

## **Milomir Stakic Case**

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Stakic genocide indictment likely to include additional charges

Milomir Stakic, former president of the Prijedor municipal assembly, left Bosnia for Belgrade in July 1997 - soon after the tribunal lifted the seal on part of the "Prijedor indictment".

On July 10, 1997, members of the international Stabilisation Force, S-For, sought for the first time to arrest war crimes suspects in Bosnia. Milan Kovacevic, former vice president of the Prijedor "crisis staff", was detained. Sima Drljaca, ex Prijedor chief of police, died in a shoot-out with S-For troops. (See Tribunal Update No. 36)

Paragraph 12 of the Prijedor indictment stated that, alongside Kovacevic and Drljaca, "core members of the [Prijedor] Crisis Staff" had led a campaign of genocide against the non-Serb population in the area.

The wording could have left no doubt in Stakic's mind that he was included in the indictment.

The United Nations Expert Commission, formed in October 1992 to investigate allegations of grave violations of international law in former Yugoslavia, published a list of candidates for a "Prijedor indictment" in July 1994, as part of its final report to the UN Security Council and the General Assembly.

The report and related documentation were handed over to the newly formed Hague war crimes tribunal.

The Commission carried out an especially detailed investigation into ethnic cleansing in the Prijedor municipality, concluding that events there can "without a doubt be characterised as a crime against humanity".

Moreover, the commissioners said it is "very likely that these events will be characterised as genocide in the judicial procedure".

The report cited a complete list of the crisis headquarter members under whose leadership the crimes were committed. Stakic appeared on that list alongside Drljaca, Kovacevic, Colonel Vladimir Arsic, Major Radmilo Zeljalja, Major Slobodan Kuruzovic, local SDS leader Simo Miskovic and the president of the Red Cross Srdjo Srdic.

On the eve of the Kovacevic trial, in June 1998 prosecutors added a further 14 counts to his indictment.

In addition to genocide, Kovacevic was accused of participating in the extermination of Muslims and Croats, of persecuting people on political, racial and religious grounds, of deliberate killings, torture, cruel treatment, deportation, and the illegal destruction and confiscation of property.

As for Milomir Stakic, the original "Prijedor indictment", issued on March 13 1997, charges him with one count, the most serious of crimes - genocide.

However, it seems likely the Stakic indictment will be amended in a similar way to Kovacevic's, adding charges of crimes against humanity, grave violations of the Geneva Conventions and violations of the laws and customs of war.

Of the 16 tribunal trials to date - ten completed, two interrupted and four underway - four have dealt with events in Prijedor and the detention camps in the area.

Dusko Tadic was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for crimes in the Prijedor camps; commanders of the Omarska and Keraterm camps are currently on trial; and Kovacevic died three weeks into his trial. (see Tribunal Update No. 87).

Prijedor and its camps make up an important part of the so-called general indictment against former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic.

The events also figure in the indictments against Radoslav Brdjanin and General Momir Talic - both awaiting trial for genocide in Bosanska Krajina.

**Location:** Balkans  
Bosnia and  
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**Focus:** International Criminal Tribunal for the former  
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