



Special Court for Sierra Leone

Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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New Principal Defender for the Special Court

Vincent O. Nmehielle, a Nigerian law professor, has been named Principal Defender at the Special Court for Sierra Leone.



Mr Nmehielle has extensive experience in both criminal defence and academic law. In 1990 he received his B.L. (Barrister at Law) degree from the Nigerian Law School, and was called to the Bar the same year.

He received an LL.M. (Master of Laws) degree in International Human Rights Law from the University of Notre Dame Law School in 1996, and a S.J.D. (Doctor of Juridical Science) degree in 2000 from the George Washington University Law School.

Mr Nmehielle has been a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria since 1990, where he practiced law in the firm of Orlu & Company, while lecturing at the Faculty of Law of the Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

From 1998 to 2002, he served as International Law Counsel for the firm Amorrown & Kum, P.A. in the United States.

Since February 2002, Mr Nmehielle has been an Associate Professor of Law at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa. He also held the post of Professorial Lecturer in Law, where he taught at the Oxford/George Washington University Joint Programme in International Human Rights Law at the University of Oxford.

He has written extensively on international human rights law, as well as constitutional law and traditional legal practices in Africa.

The Principal Defender is charged with ensuring the rights of accused persons who appear before the Special Court. In addition, he oversees the defence teams, provides counsel for indigent defendants, advises defence lawyers, and acts as a voice for the defence both inside and outside the Court.

Mr Nmehielle succeeds Simone Monasebian, who announced her intention to leave the Court last February. Ms Monasebian remained at the Court through May, and served on the panel which chose her successor.

#END

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone. It is mandated to bring to justice those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996. To date, the Prosecutor has indicted eleven persons on various charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Nine indictees are currently in the custody of the Court.

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