

CAR/ICC: 18 years imprisonment for J-P. Bemba

The Hague, 21 June 2016 – The International Criminal Court sentences the former leader of the Movement for the Liberation of Congo, Jean-Pierre Bemba to 18 years' imprisonment for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by his troops in the Central African Republic in 2002-2003. ASF supports the prosecution of other perpetrators of serious crimes committed in CAR, including through the effective establishment of the Special Criminal Court.

On 21 March 2016, the International Criminal Court found Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba responsible for the crimes committed by his forces of the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) against the Central African civilian population between October 2002 and March 2003.

Today, the Court sentences him to 18 years' imprisonment. It did not uphold the requests from the Prosecutor and from the victims to sentence him to more than 25 years' imprisonment. Yet, in its decision, the Court particularly stressed the cruelty of the MLC troops against the civilian population. It further emphasized the particular gravity of his culpable conduct.

"The Court describes how, over a period of approximately 6 months, the MLC troops have committed many acts of pillaging, along with murders and rapes, often committed in the presence of the family members. The acts of rapes were particularly cruel: the MLC troops used to rape several members of a same family and on several occasions. As the Chamber concludes, rapes were used as weapons of war", states Jean-Philippe Kot, ASF Expert in International and Transitional Justice.

In the Court's view, J-P. Bemba did more than tolerate the acts committed by his troops: his failure to sanction them was aimed at encouraging the attacks against the civilian population. Conversely, it did not find the existence of any mitigating circumstances.

Previously, Congolese warlords T. Lubanga and G. Katanga were respectively sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for recruiting children soldiers, and 12 years for complicity in war crimes and crimes against humanity. M. Bemba is the first person convicted by the Court for serious crimes committed in Central African Republic (CAR).

"This conviction is part of a process of fighting impunity of the perpetrators of serious crimes in CAR", explains Adrien Nifasha, Head of Mission in CAR for ASF. "Investigations against other perpetrators of serious crimes also need to be opened. To do so, in complementarity with domestic courts, the CAR Special Criminal Court must be set up and start work", says A. Nifasha.

ASF is present in Bangui (CAR) where it is implementing projects to improve access to justice for persons in vulnerable situation, with the support of the EU and the Embassy of France. ASF is also closely monitoring the establishment of the CAR Special Criminal Court, in close collaboration with other organisations.

For more information about the work of ASF relating to the Special Criminal Court and the J-P Bemba case, you can consult the following documents on the ASF website:

["CAR: More efforts needed to get the Special Criminal Court operating"](#)

(English, French)

["Recommendations for the establishment of the Special Criminal Court in CAR"](#)

(English, French)

["Conviction of Jean-Pierre Bemba: Pending the special criminal court's initial investigations"](#)

(English, Dutch and French)

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