

**CIVITAS  
MAXIMA**

Independent Legal Representation  
of Victims of War Crimes and  
Crimes against Humanity

**GJRP**

Global Justice and  
Research Project

## ***A Step for Global Justice***

***Former Minister of Defense and Spokesman of Liberian Rebel  
Faction found guilty.***

Thomas Woewiyu found guilty on 11 counts in Philadelphia.



For the first time ever, a former minister and spokesman of a Liberian rebel faction was found guilty for committing immigration fraud based on the denial of his senior role in the NPFL and his commission of war crimes. During the three-week trial, witnesses and victims, including child soldiers, testified in court to the most horrific crimes committed by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) during Liberia's 1st Civil War (1989-1996). Civitas Maxima and its Liberian sister organization, the Global Justice and Research Project (GJRP) assisted the U.S. authorities during the investigation and monitored the proceedings.

*“Thomas Woewiyu’s trial is crucially significant for Liberia. Never before were the crimes of the NPFL described in such detail in a courtroom. An important piece of our history was documented during this trial”* said Hassan Bility, an awarded human rights defender and GJRP’s director.

Thomas Jucontee Woewiyu faced justice in Philadelphia for lying to U.S. immigration authorities about his command within the NPFL. He was charged with 2 counts of fraudulently attempting to obtain citizenship, 4 counts of fraud in immigration documents, 3 counts of false statements in relation to naturalization and 7 counts of perjury. After three weeks of trial, a jury found him guilty of 11 out of the 16 counts. A detailed list of the charges and verdict can be found [here](#). Woewiyu's sentencing is scheduled for October 15, 2018. He faces a maximum of 110 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$4 million USD.

Woewiyu, alongside Charles Taylor, founded the NPFL and served as the Defense Minister and Spokesman of the faction while it conducted a brutal military campaign across Liberia. In order to prove his guilt, the prosecution called thirty-three witnesses including victims of the First Liberian Civil War, journalists, high-ranking foreign officials, and U.S. immigration officers.

*"Many victims courageously travelled from Liberia and were incredibly brave to take the stand. It shows that there is no fear anymore to hold these perpetrators accountable. Increasingly, victims will find justice and their voices will be heard."* said Alain Werner, director of Civitas Maxima who worked as trial attorney for the prosecutor's office during Charles Taylor's trial in front of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.



[Click here](#) to watch.

We produced a series of informative videos answering questions posted on our social media.

The victims spoke of ordered murders, the forced recruitment of child soldiers, and the NPFL's policy of ethnic persecution. The journalists who were present during the civil wars testified to what they witnessed in Liberia. The high-ranking foreign officials spoke to the interaction between the United States government and the NPFL, and the senior role that Woewiyu played in the NPFL. Broadcasts that contained interviews with the "Defense Spokesman" or "Defense Minister," Thomas Woewiyu, were also presented as evidence showing his senior role in the NPFL "government" and command of the "military". Woewiyu, serving as the face of the NPFL to international audiences, justified their violent and merciless militarized operations.

Witness B specifically recalled Woewiyu saying on the radio: *"A good Krahn man is a dead one"*.

During the trial, "Operation Octopus," the NPFL-coordinated attack on the ECOMOG peacekeeping force, which became one of the deadliest armed attacks in the history of West Africa,

was also brought to light. The rebel attack on Monrovia occurred in 1992 and resulted in the murders of thousands of combatants and civilians; including the execution of five American nuns.

Despite the attempts by the defense to prove Woewiyu's innocence through his not being named as a major war criminal by the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and his mistaken and not intentional answers on immigration forms, according to the jury, the prosecutors demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that, when applying for U.S. citizenship, Woewiyu deliberately failed to disclose his membership in the NPFL as well as the fact that he had previously advocated to overthrow the Liberian government by force. Moreover, the prosecutors equally showed that he had indeed persecuted members of a particular ethnic group, despite his declaration on his immigration application that he had not.

Prosecutor LC Wright stated: "Thomas Woewiyu was embedded in the fabric of the NPFL and the fabric of the NPFL was embedded in him."

The fact that the trial happened is a major step for global justice, regardless of the verdict. A high-level alleged perpetrator of war crimes faced a fair trial and victims had a chance to make their voices heard in a court of law. *"Because there is no domestic system providing war crime accountability within Liberia, immigration fraud proceedings in the United States can present an avenue for justice"* added Alain Werner.

Civitas Maxima, and the GJRP are with the victims, fighting impunity. Together, they created and implemented the [Liberian Quest for Justice](#) outreach campaign. It plays a key role in providing independent reporting from the U.S. courtroom to audiences around the world and through multiple artistic tools seeks to raise awareness of the victims' fight for justice.

To stay informed, follow us on our social media platforms. For additional information, material or questions contact [info@civitas-maxima.org](mailto:info@civitas-maxima.org). Background information on the case in the form of a Q&A can be found [on our website](#).

#### **About the GJRP**

The **Global Justice and Research Project (GJRP)** is a Liberia-based non-profit, non-governmental organization that documents war crimes and, where possible, seeks justice for victims of these crimes, with the full consent of the victims.

For more information and media inquiries go to [www.globaljustice-research.org](http://www.globaljustice-research.org) or contact the GJRP director by phone: **00231777250914**.

#### **About Civitas Maxima**

**Civitas Maxima (CM)**, based in Geneva, ensures the coordination of a network of international lawyers and investigators who work for the interests of those who have been victims of international crimes, particularly war crimes and crimes against humanity.

For more information and media inquiries, go to [www.civitas-maxima.org](http://www.civitas-maxima.org) or contact us via email: [info@civitas-maxima.org](mailto:info@civitas-maxima.org) or by phone: **0041223461243**.



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