



Special Court for Sierra Leone
Press and Public Affairs Office

PRESS RELEASE

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Inquiry Finds Special Court Provided Proper Care to Sam Hinga Norman

An inquiry into the events surrounding the death last February of Special Court indictee Sam Hinga Norman has concluded that proper care was provided to Mr. Norman during the entire time he spent in Special Court custody.

Mr. Norman died of a myocardial infarction, commonly called a “heart attack”, in Dakar, Senegal where he had been taken for hip replacement surgery. An independent autopsy found that he died of natural causes, and that his death was unrelated to the treatment which he received.

On February 23, Special Court President Justice George Gelaga-King appointed Justice Renate Winter to head an inquiry to look into the circumstances of Mr. Norman’s death. Justice Winter submitted that report to the President today.

Among the report’s key findings:

1. Mr. Norman died at L’Hopital Aristide Le Dantec on Thursday, 22 February, at around 11:00. He died in the presence of the Special Court’s Medical Officer and the Senegalese doctors and nurses who were called in to resuscitate him.
2. An autopsy with full pathological and toxicological examinations was conducted by independent pathologists. The findings of this inquiry confirmed that Mr. Norman died of natural causes from a myocardial infarction. There were no indications of violence, nor was poison found in his body.
3. Security at the hospital was tight. Outside security was provided by Senegalese security officers, and inside by both Senegalese security officers and security officers from the Special Court.
4. Allegations made by some media outlets and by Mr. Norman himself that he was being poisoned were completely unfounded.
5. Throughout his detention, Mr. Norman was treated by the Special Court’s Medical Officer. He arranged Mr. Norman’s treatment in accordance with the available advice of other medical specialists.
6. Registry staff responded quickly to Mr. Norman’s need for medical treatment, and ensured that adequate medical treatment was provided.
7. Mr. Norman had cardiac problems at the time of his arrival at the Court’s detention facility in 2003. Throughout his detention, the Special Court’s Medical Officer regularly checked Mr. Norman’s cardiac health.
8. During his detention, Mr. Norman suffered from several other health problems which were immediately looked after. For any medical problem which required a specialised opinion, treatment was reviewed by specialists and regular check-ups were made.
9. Mr. Norman refused the doctor’s advice to follow a healthier lifestyle. When asked a second time

to do so he stated that he might be poisoned.

“In light of the above considerations, I find that proper care was taken by the Special Court for Sierra Leone in the furnishment and provision of medical care for the late Mr. Sam Hinga Norman during the entire time that he spent at the Special Court for Sierra Leone in Detention”, Justice Winter concluded.

She noted that, apart from Senegal, no country had volunteered to provide medical assistance to treat Mr. Norman’s hip problem. The Special Court therefore had no other option than to transfer Mr. Norman, with his consent, to L’Hopital Aristide le Dantec in Dakar.

“I, therefore, find no reason to believe that the concerned authorities of the Special Court for Sierra Leone have failed in providing the best possible medical treatment available”, Justice Winter said.

“Concerning the medical care provided at L’Hopital Aristide le Dantec, I find, taking into consideration the evaluation of the independent medical expert, that international standards in diagnosis and treatment have been upheld”.

Justice Winter recommended that the Registrar continue to try and conclude an agreement with foreign states willing to provide medical assistance where such medical assistance is not available in Sierra Leone “well before the occasion to transfer a detainee may arise”.

#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.

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Press and Public Affairs Office
Special Court for Sierra Leone
Mobile: 232 76 655 237
Email: SCSL-pressoffice@un.org

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