

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

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Taylor Jr. in U.S. Custody on Passport Charges

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(New York) Charles Chuckie Taylor, Jr., son of the former Liberian president, is due to be arraigned next week in Miami on a U.S. passport violation, but the Justice Department should investigate him for his role in grave human rights abuses, Human Rights Watch said today.

According to information and research by Human Rights Watch and other organizations, the Boston-born Chuckie Taylor who has been in U.S. custody since March 30 was involved in torture and war crimes committed in Liberia from approximately 1997 through at least 2002. Federal law makes it a crime for a U.S. citizen to commit such crimes abroad.

Chuckie Taylor is implicated in heinous abuses against Liberians, said Elise Keppler, counsel with the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch. The Department of Justice should investigate his links to these atrocities with a view to prosecuting him.

Chuckie Taylor led the elite Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) during the presidency of his father, Charles Taylor, when it allegedly committed torture, such as various violent assaults, rape, beating people to death and burning civilians alive. Information collected by Human Rights Watch suggests that the ATU, a pro-government military unit, also committed war crimes during Liberias armed conflict from 1999 to 2003. In the years that Chuckie Taylor headed the unit, these war crimes included extrajudicial killing of civilians and prisoners, rape and other torture, abduction, and the recruitment of child soldiers.

The U.S. attorney in Miami should ensure that federal law on torture and war crimes committed abroad doesnt just gather dust on the shelves, said Keppler. As far as we know, no one has ever been prosecuted under this legislation. Investigating Chuckie Taylor would be a good start.

In May, the United Nations Committee Against Torture expressed concern about the lack of prosecutions under the federal torture statute.

To underscore the need for investigation and prosecution of Chuckie Taylor on torture and war crimes under federal law (18 USC sections 2340A and 2441), Human Rights Watch submitted a memorandum to the Department of Justice on serious abuses in which Chuckie Taylor is implicated. The memorandum includes Human Rights Watchs research and information from other human rights organizations, along with other open source material documenting the evidence against him to date.

Chuckie Taylor was taken into U.S. custody on March 30, after attempting to enter the United States at Miami International Airport. His arraignment was previously scheduled for May 30, but was postponed to July 5. His arraignment is due to take place at 10 a.m. before Judge Robert Dub in the Southern District of Florida in Courtroom VII of the Dyer Building in Miami.

Background on the Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU)

Shortly after his inauguration as Liberias president in 1997, Charles Taylor created the ATU. The ATU was initially used in Liberia to protect government buildings, the executive mansion, the international airport, and to provide security for some foreign embassies. According to Human Rights Watch interviews with former Liberian combatants, the ATUs responsibilities were expanded in 1999 to include combat and other war-related duties, after rebels from the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy began operating in Liberian territory.

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