

Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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Indictee Bazy Pleads 'Not Guilty'; First Appearances for Suspects Fofana and Kondewa

Special Court indictee Ibrahim Kamara aka 'Bazy' pleaded 'not guilty' Wednesday to charges of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity. The hearing took place in a tiny court room in the town of Bonthe, on Sherbro island off the coast of Sierra Leone. The Special Court's permanent courthouse and detention centre are being built in Freetown.

The seventeen count indictment against Kamara includes charges of terrorizing civilians, sexual violence, use of child soldiers, looting and burning and attacks on United Nations personnel. He was allegedly a commander in the military junta that came to power in May 1997 and was overthrown in February 1998.

Kamara had been arrested last week by members of the Sierra Leone police after a Judge of the Special Court approved the indictment against him. The police then transferred him into the custody of the Court.

Special Court Judge Judge Pierre Boutet was helicoptered to the island from Freetown on Wednesday along with lawyers for the Prosecution and Defence, plus a number of observers and journalists. People from the island were invited to fill the remaining seats of the Court's small public gallery.

Besides Kamara's case, Judge Boutet also held initial hearings for two suspects, Moinina Fofana and Allieu Kondewa, who were arrested last week without charges. The Prosecutor has up to 30 days to request indictments against them.

Defence lawyers for the suspects argued that detaining them is unlawful. Judge Boutet asked that the lawyers submit their arguments in writing so that all three of the Trial Judges of the Court could consider the issue further

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