

Zoran Zigic Pleads Not Guilty

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He said his cell has no running water or toilet and that he would not have surrendered had he known that he would be detained in such conditions. Zigic had voluntarily surrendered to the Tribunal's investigators at the military prison in Banja Luka (see Tribunal Update 72) where he was awaiting a ruling on his appeal of a 15-year-jail sentence he received for a 1993 murder of a woman.

Indeed, the timing of Zigic's surrender was a bit off: the last comfortable single-bed cells at the UN Detention Unit (24 cells) got taken ten days earlier, when Miroslav Kvočka and Mladen Radic were handed over to the Tribunal following their arrest by SFOR in Prijedor. Zigic thus had to be sent to Scheveningen, the oldest Dutch prison, on whose grounds the UN Detention Unit is located.

The president of the registry announced that Zigic's appeal will be considered, while Judge Jorda remarked that late arrivals among the accused "should not be denied the same accommodation just because the capacities of the Tribunal's Detention Unit have been filled."

The irony in the whole episode is that Zigic borrowed the wording from the two indictments against him to describe the conditions in which he was detained. The indictments charge Zigic with being a "regular visitor" at Omarska and Keraterm camps where thousands of Muslim and Croat civilians were detained "under inhumane conditions," which many of them did not survive.

The 69 counts in the Omarska and Keraterm indictments effectively charge Zigic with participation in 15 criminal acts of individual, group, or mass killings (including the 24 July 1992 massacre when, according to the indictment, at least 140 inmates of Keraterm's "Room 3" were killed and at least another 50 wounded); and beatings, torture, and other forms of physical and psychological abuse of the detained Muslim and Croat civilians.

For his alleged participation in these acts (2 at Omarska and 13 at Keraterm), Zigic is charged with 22 counts of grave violations of the Geneva Conventions, 22 counts of violation of the laws and customs of war, and 25 counts of crimes against humanity.

Since the accused pleaded not guilty to all of these charges, the prosecutor will face the burden of proof and will have to prove that his accusations are grounded.

Prosecutor Michael Keegan announced on Monday that the two indictments against Zigic will be merged into one and that he will be tried together with Miroslav Kvočka and Mladen Radic, who are also accused of committing crimes at Omarska. Since both camps were set up and operated in the region of Prijedor, the prosecutor reiterated that he had submitted a request to the president of the Tribunal that Kvočka and Radic, and now Zigic as well, be tried by Trial Chamber II.

The chamber is currently trying the case of Milan Kovacevic, a former president of Prijedor municipality's Executive Board and a member of its Crisis Staff, accused of genocide against the non-Serb population in that part of Bosnia. The prosecutor proposed that the evidence proceedings against Kvočka, Radic, and Zigic be conducted concurrently with the evidence proceedings against Kovacevic.

According to the prosecutor, many witnesses are the same in both cases and joint evidence proceedings would protect the witnesses and victims from the trauma of multiple testimonies.

Location: [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)

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

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