

Seselj Charged in Second Contempt Case

Author: [IWPR](#)
[ICTY](#)

Serbian nationalist politician accused of revealing details of witnesses in book. Vojislav Seselj has been charged this week with contempt of court for disclosing information about 11 protected witnesses in a book he authored.

This is the second time that Serbian nationalist leader, currently on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity, has been charged with contempt.

Last July, Seselj was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment for revealing details about protected witnesses in one of his books.

Seselj, who represents himself and remains the political leader of the Serbian Radical Party, SRS, based in Belgrade, has denied intimidating witnesses. His appeal against the contempt conviction is still pending.

Seselj is charged with nine counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity for atrocities carried out between August 1991 and September 1993 in an effort to expel the non-Serb population from parts of Croatia and Bosnia. The charges include murder, torture, cruel treatment and forcible transfer.

According to the indictment, Seselj's bid to create a so-called Greater Serbia was part of a joint criminal enterprise which involved senior figures in the Serbian regime, including late president Slobodan Milosevic and former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic.

Prior to the new contempt charges - for disclosing information about 11 protected witnesses in one of his books - the Seselj trial, which resumed in January after being suspended for nearly a year, heard the testimony of a protected court's witness.

The witness told judges that he received threatening phone calls from two men he believed to be associates of the accused.

The witness said that he received the calls in November 2007, the same month the trial officially got underway at the Hague tribunal.

This week, the witness said he had previously given statements to investigators from the Office of the Prosecutor, OTP, in 1998 and 2004.

The first caller, the witness told judges, said "he would kill my children this way and that way. He talked nonsense".

The second caller, he said, warned him that he could not "say anything" in court.

Presiding Judge Jean-Claude Antonetti asked the witness how he knew the callers were “close” to Seselj.

“The first one, I didn’t know who he was related to,” the witness responded. “The second was a member of the Serbian Radical Party.”

The witness said he was familiar with the second caller because the caller had been recruiting people to join the party since 1996.

It was not made in clear in open session whether the witness was Serb, Croat or Bosniak, or with whom he was affiliated during the war.

When it was Seselj’s turn to question him, he asked the witness about the allegations regarding the phone calls.

“I was most surprised when you said my associates contacted and threatened you,” Seselj said to the witness.

He then suggested that one of the callers had misrepresented himself as a member of Seselj’s political party.

“Did you know that since 2002 in the RS [Republika Srpska], there is a party called Serbian Radical Alliance?” asked Seselj.

“I didn’t know that,” responded the witness.

Using election documents from Bosnia, Seselj attempted to demonstrate that the person who had called the witness was a member of this other party, which happens to have a very similar name.

Earlier in his testimony, the witness was asked about several crimes he witnessed in Mostar, a historic city in south-west Bosnia.

According to the prosecutor’s pretrial brief, by April 1992 the city had become a stronghold for Serb forces - the Yugoslav army, JNA, as well as the Serbian Territorial Defense, TO, and other groups, including SRS volunteers, known as Seselj’s Men.

Prosecutors allege that these SRS volunteers were housed, equipped and armed by the JNA and that they “were directly involved in killing many of Mostar’s non-Serb civilians”.

The witness said that on June 13, 1992 a woman told him that her son had been taken to “somewhere in

the changing rooms” at the Vrapcici football stadium, which prosecutors allege was being used to imprison and torture non-Serb civilians.

However, the witness said he went to look for the woman’s child at the stadium.

“Someone said they had already taken people to the garbage dump,” he said.

The witness explained that he went to the garbage dump, known as Uborak, where 20 men “introduced themselves as Seselj’s Men”.

“Someone said, ‘You have no business here, go,’” the witness recounted.

The witness said that before he reached his car, “they took [the prisoners] down into the valley.

“We heard shooting, and got in the car and fled. Later we heard 100 people had been killed there.”

Prosecutors allege in their pre-trial brief that the bodies were covered over with a bulldozer and later found in a mass grave.

During the cross-examination, Seselj brought up the witness’s alleged criminal record and also accused the prosecution of not disclosing certain documents.

“What matters to me is the public and that I cut into pieces this false indictment,” he exclaimed. “You’ve forged evidence and have false evidence.”

“You can’t say the prosecution has forged an indictment approved by judges,” responded Judge Flavia Lattanzi.

Presiding Judge Antonetti noted that several of the remaining witnesses have health problems, and thus the trial will not resume until February 16.

Rachel Irwin is an IWPR reporter in The Hague.

Location: [Serbia](#)
[Croatia](#)
[Bosnia and](#)
[Herzegovina](#)

Source URL: <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/seselj-charged-second-contempt-case>