
KOSOVO PM: INDEPENDENCE FIGHTERS MUST NOT FEAR HAGUE COURT

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Kosovo's prime minister said Wednesday that former independence fighters should not humiliate Kosovo by hiding, impeding or avoiding justice.

Ramush Haradinaj, himself a former commander of the 1998-99 war for independence against Serbia, wrote on Facebook that the struggle was "clean and sacred."

The war ended with a 78-day NATO air campaign in June 1999 that stopped a Serbian crackdown against the ethnic Albanian separatists.

An international Hague-based court was created in 2015 to investigate allegations made in a 2011 report by the Council of Europe, Europe's top human rights body, that some of Kosovo's independence fighters committed war crimes during and after the war.

Haradinaj said the court will be "a challenge in our road ahead which we shall cross together and come out as unique and stronger."

He defended the independence struggle as just and said "no one is entitled to humiliate Kosovo and hide, impede or avoid justice."

Kosovo agreed to the court's establishment following U.S. and European pressure.

The court has yet to hear any cases. Local media have recently reported that some former Kosovo independence fighters have been asked to be questioned in The Hague and one has said he will not go.

Haradinaj says the government will support "freedom fighters during all the (court) stages and it is ready to offer any necessary assistance in the judicial defense."

Kosovo's 2008 independence is not recognized by Serbia.

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