

\*The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)  
The Central African League for Human Rights (LCDH)  
The Organisation for the Compassion and Development of Families in  
Distress (OCODEFAD)\*

\*Arrest of Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo\*

\*The International Criminal Court Restores Hope to Victims in \*

\*the Central African Republic \*

\*Paris, Bangui, 25 May 2008\* -- FIDH and its member organisations in  
the  
Central African Republic, the Central African League for Human Rights  
(LCDH) and the Organisation for the Compassion and Development of  
Families in Distress (OCODEFAD), applaud the arrest of Jean-Pierre  
Bemba  
Gombo, following a warrant of arrest issued by the International  
Criminal Court (ICC).

Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, former Vice President of the Democratic  
Republic of Congo and President and Commander in Chief of the  
/Mouvement  
de libération du Congo/ (MLC), is alleged to be criminally responsible  
for four counts of war crimes and two counts of crimes against humanity  
committed on the territory of the Central African Republic from 25  
October 2002 to 15 March 2003. There are reasonable grounds to believe  
that under his direction, MLC troops carried out widespread or  
systematic attacks on the civilian population and committed acts of  
rape, torture, outrages upon personal dignity and pillaging.

FIDH and its member organisations were the first to investigate the  
tragic events of 2002 and 2003 (see report : "War Crimes in the Central  
African Republic: "When the Elephants Fight, the Grass Suffers") giving  
an account, through victim testimony, of serious international crimes  
committed by the warring parties during the conflict that pitted the  
loyalist troops of the former president  
<<http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?article1091>>Patassé and his Congolese  
militias against the rebel troops of General Bozizé.

Noting the lack of will and ability of the courts of the Central African Republic to judge the authors of these crimes (see report: "Forgotten, Stigmatized: Double Suffering of Victims of International Crimes") our organisations called upon the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC multiple times to launch an investigation of this situation and to begin to prosecute those at the highest levels of responsibility.

"/The arrest of Jean-Pierre Bemba is a great victory for the victims of the Central African Republic, whose courage and self-sacrifice should be commended today. For six years, in spite of threats and stigmatisation, these victims have not stopped demanding justice. The International Criminal Court finally gives them this right. This is an enormous advance for the fight against impunity in Africa and around the world", /said Souhayr Belhassen, President of FIDH.

\*To find out more : \*\_<http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?rubrique212>\*  
<<http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?article1091>>\_

--

Karine Bonneau  
Responsable du Bureau Justice Internationale  
Director of the International Justice Desk  
FIDH  
17 Passage de la Main d'Or  
75011 Paris  
France  
Tel + 33 (0) 1 43 55 25 18  
Fax + 33 (0) 1 43 55 18 80  
<http://www.fidh.org>