

## Making Justice Work: The Bemba Case and the ICC's Future

By [Tatiana Carayannis](#)

On March 21, 2016, the International Criminal Court (ICC) found Congolese rebel leader turned politician [Jean-Pierre Bemba guilty](#) of war crimes and crimes against humanity. After holding Bemba in detention for nearly eight years, the court determined that Bemba failed to stop his Mouvement de Libération du Congo (MLC) troops from committing atrocities against civilians in the Central African Republic (CAR) during an attempted coup there in 2002–3. Bemba remains in detention pending sentencing and a judgement on reparations.

Bemba's conviction marks much more than the end of a successful prosecution at the ICC. It establishes that [commanders are responsible](#) for the actions of their troops, even if they did not directly order the actions, and even if those soldiers are part of a non-state militia. The decision is also a triumph for advocates against sexual violence, as it holds Bemba responsible for the rape and assault committed by his MLC troops. And for the ICC, the case confirms that the court can prosecute war crimes trials and obtain convictions—a major win for an institution with a checkered record.

To read the full piece please see – [Foreign Affairs](#).

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