Press Release **TRIBUNAL**

(Exclusively for the use of the media. Not an official document)

The Hague, 23 February 2011
NJ/MOW/1390e

Vlastimir Đorđević Convicted for Crimes in Kosovo



Vlastimir Đorđević

Trial Chamber II of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia today convicted Vlastimir Đorđević, a former senior Serbian police official, of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed against Kosovo Albanian civilians in 1999, and sentenced him to 27 years' imprisonment.

Đorđević, former Assistant Minister of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP) and Chief of its Public Security Department (RJB), was found guilty of participating in a joint criminal enterprise in 1999, whose aim was to change the ethnic balance of Kosovo to ensure Serbian dominance in the territory.

This objective was pursued through a widespread campaign of terror and violence against ethnic Albanians, which included deportations, murders, forcible transfers and persecutions. The common plan of the Joint Criminal Enterprise had the agreement and participation of political leaders of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and Serbia, the leadership of the Yugoslav Army (VJ), including the relevant Corps in Kosovo, and the leadership of the MUP including its Staff in Kosovo.

The Chamber found that some of the core members of the Joint Criminal Enterprise included Slobodan Milošević, President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and Nikola Šainović, Deputy Prime Minister of the FRY and responsible for Kosovo. The MUP membership of the Joint Criminal Enterprise included Vlajko Stojiljković, Minister of the Interior, the Accused Vlastimir Đorđević, Chief of the RJB, Radomir Marković, Chief of the State Security Department, and Sreten Lukić, head of the MUP Staff for Kosovo.

The Judges dismissed Đorđević's claim that he did not have effective control over the use of MUP forces in Kosovo because Minister Stojiljković had excluded him. To the contrary, the Chamber found that "*the Accused's participation in the joint criminal enterprise was crucial to its success*". He had lawful powers and exercised effective control over the police in Kosovo including regular and reserve police.

Đorđević was found responsible for the crimes of deportations, murders, forcible transfers and persecutions committed in the 13 municipalities listed in the indictment. These municipalities were: Orahovac/Rahovec, Prizren, Srbica/Skenderaj, Suva Reka/Suharekë, Peć/Pejë, Kosovska Mitrovica/Mitrovicë, Priština/Prishtinë, Đakovica/Gjakovë, Gnjilane/Gjilan, Uroševac/Ferizaj, Kačanik/Kaçanik, Dečani/Deçan and Vučitrn/Vushtrri.

Đorđević was found to be responsible for the murder of "*not less than 724 Kosovo Albanians*" who were murdered by Serbian forces, in most cases police, in many of the municipalities listed.

"*In the large majority of cases the victims, including many women and children, were civilians, who were unarmed and not in any way participating in any form of armed conflict*," the Chamber found. It added that the murder offences charged were merely examples and "*by no means exhaustive, of the crimes committed by Serbian forces, especially police, against the Kosovo Albanian population in the course of the widespread and systematic attack referred to*".

Among the incidents of murder for which Đorđević bears responsibility was the shooting and subsequent torching of 114 men and boys from a village near Orahovac/Rahovec who were killed by

the police on 26 March 1999. On that same day in Suva Reka/Suharekë the police killed about 45 members of one family. In Podujevo, Serbian forces lined up and shot 19 women and children of whom 14 were killed. The five children who survived sustained severe and permanent injuries.

Đorđević was also found guilty of deportation and forcible transfer. While over 800,000 Kosovo Albanians left Kosovo between 24 March 1999 and 20 June 1999 this Trial Chamber concerned itself with the events that took place in the 13 municipalities listed. It found that Đorđević was responsible for the deportation of at least 200,000 Kosovo Albanians from the area in the three months adding that "*the estimate is incomplete and very conservative and the true figure is likely to be very much higher*".

"*Kosovo Albanians left Kosovo because they were specifically ordered to do so by Serbian forces, or because the conduct of Serbian forces caused them to leave, in particular by shelling, shooting, killing and by burning houses and other buildings in their villages, towns and cities*," Judge Kevin Parker, Presiding, said.

The Chamber dismissed Defence allegations that Kosovo Albanians were fleeing the NATO bombing of FRY which commenced on 24 March 1999 and the fighting between the Serbian forces and the Kosovo Liberation Army. While these factors "*may have caused some concern in the minds of some Kosovo Albanians, the factor which was dominant and compelling in causing Kosovo Albanians to leave their homes, and in many cases in causing them to leave Kosovo, was the deliberate campaign of violence and terror conducted against Kosovo Albanian civilians by Serbian forces*", the Chamber found.

Đorđević was also found to have played a leading role in the MUP efforts to conceal the murders of Kosovo Albanians. "*The evidence confirms that from the second week of April 1999, on at least six occasions over a period of several weeks, trucks containing bodies of Kosovo Albanians killed by Serbian forces in Kosovo arrived at the 13 Maj SAJ Centre in Batajnica near Belgrade,*" the judgement reads. Two further deliveries were made to the Petrovo Selo PJP Centre. Bodies were also recovered from Lake Perućac in Serbia and buried in a mass grave site nearby. In 2001 the remains of 744 individuals were exhumed from the SAJ Centre in Batajnica, 61 from Petrovo Selo and 84 from Lake Perućac.

The Chamber has found that the transportation of bodies from Kosovo for clandestine burial in mass graves on MUP grounds was undertaken as part of a coordinated operation to remove evidence of crimes committed by Serbian forces against Kosovo Albanians in Kosovo during the Indictment period. This operation was conducted under the direction of the Accused, in consultation with Minister Stojiljković, pursuant to an order of the President of the FRY, Slobodan Milošević.

Vlastimir Đorđević is the eighth former senior Serbian official to be tried for the crimes committed in Kosovo and the sixth to be convicted. He was indicted in 2003 but remained on the run until his arrest on 17 June 2007 in Montenegro. His trial began on 27 January 2009 and concluded with closing arguments on 13 and 14 July 2010. The Chamber has heard over 140 witnesses and has admitted in evidence over 2,500 exhibits, including many orders and reports of the MUP and the VJ, and records of meetings of the Serbian political, police and military leaderships.

Since its establishment, the Tribunal has indicted 161 persons for serious violations of humanitarian law committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia between 1991 and 2001. Proceedings against 125 have been concluded. Proceedings are currently ongoing for 34 Accused.

*** * ***

The full text of the Summary of Judgement will shortly be available on the Tribunal's website: www.icty.org

*****

International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
For more information, please contact our Media Office in The Hague
Tel.: +31-70-512-8752; 512-5343; 512-5356 Fax: +31-70-512-5355 - Email: press@icty.org
Follow ICTY on Twitter and Youtube