

Foca Rape Sentence

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Bosnian Serb handed lengthy prison terms for wartime rapes.

The appeals chamber of the Bosnian war crimes court sentenced this week Bosnian Serb Nedjo Samardzic to 24 years in prison for the crimes he committed in the eastern Bosnian town of Foca in 1992, which included the rape, torture and sexual enslavement of Muslim women and girls.

In April this year, Samardzic was sentenced to 13 years and four months, but this judgment was quashed by the appeals chamber decision on December 13.

Samardzic was originally convicted for aiding and abetting persecution, rape and torture of Muslims in Foca, but the appeals chamber then ordered a re-trial because of procedural errors.

A new trial was held at the end of November and lasted only nine days. The appeals judges heard recorded statements of about 20 defense witnesses, and read transcripts of 6 witnesses for the prosecution.

In this week's verdict, Samardzic was found guilty of nine out of ten charges in his indictment, including persecution of Muslim population, forced sexual slavery, rape and

other crimes against humanity in Foca.

"The accused forced victims into sexual slavery, raped them, and conducted other inhumane acts, intentionally causing them great suffering, serious physical injuries and harm to their health," the court said in a statement issued this week.

Samardzic and two other Bosnian Serb soldiers held several Muslim women as sexual slaves in a house near Foca, where they were forced to engage in sexual intercourse with Serb soldiers on a daily basis. Two of these women were minors.

Victims' associations in Bosnia said they were relatively satisfied with the new judgement, especially when it's compared to other sentences handed down by the war crimes court for wartime rapes.

In November, Samardzic's close associate Radovan Stankovic was sentenced to 16 years by the Bosnian court for serial rape, but the prosecution will appeal against this judgement.

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