

Gvero Granted Early Release

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Judge says based on humanitarian grounds it's in interests of justice to do so, despite gravity of his crimes.

Milan Gvero, one of the so-called Srebrenica Seven recently convicted of crimes associated with the fall of enclave in 1995, has been granted early release.

In the June 10 judgement of the seven Bosnian Serb defendants, Bosnian army commander Milan Gvero was sentenced to five years in prison with credit for time already served.

He was arrested and transferred to The Hague in February 2005, but has been granted provisional release several times since then. In his application for early release, Gvero's lawyers state that he has served four years and 39 days in prison as of June 15, 2010.

Last week, the president of the tribunal, Judge Patrick Robinson, ruled that because of Gvero's "very serious" health conditions, his "relatively" advanced age of 72, and the fact that he has served over two-thirds of his sentence, he should be released. "I am of the view that, based on humanitarian grounds, it is in the interests of justice to grant him early release, despite the high gravity of his crimes," Judge Robinson wrote.

At the time of the Srebrenica massacre, Gvero was assistant commander for moral, legal and religious affairs of the Bosnian Serb army main staff.

He was found to have contributed to the joint criminal enterprise to forcibly remove Srebrenica's population. He was found guilty of persecution and forcible transfer and acquitted of murder and deportation.

Gvero "carried out key functions relating to external propaganda and interaction with international organisations, with the aim to support the plan to forcibly transfer the populations from the enclaves," Judge Carmel Agius said while delivering the judgement.

Furthermore, Gvero issued a statement to the media after the Bosnian Serb army had launched an attack on Srebrenica, in which he stated that the army's activities were intended to "neutralise Muslim terrorists and not against any civilians or [the UN force]".

Judge Agius said this "blatantly false statement" was intended to "mislead the international authorities concerned with protecting the enclave, with a view to delaying any action that could frustrate [the Bosnian Serb army's] plans".

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