**TNA FO 2.64**

**microfilm/28**

**Casement to Claude MacDonald**

**24 November 1894**

Vice Consulate

Opobo

November 24, 1894

Sir,

On calling at Ohumbela yesterday to learn the date the Chiefs had decided to attend at Abunko in the matter of the Complaint brought against them by the Akweta I was told that three of the four persons condemned to be sacrificed on the 17th instant in connection with the general rites of the late Chief Wankwanto of Ohumbela had already been put to death in face of the warning I gave at the meeting on the 16th instant in Ohumbela, after I had alluded to the trouble with Akweta, that the Government would hold the persons killing these slaves responsible.

At that meeting I clearly and emphatically pointed out that the custom of Human Sacrifice was one opposed to the interest of the Community, as well as being cruel and wicked, and that on these grounds it was one the Government was resolved to suppress, and those persisting in it would be punished with a strong hand if warnings failed to bring about its discontinuance. The names of those actually put to death Saturday were Odere - a female, Shionuo, Imo, males.

The fourth intended victim, said to be quite young, was, on the day of sacrifice released at the pleadings of some of the Opobo and Bonny natives trading in Ohumbela who purchased him from the relatives of Wankwanto; and he is now, I understand, the property of Japa's House.

I consider that this triple sacrifice on the morrow of the clear warning given on the 16th instant calls for prompt and energetic action on the part of the Government, not only in the interests of other wretched slaves threatened with a similar fate, but also in those of our authority thus set openly at defiance.

I propose, therefore, arresting the heads of the house of the late Wankwanto, - a man named Wonoa - brother - and Wabara, son of the deceased chief, who are principally responsible for these murders, and who, I understand from the government Interpreter were present at the meeting on the 16th instant and heard my warnings against the commission of the intended crime; and to levy a fine upon the town of Ohumbela arresting the King and the chief men in authority under him as securities for its speedy payment.

Their responsibility is much less than that of Wonoa; they were however, both present at the meeting and heard my injunction to spare the lives of the four people and it was the latter of these who, on the conclusion of my address, informed me that the practice of sacrificing slaves at the death of a chief was one they had intention of giving up. To this I replied that the practice whether voluntarily abandoned or not, should be utterly uprooted out of the land and that all the Power of the Government should be employed in its suppression; that, in the actual case then pending, my parting words to them, and I begged them to lay these close to their hearts, were that we held them responsible for the lives of the four people, and that if these suffered death after my solemn warning they should certainly answer for it to the Government.

To effect the contemplated arrests will require force; and it is possible armed resistance may be offered, in which case it would be difficult to limit the action of the troops; and the destruction for the time being of Ohumbela might necessarily result.

I shall do all in my power to prevent such a termination to our justifiable interference in this matter by making it as clear as possible to the chiefs and people that the presence of troops in their town is not intended as any menace upon others than those responsible for the crime of the 17th instant against the Commission of which they received a warning indicating the nature of the action would should be compelled to adopt, and fulfillment of which they were now witnessing.

In conclusion I would point out that I have made inquiries in order to learn whether the people put to death on Saturday had committed any offence entailing such a penalty under Country law, but I can gather no such particulars against them.

Their only crime seems to have been that they were slaves of the late Wankwanto and had therefore to suffer at the hand of his relatives the penalty which he paid to nature.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient Humble Servant

(sgd) Roger Casement

Act. Vice Consul

H.M.'s Commissioner and Consul General

Old Calabar.

Acting Vice Consul

R Casement to Sir Claude MacDonald

Inclosure No 2. in Sir Claude MacDonald's Despatch No. 47 of the 6th December 1894