

Reaction in connection with the arrest of Jean Pierre Bemba (Former Vice President and Congolese Senator)

**The** Congolese Friends of the Law Club (Club des amis du droit du Congo) applauds the arrest of Senator Jean Pierre Bemba, **President of the Congolese Liberation Movement (*Mouvement de la Libération du Congo*)** whose troops committed serious crimes in the Central African Republic (CAR) between October 2002 and March 2003. This arrest constitutes both a great victory for Central African victims and a clear signal to other perpetrators who continue to enjoy some form of impunity.

In our December 2007 analysis titled "International Criminal Court: Justice of the "small fish"?", we said that the manner in which the investigation into the situation in Central African Republic was led would indicate which direction the court was headed.

Today the Court, through the cooperation of member states, has shown us that it is able to strike hard and fast. The latest arrest is a sign that the Court plans to cut the umbilical cord and break with the ambiguities tied to its creation. It should be noted that this court has been facing several constraints since its inception, especially political constraints, which have the potential to hamper the smooth functioning of the Court. Chief among these is the lack of cooperation from member States, namely Sudan.

The cooperation of Belgium, however, is a model example—one that leads us to believe that asylum will indeed be difficult for people suspected of having committed serious crimes.

**Nonetheless, we** request that the prosecutor pursue all other persons involved in committing crimes in CAR, such as former President Ange Felix Patasse. The credibility of the Court rests on this.

The actions that the Court now takes with regard to the CAR case will thus directly affect how the International Criminal Court will be perceived.

Written on May 26, 2008.  
For Congolese Friends of the Law Club  
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Translation is unofficial and provided by the CICC secretariat.