

**INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR**

WITNESS STATEMENT

WITNESS INFORMATION

Last Name: KPADEMONA

Gender: Male

First Name: Thierry

Father's Name: [REDACTED]

Other names used: None

Mother's Name: [REDACTED]

Place of Birth: Bambari, CAR

ID number: Passport No [REDACTED]

Date of Birth: 1 October 1972

Nationality(s): Central African Republic

Ethnicity: Gbaya

Religion: Catholic

Language(s) Spoken: Gbaya, Sango and French

Language(s) Written: French, Sango

Language(s) Used in Interview: Sango and English

Occupation: Director of YAMWARA School

Place of Interview: BANGUI, CAR

Date(s) and Time(s) of Interview: 21 January 2020: 14:50 – 17:15

22 January 2020: 15:00 – 16:10

23 January 2020: 14:45 – 16:10

30 January 2020: 08:05 – 10.45

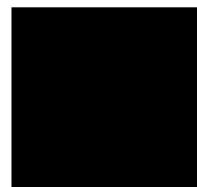
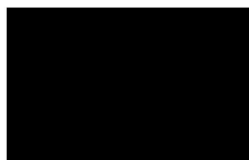
Names of all persons present during interview

[REDACTED] (Investigator)

[REDACTED] (Associate Investigator),

[REDACTED] (Interpreter) and

Thierry KPADEMONA (Witness)



Signature(s)

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Signature]

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WITNESS STATEMENT

Procedure

1. I was introduced to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and told that they are investigators with the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the International Criminal Court (ICC). I was introduced to [REDACTED] and told that he is an interpreter with the ICC.
2. The investigators explained to me what the ICC is and described its mandate. They explained the role and mandate of the OTP within the ICC.
3. The investigators explained to me that they are investigating events that took place in Central African Republic since 1st August 2012 until present. I was informed that the OTP is contacting me because they believe I may have information relevant for establishing the truth.
4. I agree that this interview will be conducted in the Sango language. I fully understand and speak the Sango language.
5. The investigators explained to me that I do not have to answer their questions but if I do, I have to tell the truth.
6. I was informed that any information I give to the OTP, including my identity, may be shared with the parties of the proceedings at the ICC; in particular the Judges, Accused persons, the Counsel of the Accused and the legal representatives of the victims.
7. The investigators have explained to me the reasons and importance of keeping my contacts with the OTP confidential, which I fully understand.
8. Having understood all the above issues, I confirmed my willingness to answer the investigators' questions.
9. The investigators explained to me how the interview was going to be conducted. I was told that I need to be as accurate as possible in my account and that I state when I do not know or do not understand the question. I understand that I need to distinguish between what I have experienced or seen myself and what I have heard or learned about from someone else.

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10. I was told that at the conclusion of the interview, I would be asked to sign a written statement after having had the opportunity to review it, make any corrections, or add additional information.

Previous statement

11. I was asked by the investigators if I have made any statements to any government or non-government organisation other than the OTP regarding witnessing attacks in the Central African Republic during the period from August 2012 to today. I have not made any statements.

Background

12. I was born on 1 October 1972 in BAMBARI, Central African Republic. I am from the Gbaya tribe. I am a Catholic. [REDACTED]

13. [REDACTED]

Instead of university, I attended a professional school called *Ecole Normale des Instituteurs* known as ENI, to have vocational training to be a director of school. I completed my training at ENI in 2002.

14. After the completion of ENI, I was first assigned to work at the WAPO School located approximately 8 km away from BERBERATI. In 2005, I was transferred to KOKORO 1 School which is located next to the BANGUI airport. In 2012, I was transferred to KOKORO 2 School and became one of four directors at the school. KOKORO 2 School is known as YAMWARA School. YAMWARA is an old name of the school and it is currently called KOKORO 2 School. When I was transferred to this school in 2012, the name of the school was KOKORO 2. In this statement, I would like to use the name "YAMWARA" rather than KOKORO 2 to avoid any confusion.

YAMWARA School

15. The school was originally established in 1979 as a Protestant Church school named after a pastor called GNAMWARA. In 1983 the school became a public school and was named KOKORO 2 after the area in which it was located.

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16. I am currently one of four directors at YAMWARA School. The other three directors are Director NISSAN, Director LANGAOTO and Director WANFIO. [REDACTED] a former Director is now retired had been allocated a residence within the school grounds. She was living there with her family. However, she left the school when the Anti-Balaka came to YAMWARA School. There are 26 teachers in total working at the school. Each director supervises six to eight teachers and manages one quarter of the school's establishment.
17. YAMWARA School used to be mixed public school with both Christian children and Muslim children but it is currently solely a Christian school after the recent conflict, which started in 2013.
18. Students were divided into two groups according to their gender and they attend classes either in the morning or afternoon. For instance, male students attend school in the morning and female students attend school in the afternoon. In the following week, this schedule changes. Female students attend the school in the morning and male students attend in the afternoon. A morning session starts at 7:00 hours and ends at 12:00 hours. An afternoon session starts at 12:00 hours and ends at 16:00 hours
19. As one of the school directors, I sometimes communicate with mayors and local chiefs. If any problem comes up, I am supposed to see them in the town hall to discuss any issues. However, the school does not receive any material support from the town hall. The town hall supports the school only when there is a ceremony or local event at the school. The local community and parents of students provide support for the school. For instance, they financially contribute to the purchase of school equipment such as chairs, benches and tables.
20. The school comes under the overall authority of the main town hall in BIMBO. The secondary smaller town hall in BOEING neighbourhood is also responsible for the school and more involved in day to day issues. The town hall in BOEING is located next to the police station and approximately 200-300 meters away from the school. The current Mayor of the town hall in BOEING is a female but I do not recall her name.
21. The school also comes under the administration of two local chiefs. One chief in charge of "*Quartier Kokoro Source*", located to the north of the school is Gabriel MASSOPGOMBI. The other chief in charge of "*Quartier Cite de la Paix*" located to the west of the school is Laurent BANTA. As far as I know, both of them had remained in their neighbourhoods during the conflict but they might have fled from time to time to avoid being attacked by Anti-Balaka elements and then later returned.



The Seleka

22. When the Seleka came to the Central African Republic, I was not in BANGUI. I was out of the country on a break. I saw the Seleka for the first time when I was traveling back from Bertoua, Cameroon to BANGUI. On 15th June 2013, I arrived in YALoke town at around 1:00 am. My plan was to stay in YALoke town. At around 2:00 am, I heard gun shots outside and I went out from my accommodation. I saw many people running to flee from the town. I also attempted to flee, but I fell down on the road and I was captured by Seleka elements. I had been returning to BANGUI with other teachers. The Seleka took me to the office of Gendarmerie in YALoke town which they had been occupying. I was kept there. They threatened me and took my personal belongings. After sometime, I was released by them and continued my travel to BANGUI through the bush with other teachers.
23. Upon arriving in PK12, BANGUI, we came across a checkpoint established by the Seleka. We showed our professional ID cards which indicated that we were school teachers. We also explained to them that we were teachers and we were not a security threat. The Seleka checked our fingers to find out any mark or indication on our fingers that we had used a gun. We were allowed to enter BANGUI when they were convinced that we were not fighters. I went back to the YAMWARA School area. I saw Seleka elements patrolling in the area to protect Muslim people but they did not cause problems to the Christian population locally.

Emergence of the Anti-Balaka

24. In around November 2013, I started hearing about the Anti-Balaka. They were trying to come to BANGUI. On 5th December 2013, I heard from people in my neighbourhood that the Anti-Balaka launched an attack in BANGUI on that day. At that time, I was residing with my family in [REDACTED] which was located approximately [REDACTED]. The Chief of the Quartier was a man named [REDACTED]. After this attack of the 5th December 2013, my spouse and children evacuated to the Ledger IDP camp at the airport to seek refuge. My spouse and children decided to flee because the Anti Balaka warned that there was going to be fighting at that they should leave to avoid getting caught up in the fighting. Many Muslim families fled because of the 5th December attack, because they feared being killed because this was now a fight between Christians and Muslims. Muslims were regarded as being the Seleka by the Anti-Balaka. I heard this from the Anti-Balaka elements. They fled to PK 5. Many Muslim civilians were killed because they were caught by surprise and killed by the Anti-Balaka during this attack. I stayed at my residence during the attack, fearing to come out, but when the attack had quietened down I came outside and saw many bodies laying on the ground. I saw that they were my Muslim neighbours. Once all the Muslims had fled things were calmer and I went to visit YAMWARA School from time to time, and I

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saw that the Anti-Balaka had established a base at the school. From this base they were very close to PK5 and from time to time there was exchanges of gun fire with the Seleka at PK5 from the barriers that the Anti-Balaka had established near to the school.

The Anti-Balaka occupation at YAMWARA School

25. On 5th December 2013, the Anti-Balaka elements were repelled by the Seleka and they then came to YAMWARA School in the early hours of the 6th December and established a base there. I was in [REDACTED] and saw the Anti-Balaka going towards the school. From then until they left to go to LOBAYE, the school was occupied by the Anti-Balaka. I passed by the school on a daily basis and checked what was going on there.
26. I saw the first group of the Anti-Balaka arriving in YAMWARA School on foot on 5th December 2013. I saw some of them wearing full military uniforms, some wearing partial military uniforms and others wearing civilian clothes. Some Anti-Balaka had guns, knives or hand-made hunting weapons such as bows and arrows. There were approximately 200 elements in total being stationed in the school. Amongst them, I saw male elements and female elements as well as children. I would estimate they were aged between 18 and 25 years of age. Investigators have asked me if I saw children younger than 18 years old at YAMWARA School but I do not recall if I saw young children. I believed some of the elements were from BOSSANGOA and outside of BANGUI, because those people who went and returned from their farms told us about a group called the Anti-Balaka that was forming in the bush.
27. I saw some Anti-Balaka being stationed in the house [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
that he had been killed, not in the fighting. I do not know how or why he was killed.
28. I heard from local people in my neighbourhood that YEKATOM was the leader of the Anti-Balaka group at YAMWARA School. He was also known as RAMBO. YEKATOM was well-known in my neighbourhood. I had personally known him before the conflict and I have seen him around the PK5 area. He was a military man, who I had often seen in his uniform. He did not have a bad reputation, he was regarded as being a brave man because it was known he had been on military

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deployment many times. He was known as RAMBO. He later became a MP. He did not have bad reputation before the conflict but it became bad after he had occupied YAMWARA School. Because of the bad behaviour of his elements and because he did nothing to prevent it and he was the leader, encouraging them to attack PK5, he developed a bad reputation. YEKATOM occupied a house near YAMWARA School, the occupants having fled. The actual owner was a deceased military man. The occupiers were Christians who fled because of the conflict.

29. Another Anti-Balaka leader called COEUR DE LION occupied a house belonging to a Muslim man who had also fled. I do not recall his name, but I knew him because he was local to the school. The house was located behind the residence of Chief BANTA near the school. COEUR DE LION is his nickname but I do not know his real name. I heard from local people that he was killed after the Anti-Balaka left for LOBAYE.
30. One of the other Anti-Balaka elements named [REDACTED] [REDACTED] It was located near YAMWARA School. [REDACTED] He was from the military man and held the rank of Lieutenant. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] had fled from his house before the Anti-Balaka came to the school although he had converted to Christianity. He still feared being killed by the Anti-Balaka.
31. There were two checkpoints established by the Anti-Balaka on the main roads around YAMWARA School as soon as they occupied the school. One checkpoint was on the road to AVICOM, a former poultry farm and the other was on the road to the Ali Church near PK5.
32. When passing through checkpoints, everyone had to show a mobile phone to the Anti Balaka elements. They would check the contact list of the mobile phone to see if any Muslim name is saved. If there is no Muslim name in the contact list, you would be able to proceed through the checkpoint. On the other hand, if they found any Muslim name, they would ask you why there is a Muslim name and they would detain the person for 48 hours or 72 hours. If you are unable to justify having a Muslim contact number, you could be killed. I heard this from people who had been captured by the Anti-Balaka for this reason. I had heard about people being captured, taken prisoner and later being killed within the school. I learned this from women who were buying chickens from the Anti-Balaka that had been stolen from AVICOM.
33. One of those captured by the Anti-Balaka was a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] He is a local from the neighbourhood of YAMWARA School. I heard [REDACTED]



from [REDACTED] himself that he had been captured by the Anti-Balaka in SAKAI where the Anti-Balaka had a base and were fighting the Seleka. He was selling [REDACTED] to people including Muslims in the area at that time. The Anti-Balaka stopped him and checked his mobile phone. They accused him of collaboration with the Seleka and took him prisoner. They also took money from him. I heard this happened before 5th December 2013. [REDACTED] was eventually released because local women pleaded for his release with the Anti-Balaka. I do not know who those women were.

34. I personally experienced having my mobile phone checked by the Anti-Balaka only once. Shortly after 5th December 2013, I tried to pass through their checkpoint near YAMWARA School and my mobile phone was checked by the Anti-Balaka but they did not find any Muslim name in my phone. After that I could pass through without them checking my mobile phone, as they knew who I was.
35. Since the Anti-Balaka came and occupied YAMWARA School on 5th December 2013, they attacked and killed not only Muslims but also Christians who had telephone numbers of Muslims. They were suspected of providing information to Muslims and considered as traitors. The neighbourhood around the school area used to be mixed with Muslims and Christians, but many Muslims left after the Anti-Balaka's occupation. I heard from local people that approximately 15 to 16 people were killed by the Anti-Balaka. I do not know how many Muslims would have fled or where this information could be obtained from. There were more Christian than Muslims in the area before the Anti-Balaka occupation. I know one Muslim man called *El hadi* WAIKOS. This was his nickname. He was originally from the GANA area where many Muslims resided. I heard that he was taken to BIMBO and killed by the Anti-Balaka there. I know another man killed by the Anti-Balaka. His name was Blaise KOUZOUYO, a Christian. He was accused of being a traitor because he worked in PK5.
36. One day, I went to the school and saw the Anti-Balaka destroying benches in the school premises. I saw a group of about 15 to 30 elements. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] although some of the local population freely associated with Anti-Balaka elements. This was the only time I dealt with the Anti-Balaka. From that time. I stopped any contact with them.
37. When DJOTODIA left BANGUI, YEKATOM's group of the Anti-Balaka left YAMWARA School. I do not recall when it was but I believed it was in 2014. The Anti-Balaka elements who were close to YEKATOM left the school with him but elements who were not close to him defected from the Anti-Balaka and left the school on the same day. They returned to their normal lives in the neighbourhood



and I saw them in the area. All of the school furniture was destroyed and the school was very dirty, but the buildings themselves were intact, although doors and windows were removed from the School Director's house.

Grave sites and exhumation in the YAMWARA School premises

38. I am aware that the Anti-Balaka group based in YAMWARA School killed people and threw bodies into holes in the ground within the school premises. Once again I heard this from women who used to visit the school to buy chickens. There were three grave sites on the premises that I can recall. I knew this because, after the Anti-Balaka left in 2014 I cannot remember the month, I came back to the school and saw obvious disturbances on the ground that looked like graves. They looked like mounds of earth on the ground and such mounds had not existed before the Anti Balaka occupation.
39. In 2015, a group of people came to my residence. They greeted me and introduced themselves as being from two non-governmental organization called the FSD and IRAD. I do not know what the initials stand for. They explained to me that they were going to exhume graves in the school premises and wanted to obtain my permission and asked me to be present during their exhumation activities.
40. The Chief of Quartier, BANTA also came to the school. He seemed to know that these NGO people were coming. He might have been informed of their activities in advance. He guided them to the three graves.
41. Chief BANTA and I were present while they were exhuming the graves but I was keeping distance from the graves as I did not want to see. Nonetheless, I could see human bones being recovered from the graves, but not flesh. There was no smell from the graves. I do not remember if I saw clothes with the bones from the graves. I did not know if these bones were male or female and how they were killed. I saw that small coffins had been prepared to put the bones in by the team from the NGO. The coffins were then taken to somewhere but I do not know where they were taken.
42. I heard from the exhumation team members that in total 10 bodies were exhumed from three graves: five bodies were exhumed from one grave; three bodies were exhumed from another grave; and two bodies were exhumed from another grave.
43. I can identify these locations on a satellite image which I produce as Annex A
44. YAMWARA School was eventually reopened in 2015 after the exhumations. Parents of students did not wish to send their children to the school until the exhumations

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had been complete because they did not want children to see or touch the graves within the school premises.

Other potential grave sites

45. As well as the three graves that were exhumed within the YAMWARA School premises, I heard that another grave was located approximately 200 or 300 meters away from the school and it was near an intersection to the airport. I do not know the exact location. As far as I know, that grave was not exhumed.

Satellite imagery shown

46. The investigators showed me a hardcopy of satellite imagery (Annex A). They explained to me that this satellite imagery is from a computer programme called Google Earth and it shows the area of YAMWARA School. I was able to recognise the school premises. They asked me to identify relevant locations that I have mentioned in this statement. I was able to identify the location of the three graves within the school premises that were exhumed.

- A grave where two bodies were exhumed (marked **site 1**);
- A grave where five bodies were exhumed (marked **site 2**);
- A grave where three bodies were exhumed (marked **site 3**).

47. I was also able to identify buildings in and around the school premises as follows: [REDACTED] (marked A); classroom building (marked B); classroom building (marked C); classroom building (marked D); classroom building (marked E); Toilet blocks (marked F); Toilet blocks (marked G); a private house (marked H) belonging to a man called [REDACTED] a Christian who fled the conflict leaving the house empty; a private property (marked I) belonging to a [REDACTED] a Christian who fled the conflict, leaving the house empty ; a private property (marked J) belonged to a [REDACTED] another Christian who fled the crisis leaving the house empty ; the house YEKATOM occupied (marked K); the house COEUR DE LION occupied is not on the picture but it is situated behind the house marked M; and the house Anti-Balaka [REDACTED] occupied (marked M).



Photographs shown

48. The investigator showed me three photographs and asked if I could recognise anything in these photographs and make any comment.

- Photograph (ERN:CAR-OTP-2119-0187) (Annex B)
I can recognise that this area is approximately 200 meters away from the school. It is a football field near to an intersection of several roads. The roads go towards where [REDACTED] lives and the airport and the other to the main road.
- Photograph (ERN: CAR-OTP-2119-0188) (Annex C)
I can recognise the baobab tree in the photograph. This is at the same location as the previous photograph. The buildings in the background of the photograph did not exist during the time of the conflict. I do not know personally if bodies were exhumed from there.
- Photograph (ERN: CAR-OTP-2119-0193)(Annex D)
I recognise this location. The big stone in the centre of the photograph is a foundation stone for a church that was never built. The stone was put there before the conflict. A church was supposed to be built there but it has not been built yet. This was done by some residents of CATTIN. The stone has since been re-painted. I believe bodies were buried in this location but I do not know the details.

Engagement with OTP Investigators

49. On 27th November 2017, I met two male staff members from the Office of the Prosecutor, International Criminal Court. They came to my residence in YAMWARA School and asked my permission for their investigative activities in the school premises. I showed them the location of graves that had been exhumed at the school and they took photographs
50. On 25th January 2020, I was present when OTP investigators came to the school to take photographs. I accompanied the investigators and showed them the grave sites that I have indicated on Annex A. In addition I allowed them access to one of the classroom blocks in order to take photographs of the interior. The interior is unchanged from when the Anti-Balaka occupied the school, except for the furniture which we had to replace.

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ANNEXES

Annex A: A hard copy of satellite imagery showing the YAMWARA School area

Annex B: Photograph ERN CAR-OTP-2119-0187

Annex C: Photograph ERN CAR-OTP-2119-0188

Annex D: Photograph ERN CAR-OTP-2119-019

Closing Procedure

51. I was informed that individuals who according to the judges qualify as victims will be entitled to participate in future court proceedings and potentially to receive reparations. I was informed of the existence of the Victims' Participation and Reparation Section and its function, as well as on the procedure for applications. I consent to my personal data being shared with the Victims' Participation and Reparation Unit.
52. I was informed that I may be called to testify before the Court. It was brought to my attention that ICC trials are held in public and explained to me that, as an exception to the principle of public hearings, the judges may apply protective measures to those testifying if circumstances require.
53. The investigators informed me of the protective measures that may apply during and after the investigation and/or trial proceeding.
54. I have nothing to add to the above statement nor do I have anything to clarify. I am available to be contacted in the future for clarifications or questions on topics not covered during this interview.
55. I have given the answers to the questions of my own free will.
56. There has not been any form of coercion, duress, threat, promise or inducement which has influenced my account.
57. I have no complaints about the way I was treated during this interview.

WITNESS ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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This statement has been read over to me in the Sango language. It is true to the best of my knowledge and recollection. I have given this statement voluntarily and I am aware that it may be used in legal proceedings before the International Criminal Court and that I may be called to give evidence in public before the International Criminal Court.



INTERPRETER CERTIFICATION

1. I,  certify that:
2. I am duly qualified to interpret from the Sango language into the English language and from the English language into the Sango language.
3. I have been informed by Thierry KPADEMONA that he speaks and understands the Sango language.
4. I have orally translated the above statement from the English language to the Sango language in the presence of Thierry KPADEMONA who appeared to have heard and understood my translation of this statement.
5. Thierry KPADEMONA has acknowledged that the facts and matters set out in his statement, as translated by me, are true to the best of his knowledge and recollection and has accordingly signed his signature 

Signed: 

Dated: 30. 01. 2020



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