



War Crimes Prosecution
Watch

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War Crimes Prosecution Watch is a bi-weekly e-newsletter that compiles official documents and articles from major news sources detailing and analyzing salient issues pertaining to the investigation and prosecution of war crimes throughout the world. To subscribe, please email warcrimesswatch@pilpg.org and type "subscribe" in the subject line.

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AFRICA

NORTH AFRICA

Libya

Libyan Warlord Hires Ex-Clinton Aide Lanny Davis, Ex-Republican House Leader Bob Livingston, to Lobby D.C. (Wall Street Journal) By Jared Malsina and Vivian Salama

September 8, 2021

A Russian-backed warlord vying for power in Libya has hired a one-time senior aide to President Bill Clinton and a former Republican lawmaker to lead a nearly \$1 million effort to lobby the Biden administration for political support, documents show.

Lanny Davis and former Rep. Robert Livingston (R., La.) have signed with militia leader Khalifa Haftar to try to arrange meetings with officials at the White House, State Department and Congress before Libya’s national election scheduled for December, documents filed with the Justice Department show. Human-rights organizations and international prosecutors have accused Mr. Haftar’s forces of war crimes.

The lobbying campaign is an effort by Mr. Haftar to regain some of the influence he has lost since the collapse last year of his 14-month long offensive against the country’s internationally-recognized government in Tripoli. A U.N.-brokered unity government took office in Libya earlier this year after Mr. Haftar’s attempt to seize power unraveled in the face of a Turkish-backed counteroffensive.

A one-time commander in the Libyan military, Mr. Haftar broke with longtime leader Moammar Gadhafi in the late 1980s. He later led, with CIA backing, a campaign against the Gadhafi regime and lived for two decades in northern Virginia. When the uprising against Gadhafi began in 2011, Mr. Haftar flew back to Libya and led fighters in the rebellion. He now faces lawsuits in the U.S. brought by Libyans accusing his forces of torture, summary killings and other war crimes during his military operations in Libya.

Libya faces a range of challenges leading up to the planned December election, including the presence of foreign mercenary forces in the country. Russia has dispatched thousands of paramilitary fighters from Russia, Syria and elsewhere along with MiG-29 jet fighters and other military hardware to support Mr. Haftar’s forces since 2019. Turkey also has sent Syrian fighters to support the Tripoli government.

Mr. Haftar hasn’t declared his candidacy in the December election, but some analysts expect him to run. His forces still control much of the country, including the city of Benghazi and oil installations.

Mr. Haftar has agreed to pay \$160,000 a month total over six months for Messrs. Davis and Livingston's services, and intends to visit Washington for meetings with senior U.S. officials "to advocate for the December 24, 2021 elections in Libya."

A spokesman for Mr. Haftar didn't immediately respond to a request for comment. Mr. Livingston declined to comment.

Mr. Davis served as special counsel to former President Clinton and was a leading White House spokesman during the Clinton impeachment proceedings. More recently, he advised President Trump's lawyer, Michael Cohen, in his legal battle with the former president.

Mr. Livingston was tapped to be speaker of the Republican House following the resignation of Newt Gingrich after the GOP's losses in the 1998 midterm elections. But he withdrew over concerns that revelations of past marital infidelity would undermine the Republicans' Clinton impeachment effort.

Among the two men's priorities will be to free Mr. Haftar from the label "warlord," broadly applied to him over the years since he broke with the authorities in Tripoli and launched a rogue military campaign in 2014.

His military operations displaced tens of thousands of Libyans, and human-rights groups accused his forces of torture and indiscriminate shelling. An officer in Mr. Haftar's army has been indicted by the International Criminal Court in 2017 for the alleged summary executions of 33 people.

The lobbyists will promote the notion that because Mr. Haftar has worked with the U.S. in the past and was involved in efforts to overthrow Mr. Gadhafi, he should be regarded as a player in Libya's future. Their ultimate goal is to win Mr. Haftar support from the West ahead of the December general election, a person familiar with the arrangement said.

Mr. Haftar has hired other lobbyists to represent him in Washington in recent years and built inroads to the Trump administration, including during his 2019 assault on Tripoli.

Former President Trump called Mr. Haftar during the opening days of the conflict to voice his support for the commander's vision for Libya, a conversation arranged by Mr. Trump's former national security adviser John Bolton.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi also urged Mr. Trump to support Mr. Haftar during his war against the Tripoli government. Mr. Sisi has lost clout in Washington due to Egypt's declining human rights record, forcing Mr. Haftar to rely on lobbyists to advocate for him in Washington.

The Biden administration hasn't stressed Libya in its overall foreign-policy approach, focusing instead on the military withdrawal from Afghanistan and confronting China. In May the administration tapped the current ambassador to Libya, Richard Norland, to become special envoy to the country.

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CENTRAL AFRICA

Central African Republic

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Sudan & South Sudan

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in Darfur, Sudan**

Sudan Summoned Ethiopia's Ambassador Over 29 Bodies Found in River (VOA News)
September 8, 2021

Sudan summoned Ethiopia's ambassador to Khartoum to inform him that 29 corpses found on the banks of a river abutting Ethiopia were those of Ethiopian citizens from the Tigray ethnic group, Sudan's Foreign Ministry said.

It said in a statement late on Tuesday that the ambassador had been summoned on August 30 and was told that the bodies had been found between July 26 and August 8 on the Sudanese side of the Setit River, known in Ethiopia as the Tekeze.

The corpses were identified by Ethiopians residing in the Wad al Hulaywah area of eastern Sudan, it said.

The statement did not say how the people died.

Dina Mufti, spokesperson for the Ethiopian Foreign Affairs Ministry, did not immediately respond to request for comment.

The river is the current de facto borderline between territory controlled by Tigrayan forces and those controlled by Amhara forces allied with Ethiopia's federal government. At a different point the river also separates Sudan from Ethiopia.

Tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia have been running high because of a spillover of the conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region and Ethiopia's construction of a giant hydropower dam on the Blue Nile.

Tens of thousands of refugees have fled into eastern Sudan and there have been military skirmishes in an area of contested farmland along the border between Sudan and Ethiopia. Sudanese authorities said on Sunday they had confiscated a weapons shipment that arrived by air from Ethiopia on suspicion the arms were destined for use in "crimes against the state."

Sudan's Interior Ministry said later on Monday that the shipment had turned out to be part of a legal cargo imported by a licensed arms trader.

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Democratic Republic of the Congo

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

Several civilians burned, hacked to death by rebels in DR Congo (Al Jazeera)
Several civilians burned, hacked to death by rebels in DR Congo (Al Jazeera) August 28, 2021

Nineteen civilians in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have been burned and hacked to death by Ugandan rebels, a local official said.

Fourteen bodies were found on Saturday, a day after the incident, Kakule Kalunga told the AFP news agency.

A local chief said the bodies were discovered by Red Cross workers who went into the nearby forest to look for those missing after the attack on Kasanzi village in the Beni territory of North Kivu.

Beni lies at the heart of an area where the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) – affiliated to ISIL (ISIS) – have mounted deadly attacks in spite of emergency security measures by President Felix Tshisekedi.

"[The] 19 people were killed by the rebels who plague the territory of Beni, the ADF," Kalunga said, adding that the victims were killed by "bladed weapons and fire", and that houses were also set ablaze.

In a statement on Friday, Meleki Mulala, a spokesman for the New Civil Society organisation in Rwenzori, deplored the

absence of military personnel around Beni.

Regional military sources contacted by AFP did not immediately comment.

Since May, the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri have been under a state of siege, replacing civilian authorities with army and police officers to fight armed groups.

Earlier this month, a contingent of US special operations forces arrived in the area to help the Congolese army in their fight against the ADF, US and Congolese sources said at the time.

The size of the contingent was unknown but about a dozen soldiers could be seen in official photos of a meeting between Tshisekedi and a delegation led by the US ambassador to the DRC, Mike Hammer.

Dozens killed in northeast DR Congo by suspected ADF rebels (Al Jazeera)

September 6, 2021

At least 30 people were killed in a weekend attack in the restive northeast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, according to local and UN sources.

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebel group is suspected of carrying out the attack in the Ituri area on Saturday, they said on Monday.

Dieudonne Malangayi, acting chairman of the chiefdom of Walese Vonkutu, initially said 14 people died in the attack but told AFP news agency on Monday that more bodies had since been discovered.

“The civilians who went to look for the bodies of the victims found 16 others in the bush, which makes 30 civilians massacred,” said Malangayi.

A UN source confirmed to AFP that at least 30 people had been killed in the attack.

One civilian who helped look for bodies said the victims had mostly been attacked with machetes or shot.

The ADF, which the United States has deemed a “terrorist group”, is considered the deadliest of many armed groups that roam the mineral-rich eastern DR Congo.

In August, the group burned and hacked to death at least 19 civilians in the Beni territory of North Kivu, according to local officials.

‘State of siege’ The Catholic Church in the country says the ADF has killed about 6,000 civilians since 2013, while a US-based monitor, the Kivu Security Tracker (KST), blames it for more than 1,200 deaths in the Beni area alone since 2017.

Congolese authorities’ crackdown against ADF has included a “state of siege” that started in early May, in which top officials in North Kivu and neighbouring Ituri province have been replaced by members of the security forces who have been granted far-reaching powers. Human rights organisations have warned against the misuse of “the state of siege”. “Emergency powers can lead to more human rights violations if abused,” Amnesty International said when “the state of siege” came into force in May.

Civil society activists have called for an end to the siege, saying “the rights of citizens are increasingly trampled on”.

In August, President Felix Tshisekedi authorised US special forces to help the Congolese army battle the ADF, which is believed to be linked to the ISIL (ISIS) armed group. Since April 2019, ISIL has claimed responsibility for some of the ADF attacks and, in March this year, Washington placed the ADF on a list of “terrorist organisations” affiliated with ISIL.

United Nations experts, however, have said they have not found conclusive evidence that ISIL has control over ADF operations.

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WEST AFRICA

Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

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Lake Chad Region – Chad, Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon

Almost 6,000 Boko Haram fighters have surrendered, Nigerian army says (Reuters)

September 2, 2021

Close to 6,000 fighters from the Boko Haram Islamist insurgent group in northeast Nigeria have surrendered in recent weeks, the Nigerian armed forces said on Thursday, attributing the development to the military's counter-insurgency efforts.

Some 350,000 people have died in the conflict between Boko Haram and the Nigerian army since it began 12 years ago, according to a United Nations estimate, and the fighting has spilled over to neighbouring Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

"Within the last few weeks, more than 5,890 terrorists comprising foot soldiers and their commanders have surrendered with their families to our troops in the North East Zone," said Brigadier General Bernard Onyeuko, spokesman for the armed forces.

He said 565 of the surrendered fighters had been handed over to the government of northeastern Borno State for "further management after thorough profiling", but gave no further details.

Boko Haram, which acquired global notoriety with the mass kidnapping of schoolgirls from the town of Chibok in 2014, has been in a state of flux due to a conflict with a splinter group-turned-rival, the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP).

Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, died in May. According to ISWAP, he was fleeing a battle with ISWAP and detonated an explosive device before he could be captured. [read more](#)

Observers expressed uncertainty as to what the repercussions of Shekau's death might be. The two groups had been fighting each other for control of territory in northeast Nigeria and around Lake Chad.

The Nigerian government and armed forces have in the past made statements about imminent success against Boko Haram, only to have events on the ground to contradict them.

Hundreds of Boko Haram fighters attacked a military post in southern Niger last week, killing 16 soldiers, according to the Niger defence ministry. [read more](#)

At least 26 Chadian soldiers were killed earlier in August by suspected Boko Haram attackers, according to the Chadian army.

How Nigerian Army Tortured, Sentenced Me To Death For Demanding Better Weapons To Fight Boko Haram—Ex-Soldier (Sahara Reporters)

September 2, 2021

An ex-soldier, Amoo Bukola, recently released with others from the Maximum Security Prisons, Kirikiri in Lagos has narrated how he and others were tortured, jailed and sentenced to death by the army authorities for demanding better weapons to fight Boko Haram terrorists.

Bukola disclosed this in a recent interview with PM News, expressing hope that he will be reinstated in the army.

He gave details of how he joined the Nigerian Army and what led to his imprisonment alongside 53 others.

Bukola narrated how he began his military career, saying, "I joined the Nigerian Army fully on the 6th of August 2012 after

completing six months' training and eventually passing out of the training on the 21st of December 2012.

"After passing out from the Depot, I was posted to NATRAC Kotangora in Niger State for training as a (member of the) Counter-Terrorist Special Force and Quick Response Group (QRG).

"There I was trained for four months, commencing from the 3rd January through to 19th April 2013.

"Thereafter, I was then posted to 101 Special Force battalion at Kainji, Niger State. After the posting, I was then nominated to go for training in Pakistan, there, I was trained for two months between 13th July and 13th of September 2013. SEE ALSO

54 Nigerian Soldiers Jailed For Demanding Better Arms, Regain Freedom After Seven Years 3 Comments3 Weeks Ago "I also had the Anti-Terrorist Training (ATT) commando course 43. Two days after my arrival from Pakistan, I was appointed to go for Operation Zama Lafiya in Maiduguri, Borno State.

"We took off from 101 battalion special force camp to Abuja on the 15th of September 2013, for operation. We were about one hundred and eighteen soldiers (118) that went for the operation and we went at a company level named 'Army Headquarters Special Force Company.'

"We finally left Abuja on the 18th of September, 2013. We transited at Damaturu where we slept in Yobe State till the following morning. We then moved to Maiduguri. We arrived at 7 division Garrison in Maiduguri, Borno State.

"We were deployed to several places like Bulaburi Damboa, Bulaburi garna, Mafindi, Balle, Chinese, Ngwoshe, Gwosa, Cashew Plantation at the back of How's barracks, Asigashia Cameroon, and Mulai primary school along Damboa Road, adjacent AIT, Maiduguri, Borno State.

"On the 9th of July, 2014 our mission on this day was to go and recapture Damboa from the terrorists. On our way to the point, along the road the terrorists had laid ambush unknown to us. At that point, we lost nine men and twenty-three (soldiers) were seriously injured.

"To further commence the journey, we requested sufficient weapons from our commander so as to be able to fight more sufficiently with the terrorists but our request was refused by the commander.

"On the 4th of August 2014, we were asked to return to Damboa. At this point again we were ambushed, yet again we requested weapons from our commander and he still refused.

"All of a sudden on the same day, the GOC of 7 division in Maiduguri, Borno State, Major General M.Y Ibrahim ordered that we should be brought to him for an address.

"His plan then was to hand us over to the military police guardroom. Two weeks later we were moved to the airport, flown to Abuja, and driven to Abacha barracks in Abuja.

"At the barracks, we were divided into different groups and taken to different guardrooms at different barracks, some Mambila barracks, Lungi barracks, Mogadishu barracks, and Keffi barracks, Nasarawa State.

"We were in the guardroom for four months after which we were sent to the general court-martial.

"The court-martial process started on the 2nd of October 2014. A case was established against us in the court and adjourned several times before we were finally sentenced.

"But one of us did not face the trials for health reasons, five were discharged and acquitted while 54 of us were sentenced to death by firing squad on the following charges: mutiny and criminal conspiracy to commit mutiny against 7 division Maiduguri.

"The presiding chief justice who sentenced us is Brigadier General M.S. Yusuf, while the advocate judge was Lieutenant Col Ukpe Ukpe, the prosecutor Captain J. A. Nwosu, our defence counsel was led by Mr. Femi Falana (SAN), Major Femi Oyebanji (Rtd), Barr. Samuel, Barr. Eze, and Barr. Olakitan.

"After the sentence was announced on the 17th December 2014, we were taken to the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja and flown to Lagos on 21st December 2014 with handcuffs and leg chains.

"On arrival in Lagos, we were shared into different guardrooms e.g. CIC intelligence underground guardroom and SIB military detention, all these with handcuffs and leg chains for a whole month all together in detention we spent 1 year, 2 days, 7 hours and 40 minutes and 29 seconds in Lagos State.

"Thereafter, on the 18th of December 2015, our sentence was reverted to 10 years imprisonment and after some days we were moved to the maximum security prisons, Kirikiri, Apapa, Lagos State."

Bukola also revealed that the incident affected his marriage, saying his wife abandoned him after he was sentenced to death.

Bukola said: "This life is full of ups and downs. I never imagined that my wife, mother of my only child (Adam) would abandon me just after I was sentenced to death by firing squad to marry another man. Anyway, life continues. It sounded incredulous when our death sentence was reverted to 10 years.

"So many things happened when I was in prison, my elder brother a constable in the Nigeria Police Force attached to Kwara State Police command misfired on January 20, 2016, and was sentenced to death.

"The sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment last year. My aged parents –Mrs. Rainot Amoo, 65 and Pa Abdul Salam Amoo, 70 –are in the village Gorioluode in the Moro Local Government Area of Kwara State.

"Now that we have been released, we beg President Mohammadu Buhari, Vice President (Prof.) Yemi Osinbajo, the Chief of Army Staff to reinstate us in the army so that we can fight the terrorists."

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Mali

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Liberia

Cummings, Boakai to Appear Before Senate (Liberian Observer) By J. Burgess Carter

September 7, 2021

Joining views: Allan White, Bishop Kortu Brown, Jerome Verdier, Massa Washington, as Senate solicit views on TRC VS its TJC recommendation

Former Vice President Joseph N. Boakai and Alexander B. Cummings, political leader of the Alternative National Congress, have been invited by the Senate to give their opinions on the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report.

The Senate's invitation to the opposition politicians, along with 12 others, comes after public backlash over its decision to recommend to President George Weah of their preference to set up a Transitional Justice Commission (TJC) to perform several tasks as recommended by the erstwhile Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The TRC called for the establishment of a war and economic crimes court to prosecute perpetrators and address the legacy of the 14-year civil war that killed an estimated 250,000 people and displaced more than a million -- a suggestion in which the Senate, which has in its membership at least one warlord, appeared not to be interested.

But after public outcry, the Senate has decided to solicit the views and opinions of politicians, lawyers, experts, civil society organizations, and some former commissioners of the TRC, regarding its decision to call for the setup of the TJC.

"The Liberian Senate, in continuation of the debate and public hearing on its recommendation to the President on the implementation of the TRC recommendations, has invited some experts and stakeholders to appear and give their opinions," a statement from the Senate said on Thursday, July 1.

According to the Senate, the hearing of expanded experts and stakeholders will run from Monday, July 5 through 14, 2021, in

the Annex Chambers of the Senate.

The ANC political leader and Cllr. Arthur Johnson are expected to appear before the Senate plenary one on July 5, 2021, while the former Vice President and Debay Sayndee, Director of the Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation, University of Liberia and representatives of the Liberian National Bar Association will appear on July 7, 2021, at noon. The expected appearance of Cummings and of Boakai, will happen a few days after Solicitor General Syrennius Cephus, informed the Senate of his support for the establishment of the TJC to handle the TRC report rather than a war and economic crimes court.

Cllr. Cephus, who earlier informed the Senators that his remark was not an official position of the President Weah-led government, argued that the 1986 Constitution of the Republic of Liberia has to be amended in order to pave the way for the establishment of the court.

“We all know the socio-economic impediment and the processes that occasioned the final report of the TRC, the constitutional challenges bordering on due process and the question of the full implementation was left unaddressed,” Cephus said.

He added “My position on this is that the Transitional Justice Commission is indeed the better forum to be able to carry out this work. The TRC was not a Supreme Court or any court of appeal where descending or conclusiveness of a judgment is based on majority opinion.

“Liberia’s mere commitment to treaty obligations does not constitute parts of the laws of Liberia. Even after ratification of a treaty where it becomes law, it becomes subject and subordinate to the Constitution and can be reviewed by Article 2 of the Liberian Constitution,” Cephus said. In his argument, he said that the TRC was not meant to be a court where Commissioners of the Commission would have provided dissenting opinions but a platform for national reconciliation and healing.

Cllr. Cephus added that the creation of the Court in question would require amendments to Articles 2, 50, 54, 56 of the 1986 constitutions.

What’s in the Senate Report

In their recommendation, the Senate leadership informed President George Weah that the establishment of such a commission is necessary to determine whether the TRC recommendations have not been fully and timely implemented.

The Senate argued that the transitional justice commission, when established, will examine the effect of the August 2003 Act of the Legislature, which granted general amnesty to all participants in the civil crisis, a major obstacle to the prosecutions of warlords.

The commission, the Senate said, will then determine if the TRC commissioners comply with the mandate such as the face-to-face meeting with perpetrators of crimes and other offenses and their respective victims in light of allegations from some former warlords that the TRC never contacted them.

“The mandate of the TJC, when established, will also include analyzing credibility and legitimacy issues surrounding the final report of the TRC in respect of the fact that four of the Commissioners had serious issues with the report and consequently, two of the commissioners did not sign the final report but instead presented a dissenting report,” the Senate report said.

“The TJC will also examine the effect of the ratification, assertion of Liberia to the Rome Statute in 2004 after the end of the civil crisis on the establishment of the war crimes court,” the report said.

The 24-page report from the Senate comes nearly two years after President Weah asked the Legislature to advise him on the implementation of the TRC’s recommendations which, among other things, called for the setting up of a war crimes court. During Liberia’s armed conflicts from 1989-96 and 1999-2003, Liberians suffered widespread violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, such as mass killings, rape and other forms of sexual violence, summary executions, mutilation and torture, and use of child combatants.

The TRC, which operated between 2006 and 2009, recommended creating a war crimes court to try those responsible for grave crimes committed. Many of the TRC’s recommendations, including for the war crimes court, have never been carried out.

But in the last two years, Liberians have held marches to campaign for the war crimes court and have petitioned the Legislature to carry out the TRC’s recommendations. These marches gained the support of the Liberian Bar Association, the National Traditional Chiefs Council, and other prominent high profile Liberians, and civil society groups.

Other invitees

Meanwhile, the Senate has disclosed that on July 8, 2021, Bishop Kortu K. Brown, President of the Liberian Council of

Churches; and Charles B. Coffey, President of the Press Union of Liberia will appear for their expert opinions; while, Jerome Verdier, former Chairman of the TRC; and Oscar Bloh, chairman of the Election Coordinating Committee (ECC) will be appearing on Monday, July 12, 2021, at 12 Noon.

The Senate further said that on July 13, 2021, members of the National Muslim Council of Liberia will join Alan White, former Prosecutor of the Sierra Leone Special Court at 12 Noon for further hearings which will be followed by questions from the Senators. On Wednesday, July 14, 2021, the National Chairman of the Coalition for Democratic Change, Mulbah K. Morlu and Madam Massa Washington, a former member of the TRC will also appear.

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EAST AFRICA

Uganda

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in Uganda**

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Kenya

**Official Website of the International Criminal Court
ICC Public Documents - Situation in the Republic of Kenya**

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Rwanda (International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda)

Official Website of the ICTR

Rwanda: Genocide - French Court Paves Way for Probe of Habyarimana Widow (New Times Rwanda) By James Karuhanga
August 30, 2021

The Paris Court of Appeal on Monday, August 30, ruled against the request by Agatha Kanziga Habyarimana, the widow of former Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana, not to be brought to justice over allegations of involvement in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

For over two decades, survivors and the government of Rwanda wondered how Kanziga, 78, a wanted Genocide suspect, continues to evade justice.

Kanziga is one of the core members of Akazu, a small elite group that orchestrated the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

For over a decade she had been the subject of an investigation in France, according to reports.

Alain Gauthier, the president of the France based rights group, Collectif des parties civiles pour le Rwanda (CPCR), which filed genocide charges against Kanziga 14 years ago, last year noted that when they first filed a complaint against Kanziga on February 14, 2007, "we were well aware that we were facing insurmountable difficulties."

Politically, he indicated, they knew that it was unfathomable to see how France, which had welcomed her in the first days of the Genocide, with heavy indemnities and a bouquet of flowers, was going to be able, 13 years later, to accept to try her.

Despite the fact that she officially has no residence, it was noted, "that does not prevent her from spending happy days (apparently not that happy), in her villa in Courcouronnes, surrounded by part of her family," which is far from being the case for many survivors of the Genocide against the Tutsi.

According to the CPCR, Kanziga could have been extradited, but the Court of Cassation opposed, on 42 occasions, and perhaps more, any transfer to Rwanda.

Last November, she appeared before a court in Paris for questioning in an ongoing investigation against Barril, a man who, among others, supplied arms and mercenaries on behalf of the French government to Rwanda's genocidal government in 1994.

Rwanda President Under Scrutiny After Hero Depicted in Hotel Rwanda Is Put on Trial for Terrorism and Murder (People.com) By Chris Harris

September 1, 2021

Later this month, the life of Paul Rusesabagina — the hotel manager whose heroics during the 1994 Rwandan genocide inspired the Oscar-nominated Hotel Rwanda — could change forever.

Rusesabagina, who was portrayed in the 2004 film by actor Don Cheadle, will learn his fate from judges at the High Court Chamber for International and Cross-Border Crimes in Rwanda on Sept. 20.

The "genocide hero" has been a fervent opponent and critic of Rwanda President Paul Kagame since his regime assumed power in 2000, and just over a year ago, Rusesabagina was arrested on terrorism charges along with 19 others.

The 67-year-old activist and his co-defendants are further charged with murder, arson, financing and founding armed groups, and conspiracy to involve children in armed groups. He is facing a possible life sentence.

The arrest of Rusesabagina — who famously saved the lives of more than 1,200 Hutu and Tutsi refugees, sheltering them inside the Hôtel des Mille Collines in Kigali during the three-month massacre that killed more than 800,000 — has led to international condemnation against Kagame, with New York-based Human Rights Watch denouncing it as an "enforced disappearance, a serious violation of international law."

In February, just before the start of Rusesabagina's trial, the European Union adopted a resolution condemning the arrest and characterizing it as "politically motivated."

The resolution also called for an investigation that provides full accounting of how Rusesabagina — who was living in Texas at the time of his arrest — ended up in Rwandan custody.

"Rusesabagina was forcibly transferred from Dubai to Kigali in uncertain circumstances and only reappeared ... at the headquarters of the Rwandan Investigation Bureau," reads the resolution. "Rusesabagina was arrested at Kigali International Airport, contradicting an earlier police account which stated that he was arrested through 'international cooperation.'"

The resolution also noted that the Rwandan government "has arrested, detained and prosecuted critics and government opponents in politically motivated trials" and "repeatedly threatened others outside the country, with some having been physically attacked and even killed."

Rusesabagina's own lawyers have said the arrest was undeniably driven by his criticism of the Rwandan government — and that other dissidents have been arrested or disappeared altogether during Kagame's presidency.

Kagame has raised the ire of numerous human rights groups over the years; all accuse him of suppressing the freedoms of Rwandan citizens, and using illegal tactics to eliminate his political rivals.

Speaking to The New York Times after his arrest, Rusesabagina — who fled Rwanda in 1996 after a failed assassination attempt — said that in Dubai, he boarded a private plane that he was told was bound for Burundi, where he was to deliver a

speech at the invitation of a Christian pastor.

Instead, it landed in Kigali.

Al Jazeera reported in February that Johnston Busingye, Rwanda's then-minister of justice, admitted that the government paid for the private jet that delivered Rusesabagina to Rwandan authorities.

This week, it was announced that Busingye had been removed as justice minister, and appointed an ambassador to Great Britain. A reason for the move was not provided by Rwandan officials.

Relatives have said Rusesabagina, a cancer survivor, is in poor health and being mistreated while in custody. They further believe the allegations against him are pure fiction.

"What they're accusing him of is all made up," his adopted daughter, Carine Kanimba, told The Guardian last year. "There is no evidence to what they're claiming ... We know this is a wrongful arrest."

Rusesabagina refused to attend the majority of his trial, alleging that his right to a fair trial has been violated.

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Somalia

Somalia: Concerns On Civilian Safety Fuel Somalia's Stance On AMISOM (All Africa) By Aggrey Mutambo, Abdulkadir Khalif
September 5, 2021

Somalia will this week expect a report from a team appointed by Prime Minister Hussein Roble to investigate circumstances under which seven people were killed in a raid by African Union Mission forces in Somalia (Amisom).

The incident in Golweyn, Lower Shabelle region of Somalia, happened in an area manned by Ugandan forces in Amisom's Sector 1. Amisom had said the August 10 raid had targeted and killed al-Shabaab militants.

But it was followed by protests by the families of the people killed who demanded compensation. Mr Roble on August 22 ordered an investigation by a ministerial taskforce.

Mr Mohamed Ibrahim Moalimu, Somalia's Government Spokesman said "punitive action" should follow those found culpable.

Punitive action

It is unclear what kind of punitive action Somalia could take on Ugandan forces, although Prime Minister Roble met Ugandan Ambassador Nathan Mugisa to relay the complaints.

The incident, however, reflects the kind of working relationship between Amisom and the Somali government, as both sides discuss the future of the Mission.

Legally, the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia is expected to end on December 31 this year, unless it is extended by the UN Security Council or at least modified.

The Mission, which was formed in 2007 as a combat force against al-Shabaab, has had its mandate extended every year since, including this year when it was extended to December from February.

Whatever happens after December will now depend on perceptions against the Amisom forces. Although the Mission helped stabilise Somalia's nascent government to an extent by pushing al-Shabaab out of main towns, it has been accused by rights groups of violating the law.

All troop contributors Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Burundi and Djibouti have in the past been accused, in one way or another, of indiscriminate killings or other forms of violations. The Mission officially denies encouraging impunity and has often

promised to investigate claims. When the Ugandan forces killed seven people last month, the Mission had initially said they were terrorists.

But after complaints from families and the Somali government, Amisom promised to investigate, saying it does "not condone criminal activities against civilians by its soldiers."

Somalia's political leaders think Amisom's previous promises to investigate violations were not met with action. At a press conference on Friday, Bankole Adeoye, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security suggested future changes to Amisom must correct its command structure.

Security

"The command and control must be centralised and coordinated," he argued in a virtual briefing.

So far, the AU and the Somali government have about two months to decide the future of Amisom.

"We do not have any agreement [on the future of Amisom yet]. We continue to engage," said Adeoye.

In August, the African Union (AU) Commission and the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) agreed on a framework to redraft the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia beyond 2021.

In a formal statement, the two sides agreed that, among many others, good progress has been made on the implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan, which is technically the way Somalia's armed forces should assume security responsibility upon exit of the peacekeepers under AU.

But Somalia has made it clear it wants fewer gun-carrying men and women, and more experts to help rebuild the country's own institutions.

In July, a special taskforce proposed four options including extension of mandate, modification of Amisom into a hybrid force under AU-UN or total exit after December.

Somalia rejected all the options, citing lack of central role for Somalia and absence of a plan to build its own military.

After a framework agreement last month, Adeoye said Somalia seemed inclined to the option of a modified mission that will have less combat, with adjustments to what the AU taskforce had proposed.

New mission

After the framework deal, Ms Fiona Lortan, the Acting Director of Conflict Management at the Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department of the African Union (AU) said both sides are keen to avoid a vacuum when the Amisom mandate ends.

"The talks [are] focused on what the new mission should look like and what the mandate of the new mission will be."

Officials in Somalia say the stay of Amisom should be complementary not primary to the security needs in Somalia. But they agree that such a transition may take longer, beyond December, even if Amisom were to exit.

Said Samantar, the Director-General in the Ministry of Defense, admits the transition "will be implemented gradually, taking into consideration the level of readiness by Somali security forces."

"We will steadily exchange roles with our African brothers and sisters who have been helping us over a decade."

Many people see this cautious step-by-step approach as ideal, seeing what happened in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of the US and NATO forces, paving the way for the takeover of Taliban of the entire country including the capital Kabul, causing mayhem.

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EUROPE

The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, War Crimes Chamber

Official Court Website [English translation]

Bosnia Upholds Serb Ex-Soldier's Sentence for Killing Civilians (Balkan Transitional Justice) By Aida Trepanic
September 7, 2021

Boro Milojica's defence lawyer Ranko Dakic told BIRN that an appeal to reduce the former Bosnian Serb Army soldier's 20-year sentence has been rejected by the appeals chamber of the Bosnian state court.

Milojica, a former member of the Sixth Company of the Bosnian Serb Army's Ljubija Battalion, was convicted in October 2020 of committing multiple murders of civilians in the village of Hambarine in the Prijedor area in July 1992.

He was sentenced to 16 years in prison but his co-defendant Zelislav Rivic was acquitted.

Under a previous verdict handed down by the District Court in Banja Luka in December 2006, Milojica was also sentenced to seven years in prison for killing civilians in Ljubija in mid-August 1992 as a member of the Interventions Squad of the Sixth Company of the Bosnian Serb Army's Ljubija Battalion.

Milojica then filed a request for these two sentences to be combined, which the Bosnian state court of Bosnia and Herzegovina agreed to do in June 2021, imposing a cumulative sentence of 20 years.

The defence appealed against the decision, requesting a shorter sentence, claiming that the court hadn't taken into account any mitigating circumstances.

But the appeals court rejected this and confirmed the 20-year cumulative sentence.

Bosnian Serb Ex-Soldier Acquitted of Raping Prisoner (Balkan Transitional Justice) By Lamija Grebo
September 8, 2021

Ex-soldier Milenko Gojgolic's lawyer Miodrag Stojanovic told BIRN on Wednesday that the District Court in East Sarajevo acquitted his client "due to a lack of evidence".

Gojgolic was a member of the Territorial Defence force in Vlasenica and later became a member of the Vlasenica Light Infantry Brigade of the Bosnian Serb Army's Drina Corps.

He was tried for raping and beating a female detainee at the Susica detention camp in Vlasenica in June 1992.

The acquittal verdict was a first-instance ruling and can be appealed.

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International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)

Official Website of the ICTY

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Domestic Prosecutions In The Former Yugoslavia

Bosnian Croat Ex-Leader's Jail Letter Expresses Regret for Crimes (Balkan Transitional Justice) By

Emina Dizdarevic

September 7, 2021

Milivoj Petkovic has written a letter to the president of the UN's Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals in The Hague from prison in Belgium saying that he accepts his 20-year sentence and expresses regret for the crimes committed against Bosniaks during the war.

"Today, eight years since the first-instance judgement and four years since the final judgment, I have a need to say to you, Mr. President, and to all others, that I accept my judgment and personal responsibility for my acts or omissions which led to the commission of crimes I was convicted for. I also accepted the punishment which I serve," Petkovic said in the letter, which was sent on August 30 and made public on Monday.

"There is no justification, nor excuse, for the crimes committed. Because of that I feel sincere remorse and express my deep condolences to all victims of Bosniak ethnicity, and to their relatives and friends. I feel a human need to say this, although I am aware that my regret and expression of condolences offer weak consolation to those who have lost their loved ones," he added.

Petkovic also said in the letter that admitting the crimes and expressing "sincere remorse and expression of condolences" to the families of victims was "the only way to reconciliation, preserving peace and coexistence among the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and ex-Yugoslavia".

"I hope this statement of mine will contribute to that goal at least a little bit," he added.

In November 2020, Milivoj Petkovic's defence asked the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals to grant him early release, saying he will have met the conditions to be freed after having served two-thirds of his sentence in February 2021.

In a submission to the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals on Monday, the defence asked for Petkovic's letter to be "taken into consideration in assessing his application for early release".

Petkovic was one of six wartime Herzeg-Bosna political and military leaders who were found guilty in March 2017 of crimes against the Bosniak population in 1993 and 1994 and sentenced to a total of 111 years in prison.

They were convicted of participation in a joint criminal enterprise that involved expulsions, murders, unlawful detentions, inhumane treatment and destruction of property.

One of them, Slobodan Praljak, took poison in the courtroom when his verdict was being read out, and died shortly afterwards.

Bruno Stojic, the former defence minister of Herzeg-Bosnia, who was among those convicted, also appealed for early release last year, with his defence arguing that he had showed remorse.

Since his appointment, the president of the Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, Carmel Agius, has rejected several early release requests filed by Hague convicts because he thought they had not demonstrated adequate signs of rehabilitation.

Serbian Security Chiefs Appeal Conviction for Aiding War Crimes (Balkan Transitional Justice) By

Milica Stojanovic and Lamija Grebo

September 7, 2021

Lawyers for former Serbian State Security Service officials Jovica Stanisic and Franko Simatovic appealed on Monday against the verdict in June which sentenced them both to 12 years in prison for aiding and abetting war crimes in Bosnia

and Herzegovina in 1992.

The UN's Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals in The Hague convicted them of aiding and abetting the crimes committed by a State Security Service special fighting unit in the Bosanski Samac area, but acquitted them of responsibility for other crimes committed by Serb units elsewhere in Bosnia and in Croatia during the wars there in the early 1990s.

This verdict was the first-ever conviction of top Serbian wartime officials for crimes during the wars that broke out during the break-up of Yugoslavia. It also confirmed more details that establish that the Serbian state had involvement in the conflicts in Bosnia and in Croatia, despite its denials.

In their notice of appeal, both Stanisic and Simatovic urged the court either to quash the verdict and declare them not guilty, or reduce their sentences.

Stanisic's defence claimed that the trial chamber was mistaken when it determined that organising training for State Security Unit members and local Serb forces at the Pajzos camp in Croatia, and their deployment during the Serb takeover of Bosanski Samac, "was capable of amounting to practical assistance which had an effect, substantial or otherwise, on the perpetration of the crimes of persecution, murder, and forcible displacement by Unit members and local Serb forces".

It also claimed that the trial chamber failed to identify a connection between the men's alleged assistance and the crimes committed, which included a massacre in Crkvina in May 1992.

Stanisic's defence further argued that because the court found that he did not control the perpetrators, or direct them during the commission of the crimes, "the trial chamber erred by failing to assess, or provide a reasoned opinion, as to how the practical assistance substantially affected the perpetration of the entirety of the crimes committed".

Stanisic's appeal said the court "failed to place proper weight on the evidence that showed that Stanisic was not part of the JCE [joint criminal enterprise]".

Simatovic's appeal claimed that the court made a series of errors, arguing that it incorrectly established that he set up the State Security Service's Special Operations Unit from fighters trained in Croatia in 1991.

It also claimed that the court wrongly established that Simatovic had authority over the Special Operations Unit and agreed on "arrangements for the training of persons sent to Bosanski Samac [to fight]".

"The trial chamber erred in facts and in law when it established that Simatovic was aware that by allowing persons sent to Bosanski Samac to use facilities and trainers he would be supporting military actions and in the context of the conflict at the time, the commission of crimes by these forces," it said.

The prosecution has also appealed against the verdict, calling for higher sentences for both men.

It argued that the court should have found them guilty of being members of a 'joint criminal enterprise' to commit crimes during the Croatian and Bosnian wars, along with Slobodan Milosevic and other Serbian political, military and police officials and leaders of Croatian and Bosnian Serbs.

The prosecution also said they should have been convicted of involvement in the forced displacement of civilians, and of aiding and abetting crimes committed in Zvornik, Dobojo and Sanski Most in Bosnia, and in two self-proclaimed, rebel Serb-controlled territories in Croatia called the Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina and the Serbian Autonomous Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem.

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Turkey

Turkey accused of war crimes in second attack on UN-administered refugee camp (Morning Star)

By Steve Sweeney
September 3, 2021

Turkey was again accused of war crimes today after carrying out fresh air strikes on the United Nations-administered Makhmour refugee camp in northern Iraq.

Camp officials told the Morning Star that the attack had started in the early hours of the morning, but no casualties were

reported.

“There was no loss of life in the drone attack on Makhmour and the bomb dropped in the garden of a house,” the official said.

Footage of the aftermath showed damage to buildings, including glass strewn over a child’s cot by the impact of the blast.

“This picture says it all,” the official said, adding that Turkey’s continued attacks on the camp amount to war crimes. He urged the international community to break its silence on the issue.

Today’s attack was the second time that Turkish have hit the camp in the space of a few months, with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan claiming that it was “an incubator of terrorism” due to residents’ support for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

In June, he issued a chilling threat, saying that if the UN did not “clean it up, we will do it as a UN member.”

Days later, Turkish air strikes killed three civilians in the camp, which lies in a contested area between Iraqi federal government territory and that of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), 112 miles from the border with Turkey.

The camp is home to some 12,000 Kurdish refugees, most of whom fled south-east Turkey during forced assimilation operations in the 1990s. More than 3,000 Kurdish villages were burnt to the ground and thousands of people were killed and disappeared, with bodies dumped in mass graves.

In 2014, the Makhmour camp was seized by Isis jihadists as they swept across the region, taking control of large swathes of Iraqi and Syrian territory.

But only about a month later, they were driven out of the camp by PKK guerillas, who were thanked by KRG President Masoud Barzani for their efforts.

Turkey has recently stepped up its four-month-old war against Kurds in the region, on which the global media has remained virtually silent.

Ankara insists that its military operations are justified actions against the PKK.

But it has been accused of a litany of atrocities, including use of chemical weapons and driving thousands of Kurdish villagers from their homes.

Last month, Turkish missiles struck a busy marketplace in the Yazidi region of Shengal, assassinating a military commander who was on his way to meet Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Khadimi.

Just days after that attack, Turkish missiles hit a hospital in Shengal, killing eight people including four health workers.

Earlier this week, Ankara was accused of responsibility for a bomb explosion in a Yazidi refugee camp that killed two children.

Turkish jets bomb Kurdish village with chemical weapons amid calls for war crimes investigations (Morning Star) By Steve Sweeney

September 5, 2021

Turkish war planes have bombed a Kurdish village in Iraqi Kurdistan with chemical weapons, local officials told the Morning Star, demanding that war-crime investigations be opened.

Missiles loaded with chemicals struck Berwari Bala village in the mountainous Duhok province which borders Turkey in the early hours of Saturday, they said.

Health officials said they had treated three residents for the effects of toxic gas, with symptoms including shortness of breath, an irregular heartbeat and blurred vision.

Resident Cihad Hirure said that Turkish fighter jets had bombed the village: “A white chemical gas has spread many kilometres wide in the area. We think that this was a chemical bomb.”

Serbest Sabri, an official in the district of Kani Masi, said: “After the bombardments an unidentified gas has spread around the area. We estimate that this was tear gas and deployed medical teams to the area.”

Doctor Rasul Mohammed, head of the medical centre in Kani Masi said: “The situation of one of the wounded is unstable. This

person suffers from severe breathing problems. Also a 70-year old woman has severe difficulties with breathing and suffers from vomiting.”

Earlier this year the Morning Star reported from the ground on how Kurds in Berwari Bala were being driven from their homes, which were being handed over to jihadists shipped in by Turkey from Syria and Libya.

The latest attack comes days after the Makhmour refugee camp, home to 12,000 Kurds, was hit in a Turkish drone attack.

Ankara, which began its military operation in April, has been accused of a litany of atrocities, including the destruction of churches and acres of forest land, while thousands of Kurdish villagers have been forced to flee.

Kurdish officials told the Morning Star that war-crime investigations must be opened against Turkey following its recent air strikes on a busy marketplace, a refugee camp and a hospital in Shengal.

Turkey appears to be bogged down in what has been described by Kurdish militia as “an unwinnable war,” as its ground troops meet fierce resistance.

Turkey’s war is opposed by all regional parties with the exception of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the leading party in the Kurdish regional government. It stands accused of siding with “the Turkish state’s fascist colonial attacks” at the cost of the blood of the Kurdish people.

On Saturday its peshmerga forces killed at least seven Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) fighters in an ambush at a crossing in the Xelifan region. A PKK statement said that the attack caused “significant harm to the Kurdish people’s freedom struggle” and warned the KDP against initiating a bloody intra-Kurdish conflict.

According to PKK sources, Turkey has used chemical weapons in 17 separate attacks on its forces over the weekend with “heavy drone and aircraft reconnaissance activity continuing,” though these claims have not been verified.

Earlier this year a Morning Star report on a chemical attack on guerilla fighters from the PKK in Avashin led to calls for a commission of inquiry in the Turkish parliament.

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Kosovo Specialist Chambers

EU mission helps Kosovo with database on war crimes (Seattle Times) August 30, 2021

The European Union’s mission in Kosovo said Monday it has assisted the country’s police in developing a database to help investigate war crimes.

The EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, or EULEX, reconfigured its mandate in 2018 and handed over all its files, including around 400 war crime cases, to the government.

A statement said the tool, for which three years of work were needed, enables investigators to organize vast amounts of data, investigate complex and interconnected war crimes cases, and successfully prepare them for prosecution.

More than 10,000 mainly ethnic Albanians were killed and more than 1,600 are still missing from the 1998-1999 war.

The Kosovo Police War Crimes Unit has opened investigations for all missing persons’ cases.

“We hope that by linking missing persons’ cases to existing war crimes investigations, the number of women, men and children from all communities still unaccounted for will be further reduced and their relatives will obtain justice and reparation.” said EULEX war crimes analyst Roland Burgsteiner, who helped develop the database.

The 1998-1999 war in Kosovo, then a Serbian province, ended after a NATO military intervention that forced Serbia to withdraw its forces. The United Nations administered the territory for nine years before Kosovo declared independence in 2008, a move that Serbia doesn’t recognize.

Hague Court Rejects Thaci’s Challenge to Kosovo War Crime Charges (Balkan Insight) By Xhorxhina Bami
September 2, 2021

A pre-trial judge at the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague rejected a legal challenge by Kosovo's former President Hashim Thaci to the indictment charging him with war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Pre-trial judge Nicolas Guillou has dismissed an attempt by former Kosovo president and wartime Kosovo Liberation Army political leader Hashim Thaci and two of his co-defendants, Kadri Veseli and Rexhep Selimi, to have the charges against them thrown out.

Guillou said in his ruling, which was published online on Wednesday evening, that there was “no violation of the accused’s constitutional rights”, and that “Mr Thaci’s right to be presumed innocent has not been violated”.

In his defence’s legal challenge in March, Thaci claimed that the mandate of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers had expired and that the Specialist Prosecutor’s Office no longer had a constitutional and legal basis to conduct additional investigations.

Thaci also claimed there had been violations of his right to a fair and impartial hearing within a reasonable time, his right to be presumed innocent, and his right to be tried by an independent and impartial tribunal.

He alleged that the Specialist Chambers had explicitly endorsed a Council of Europe report which “contains words and statements which clearly reflect the opinion that he was guilty before it had been proved according to law”.

The Council of Europe report, published in 2011, contained grave allegations against senior Kosovo Liberation Army figures including Thaci, which eventually led to the establishment of the Specialist Chambers.

But the pre-trial judge said the report “has not been used to underpin any of the criminal charges with which Mr Thaci has ultimately been charged. On the contrary, the present charges stem from an independent and impartial criminal investigation.”

He also said that no official of the Specialist Chambers has made “prejudicial statements” against Thaci since he was charged in 2019.

The indictment in the case alleges that Thaci and his three co-defendants, Veseli, Selimi and Jakup Krasniqi, who were also leading politicians in post-war Kosovo, committed war crimes and crimes against humanity when they were senior figures in the Kosovo Liberation Army in the late 1990s.

They are accused of having been part of a “joint criminal enterprise” that aimed to take control over Kosovo during the war “by means including unlawfully intimidating, mistreating, committing violence against, and removing those deemed to be opponents”. They have all pleaded not guilty.

In a separate development, trial preparation conferences were held on Wednesday and Thursday in another case at the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, against KLA Veterans’ Organisation leader Hysni Gucati and his deputy Nasim Haradinaj.

Gucati and Haradinaj are charged with obstructing justice and intimidating witnesses after batches of confidential case files from the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, which was set up to try former KLA guerrillas, were leaked to them, and both men urged media in Kosovo to publish the material.

On Wednesday the prosecution claimed the two files contained confidential information, including documents from the Serbian authorities and the identities of several witnesses.

Witness-tampering is a key concern for the Specialist Chambers, after problems caused by intimidation in other KLA-related war crimes cases at the UN tribunal in The Hague and in Kosovo itself.

Kosovo Arrests Seven for Protest Against War Court Chief (Balkan Insight) By Xhorxhina Bami
September 7, 2021

Police arrested seven people after protesters targeted a visit to Pristina by officials from the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, which is prosecuting former Kosovo Liberation Army fighters for wartime crimes.

Kosovo police arrested seven members of the Social Democratic Party of Kosovo, PSD, after protesters tried to disrupt an event in Pristina organised by the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, which they accuse of denigrating the Kosovo Liberation Army’s wartime struggle against Serbian forces.

While Ekaterina Trendafilova, president of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, was starting her presentation to civil society activists and journalists, two protesters interrupted her by blowing whistles. They called Trendafilova a representative of an

unjust court that they claimed is trying to “change the history of Kosovo”.

The others who were arrested were protesting outside the building, including Dardan Molliqaj, the leader of the PSD, a small party with no MPs in parliament.

“The Special Court is unfair, so it cannot bring justice,” the party said in a statement which also accused the police of using excessive force when arresting its members.

Kosovo’s former president, Hashim Thaci, and several other high-profile former KLA commanders are currently awaiting trial for wartime crimes at the Specialist Chambers in The Hague.

The PSD claims, like other critics of the Specialist Chambers in Kosovo, that it is only targeting Kosovo Albanians and ignoring more serious crimes committed by Serbian forces during the 1998-99 war.

The Specialist Chambers are part of Kosovo’s judicial system but are located in the Netherlands and staffed by internationals.

They were set up in August 2015 by the Kosovo parliament, acting under pressure from the country’s Western allies, who believe Kosovo’s own justice system is not robust enough to try KLA cases and protect witnesses from intimidation, after previous cases at the UN’s Yugoslav war crimes court in The Hague were marred by witness-tampering.

Thaci and his fellow indictees are charged with being part of a ‘joint criminal enterprise’ during the war. This term has often been interpreted in Kosovo as an attack on the KLA itself, claiming it can be seen as a suggestion that the KLA was a criminal organisation.

But Trendafilova told the event on Tuesday that a joint criminal enterprise is a legal concept used to “hold accountable not only those who committed the crimes in the field but also the masterminds” behind them.

Trendafilova called for the two protesters who entered the room with whistles to be allowed back in to present their allegations and receive responses.

She also insisted that the Specialist Chambers have a good system in place to protect witnesses and any war crimes victims who decide to participate in trials via the court’s victim participation scheme.

“We put enormous efforts to keep people safe,” she said.

The Specialist Chambers’ registrar, Fidelma Donlon, stressed that “the application process [in the victim participation scheme] is confidential” and that applications will be dealt with “confidentially and in a secure manner”.

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Azerbaijan

Human rights advocates identify Azeri troops who committed war crimes against Armenian servicemen (Armenpress) By Stepan Kocharyan

September 8, 2021

Human rights advocates and lawyers in Armenia have identified the Azeri troops who committed war crimes by executing captured Armenian servicemen and mutilating their bodies on October 20, 2020 in Kovsakan (Zangelan). The perpetrators of this crime are the same Azeri troops who are seen in a November 7, 2020 footage dancing in the Tatul Krpeyan school of Kovsakan.

“We have identified them with facial recognition, their photos are included in the report,” said Armenia’s Ombudsman Arman Tatoyan while presenting an English-language emergency report.

Tatoyan said that 61 Armenian servicemen left Kapan on October 20 for Kovsakan, where a firefight with Azeri troops took place and some of the Armenian troops were killed in action, while some were captured or forcibly disappeared.

“The important part here is that we have identified the facts, which first of all prove that atrocities have taken place not only against persons who were alive, but also against body parts of deceased,” Tatoyan said and presented photos showing Azeri troops mutilating the bodies of dead Armenian servicemen by cutting off their ears. “The perpetrators are servicemen of the

Azerbaijani border guard service. This case took place in Kovsakan,” he said, noting that the report gives detailed description of the uniform and equipment of the perpetrators, and the identities of some of them.

“The report includes clear images showing the Armenian servicemen tied to vehicles and dragged. Our identification proves that this has happened, for example, with a Turkish-made Otokar APV special vehicle, operated by the Azerbaijani border guards. The fact that the servicemen were dragged behind the vehicles dead or alive is obvious upon detailed analysis of the state of the uniforms, bodily damages, location and others,” Tatoyan said.

Another photo showed Azeri border guards outside the Tatul Krpeyan school in Kovsakan. The Azeri troops are carrying the Azeri-made Khazri assault rifle in the images. The analysis shows that these troops and the ones who tortured Armenian servicemen in Kovsakan both carried the same assault rifles.

“This uniform is described with colors and identifying specificities in the report which will be published. These are the servicemen who are today present on the roads between the communities in Syunik, and it is also mentioned that they must be deployed near villages,” Tatoyan said.

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MIDDLE-EAST

Grotian Moment: The International War Crimes Trial Blog

Reparations for Iraq (New York Magazine) By Kaleem Hawa

September 1, 2021

America illegally invaded Iraq in 2003, occupied and destabilized and flattened it, and then never left. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been killed, and millions more have been made refugees or internally displaced persons. The consequences for the population are almost beyond comprehension: After decades of conflict, more than 2 million Iraqis are disabled, while the PTSD is inescapable. Entire generations have been left unable to look at the sky the same way.

The Iraqi people must be added, alongside the American dead and their families, to the register of 9/11’s victims, after that day’s events were used as a justification for war. The atrocities at Abu Ghraib prison, the bombardment of Fallujah, the attack on civilians in Baghdad’s Nisour Square by the military contractor Blackwater — these events are a small part of a long list, made exceptional not by the character of their violence but by their outsize impact on the collective psychology. America trained, funded, and commanded Iraqi Interior Ministry special police forces to run a network of torture centers across the nation. Parts of Iraq are now rubble, a ruin-monument to western folly. One hundred military orders were signed into law by the U.S.-backed Coalition Provisional Authority to privatize state-run companies and amend the tax laws to facilitate foreign ownership.

America’s engagements in Iraq can best be described as a multidecade colonization — a complete alteration of the country across military, sociopolitical, and economic domains in campaigns that stretch back at least to 1991. Since then, America has used every coercive measure in its arsenal: sanctions, de-Baathification, aerial bombardment, targeted assassinations, and the destruction of civilian infrastructure. And now, after six presidents at war with the country, the current administration has promised to “withdraw” U.S. forces by the end of the year — which is to say, trade green fatigues for gray, leaving intact a military-intelligence apparatus composed of scores of contractors and consultants that will prop up chosen chieftains and bureaucrats.

Iraq’s people are among the many targeted by the global war on terror. As Americans sat enraptured by the disasters unfolding in Afghanistan this August, I was left with a pit in my stomach. The attention being paid to Afghanistan, after years of neglect, clearly had more to do with the spectacle of American defeat than any genuine care for the lives of the Afghan people. Anniversaries like 9/11 are often treated as opportunities to navel-gaze about American grief, but the Arab and Muslim victims of the war on terror are not interested in what the U.S. has “learned” from its catastrophes or in an American redemption arc.

In the case of Iraq, there is little new to be said that has not already been said by Iraqis: All America can do is honor its obligations to truth, justice, and reparation so that Iraqis can live full lives.

This call for “reparations” has mixed antecedents. In North America, demands have been made for reparations to, among others, the victims of transatlantic slavery and Indigenous genocide. Internationally, reparations have been proposed or implemented in nations like Germany, Colombia, South Africa, and Malawi. It is worth noting that Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger committed in 1973 to \$3.25 billion in reconstruction aid to Vietnam — a paltry sum that came with no acknowledgment of culpability for the war and that, unsurprisingly, never materialized.

In 2013, the Center for Constitutional Rights, a New York–based legal-advocacy organization, called for the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a body of the Organization of American States, to hold a hearing on Iraqi reparations. The request has twice been rejected. If such a demand for monetary reparations sounds far-fetched, then consider the fact that Iraq itself has paid almost \$50 billion in reparations to Kuwait and other nations stemming from its 1990 invasion of Kuwait, honoring its commitments to the United Nations Compensation Commission long after Saddam Hussein was ousted.

A series of crimes deserving of reparations is obviously not the way Americans want to remember the Iraq War or the legacy of 9/11. The 9/11 Museum at ground zero sells nostalgia, jingoism, trinkets. Where in this monument is the acknowledgment of the arrogance? Where is the acknowledgment of the lies peddled to the American people (lies too eagerly accepted) that manufactured consent for a war against a nation that had nothing to do with 9/11?

My great-uncle used to work in Iraq. He died a few years ago. My mother’s cousin Eliana did, too, as an interpreter for refugees. Iraq was welcoming to many Palestinians dispossessed of their homes by Israel. Perhaps Iraq is made personal for me in this way, but I suspect that Iraq is personal for all Arabs — a place that showed a whole generation of us just how disposable our lives are.

The architects of the Iraq War gathered the American victims of 9/11 — the grievable lives — into a narrowly circumscribed “we.” America then demanded vengeance and sought security on behalf of this “we,” foregrounding itself as the chief party in conversations it conducted about extremism, civilizational conflict, and domestic security. The radicalism of reparations lies in its subject-object reversal: in its insistence that the “we” worth caring about is the Iraqi people; in its demand that they receive restitution.

What might that look like? Reparations mean, first and foremost, that the U.S. would end all facets of its occupation of Iraq. It would issue a formal apology for its involvement in the destruction of the country. Iraqi refugees would have the right to resettle in the U.S. should they desire, or the U.S. would facilitate resettlement to other nations of the refugees’ choice. The U.S. would commit substantial financial resources to rebuilding the infrastructure, land, and homes it destroyed and to addressing the environmental degradation it caused, including the removal of explosives, depleted uranium, and the chemical-weapons- precursors that American companies provided to Saddam Hussein during the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq War.

The U.S. would also commit to individual monetary reparations for the victims of the wars, including support for the families of those killed, tortured, or disabled — far above the “condolence payments” preferred by the Coalition forces. The U.S. would close Guantánamo Bay and shutter any remaining CIA black sites in Iraq. It would allow for an Iraqi-led truth-and-reconciliation process that brought U.S. military and political personnel and private contractors acting on the orders of the American state to trial. The U.S. would also allow its military and political leaders to be fully investigated by international war-crimes tribunals for their roles in the illegal occupation and the torture of the Iraqi people.

Reparations will not prevent future American invasions nor repair the Iraqi lives destroyed. They will not counteract the primary forces at work here: the maintenance of empire and all its profiteers. Moreover, the responses to these demands write themselves: impractical, irresponsible, imprecise, ill-timed, and yes, improbable, too. Should that matter? In 2003, then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was famously unsure “who the bad guys are in Afghanistan and Iraq.” That question is answered; now, time for courage.

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Syria

Germany top court confirms conviction of Syrian for war crimes and ISIS membership (Jurist) By Panagiotis Lampropoulos

September 1, 2021

The Third Criminal Senate of Germany's Federal Court of Justice on Monday made public its decision to reject a Free Syrian Army member's appeal against his conviction for war crimes, attempted homicide, torture, and membership of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

The Stuttgart Higher Regional Court sentenced Fares A.B. to 12 years in prison on November 19, after finding that he partook in several battles against the Syrian regime in 2012 as part of a sub-unit of the Free Syrian Army. Specifically, he had taken a captured member of a militia supporting the Syrian government to his unit's headquarters, and executed him while he was handcuffed. However, there is some evidence indicating that the man did not die from Fares' shots, but rather from shots fired by other individuals.

According to the court, Fares joined ISIS in June 2014 and within a month of his joining the group, he and two other members allegedly captured and beat two youngsters for over 30 minutes in a school used as a prison. It is also alleged that he detained another person in the same school for violating the ISIS code of conduct and that he performed road-side checks and made other contributions to the group until he left Syria in October 2014.

As the Federal Court of Justice found no error in the law with respect to the lower court's judgment, it is now final.

Syria war crimes not considered news by nearly half of Britons, but 'the crisis didn't end' (i news)

By Tom Ambrose
September 3, 2021

War crimes in Syria are no longer considered newsworthy by almost half of Britons, despite most people thinking attacks on civilians happen regularly.

Forty-nine per cent of people do not think the UK media would bother reporting on atrocities, such as attacks on schools and hospitals, in the Syrian civil war.

This is despite the majority (63 per cent) of Britons believing such war crimes are common in the conflict, now in its 11th year.

The reason is a combination of confusion, insularity, the spread of disinformation and a reluctance for Western countries to intervene, according to a report by the charity Syria Relief, which commissioned the YouGov poll.

Attacks such as the deadly bombing of Aleppo's Al-Shifa Hospital in June, which left at least 18 people dead, are still a regular occurrence.

Since 2011, Syria has seen chemical weapon attacks, mass killings, the use of child soldiers and the targeting of religious minorities.

Shamsa Al Ali, a 33-year-old Syrian refugee living in Lebanon, told i: "The crisis didn't end, it's maybe greater than before.

"Every day I receive or hear news about one of my relatives who is missing, and his family can't reach or contact him, or [he's] died."

Another refugee Asreya Al Hajj, 33, said: "Most of my family and siblings are homeless, the sweat we've given early before the war, building our houses and memories, are all now gone with a single airstrike."

Shaha Al Mohammad, 24, said that she believes there is a lack of interest in what is happening in Syria because of the complex nature of the conflict.

"Because we kill each other as Syrians, others feel we deserve what is happening for us," she added.

Syria Relief's head of advocacy Charles Lawley believes the main reason for apathy from countries like the UK is "the sheer frequency of crimes against humanity".

"We don't believe that Syria should simply be condemned as just a place where bad things happen, but that every single attack on civilian life is an outrage, no matter how frequent they are," he told i.

"In fact, we would argue that the more frequent they are, the more outrageous they are.

"However, sadly, the lack of political will has meant that because there are just so many war crimes being committed, there is less anger about it."

The report revealed that civilian victims of sniper attacks were injured in similar ways on certain days, suggesting shooters are having “competitions”. In some cases, pregnant women were found shot in the uterus.

Brutal attacks on homes, hospitals and schools have forced millions to abandon their lives and seek refuge abroad. Since the start of the conflict, 6.8 million Syrians have become refugees and asylum seekers, with a further 6.7 million people displaced within Syria.

Rami Elsayer, a refugee at the Atmeh refugee camp in northern Syria, said “international news channels talking about the improvement of the situation in Syria are incorrect”.

“Our unemployment is high and the spread of coronavirus has affected us greatly, there is no healthcare,” he told i.

“The situation is really much worse than previous years and I hope my message will reach all people around the world – don’t leave us alone.”

The United Nations (UN) says Lebanon has 865,530 registered Syrian refugees and estimates there are 1.5 million Syrians in the neighbouring country.

An estimated 90 per cent of Syrian refugee households live in “extreme poverty” in Lebanon, according to the UN, up from 55 per cent in early 2019.

Paris attacks suspect investigated in Sweden as Bataclan trial opens (The National News) By Soraya Ebrahimi
September 6, 2021

Swedish militant Osama Krayem, who on Wednesday will stand trial over his alleged involvement in the 2015 Paris attacks, is also under investigation in his home country for "war crimes" committed in Syria, Swedish prosecutors said on Monday.

A preliminary investigation by the Swedish prosecutor's office's "is under way for aggravated war crimes committed in Syria", a spokesman for Sweden's Prosecution Authority told AFP.

Krayem has also been implicated in the March 22, 2016, attacks in Brussels, and identified by Belgian investigators as one of the executioners of a Jordanian pilot murdered by ISIS in early 2015 in Syria.

Italy arrests 'forger' Athmane Touami in connection with 2015 Paris terror attacks The pilot was burnt alive in a cage and images of his death were broadcast by the extremists.

Newspaper Le Monde reported that Sweden is investigating Krayem in relation to the execution. The prosecution did not confirm this, saying preliminary investigations were confidential.

Originally from Malmo in southern Sweden, he joined ISIS in Syria in 2014 before returning to Europe by taking advantage of open routes for migrants.

Investigations have established that he travelled with Saleh Abdeslam, the last surviving member of the Paris attackers, and two other members of the cell, in October 2015.

Krayem, from a Palestinian family living in Sweden, was arrested in April 2016 in Belgium.

About 300 Swedes or Swedish residents, a quarter of them women, joined extremist organisations in Syria and Iraq, mainly between 2013 and 2014, the country's intelligence service said.

Half of them have since returned home.

Due to a lack of Swedish legislation at the time to prosecute "returnees" for associating with a terrorist organisation, charges have been rare.

But two Swedes were sentenced to life in prison in Gothenburg in December 2015 after videos showed them taking part in beheadings.

A Swedish woman, 31, was also sentenced in March to three years in prison for taking her son to Syria.

Sweden arrests 2 women suspected of war crimes in Syria (ABC News) By The Associated Press
September 7, 2021

Swedish authorities have arrested two women from Sweden suspected of committing war crimes in Syria.

Swedish authorities arrested two women from Sweden suspected of committing war crimes in Syria, the prosecutors office and local media said Tuesday, the first such arrests in the Scandinavian country.

According to a statement from the prosecutor's office, three women from the territories once controlled by the Islamic State group arrived on Monday at the Stockholm airport. Two were arrested while a third one, who is not considered a suspect, was released after questioning.

Prosecutors Hanna Lemoine and Karolina Wieslander, in charge of the two cases, told Swedish news agency TT that the two arrested will be questioned further before the prosecution decides whether to formally charge them.

Swedish broadcaster SVT said one of the two women is also suspected of genocide and crimes against humanity.

TT said the Kurdish regional government in northeastern Syria — where the Islamic State group had set up the headquarters of its self-styled caliphate before its collapse in 2017 — decided in June to deport the women, who all had been part of IS and are Swedish citizens.

“We cannot or do not have the resources to bring them to justice,” Shiyar Ali, the Kurdish representative in the Nordic countries, told TT. “Just the fact that they have been part of a terrorist organization is frightening, considering what IS has committed.”

Sweden's Foreign Minister Anne Linde told TT on Monday that Sweden, unlike other countries, had not brought back on its own initiative Swedish citizens who were part of IS in Syria.

“We have not repatriated the women,” Linde told TT. “It is a different matter when the Kurdish self-government decides to expel the women. Then we have a responsibility just like everyone else to receive our citizens.”

In March, a woman was sentenced to three years in prison in Sweden for taking her 2-year-old son to Syria in 2014, to an area that was then controlled by IS. The woman had allegedly told the child's father that she and the boy were only going on a holiday to Turkey. However, once in Turkey, the two crossed into Syria and IS-run territory.

The woman later managed to escape to Turkey where she was arrested with her son and two other children she had given birth to in the meantime, while living with an IS fighter from Tunisia. She was extradited from Turkey to Sweden.

In neighboring Norway, a 30-year-old Norwegian woman who was repatriated by Norway from a refugee camp in Syria because her son was sick, was sentenced to 3 1/2 years in prison by an Oslo court for participating in the Islamic State group.

France's Lafarge loses ruling in Syria 'crimes against humanity' case (Arab News)

September 7, 2021

France's top court on Thursday overturned a decision by a lower court to dismiss charges brought against cement giant Lafarge for complicity in crimes against humanity in Syria's civil war.

The ruling by the Court of Cassation marks a major setback for Lafarge, which is accused of paying millions of euros to militant groups including Daesh to keep its cement factory in northern Syria running through the early years of the country's war.

It does not mean however that the firm will automatically face trial on the most serious charge brought against a French company in recent memory over its actions in a foreign country.

The court instead referred the matter back to investigating magistrates to reconsider the charge and another charge of “endangering the lives of others.”

Lafarge is also charged with financing terrorism and violating an EU embargo over the payments made by its Syrian subsidiary in 2013 and 2014.

The Paris Court of Appeal in 2019 had quashed the crimes against humanity charge but recommended that the company be prosecuted on the other charges.

Apart from the company as a corporate entity, eight Lafarge executives, including former CEO Bruno Laffont, are also charged with financing a terrorist group and/or endangering the lives of the firm's former Syrian staff.

Amnesty International says Syrian refugees tortured on return (Reuters) By Maha El Dahan
September 7, 2021

Amnesty International said on Tuesday Syrian refugees who returned home were subjected to torture, detention and disappearance by security forces, urging governments to protect them from deportation and forcible return.

In a report titled "You're going to your death" the London-based human rights group documented violations by intelligence officers against 66 returnees, including 13 children.

It also cited five deaths in custody.

The report comes as pressure piles on Syrian refugees in some Western countries such as Denmark to go home.

"Any government claiming Syria is now safe is wilfully ignoring the horrific reality on the ground, leaving refugees once again fearing for their lives," the report said.

Syria has denied refugees face indiscriminate torture and reprisals and President Bashar al-Assad has said millions of refugees were being forced to stay in host countries by "pressure or intimidation" and that host states were enticing them financially while benefiting from international aid for them.

Assad has all but crushed the insurgency against him regaining control of 70 pct of the country.

He secured a fourth term in office in a May election that the West has said was marked by fraud but the government saying it showed the country was functioning normally despite its decade long war.

Amnesty urged European governments and Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon to halt any practice that forces people to return.

"Military hostilities may have subsided, but the Syrian government's propensity for egregious human rights violations has not," it said.

Both the European Council and the European Parliament have issued declarations saying conditions are not in place for the safe and voluntary return of Syrian refugees.

Similarly, the United Nations' refugee agency, UNHCR, has called on states not to forcibly return Syrian nationals to any part of Syria, even those areas controlled by the government, such as the capital region.

Syria's conflict which started in 2011 as peaceful protests against Assad's rule spiralled into a multi-sided conflict that killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions.

It has fractured the Middle East country and drawn in foreign friends and enemies.

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Yemen

The people of Yemen deserve justice for war crimes – so why hasn't it been delivered yet? (The Independent) By Toby Cadman and Almudena Bernabeu
August 30, 2021

We are raising a submission today before the International Criminal Court on behalf of more than 200 victims and their families, calling for an investigation into inhumane attacks.

Three years ago in Yemen, a missile struck a school bus killing 26 children, more bystanders, and maiming close to 100. There was no military target, no opposing soldiers, no militants, no reason. Just a stationary bus and a driver gone to seek water for thirsty kids, while others shopped for groceries in the local market. When families came to collect the dead, the blast had been

so devastating some were unable to recover any body parts at all.

There have been so many more attacks just like the school bus in Yemen over the last six years, during the world's worst and least known war. From a double missile launch on an indoor funeral delivering death for hundreds and life changing injury for more, to the use of foreign mercenaries in combat and torture – they risk being nothing but stories: truths, detailed by international NGOs, and reported in the world's media – but not evidence laid out in any courtroom where such crimes of war and inhumanity should be held to account. For in Yemen there is no tribunal and there will be no trial to hear these charges. The victims would never secure one.

Nor can anyone believe the words of the coalition's public relations officials – who claimed, after these attacks, there would be investigations. They are, after all, just three incidents in a six-year war of 20,000 airstrikes, a quarter of a million deaths, and four million civilian displacements. For this coalition, three is a number that must surely move no heart. A school bus, a funeral, and abuse and death at the hands of foreign mercenaries: this is nothing.

That's why we raise a submission today before the International Criminal Court at the Hague in Europe on behalf of more than 200 victims and their families. When many of the applicants remain living in Yemen, they risk their lives to submit it. No matter: they call on the world's court to launch an investigation into these three incidents – and many more – and start to assuage their grief.

The ICC, established to deal with the most serious offences, remains a voluntary tribunal. Yemen is not a member; nor is Saudi Arabia, nor UAE – the two, undisputed leaders of the war coalition. Without crimes committed either within a signatory state, or by one, the cause is surely lost. As recent attempts to open a case into genocide against the Chinese Uighurs demonstrate, no matter how terrible the evidence, even launching an investigation is beyond a court which holds uncertain jurisdiction to do so.

But with Yemen it is different. There were, and there still are, members of the Saudi-war coalition that are state signatories to the court. Their allegiance to both offers a route to redress. ICC member Jordan has contributed warplanes and has taken part in airstrikes; ICC member Senegal has provided more than 2,000 ground troops. Another ICC signatory and coalition partner at the time of these three attacks was the Maldives. Whilst their practical contribution is less clear, a formal investigation would establish the facts.

So too would an investigation into the extent of involvement of several hundred mainly Colombian mercenaries – their home also an ICC member country – reported as contract killers for the United Arab Emirates. Victims making the submission are giving evidence of imprisonment, torture, and worse by their hands.

The evidence submitted today opens doors to the prosecution of senior military and politicians for war crimes. Ever since the ICC initiated an investigation into alleged crimes of military personnel from the United Kingdom (a member state) in Iraq (a non-member state), this jurisdiction has been firmly established and consolidated. Here no case was subsequently begun – it was concluded that the UK was more than capable of addressing such cases itself – and the opportunity for plaintiffs to seek redress in Britain was substantial. No-one needs to be a lawyer to realise the chance of such cases going to court in other ICC states must be more slender.

But this submission offers more than just hope for victims: it offers promise for the court and its cause of international justice. The ICC is plagued by accusations of bias – from putting only Black Africans on trial, to not bringing investigations conducted beyond that continent to court. It offers a chance for its vindication, and an opportunity for the new Chief Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan QC to reimagine its international remit and relevance after some \$2bn (£1.4bn) spent on only 10 convictions in close to 20 years.

So, with clear evidence and strong jurisdiction, the case is there to be investigated. But will the court grasp it? What is certain is that Yemenis have no choice but to come to the ICC's door. They deserve truth and trials. And if not at the ICC, then where?

Lawyers seek ICC probe into alleged war crimes in Yemen (Washington Post) By Mike Corder
August 30, 2021

Human rights lawyers representing hundreds of victims of Yemen's civil war are calling on the International Criminal Court to open an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition during the devastating conflict.

British lawyer Toby Cadman filed the request Monday, highlighting three separate incidents – an August 2018 airstrike that destroyed a school bus and killed dozens; a missile attack in October 2016 that killed at least 110 people; and allegations of torture and murder of civilians being held in prisons in the south of Yemen.

The filing came a day after a missile and drone attack, blamed on the Houthi rebels, on a key military base in Yemen's south killed at least 30 troops.

The civil war in Yemen erupted in 2014, when the Iranian-backed Houthis swept across much of the north and seized the capital, Sanaa, forcing the internationally recognized government into exile. The Saudi-led coalition entered the war the following year on the side of the government. All sides are accused of atrocities in the yearslong conflict.

Lawyer Almudena Bernabeu, representing victims of the school bus attack, said that the coalition said it would investigate the deadly strike and bring those responsible to justice.

"Of course, they did no such thing," Bernabeu said in a statement. "As the court of last resort, victims and families have no choice but to call on the International Criminal Court to ensure justice is done."

A spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition did not respond to phone calls seeking comment.

Yemen is not a member state of the court and nor are key coalition members Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. However, in a 212-page written submission, the lawyers argue that the court should exercise jurisdiction because some members of the coalition are ICC member states.

A written submission filed by the lawyers says Jordan deployed fighter jets to the coalition, Senegal provided troops, while the Maldives supported it diplomatically.

The lawyers also allege that crimes were committed in Yemen by mercenaries from another ICC member state, Colombia.

"The ICC can and must use its clear jurisdiction to investigate these undeniable and evidenced crimes," said Cadman.

The ICC, set up to investigate crimes in countries that are unable or unwilling to prosecute them, receives hundreds of requests each year to open investigations. Many are rejected as falling outside its jurisdiction, others are studied to establish whether they merit a full-scale investigation. It can take years for the court's prosecutors to decide whether to open an investigation.

Cadman said that lawyers for Yemeni victims are also looking at other ways of seeking justice.

"While our campaign begins at the International Criminal Court, we intend to fight our case using all and every legal avenue available. Those who perpetrate the worst crimes can and will be held accountable," Cadman said.

Starvation Makers: The use of starvation by warring parties in Yemen as a method of warfare (ReliefWeb)

September 2, 2021

Mwatana and GRC release "Starvation Makers" report

Warring parties in Yemen have deliberately deprived civilians of objects essential to their survival (OIS), starving them, in some cases to death, over the course of the conflict, Mwatana for Human Rights (Mwatana) and Global Rights Compliance (GRC) said in a new report published today.

The report, "Starvation Makers," follows a year-long investigation into attacks and other conduct by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition—acting with the consent of the internationally recognized Government of Yemen and fighting with government forces loyal to President Hadi—and the Ansar Allah (Houthi) armed group impacting access to food and water in Yemen. Mwatana and GRC conclude that the Coalition and Ansar Allah likely violated prohibitions under international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL), and that their members may have committed the war crime of using starvation as a method of warfare.

"We have been saying for years that Yemenis are not starving, they are being starved by the warring parties. States must take action now on behalf of Yemenis, starting with a push for an international criminally-focused investigative mechanism," Radhya Al-Mutawakel, the Chairperson of Mwatana for Human Rights, said.

The report documents airstrikes by the Saudi/UAE-led coalition on farms, water facilities, and artisanal fishing boats and equipment that destroyed, damaged and/or rendered useless OIS, namely agricultural areas, irrigation works, livestock, foodstuffs, water infrastructure, fishing boats and fishing equipment. It also documents Ansar Allah conduct that severely restricted civilian's access to food and water through their imposition of restrictions on humanitarian relief action and their widespread and indiscriminate use of landmines in wholly civilian areas.

At the same time, parties to the conflict imposed restrictive economic and other measures, including a de facto naval and

aerial blockade, adversely impacting access to food and water.

Members of the Saudi/UAE-led coalition and Ansar Allah acted in spite of the widespread knowledge of the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen, where people, including children, were dying from starvation. They must have intended to starve civilians or been aware of the virtual certainty that starvation would occur in the ordinary course of events—that is, without humanitarian intervention.

“It is difficult to imagine that those responsible for the starvation of civilians did not know their actions would result in such dire consequences,” said Kate Vigneswaran, Senior Legal Advisor at GRC.

IHL prohibits the use of starvation as a method of warfare. Using starvation as a method of warfare is also considered a war crime in international and non-international armed conflicts under international criminal law. An amendment to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2019 will bring the use of starvation as a method of warfare in non-international armed conflicts within the jurisdiction of the Court when it comes into force.

The report concludes with a comprehensive range of recommendations addressed to the parties to the conflict, other states and UN actors aimed at preventing future violations of international law, holding perpetrators accountable, and ensuring redress for victims.

Mwatana and GRC call on the parties to the conflict to cease all violations of IHL, violations and abuses of IHRL and war crimes, and to take steps to protect civilians and civilian objects, including OIS, and facilitate access to full humanitarian aid, including food and water. They also call on the UNSC to refer the situation to the ICC and the UN Human Rights Council to support the establishment of an international criminally-focused investigative mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence, and to prepare case files in order to facilitate and expedite fair and independent criminal proceedings.

The report follows several years of field research and documentation across Yemen in which Mwatana interviewed thousands of victims, families, eye-witnesses, humanitarian workers and paramedics. For the report, Mwatana conducted an additional 101 interviews across four governorates regarding the impacts that specific attacks and conduct have had on their access to food and water.

Mwatana continues to document attacks and conduct by the warring parties impacting Yemenis’ access to food and water across the country.

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Special Tribunal for Lebanon

**Official Website of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon
In Focus: Special Tribunal for Lebanon (UN)**

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Israel and Palestine

‘I thought I would die’: Settlers abduct, brutally attack Palestinian teen (+972 Magazine) By Oren Ziv and Ahmad Al-Bazz
August 26, 2021

For the last two weeks, Tareq Zbeideh has been lying wounded in his bed in the northern West Bank town of Silat a-Dahr, after being kidnapped and brutally

attacked by Israeli settlers on Aug. 17.

According to Zbeideh, 15, he was enjoying a picnic with friends near the former settlement of Homesh — one of the four Israeli settlements removed from the occupied West Bank during the Gaza Disengagement in 2006 — when settlers hit him with their car and tied him to the vehicle, before dragging him to an isolated area and beating him. The attack lasted half an hour, during which Zbeideh says the settlers tied him to a tree, beat him with a belt, sprayed him with pepper spray, electrocuted him, and then burned him with the car's cigarette lighter.

He was found by the Israeli army, which returned him to his family. "I thought I would not make it out alive," Zbeideh said this week.

As he lay on the couch in his home, located just southwest of the city of Jenin, Zbeideh recounted the events of that day, when he headed out with a group of friends to a neighborhood on the outskirts of Silat a-Dahr overlooking what remains of Homesh. After the disengagement, Homesh was supposed to return to Palestinian hands, but in recent years settlers have set up a new outpost there.

"On Tuesday, at around 9:30 in the morning, we bought some things at the grocery store and went up [to the neighborhood]," said Zbeideh, who left school as COVID-19 began to spread across the occupied territories and now works casual jobs. "There were six of us including me. We go to sit there sometimes. We sat for 20 minutes, and then we saw two people arriving on foot and in a gray car. They spoke to us in Hebrew. They wore a kippa [Jewish skullcap] and side locks, so we realized they were settlers. My friends fled. I have a leg injury, so it took me longer to walk down a dirt road instead of through the hills. Then their car hit me, and I fell to the ground."

"Four of them got out of the car," he continued. "Three started hitting me, the fourth brought a cable. They put me on the hood, tied me up, and started driving up toward the settlement. They pressed the brakes, and I was tossed forward because they had loosened the cable [during the drive]."

Zbeideh's friends witnessed the beginning of the incident from a distance, after which they ran to call for help. "We went for a picnic," says H., one of Zbeideh's friends who was with him that day. "[The attackers] threw bottles and stones at us. We saw they had weapons, so we ran away. They told us to stop in Arabic, and then the gray car hit Tareq. After they hit him, we saw that they were attacking him and we ran away. We were very scared. We did not see him when they took him, only when he was beaten with a stick."

"The place is about half a kilometer from the settlement," said another friend who was there that day. "There are Palestinian buildings there. We heard what the settlers were doing [in the outpost], so we were afraid to approach. We did not think it was that dangerous there." The friend added that while the others went to call for help, he became very scared and hid for a long time in a nearby pit, until local residents thought he too had been kidnapped and went out to search for him.

The next part Zbeideh's friends no longer saw, but for him, it was only the beginning. "They bounded me with plastic [handcuffs] that the army uses and beat my legs with sticks," he said. "After that, they released the handcuffs and hung me from a tree, with my hands crossed above my head. My feet did not touch the ground, they were in the air." Zbeideh added that the settlers also attacked him with pepper spray and an electric shocker.

Tareq Zbeideh shows the wounds he sustained on his feet after he was abducted and brutally attacked by settlers near the former settlement of Homesh, Silat a-Dahr, West Bank. (Oren Ziv) Tareq Zbeideh shows the wounds he sustained on his feet after he was abducted and brutally attacked by settlers near the former settlement of Homesh, Silat a-Dahr, West Bank. (Oren Ziv) Zbeideh said that he tried to shout at them, but the kidnappers spoke to him in Hebrew, which he does not understand. "They brought a rubber belt and beat me with it. After that they cut the rope and I fell to the ground. Then they cut my legs with a knife. On my other leg they used the car's cigarette lighter to burn me, twice on my right leg."

Zbeideh showed us the wounds on his foot and his right shoulder, which he said was caused by an electric shocker. "I screamed in pain. I was conscious. I thought they wanted to kill me. I did not think I would return home alive to my family."

Zbeideh estimates that the attack lasted between half an hour and 40 minutes, during which the assailants repeatedly cursed at him. "They kept verbally humiliating me, talking about my mother and sister, calling me a 'son of a bitch' while spitting on me." He said the attackers eventually hit him in the head with a piece of wood, and he lost consciousness. When he woke up, he was in the back of a military jeep, handcuffed and bleeding.

Meanwhile, Zbeideh's friends informed his family of the abduction, one of whom then called the Palestinian Authority. The PA contacted the Israeli authorities, and a military jeep arrived in the area and found the boy. The family was then told to arrive at the entrance of Homesh to pick up their son.

'He had nightmares they would come arrest him' The new outpost at Homesh is frequently visited by dozens of young Jews on

a daily basis. According to Palestinian residents, they arrive in several cars, traveling around 12 kilometers deep into Palestinian territory to reach the site. There are no other settlements in the area.

Over the last few years, settlers have tried to build a yeshiva [Jewish educational institution] on the site, which has been demolished numerous times by the Israeli authorities. Since the disengagement, the army has used a variety of orders to prevent Palestinians from entering the area, despite High Court rulings allowing them to do so. The local residents have also reported many cases of settler violence on a near-weekly basis.

Between 2020-2017, Israeli human right organization Yesh Din documented 25 incidents of settler violence or damage to Palestinian property in the Homesh area. Most of the victims, according to the organization, refrain from lodging a complaint with the police, often due to fear of reprisal or lack of trust in the Israeli law enforcement authorities.

At the time of the attack, Zbeideh's uncle, Taysir Abu Qais, 31, was in his bakery. "Someone called and said settlers had ran over my sister's son and took him," he said. "I picked up Tareq's brother and drove quickly in the direction of Homesh. We stopped on the main road. We saw an army jeep above us, we got out of the car, honked at it, and waved. But it did not come to us. By chance, an ambulance passed by, so I flagged it down and told the driver what had happened. That's when the jeep drove down to us."

The family members did not know that Zbeideh was actually inside the military jeep. "There was an argument with the soldiers. I told them what had happened, we did not at all understand that he was with them in the car. They said they wanted to arrest him because he was inside the settlement. When we began shouting, they let us talk to an officer on the phone."

Abu Qais says that before Zbeidi was released from the jeep, he was told that if "anything [violent] happens in the area, they will come straight to his house and arrest him." The uncle added that when he was let out of the jeep, Zbeideh "was almost dead. We saw shoe marks on his neck, on his chest, his legs were bloody and full of scratches."

Zbeideh says that when he woke up tied to the floor of the jeep, he was full of thorns, sand, and blood. "They gave me the phone [to speak to an Arabic-speaking soldier], they threatened me that no matter what had happened in the settlement they would arrest me."

A senior source confirmed that Zbeideh had spoken on the phone with an Arabic-speaking officer, and that the boy had admitted to him that he had come to the scene with his friends to throw stones. This claim, however, is both baseless and was not obtained through a formal investigation. In addition, the fact that the soldiers did not arrest the boy despite the allegations may indicate that they, too, understood the course of events.

"They always say [Palestinians] threw stones, but we were the ones who called the Palestinian Authority," one of Zbeideh's family members said.

Zbeideh's father, Abed a-Razeq, was working on a construction site in the Tel Aviv area when the incident took place. "I heard about what happened and went straight home," he says. Since then, he has been sitting by his son's bed and has not returned to work. "For the first few days I was worried. He had nightmares, fears that they would come arrest him. We sat by him all night."

The family is shocked yet not surprised by the attack. "Three months ago, they did this to a guy from the village of Beit Marin," said a-Razeq. "They beat him so badly he could not walk." After being released by the army, Zbeideh was taken to a hospital in Jenin where he stayed for 24 hours. On Wednesday he was able to walk on his tiptoes.

The IDF Spokesperson did not deny the incident and confirmed that it had returned Zbeideh to his family. Yet it presented a different version of the incident, according which the Palestinian boys had been throwing stones at settlers. A senior source in the army claims the soldiers did not witness the violence themselves, and therefore did not call the police or detain any suspects.

The family has yet to file a complaint with the police, but if an investigation is opened it will not be difficult to locate suspects who beat Zbeideh, as the roads leading to the area are equipped with several military cameras. But a-Razeq knows that Palestinians and settlers live under a completely different set of rules in the West Bank, and that the response by the authorities reflects that disparity. "If a Palestinian had committed such a thing against a Jew, 500 people would have been arrested during the investigation."

Israel-Palestine: Waste no opportunity for 'serious' political negotiation, envoy urges (UN News)
August 30, 2021

The top UN envoy for the Middle East peace process told the UN Security Council on Monday that three months after the deadly escalation in violence between Israel and

militants in the Gaza Strip, the situation there remains tense.

The top UN envoy for the Middle East peace process told the UN Security Council on Monday that three months after the deadly escalation in violence between Israel and militants in the Gaza Strip, the situation there remains tense.

Special Coordinator Tor Wennesland, welcomed Qatar's contribution of \$40 million to provide cash assistance to needy families in the Hamas-controlled enclave, but warned of continuing violence across the whole Occupied Palestinian Territory.

He told ambassadors that tensions along the Gaza perimeter fence, reached a peak on 21 August, when hundreds of Palestinians attended a rally, describing the throwing of stones and reportedly, improvised explosive devices, towards Israeli security personnel.

Israeli forces fired on Palestinian protestors, injuring 51 Palestinians, including 25 children. Reiterating that children must never be targeted, Mr. Wennesland called on all sides to show restraint, avoid provocations at the fence and keep the protests peaceful.

Palestinian deaths

Drawing attention to a number of Palestinian deaths in July and August, he highlighted the killing of an 11-year-old Palestinian boy in Beit Ummar on 28 July, after Israeli security forces fired at the car he was travelling in with his father and siblings.

While Israeli authorities have opened an investigation, he added that the next day, security personnel killed a 20-year-old Palestinian man, amid clashes during the boy's funeral.

Also voicing concern about Israeli settler violence against Palestinian civilians, he said further measures must be taken to ensure that Israel fulfils its obligation to better protect Palestinian civilians.

He called on Israeli security forces to exercise maximum restraint and use lethal force only when it is strictly unavoidable in order to protect life.

End arrests of rights defenders

Noting that on 21 August, Palestinian security forces arrested 23 people, including well-known human rights defenders and lawyers, in Ramallah for their participation in a planned demonstration, the Special Coordinator called on the Palestinian Authority, which governs the West Bank, to immediately stop arrests of human rights defenders on charges that violate their right to freedom of expression.

Mr. Wennesland pointed to recent seizures of Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem and urged Israeli authorities to desist.

Noting a gradual and partial easing of the access restrictions in Gaza by Israeli authorities, he said that for the first time in 18 months, permits will be given to 2,000 Palestinian traders and 350 businesspeople, to cross from Gaza into Israel.

However, the volume of trade still remains below pre-escalation levels, he noted, adding that no amount of humanitarian or economic support on its own will address the challenges facing Gaza.

Political solutions

"Gaza requires political solutions that will see a full lifting of Israeli closures, the return of a legitimate Palestinian Government and the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State," he said.

Commenting on militant group Hamas's takeover of a UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) school, he said the agency had declared its institutions "inviolable at all times" and protested the move.

"While the school was subsequently vacated by Hamas, such actions undermine the inviolability and neutrality of UNRWA premises and compromise the safety return of children to their schools on time", he said.

Turning to the "precarious" state of the Palestinian Authority's finances, he said that Israel continues to deduct from the monthly transfer of clearance revenues, an amount equivalent to what it calculates is paid by the Palestinian Authority "to the families of prisoners and martyrs".

Positive engagement

Also noting meetings between Israeli Ministers and their Palestinian counterparts, as well as a meeting on Sunday between Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz and President Abbas, he described the latter as "the highest-level meeting between the two sides since the formation of the current Israeli Government."

"No positive, hopeful step should be wasted", he said, calling for serious political efforts to return to meaningful negotiations that will address all final status issues, achieve a negotiated end to the occupation, and the vision of two States living side-by-side.

Gaza needs Israeli siege lifted fully, says UN envoy (Middle East Monitor)

August 31, 2021

The UN envoy for the Middle East peace process told the Security Council on Monday that the Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip needs to be lifted fully.

"Although movement and access in and out of Gaza should be further improved, no amount of humanitarian or economic support on its own will address the challenges facing Gaza," said Tor Wennesland. "The current gradual approach is a holding operation and not a strategic way forward and a solution for the people in Gaza."

The UN official stressed that Gaza requires political solutions that will see a full lifting of Israeli closures, in line with UN Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the return of a legitimate Palestinian Government to Gaza. "The establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State, of which Gaza is an integral part," is also needed, he added.

Addressing the Security Council, Wennesland drew attention to the number of Palestinians killed in July and August. He highlighted the killing of an 11-year-old Palestinian boy in Beit Ummar on 28 July, after Israeli security forces fired at the car he was travelling in with his father and siblings.

While the Israeli occupation authorities have opened an investigation, he pointed out, the very next day, Israeli forces killed a 20-year-old Palestinian man, during "clashes" at the boy's funeral.

Wennesland also voiced concern about Israeli settler violence against Palestinian civilians and said that further measures must be taken to ensure that Israel fulfils its obligation, as the occupying power, to protect Palestinian civilians.

Israeli soldiers enter a-Nabi Saleh and fatally shoot Muhammad Tamimi (17) in ensuing confrontation (B'Tselem)

September 1, 2021

On Friday, 23 July 2021, at around 4:00 P.M., four soldiers entered a-Nabi Saleh, a village in Ramallah District, and began advancing on its streets. As they were making their way towards the center of the village, several youths and young men began throwing stones at them from among the houses. The soldiers gave chase, accompanied by a military jeep. About 20 more youths and young men joined the confrontation and threw stones at the soldiers, who fired live bullets and hurled tear gas canisters and stun grenades at them. At around 5:00 P.M., after the soldiers descended from a rooftop in the center of the village, they began retreating towards its western exit, shielding themselves from the stone-throwing behind a jeep and firing live shots in the air and at the stone-throwers on the other side of the jeep. The gunfire hit a car belonging to one of the residents.

After several minutes, the soldiers reached a barricade set up by the young men on the road while intense stone-throwing continued, as they sheltered behind the armored jeep, and their lives were not in danger. One of the soldiers opened live fire, hitting Muhammad Tamimi (17) in the back and buttocks from about 30 meters away. After the soldiers drew back, Tamimi was taken by private car to a hospital in Salfit, where he succumbed to his wounds several hours later.

From 2009 to 2017, weekly protests were held in the village of a-Nabi Saleh, which is home to some 600 residents, against settler takeover of village land and a nearby spring. Since then, protests have been held irregularly. Muhammad Tamimi is the fifth person killed in the last decade during demonstrations and clashes in the village. He was preceded by 'Iz a-Din Tamimi in 2018, Sabaa 'Obeid in 2017, Rushdi a-Tamimi in 2012, and Mustafa Tamimi in 2011.

As in the case of the four other Palestinians killed in the village, the shooting at 17-year-old Tamimi's back was carried out although he did not pose any threat to the soldiers' lives. Live fire is permitted only when there is an imminent risk to life, and even then, only when the danger cannot be averted by other, less lethal means. Therefore, this shooting was unlawful and unjustifiable. In the present case, the incident that led to the killing started with an unexplained raid by the soldiers into the village, the entire purpose of which appeared to be provocation. According to media reports, an MPIU investigation has been

launched. Yet years of experience show that it is bound to be closed, as its purpose is not to uncover the truth or hold the perpetrators accountable but rather to act as a fig leaf for the military law enforcement's whitewash system.

Israeli troops kill Palestinian during Gaza blockade protest (AlJazeera)

September 2, 2021

Israeli troops have killed a Palestinian in the besieged Gaza Strip, Gaza's health ministry has said, as hundreds took part in a protest against Israel's 14-year blockade of the territory.

Ahmad Saleh, 26, was shot in the abdomen, the ministry said on Thursday. At least 15 others were wounded by Israeli fire, including a child who was in serious condition, it said.

The Israeli military said that over 1,000 Palestinians had gathered along the Israeli fence in Gaza, setting tyres ablaze and throwing explosive devices.

"IDF [Israeli military] troops deployed in the area are using riot dispersal means, including when necessary live fire and .22 Caliber rounds," the military said in a statement.

Sanctioned by Hamas, the Palestinian group that rules Gaza, Palestinians have staged nightly protests along the Israeli fence this week to voice anger at an Israeli-led blockade of the territory. Israel cites threats from Hamas for the restrictions.

The protests add to a recent rise in violence that has tested a fragile truce that ended 11 days of deadly Israel-Hamas fighting in May.

Since the Egyptian-mediated ceasefire, Palestinians have sporadically sent balloons carrying incendiary material into Israel, igniting brush fires and drawing Israeli air strikes on Hamas facilities in Gaza.

In the first deaths since the May fighting, a Palestinian boy and an Israeli soldier succumbed to their injuries this week after being shot in cross-border fire during border clashes on August 21.

Egypt and the United Nations have stepped up mediation efforts in recent weeks, helping facilitate Qatari aid to Gaza in a move that was widely seen as bolstering the May 21 truce.

At least 256 Palestinians and 13 people in Israel were killed in the May conflict, in which Gaza armed groups fired rockets towards Israeli cities and Israel carried out air strikes across the coastal enclave.

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Gulf Region

Qatar condemns Houthi attack on Saudi Arabia's Abha Airport (Doha News) By Farah Alsharif

September 1, 2021

A drone attack on Abha airport in Saudi Arabia injured eight people.

Qatar has voiced its strong condemnation and denunciation of two attacks attempts on Saudi Arabia's Abha Airport, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) statement said.

The statement described the targeting of civilian installations and vital facilities as "an act of sabotage that violates all international norms and laws."

MoFA reiterated Qatar's firm position in rejecting violence, criminal and sabotage acts, regardless of motive and reason.

At least eight people were wounded and a civilian aircraft was damaged in a drone attack on the neighbouring kingdom's Abha airport, according to the Saudi-led coalition battling Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Among those injured were one Saudi national, a Nepalese national, three people from India and three from Bangladesh, one of which was reported to be in critical condition.

Flights had been temporarily halted “to ensure the safety of incoming and departing aircraft, as well as civilians at the airport”.

“A second drone attempting to attack Abha International Airport was intercepted and shot down,” said the the coalition in a statement on Saudi Arabia’s official Al-Ekhbariya television channel.

It also noted a booby-trapped drone was intercepted by the coalition earlier on Tuesday, the first of such attack attempts.

The coalition added that the second attack on the airport “constitutes a war crime,” after it intercepted the first attack.

In response, the coalition launched a military operation to target a launchpad used in the Yemeni capital which it said was used in the attack on the airport. It said that it had “destroyed the terrorist elements responsible for the attack”.

Ongoing conflict

In 2014, the Houthis overran all government institutions in Sanaa and gained control of the city, forcing the internationally-recognised government to flee to Aden.

The conflict was exacerbated in 2015 after a Saudi Arabia-led military coalition intervened to reinstate the government of Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi.

However, six years on, at least 233,000 Yemenis have been killed, among them 131,000 who died as a result of malnutrition, lack of healthcare and medicine. Both the Houthi rebels and the Saudi-led coalition have been criticised by the international community for engaging in war-crimes throughout the conflict.

It is estimated that more than 16 million people will go hungry this year due to the dire conditions that have been imposed on the country due to the ongoing war.

It is also estimated that 400,000 Yemeni children below the age of five could die from acute malnutrition.

“Any ceasefire, any peace plan that includes lifting all restrictions against humanitarian efforts and ensures access for aid workers to reach civilians anywhere in Yemen, will benefit Yemenis,” Afrah Nasser, Yemen Researcher at Human Rights Watch [HRW] told Doha News in March.

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ASIA

Targeted for genocide in Afghanistan: The Hazras (Minn Post) By Ellen J. Kennedy
September 7, 2021

I teach a class at Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul titled “Genocide Prevention: A 21st-Century Challenge.” At the beginning of each class, I invite the students to share updates on human rights issues in the news.

As you would imagine, the catastrophe in Afghanistan weighs heavily on all of us – the chaos, the violence, the terrorist attacks, the apparent inability to protect and evacuate those who are desperately trying to leave, and the fear of the future, especially for women and girls.

Last week, one of the students mentioned a personal connection. He was flying back to the U.S. from overseas. His seatmate was an Afghani, more specifically an Afghani Hazara, who was coming to the U.S. to study.

The Hazaras have been targeted for genocide. A few days ago, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum sent out a Museum Statement on the Hazara.

The statement reads, “We are concerned about ethnic and religious minorities, specifically the Shi’a minority who belong

predominantly to the Hazara ethnic group, which faces a risk of crimes against humanity or even genocide.”

Genocide Watch, an internationally known organization focusing on genocide prevention, calls the Hazara situation a genocide emergency.

Human Rights Watch is urging the U.N. Human Rights Commission to investigate the killing of Hazaras as genocide or as a crime against humanity.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield recently spoke about the violence directed against ethnic and religious minorities in Afghanistan. She, too, singled out the desperate situation of the Hazaras: “I want to extend my deepest condolences to these victims and their families, and in particular, the Hazara community that has been so acutely impacted by these attacks.”

Who are the Hazaras? The plight of the Hazaras isn’t well known on the international stage. They are an ethno-religious minority, about 9% of the Afghani population of 36 million. Although most of the Afghan people identify as Sunni Muslims, most Hazaras are Shi’a (or Shi’ite). The Hazaras are perceived as ethnically, physically, and linguistically distinct from the Pashtun, who make up 40% of the population, and the Tajik, the second-largest group at 25%.

Why are the Hazaras targeted? Because of their religious status, they have long faced discrimination from the majority population and specifically from IS and other Sunni terrorist groups. ISIS-K claims a goal to exterminate all Shi’a, including the Hazaras.

The death toll of Afghans in the past decades’ conflicts is more than 47,000. Hazaras are a disproportionate number of that total; they have been singled out for killings, beheadings, suicide bomb attacks, and kidnappings.

According to an AP report on June 21, 2021, Hazaras have been targeted at schools, weddings, mosques, sports clubs, and even at births.

The AP report highlighted gunmen’s attack on a maternity hospital in a Hazara neighborhood that killed 24 people, including newborns and their mothers. In May 2021, a school bombing in the same area killed 100 Hazara schoolgirls.

Amnesty International reported the Taliban’s brutal massacre of nine Hazara men in July, six who were shot and three who were tortured to death. Torture and murder in the context of armed conflict, in addition to the deliberate targeting of civilians, hospitals, and children, are war crimes.

The United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, passed in 1948, defines genocide as ‘the intent to exterminate, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.’ As the Holocaust Museum statement notes, the Hazaras are targeted because of their ethnicity and religion.

What is being done? The International Criminal Court, located in The Hague, Netherlands, is the world’s only permanent tribunal established to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression. The court, to which 123 countries of the world are parties, opened an investigation in 2006 into crimes perpetrated in Afghanistan by the Taliban, the Afghan government, and the United States. The U.S. is alone among Western nations and democracies in not being a party to the court. The Trump administration exerted considerable pressure on the court to drop this case and, after U.S.-imposed sanctions, visa denials, and other reprisals against court prosecutors and administrators, the case was shelved.

In 2020, upon review by the court’s Appeals Chamber and after global outrage over apparent U.S. intimidation of court members, the case was reinstated and is in process. The hope is that there will be accountability for the crimes perpetrated by all sides.

What can we do? This genocide is occurring now, on our watch. We can ask our senators and representatives in Congress to consider the Hazaras in plans that are being developed to enhance safety for people in Afghanistan and in refugee resettlement. They are at grave risk.

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Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)

**Official Website of the Extraordinary Chambers [English]
Official Website of the United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials (UNAKRT)
Cambodia Tribunal Monitor**

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Bangladesh International Crimes Tribunal

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War Crimes Investigation in Myanmar

Myanmar shadow government declares war on military junta, escalating crisis (Washington Post) By Shibani Mahtani
September 7, 2021

Myanmar's security crisis deepened Tuesday when its shadow government, which is allied with ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, called for an armed revolt against the ruling military junta, sparking an escalation of fighting in parts of the country.

The declaration sets the stage for a further unraveling in the crisis-hit Southeast Asian country, where the military has violently cracked down on protesters since it seized power in February. More than 1,000 have been killed by security forces, and dozens of soldiers have lost their lives in retaliatory attacks that have increased in frequency and intensity.

"Today ... we launched a people's defensive war against the military junta," said Duwa Lashi La, acting president of the National Unity Government (NUG), in a video address posted to Facebook. He called on citizens "in every corner of the country" to revolt against military rule.

The NUG claims to be Myanmar's rightful government and has wide support in the country of 57 million. It consists largely of former lawmakers and others affiliated with Suu Kyi and her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), who were ousted in the military coup.

Duwa Lashi La said his group also was calling on those working with the government, including civil servants, to abandon their posts and join the resistance. He ordered militias aligned with the shadow government to target the junta and its assets. The NUG's defense ministry also released a code of ethics for fighters, which included orders not to torture or sexually assault enemy troops.

The shadow government's intervention was largely celebrated by activists and civilians across Myanmar, who labeled the occasion "D-Day" against the military regime. Within hours, student unions, militias and other armed groups signed on to the NUG's declaration, offering themselves as front-line fighters. Local media reported that junta forces clashed with armed ethnic groups in parts of the country, adding to fighting near the borders with Thailand and China. The declaration also appeared to reignite protests, which had largely quieted after the crackdown on peaceful demonstrators.

"People have been severely suffering at the hands of military terrorists," said Ko Htet Wai, an environmental activist who is part of the Bamar People's Liberation Army, a civilian militia. "Such a call for a defensive war by the NUG will encourage those

who have been fighting the military separately to stand under one banner, and become a stronger force.”

A resistance fighter who is training in the jungles of Myanmar said the declaration was an “alarm” for those like her.

“The junta is killing us, so we have to fight,” she said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of safety concerns. “This is such an honor for us.”

A spokesman for the Myanmar military said that the armed forces were not worried about the declaration and that the NUG was posturing ahead of the United Nations General Assembly, where it is seeking recognition as the legitimate government of Myanmar. But witnesses saw fighter jets flying across parts of Myanmar, while security checks and troop deployments were stepped up in cities such as Yangon.

The military, known as the Tatmadaw, seized power Feb. 1, detaining Suu Kyi and others in the democratically elected NLD government whom it later charged with treason and other crimes. The military, led by commander in chief Min Aung Hlaing, claims that the NLD won elections last year fraudulently but has provided little evidence and has pledged to hold a new vote.

The coup ended a tenuous power-sharing deal between the generals and the civilian-led government, and returned Myanmar to direct military rule after a short experiment in nominal democracy. The resultant uprising has been met with lethal force and mass detentions by security forces, whose actions have been described by U.N. officials and human rights groups as crimes against humanity.

Both the security situation and trust in the military junta have deteriorated in recent months with the spread of the delta variant of the novel coronavirus, pushing Myanmar, its economy and health system toward collapse.

Richard Horsey, Myanmar adviser to the International Crisis Group, said that although the NUG’s declaration “raised expectations that the revolution will now shift into higher gear,” meeting those expectations will be difficult.

“The two sides are likely to remain locked in a violent stalemate, with neither able to easily prevail over the other,” he said. “The backdrop of economic crisis, poverty and health system collapse mean that the consequences of the coup are devastating for ordinary people.” The international response to the crisis in Myanmar has largely been led by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which named an envoy to deal with the situation. The envoy, a diplomat from Brunei, has not been granted access to the country. Sanctions imposed by the United States and other Western nations have done little to change the situation on the ground. ASEAN and others have pushed for a cease-fire, but Myanmar’s military has not honored promises to end hostilities.

Against this backdrop, increasing numbers of people in Myanmar have turned to violence. Tens of thousands are estimated to have completed military training in areas controlled by ethnic armies that have been fighting the Tatmadaw for decades in the country’s border regions. The military is doing battle on multiple fronts, including against the new militias made up of civilians.

In his declaration of war, Duwa Lashi La said Myanmar’s people, faced with military atrocities, have no choice but fighting. “I believe that our neighboring countries, ASEAN countries, the United Nations and all other countries around the world understand that we do it out of necessity, based on our country’s current situation,” he said.

Myanmar opposition calls for attacks on military in people’s war against the coup regime (People’s World)
September 8, 2021

Myanmar’s parallel government called for an uprising against the military junta today, urging ethnic groups to “immediately attack” the armed forces.

Duwa Lashi La, acting president of the National Unity Government, formed by parliamentarians ousted in the February 1 coup, issued the rallying cry for a “revolution” against the regime in a video message.

He called for “a people’s defensive war against the military junta” and for soldiers and civilians alike to take up arms and join the People’s Defence Forces.

“As this is a public revolution, all the citizens within all Myanmar, revolt against the rule of the military terrorists led by [General] Min Aung Hlaing in every corner of the country,” he said.

Mr Duwa called for immediate attacks on the military, accusing it of committing “war crimes” against the people after waging a brutal crackdown on dissent in the wake of the coup.

He demanded military-appointed bureaucrats resign from the government and called on the country’s border guards and soldiers to “join with the people and attack the people’s enemy.”

“From today onwards, all the civil servants under the military council, we warn and forbid you from going to the office,” Mr Duwa said, warning members of the public to “avoid unnecessary travelling.”

“We will remove Min Aung Hlaing and uproot dictatorship from Myanmar for good and be able to establish a peaceful federal democratic union that fully safeguards equality,” he said.

Myanmar has been plagued by instability with mass protests and strike action across the country demanding a return to democracy.

The military has led a brutal crackdown, opening fire on peaceful protests.

More than 1,000 people have been killed since the country’s armed forces seized power according the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group.

Tens of thousands have been displaced in Myanmar while thousands have been jailed or disappeared as the military defies global calls for a return to democracy.

It insists that it was forced to take charge of the country, citing unfounded allegations of election fraud in last November’s poll which was won by Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) in a landslide.

She is under house arrest and, along with other leading figures in the NLD, faces a number of charges including bribery and corruption.

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AMERICAS

North & Central America

Three Guantánamo Detainees Charged in 2002 Bali Bombing (New York Times) By Carol Rosenberg
August 31, 2021

Three men who have been detained by the United States for 18 years without charge were formally accused of war crimes on Tuesday as part of a global Qaeda conspiracy that began in Afghanistan in 1996 and resulted in the grisly Bali nightclub bombings in 2002.

The lead defendant, an Indonesian man called Encep Nurjaman, who is known as Hambali, and two Malaysian men, Mohammed Nazir Bin Lep and Mohammed Farik Bin Amin, offered no pleas. No trial date was set, and defense lawyers indicated they would seek to disqualify the arraignment of their clients as defective because of translation problems.

The case is the first new prosecution at the troubled military commissions system since 2014. It had been dormant for years, the men held as enemy combatants, until a Trump administration appointee abruptly approved the case on the first full day of the Biden administration without explanation.

Defense lawyers say that potential witnesses have died or disappeared and that some of the men named as accomplices have been executed in Indonesia or killed in clashes with security services.

One key issue, the lawyers said, was the discovery that the woman who served as the court’s official translator of Bahasa Indonesian had remarked last year that “the government is wasting money on these terrorists; they should have been killed a long time ago.” Defense lawyers called her biased and sought to halt the proceeding, which was already delayed for six months

because of the coronavirus pandemic.

But the Navy judge, Cmdr. Hayes C. Larsen, presiding in his first military commission case, ruled that the Pentagon-paid translators were “qualified” and “certified” by war court headquarters and so what the defendants heard in their headsets was sound.

Brian Bouffard, a lawyer representing Mr. Bin Lep, disagreed. He said, for starters, that the translations were so flawed that he had “no confidence” that the defendants understood the process, and that he had no trustworthy interpreter to assist him.

Mr. Bin Lep found the translation of the proceedings into his first language, Malay, so inscrutable that he switched to his second language, Bahasa, and listened to the charges against him translated by “someone who we know would have liked it if he was summarily executed years ago,” Mr. Bouffard said.

The defense lawyers had already refused to work with their teams’ Defense Department contract linguists, translators who had been vetted by the government to receive top-secret security clearances and help them communicate with the prisoners. All three defendants were held by the C.I.A. in the early years of their detention and were tortured, according to the lawyers, who said they did not trust that the government’s choice of linguists would keep their conversations confidential.

“They’ve had 18 years to get us translators and interpreters for these guys,” said James Hodes, Mr. Hambali’s lead lawyer. “But the system is so flawed.”

The case is complex, charging murder, terrorism, attacking civilians and conspiracy. The charges cast two bombings in Indonesia in 2002 and 2003 as acts of war by a Qaeda affiliate after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. On a Saturday night in Bali in October 2002, suicide bombers struck at two popular nightspots, Paddy’s Pub and the Sari Club, killing more than 200 people, mostly Australians and Indonesians as well as seven Americans.

In a sweeping charge sheet, which an Air Force prosecutor read aloud in English for about 95 minutes Tuesday, Mr. Hambali was described as ordering recruits to his Jemaah Islamiyah movement to plot bombings of “bars, cafes or nightclubs frequented by ‘Westerners’ in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand” in late 2001 and early 2002. It also described Mr. Hambali as so aware of what would happen in Bali that he arranged to rent a hotel room in advance to watch the news on CNN.

The charges did not directly tie the Malaysian defendants to the Bali bombing. Instead, they were described as associates of Mr. Hambali who trained in Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and, at his direction, conducted surveillance in 1999 of other U.S., Israeli and tourist targets in Southeast Asia for plots that never took place. They were also accused of helping him elude capture by securing fake documents, weapons and safe-house lodging.

Mr. Bin Lep and Mr. Bin Amin are also accused of hiding \$50,000 at their apartment in Bangkok that Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, who is accused of masterminding the Sept. 11 attacks, sent for follow-on attacks in 2002. Prosecutors suggested it was used to fund a car bombing at a Marriott hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia, in August 2003, killing 11 people and wounding at least 80 others.

By then, Mr. Bin Amin had been arrested. The other two men would soon be detained, and like him, spend more than three years in secret C.I.A. prisons before President George W. Bush had them transferred to military custody at Guantánamo Bay with Mr. Mohammed and 10 other so-called high-value detainees.

Canadian imperialism shaken by US debacle in Afghanistan (World Socialist Website) By Roger Jordan and James Clayton
September 6, 2021

Last week’s humiliating departure of the remaining western troops from Kabul’s “Hamid Karzai International Airport” brought an ignominious end to the two-decade-long American imperialist conquest and occupation of Afghanistan. The US and its NATO allies spent well over \$2 trillion on propping up Washington’s puppet regime in Kabul, yet once deprived of Pentagon combat support it collapsed like a house of cards before the Taliban advance. This was because the Afghan masses identified it with all the venality and brutality of the neocolonial subjugation of their country—torture and dragnet arrests; government of, by, and for a corrupt elite; the wanton killing of civilians in drone and other air strikes.

Bitter recriminations have erupted in the US political and military-security establishment over “who lost Afghanistan.” In Berlin and Paris, the US defeat in Afghanistan is being marshalled as a fresh argument for why Europe’s imperialist powers must expand their military might and gain the means to act independently of and, if need be, in opposition to Washington.

However, outside Washington and Wall Street, the collapse of the Kabul regime has arguably dealt no imperialist ruling elite a bigger blow than Canada's.

Given Canadian imperialism's dependence on the eight-decade old, Canada-US military-strategic alliance to pursue its own global interests and ambitions, any serious geostrategic, military or economic reversal for Washington would roil it. But if America's Afghan debacle has delivered so smarting a blow to its junior partner to the north, it is because the Canadian ruling class—with the support of the entire political establishment, whether avowedly "left" or "right," federalist or Quebec sovereigntist—was itself heavily invested in the Afghan war.

Over the course of two decades, Canadian imperialism expended vast amounts of "blood and treasure" in waging war in Afghanistan and sustaining the neo-colonial Kabul regime.

The Afghan war was the largest Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) military deployment since the Korean War, and ultimately became its biggest and longest since World War Two. Some 40,000 Canadian troops served in Afghanistan, 158 CAF personnel were killed, and more than 100 subsequently committed suicide. Among the foreign occupiers, only the United States and Britain lost more troops in the Afghan war than Canada. Government estimates place the total cost of the 12-year Canadian military intervention in Afghanistan, which began in 2001 and concluded only in 2014, at more than \$18 billion. Ottawa provided the Kabul regime a further \$3.6 billion in "international assistance" during the two-decade US occupation, with Afghanistan remaining the largest or one of the largest recipients of Canadian aid in every year since 2014.

US imperialism seized on the 9/11 terrorist attacks as a pretext to launch a war in Afghanistan for which plans were already far advanced. Its goal was to stake claim to the immense oil and gas reserves of Central Asia, which prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union had been off-limits to the US oil giants, and to establish new military bases from which to project US power in Asia, above all against Iran, China and Russia.

In joining and assuming a major role in the Afghan war Canada's ruling elite had two aims.

First, it wanted to demonstrate to Washington that Ottawa remained a reliable partner under conditions where American imperialism was unleashing unprecedented levels of military violence around the world in a desperate bid to offset the erosion of its economic predominance. Fears within the Canadian ruling class that China and Mexico were rapidly diminishing Canada's hitherto unchallenged role as America's foremost economic partner were compounded by the actions Washington took after 9/11 to "thicken" the Canada-US border, thereby threatening the enhanced economic ties that had developed under the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement.

Canadian big business and its political representatives also seized on the Afghan war as a means to adopt and overcome popular opposition to a more aggressive and militarist foreign policy. Since the 1960s, successive Canadian governments had cast Ottawa as a peaceful force on the world stage, focused on multilateral diplomacy and its "special vocation" for "peacekeeping." This was always a fraud. Canada was a premier member of NATO and NORAD, a frontline state in the preparation for nuclear war with the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War, and readily joined the US-led wars against Iraq and Yugoslavia in 1991 and 1999. The UN "peacekeeping" missions the Canadian Armed Forces led or staffed were all sanctioned by Washington in furtherance of imperialist interests.

But by the early 2000s, with the US intent on establishing a "new world order" and tensions deepening between the major powers, the "pacific" claims that the Canadian ruling elite used to cloak its predatory interests and ambitions came to be seen as a hindrance. As John Manley, then the Foreign Minister in the Chrétien Liberal government and now the chairman of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, remarked in 2001 at the outset of the CAF's assault on Afghanistan, "If you want to play a role in the world, there's a cost to doing that." General Rick Hillier, who commanded NATO forces in Afghanistan in 2004 then served as Canada's Chief of Defence Staff for three years, was blunter still. "We're not the public service of Canada," he declared. "We are the Canadian Forces, and our job is to be able to kill people."

And kill people they did. Canadian Armed Forces personnel participated in the fall 2001 invasion of Afghanistan; fought alongside US forces in southern Afghanistan in early 2002; helped guard Kabul for several years; then as Taliban resistance hardened, fueled by popular anger over the occupation forces' slaughtering of thousands of civilians in air raids and the malevolent character of the US-installed neo-colonial regime, assumed a major role in fighting the US-NATO war.

In 2005, the Canadian intervention escalated dramatically, when Liberal Prime Minister Paul Martin agreed to double the troop deployment to Afghanistan to 1,200 and that the CAF would assume command of the counter-insurgency war in Kandahar province, a centre of Taliban resistance. This was part of a quid pro quo with Washington that freed up more US troops to fight in Iraq and was meant to make amends for Chrétien's eleventh-hour decision to not join the 2003 invasion of Iraq—although, as George W. Bush's Canadian emissary, Paul Cellucci, would subsequently admit, Canada would do far more militarily to support the US war in Iraq than most members of the "coalition of the willing."

The CAF's Kandahar campaign featured house to house raids, and the capture and detention of "suspected militants." In reality, Canadian troops swept up anybody they came across and brutalized them. In May 2006, the newly elected, Stephen Harper-led Conservative government extended the Kandahar combat operation to 2009. In early 2008, it prolonged it again through 2011, and would continue to deploy hundreds of troops to Afghanistan to train Afghan army and national police forces till 2014.

While Canadian forces engaged in bloody combat and perpetrated war crimes in Afghanistan, the political establishment used the war as the backdrop to promote militarism and reaction, issuing declarations of bloodlust and whipping up of Islamophobia in the name of the "war on terror." Meanwhile, the Toronto Star's Rosie DiManno, Christie Blatchford of the National Post, and a host of other "embedded journalists" churned out reports celebrating the "valour" and "self-sacrifice" of the CAF. This thuggish imperialist propaganda was aimed at acclimatizing the population to war and, above all, at intimidating the war's opponents into silence.

In 2007 at a ceremony commemorating the World War I Battle of Vimy Ridge, Harper declared, "Canadians did not go to war then, nor will we ever, to conquer or to enslave." Canadian soldiers were simultaneously proving him a liar, delivering captives to be tortured by Afghan security forces and committing other crimes which Harper would later stop at nothing to conceal.

As its role in the Afghan war expanded, so did Canadian imperialism's ambitions, its appetites whetted by the possibility that it could gain access to Afghanistan's abundant resources for Canadian energy and mining companies. Canada placed more than 15 "advisors" in various offices of the Kabul government, including the office of President Karzai. In an action that attested to the military's growing reach and power, this "Strategic Advisory Team" (SAT) was established by the CAF, not the civilian federal government. Bragging about the influence they had, Rob Ferguson, one of the SAT's members, asserted at the time, "No other country is as strategically placed as Canada with respect to influencing Afghanistan's development." These "advisors" reported directly to Ottawa, directing Afghan government policy in its dealings with other states, the World Bank and aid agencies.

The imperialist subjugation of Afghanistan entailed horrific, criminal violence. Crimes had to be covered up with lies. For these lies to stand unchallenged, basic bourgeois democratic norms had to be subverted.

In 2009, Richard Colvin, a Canadian diplomat formerly posted to Afghanistan, revealed that from at least 2006 Canadian troops had handed over hundreds of Afghans to the puppet state security services, the NDS, or to American forces, who subjected them to torture "as standard operating procedure." This included rape, electric shock, beatings and sleep deprivation.

The extent of these crimes remains shrouded in secrecy to this day, thanks to the sabotaging of their investigation by the Harper Conservative government, on the one hand, and the fecklessness of the parliamentary opposition on the other. Harper prorogued parliament for the second time in a year in December 2009 for the explicit purpose of preventing information discovered by Colvin from reaching the public. When the government was forced to release documents pertaining to the CAF's mistreatment of Afghan detainees, in response to the Speaker's ruling that it had violated parliament's core constitutional rights, it conducted a massive document dump and otherwise took steps to subvert a serious investigation.

The Tories' brazen cover-up was facilitated by the connivance of the opposition parties, who agreed to farm the issue out to a specially vetted committee with only limited access to the documents and whose members were legally barred from say anything about their contents without the consent of the government, senior bureaucrats and the military.

The reality is that none of the parliamentary parties wanted the truth about Canadian war crimes to see the light of day. The Liberal Party, having launched the Afghan bloodbath, continued to support the brutal occupation throughout. The Quebec sovereigntist Bloc Quebecois was also a full-throated supporter of the Afghan war, as it has been of all Canadian imperialism's foreign interventions since its founding in 1991, and joined with Harper and his Conservatives in exploiting it to promote Islamophobia.

The trade union-backed NDP, which voted in favour of the war but uttered rhetorical criticisms of the conflict from time to time, showed where its loyalties really lay in the fall of 2008, when it agreed to serve as junior partners in a Liberal-led coalition government committed to waging war in Afghanistan through 2011. The coalition was ultimately aborted because Harper, supported by the most powerful sections of Canadian capital, staged a constitutional coup, shutting down parliament, via prorogation, to prevent the opposition parties from exercising their right to bring down the government.

On August 27, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh issued a statement lamenting the "heart-breaking loss of life" and calling on the Trudeau government to work with its "allies" in "support of peace, women, and security in Afghanistan." Yet the NDP, like the Canadian imperialist bourgeoisie it serves, has a highly selective concern for "women's rights" and "peace." It was, after all, this very same NDP that voted unanimously in 2011 to back NATO's savage air bombardment of Libya, an operation that claimed tens of thousands of civilian lives. The top Canadian military commander of that mission frankly acknowledged that

Canadian fighter jets functioned as “al-Qaida’s air force.”

This savage record of Canadian imperialism is a taboo subject in the current federal election campaign. To discuss Canada’s real role in the wars of the past quarter century would expose the responsibility it shares with the US and its European NATO allies for the destruction of entire societies and promotion of Islamist forces that have produced disaster for the peoples of Central Asia and the Middle East. Even the Taliban, which is now pilloried by the entire Canadian political establishment as beyond the pale, emerged out of American imperialism’s criminal use of the Afghan people in the 1980s as cannon fodder in its drive against the Soviet Union—operations which entailed mobilizing and arming Islamist forces, al-Qaida included, and which Ottawa fully endorsed.

The determination of all the establishment parties and the corporate media to cover up Canada’s war crimes in Afghanistan, and its decades-long record of imperialist savagery and criminality is not just a matter of burying past crimes. It is part of the preparation for new ones.

Leading strategists for Canadian imperialism are already penning op-eds and policy papers arguing that the “lesson” of Afghanistan is that Canada must become more active and aggressive on the world stage. Bemoaning the US retreat from Afghanistan, Hugh Segal, former chief of staff to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, argued in an August 24 Globe and Mail column that Canada must seek to lessen the impact of American “caprice” by “exapand(ing) the size of our military” and “combat deterrence” against “potentially hostile powers such as Russia, China, Iran or North Korea.”

Canada’s ruling elite is intent on maintaining the fiction that the Afghan intervention was motivated by a fight for “democracy” and the protection of “women and girls” because these threadbare arguments will be required to promote further imperialist aggression in the not-too-distant future. In this regard, one only needs to point to the incessant anti-China propaganda campaign in the Canadian media and political establishment, which portrays Beijing as a threat to the “liberal world order” and serial violator of “human rights” and “freedom of speech.” Irrespective of which party or coalition of parties holds power after the September 20 election, Ottawa is committed to lining up squarely behind the Biden administration’s bipartisan diplomatic, economic, and military-strategic offensive against Beijing, an offensive whose logical culmination is a catastrophic global conflagration.

Canada's last wartime Nazi Helmut Oberlander loses bid to keep deportation hearing secret (National Post)

By Adrian Humphreys

September 7, 2021

Complaining that media coverage of the case against Canada’s last-known wartime Nazi brings violent threats against his family and lawyers, Helmut Oberlander’s representatives asked for his immigration hearing to be closed to the public and the media.

The request delayed a last-ditch hearing to deport Oberlander to Germany before he dies in Canada — another step in the 35-year struggle to hold him accountable as a member of a German killing squad during the Holocaust of the Second World War — while reporters objected to holding this week’s Immigration and Refugee Board hearings behind closed doors.

“Each time the media issues a story about my grandfather, we receive unsolicited and often threatening messages by email and on social media platforms,” Oberlander’s grandson, Jamie Rooney, told the IRB in an affidavit.

“The messages describe various means of killing one or all of my family members, including forcing my family members to drink Clorox; gassing my family members; hanging my family members; decapitating my family members; shooting my family members; and killing my family members by other means,” according to Rooney.

Rooney asked to replace his mother as Oberlander’s designated representative before the IRB because of the fear of harm against her.

Waterloo Regional Police Service have been notified of the threats, Rooney said.

After an objection by National Post and other media organizations, arguing the case was a matter of great public importance and the public interest was greater than privacy concerns of the family, IRB adjudicator Karen Greenwood ordered the case remain open to the public.

Greenwood did grant Rooney’s request to replace his mother as Oberlander’s designated representative.

Oberlander, 97, a retired businessman in Waterloo, Ont., was a member of a notorious Nazi killing squad in Ukraine and Russia during the Second World War. He entered Canada fraudulently in 1954 by failing to disclose his activities with the Nazis, tainting his citizenship application.

Now in frail health, Oberlander's family is set on delaying or postponing deportation to allow him to die in Canada and be buried with his wife here.

After failing to hold the hearing in secret, Oberlander's lawyers' next order of business was to press applications to exclude evidence from being considered in the case and applications to halt the proceedings altogether, claiming an abuse of process and Oberlander's declining health.

Oberlander's current mental and physical health was chronicled to the IRB through a doctor's report from a June assessment after an hour-long assessment at his home in Waterloo, Ont.

"He was seen today in his family room. He sits on a Lazy Boy chair with his feet on an ottoman. He is next to the sliding doors to the back deck, with a view of the backyard," the doctor's report reads.

"He answered at times tangentially, and at other times his answer was irrelevant and slurred. According to his family, this was one of his better days.

"At one point, he interrupted our conversation, asking what was out hanging and drying in the back yard (there was nothing). When asked to clarify, he lost track of his train of thought.

"He hallucinates, seeing squirrels or people with suitcases. We observed him picking at invisible things in the air with his hands. He is generally quite drowsy. Sleep is poor."

His physical functions are also declining, the report says.

"A referral to palliative care services was recommended and accepted."

The arguments on those applications were being made for the remainder of the hearing Tuesday afternoon.

Canada has been trying to deport Oberlander for decades because of his Nazi past.

He was among the first targets of a war crimes unit set up by the federal government in the 1990s.

Because of the passage of time and the difficulty in obtaining criminal prosecutions, deportation was seen as a more realistic goal. Even this tool, however, has been ineffective.

Four times his Canadian citizenship was stripped from him and three times that decision was overturned by the courts, in 2001, 2007, and 2012.

In 2019 the Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear Oberlander's appeal of the last revocation of his citizenship. The country's highest court accepted that Oberlander entered Canada fraudulently after the war.

His lawyers have continued to fight, on several legal fronts. His family has said they wish for him to remain in Canada until his death.

Oberlander is an ethnic German who lived in the Soviet Union — in what is now Ukraine — during the Second World War when it was invaded by Nazi forces. Then a teenager, he was assigned to work as a translator for Einsatzkommando 10a, known as Ek10a, one of the special police task forces that operated in occupied territory.

A Canadian judge described them as "mobile killing units" used by the Nazi SS for mass murder.

Oberlander's family earlier said he should be regarded as a former child soldier because he was "forcibly conscripted on the threat of death by the Nazis at age 17."

The hearing is scheduled to continue all week.

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South America

Colombia court refuses to try general accused in 104 murders (Washington Post) By Manuel Rueda
August 30, 2021

A court refused Monday to allow a trial for a retired general accused of offering incentives that led soldiers to murder 104 civilians and pass them off as guerrilla fighters killed in combat during Colombia's long civil conflict.

Mario Montoya had appeared at a court hearing last week, where he was going to be charged with murder by the Attorney General's Office. But Bogota's Superior Tribunal stopped prosecutors from pressing charges while they considered the case.

The court ruled Monday that Montoya is not under the jurisdiction of ordinary courts because he is cooperating with a special tribunal created by the 2016 peace deal between the government and the now disbanded Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

The ruling will be appealed by relatives of civilians killed by soldiers under Montoya's command, who are hoping that the case sets a powerful precedent.

Montoya was commander of Colombia's army between 2006 and 2008 and is the highest ranking officer who has faced charges so far over the executions of civilians, who were abducted by soldiers, killed and presented as rebel fighters in what is known as the "false positives" scandal.

Prosecutors say they have gathered evidence proving Montoya pressured his subordinates to increase the number of enemy fighters killed in combat and rewarded soldiers who provided the most kills with vacations and promotions. This policy allegedly motivated some soldiers to abduct civilians, murder them and present them as dead guerrilla fighters.

Montoya denies the charges. He says he sought only to get tactical results from his subordinates in fighting the rebels and did not seek greater kill rates.

Under Colombia's peace deal with the FARC, soldiers and guerrilla fighters accused of war crimes can choose to collaborate with the tribunal known as the Special Jurisdiction for Peace. Those who help investigations and tell the truth about war crimes can avoid time in prison, and will instead receive alternative sentences that include paying reparations to victims or conducting community service.

Montoya has been cooperating with the tribunal since 2018.

Attorney General Francisco Barbosa, however, argued in a radio interview last week that he was constitutionally entitled to investigate accusations against the former general and did not want human rights abusers to "profit from the inaction of prosecutors." Barbosa said evidence gathered against Montoya will be handed over to the peace tribunal, which can use it to further its own investigations.

According to the peace tribunal, at least 6,402 civilians were murdered by the Colombian army and presented as "false positives" between 2002 and 2008, when the killings were first revealed by journalists. In all, an estimated 262,000 people died as a result of the five-decade conflict.

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TOPICS

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

22 Years On, Kosovo Plans Post-War Truth and Justice Strategy (Balkan Transitional Justice) By Serbeze Haxhijaj
September 2, 2021

More than two decades after the war ended, Kosovo's Justice Ministry has put together a team to devise a national strategy on transitional justice for the first time.

The Justice Ministry tasked the team of ten people, including state officials, civil society representatives and foreign experts, with preparing a draft document within six months detailing how the strategy should be implemented. It will then be offered for public debate.

At the first meeting of the working group last month, Prime Minister Albin Kurti said the initiative was almost too late.

"This is the last moment to properly face up to the past. It's the last moment to address all that has happened. To gauge the damage. To repair it. To fulfil the right to truth for victims of crime, survivors and their families," Kurti said.

The move came two months after Kurti held the first meeting of another working group focused on planning for the establishment of a new, government-backed Institute for Crimes Committed During the War, which is intended to properly document all the crimes committed during the conflict.

A previous Institute for War Crimes was established in 2011, but then abolished in 2018 by the prime minister at the time, Ramush Haradinaj. Its re-establishment was one of Kurti's Vetevendosje party's promises before it won parliamentary elections in February. Kurti also vowed to sue Serbia for alleged genocide.

Baki Svirca, the head of Transitional Justice Division at the Justice Ministry, who is leading the working group on the national transitional justice strategy, said that it will aim to be a "comprehensive, victim-centred strategy".

Svirca explained that it will include a "programme of reparations, truth-telling, memorialisation and effective tools for survivors".

"We [also] want to create an information strategy so the public can understand the principles and ethics of transitional justice in Kosovo. At the heart of this strategy will be the rights, needs and interests of all communities," he said.

The strategy will pool information that has already been gathered and published by various domestic and international rights organisations such as the Humanitarian Law Centre, Human Rights Watch and others, he added.

"We want to gather all the information related to the war and turn it into official state information and create a narrative for the war," he said.

Gezim Visoka, a Kosovo-born associate professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Dublin City University in Ireland, said that previous transitional justice initiatives in Kosovo, like the Institute for War Crimes that was abolished by Haradinaj, and the proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission launched by former President Hashim Thaci, were flawed.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was initiated by the Kosovo Liberation Army's wartime political director Thaci in 2017 and aimed to provide the basis for dialogue between Kosovo's divided communities. But its future has been uncertain since Thaci was sent to the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague last year to stand trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Visoka said these previous transitional justice initiatives "went ahead without wider vision, coordination and harmonisation, and were often exposed to politicisation and personalisation by political leaders".

"It is never too late to seek justice for unresolved crimes. But past efforts have left an uncertain legacy which could undermine present and future efforts," he added.

In terms of criminal proceedings, since 1999, war crimes cases have been tried by the UN court in The Hague, by the UN and EU's missions in Kosovo, UNMIK and EULEX, and by domestic courts – and none of them has been particularly successful. It remains to be seen whether the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, which was set up to try Kosovo Liberation Army ex-guerrillas for wartime crimes, will achieve more.

Overall, transitional justice efforts in Kosovo so far have been inconsistent and inadequate, experts believe.

"The focus on war crimes trials abandoned the importance of the truth-seeking, documentation and commemoration aspects [of transitional justice], as well as the significance of reparations and compensation," Visoka said.

“With these elements being mostly absent, recognition for victims and survivors of the conflict is also being neglected,” he added.

Post-war reconciliation is still a long way off in Kosovo, where its majority ethnic Albanian and minority Serb communities have completely different narratives about what happened during the war, and tensions are never far from the surface.

“There are several ‘exclusive’ truths blocking people from trusting each other, a lack of information about many wartime events or the whereabouts of missing persons, and there is still a culture of impunity for war crimes or corruption,” Visoka explained.

He also argued that “the lack of interest from the international community” in including transitional justice issues in the ongoing EU-facilitated dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade to normalise relations has hampered any possible progress.

‘A solution for the whole of society’

Baki Svirca from the Kosovo Justice Ministry is leading the working group on the national transitional justice strategy. Photo: Serbeze Haxhijaj.

Bekim Gashi’s mother and four sisters were killed by Serbian forces in a massacre in their village of Trnje/Terne on March 25, 1999, and their remains have not yet been found. Gashi said the transitional justice strategy should prioritise “missing persons and justice for the victims”.

“We have seen selective justice and the denial of crimes against humanity,” he told BIRN.

“Nothing can heal the wounds of the past if justice cannot be served,” he said.

Gashi has had some success in getting justice for his murdered relatives. In 2008, he filed a criminal complaint to Serbia’s War Crimes Prosecution against the Yugoslav Army’s 549th Brigade. In 2019, Belgrade Higher Court sentenced former Yugoslav Army officer Rajko Kozlina to 15 years in prison for the murder of 27 civilians in Trnje/Terne in 1999, while acquitting his superior, Pavle Gavrilovic.

Lejla Gacanica, a Sarajevo-based legal adviser for TRIAL International, an NGO that provides legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses, said that because so many years have passed since the war, there has been time to assess what is needed.

“The strategy, even after 20 years, should bridge the main gaps and be perceived as a concrete solution for the whole of society. It is another chance to bring justice and peace in a post-conflict society and to work towards guaranteeing the non-repetition of the conflict,” Gacanica said.

Aidan Hehir, a reader in International Relations in the University of Westminster who recently co-edited the book *Kosovo and Transitional Justice: The Pursuit of Justice After Large Scale-Conflict*, said that unlike the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, which were “imposed upon Kosovo by the international community and has negligible local support”, the transitional justice strategy should be “inherently more legitimate”.

Hehir said that the experts preparing the strategy should “establish principles on how to implement effective transitional justice mechanisms and not allow the process to become politicised domestically or interfered with by outside actors, so the initiative will help establish the truth about the war in Kosovo and provide support to all those affected”.

There are several challenges that could undermine the strategy’s chances of achieving any success, however.

Visoka said that “there is a risk that since there is no peace agreement between Kosovo and Serbia, and thus no agreed framework for dealing with the past, that the initiatives will be objected to by local Serb communities and ignored by donors and the wider international community”.

The other key issue is that Kosovo’s political leaders must have the will to genuinely address the unresolved legacies of the war, he said.

“It is crucial that transitional justice is not pursued according to mono-ethnic political agendas, but on principled grounds that offer a measure of justice to all victims and survivors,” he argued.

Svirca insisted that process of drawing up the transitional justice strategy will not be conducted according to a mono-ethnic agenda, and that it will “offer a platform for all victims and survivors”.

Hehir cautioned however that there will be a degree of scepticism among Kosovo Serbs, given that previous political leaders in

Pristina have used transitional justice initiatives in cynical ways.

“The current government is very different, however, and not tainted by association with past failures; I hope, therefore that it will be given a chance to prove to all in Kosovo that it has good intentions,” he said.

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Terrorism

What to know about ISIS-K, the terror group claiming responsibility for the Kabul airport attack (CNN) By Rob Picheta
August 27, 2021

In the space of just a few years, an ISIS affiliate in Afghanistan has seized on the country's instability to become one of the region's most feared terror groups.

ISIS-K has claimed responsibility for the deadly bombing attack outside Kabul airport on Thursday, which targeted a frantic Western evacuation operation and killed 13 US troops and more than 90 Afghans. The group provided no evidence to support the claim but US officials have said it was likely behind the atrocity.

It was ISIS-K's most globally consequential action to date and drew a promise of retribution from US President Joe Biden.

But the group, known in full as ISIS-Khorasan, has been responsible for thousands of deaths since its 2015 formation.

Its members operate in central Asia, and the group's name comes from its terminology for the area that includes Afghanistan and Pakistan.

In 2018 it was ranked the world's fourth deadliest terror group, claiming more than 1,000 lives, mostly in Afghanistan, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace, which monitors global terrorism annually.

Since then the group's growth has been limited and its militants have fought the Taliban. But they have capitalized on uncertainty in Afghanistan in recent months to launch brutal attacks, and the impending withdrawal of troops by the United States threatens to give them a window in which to regain strength.

How was ISIS-K formed?

The group is a branch of ISIS, the terror group that first emerged in Syria and Iraq and, at its peak, controlled a huge stretch of territory stretching from western Syria to the outskirts of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. The original group had its self-declared caliphate ended by US-backed forces in recent years.

But the connection between ISIS-K and its apparent parent group is not entirely clear; the affiliates share an ideology and tactics, but the depth of their relationship with regards to organization and command and control has never been entirely established.

US intelligence officials previously told CNN that the ISIS-K membership includes "a small number of veteran jihadists from Syria and other foreign terrorist fighters," saying that the US had identified 10 to 15 of their top operatives in Afghanistan.

Its earliest members included Pakistani militants who emerged in Afghanistan's Nangarhar province around a decade ago, many of whom had fled Pakistan and defected from other terror groups, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

Counter-terrorism analysts estimate its strength now at around 1,500-2,000, but that number may soon grow. Some captured ISIS-K fighters were being held in prisons near Kabul, which the Taliban overran as their offensive accelerated.

What do they want?

Key figures involved in the formation of ISIS-K included Taliban defectors -- such as former Taliban member Abdul Rauf Aliza, who was briefly held at Guantanamo Bay and was killed in a US drone strike in 2015 after joining ISIS.

But the group has a mutual hatred of the Taliban, and attracts those with views even more radical than the Taliban.

Unlike the militant group that has seized power in Afghanistan, ISIS and its affiliates have little interest in political governance.

"ISIS believes that only God can rule. And even though the Taliban is attempting to establish an Islamic emirate, that's not enough for ISIS," Colin Clarke, author of "After the Caliphate: The Islamic State and the Future of the Terrorist Diaspora," told CNN before the Kabul airport attacks took place.

In any place they control, Clarke said, ISIS-K "are going to implement extremely harsh Sharia law. And they're going to rule with an iron fist. They want to attract and recruit the most ardent sociopaths in the country and wanton violence helps them bring other fighters into the organization that have a similar mindset."

ISIS-K have intentions that stretch beyond the borders of Afghanistan and Pakistan; they intend to "establish a Caliphate beginning in South and Central Asia, governed by sharia law, which will expand as Muslims from across the region and world join," according to CSIS.

And its hatred of the West, including the United States, also features prominently in their agenda. ISIS-K "has mocked and threatened the United States in its official media streams and called for lone-wolf attacks in the West," the organization said.

What attacks has the group been responsible for?

According to UN figures, ISIS-K launched 77 attacks in the first four months of this year.

The group has carried out some of the deadliest attacks on civilians in Afghanistan, with several mass casualty suicide bombings in the capital, Kabul.

ISIS-K was believed to be behind a horrific car bombing attack outside a girls' high school in May that killed at least 85 people.

The group was particularly active during its peak around 2018. In July of that year, an ISIS-K suicide bomber killed 128 people at an election rally in Mastung, Pakistan, one of the bloodiest attacks anywhere in the world in 2018.

According to a US State Department report, the group relied heavily on suicide bombings -- the same tactic used in the Kabul airport blasts on Thursday.

The report found that in 2018, the group conducted 15 attacks in public places and killed 393 people. They included a bombing that killed 68 at a large public demonstration in Nangarhar, Afghanistan, on the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks.

The group declined in strength after the US targeted its fighters across the region. But in 2019, Gen. Joseph Votel, the commander of US Central Command, told reporters during a visit to Afghanistan that they still posed a major threat both in the region and abroad.

And the Institute for Economics and Peace warned that despite the group's decline, it was "believed to still have sleeper cells in cities such as Kabul and Jalalabad," and its militants continued to pose a threat to the Taliban.

The group has built up a presence in eastern Afghanistan in recent years, especially in the provinces of Nangahar and Kunar. Last August, the group attacked the main prison in Jalalabad, the capital of Nangahar, in an effort to free dozens of its supporters who had been captured by the Afghan army and police.

This January, Afghanistan's intelligence agency said it foiled an attempt by the group to assassinate a key US diplomat, Ross Wilson, in Kabul. And in June the group claimed responsibility for an attack on an international demining charity, the Halo Trust, that left 10 people dead and 16 others wounded.

FBI: Texas shooter possibly inspired by foreign terrorists (Associated Press) August 30, 2021

Investigators are looking into whether a Texas man was inspired by foreign terrorists when he killed a Lyft driver in a Dallas suburb and later opened fire in the police station of another suburb where officers fatally shot him.

Police said Imran Ali Rasheed ordered a Lyft in his home city of Garland Sunday then fatally shot the driver, Isabella Lewis. Her stolen car was found a short time later outside the police station in the neighboring community of Plano, where Rasheed began shooting in the lobby before being shot by officers, police chiefs in both cities said at a Monday news conference.

Matthew DeSarno, special agent in charge of the FBI's Dallas office, said investigators believe Rasheed acted alone but that the 33-year-old left a letter indicating he "may have been inspired by a foreign terrorist organization." He did not offer more specifics on the letter and declined to identify the group.

DeSarno said Rasheed was the subject of a counterterrorism investigation from 2010 to 2013, when the case was closed after agents determined Rasheed did not currently pose a threat. The agency's regional terrorism task force is working on the investigation of Lewis' killing, he said.

Authorities said there was no known connection between Lewis and Rasheed and it's unclear why he went to the Plano Police Department. "We have no idea why he came to Plano to find police officers," said the city's police chief, Ed Drain.

Rasheed died of his injuries at a hospital later Sunday, Drain said. The officers' shooting of him is being investigated in cooperation with the Collin County District Attorney's Office, he said.

New Zealand Police Kill 'Extremist' Who Stabbed 6 in ISIS-Inspired Attack (New York Times) By Natasha Frost
September 3, 2021

Six people were injured in a knife attack at a supermarket in New Zealand on Friday, an outburst of violence that the prime minister labeled a "terrorist attack" that had been carried out by a "violent extremist" inspired by the Islamic State.

The suspect, a Sri Lankan national, was shot and killed by the police, officials said. He had been under constant, active surveillance at the time of the attack at the market in West Auckland, they said. The suspect was not immediately identified.

"A violent extremist undertook a terrorist attack on innocent New Zealanders in the New Lynn Countdown in Auckland," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said at a news conference, referring to the supermarket.

"What happened today was despicable, it was hateful, it was wrong," she added. "It was carried out by an individual — not a faith, not a culture, not an ethnicity, but an individual person who is gripped by ideology that is not supported here by anyone or any community. He alone carries the responsibility for these acts; let that be where the judgment falls."

It was the first terrorist attack in the country since an Australian gunman, Brenton H. Tarrant, killed 51 people and injured 40 at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019, the deadliest attack in the country's history. Mr. Tarrant became the first convicted criminal in New Zealand's history to be sentenced to life in prison without eligibility for release. The massacres also prompted a significant tightening of New Zealand's gun laws.

Those injured on Friday were taken to hospitals in the Auckland area. Three were in critical condition, and one was in serious condition, said Glenn Metcalfe, an official from St. John's Ambulance in New Zealand.

Ms. Ardern said the attack took place about 2:40 p.m. Auckland is experiencing a coronavirus outbreak driven by the more transmissible Delta variant, and it has been under a stringent lockdown, with only supermarkets and other essential businesses open. Officials said the assault was carried out with a knife that the suspect had taken from a shelf at the supermarket. The prime minister said the suspect, who came to New Zealand in 2011, had been known to security forces since 2016. She described him as a lone actor who had been under constant monitoring because of concerns about his ideology. "This was a violent attack," she said. "It was senseless, and I'm so sorry it happened." Surveillance teams were as close as they could possibly be at the time of the stabbings, said Andrew Coster, New Zealand's police commissioner. "The reality is that when you are surveilling someone on a 24/7 basis, it is not possible to be immediately next to them at all times," Commissioner Coster said. "The staff intervened as quickly as they could, and they prevented further injury in what was a terrifying situation." Ms. Ardern added, "We used every element and lever in the law that was available." The assault on Friday has revived memories of the Christchurch attack, said Abdur Razzaq Khan, a Muslim community leader with New Zealand's Federation of Islamic Associations. "When we first heard about it, it resurrected the trauma that we had two years ago," he said. "Such inhuman and vile acts don't belong to any religion. This is a sheer act of hate."

Since the massacres in Christchurch, the Muslim communities in New Zealand have played an active role in working with the authorities to counter terrorism in the country, he added.

"Extremism, in this particular case or any other case — we have to really root it out from the grass roots in the sense of identifying who these people are and making sure the authorities are aware of them," he said.

Former UK PM Blair warns West should prepare for bio-terrorism threat (Reuters) September 6, 2021

Islamism remains a "first order" security threat and the West should prepare for

potential use of biological weapons by extremist groups, former British prime minister Tony Blair said on Monday.

The Taliban swept to power in Afghanistan last month as the United States withdrew its troops after a 20-year war, and Britain fears the group's return and the vacuum left by the West's chaotic withdrawal will allow militants from al Qaeda and Islamic State to gain a foothold there.

"Islamism, both the ideology and the violence, is a first order security threat and, unchecked, it will come to us, even if centred far from us, as 9/11 demonstrated," Blair said in a speech at the RUSI security think tank to mark the twentieth anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

Blair said the West needed to assess its vulnerability.

"COVID-19 has taught us about deadly pathogens. Bio-terror possibilities may seem like the realm of science fiction. But we would be wise now to prepare for their potential use by non-state actors," he said.

The former prime minister, who sent British troops into Afghanistan in 2001, said with limited appetite for military engagement from the United States, Britain should work more closely with European countries on how best to develop capacity to tackle the threat in areas such as Africa's Sahel region.

"Counter-terrorism on its own won't remove an entrenched threat," he said. "We need some boots on the ground. Naturally our preference is for the boots to be local but that will not always be possible," he said.

Close to home: how US far-right terror flourished in post-9/11 focus on Islam (The Guardian) By Adam Gabbatt
September 6, 2021

The US government acted quickly after 9/11 to prevent further attacks by Islamic extremists in the US. Billions of dollars were spent on new law enforcement departments and vast powers were granted to agencies to surveil people in the US and abroad as George W Bush announced the war on terror.

But while the FBI, CIA, police and the newly created Department of Homeland Security scoured the country and the world for radicalized Muslims, an existing threat was overlooked – white supremacist extremists already in the US, whose numbers and influence have continued to grow in the last two decades.

In 2020 far-right extremists were responsible for 16 of 17 extremist killings, in the US, according to the Anti-Defamation League, while in 2019, 41 of the 42 extremist killings were linked to the far right.

Between 2009 and 2018 the far right was responsible for 73% of extremist-related fatalities in the US, while rightwing extremists killed more people in 2018 than in any year since 1995, when a bomb planted by an anti-government extremist killed 168 people in a federal building in Oklahoma City.

Despite the statistical dominance of far-right and white supremacist killings in the US, America's intelligence agencies have devoted far more resources to the perceived threat from Islamic terror.

"The shock of 9/11 created this incredible machinery really, in the US and globally – the creation of entire new agencies and taskforce hearings, and all those sorts of things, that created blind spots," said Cynthia Miller-Idriss, author of *Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right* and a professor at American University, where she runs the school's Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab.

"Of course, they were also interrupting plots and warning of threats. So some of that was happening, but at the same time, this other threat was increasing and rising, and they weren't seeing it," she added.

In the last few years alone, a gunman killed 23 people in El Paso, Texas, after allegedly posting a manifesto with white nationalist and anti-immigrant themes online. In it he wrote that he planned to carry out an attack in "response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas".

In February 2019, a US Coast Guard lieutenant who was a self-described "white nationalist" was arrested after he stockpiled weapons and compiled a hitlist of media and government figures. He was sentenced to 13 years in prison in 2020.

Nine black church members were murdered in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2017, by a 22-year-old who confessed to the FBI that he hoped to bring back segregation or start a race war.

But successive governments have spent most of the last two decades putting the majority of their resources towards investigating Muslims, both in the US and abroad. In 2019 the FBI said 80% of its counter-terrorism agents were focused on international terrorism, with 20% devoted to domestic terrorism.

As the government pursued Islamic terrorism, the civil rights of Muslims in America were impinged, and many innocent Muslims suffered. More than a thousand people were detained in the months following 9/11, and thousands more questioned as mosques and Muslim neighborhoods were placed under surveillance. The number of hate crimes against Muslims in the US spiked in the immediate aftermath of the attack, and have remained way above pre-2001 rates in every year since.

“There was a lack of attention from authorities – resources – but some of the actual interventions that authorities made were Islamophobic. And so they fostered some of this Islamophobia, anti-immigrant sentiment,” Miller-Idriss said.

Michael German, a former FBI special agent who specialized in domestic terrorism and covert operations, said a disparity in the attention giving to alleged Muslim actors and white supremacists was growing even before 9/11.

After that attack, however, new laws, including the Patriot Act, gave the government extra powers to surveil and target Americans, while the justice department was given more power to investigate people with no criminal record.

German, who is a fellow with the Brennan Center for Justice’s Liberty & National Security Program said these powers were mostly focused on Muslim Americans, while paying white supremacists little heed.

“[There was] a disparity between how the FBI targeted Muslim Americans who simply said things the government didn’t like, or were associated with people the government didn’t like, or the government suspected just because they were Muslim, and had never committed any violent crime, had never been engaged with any terrorist group versus failing to even document murders committed by white supremacists,” German said.

After the World Trade Center attacks, “a tremendous amount of resources were coming into the Joint Terrorism Task Force and the counter-terrorism work”, German said. “But that was all being focused on potential terrorism committed by Muslims.”

A justice department audit in 2010 revealed that between 2005 and 2009 an average of fewer than 330 FBI agents were assigned to domestic terrorism investigation, out of a total of nearly 2,000 counter-terrorism agents.

The decision to not focus as intensely on white supremacist or domestic terrorism wasn’t just a strategic one, German said. He said the influence of money and big business had a role, as industries lobbied lawmakers and even the FBI itself to instead pursue anti-capitalist and environmental protest groups.

“The FBI needs resources. And to get resources, it needs to convince members of Congress. And Congress works most effectively when there are wealthy patrons who contribute to their campaigns,” German said.

“So the FBI has to cultivate a base of support in the wealthy community, and how can they do that? Well, by going to corporate boards, and telling them, you know, the FBI needs more resources.

“And then of course, that gets the corporate boards a lot of influence over what the FBI does. And what those corporate boards were saying wasn’t that there are minority communities in the United States that are being targeted by white supremacists, what are you doing about it?

“They were saying: ‘Hey these [anti-corporate or environmental] protesters are a real pain and you know, there’s a potential they could become violent.’”

When the government and intelligence agencies sought to expand its collection of intelligence post-9/11, that gave corporations another bargaining chip, German said – further knocking white supremacy and the far right down the priority list.

“Giant corporations hold a lot of private information about Americans, and getting access to that information became important to the FBI, so pleasing those corporations became part of the mission.”

Alongside that issue is the fact that there are “lingering racism problems within the FBI”, German said, with the agency still a predominantly white and male organization.

“So that’s one end of the spectrum, the people who are either explicitly racist or implicitly racist. Because white supremacists don’t threaten their community so they don’t see it as a threat.

“The white male agent who goes home to a white suburban community doesn’t really see a lot of white supremacist skinheads causing problems in his community. So it becomes a lesser threat.”

In 2020 there were signs that more attention was being focused on the far right. The Department of Homeland Security said white supremacists were “the most persistent and lethal threat in the homeland” as it announced a report on threats in the US.

But that came just days after Donald Trump had told the extremist group Proud Boys to “stand by” during a presidential debate.

Trump was notoriously reluctant to condemn white supremacist violence, and his “both sides” comments after the Charlottesville riots were seen as legitimizing the far right. In April 2020, as the pandemic raged in the midwest, he told his supporters to “LIBERATE MICHIGAN!” after Gretchen Whitmer, the state’s Democratic governor, imposed stay-at-home orders. Hundreds of armed rioters duly stormed the Michigan state capitol. In October 2020 the FBI charged six people with allegedly plotting to kidnap Whitmer, who had been a target of Trump’s attacks for months.

The riot in Michigan could be seen as a grim preview of the events of 6 January, when a far-right movement that had been brewing for years spilled out in Washington DC and attacked the Capitol.

Joe Biden has been less reluctant than his predecessors to identify the danger to US citizens. In June Biden said white supremacists are the “most lethal threat” to Americans, and later that month his administration unveiled a sweeping plan to address the problem.

PW Singer, a strategist who has served as a consultant to the US military, intelligence community and FBI and is a fellow of New American, a public policy thinktank, said the growing threat of white supremacism in the US was too complex to blame just on a lack of attention from government intelligence agencies – “but it certainly didn’t help stop it”.

“Think of it as akin to a disease striking the body politic. The person was not only in active denial, deliberately avoiding the needed measures to fight it, but the normal defenses [used] against other like threats were not deployed.”

Trump may be gone, but the pandering of some Republicans to rightwing extremists seems unlikely to stop. As recently as August Mo Brooks, a Republican congressman from Alabama, defended a Trump supporter who carried out a Capitol Hill bomb threat.

“Although this terrorist’s motivation is not yet publicly known, and generally speaking, I understand citizenry anger directed at dictatorial Socialism and its threat to liberty, freedom and the very fabric of American society,” Brooks tweeted, hours after the man had parked close to the Capitol and supreme court and told police he had a bomb.

“The way to stop socialism’s march is for patriotic Americans to fight back in the 2022 and 2024 election,” he said. “Bluntly stated, America’s future is at risk.”

It’s a dangerous game, but with the rise of Trumpism and far-right extremism in conservative politics – which can be traced back to the Tea Party movement which demonized Barack Obama – it is one Republicans seem likely to continue.

“What was once the unacceptable extreme has become an accepted part of our politics and media,” Singer said.

“It is a hard truth that too many are unwilling to accept. It didn’t start on 6 January, but years before, where these extremist views were first tolerated and then celebrated as good for clicks, and then votes.”

Trial Begins Over November 2015 Paris Terrorist Attacks (The New York Times) By Aurelien Breeden
September 8, 2021

The trial of 20 men accused of involvement in the November 2015 attacks in Paris began on Wednesday, nearly six years after the coordinated and devastating assault that left over 100 dead and shook France to its core.

Salah Abdeslam, who prosecutors say is the sole surviving attacker, arrived at the courthouse on Wednesday under tight police escort, and when asked by the presiding judge to confirm his name, set a defiant tone.

“I abandoned all professions to become a fighter for the Islamic State,” said Mr. Abdeslam, wearing a black T-shirt and black face mask, when asked about his job.

All the other men on trial are accused of being accomplices, and will, along with Mr. Abdeslam, be tried by a panel of judges in a courtroom designed specifically for the monumental proceedings, with space for 550 people. Over 300 lawyers and nearly 1,800 plaintiffs will take part, and it is expected to last a record nine months.

“It’s the trial of all superlatives,” Éric Dupond-Moretti, the French justice minister, said this week at the courthouse on the Île

de la Cité, an island on the Seine River that will be partly locked down by the police for the duration of the trial. “The longest trial in our history,” he added.

The coordinated assaults on Nov. 13 — a series of shootings and suicide bombings at the Bataclan concert hall, an area outside France’s national soccer stadium and the terraces of cafes and restaurants in central Paris — were carried out by 10 Islamic State extremists who killed 130 people and wounded nearly 500 others. (One survivor who suffered from severe trauma and killed himself in 2017 was officially declared the 131st victim.)

While France united in mourning in the wake of the devastation, the attacks also instilled deep fears across the country. And in ways, they have defined the national conversation in recent years as France wrestled with unresolved debates over the place of Islam in a country that defines itself as secular; immigration; and the balance between security and civil liberties.

The attacks came months after deadly shootings at a kosher supermarket and at the offices of Charlie Hebdo, a satirical newspaper, and deepened wounds in French society that have yet to fully heal.

But the trial is also a reminder of the personal rawness of that night for the many survivors and families of victims. Marilyn Garnier was at the Bataclan that night and can never forget.

Firecracker noises erupted at the back of the crowd. Her partner pushed her to the floor, where they lay still, overcome by the smell of blood and gunpowder. Bursts of gunfire punctuated a deathly silence.

Ms. Garnier, now 30, escaped from the Bataclan uninjured after bursting through an emergency exit. But she wants to see the accused in person and wants the world to understand what victims have been through: the exhausting hyper-vigilance, the endless medical procedures, the administrative obstacle course to get compensation from France’s official victim’s fund, the isolation from friends and family, the broken careers.

“To measure the real impact that this event had on our lives,” Ms. Garnier said. “So that they really realize that six years later, it’s still very, very close.”

Of the 10 attackers, nine were killed — some as they carried out suicide bombings, other who were killed by the police.

The trial is the first in French history to be accessible for plaintiffs on a live internet radio. People can become a “partie civile,” or plaintiff, in a French criminal trial if they were harmed by the crime in question, a status that could give them the right to compensation. It will also be one of the rare trials in France to be filmed.

On Wednesday, the courthouse, surrounded by checkpoints, was teeming with camera-toting journalists and police officers with bomb-sniffing dogs. Plaintiffs were offered lanyards indicating their willingness to talk to the news media — green for yes, red for no.

François Hollande, the socialist president of France at the time of the attacks, has told *Le Parisien* that his time in office, “whether I like it or not, bears the traces of what happened that Nov. 13, and, more generally, of Islamist terrorism.”

“Each time a new terrorist attack occurs, it plunges me back into that dark night,” said Mr. Hollande, who will testify at the trial, a first for a former president.

For some survivors, a door slamming or a car backfiring may be all it takes.

Stéphanie Zarev, 48, who was also in the Bataclan that night, said that for years she was plagued by panic attacks and flashbacks. She has avoided watching or reading about the attacks. “But now,” she said, “I need to know.”

She hopes that the testimonies will help her understand how the attacks came to be. Her fear is that the trial, delayed by the coronavirus pandemic and coinciding with France’s 2022 presidential election, will be used to score political points.

While France has avoided a mass casualty attack since a 2016 truck massacre in Nice, a string of smaller-scale stabbings and shootings have kept terrorism fears particularly acute.

“In France, there was a before and after Nov. 13, 2015, just like in the United States there was a before and after Sept. 11,” said Georges Fenech, a former lawmaker who led a parliamentary inquiry into the 2015 attacks that found failings by French security services.

In both cases, “we were the victims of new forms of terrorist threats that were previously unknown, and that challenged all of our strategies,” he said, acknowledging that France, which has passed a raft of antiterrorism and anti-extremism bills in recent years, had put in place many of the inquiry’s recommendations.

The Nov. 13 assailants were mostly French citizens who, in a carefully orchestrated plot, had traveled to territory in Syria controlled by the Islamic State for military training, before returning to Europe, where the attacks were prepared, mainly in Belgium.

The men accused in the trial, who are mostly in their 20s and 30s, face a range of charges, including being accomplices to murder and hostage-taking — the Bataclan attackers held hostages in the concert hall for several hours — as well as organizing a terrorist conspiracy. Most face sentences ranging from 20 years to life in prison.

Prosecutors say many of the accused men helped the Nov. 13 attackers by renting hide-outs to stash weapons and explosives, driving members of the cell across borders or securing cash and fake documents. Fourteen will attend the trial in person after being arrested mainly in France and Belgium, while six others who are still wanted for arrest will be tried in absentia.

Several are presumed to have been killed by Western airstrikes against territory that the Islamic State used to control in Iraq and Syria — including Oussama Atar, a Belgian-Moroccan who investigators suspect of planning the attacks, and Fabien and Jean-Michel Clain, two French jihadists who recorded the group's claim of responsibility for the killings.

Only Mr. Abdeslam stands directly accused of murder, attempted murder and hostage-taking.

Mr. Abdeslam, a French citizen of Moroccan ancestry who lived in Belgium, played a key role in the attack, prosecutors say, but did not detonate his explosive vest. Investigators believe that it malfunctioned and that he fled in the hours that followed, prompting a monthslong manhunt.

Mr. Abdeslam has not cooperated with investigators. At a trial in 2018 in Belgium, where he was convicted of shooting at officers in Brussels while on the run, he barely said a word.

Still, plaintiffs like Fabienne Kirchheim, whose brother Jean-Jacques Kirchheim, 44, was killed at the Bataclan, hope that justice will be served.

“Through these attacks, the values of the Republic came under fire,” Ms. Kirchheim said. “Now I expect that same Republic to judge and punish, in a fair and democratic way, those attackers.”

Others have mixed feelings about the spotlight. Karena Garnier, another Bataclan survivor, was dreading the trial and had no intention of becoming a plaintiff.

The attention on the trial felt “like a huge invasion of privacy of this tragic event that happened to me,” said Ms. Garnier, 45, an American resident of France. But after talking with others in a victims' group she belongs to, she said she changed her mind, even if the trial will not erase years of therapy, nerve-racking anxiety or bouts of work-disrupting brain fog.

“It's really just to get some closure,” she said. “And to be there for my friends.”

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Piracy

Pirates repelled after firefight off Somalia (DefenceWeb) August 27, 2021

Days ahead of a reduced Indian Ocean high risk piracy area (HRA) announcement, the motor vessel (MV) Anatolia was attacked by pirates off Somalia.

The EU NavFor Operation Atalanta joint operations centre in Rota, Spain, was alerted to the then ongoing incident on 13 August. The alert had it a skiff carrying at least four armed men approached the Anatolia, opening fire with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). One of the RPGs caused damage in the vicinity of the bridge.

“After an exchange of fire lasting almost two hours between the assailants and privately contracted armed security personnel on board, the attackers abandoned their intentions and left. There were no injuries on board Anatolia, which continued its transit arriving safely at Mogadishu port,” according to an EU NavFor Atalanta statement.

The reduced Indian Ocean high HRA announcement was made on 20 August by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a division of the International Chamber of Commerce. It is slated to become active on 1 September, next Wednesday, following a

reduction in piracy off Somalia and the Horn of Africa.

"The HRA was created at the height of the Somali piracy threat in 2010 to show ship owners, operators and seafarers where pirates operate and where extra vigilance was required to avoid attacks.

"Subsequent updates to the HRA reflected the changing nature of threats in the region as well as more severe security threats, including piracy off West Africa, necessitating a change in how industry assesses such dangers to shipping," an IMB statement said.

In response to the Anatolia attack, only the second this year off the Horn of Africa, EU NavFor Atalanta pointed out the decline in piracy and robbery at sea off Somalia adding the incident demonstrated these crimes are not eradicated.

The attack on the Anatolia was monitored by EU NavFor Atalanta JOC – Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), sharing information with UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), from the moment the incident was reported. EU NavFor Atalanta was ready to assist with assets and capabilities in co-ordination with UKMTO and the Combined Maritime Force (CMF).

The Operation noted – gratefully – "no direct intervention was necessary".

Last month, the IMB said piracy and armed robbery incidents are at the lowest level in 27 years, but risks remain to seafarers.

IMB's latest global piracy report detailed 68 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships – the lowest total since 1994 – down from 98 incidents in the same period the previous year. In the first six months of 2021, IMB's Piracy Reporting Centre reported 61 vessels boarded, four attempted attacks, two vessels fired on and one hijacked.

Despite the overall decline in reported incidents, violence against crews continues with 50 crew kidnapped, three threatened and taken hostage, two assaulted, one injured and one killed in the first half of 2021.

The Gulf of Guinea remains particularly dangerous for seafarers with 32% of all reported incidents taking place in the region, according to the IMB. The region accounted for all 50 kidnapped crew and the single crew fatality.

Crewman shot in pirate raid on offshore vessel in Gabon (Trade Winds) By Gary Dixon
September 6, 2021

Two seafarers have been injured in a pirate attack on an offshore support vessel in Gabon.

Maritime security companies reported that a platform supply vessel was boarded by three armed men at the Libreville anchorage on 5 September, 5 nautical miles (8 km) from shore.

Dryad Global named the ship as the 4,345-dwt Tampen (built 2002).

The security company understands the crew engaged with the pirates in a bid to repel the attack.

Two crew sustained injuries and are receiving treatment in hospital.

At least one is understood to have been shot.

There were also reports of a missing crew member, who was presumed to have been kidnapped, but this could not be verified.

The ship is in lay-up, according to UK shipbroker Clarksons.

The former Bourbon Maritime vessel is owned by Prince Marine Transport Services of India, which acquired it in January.

The company has been contacted for further information.

"If confirmed, this incident would be the second within Gabonese waters in 2021 and the first reported kidnapping within this time frame," Dryad said.

"Indeed, region-wide, this latest incident would be the first offshore kidnapping incident reported throughout the wider region since 31 May 2021," the company added.

Kidnapping incidents in the Gulf of Guinea have undergone a significant downturn this year.

The attack came as another West African country, Ghana, indicated it would be stiffening jail terms for pirates.

The attorney-general and the Ghana Maritime Authority are working on a new maritime bill, which will see pirates receive up to 15 years in prison, domestic media reported.

Convicted gunmen are often sent to Nigeria for prosecution due to gaps in Ghana's maritime law.

Coup in Guinea

Meanwhile, in Guinea, special forces and other military were reported to have arrested President Alpha Conde and dissolved the country's constitution.

Gunfire has been heard in the capital Conakry and military personnel have been deployed across the city.

A nationwide curfew is in place as of Monday. Land borders have been closed for a week and some international flights have been cancelled.

Security company ARC said: "It remains to be seen if shipping is affected at Conakry and Kamsar ports.

"Based on AIS movements, some vessels have entered Kamsar port in the last 24 hours, indicating that cargo operations are continuing," the company added.

ARC believes it is likely that prices for some raw materials, such as bauxite, will be affected as Guinea is a major exporter, but it will be in the interest of any new authorities to make sure supply lines are not affected due to the key role that such exports play in the country's economy.

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Gender-Based Violence

Help For Afghan Women Was Needed Before Taliban Takeover (The Chicago Reporter) By Nadinne Naber
August 27, 2021

In the short week since Kabul fell to the Taliban, the U.S. corporate media — and those who uncritically buy into it — are once again beating the drum that calls upon Western heroes to save Afghan women from Islamist extremism. While a New York Times headline reads, "Desperate Afghan Women Wait for U.S. Protection," CNN sensationalizes the issue with shocking stories of the Taliban killing women.

As these media stories trickled down into daily life, a teacher in my neighborhood texted me asking where she can donate funds to help Afghan women. Feminist groups are teaching people how to "save Afghan women." To be sure, the Taliban are exceptionally violent when it comes to gender justice and women's rights and fundraising could indeed be helpful. Yet more than ever before, our society must shift the focus of our apparently "feminist" concerns.

Where have these concerned voices been for the past two decades while the U.S. empire has been bombing Afghan women and devastating their lives? Where were these voices even prior to 2001 when the U.S. was funding the violence in Afghanistan?

Many of the people jumping on the "saving Afghan women" bandwagon have remained silent on the rampant problem of sexual abuse across U.S. society. Perhaps the drive to "save" is driven more by a liberal humanitarian imperialist stance that ultimately reinforces U.S. superiority rather than a feminist stance truly committed to ending gender violence. Indeed, it's easier, and probably even feels better, to focus on gender violence in stereotypical "Muslim" contexts "far away" than to consider the root causes of women's oppression in one's own backyard or how violence abroad has its roots, in part, in U.S. policy.

Yet we need to address the Taliban's promotion of gender violence in ways that do not ignore, as news media typically do, the Rambo-like U.S. complicity from which this violence emerged.

Those responsible for the new wave of violent conservative gender abuses are in power because the U.S. armed and trained them. This reality was fully covered up in 2001, when the Bush administration and liberals and conservatives alike joined the choir of support for a war that was promoted to help "liberate women." Now, that choir has re-emerged as if it is only U.S.

troops that can save Afghan women. The code of silence in the corporate media on the U.S.' role in propping up Afghan warlords must come to an end.

While a dominant idea circulating in the U.S. now blames the withdrawal of U.S. troops for the devastation of Afghan women's rights, the U.S. military has a terrible record of sexual violence within its ranks while simultaneously killing women and children at alarming rates with aerial bombardments in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Where are those news stories?

In 2011, a Department of Defense estimate affirmed 22,800 violent sex crimes in the U.S. military. Some 20,500 service members were sexually assaulted in 2018 not by a "few bad apples" but by an institution rooted and founded upon sexualized violence. According to the film *Invisible War*, 20 percent of all active-duty female soldiers are assaulted and 33 percent of survivors do not report assault because they must report to a friend of their rapist — if not the rapist himself — and they fear retaliation.

The corporate media's coverage of gender violence and Afghanistan also conveniently ignores the U.S. soldiers who have raped or assaulted Afghan women and girls; the U.S.' rampant killings and torture in Afghanistan; the U.S.' refusal to prosecute while blocking International Criminal Court investigations into U.S.-led torture and abuse; and the many detainees who have been tortured, abused, and/or sexually assaulted in Afghanistan by the CIA. We must stop expecting that an institution, and an empire, rooted in sexual violence and torture will help end sexual violence and abuses abroad and we must hold U.S. militarism accountable.

U.S. leaders call for an end to sexualized violence in Afghanistan only when it benefits U.S. policy. It is no secret that the Obama and Bush administrations forced U.S. soldiers to remain silent on — and avoid reporting on — child sexual abuse in Afghanistan when it was practiced by their allies in the Afghan police and militia they trained. The same leaders who allegedly fought to "save the women" from the Taliban enabled allies to sexually abuse children.

Overall, the bombing of hospitals, massive civilian casualties, deadly landmines, poverty, malnutrition, lack of sanitation, inaccessible health care, and environmental destruction disproportionately devastate women. As the primary community-based caretakers, women carry these tragedies on their shoulders.

As an Arab woman whose region of the world has been divided and destroyed by U.S.-led wars, I am offended by hypocritical feminist advocates who call for ending gender violence only when it aligns with U.S. military agendas. These advocates should adopt a more consistent feminist politics.

They could challenge the imperialist notion that the U.S. is the world's leader and savior in the struggle to end gender violence. Rather than striving to "save Afghan women," they could acknowledge their own privileged position in relation to Afghanistan including what their own tax-dollars have been funding. They could call for an end to U.S.-led militarism and the racist-sexist violence it wreaks upon the world. They could demand an end to sexual violence enacted by the U.S. state—in the military, on the streets, in prisons and jails, in detention centers, upon the bodies of indigenous women, and in the courtroom. They could also challenge the U.S.' funding of leaders who have promoted gender injustices—in Egypt, Israel, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and beyond.

As the movement I have been involved in, INCITE!, said shortly after the U.S. launched its war on Afghanistan in the name of "saving women" in 2001, "wars have never liberated women of color and third world women." The travesty of Afghanistan affirms this reality more than ever before.

Yet again, we are learning that U.S. imperialism was never meant to "help." It was meant to divide, conquer, and destroy. The U.S. spent hundreds of billions of dollars in Afghanistan and yet is departing in many ways more devastated than before 2001. This is a failure not just to recognize the limits of US military power, but a failure to recognize the inherent violence and cruelty of imperialism — feminist imperialism or otherwise — and the certainty that it will elicit a strong pushback.

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WORTH READING

Shortcomings Related to Genocide Trials: A Comparative Case Study of Rwanda and Former Yugoslavia

By Rodgers Manana
August 31, 2021

This book investigates the legal shortcomings experienced by the ad hoc tribunals created in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, with regard to genocide trials. International Criminal Law has experienced phenomenal growth in the past decade owing to international crises witnessed in these two countries. The impetus provided by the two crises led to the formation of ad hoc tribunals to prosecute mass violations of human rights in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia.

These tribunals helped in bringing about accountability for the crime of genocide and contributed towards peace and reconciliation in the two regions. The major contribution of the ad hoc tribunals has been the harmonization of the requirements for the prosecution of genocide. Through the definition of genocide which has been developed by the two tribunals, especially as far as protected persons is concerned, the crime of genocide is now firmly entrenched under International Law, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) as well as the Elements of Crimes Act, 2002, which form part of the applicable law of article 21 of the ICC.

However, the ad hoc tribunals have had a number of shortcomings in the course of prosecuting perpetrators of genocide. For starters, the formation of the tribunals to prosecute crimes that were not known in law violated the principle of legality, which is a key element in criminal prosecution. This led many accused persons to question the jurisdiction of the court to undertake prosecutions of this nature. The rich jurisprudence of the tribunals in the crime of genocide not only forms a point of reference but these tribunals formed a basis for the establishment of a true International Criminal Court situated in The Hague.

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