



HRSP NEWSLETTER

U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division, Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section

May 2018

Former Liberian Warlord Known As “Jungle Jabbah” Sentenced To 30 Years in Prison For Immigration Fraud And Perjury

Mohammed Jabbateh, a violent and ruthless Liberian warlord also known as “Jungle Jabbah,” who had been living in East Lansdowne, Pennsylvania, was sentenced on April 19, 2018 to 30 years in prison by U.S. District Judge Paul S. Diamond. Jabbateh, 51, was found guilty in October of two counts of fraud in immigration documents and two counts of perjury.

During the height of Liberia’s first civil war from 1992 to 1995, Jabbateh, while serving as commander of a warring faction known as the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), committed various acts of shocking brutality including rapes, sexual enslavement, slave labor, murder, mutilation, and ritual cannibalism. He also used children as soldiers.

“This defendant committed acts of such violence and depravity that they are almost beyond belief,” said U.S. Attorney William M. McSwain. “This man is responsible for atrocities that will ripple for generations in Liberia. He thought he could hide here but thanks to the determination and creativity of our prosecutors and investigators, he couldn’t. This prosecution was our only option under the law and his sentence achieves at least some measure of justice for his victims.”

According to trial testimony, in one instance Jabbateh ordered the heart of a captive be cooked and fed to his fighters. In another, fighters under the defendant’s command murdered a villager, removed his heart and ordered the town chief’s wife to cook it. Jabbateh later had the town chief himself murdered and ordered his widow to cook her husband’s heart.

In December 1998, when making an application for asylum, and later for permanent legal residency, the defendant was not truthful about his activities during Liberia’s first civil war while he was a member of the ULIMO and later ULIMO-K rebel groups that battled for control of Liberia.

At Jabbateh’s trial, during two weeks of testimony from some two dozen witnesses, including 17 Liberian victims, the jury heard evidence that Jabbateh, as a ULIMO commander, either personally committed or ordered ULIMO fighters under his command to commit the following offenses: the murder of civilian noncombatants; the sexual enslavement of women; the maiming, torturing, and enslavement of civilian noncombatants; the conscription of child soldiers; the execution of prisoners of war; the desecration of corpses and ritual consumption of human flesh; and the killing of persons because of race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, or political opinion.

“Let today’s sentencing serve as an example of Homeland Security Investigations’ (HSI’s) commitment to bring to justice individuals such as Mr. Jabbateh,” said Marlon Miller, Special Agent in Charge of HSI’s Philadelphia office. “Human rights violators will not evade justice and will be held accountable for their crimes committed abroad, nor will they find refuge here in the United States.”

The case was investigated by HSI Special Agents Mark Gilland, Tom Eyre, and Al Cabrelli, along with HSI Supervisory Special Agent Brian Jones. Also aiding in the investigation were Africa research specialist Marian Drake and victim assistance specialist Jackie Goldstein. The Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section (HRSP) of DOJ’s Criminal Division provided assistance during the investigation. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Linwood C. Wright, Jr. and Nelson S.T. Thayer, Jr. of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

People with information about former human rights violators in the United States are urged to contact U.S. law enforcement: Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section at 1-800-813-5863; Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 1-800-347-2423 or online tip form at <http://www.ice.gov/exec/forms/hsi-tips/tips.asp>); and FBI’s International Human Rights Unit tips form at <https://tips.fbi.gov>.

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