

Hadzic's Health 'Rapidly Deteriorating'

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Tumour which led to his provisional release is affecting his cognitive skills.

Former Croatian Serb leader Goran Hadzic's terminal brain cancer means that his ability to participate in trial proceedings is expected to rapidly deteriorate, a medical expert told the Hague tribunal this week.

Hadzic, who served as president of the breakaway Serb state in Croatia, the Republic of Serb Krajina, is charged with 14 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed there in the early 1990s. The indictment includes charges of persecution, extermination, murder, imprisonment, torture, inhumane acts, cruel treatment, deportation, wanton destruction and plunder.

His trial has been suspended since October 2014 when he was diagnosed with a tumour and allowed to return to Belgrade. The chamber has since ordered a number of expert medical reports to establish whether his case should continue.

Forensic psychologist and neuropsychologist Daniel Martell told judges last week that the tumour had rapidly metastasised to multiple locations within Hadzic's brain, affecting cognitive skills.

Martell told the court he had spent two days examining the defendant and carrying out numerous tests, including presenting him with more than 500 written questions. The expert said he included tests to identify any attempt at "malingering" or overstating the symptoms.

"Mr Hadzic in every case passed these tests, indicating he was giving good effort and not exaggerating his problems, and so I believe my findings are valuable and reliable indications of his functioning, and not the product of manipulations," Martell said.

The psychologist found that Hadzic's IQ had deteriorated and was currently 95, an estimated fall of some 20 points. The defendant also had short-term memory problems.

"He will not remember something he told you that morning or he will not remember something you just watched on television," the expert said, adding that this amounted to a noticeable "level of impairment".

As for the prognosis, Martell emphasised that Hadzic's tumour was "rapidly progressive".

"This means as it sounds - it gets worse quickly," he continued. It's the most aggressive brain cancer that one can have... it can be expected to continue to grow, and his capacity to participate [in legal proceedings] will continue to deteriorate. He will get worse.

"The nature in which he gets worse depends on where the tumour goes," Martell explained. "At this point his frontal lobes are fairly well preserved, his language centres are fairly well preserved, but if the tumour begins to invade the language centres or the executive control centres, a further deterioration in those behaviours [can be expected] on top of the ones that are already impaired involving attention, concentration and memory."

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