

Bosnian Croat Leaders Denied Provisional Release

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Judges uphold prosecution motion that if release granted, defendants likely to abscond. Appeal judges at the Hague tribunal overturned a decision this week to grant provisional release to five Bosnian Croat leaders until their trial resumes.

Jadranko Prlic, Bruno Stojic, Slobodan Praljak, Milivoj Petkovic and Valentin Coric will remain in the UN detention unit in The Hague after appeal judges ruled that the defence justifications for their respective releases were “not sufficiently compelling”.

The men, who are standing trial along with a sixth accused Berislav Pusic, are charged with committing crimes against humanity against Bosniaks and other non-Croats during the 1992-95 conflict in Bosnia.

After the prosecution rested its case last month, the trial chamber decided that while all the defendants had a case to answer, the five could return to Croatia until their defence teams began their cases in May.

The trial chamber ruled that at this halfway stage in the trial there was clear evidence supporting the prosecution’s case that the accused had participated in a joint criminal enterprise. They face charges of attacking and driving out women and children as they sought to establish Herceg-Bosna, a self-proclaimed Croat entity within Bosnia.

In their decision to repeal provisional release, appeal judges said the trial chamber had failed to consider the implications of the ruling against an acquittal of the accused at this point. They therefore upheld the prosecution’s motion that if release was granted to the defendants, they were likely to abscond.

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