

Seselj Defiant in Closing Arguments

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Accused continues attacks on tribunal as trial draws to a close.

Serbian nationalist politician Vojislav Seselj remained defiant as he concluded his closing arguments this week, insisting that his goal of “destroying” the Hague tribunal had been a success.

“I am plucking your feathers and your feathers are flying sky high!” the accused exclaimed at one point. “I crush you every step of the way. I am destroying the Hague tribunal as a whole.”

Since his surrender to the tribunal in 2003, Seselj has insisted on representing himself. His trial has endured repeated delays since it officially began in November 2007, a full year after the original trial date was postponed because the accused went on hunger strike. He remains leader of the Serbian Radical Party, SRS, based in Belgrade.

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 non-Serbs from parts of Croatia and Bosnia between August 1991 and September 1993. He is further accused of giving numerous inflammatory speeches and recruiting a force of volunteers who murdered, raped and tortured non-Serbs in both Croatia and Bosnia.

In addition, he is charged with being part of a “joint criminal enterprise”, together with numerous high-ranking Serb political, military and paramilitary wartime leaders, including the late Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic.

Seselj has already been convicted twice on contempt charges for revealing the personal details of protected witnesses. A third contempt case is currently in the pretrial phase.

Two weeks ago, prosecutors asked that Seselj be sentenced to 28 years in prison for his “grave and heinous” wartime crimes (For more, see: [Prosecutors Seek 28-Year Jail Term for Seselj](#).)

In the first part of the accused’s own closing arguments, he claimed that the tribunal was an illegal “political instrument” and that western intelligence services were trying to assassinate him. (For more, see [Seselj Rails Against Tribunal](#).)

He reiterated those same claims this week and continued to attack judges, the prosecution, and the tribunal itself.

“I am morally and intellectually stronger than you. There is no remedy against me. You can only kill me, but even if you do that, my grave will continue to fight against you,” Seselj said, gesturing excitedly with his hands.

As for the indictment against him, Seselj said that “participation in war is not a crime” and “making a contribution to the Serbian side is not a crime.

“The Serbian side was not the aggressive side in the war. When you listen to my speeches, can you find a single fragment which constitutes an essential contribution to the perpetration of a single crime?” he asked.

He also drew attention to video footage which the prosecution showed in its closing remarks, in which Serb soldiers – allegedly belonging to Seselj’s volunteers – sing a song with lyrics that go, “Slobo, send us lettuce, there will be meat, we will be slaughtering Croats.”

Seselj said the soldiers shown could not be his volunteers because they were wearing different uniforms, and they would “never sing a song” that begins with “Slobo,” a reference to ex-Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic. Instead, he said, his volunteers would have sung “Seselj, send us lettuce.”

Milosevic died in 2006 before his long-running trial in The Hague could be completed.

“I fully respect his martyr’s death. We became friends during the time we socialised here, we had never been friends before,” Seselj said. “But now I’m sharing facts that don’t insult Milosevic, those facts only go to show that your indictment is based on false documents. You can’t go against facts. The only songs my volunteers could sing about Milosevic could be mocking songs.”

Seselj did agree with the prosecution argument that he “used and pounded words as if firing from a howitzer”.

“People who verbally pound opponents as if firing from a howitzer means targeting the core of the problem, to use the destructive power of your thoughts to destroy arguments of your opponent, to prove the consistency of your own political programme, and to prove you are knowledgeable about everything,” he said.

“That’s what I’ve been doing here in this courtroom for nine years. Don’t you, as the prosecution, realise how devastated you have become? You have found yourself in dire straits.”

He appeared to agree with many of the arguments brought by the prosecution.

“You say I’ve used this trial as political sounding-board. That’s correct,” Seselj said. “You don’t stand a chance against me. All you have is brute force; I challenge you to use that brute force to the end. You say that I presented a program of Serbian national dominance, and that’s correct. You say these are aggravating circumstances and I agree. We Serbs are dominant. What other nation would have survived what we Serbs have?”

He went on to challenge the judges to sentence him to life instead of the 28 years recommended by the prosecution.

“All I’ve been doing here is to shatter you completely. It might take a physical toll on me but I’m enjoying it, and I’m having the time of my life,” Seselj said. “If you bear in my mind how much I hate the [tribunal], then the only appropriate sentence would be a life sentence.”

Meanwhile, Seselj also appeared this week in a status conference relating to the third contempt case against him, in which he is accused of failing to comply with a court order to remove confidential information from his website.

When asked whether he was ready to proceed to trial on those charges, the accused replied, “This is in the hands of God, not in my hands, and it is up to the skills of dark western powers and their intelligence services.”

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

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