

## **Milan Lukic Reiterates Innocence**

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Convicted of killing over 130 civilians, he again tells judges he was wrongly identified by witnesses.

At a status conference this week to review the progress of appeals proceedings in the case of Milan and Sredoje Lukic, the former maintained his innocence and again blamed his conviction on a case of mistaken identity.

Milan Lukic, a former reserve policeman, was found guilty in July 2009 of personally killing at least 132 Bosniak civilians in the eastern Bosnian town of Visegrad during the summer of 1992. More than 100 of these victims were confined inside two barricaded houses and burned alive.

He was also convicted of abusing detainees in the Uzamnica prison camp and killing 12 Bosniak men by the banks of the Drina river. Judges found that not enough evidence was presented during the trial to substantiate the claim that he was a paramilitary commander.

He was sentenced to life in prison.

His cousin Sredoje Lukic, a former police officer, was found guilty of aiding and abetting murder in one of the house burnings, and of mistreating detainees at the Uzamnica camp. He was given a 30-year prison sentence.

“The perpetration by Milan Lukic and Sredoje Lukic of crimes in this case is characterised by a vicious and callous disregard for human life,” judges said in the 2009 verdict.

The two house burnings, they said, “exemplify the worst acts of inhumanity that a person may inflict upon others”.

Both the prosecution and the defence have appealed against the judgment. Prosecutors asked for Sredoje Lukic’s sentence to be increased, while the defence asked for lighter sentences for both men, or the annulment of the verdict.

At the September 2011 appeals hearing, lawyers for Milan Lukic argued that the case was essentially based on mistaken identity and faulty witness statements. Sredoje Lukic’s lawyers argued that he was not at the house burning on Pionirska street, and that even if he was, his actions did not legally constitute aiding and abetting. (For more, see [Lukic Alleges Mistaken Identity](#).)

During this week’s brief status conference, the men addressed the judges and informed them of their current conditions in detention.

“I don’t feel well,” Milan Lukic told the chamber, “although I have no reason to complain about the imprisonment.” He said he experienced a sharp pain “like a dagger in my heart”.

“It feels so unjust to receive such a harsh sentence for something I didn’t do,” he told the judges.

“I’ve been spending months, even years, trying to prove that while the witnesses who have testified at this trial have suffered a lot, it was not me who had caused them harm,” he said.

“Look at my hair and you’ll see that it’s not blond,” he said, referring to testimonies given by several prosecution witnesses who described the man they believed to be Milan Lukic as a blond man with blue eyes, a scar on his face and a distinctive tattoo on his body.

“These testimonies were definitely untrue, because I don’t have blond hair and I have never had it,” said Milan Lukic, whose hair is dark. “I don’t have [a scar or tattoo] either,” he added.

Sredoje Lukic told the court that he “had no reason to complain about [his] health,” adding that his treatment in prison “was acceptable.”

The judges confirmed this week that the appeals verdict would be announced shortly.

“This will happen either before the summer break, or shortly after,” judge Mehmet Guney said.

The tribunal’s summer break is scheduled to begin after the third week of July.

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**Topic:** International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

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