

Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 6 October, 2003

First Appeals Session to Hear Arguments on Immunity for Taylor and Other Issues

The Appeals Chamber of the Special Court will convene for the first time to hear and determine a number of fundamental legal issues which have to be resolved before the trials can begin. The dates for the hearings are from 31st October to 7th November, 2003.

The panel of judges will hear arguments by counsel for former Liberian President Charles Taylor that his indictment is invalid. Taylor's lawyer will assert that because he was head of state, he is immune from prosecution. His lawyer will also argue that the Special Court has no power to enforce his arrest warrant outside the borders of Sierra Leone.

Lawyers for another indictee, former Internal Affairs Minister Sam Hinga Norman, will argue that Norman cannot be charged with recruiting child soldiers, because this is not an offence under international criminal law.

The Court will also hear arguments that the indictees are covered by an amnesty under the Lome Accord, which bars further proceedings against them. Lawyers for a number of the defendants will argue that the Court has not been lawfully established

Court President Geoffrey Robertson QC will preside over the session in Freetown, sitting with other Justices from the Appeal Chamber.

The hearings will be open to the public. The Court may permit other interested parties, such as law associations and human rights groups, to submit legal arguments on these issues for the Court's consideration.

#END

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted thirteen persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

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