
CROATIA RETRIES SERBIAN EX-FIGHTER FOR WAR CRIMES

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Balkan Transnational Justice (22 January 2019)

Osijek County Court on Tuesday continued the retrial of Djordje Rkman, a 62-year-old Serbian citizen accused of committing war crimes against civilians in Djakovo in 1991 and 1992 while he was a member of the local Territorial Defence force.

At the opening of the retrial on Monday, Rkman pleaded not guilty. Glas Slavonijenewspaper reported that on hearing the allegations against him, he told the court: Thats not the truth!

The Osijek court originally sentenced Rkman in absentia to 20 years in prison in 1994.

He was convicted, alongside 18 other members of the so-called Sodobovci group of Serb fighters, of shelling the town of Djakovo and the nearby villages of Kesinci, Koritno, Mrzovic, Semeljci and Vladislavci. However, at their retrial, most of the defendants were acquitted.

Rkman was arrested last April at the border crossing between Serbia and Bosnia and extradited to Croatia by the Sarajevo authorities. After his extradition, he filed a request for a retrial.

According to Croatian news agency Hina, the deputy state prosecutor in Osijek, Zlatko Bucevic, said that the prosecution has evidence confirming that Rkman was the commander of the Territorial Defence force at the time of the attacks on civilian targets.

But Rkmans lawyer Krunoslav Vuksic said in his opening speech that the defence would prove that Rkman did not command Territorial Defence fighters and had nothing to do with attacks on civilians.

He was concerned about the needs of the population, regardless of nationality, and had nothing to do with military action, Glas Slavonije quoted Vuksic as saying.

<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/retrial-against-serb-citizen-for-war-crimes-in-djakovo-area-01-22-2019>

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