
KOSOVO ACQUITS DEPUTY PM FATMIR LIMAJ OF WAR CRIMES

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The Basic Court in Gjakova/Djakovica on Friday acquitted Fatmir Limaj of charges that he did not take reasonable and necessary measures to prevent the killing of two ethnic Albanian civilians while he was a Kosovo Liberation Army commander in October 1998.

No elements of a criminal offence can be proved, so the indicted is acquitted, the judge said.

Limaj was accused, as the commander of 121st Brigade of the Kosovo Liberation Army, of not acting to stop the killings of the two victims, Ramiz Hoxha and Selman Binishi.

Hoxha, from Bellanica, and Binishi, from Banja, Limaj's birthplace, were seized on October 2, 1998 near the mosque in Bellanica and executed near the village of Kravasari, some four kilometres away.

The indictment said that Limaj saw the bodies of the victims and was aware of the crime committed.

He pleaded not guilty.

During the closing arguments in the trial on March 6, the prosecution demanded that Limaj be convicted of having command responsibility for the killings as he did not take action to prevent them.

Limaj said he felt bad for the families of the two victims but did not know who was responsible for the killings.

The guerrilla commander turned politician has been tried and found not guilty of war crimes several times in the past.

In May 2017, the Kosovo appeals court upheld a verdict acquitting Limaj and nine other former KLA fighters of war crimes against civilians and prisoners of war at an improvised jail in Klecka during the late 1990s conflict.

After a previous trial at the UN-backed tribunal in The Hague, Limaj was also acquitted in 2005 of war crimes against Serbs and Albanians suspected of collaborating with Serbia.

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