

Prosecutors May Appeal Haradinaj Acquittal

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Chief prosecutor says his office is assessing possible grounds on which to appeal ruling. The Hague tribunal's chief prosecutor Serge Brammertz hinted during a visit to Belgrade this week that he might appeal against the acquittal of former Kosovo prime minister Ramush Haradinaj.

"My office is not satisfied with the [Haradinaj] ruling," Associated Press quoted Brammertz as saying.

"The office is now studying the 300-page judgement in order to make an assessment on the possible grounds to appeal."

Brammertz was speaking during his first official trip to Belgrade since he took over from Carla Del Ponte in January.

During his two-day visit, he met Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, who voiced disagreement with the court ruling.

On April 4, Haradinaj was found not guilty of committing war crimes against Serbs in Kosovo during the 1998-99 war.

Kostunica said there was ample evidence to convict Haradinaj and the decision was anti-Serb. He also raised doubts about the tribunal's legality.

"Serbia has the right to demand that the legitimacy of the Hague court be determined," Kostunica said in a statement.

During his visit, Brammertz renewed calls for Serbian officials to arrest Bosnian Serb war crime suspects Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic.

He met Rasim Ljajic, who chairs the national council on cooperation with the tribunal, telling him more needed to be done to ensure the fugitives are delivered to The Hague.

"I particularly insisted on the search for and the arrest of the remaining four fugitives," said Brammertz after the meeting.

Mladic and Karadzic, charged with orchestrating the 1995 genocide in Srebrenica which led to the death of 8,000 Bosniak men and boys, are the men most wanted by the tribunal. Stojan Zupljanin and Goran Hadzic are also wanted on war crimes charges.

“It is crucial that they be brought to justice as soon as possible,” added Brammertz.

Brammertz also met Serbian war crimes prosecutor Vladimir Vukcevic to discuss the transfer of documents to Hague prosecutors and access to state archives in Serbia.

“It is understandable that full cooperation is of crucial importance for the tribunal in all current and future trials,” Brammertz told reporters.

Brammertz is expected to make a formal evaluation of Serbia’s cooperation with the tribunal in his next report to the United Nations Security Council in mid-May.

Kostunica also used Brammertz’s visit to raise concerns over allegations of organ trafficking in Kosovo in 2002-03. The allegations came to light in a book published by Del Ponte.

This week, the Office of the Prosecutor, OTP, in The Hague said there was not enough evidence to warrant an investigation by the tribunal, meaning the issue was in the hands of local authorities.

“The office of the prosecutor, together with UNMIK [United Nations Mission in Kosovo] and the Albanian authorities conducted a preliminary investigation into the matter,” said Brammertz’s spokesperson Olga Kavran.

“Despite these efforts, the OTP could not substantiate the allegations and had no further basis on which to proceed in relation to our jurisdiction.”

Simon Jennings is an IWPR reporter in The Hague.

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