
HAGUE TRIBUNAL TO DELIVER VOJISLAV SESELJ VERDICT

31.03.2016

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BalkanInsight

The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, ICTY will announce on Thursday whether nationalist politician Seselj is guilty of the deportation or forcible transfer of tens of thousands of Croat, Muslim and other non-Serb civilians from large areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia during the war years.

Seselj is alleged to have participated in the recruitment, formation, financing, supply, support and direction of Serb volunteers connected to his Serbian Radical Party and/or the Serbian Chetnik Movement.

He is also accused of having participated in the planning and preparation of the takeover of towns and villages in Croatia and in a number of municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the subsequent forcible removal of the majority of the non-Serb population from those areas.

During the trial, the prosecution tried to prove that Seselj mobilised not only the armed wing of his Serbian Radical Party, but also other Serb forces, inciting them to persecute Croats and Bosniaks.

His Seseljevci (Seseljs Men) paramilitary group, formed of Serb volunteers, allegedly deported tens of thousands of non-Serbs and killed thousands.

Seselj has denied the charges.

His marathon trial saw a series of scandals and disruptions, with the Serbian Radical Party leader repeatedly mocking the UN court and refusing to return for the verdict on Thursday after being released for cancer treatment in 2014.

This will be first-ever verdict to be delivered by the Hague-based court without the accused present in the courtroom to hear it - instead, Seselj will be in Belgrade, campaigning for the Serbian parliamentary elections, and has dismissed an offer from the ICTY to watch the judgment via a video link.

The ICTY said that it had accepted an argument from the Serbian government that it was not possible to interrupt Seseljs medical treatment for cancer or continue his treatment in The Hague.

He was initially allowed to return to Belgrade from detention in The Hague in November 2014 after being granted temporary release on humanitarian grounds to undergo cancer treatment.

Ever since then, he has led nationalist protests and made a series of hardline statements that

have angered war victims.

Seselj voluntarily surrendered in 2003, but his trial did not begin until 2007 after a series of delays and obstructions including a hunger strike.

The prosecution has called for 28 years imprisonment, saying that it has been proven that he committed war crimes and that he has shown no remorse.

Before he gave himself up, he made a defiant speech insisting that he would clear his name.

With their stupid charges against me, they have come up against the greatest living Serb legal mind. I shall blast them to pieces, he said.

Marija Ristic BIRN Belgrade

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