s unfortunate because Senegal is a country that in many respects is in the avant-garde in terms of democracy and human rights and it would be an honour for Senegal, it would be to Senegal’s credit, to hold the trial of Hissene Habre," he said.
Kevin Maguire is my name, I am the legal advisor to the Registrar for the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Seated next to me are officials of that Court, and I will introduce them individually. Immediately to my right is Lovemore Munlo, who is the Registrar of the tribunal. Next to Mr Munlo is Dr Christopher Staker, the Deputy Prosecutor and Acting Prosecutor for the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and on the end is Joseph Poraj, who is the Chief of Security at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. I will ask Mr Munlo to make some introductory remarks in relation to this matter and press conference today, and at question times I would ask that any question in relation to the International Criminal Court be directed to Mr Bruno Cathala, the Registrar of the Court. I now invite the Registrar, Mr Munlo, to give some remarks.

MR MUNLO: Thank you members of the press, ladies and gentlemen. I am happy to be with you here, together with my colleagues. Just to brief you that immediately after the Security Council resolution last Friday, the President of the Special Court made a determination on the Rule 4 for the Rules of Procedure of the Special Court that this is a case that should be tried away from the seat of the Court with the Judges of the Special Court, and immediately we entered into an agreement with the Dutch government to allow us to come to the Netherlands and have our trial done here by our Judges. We also entered into an agreement with the International Criminal Court here allowing us to use the facilities for the case that we are going to have against Mr Charles Taylor. I want to take this opportunity to thank the government of the Netherlands for the facilities they have given us. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the International Criminal Court for allowing us to use their facilities for our case. I want to recognise the presence in this press conference of the Registrar who has personally assisted me in a lot of issues relating to logistics of this case. I thank you, and I am ready to answer any questions from you. I thank you.

Thomas Fair, for SINP international news agency: Mr Registrar, I can imagine that the transfer of a case also has certain logistical implications. Can you tell us how many of your staff you will have from Freetown to the Hague? Can you tell us if an estimate has been made for the costs of this relocation? And can you tell us if the financing of the Taylor trial here in The Hague is assured, because the SCSL has seen in the past years a kind of chronic financial crisis when the voluntary contributions that countries had pledged to the Special Court did not arrive in time, so one may wonder what your financial situation is at this moment.

MR MUNLO: Thank you. First of all, I want to emphasise that our main activities are in Freetown. We have our full compliment of the Court in Freetown. The Office of the Prosecutor is complete; the Chambers, the Judges, the Appeal Chambers is complete, and the Registry which is supporting their ongoing cases now. The case of Charles Taylor is a portion of the work that we are doing, is not the whole mandate of the Court, so basically the staffing position in Freetown will be supporting this case. We will have to have people here who will be actually doing the case. So the Prosecutor will come here with his full team, a full trial team that will be trying this case. The Registrar will support the Defence, to have the Defence lawyers, but Defence lawyers
need not come from [indistinct] of course, they come from all over the world, but support them to come here and defend Mr Charles Taylor. We are working out details with the Registry here of the International Criminal Court, they will tell us in which areas in terms of logistic, like stenographers, like court reporters, where they feel they can help us with members of staff on our Court to support with the support work. Where they can’t do that, we are ready to have our own people here to do that. So, we are working out which areas where we need to have our own people come and do the work. We will have here legal representation to look at any issue that Mr Taylor may have while he is in the detention of ICC. I have made a determination that while he is here, the Rules of Detention of the ICC will be part of the regime that I will be using to look after his interests, but should we have an appeal, that appeal will come straight to me as the Registrar of the Special Court to deal with.

Talking about the financing of the Special Court, we have already looked into that, we have our budget, but as you correctly observed, one of the special features of the Special Court, unlike the other criminal international courts, we do not have regular budgets like the ICTR or ICTY who have a regular budget from the UN. Our Court is run on the voluntary contribution from the group of interested states. So, by the very nature of the word “voluntary contribution”, you cannot give sure answers that the money will come. What I want to put to you members of the press is that although its only voluntary contributions, this Court started in 2002. We are still going on. Of course maybe we are living from hand to mouth, but we have the money to run the Court. I do not think anybody in the court is worried that we will be unable to meet the finances. We don’t have them, but we are sure that we will get the finances. I thank you.

Thomas Peter, the German Press Agency (DPA) Mr Registrar can you give us any idea when the actual trial will start? And is it predictable more or less how long that should take to come to judgment?

MR MUNLO: One of the fundamental principles about international criminal law is that, one, you must give sufficient time to the accused person to study what it is that he is being accused of; two, you must give him sufficient time to prepare for his defence. Now, Mr Charles Taylor was brought to the Court on 29th of March. Immediately after he was brought on 3rd of April he appeared before the Court, in the Special Court, and there was an initial appearance, where he pleaded not guilty to all the charges, 11 charges that the Prosecutor has brought to him. He immediately after he pleaded not guilty the Prosecutor started making disclosures. The documents which the Prosecutor is going to rely on, the statements of witnesses which the Prosecutor is going to rely on, and Mr. Taylor has now over 32,000 documents served on him, in fact served on his lawyer, and then they are discussing those documents with his lawyer. What will happen is that the Court is setting up a status conference, to find out from the parties, both the Prosecutor and the Defence, after they have read those documents, when they think they will be ready to start the case. The status conference has yet to be heard, and at that time each party will show the state of preparedness and how they want to move forward. Thank you.

DR STAKER: Perhaps I could add something to that, as the Prosecutor, since we are in fact [indistinct] of the litigation in this case. I have to say that it is very hard to predict precisely when the trial will start or how long it will take because that’s not a matter that is ever entirely in the hands of any one party. It will depend on the Prosecution in part, but it will also depend on the Defence, and it will depend upon the Chambers. What I think I can say is that as the world gains greater experience of international criminal trials and this form of litigation, we should through experience, manage to become more and more efficient, and it is our hope that this case will prove to be an example of the efficiency with which international criminal trials can be conducted. The Prosecution itself is prepared to move very quickly and to begin as soon as
possible. Of course it is a matter for the Defence to indicate how long it will need to prepare its case, but the early indication is that the Defence is willing to work together with the Prosecution to of course safeguard the rights of the accused and to present his Defence, but to try and seek to focus on the matters that are really in dispute to enable the trial to concentrate on those and to avoid the need for lots of unnecessary evidence to be brought to prove things that are perhaps not really in dispute at all. So it is our hope that once things do start, the trial will progress expeditiously and be a model for how this kind of litigation can be conducted.

Journalist: ...Radio and Television. I heard that there would be a status conference this afternoon in Freetown. Is this correct?

DR STAKER: There was a status conference that was scheduled to be held in Freetown this afternoon. The scheduling of that status conference was of course set before the transfer of the accused happened. My understanding is that no decision has yet been taken in Freetown as to whether that status conference will proceed today or whether it will be postponed to be held in The Hague. The information I received just a few minutes ago is that it will be for the pre-trial Judge to decide in consultation with the Defence whether the accused is willing to waive his right to be personally present at the status conference. If he is willing to waive that right, the status conference may proceed this afternoon. Otherwise it may be adjourned, presumably to be held this afternoon in The Hague.

Journalist: ... the Prosecutor until now, Mr. Da Silva, is I understand supposed to take leave from the Court, will be come back to try the case do you believe?

DR STAKER: Mr De Silva has indicated his willingness to return at the beginning of next year. I have to say that Mr De Silva is an extremely experienced prosecutor, a person of great stature. I think it has been the great fortune of the Special Court to have a person of his standing conducting the work of the Special Court. I think that all of the staff in the Office of the Prosecutor would very much welcome his return, but that’s a matter in the future.

Journalist: Will there be a third trial chamber, or is that impossible under your statute? Because I heard some concerns from Sierra Leone already that other trials would take more time because of this trial, or would be postponed or whatever.

DR STAKER: Under the Statute of the Special Court as it’s now worded, and the Agreement which sets us up (indistinct) the provision for a maximum of 11 Judges, that’s 5 Judges of the Appeals Chamber, and a maximum of two trial chambers of three Judges each. So if a third trial chamber were to be established, that would require an amendment to the agreement, which I said was entered into by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. That would therefore be a matter for the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It’s a matter that is beyond my remit to speak about, I don’t know if the Registrar can add anything?

MR MUNLO: That is the correct position. The Statute says it and the decision whether to increase the Judges or not rests with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and then the government of Sierra Leone. We do not know whether that is their intention to do, but should they decide then, it will be possible.

Journalist: But that leaves the concerns of Defence Council for instance that their trials will be postponed because this is such an important one.
MR MUNLO: I think we will be speculating at the moment, because as I said they need this status conference to establish the readiness of the parties to start. If the parties are of the view that they are ready to start now, than the considerations of the third chamber may come up. But if they also are not ready, they are taking time before they are ready, all depends on what will happen, and I do want to suppress my enthusiasm with entering into speculation.

Journalist (indistinct) the conditions in the detention unit, will Charles Taylor be held in isolation, will he be allowed to mix with, to meet other detainees if more come in, or Mr Lugamba as it is now, and can you tell us anything about the check-in procedures last night, was he examined medically, exactly how did it work?

MR PORAJ: I think on the matter of segregation I should refer that to the Registrar.

MR MUNLO: Well, in my agreement with the International Criminal Court, I have accepted that I will go by their regime, that the International Criminal Court has for its detainees. This is a practical issue. I do not think that there are many detainees for the International Criminal Court now, I think there is one and Mr Taylor is two. I will be advised later on after we discuss with the Registrar, members of detention facility, in relation to the question you ask. But Mr Taylor is not segregated now. They are not segregated. There are no rules [relating to] segregation for Mr Taylor. I do not know about the International Criminal Court detainee who is there. So these are issues that I will discuss later with the Registrar. We only came in last night at 7:30 so I am meeting with the Registrar for the first time in this press conference.

Journalist: Sebastian Gottlieb: Radio Netherlands International. Mr Prosecutor, can you already estimate how many witnesses you would like to use in the Court, and how many witnesses have to be transferred to Holland?

DR STAKER: Now as I say, this will depend in large part on discussions between the Prosecution and the Defence. If it’s possible to narrow down the matters that are really in dispute, that will of course reduce the number of witnesses that will have to be called. You can imagine that theoretically in a criminal trial it would be open to an accused to dispute every single last fact that was alleged. The accused might even deny that he is the person who is named in the indictment and then put the burden on the Prosecution to bring evidence to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that that person is the person named in the indictment. What is common in criminal trials is that, and what we would like to see more of, is for the Defence to be willing to say what is in dispute and what not, to concede that certain events happened, but to indicate why it’s maintained that the accused is not responsible for them, and then evidence then focus on more precise issues. These discussions are ongoing. We can’t say exactly how they will result, and because of that we cant give any definite figures at this stage.

Journalist: I heard that Mr. Taylor’s Defence Counsel wasn’t aware that Mr Taylor would leave Sierra Leone as fast, as quickly as he did. Is that the start of a fair trial, that you whisk away a client from his Defence Counsel without his Defence Counsel knowing?

MR MUNLO: I don’t know where you got your information from. I know that Mr Charles Taylor’s lawyers who happened to be in Freetown at the time, was told a day before Mr Taylor left to come here. I actually phoned him in his hotel and said I was going to meet him in his hotel. We had a meeting in his hotel, and I told him that tomorrow morning Mr. Taylor would be leaving. Of course you should also understand from the Resolution that there are security concerns, security implications, so this is not the sort of matter which you go broadcasting to the
movement of the suspect from jail. But he was told one day before the operations took place. Thank you.

Journalist: (indistinct) this operation here? Or is there going to be somebody to deal with us?

MR MUNLO: We are going to organise that. It is a matter that we are going to discuss today with the Registrar. We are ready to provide, that’s why I say we will see the areas where we need to have our people on the ground and we will immediately work to address those issues.

MR MCGUIRE: I might add that there is a simultaneous press conference proceeding in Freetown at the moment, so there is this interaction. This sort of interaction will continue throughout this period.

DR STAKER: I would also add that this doesn’t relate specifically to interactions with the press, but I think in terms of the operation of the Special Court as a whole, it needs to be emphasised that the Special Court for Sierra Leone is a genuine international criminal court, in the same way as the ICTY or the ICC or the ICTR. It was established by an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. We have a decision of the Special Court Appeals Chamber which confirms that the Special Court is a genuine international criminal court. Now, because of that, it has in its Statute and its Rules the express power to sit anywhere in the world. The basic rule is it sits in Freetown. That’s where its base is, this was part of the concept of the Special Court as a new model of international criminal court, that it would conduct its work in the territory of the country where the events in question happened, to bring the justice process to the people who suffered the events in question, to enable any member of the public to observe the proceedings and participate in the process. But it certainly has the power, when there is good reason to do so, to sit elsewhere, anywhere in the world. The fact that the Special Court is conducting this one case involving one accused here in The Hague doesn’t alter the fact that the Special Court as an institution is a separate criminal court. It is based in Freetown, the trial that is conducted here will be conducted according to the same Statute and the same Rules of the Special Court. It will be judged by Special Court Judges. It will prosecuted by Special Court Prosecutors and defended by Special Court Defence counsel. So in terms of procedure and substance, nothing at all is changed by the fact that one trial of one accused is happening in a different place. What it does do is it shows the genuinely international nature of the Special Court for Sierra Leone as an institution. It also shows what the international community is able to do to make the international criminal justice work effectively, practicably and responsibly. We had a situation where the Security Council had decided that questions of stability and peace in the sub-region required that the trial not be held in Sierra Leone. Because of the good cooperation of the Government of the Netherlands and the International Criminal Court, it was possible for this one trial to be held at another venue. That is the international community coming together to ensure both that the process of international justice is not impeded by issues such as the one that came up in this case, but that solutions to those issues will be found by the international community working together. I should add simply by way of comparison: The International Criminal Court itself is based here in The Hague but also has the power to sit elsewhere, under its Statute, in certain circumstances, and the Special Court for Sierra Leone conducting its trial in The Hague is in effect no different than the International Criminal Court if it were at some stage to conduct a trial away from The Hague.

MR MCGUIRE: Are there any further questions?

Journalist: Are there any facilities for the public in Sierra Leone to follow this trial such as (indistinct)
MR MUNLO: We are waiting on that. We are waiting on that, we have a very capable Outreach program going on because of the special nature of the Court in Sierra Leone. There are already a task force to work on the modalities of how this is going to be done, how the region will be involved, and what will be the logistics to do that. So there is already a team working on that. Thank you.

MR MCGUIRE: I might add just in relation to that, you’ll note from the Security Council Resolution and also the Order of the Special Court that this issue of enabling the people of Sierra Leone to have at least access via video links and whatever means possible should be pursued by the Court, and we will certainly be following those Resolutions by the Security Council and the Order of the President.

Journalist: Have you rented office space yet? Is there a place where we can find you in The Hague?

MR MUNLO: Now wee just came yesterday. We came yesterday and we are looking at those issues.

Journalist: You have to go house hunting yet?

MR MUNLO: Yes, thank you.

MR MCGUIRE: Are there any more questions? If not, I will thank you ladies and gentlemen for your attendance today, and on that we’ll close the press conference.
LEAD-IN: Three days after Charles Taylor was transferred to The Hague in the Netherlands, his supporters say he’s being held incommunicado. John Richardson, who served as National Security Advisor to the former Liberian president, says he’s formed an association for the legal defence of Taylor to solicit money to pay for his defence. To get to the bottom of his allegation, I called up Vincent Nmehielle who, as Principal Defender at the Special Court in Sierra Leone, is in charge of Charles Taylor’s defence, and he’s supposed to make sure that his rights are respected. I asked first whether the UN-backed Special Court is paying for Charles Taylor’s defence.

**PROF NMEHIELLE:** Under the current situation, when Mr Taylor was arraigned, or when he was arrested rather and brought to the Court, Mr Taylor asked for legal assistance, and we went to determine whether or not he’s entitled as governed by the Directive on Assignment of Counsel, having in mind Article 17 of the Statute. And of course we made a determination that under the current circumstances, Mr Taylor does not fully have sufficient means and could be said to be partially indigent, and in the interests of justice, may be entitled to legal assistance. That is the [indistinct] we are using now in affording him legal assistance, unless the contrary is proved.

Does that mean he gets to choose his own lawyers then?

**PROF NMEHIELLE:** No, what it means is within the procedure that the Court applies, my office keeps a list of qualified lawyers which we’ll present Mr Taylor from which he can choose his lawyers. Now, any lawyer can be listed as long as you qualify with the provisions of the Directive on Assignment of Counsel. Lawyers from all over the world are listed and if, when he’s presented that list, he could make a choice as to who he wants to be his lawyer. As long as he’s within the legal aid, he will choose lawyers within the list. If the lawyers he wants are within the list that I keep in my office, sure, he could have those lawyers. But generally speaking, the list is an open-ended list where lawyers are listed from time to time.

So this group in Liberia that’s trying to raise funds for Charles Taylor’s legal representation calling itself the Association for the Legal Defence of Taylor, can they come up with their own lawyers to take to The Hague to defend Taylor there when the case starts?

**PROF NMEHIELLE:** Well again, the group in question does not control Taylor’s defence. Taylor controls his defence in terms of saying ‘these are the lawyers I want’. Now if Taylor tells me as Principal Defender who manages the legal aid of the Court ‘I have resources. I want specific lawyers who do not fall within the legal aid ambit, I am getting out of this’, of course he’s entitled as long as I am refunded every amount that the Court has spent so far in his case.

*Mr Nmehielle, just to check with you, whilst Mr Taylor is in The Hague there, does he have access to telephone calls to his family and his people?*

**PROF NMEHIELLE:** Well I do not know what the detention conditions at The Hague currently are.
As his lawyer currently, have you had access to him?

PROF NMEHIELLE: I’m yet to make contact with Mr Taylor at The Hague.

Why not?

PROF NMEHIELLE: I’m yet to be advised of his access telephone at The Hague.

But his people in Liberia are saying that they’re concerned he’s being incommunicado.

PROF NMEHIELLE: Well the concerns of his family are the concerns of his family. I cannot say exactly whether he’s being held incommunicado or not because, if that is the case, I must be informed. There has to be an official decision in that regard. I have not seen any.

But have you yourself tried to call Mr Taylor?

PROF NMEHIELLE: I do not have access to the telephone to call Mr Taylor. If I knew the telephone number to reach him I would definitely. And I’m waiting to get [advice] on that.

Vincent Nmehielle, the Principal Defender at the UN-backed Special Court in Sierra Leone.