

For Immediate Release

Liberia: US War Crimes Ambassador's Visit *Rights Groups Call for Justice for Civil Wars-era Crimes*

(Monrovia, October 4, 2022) – The United States government should stand with victims of civil wars-era crimes in Liberia by signaling its support for prosecutions of those implicated in the atrocities, to deliver justice and to foster durable peace and stability in the country, eight Liberian and international organizations said today. US Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice Beth Van Schaack is scheduled to visit Liberia on October 6, 2022.

The groups are Advocates for Human Rights, Center for Justice and Accountability, Civitas Maxima, Civil Society Human Rights Advocacy Platform of Liberia, Global Justice and Research Project, Human Rights Watch, the Secretariat for the Establishment of a War Crimes Court in Liberia, and Transitional Justice Working Group in Liberia.

Liberia [has not prosecuted anyone](#) for the grave crimes committed during its two armed conflicts and has yet to establish a war crimes court that the country's truth and reconciliation commission recommended in 2009. Judicial authorities in the [United States](#), [Belgium](#), [France](#), [Finland](#), and the [United Kingdom](#) have pursued criminal cases related to Liberia's civil wars in recent years, often spurred by civil society efforts.

“The Liberian people have waited too long for justice and accountability for abuses suffered during the civil wars,” said Adama Dempster of the Civil Society Human Rights Advocacy Platform of Liberia and the Secretariat for the Establishment of a War Crimes Court in Liberia. “The US government has the opportunity to stand with victims of atrocities committed in Liberia's civil wars by assisting Liberia in establishing a war crimes court.”

During Liberia's armed conflicts from 1989-96 and 1999-2003, Liberians suffered [widespread violations](#) of international human rights and humanitarian law such as mass killings, rape and other forms of sexual violence, summary executions, mutilation and torture, and the use of child combatants.

The US government has played a pivotal role in fostering accountability in West Africa, including in the landmark trials of former Liberian President Charles Taylor by the Sierra Leone Special Court and of the former Chadian President Hissène Habré in Senegal that should be replicated in Liberia, the groups said.

Criminal accountability for civil wars-era atrocities has wide support in Liberia, the groups said. Individuals, families of the victims, and activists have [marched in the streets](#) of Monrovia multiple times in recent years calling for accountability and demanding the creation of a war crimes court.

The Liberian Bar Association [added](#) its support for a war crimes court in April 2019. And the Traditional Chiefs Council and the National Economic Dialogue – attended by 350 Liberians,

including members of the government, political parties, youth, and civil society – backed establishment of a war crimes court [in September 2019](#). In addition, more than 50 members of Liberia’s House of Representatives have [endorsed a resolution](#) backing a war crimes court for Liberia.

“Accountability for Liberia’s past crimes has been limited to cases abroad,” said Hassan Bility of the Global Justice and Research Project and the Secretariat for the Establishment of a War Crimes Court in Liberia. “Liberia needs a dedicated war crimes court so that victims have greater access to justice for the crimes committed against them and a fuller scope of perpetrators can be held to account.”

For a Q&A document on accountability for past crimes in Liberia, please visit: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/01/qa-justice-civil-wars-era-crimes-liberia>

For a video appeal on justice for Liberia, please visit: <https://www.hrw.org/video-photos/video/2019/05/14/liberia-video-appeal-war-crimes-court>

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