

REPORT: Jorda Blasts Belgrade Extradition Record

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The Hague runs out of patience with Belgrade over its reluctance to hand over war crimes suspects.

The president of The Hague tribunal, Judge Claude Jorda, urged the UN Security Council on Wednesday, October 23, to take "all the measures necessary" to force Yugoslavia to hand over 11 indicted war crimes suspects still at large.

In a letter to the Security Council, Jorda complained that despite repeated demands, Yugoslavia has failed to hand over the suspects, who include the current Serbian president, Milan Milutinovic.

He said that far from cooperating, Belgrade was operating a law giving precedence to local courts over The Hague. "This is a flagrant violation of Article 9(2) of the (tribunal) Statute which guarantees the primacy of the International Tribunal," he writes.

The letter also reminds the Security Council that earlier this year it called on the tribunal to wind-up operations by 2008, a date Jorda says will only be workable if arrests are made soon because of the lengthy legal process that is needed.

The judge says his call came after a report from chief prosecutor, Carla Del Ponte, on October 17, which outlined Belgrade's non-cooperation.

The development coincided with Del Ponte's visit to Croatia to demand that it also increase cooperation after its failure to hand over the country's former army commander.

Suspects listed by Jorda as still at large in Yugoslavia include General Ratko Mladic, accused by The Hague of ordering the massacre of 7,000 Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica in 1995.

Complaining that Yugoslavia has repeatedly been told to hand over these men, the judge writes, "The Prosecutor and I request that you take all the measures necessary in order to force the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to assume fully its international obligations."

Jorda's appeal comes in advance of Del Ponte's trip to address the Security Council on Monday October 28.

The Hague tribunal has a long record of prompting the international community to bring pressure on Balkan regimes to hand over war crimes suspects.

In 1997, former prosecutor Louise Arbour persuaded NATO to launch commando raids to arrest wanted men.

And in 2001, Del Ponte got America to threaten to cut off aid, as a means of pressuring Belgrade to hand over the biggest prize of all - former president Slobodan Milosevic.

The phrase "all the measures necessary" has been used in UN resolutions elsewhere in the world to include military action, but in this situation the Security Council is likely to consider some form of economic sanction.

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Location: Croatia

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