



United Nations
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International
Criminal Tribunal
for the former
Yugoslavia

Tribunal Pénal
International pour
l'ex-Yougoslavie

STATEMENT

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REGISTRAR

The Hague, 21 December 2017

ICTY Closing Ceremony

Remarks by John Hocking

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General

International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia Registrar

Your Majesty, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Your Honours, Distinguished Guests.

The ICTY set the bar. Now, let us raise it higher.

Let us demand justice, where it is still denied, where it seems impossible. After the ICTY, we can and we must. When the ICTY started, war was still raging in the Balkans. Justice from a tribunal that had no staff, no rules and no accused was an improbable hope. Yet, accused after accused, leader after leader, eventually saw their day in court, until there were no fugitives left and justice had become a reality. After the ICTY, justice is no longer a question of “if”, it is a question of “when” and “how”. The ICTY set the bar. Now, let us raise it higher.

Let us speak up when humanity is targeted. 5,000 witnesses told their story at the ICTY. The boy who crawled over dead bodies, the girl who was raped over and over, the woman who was not worth treating, they spoke up about the unspeakable and made justice possible. Today Rohingya women fight through the same shame and pain to tell their stories because they need justice. If they can, we too must find our voice and speak up.

Let us treat every person with humanity. The ICTY set the bar and treated persons accused or convicted of the most inhumane acts with the same humanity which is owed to all human beings. And by respecting human dignity when it is most difficult, we raise higher the respect of human rights for us all.

After the ICTY, we can raise the bar higher. Today we do not have to start from scratch again. Today it is no longer revolutionary that rape can be an act of genocide and that Heads of State can stand trial. Today there is no longer one *ad hoc* tribunal in The Hague. Today there is an entire world building on what the ICTY has achieved. In The Hague and in New York, in the capitals and in the villages, with a gavel or with a phone, international and domestic courts, Member States, NGOs and all of us work towards justice. With each judgement rendered, each victim supported and each child educated, we raise the bar for justice higher every day.

But despite our efforts, monuments still turn into rubble and bodies into corpses, condemned war criminals are hailed as heroes, and documented atrocities are denied or downplayed. When it feels as if we have made no progress, we have learned no lessons, and we are no better than we were before we must remember that justice is not an event, it is a process. The deeper the wounds the greater the challenge, the greater the urgency the bigger the risk to expect too much too soon. On this winding uphill path, we must always remember that every effort has value and every step raises the bar higher.

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This past 11 July, I was in Srebrenica, one last time as the ICTY Registrar. In the crowd together with the Mothers of Srebrenica was a group of Yazidis. Armed with the resilience of those who have lost it all, the Mothers of Srebrenica made the world care. Genocide was recognised and from excavating mass graves, bone by bone, almost all the victims have been identified. Today, the Mothers of Srebrenica tell the Yazidis and all of us that a judicial process is the way forward. In the words of one of them: “You cannot bring the dead back, but you can feel the justice.”

The ICTY set the bar. It delivered justice for the murdered, the raped and the displaced in the former Yugoslavia. But millions more are being murdered, raped and displaced in villages that now stand out on the map and in villages already wiped off the map. For them, and for all of humanity, it is now up to all of us to raise the bar ever higher.

Thank you.
