
RADOVAN KARADŽIĆ FACES FINAL VERDICT IN BOSNIA WAR CRIMES CASE

-

20.03.2019

The Guardian (20 March 2019)

The former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić will hear the final judgment on his role in the bloody conflict that tore his country apart a quarter of a century ago.

In one of the last remaining cases from the break-up of Yugoslavia, UN judges in The Hague will rule on Karadžić's appeal against his 2016 conviction for genocide and war crimes, and his 40-year sentence.

Karadžić, 73, once the most powerful Bosnian Serb political figure, was notorious for his role in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre, the worst bloodletting on European soil since the second world war.

About 100,000 people eventually died and 2.2 million others were left homeless in the brutal three-year war that pitted Muslims, Serbs and Croats against each other.

I think this verdict is historical for justice, said Munira Subašić of the Association of Mothers of Srebrenica, adding that they wanted Karadžić to get a full life sentence.

She said: If Karadžić does not get what he deserves it means that there is no justice in this world and that it is possible to commit crimes without risking penalties.

The ruling is due to start at 1pm GMT at the UNs international residual mechanism for criminal tribunals, which deals with cases left over from now-defunct courts for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

Karadžić's case still bitterly divides the country he helped drive to war, with widows of Srebrenica hoping he dies in prison even as Bosnian Serbs have honoured him with a university dorm in his name.

The decision also comes at a crucial time for international courts as they come under attack from quarters including the administration of the US president, Donald Trump, and are reeling after a series of mistrials.

The hunt for Radovan Karadžić, ruthless warlord turned spiritual healer

Karadžić's lawyer, Peter Robinson, said his client fervently believed that the trial chamber judgment was wrong and the product of an unfair trial. Robinson described Karadžić as an optimistic person by nature.

In 2016, Karadžić was found guilty on 10 counts including orchestrating a nearly four-year siege of

the Bosnian capital Sarajevo, where more than 10,000 people died in a campaign of sniping and shelling, according to prosecutors.

He was also found guilty of genocide in Srebrenica, where Bosnian Serb troops slaughtered more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys in the eastern Bosnian enclave, which was supposed to be under UN protection, and buried their bodies in mass graves.

Karadžić, a poet and psychiatrist turned ruthless political leader, has appealed against the sentence on 50 grounds and accused judges of conducting a political trial against him.

He represented himself at his trial, with Robinsons assistance.

Prosecutors, however, said Karadžić and others including his military alter ego, the former Bosnian Serb army commander Ratko Mladić, wanted to permanently remove Muslims and Croats from territory claimed by Bosnian Serbs at the time.

United Nations prosecutors also asked judges to reverse his acquittal on a second charge of genocide in Bosnias municipalities and hand him a life sentence.

Mladić, 76, dubbed the Butcher of Bosnia, is currently appealing against a life sentence on similar charges. He has previously refused to testify at Karadžićs trial, calling the UN tribunal satanic.

The former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, Karadžićs long-time patron during the war, was on trial in The Hague until his death in 2006.

<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2019/mar/20/radovan-karadzic-faces-final-verdict-in-bosnia-war-crimes-case>

Kaynak/Source: