



UNITED NATIONS

International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

The International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals ("Mechanism") was established on 22 December 2010 by the United Nations Security Council to continue the jurisdiction, rights, obligations and essential functions of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda ("ICTR") and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia ("ICTY") which closed in 2015 and 2017, respectively

STATEMENT

PRESIDENT

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

The Hague, 11 July 2020

Judge Carmel Agius, President International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals Remarks for Twenty-fifth Commemoration of Srebrenica Genocide, 11 July 2020

Excellencies, esteemed victims and survivors, Mothers of Srebrenica and other victims' associations, friends,

I am most honoured to join you today and wish wholeheartedly that I could be there in person and pay my respects beside the graves at Potočari, as I have done in the past. Indeed, it saddens me that we are prevented from gathering and grieving together, as we should. However, please know that I am there with you in spirit, today of all days.

Let me start by sharing with you that one of the most challenging chapters in my career was as Presiding Judge of the case against Vujadin Popović and others before the ICTY, which dealt with the appalling crimes committed exactly 25 years ago in Srebrenica.

During the course of the trial, I heard every detail of those infamous events. I listened to the stories of survivors, whose courage and strength still astound me. I watched video footage of helpless, unarmed Bosnian Muslim civilians being summarily executed. I saw photos of piles of bodies outside the warehouses in Kravica. I can never forget the expressions on the faces of those who knew they would die. In addition, I visited the killing sites, where sometimes the blood and tissue remains of the victims could still be seen on the floor and on the walls. I also viewed mass graves and saw for myself the efforts made by the murderers to hide their despicable actions.

I realise now how deeply this case has affected me, and that the trauma of these memories will stay with me for life. And yet what I and the other Judges experienced was barely a shadow of the excruciating pain and loss that the victims and their families endured, and continue to endure.

It is hard to believe that a quarter of a century has passed since the genocide, but I can imagine that for the victims, it feels like an eternity without your loved ones. For you, these have been 25 long years of suffering, as well as an exhausting quest for justice. Perhaps today, for you, is no more or no less agonising than every other day. For the rest of us, however, this milestone commemoration will, I hope, serve as an opportunity to reflect meaningfully on the progress made since 1995, and on what remains to be done.



I regret that there is much work ahead. While the ICTY and the Mechanism have delivered justice on an international scale, thousands of alleged perpetrators are yet to be tried domestically. Moreover, victims continue to be tormented by those who attempt to deny their lived experiences and, thereby, their very existence. The revisionists seek to bury the truth with the same ruthlessness that saw almost 8,000 men and boys cut down in cold blood and thrown into shallow pits.

Despite this, I trust we will see better days. Twenty-five years is not only a significant period of time; it represents the maturation of an entire generation, and thus the possibility of change. It is your children, the voices of the present and the future, who have the capacity and the determination to create a different reality, if they choose. I am confident they will champion truth and justice in honour of the victims we are commemorating today. But they will also need to set aside hatred, in order to effect a lasting transformation. With the support of the international community and likeminded people of all ages and ethnicities, I am convinced that, ultimately, they will succeed.

I thank you sincerely for your attention.
