

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesperson

For Immediate Release

April 26, 2012

2012/643

STATEMENT BY VICTORIA NULAND, SPOKESPERSON

The Verdict in the Charles Taylor Trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone

The United States welcomes the issuance of the judgment by the Special Court for Sierra Leone, convicting Charles Taylor, the former president of Liberia, of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Today's judgment was an important step toward delivering justice and accountability for victims, restoring peace and stability in the country and the region, and completing the Special Court for Sierra Leone's mandate to prosecute those persons who bear the greatest responsibility for the atrocities committed in Sierra Leone. The Taylor prosecution at the Special Court delivers a strong message to all perpetrators of atrocities, including those in the highest positions of power, that they will be held accountable.

The trial of Charles Taylor is of enormous historical and legal significance as it is the first of a powerful head of state to be brought to judgment before an international tribunal on charges of mass atrocities and serious violations of international humanitarian law. Over 90 witnesses testified during the trial, bringing to light the range of crimes committed during the war in Sierra Leone, and affirming the importance of justice for the victims. The United States has been a strong supporter and the leading donor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone since its inception. The successful completion of the Special Court's work remains a top U.S. Government priority.

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