

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Nigeria: Demonstrate commitment to justice -- surrender Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone**

Nigeria should help bring justice to the countless victims of crimes committed during Sierra Leone's civil war, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International said today in an open letter urging Nigeria's President to surrender former Liberian President Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo is currently in New York for the opening of the UN General Assembly and will be holding a press conference at the United Nations on Friday. Charles Taylor, who has been in exile in Nigeria since August 2003, has been indicted by the Special Court for Sierra Leone on seventeen counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during Sierra Leone's civil war.

"The Special Court for Sierra Leone is best placed to bring justice to the countless African victims of the crimes for which Charles Taylor is accused," said Kolawole Olaniyan, Director of the Africa Programme of Amnesty International. "However, the Special Court will only operate for a limited time. This valuable window of opportunity is rapidly closing."

The Court has a mandate to prosecute those bearing the greatest responsibility for the crimes committed during the civil war in Sierra Leone, which was characterized by murders, sexual violence, mutilation and the widespread use of child soldiers.

"Given its aspiration to become a permanent Security Council member, Nigeria is well-placed to show leadership in supporting justice for serious crimes committed around the world," said Richard Dicker, Director of the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch. "Nigeria should demonstrate its commitment to ending impunity by promptly surrendering Charles Taylor to the Special Court."

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