

THE SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

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For Immediate Release:

Prosecutor for the Special Court Begins Holding 'Town Hall' Meetings

The Prosecutor of the Special Court, David M. Crane, went to Kono district of Sierra Leone yesterday to meet with hundreds of people from the community. He listened as they spoke of their hopes and concerns regarding his work.

One woman told Crane, "You need to help us create a society in which we will no longer have mass atrocities." Many who came forward during the two hour meeting, held next to the burned out Koidu Community Center, were victims of the decade long civil war. Others were ex-combatants, youth groups, school teachers, and local traditional leaders. They expressed their visions of how the Prosecutor could help deliver justice in Sierra Leone and move the country forward to a period of sustained peace.

The office of the prosecutor as well as the registry of the new international court began functioning in Freetown in August. Judges are to be sworn in by the end of the year. The international criminal court has three years to complete its work.

Crane assured those in the gathering of the vigor with which he will undertake his mandate. "No one in the world deserves to suffer in the way that the people of your district have suffered," he said. "Justice cannot be reserved only for the rich. It is the right of every person in the world, no matter how poor," he added.

Crane followed with a pledge: "I will not be influenced by anyone or anything other than the interests of the people of Sierra Leone."

One ex-combatant at the meeting asked the Prosecutor whether he plans to indict those who directed the fighting from afar. Crane responded, "I will go wherever the evidence takes me -- commanders, their backers, and anyone else who bears the greatest responsibility."

Another resident asked whether the Prosecutor would indict perpetrators who were currently in the army. Crane repeated his point, "I will go where the evidence leads. No one is above the law."

The event was the first of a series of 'town hall' meetings the Office of the Prosecutor is planning to hold in districts throughout Sierra Leone, said Tom Perriello, who coordinates outreach for the Prosecutor. "We need to hear the concerns and suggestions of all Sierra Leoneans."

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