

Charles Ghankay Taylor
ICCDU
Scheveningen, Den Haag
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1 June 2007

Justice Julia Sebutinde, Presiding Judge
Trial Chamber II
The Special Court for Sierra Leone
Jomo Kenyatta Road
Freetown
Sierra Leone

Cc: Justice Richard Lusick
Justice Teresa Doherty

re: Termination of Representation

Your Honours,

It is with great sadness and regret that I write to inform you that I no longer feel able to attend and participate in the proceedings against me before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. Sadness, because at one time I hoped and had confidence in the Court's ability to dispense justice in a fair and impartial manner. Over time it has become clear that such confidence is misplaced.

Every one deserves justice. The people of Liberia and Sierra Leone, who for too many years have undergone tragic sufferings, deserve justice. The people of Africa, for whom the promise of independence was only pyrrhic, deserve justice. And I too, deserve at least the modicum of justice.

I have always, in my small way, been willing to make sacrifices for peace. I relinquished the Presidency of Liberia, and accepted exile in Nigeria, to ensure that the people of Liberia would no longer suffer war. As I said on 7 August 2003, when I left Liberia, I relinquished the Presidency because I could no longer preside over the suffering and humiliation of the Liberian people.

Till date, the Special Court has not demonstrated itself capable of delivering justice.

Justice is blind. Justice pursues truth. Justice is fair. Justice is immune to politics. It is not justice to preordain convictions. It is not justice to emaciate my defence to an extent that I am unable to launch an effective defence. It is not justice to throw all rights to a fair trial to the wind in a headlong rush to trial.

It seems apparent that there is a plain desire to reach a pre-determined decision of guilt in haste and without due regard to even the most basic fair trial rights as enshrined under international law.

Article 14 of the ICCPR and Article 7 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights provide for the equality of arms between parties. Today marks the start of the trial against me. The Special Court's administration has been so dilatory that I have only one counsel to appear on my behalf. One counsel against a Prosecution team of nine lawyers. This is neither fair nor just. It is astonishing that, as the custodians of fairness, the Trial Chamber is prepared to countenance this position.

Given the size of the Prosecution team it is not surprising that it has been able to produce a seemingly never ending volume of material to be considered in this case. The limited defence resources have made it impossible to review all of this material and has distracted from the proper preparation of my defence.

My legal representative has not been provided the adequate time and facilities as guaranteed under Article 14 of the ICCPR and Article 7 of the African Charter. The numerous Defence requests for proper time to prepare have been ignored.

Defence preparations for trial have been further frustrated by the insidious presence of a camera in conference facilities in the Detention Unit, overseeing meetings between lawyer and client that are supposed to be privileged and confidential. The obvious result of this has been to seriously frustrate and hamper defence preparations for trial. The problem persisted continuously for three months, yet the Court granted only an 18 day extension for defence preparation.

My transfer to The Hague has left me cut off and in almost total isolation from my family and those closest to me. Their visits to The Netherlands are restricted to one visa being issued to one visitor at a time, for a maximum period of two weeks.


The Special Court's administration is ill-prepared to handle a trial of this magnitude in The Hague and is unwilling or unable to perform its basic functions. Despite this the Court advances with great haste to trial without any regard to the most fundamental procedural safeguards.

For all of these reasons, I am driven to the conclusion that I will not receive a fair trial before the Special Court at this point. It is therefore with great regret that I must decline to attend any further hearings in this case until adequate time and facilities are provided to my defence team and until my other long standing reasonable complaints are dealt with. It follows that I must terminate instructions to my legal representatives in this matter. Despite my complete confidence in their ability and competence, I must ask that they cease to represent me before the Special Court and instruct them accordingly.

I cannot participate in a charade that does injustice to the people of Sierra Leone and Liberia, and the people of Africa; and a disservice to the international community in whose name this court claims to speak. I choose not to be the figleaf of legitimacy for this process.

I hope and pray for a fair trial that will perhaps bring to an end these cycles of injustice. I stand ready to participate in such a trial, and let justice be done, for myself, and for those who have suffered far more than me in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Yours Sincerely,


3rd June 2007
4:35 p.m.

Charles Ghankay Taylor