

Press Release

Freetown, Sierra Leone 3rd April 2006

Take Charles Taylor and Others The Hague to Ensure Fair Trial for All

As we wait to witness the Court appearance today of War Crimes indictee Charles Taylor, Forum of Conscience (FOC) welcomes the request by the President of the Special Court Justice A. Raja N. Fernando to the Government of the Netherlands and the President of the International Criminal Court asking for physical facilities, the use of a Courtroom and a cell to facilitate the conduct of the trial of former Liberian President Charles Taylor by the Special Court in The Hague.

Forum of Conscience notes with concern the fact that for the first time the International Community, including the President of the United States, Mr. G.W. Bush and the President of the Special Court Justice Fernando are speaking with one voice, referring to concerns about the stability in the region should Taylor be tried in Freetown.

Forum of Conscience is asking for an extension of the security assessment done for War Crimes indictee Charles Taylor to be extended to other War Crimes indictees currently undergoing trial in Freetown taking into consideration the fact that the Special Court promised the People of Sierra Leone that everyone is equal before the law. Therefore, in order to ensure fair trial for all the indictees, they should be kept in the same detention facility –Freetown or The Hague.

The Executive Director Forum of Conscience, Mr. Caulker today said: ‘The request by the President of Special Court to the Government of the Netherlands, confirms the views of most Sierra Leoneans that the continued presence of the Special Court in Sierra Leone is a security threat to the Nation particularly as we approach 2007 Parliamentary and Presidential elections.’

Consequently, Forum of Conscience is requesting the Sierra Leone Peoples' Party (SLPP) led government of President Alhaji Tejan Kabba to make a formal request to the President of Special Court for Sierra Leone to consider relocating the seat of the Court in Freetown to another Country under 'rule 4 of the Special Court's rules of procedure and evidence', which empowers the President of the Special Court to authorize a Trial Chamber to exercise its functions away from the seat of the court in Freetown.

It is important to note that the awaited ruling by the Special Court on an application by War Crime indictee Chief Hinga Norman for the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone Dr. Alhaji Tejan Kabba to be compelled to testify before the Special Court and recent arrival of Charles Taylor to Sierra Leone make the nation vulnerable to conflict.

Finally, Forum of Conscience is appealing to the Special Court to make adequate provision for Representatives of National Media houses / Journalists in Sierra Leone to cover the trials of all the indictees within and or outside of Sierra Leone for the benefit of Sierra Leoneans who rely heavily on our national news

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Forum of Conscience (FOC) is an independent Sierra Leonean Human Rights organization that seeks to protect human and Peoples Rights

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