

Bringing the Judgment Home

APRIL 2012

THE SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE will deliver its judgment in the trial of Charles Taylor, the former Liberian president, in The Hague on April 26, 2012. Thousands of miles away, people in Sierra Leone and in Taylor's native Liberia are awaiting the verdict.

Taylor has been on trial in The Hague since 2008, and he is the first African head of states to be tried in an international criminal tribunal. The charges against Taylor include 11 counts of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in Sierra Leone from 1996-2002.

In order to enhance public discussion and understanding of the judgment, the Open Society Justice Initiative has partnered with local human rights organization in Sierra Leone and Liberia to bring independent reporting and analysis of Taylor trial judgment from The Hague to local communities.

In Sierra Leone, the Justice Initiative is working with the [Center for Accountability and the Rule of Law in Sierra Leone](#) (CARL-SL) and the Fourah Bay College Human Rights Clinic (FBCHRC). Once a public version of the verdict is available, CARL-SL and the students at the Clinic will summarize it into simple language for the communities in Sierra Leone to better understand the main issues presented. The summaries will then be used to engage in a series of community town hall meetings, radio and television programs, and panel discussions at universities and colleges in Freetown and the provinces.

In Liberia, The Justice Initiative is partnering with the Human Rights Protection Forum (HRPF). The implementation of this project will also be based on using the prepared summary of the judgment being written by CARL-SL and the Clinic. The outreach events in Liberia include organizing radio programs in Monrovia, Gbarnga, Bong, Bomi, and Grand Bassa Counties followed by town hall meetings, panel discussion among civil society members, public debates on university campuses, through which copies of the judgment will be distributed to participants, as well as individuals in the local communities. The events in both Sierra Leone and Liberia are being planned to take place in the immediate weeks and months after the judgment.

The Open Society Justice Initiative had been monitoring the since 2008 through our website www.charlestaylortrial.org and will be present at the courthouse when the judgment is announced.

Dissemination and understanding of the judgment is crucial because without this effort, the people of Liberia and Sierra Leone, including victims, will not have full access to the final phase of the trial.

This project is also expected to create a national discourse among lawyers, students, academics, the media, civil society, and victims on the trial and the final verdict as a model for the promotion of the rule of law in Sierra Leone, and a significant accountability measure for gross violations of human rights committed during the conflict in Sierra Leone. We hope that disseminating information about the trial and the final judgment in this way will help ensure that justice is not only done, but that it is also seen to be done.

The Open Society Justice Initiative is calling on the international community to address the urgent issues facing the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), as it prepares to wind down operations in coming months with the eventual conclusion of the Taylor proceedings.

Our report, [*Legacy: Continuing the Work of the Special Court for Sierra Leone*](#), based on research and interviews conducted by staff of the Open Society Justice Initiative from July 2007 to September 2011, identifies seven key remaining legacy and residual issues that require urgent national and international attention. While commendable efforts have already been made to address some of these issues, giving urgent attention to all of them before the SCSL closes its doors will help to maximize the impact of the court's legacy in Sierra Leone.

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