



UNITED NATIONS

## International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

*The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals ("Mechanism") was established on 22 December 2010 by the United Nations Security Council to continue the jurisdiction, rights, obligations and essential functions of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda ("ICTR") and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia ("ICTY") after the completion of their respective mandates.*

# STATEMENT

REGISTRAR

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

The Hague, 11 July 2018

## Address at the commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide

**Olufemi Elias**

**Registrar of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals**

**11 July 2018, Srebrenica**

Survivors and families of the victims, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

It was impossible to avoid a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions overwhelming me as I arrived here today. Deep, unspeakable sadness over the lives that have so brutally been taken here 23 years ago, and a strong sense of compassion with the survivors and victims' families, mix with questions of "why" and "how" could such evil be committed against fellow human beings, and what, if anything, can be done in the aftermath of the genocide to address it.

I am deeply honoured to be here today to pay homage to the victims, representing an institution dedicated to responding to these questions and to attributing individual criminal responsibility for the crimes that have been committed here.

Of course, the role of criminal justice is limited; the dead cannot be brought back to life, the suffering of the survivors and victims' families cannot be erased, the broken families cannot be restored. We cannot change the past, but to build the future, it is essential that the facts about the genocide are established beyond reasonable doubt; that the individuals who initiated, planned, ordered and executed the genocide are held accountable and punished for their crimes; that the memory of the victims and the crime committed against them is preserved and firmly written in history and in humanity's collective memory; and that there is no room for denial of the genocide that was committed here 23 years ago, as established in the judgements of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Court of Justice.

This is exactly what the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals stands for. It stands for accountability - against impunity for perpetrators. It stands for facts based on evidence - against groundless, false narratives. It stands for memory - against denial of crimes and disrespect of the

International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

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victims. It stands for understanding and overcoming the past – in support of preventing such crimes from ever occurring again.

The Mechanism stands for and promotes these values in multiple ways - through its judicial work; through promoting and carrying forward the legacy of the ICTY and acting as the custodian of the Tribunal's archive; through support to victims and witnesses; as well as through the assistance to national courts in the region of the former Yugoslavia in the adjudication of war crimes cases.

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All three war crimes cases for which the proceedings are currently ongoing before the Mechanism include allegations of responsibility of the accused for the crimes committed as part of the genocide in Srebrenica. The Mechanism has inherited these cases from the ICTY and it is of utmost importance that they are efficiently completed in line with the highest standards of international criminal justice. In that way the Mechanism will ensure that there cannot be any reasonable doubt regarding the findings established in these cases' final judgments.

The cases tried by the ICTY have contributed in a profound way to establishing what happened in Srebrenica in July 1995, how the genocide was committed and who is responsible for it. The Mechanism, as the Tribunal's successor, is dedicated to ensuring that the ICTY's legacy is not forgotten or disregarded after its closing, but that it remains impactful and that it provides a meaningful platform for the processes of facing the past in Srebrenica, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entire region of the former Yugoslavia.

One of the key functions of the Mechanism is to preserve and manage the ICTY's archive, as well as to ensure and facilitate the public's access to it. This archive includes thousands of documents, artefacts, photographs and videos related to the genocide in Srebrenica, which enable us, and will enable future generations, to better understand the horrific events that took place here 23 years ago, so that we can hopefully learn from them and never again allow such evil to be repeated.

The ICTY and the Mechanism have handled cases against 20 individuals accused of being the most responsible for the genocide in Srebrenica. Hundreds of cases remain to be adjudicated. The responsibility for prosecuting other perpetrators, whose cases never reached the courtrooms of the Mechanism and Tribunal, now rests with the national courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region of the former Yugoslavia. It is imperative that these courts continue this work and process as many cases as possible.

The Mechanism therefore places the highest importance on its cooperation with the courts in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region, which are dealing with war crimes cases, including the Srebrenica genocide. Daily, the Mechanism is providing assistance to national courts and to all parties involved in war crimes trials before them. In this way we assist in ensuring that there is no effective impunity for the perpetrators after the closing of the ICTY and that those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes, can expect that one day they will be brought before a court of law to be held accountable for their crimes.



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This is my first visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina as the Registrar of the Mechanism and it feels only right that I am delivering my first public address here, before you – the survivors and families of victims of the genocide. I am both humbled and honoured to be with you to mourn your loved ones. I can assure you that the Mechanism will do its part to ensure that the events of Srebrenica will not be forgotten and cannot be denied, that the perpetrators are held accountable, and that the memory of the victims is preserved.

Thank you.

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