

## **Karadzic Demands Phone Interview**

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Ex-Bosnian Serb leader objects to court ruling that he can only contact journalist by letter. Former Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic has asked The Hague tribunal's vice president to overrule the court and allow him to give an interview to a Dutch journalist by telephone.

On March 12, the court's registrar granted Karadzic permission to contact the journalist by letter. The defendant wants to conduct an interview about his claim that he made an agreement with a United States envoy making him immune from prosecution.

However, Karadzic - who is awaiting trial for mass war crimes - contends that by limiting his communication to written form, the registrar has "abused his discretion".

"Interviews by journalists are not conducted by written questionnaire because such contact lacks the spontaneity of oral communication and the ability to follow-up or clarify answers," Karadzic submitted on March 20, adding that there would be little media interest "in such 'canned' exchanges".

The tribunal's vice president Judge O'Gon Kwon granted Karadzic permission on February 12 to be interviewed by the journalist, Zvezdana Vukojevic, of Dutch magazine Revu. In doing so, he overturned the court's original decision to ban the defendant from having any contact with Vukojevic due to concerns that it could threaten security at the prison where he is being held or prove prejudicial to his trial.

Judge Kwon ruled that while the interview could not take place face-to-face at the prison, it could take the form of "written communication, telephone calls, or whatever other means the Registrar deems appropriate".

According to the ruling, all communication between the defendant and the journalist will be monitored by the court.

Karadzic submits that the court should allow him to use "the least restrictive measure" in terms of limiting his freedom of expression. He argues that the restriction on his right to freedom of expression should be proportional to the risk that any communication presents to the security of the prison.

"The registrar failed to provide any proportionality principles at all or provide any reasons for choosing the most restrictive form of communication," submitted Karadzic to Judge Kwon, following the announcement that he must give the media interview by letter.

Karadzic has been in detention in The Hague since his arrest in Belgrade in July 2008. He will go on trial later this year charged with 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity. He is charged with two separate counts of genocide in ten municipalities across Bosnia and for 1995 massacre of nearly 8,000 Bosniak men and boys at Srebrenica.

He is the first war crime suspect charged by the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, ICTY, to

be allowed to contact the media from his prison cell.

Karadzic has said he wants to speak to the media about the deal he allegedly made with former US envoy Holbrooke, who he claims promised him immunity from prosecution in The Hague in return for stepping down from politics. Holbrooke has denied making the agreement.

While Karadzic has repeatedly claimed that the alleged agreement makes him exempt from proceedings at the court, judges have ruled that even if such a deal had been made, it would have no bearing on the trial. Karadzic is currently appealing that decision.

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