

Krajisnik

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By Merdijana Sadovic in The Hague (TU No 396, 04-Mar-05)

In Judge El-Mahdi's place was a new ad litem judge, Claude Hanoteau of France.

Krajisnik, on trial for genocide, is accused of masterminding a campaign of ethnic cleansing during the Bosnian war, which included mass murders, forced expulsions and illegal detention of Muslim and Croat civilians across the country.

This week prosecutors – who say the accused put this plan into action using so-called “crisis staffs” established by his Serbian Democratic Party, SDS – called an expert witness, who sought to establish a direct link between the accused and these local bodies.

Judge El-Mahdi was the only one of the tribunal's 14 permanent judges not to be re-elected to his post in voting last year. He withdrew from the Krajisnik case on the grounds that his current mandate wouldn't have lasted long enough for him to see it through to the end.

On January 25, tribunal president Theodor Meron issued an order assigning Judge Hanoteau to the trial chamber. Last month, Judge Hanoteau signed a declaration to the effect that he had acquainted himself in detail with everything that has happened in the case to date.

With the trial underway again, prosecutors called Dorothea Hanson in an effort to counter claims by Krajisnik's defence lawyers that local Bosnian Serb officials acted almost entirely independently during the war, and that the accused and other top leaders had little information on what was happening on the ground at the time

Hanson brought with her documents and intercepts suggesting that Krajisnik was kept up to date on ethnic cleansing campaigns during the Bosnian conflict by so-called “war commissioners”, who he personally appointed.

The evidence also indicated that the crisis staffs cooperated closely with Bosnian Serb armed forces and paramilitary units.

A recorded television interview played in court showed a local SDS leader from Vogosca, Jovan Tintor, saying that as commander of the local crisis staff, he was “superior to the military and civilian authorities” in his municipality.

Tintor was also seen describing a meeting with Krajisnik, top Bosnian Serb official Radovan Karadzic and other high-ranking police and military officials in Sarajevo in spring 1992, during which they discussed plans to divide Sarajevo into Serb and Muslim enclaves.

The documents also incriminated Krajisnik by suggesting he learned about the expulsion of non-Serbs from their homes and the destruction of their property from deputies who discussed these matters in parliamentary sessions.

Krajisnik's defence lawyers will have a chance to cross-examine Hanson on her evidence next week.

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Topic: Courtside

Focus: International Criminal Tribunal for the former
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