
BALKAN STATES BACKSLIDING ON WAR CRIME CASES, HAGUE PROSECUTOR WARNS

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More political will and cooperation between former Yugoslav states is needed for the remaining suspects from the 1990s wars to be brought to justice, Hague chief prosecutor Serge Brammertz said on Thursday.

Obviously there are political obstacles, that is, the lack of political support and determination that are necessary for the success of war crimes prosecutors, Brammertz said in the interview broadcast on the N1 TV network.

Brammertz noted that regional cooperation on cases of human trafficking, organised crime and terrorism is going well, but cooperation between ex-Yugoslav states over prosecuting war crimes cases is not.

He said that a report he has drafted on the level of cooperation between the countries of the region and the UN tribunal in The Hague is mainly negative. He is expected to present the report to the UN Security Council in mid-July.

The reality is that, for many crimes committed in Bosnia, individuals who are allegedly guilty live peacefully in Serbia and Croatia, and they should be investigated and prosecuted, he said.

He also pointed out that several thousand war crimes cases are still unresolved in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and hundreds of cases related to Serbia and Croatia.

Brammertz, who was interviewed during a visit to Serbia, warned that in some countries, convicted war criminals are considered heroes and glorified by politicians, and war crimes are still being denied, sending out negative signals to potential witnesses.

We cannot change the political reality, we cannot change the fact that in this country [Serbia], as in others, there are politicians who celebrate war criminals, which is an insult to the victims of these crimes, but we hope that there are enough politicians in positions who will support this process, he said.

Asked about the case of two Serbian Radical Party politicians, Vjerica Radeta and Petar Jojic, who are wanted by the tribunal for alleged contempt of court in the trial of their leader Vojislav Seselj, Brammertz urged Serbia to comply with the request for their extradition.

We believe that there is a duty of cooperation with the UN tribunal established by the UN Security Council, which means that all UN members have to cooperate with it, he said.

We believe that there is a legal basis for Radeta and Jojic to be handed over to The Hague. Even if there is no such basis, the government [of Serbia] has an obligation to create it, he added.

Brammertz was in Serbia to take part in a regional conference of war crimes prosecutors, held in Belgrade on Thursday.

The primary topic of discussion, which was attended by the prosecutors from Bosnia, Croatia, Montenegro, and Belgrade, was regional cooperation in war crimes cases.

The Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals said in a statement that participants agreed that more prosecutions are still needed for war crimes committed during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, and that cooperation between their offices is critical to achieving this.

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