



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Ellis Odjurhe (Part 1 of 4)



Role:	Prison Operations Officer
Country of Origin:	Nigeria
Interview Date:	16 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewer:	Lisa P. Nathan
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Ellis Odjurhe speaks about his responsibilities as a Prison Operations Officer where he oversees the daily operations of the Tribunal's detention facilities. He stresses the need for improved security measures to adequately protect detainees and prison staff. He also emphasizes the need for rules to apply equally to judges, lawyers, investigators and others. Odjurhe further calls attention to the Tribunal's humanitarian and high quality detention services that stand in contrast with the poverty and harassment many detainees face after release.

The transcript of Part 1 begins on the following page.

Part 1

- 00:00** Lisa P. Nathan: Thank you for your time, greatly appreciate it, we know that you are very busy. So I will ask you questions and some of them I may ask "why" just so I understand better or if I don't understand a technical term because this is not my area.
- 00:15 Okay.
- 00:16** LPN: So to begin with could you tell me your name and what country you are from?
- 00:20 Okay, my name is Ellis Odjurhe. I'm a Nigerian.
- 00:28** LPN: And what is your role here?
- 00:31 At the detention, this, at the detention facility here I'm here as the OIC Operations, which means that I take care of the daily operations of the, of the detention facility.
- 00:48** LPN: So can you tell me about your background before you came here?
- 00:50 Okay. Before I came here I was in the Nigerian police force for 21 years, and during the course of that I had the privilege of serving with the UN as a Training Officer in Cambodia. That was in 1992 to '93. I was responsible for training of the police in a (___)-, a particular province known as Kampong Cham. At the end of the mission I, I went back to Nigeria and when I returned to Nigeria I continued with my duties as a police officer. In fact I was of the rank of an Assistant Superintendent.
- 01:39 After about a year I decided to go on a voluntary retirement from the police force. And immediately I left the police, I mean about three years after I left the police force I just thought of coming to join the UN again, having had a taste of it, before I, I thought of coming to join the UN again to give me an opportunity to, you know, mix with people from various part of the world. So that's how I found myself here.
- 02:19 And when I got here in 1998, at first I was at the headquarters there; that's the ICTR Headquarters. After about a year, I was, I was moved here and I was here as a team leader for a number of years, about seven years.
- 02:48 Then during that period I was acting occasion-, occasionally as OIC Operation whenever the incumbent was on leave. And eventually some time last year I was asked, I mean I was asked to come and assume the position of the OIC Operations which I have been holding up to this moment.
- 03:14** LPN: Thank you.
- 03:15 Welcome.
- 03:15** LPN: Can you tell me where you were in the spring of 1994? Do you remember?

- 03:23 Dur- 1994? Oh, 1994 I was in Nigeria. Yeah, I was in Nigeria and I was still in the police force. In fact that was the year I left the police. The (_____).
- 03:36 LPN: Do, do you remember hearing about the events in Rwanda?**
- 03:41 Yes, yes I did.
- 03:43 LPN: Can you, can you tell me more about what you remember, what you heard, where you were?**
- 03:49 Well, what we heard that time was that there was mass killing of one particular tribe by the other in Rwanda and we had some videos that were being sold in the shop. We bought them, we watched them and we saw how horrifying it was.
- 04:14 And (____), at the time I was applying for a job I never really specifically requested to come to this particular place, that is to come and serve and, in the tribunal responsible for the trial of the, the Rwandese. I merely applied to become a security officer with the UN but I was assigned to be here. It was not those incidents that really impelled me to come here.
- 04:45 LPN: When you found out that this would be where you were stationed, what did you know about this facility, this, the ICTR?**
- 04:53 When I felt?
- 04:54 LPN: Wha-, wha-, what did you know about, when you first heard that you were going to be stationed here . . .**
- 04:59 Uh-huh.
- 05:00 LPN: What did you know about the ICTR? Did you know – had you heard anything, did you, do you remember?**
- 05:07 Yes, I heard, the first time I heard of it was when the president of America, Bill Clinton that time, was proposing – and it was in a television program, I can't remember the program very well, when he was talking of an intention to set up a tribunal for the trial of people responsible for the Rwandan genocide. That was the first time I heard about it.
- 05:32 And then when at the time I applied to become a security officer and I, I got the offer that I had to come to this tribunal I was somehow happy that I was going to be part of a system that was going to be known for fighting injustice, impunity and so forth.