

Registry Challenges Seselj Judges

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Dispute concerns disagreement about provision of financial assistance for Seselj's defence.

The Hague tribunal deputy registrar asked the appeals chamber this week to quash a recent decision by trial judges related in the case of Serbian nationalist politician Vojislav Seselj.

The request concerns the continued battle over funding for Seselj's defence, which as a self-represented accused he is coordinating himself. In July, the registry denied Seselj any financial assistance, stating that he has repeatedly failed to provide information that would prove he does not have sufficient funds for his defence.

However, on October 29, trial judges ordered the court to fund 50 per cent of what would normally be allocated for an indigent accused.

Deputy registrar Ken Roberts told the appeals chamber that "the trial chamber cannot appropriate for itself a power that is explicitly conferred elsewhere, and that an accused before this tribunal remains ineligible to receive tribunal funding for his defence in the absence of established indigence".

He further stated that the trial judges have "no jurisdiction" to issue such a decision and that they have "substituted" their own decision for that of the registrar.

Roberts concluded by asking the appeals chamber to invalidate the trial judges' decision.

In other news this week, a panel of judges rejected Seselj's request to have two of the judges set to hear a contempt case against him removed.

The accused had argued that Judges O-Gon Kwon and Kevin Parker had already sat on the bench of his first contempt trial and sentenced him to 15 months in prison for revealing details about protected witnesses in a book he authored.

The second contempt case also concerns confidential witness information being revealed in one of his books and, since this book also mentions these two judges by name, Seselj argued that they would not be able to be neutral and impartial during the trial.

"Seselj presumes that the two judges must have antipathy for him due to the publication of these books; however, he fails to show the tribunal, through the words or actions of the judges, that this is in fact the case," stated Judge Howard Morrison in the report to tribunal president Judge Patrick Robinson.

Arrested in 2003, Seselj is charged with nine counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity – including murder, torture and forcible transfer – for atrocities carried out in an effort to expel the non-Serb population from parts of Croatia and Bosnia between August 1991 and September 1993. He remains leader of the Serbian Radical Party, SRS, based in Belgrade.

Seselj's criminal trial has endured repeated delays since it officially began in November 2007, a full year after the original trial date was postponed due to the accused's hunger strike.

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Location: [Balkans](#)

Topic: [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia](#)

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