

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Amnesty International welcomes the European Union's Parliament resolution on Charles Taylor; calls for its full implementation

Amnesty International today welcomes the European Union (EU) Parliament resolution urging the Nigerian government to hand over former Liberian President Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

This resolution represents a significant step in the efforts to bring Charles Taylor to justice for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other crimes under international law that he is alleged to have committed.

The resolution, adopted on 24 February 2005, calls on inter-governmental organizations, including the UN Security Council and the African Union (AU), to co-operate with the EU in order to ensure its full implementation.

Amnesty International calls on the EU and its member states to fully implement the resolution by ensuring that Charles Taylor is handed over to the Special Court for Sierra Leone for prosecution. It is important that the EU work closely with the AU in this regard if the efforts to ensure justice and accountability in Liberia are to be successful.

Amnesty International also calls on the AU to fully cooperate with the EU to achieve the implementation of the resolution. Such cooperation is consistent with the fundamental objective under the organization's Constitutive Act which is to "promote and protect human and peoples' rights" as well as to "condemn and reject impunity". Amnesty International urges the AU to demonstrate greater political will in order to find a lasting solution to the human rights problems in Liberia, including by supporting international community's efforts to bring Charles Taylor to justice.

The Chairman of the AU, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, should ensure a consistent application of the AU principles by using his good offices to initiate action that would ensure Charles Taylor's appearance before the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Background

On 4 June 2003 the Special Court indicted Charles Taylor for bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious crimes under international law. These crimes included killings, mutilations, rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual slavery, conscription of children, abduction and forced labour perpetrated by Sierra Leonean armed opposition forces, which Charles Taylor actively supported.

In August 2003, Charles Taylor left Liberia for Nigeria where he remains. No steps have been taken by the Nigerian authorities to surrender him to the Special Court or to open an investigation into the charges. Charles Taylor was subsequently granted refugee status in violation of international and regional refugee conventions

The EU's Parliament resolution among others calls on the UN Security Council to urgently take up this issue; and urges building international pressure international pressure in order to bring about Charles Taylor's extradition. The resolution also supports the Liberian transitional government's decision to freeze the assets of Charles Taylor and his associates; calling on the EU to continue to support the 2003 Liberian peace agreement. It urges all states in the region to refrain from any action that might contribute to instability in neighbouring countries.