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Karadžić's sentence divides Bosnia and Herzegovina

Radovan Karadžić, the President of Republika Srpska and Supreme Commander of its armed forces from 1992 to 1995, has been sentenced to 40 years' imprisonment. Karadžić was convicted of genocide in the area of Srebrenica in 1995 (not in other municipalities), of persecution, extermination, murder, deportation, inhumane acts (forcible transfer), terror, unlawful attacks on civilians and hostage-taking. The sentence, issued by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia on 24th March 2016, is being hailed by a large part of international public opinion as an "historic decision" (quotation from Ban Ki-Moon, SG of the UN). As a matter of fact, the trial related to Radovan Karadžić can undoubtedly be considered as the most important among the 149 proceedings concluded by the ICTY (the Tribunal has totally indicted 161 people). Following the death of Slobodan Milošević in the jail of The Hague in 2006, the sentence against Radovan Karadžić gained the highest importance, also in order to prove the efficiency of the ICTY itself.

Bosnian Muslims survivors of the war and of the ethnic cleansing, perpetrated by Karadžić and his army during the war, immediately condemned the decision of the Tribunal. A group of persons related to Bosnian Muslims victims personally attended the session of the Tribunal in Netherland, and their reaction was of deep disappointment and rage. On one hand they disapproved the duration of the process and the decision of considering genocide only the massacre of Srebrenica, on the other hand they lay claim to a life sentence. The anger of the victims undermines the credibility of the Tribunal among the Bosnian Muslims majority, and it will surely have some repercussions at a political level.

The sentence obtained the opposite reaction from the Serbs, from the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina in particular. Although Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić preferred not to comment the conviction, Karadžić continues to be considered as a "national hero" by many Serbs in Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As a matter of fact, after his indictment from the ICTY in 1995, Karadžić evaded arrest until 2008 living in Belgrade and working as a healer under the name of Dr Dragan Babic.

Large part of the Serbs is outraged for the 40 years sentence, because they consider Karadžić not guilty at all. According to this interpretation, the Tribunal has always conducted a political mission with the aim of describing the Serbs as oppressor and as the only guilty party. The current president of Republika Srpska

Milorad Dodik decided to name a students' residence in Pale (the capital of Karadžić's Republika Srpska) "Radovan Karadžić" and inaugurated it in the last weeks.

The future sentences of the ICTY will conclude the trials of Vojislav Šešelj and Ratko Mladić by 2017, and both these cases will probably have the same consequences of the one just finished. The works of the Tribunal continue to have important repercussions in current political affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, unfortunately none of that seems to bring to an easier reconciliation.