

**Central African Coalition for the ICC, Press Release No. 02/2008 on the arrest of Mr. Jean Pierre Bemba, 27 May 2008\***

"It is with great satisfaction that the Central Coalition for the ICC welcomed the news of the 24 May 2008 arrest of Mr. Jean Pierre BEMBA, as part of the ICC investigation into the situation in Central African Republic (CAR).

This arrest which comes one year after the decision by the Prosecutor's Office to open an investigation in CAR, demonstrates the effectiveness of the ICC in ensuring compliance with international justice norms. We applaud the Court.

This development inspires great hope that the many victims will finally see justice which is their expectation of the Court.

It is also a signal strong enough to break the culture of immunity that has prevailed in this country for over twelve years.

As was made clear by the ICC Prosecutor, "the arrest of BEMBA is a serious warning to all those who commit, encourage or condone sexual crimes."

Indeed, it is clear that if rape continues to be used as a weapon of war in the DRC and CAR to this day, it is because the perpetrators have never really been the target of the law in their own country, where travesties of justice on the matter are not uncommon.

That is why we depend on the ICC for a fair and independent justice so we can say, "Never again!"

We take this opportunity to ask the Central African Republic to fully and completely cooperate with the ICC so that all the persons involved may have to answer for their acts. "

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\* *Translation is unofficial and provided by CICC Secretariat*