

Simo Zaric Surrenders and Appears in the Hague

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They then, under US diplomatic escort, handed him over to SFOR, who in turn arranged for his transfer to the Hague. Before his surrender, Zaric (age 49) offered two seemingly contradictory statements explaining his move.

Speaking to the Western media he claimed that he was going to The Hague, not only to defend himself, but also to point the finger at those truly responsible for the campaign of terror and "ethnic cleansing" of Bosanski Samac in 1992. In the statements given to the domestic media, however, Zaric said he was surrendering in order to "defend the Serbian people and not himself" before the Tribunal.

It is perhaps not surprising that Zaric, a former police chief of Bosanski Samac and former State Security Service agent, tried to placate both sides by telling them what they wanted to hear. However, the two explanations may well be complementary. By individualising guilt in pointing the finger, he could relieve his people of the collective guilt that has been bestowed upon them. Such individualisation is the Tribunal's main means in the reconciliation process.

The initial appearance of the accused, on 26 February, was not an occasion for delving into details about the events in Bosanski Samac in 1992 nor for implicating those deemed responsible.

Zaric was only requested to formally plead guilty or not guilty on the counts of the indictment, which charges him together with Miroslav Tadic (one of the two Bosnian Serbs who voluntarily surrendered on 14 February, see Update 63 and 64) for having "participated in the planning of, and preparation for, the unlawful deportation and forcible transfer of hundreds of Bosnian Croat and Muslim residents, including women, children and elderly, from their homes in the Bosanski Samac municipality to other countries or to other parts of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina not controlled by Serb forces."

As expected, Zaric pleaded "not guilty" on both counts of the indictment which qualify his participation in the "ethnic cleansing" of Bosanski Samac as a Grave Breach of the Geneva Conventions and a Crime against Humanity. Upon being presented by Presiding Judge Claude Jorda with an opportunity to speak, Zaric made the following statement:

"The indictment is grave, but is easily refutable as it concerns an honourable and honest man such as Simo Zaric. I only wish...to arrive at justice by means of truth. I have every confidence in that the Hague Tribunal will fairly and impartially review the allegations contained in my indictment and that it will enable my defense counsel and myself to prove my innocence."

Unless there is a change of circumstances in the meantime (caused, for example, by new surrenders or arrests of any of the remaining three persons accused in the Bosanski Samac- indictment) Zaric will be tried together with Miroslav Tadic and Milan Simic, the first Bosnian Serbs who surrendered voluntarily to the Tribunal on 14 February.

Location: [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

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

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