

3 June 2008

Jean-Pierre Bemba's residence in Portugal

Jean-Pierre Bemba, accused of four war crimes and two crimes against humanity, committed in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2002-03, was arrested on 24 May 2008 in Brussels by order of the International Criminal Court (ICC). According to the Court, the forces of the Movement for Liberation of Congo (MLC), led by Bemba, committed systematic attacks, as a general practice, on the CAR's civilian population, including rapes, torture, attacks on individual human dignity and acts of pillage.

The ICC Prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, has publicly stated that: 'There are no excuses for hundreds of rapes. There are no excuses for the rape of a little girl, with her parents watching. There are no excuses for commanders ordering, authorising or acquiescing in the commission of rapes and looting by their forces'.

According to the 26.5.2008 issue of the daily newspaper Diário de Notícias (DN), Bemba, former Vice-President of the CAR, principal political rival of President Kabila, and leader of the MLC, had been living since April 2007 in a luxurious refuge in the Quinta do Lago in Faro, under the protection of the Public Security Police.

Equipped with a Schengen visa, Bemba had travelled to Portugal claiming that he needed medical treatment. According to the DN, he was admitted to Portugal, without requesting political asylum, 'thanks to the (direct) intervention of the President of the Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso'.

1. Is it true that President Barroso intervened, as the DN claims?
2. If so, was President Barroso unaware of the ICC investigation, underway since May 2007?
3. In view of the ICC investigation, how does the Commission justify the statements made by Commissioner Louis Michel, who said that he was surprised by the arrest of Jean-Pierre Bemba, admitted to being in contact with him, refused to make any comments on the case because he did not want to make 'value judgments', and claimed that he knew nothing about the crimes of which Bemba is accused?

Answer:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=P-2008-3176&language=EN>