

Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

Freetown, Sierra Leone, 7 April 2003

Status of Detention of the Accused

The Registrar of the Special Court would like to respond to accusations of ill treatment of the Court's detainees, in particular claims recently made in the press on behalf of Mr. Hinga Norman by his family and counsel. These statements, following Ms. Norman's first visit to her father, who is currently held in detention by the Special Court, are incorrect.

The welfare of all detainees is a responsibility which is taken seriously by the Registrar. The Rules of Detention for the Special Court respect international standards of detention and the Court is committed to meeting those standards, now and in the future.

However, the fact remains that those presently in detention are accused of committing crimes under the jurisdiction of the Court and are under detention on remand, or are suspected of committing crimes under the jurisdiction of the Court. There are strict guidelines about the treatment they receive which take into account the rights of the accused and the rights and safety of staff.

The Registrar would like to make it clear that:

" Whatever food is being given to the detainees must, in the interests of health and nutrition, be supervised and approved of by the Medical Officer of the Court;

" Bottled water is available in each cell 24 hours a day.

" The Registrar has seen each of the detainees individually, including Mr. Norman, and had asked them if they had complaints. None of the detainees had any complaints as to their condition of detention;

" Requests by detainees for items of comfort have been received and met. [For example, the detainees have made requests through their duty counsels for items such as bibles, praying mats, and kettles, which have been provided];

" There is a short list of food items that visitors can bring to the detainees: this does not include bottled or canned products which could cause harm to detainees or staff either intentionally or unintentionally.

" Detainees have individual free time outside their cells, and are kept separated in the interests of their own physical safety and that of the staff.

All accused are treated equally before the law. Mr. Norman is not being treated differently to the other detainees. Mr. Norman is, in all ways, being treated in accordance with the Special Court's Rules of

Detention.

The Registrar regrets to note the dissatisfaction of the family of Mr. Norman, but reiterates the Court's fair and equal treatment of all accused currently under detention.

The Registrar would further like to make it known that he has been in consultation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) regarding an independent evaluation of the detention facility, which he hopes will take place soon. He has also invited Amnesty International to visit the Court, and they will be performing their own independent assessment of facilities in May.

The Registrar remains open to requests from independent human rights observer groups to visit the Court and detention facility.

Attached to this press release is a sample menu of the food being provided to the detainees.

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Produced by the
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