



Press Release : 21 June 2016

# ICC Trial Chamber III sentences Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo to 18 years' imprisonment for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the Central African Republic in 2002-2003

ICC-CPI-20160621-PR1223



Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo in the ICC Courtroom during the delivery of his sentence on 21 June 2016. © ICC-CPI

**Situation:** Central African Republic

**Case:** *The Prosecutor v. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo*

Today, 21 June 2016, Trial Chamber III of the International Criminal Court ("ICC" or "Court") sentenced Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo to 18 years of imprisonment. On 21 March 2016, the Chamber had found Mr Bemba guilty beyond reasonable doubt as a military commander responsible for two counts of crimes against humanity (murder and rape) and three counts of war crimes (murder, rape, and pillaging) committed in the Central African Republic between October 2002 and March 2003. ICC Trial Chamber III is composed of Presiding Judge Sylvia Steiner (Brazil), Judge Joyce Aluoch (Kenya) and Judge Kuniko Ozaki (Japan).

Trial Chamber III delivered the sentence in an open hearing, where Presiding Judge Sylvia Steiner read a summary of the decision. She indicated that the Chamber found the crimes of murder, rape, and pillaging to be of serious gravity. The Chamber also found that two aggravating circumstances applied to the crime of rape: it was committed (i) against particularly defenceless victims and (ii) with particular cruelty. The Chamber also found that one aggravating circumstance applied to the crime of pillaging, which the majority of the Chamber considered to be the particular cruelty with which the crime was committed. The Chamber further found that Mr Bemba's culpable conduct was of serious gravity. Lastly, the Chamber was satisfied that no mitigating circumstances existed in this case.

In light of his conviction, Mr Bemba was sentenced to the following terms of imprisonment:

- Murder as a war crime: 16 years of imprisonment;
- Murder as a crime against humanity: 16 years of imprisonment;
- Rape as a war crime: 18 years of imprisonment;
- Rape as a crime against humanity: 18 years of imprisonment; and
- Pillaging as a war crime: 16 years of imprisonment.

The Chamber considered that the highest sentence imposed, namely, 18 years for rape, reflected the totality of Mr Bemba's culpability and decided that the sentences imposed shall run concurrently. The entire time he has spent in detention in accordance with an order of this Court, since 24 May 2008, will be deducted from his sentence. The Prosecution and the Defence may appeal the sentence on the grounds of disproportion between the crime and the sentence.

The issue of reparations to victims under article 75 of the Statute will be addressed in due course.

## Background

On 21 March 2016, Trial Chamber III [declared](#) Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo guilty beyond any reasonable doubt of two counts of crimes against humanity (murder and rape) and three counts of war crimes (murder, rape, and pillaging). The crimes were committed in the Central African Republic from on or about 26 October 2002 to 15 March 2003 by a contingent of the Mouvement de Libération du Congo troops. Mr Bemba was a person effectively acting as a military commander, who knew that the MLC forces under his effective authority and control were committing or about to commit the crimes charged. The Defence has been granted until 19 September 2016 to file a document in support of the appeal against the decision on the guilt of Mr Bemba.

Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo was arrested by the Belgian authorities on 24 May 2008, pursuant to an ICC arrest warrant, and surrendered to the Court on 3 June 2008. On 15 June 2009, Pre-Trial Chamber II confirmed the charges against him. His trial started on 22 November 2010 and the closing oral statements of parties and participants were delivered on 12 and 13 November 2014. The Chamber granted 5229 persons the status of victims authorised to participate in the proceedings.

Further information on this case is available [here](#).

- **Decision of 21 June 2016 delivered by Trial Chamber III, pursuant to Article 76 of the Rome Statute, in the Bemba case** [English](#)
- **Summary of Trial Chamber III's Decision of 21 June 2016, pursuant to Article 76 of the Statute, in the Bemba case of *The Prosecutor v. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo*** PDF: [English](#); [Français](#)
- **Questions and Answers about the sentence delivered in the Bemba case on 21 June 2016** PDF: [English](#); [Français](#)
- **'Ask the Court' audio-visual programme about the sentence delivered in the Bemba case, 21 June 2016**
  - YouTube (for viewing): [English](#); [Français](#)
  - Video for download: [English](#); [Français](#)
  - Audio for download: [English](#); [Français](#)

- **Photographs:** <https://www.flickr.com/photos/icc-cpi/sets/72157652364795253>
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