

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

PRESS RELEASE

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Testimony for the Prosecution Concluded in Taylor Trial

The Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone, Stephen Rapp, said Monday that his team had “achieved what we set out to do” with the presentation of testimony in the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor in The Hague.

On Friday afternoon, the final witness for the prosecution, a double amputee from Sierra Leone, concluded testimony at the trial in The Hague, Netherlands. He was the 91st in a procession of prosecution witnesses whose testimony began in January 2008, and had filled 205 days, or 41 full weeks, of court sessions.

Prosecutor Rapp praised his trial team, led by Principal Trial Attorney Brenda Hollis, the Special Court Judges, and all court personnel for “the great professionalism shown in bringing the trial forward to this milestone.”

“It has been demonstrated that it is possible to prosecute a former chief of state in a trial that is fair and efficient, even where the indictment covers wide-ranging crimes. We have seen international justice conducted in accordance with the highest standards,” said Mr. Rapp.

Charles Taylor is charged with 11 counts of War Crimes, Crimes Against Humanity and other violations of International Humanitarian Law committed during the civil war in Sierra Leone from 1996 to 2002. The Prosecution built its case on the strength of the 91 witnesses, including 31 “insider” witnesses who testified to the links between Taylor and the crimes committed in Sierra Leone, and 52 “crime base” witnesses who themselves had seen or suffered these atrocities.

The Prosecutor praised the contribution to justice made by the victim witnesses. “Brave men, women and children have taken the stand against Charles Taylor and recounted their suffering. They have included amputees, rape victims, former child soldiers, and persons enslaved, robbed, and terrorized. We are awed by their courage and grateful for their willingness to travel thousands of miles to bear witness.”

“The contrast between these victims and the accused could not be more stark,” said Rapp. “This was brought home in particular by the last witness, a man whose left hand was amputated by rebels alleged to have been controlled or aided by Taylor. When his 4-year old son protested the injury to his “papa” and the rebels then threatened the boy with amputation, the witness offered his own right hand to save his son.”

“Here we saw a man who sacrificed his hands for the future of his son bearing witness against a man charged with sacrificing the lives, the hands, and the futures of thousands of human beings in pursuit of his own wealth and power,” said Rapp.

Of the 91 witnesses, only four testified entirely in closed session. All the rest were heard in open court, with some protected by partial security measures, such as voice or facial distortion. All open session testimony has been streamed worldwide over the internet. There has been daily radio and newspaper coverage in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

The Prosecution's case will not officially close until certain pending motions before the judges are decided and there remains the possibility that further evidence may be presented by the Prosecution depending on these decisions.

#END

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