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One Hundred Ninth Congress  
**Congress of the United States**  
Committee on International Relations  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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May 4, 2005

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On the occasion of the visit by His Excellency Olesgun Obasanjo, President of Federal Republic of Nigeria, we urge you to help foster peace and end an era of impunity in West Africa by calling upon the Nigerian Government to transfer former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, to the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

In 2002, the international community empowered the Special Court for Sierra Leone to prosecute those "who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law . . . including those leaders who, in committing such crimes, threatened the establishment of and implementation of the peace process in Sierra Leone." The Special Court, headed by Chief Prosecutor David Crane, has since worked tirelessly and courageously toward this end. Today, nine individuals, including leaders from each of the warring factions and one senior member of the Government of Sierra Leone, are facing justice. As the Special Court prepares to complete its work within the next year, however, one particularly important indictee's conspicuous absence threatens to undermine the legitimacy of the Court.

On June 4, 2003, the Special Court announced a 17-count indictment against Charles Taylor, then-President of Liberia, charging him with war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. These charges relate to his direct and active support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group notorious for hacking off the limbs of civilians, and specifically include charges of mass murder, severe mutilation, sexual slavery and rape, forced conscription of child soldiers, forced labor and enslavement, arson, looting, and attacks against United Nations peacekeepers and humanitarian workers.

You may be aware that we wrote to the former Secretary of State, Colin Powell, on June 13,

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2003 – nine days after Mr. Taylor’s indictment was announced and two months prior to his departure from Liberia – urging the Administration to support the Special Court and to resist efforts to negotiate a “soft landing” for then-President Taylor. We explicitly stated, “There can be no peace in Liberia, or in West Africa, as long as Charles Taylor is allowed to maintain influence and act as a menace to his neighbors,” and “If the United States truly seeks to support the peace process in Liberia and to foster stability in West Africa, there can be no deals. Exile for Mr. Taylor is not a sound option.” We stand by those statements.

We do understand, however, that your Administration firmly believed that helping to negotiate a temporary asylum deal for Mr. Taylor was the only way to bring an end to the devastating war in Liberia. There is no doubt that countless more lives would have been lost had Mr. Taylor been allowed to remain in Liberia and continue his reign of terror. We recognize those facts and concede that the decision to help broker an asylum deal for an indicted war criminal could not have been an easy one, but perhaps a necessary evil.

We are compelled to remind you, though, that the Members of the House International Relations Committee were assured by former Secretary Powell on July 24, 2003, that the Administration did not intend to trade justice for peace, and that the United States would not support dropping the indictment against Mr. Taylor. This assertion repeatedly has been affirmed in subsequent briefings on this matter.

Mr. Taylor is a tyrant and a thug who must be held accountable for his heinous crimes. In addition to supporting the RUF, he is alleged to be cooperating with international terrorist organizations. He is linked to the proliferation of small arms throughout West Africa and the illicit trade in diamonds in violation of U.N. sanctions. He has terrorized the population of Liberia and fomented conflict in neighboring Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire. Mr. Taylor has destabilized the entire sub-region of West Africa, leaving hundreds of thousands dead and millions displaced in his wake.

By urging you to advocate for Mr. Taylor’s transfer to the custody of the Special Court during your discussions with President Obasanjo, we do not intend to embarrass or impugn the motives of the Nigerian Government. Nigeria, after all, has made tremendous contributions – politically, militarily, and financially – to the quest for peace and stability in Africa. Nigeria must be recognized, and in fact commended, for these efforts. However, the time has come to recognize that Mr. Taylor’s continued presence in Nigeria threatens U.S. and Nigerian efforts to bring stability to the region. Further, the United Nations and the Nigerian Government itself acknowledge that Mr. Taylor has violated the terms of his asylum deal repeatedly, without compunction or consequence.

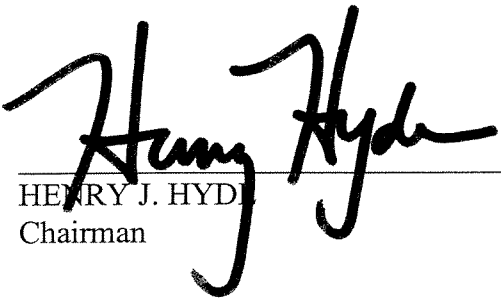
It is our firm belief that Mr. Taylor must not be allowed to flout justice and thereby undermine the legitimacy of the Special Court for Sierra Leone and threaten the stability of West

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Africa. To this end, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly has passed House Concurrent Resolution 127, Calling on the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to transfer Charles Ghankay Taylor, former President of the Republic of Liberia, to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to be tried for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. We urge you to support this effort.

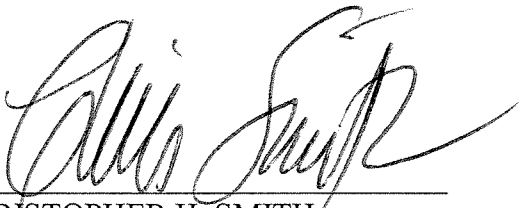
Mr. President, we have seen your Administration make valuable and visionary commitments to the people of Africa. Let us now extend that commitment to the people of West Africa by taking measures to foster peace and end an era of impunity in that region, by calling upon President Obasanjo to immediately transfer Charles Taylor to the custody of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Sincerely,



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HENRY J. HYDE  
Chairman



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CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global  
Human Rights and International Operations



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EDWARD R. ROYCE  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on International Terrorism  
and Nonproliferation