



HRSP NEWSLETTER

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

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Former Liberian Civil War Commander Found Guilty of Immigration Fraud and Perjury

On October 18, 2017, Mohammed Jabbateh, a/k/a “Jungle Jabbah,” 51, a citizen of Liberia residing in East Lansdowne, PA, was found guilty by a federal jury in Philadelphia of two counts of fraud in immigration documents and two counts of perjury. In December 1998, when applying for asylum and later for permanent legal residency, Jabbateh was not truthful about his activities during Liberia’s first civil war while he was a member of the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), and later ULIMO-K, rebel groups that battled for control of Liberia. Jabbateh was a battalion commander in ULIMO and ULIMO-K. In January 1999, during the asylum seeking process, Jabbateh was interviewed by a United States asylum officer for purposes of determining whether his application should be granted. The jury heard evidence that Jabbateh falsely responded “No” to the following two queries: 1) “[H]ave you ever committed a crime?”; and 2) “[H]ave you ever harmed anyone else?” On or about December 23, 1999, Jabbateh received asylum, largely based upon his answers to these and other questions posed on his asylum application and his answers to questions posed during his asylum application interview.

Later, when Jabbateh applied for legal permanent residency by filing a Form I-485 with United States immigration authorities, he falsely responded “No” to the following two questions:

“Have you ever engaged in genocide, or otherwise ordered, incited, assisted or otherwise participated in the killing of any person because of race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin or political opinion?” and “Are you under a final order of civil penalty for violating section 274C of the Immigration and Nationality Act for use of fraudulent documents or have you, by fraud or willful misrepresentation of a material fact, ever sought to procure, or procured, a visa, other documentation, entry into the U.S. or any immigration benefit?”

The jury found that Jabbateh knew his answers to these two questions were false in that he had ordered, incited, assisted, and otherwise participated in the killing of any person because of religion, nationality, ethnic origin, and political opinion and knew that he had procured asylum in the United States by fraud and willful misrepresentation of material fact.

During the course of two weeks of testimony from over two dozen witnesses that included 17 Liberian victims and eyewitnesses, the jury heard evidence that Jabbateh, as a ULIMO commander in the early 1990s, either personally committed or ordered ULIMO fighters under his command to commit the following nonexclusive list of acts: 1) the murder of civilian noncombatants; 2) the sexual enslavement of women; 3) the public raping of women; 4) the maiming of civilian noncombatants; 5) the torturing of civilian noncombatants 6) the enslavement of civilian noncombatants; 7) the conscription of child soldiers; 8) the execution of prisoners of war; 9) the desecration and mutilation of corpses and ritual consumption of human flesh, including human

hearts; and 10) the killing of persons because of race, religion, nationality, ethnic origin or political opinion.

“Jabbateh sought to escape to the United States and start anew, where he lied about his extensive and horrific criminal background on federal immigration forms and to the faces of U.S. immigration officers,” said Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania Louis D. Lappen. “Jabbateh committed atrocities in Liberia that ravaged communities in ways that will be felt for generations. This office has rarely if ever seen such an abuse of our immigration process, and we are incredibly proud of the efforts of law enforcement and the victim witnesses who helped bring this man to justice.”

At sentencing, Jabbateh faces a maximum possible sentence of 30 years in prison, a possible fine, a \$400 special assessment, and a period of supervised release.

The case was investigated by U.S. Homeland Security Investigations and Assistant United States Attorneys Linwood C. Wright, Jr. and Nelson S.T. Thayer, Jr. handled the prosecution. The Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section (HRSP) of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Criminal Division provided assistance during the investigation.

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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