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4 messages

warcrimeswatcheditors@case.edu <warcrimeswatcheditors@case.edu>

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FREDERICK K. COX
INTERNATIONAL LAW CENTER

Founder/Advisor
Michael P. Scharf

Faculty Advisor
Jim Johnson

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PILPG
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Editor-in-Chief

Michelle Wang

Technical Editor-in-Chief

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Xi Chen

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Libya

Trial of former President Sarkozy sheds light on France's back-channel talks with Libya's Gadhafi (ABC News) By Sylvie Corbet

March 28, 2025

The monthslong trial of former French President Nicolas Sarkozy over the alleged illegal financing of his 2007 presidential campaign is shedding light on France's back-channel talks with the government of then-Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi.

Family members of terrorist attacks sponsored by Gadhafi's regime have told the court they suspect that Sarkozy was willing to sacrifice the memories of their loved ones in order to normalize ties with Libya almost two decades ago.

French prosecutors on Thursday requested a seven-year prison sentence for the 70-year-old former leader. Sarkozy, who was president from 2007 to 2012, has denied all wrongdoing.

The trial, which started in January, is to continue until April 8, with Sarkozy's lawyers to plead on the last day. The verdict is expected at a later date.

Some key moments in the trial have focused on talks between France and Libya in the 2000s, when Gadhafi was seeking to restore diplomatic ties with the West. Before that, Libya was considered a pariah state for having sponsored attacks.

French families of victims of a 1989 plane bombing told the court about their shock and sense of betrayal as the trial questioned whether promises possibly made to Gadhafi's government were part of the alleged corruption deal.

In 1988, a bomb planted aboard a Pam Am flight exploded while the plane was over the Scottish town of Lockerbie, killing 270 people from 21 countries, including 190 Americans.

The following year, on Sept. 19, 1989, the bombing of UTA flight 772 over Niger killed 170 people, including 54 French nationals on board, after an in-flight explosion caused by a suitcase bomb.

Both French and U.S. investigations have tied both bombings to Libya, whose government had engaged in long-running hostilities with the U.S. and other Western governments.

Now, families of victims are wondering whether French government officials close to Sarkozy promised to forget about the bombings in exchange for business opportunities with the oil-rich nation and possibly, an alleged corruption deal.

"What did they do with our dead?" Nicoletta Diasio, the daughter of a man who died in the bombing, has told the court, saying she wondered if the memories of the victims "could have been used for bartering" in talks between France and Libya.

During the trial, Sarkozy has said he has "never ever betrayed" families of victims. "I have never traded their fate for any compromise, nor pact of realpolitik," he said.

Libya was long a pariah state for its involvement in the 1980s bombings.

In 2003, it took responsibility for both the 1988 and 1989 plane bombings and agreed to pay billions in compensation to the victims' families.

Gadhafi also announced he was dismantling his nuclear weapons program, which led to the lifting of international sanctions against the country.

Britain, France and other Western countries sought to restore a relationship with Libya for security, diplomatic and business purposes.

In 2007, Sarkozy welcomed Gadhafi to Paris with honors for a five-day official visit, allowing him to set up a bedouin tent near the Elysee presidential palace. Many French people still remember that gesture, feeling Sarkozy went too far to please a dictator.

Sarkozy said during the trial he would have preferred to “do without” Gadhafi’s visit at the time but it came as a diplomatic gesture after Libya’s release of Bulgarian nurses who were imprisoned and facing death sentences for a crime they said they did not commit.

On July 24, 2007, under an accord partially brokered by first lady Cecilia Sarkozy and EU officials, Libya released the five Bulgarian nurses and a Palestinian doctor.

The medics, who had spent over eight years in prison, faced death sentence on charges they deliberately infected hundreds of children with the AIDS virus in the late 1990s — an allegation they denied.

The release of the medics removed the last major obstacle to Libya’s rejoining the international community.

Sarkozy travelled to the capital, Tripoli, for talks with Gadhafi the day after the medics were returned to Bulgaria on a French presidential plane.

In court has spoken of his “pride to have saved those six persons.”

“If you did not discuss with Gadhafi, you’d not get the release of the nurses,” he said.

Accused of masterminding the attack on UTA Flight 772, Gadhafi’s brother-in-law and intelligence chief Abdullah al-Senoussi was convicted in absentia to a life sentence by a Paris court in 1999 for the attack.

An international arrest warrant was issued for him and five other suspects.

Financial prosecutors have accused Sarkozy of having promised to lift the arrest warrant targeting al-Senoussi in exchange for alleged campaign financing.

In 2005, people close to Sarkozy, who was at the time the interior minister, including his chief of staff Claude Guéant and junior minister Brice Hortefeux, travelled to Tripoli, where they met with al-Senoussi.

Both Guéant and Hortefeux have told the court that it was a “surprise” meeting they were not aware of beforehand.

Al-Senoussi told investigative judges that millions of dollars were provided to support Sarkozy’s campaign. Accused of war crimes, he is now imprisoned in Libya.

Sarkozy has strongly denied that.

Gadhafi's son, Seif al-Islam, told the French news network RFI in January that he was personally

involved in giving Sarkozy 5 million dollars in cash.

Seif al-Islam sent RFI radio a two-page statement on his version of events. It was the first time he talked to the media about the case since 2011.

He said Sarkozy initially “received \$2.5 million from Libya to finance his electoral campaign” during the 2007 presidential election, in return for which Sarkozy would “conclude agreements and carry out projects in favour of Libya.”

He said a second payment of \$2.5 million in cash was handed over without specifying when it was given.

According to him, Libyan authorities expected that in return, Sarkozy would end a legal case about the 1989 UTA Flight 771 attack — including removing his name from an international warrant notice.

Sarkozy strongly denied those allegations.

“You’ll never find one Libyan euro, one Libyan cent in my campaign,” he said at the opening of the trial in January. “There’s no corruption money because there was no corruption.”

The Libyan civil war started in February 2011, with army units and militiamen loyal to Gadhafi opposing rebels.

Sarkozy was the first Western leader to take a public stance to support the rebellion.

On Feb. 25, 2011, he said the violence by pro-Gadhafi forces was unacceptable and should not go unpunished. “Gadhafi must go,” he said at the time.

On March 10 that year, France was the first country in the world to recognize the National Transitional Council as the legitimate government of Libya.

“That was the Arab Spring,” Sarkozy told the court. “Gadhafi was the only dictator who had sent (military) aircrafts against his people. He had promised rivers of blood, that’s his expression.”

Moammar Gadhafi was killed by opposition fighters in Oct. 2011, ending his four-decade rule of the North African country.

Africa: Libya (Security Council Report) March 31, 2025

In April, the Security Council will hold its bimonthly briefing on the situation in Libya. Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Hanna Tetteh will brief the Council on recent political, security, and humanitarian developments in the country and the Secretary-General’s latest report on UNSMIL.

Additionally, the chair of the 1970 Libya Sanctions Committee might brief on the Committee’s activities. (At the time of writing, the chair had not yet been appointed, as Council members continue to negotiate this year’s allocation of subsidiary bodies).

Key Recent Developments

The political impasse in Libya continues between the UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU), based in Tripoli and led by Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Mohammed Dbeibah with

advisory support from the High State Council (HSC), and the eastern-based Government of National Stability (GNS), led by Prime Minister Osama Hamad and backed by the House of Representatives (HoR) and the self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) under the command of General Khalifa Haftar. The parties remain deadlocked over proposed legislation to hold national elections that would reconcile the country's divided government. A key point of contention concerns the formation of a unified interim government to organise the elections, a move favoured by the GNS and HoR but opposed by the GNU and some segments of the HSC. The prolonged stalemate between the rival governments—which has persisted since the indefinite postponement of the 2021 elections—is one of the root causes of Libya's political, security, and economic instability.

On 4 February, UNSMIL announced the establishment of the Advisory Committee to address outstanding issues hindering the holding of elections in Libya. The Committee is composed of a diverse group of Libyan personalities, whose selection was based on several criteria, including expertise in legal, constitutional, and electoral issues; the ability to build compromise; and an understanding of the political challenges facing Libya.

UNSMIL has clarified that the Committee's role is advisory, rather than decision-making, and its mandate is time-bound. The Committee is expected to provide proposals to UNSMIL for consideration in the next phase of the political process, while UNSMIL will facilitate communication between the Committee and relevant institutions.

At the time of writing, the Committee had held five meetings, including a meeting with the members of the joint 6+6 Committee. This Committee was established by the HoR and the GNU-aligned High State Council (HSC) to draft electoral laws to enable elections, comprising six representatives from each body.

Newly appointed Special Representative Hanna Tetteh officially began her duties on 20 February. In a statement issued the same day, she committed to lead UN mediation efforts in line with resolution 2755 of 31 October 2024, which last renewed UNSMIL's mandate. Emphasising the importance of Libyan-led and Libyan-owned solutions, Tetteh said that UNSMIL will engage with diverse Libyan communities and work with regional and international actors to support national unity and stability. She also affirmed UNSMIL's commitment to enabling inclusive elections and fostering a shared vision for Libya's future.

During the Council's most recent briefing on the situation in Libya, held on 19 February, Council members were unanimous in welcoming the appointment of Tetteh, while many members expressed their support for the establishment of the Advisory Committee. In her briefing, Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo highlighted the stalled political process, economic issues, human rights violations, and security threats. DiCarlo emphasised the urgent need for progress and noted that UNSMIL is taking steps to revive the political process based on inclusivity and national ownership.

On 18 January, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Osama Elmasry Njeem, suspected of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Libya from February 2015 onward. Njeem allegedly oversaw Tripoli prison facilities, where thousands were murdered, tortured, raped, and subjected to sexual violence. On 19 January, Italian authorities arrested Njeem in Turin, Italy. However, on 21 January, the Rome Court of Appeal (that is, an Italian appellate court) ordered his release due to a procedural error. That same day, Italy returned Njeem to Libya, citing security concerns. The ICC claims Italian authorities failed to notify them of

any warrant issues. As a result of the incident, Italian prosecutors have launched an investigation into Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and two ministers concerning the repatriation of Njeem to Libya despite the ICC warrant for his arrest.

Libya is not a state party to the Rome Statute of the ICC. The Security Council referred the situation in Libya to the ICC through the unanimous adoption of resolution 1970 on 26 February 2011, which invited the ICC Prosecutor to update the Council every six months. The ICC has jurisdiction over crimes listed in the Rome Statute committed on Libya's territory or by its nationals from 15 February 2011 onwards.

Key Issues and Options

The key issue for the Council remains supporting political progress towards national elections to unify Libya's divided government. One of the core objectives for the Council is to help foster common political ground between the country's rival governments to reach an inclusive agreement on electoral laws, including the possible establishment of a unified interim government to organise the elections.

April's briefing will provide Council members with an opportunity to learn about preparations for and the implementation of UNSMIL's revitalised efforts to facilitate dialogue between Libyan political stakeholders. In this regard, Council members will likely be interested to hear more about the work of the Advisory Committee from Tetteh.

To demonstrate the Council's continued support for the mission's intensified engagement under Tetteh's leadership, members could consider issuing a press statement expressing support for the Special Representative and the efforts of the Advisory Committee. They could also consider holding a closed Arria-formula meeting with representatives of the rival governments for a frank discussion on potential ways to break the long-standing political impasse.

Council Dynamics

Council members remain united on the need for a Libyan-led, inclusive political process resulting in elections that will help to restore political, security, and economic stability to the country. They also remain broadly supportive of the UN's mediation role towards this end.

At the most recent briefing in Libya in February, many Council members welcomed the establishment of the Advisory Committee. Russia appeared more sceptical, however. It referred to the Committee as an ambiguous proposal created without consulting Council members. Russia expressed concerns about its inclusiveness and impartiality, emphasising that its work should be coordinated with key Libyan stakeholders

More broadly, geopolitical tensions influence Council dynamics with respect to Libya. Several Western members remain concerned about Russia's growing presence in the eastern part of the country under Haftar's control, which has reportedly accelerated as Russia has transferred military assets from Syria following the ouster of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. For its part, Russia routinely blames Libya's current instability on the NATO-led military intervention in 2011 and accuses Western countries of seeking to exploit Libya's oil reserves for economic gain.

The UK is the penholder on Libya.

Sudan reviews legal reforms, war crimes cases: state media (Sudan Tribune) March 23, 2025

Sudan's attorney general has briefed a senior official on proposed legal reforms and the progress of war crimes cases, including the killing of a state governor, state media reported on Sunday.

Attorney General Al-Fateh Tayfour met with Sovereign Council member Ibrahim Jabir in Port Sudan to discuss draft amendments to the Constitutional Court law, a draft law on compensating war victims, and a draft law on cooperation in criminal matters, the Sovereign Council said in a statement seen by Sudan Tribune.

Tayfour also presented a report on the Public Prosecution's performance over the past year, the statement said. The report included cases related to the killing of the governor of West Darfur, attacks in El Geneina and Ardamata in West Darfur and Khartoum, and cases brought by individuals described as "political partners," Tayfour said in a press statement. A judge of Sudan's Terrorism and Crimes Against the State Court on March 23 ordered the appearance of the commander of the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), his brothers, and others in connection with the assassination of West Darfur Governor Khamis Abakar. The trial is scheduled to begin on April 20.

Abakar was killed on June 24, 2023, shortly after being detained by RSF fighters. A video circulated online purportedly showed the mutilation of his body. The killing occurred during a conflict in West Darfur that has claimed thousands of lives.

The Public Prosecution has accused political leaders who advocate for a peaceful resolution to the conflict, including former Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, of collaborating with the RSF. Tayfour also briefed Jabir on his recent visits within Sudan and abroad, including stops in Khartoum, Al-Jazira, Sennar, and White Nile states, where he assessed the presence of police stations and prosecution offices.

He stressed that administrative and criminal proceedings in the Public Prosecution were "proceeding apace" to prevent impunity, urging citizens to file complaints and provide testimony about violations they had experienced.

The Public Prosecution is committed to ensuring due process and fair trial standards, guaranteeing the rights of both victims and defendants, he added.

The Public Prosecution has faced accusations of using the justice system to suppress anti-war activists, some of whom have received lengthy prison sentences. At the same time, other cases carry potential death sentences. Individuals affected by alleged RSF crimes have filed thousands of cases with prosecution offices and an online platform.

Liberia

**Civil Society Urges President Boakai to Extend Expiring Executive Order for War Crimes Court Office - Office Head Warns President Will Be 'Shooting Himself' If He Declines (AllAfrica) By Anthony Stephens
March 27, 2025**

Civil society organizations working on transitional justice in Liberia have urged President Joseph Boakai to extend his executive order establishing the Office of War and Economic Crimes Courts which expires May 1.

Key mandates of the Office, including a roadmap for Liberia's transitional justice process and a bill for a war and economic crimes court, have yet to be finalized. Earlier this month Dr. Jallah Barbu, executive director of the Office, said a bill for the court will be ready "very soon."

At an event organized by the Liberia Massacre Survivors Association and the Female Lawyers Association of Liberia to forge a collaboration between civil society and the Office on Tuesday, Mr. Adama Dempster, a prominent human rights advocate, said the renewal was important for the country's transitional justice process.

Mr. Dempster said an international and national coalition was drafting a joint statement calling on the government to extend the executive order.

Other human rights leaders at the event included Mr. Molton Farley, a senior investigator with the Global Justice and Research Project, which has expertise in documenting war-related crimes in Liberia; Mr. Seidu Swaray, head of the Liberia Association of Psychosocial Services and Mr. Aaron Weah from the Ducor Institute. The meeting was one of several events civil society, under the banner of the Liberia Association of Civil Society Initiative for Transitional Justice, is holding on the process.

Mr. Dempster challenged his fellow advocates, "to raise the necessary conversation nationally, internationally and regionally for the success of all what we want to see."

"Liberia has come many years since we have not addressed war crimes. How can we convince the international community to support Liberia's war crimes process?" asked Mr. Dempster. "It's not only Dr. Barbu who will be saying it. The Office, in as much as it has its independence, looks up to civil society to remain a mouthpiece to advocate for the Office."

Dr. Barbu said he was upbeat about the renewal of the order.

"If it doesn't achieve its purpose and the person who issue it say, "I na issuing nothing again, da me he shooting? Da himself," said Dr. Barbu in Liberian English, amid laughter from the audience. President Boakai was hailed as a champion of accountability by setting up the Office, a decision none of his predecessors were willing to take.

Experts said ensuring the courts were fully operational during his administration, which ends in 2030, it would be a landmark legacy for Mr. Boakai.

Calls for the renewal of the president's executive order come at a crucial time for the Office as the United States which had been expected to provide the bulk of the more than \$US10m needed for the court, cut almost all international aid.

Dr. Barbu, who has only been in the role since November, has had a number of meetings with other international donors in which he said "additional promises and commitments" were made.

The Swedish government is the only donor to publicly disclose that it has provided funding for support of the Office, in its case, through the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

As civil society and Dr. Barbu push for the extension of the mandate of the Office, unanswered questions have continued to linger over the expenditure of \$US132,000 that was allegedly spent by the Office under the leadership of its first head, Cllr. Jonathan Massaquoi, who has repeatedly ignored requests for comments on the matter. Dr. Barbu, who himself raised concerns among donors in January when he predicted the Office budget would need to be \$130,000 a month, has reined that in telling NN/FPA that "a portion of that money (\$368,000 from the government's 2024 budget) is still available because, we are spending it judiciously. We want to ensure that we have value for money and that's what we are doing up to this point."

The 2025 Boakai budget had a reduced budget of \$300,000 allocated for the Office. Dr. Barbu said he hoped the government would increase that.

Mr. Dempster said civil society had a big role to play in the push for support for the court from international donors. He said they should rally behind the Office.

"We are the voice that has advocated before all of what is happening today, is happening," said Mr. Dempster.

Meanwhile, Dr. Barbu's office received a boost on Tuesday when the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC), the parent body of all Christians in Liberia, signed a Memorandum of Understanding "to collaborate in achieving the Office's mandate."

"The LCC will support processes leading to the establishment and operationalization of the War and Economic Crimes Courts and the National Anti-Corruption Courts through coordinated efforts of assessment, advocacy, and awareness for OWECC-L's programs and activities," the release said. "The LCC will also educate the public about the OWECC-L's mandate, promoting awareness of Human Rights related issues, and at the same time encourage citizens' participation."

Since the end of Liberia's civil wars more than 21 years ago, the LCC has been a lead advocate for the courts and the full implementation of recommendations of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission released in 2009.

Uganda

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

**Convicted war criminal Lubanga announces new rebel group in east Congo (Reuters) By
Sonia Rolley
March 31, 2025**

A convicted war criminal based in Uganda has announced a new rebel movement intent on toppling the government in eastern Congo's Ituri province, creating another potential security threat in the war-scarred region.

The formation of the Convention for the Popular Revolution (CPR) by Thomas Lubanga, an Ituri native, comes as Congo's army faces an unprecedented advance by Rwandan-backed M23 rebels elsewhere in eastern Congo.

The International Criminal Court secured its first conviction against Lubanga in 2012 on charges

of recruiting child soldiers and sentenced him to 14 years in prison.

He was released in 2020 and President Felix Tshisekedi appointed him to a task force to bring peace to Ituri. But in 2022 he was taken hostage for two months by a rebel group, which he blames on the government, and is now based in Uganda.

In written responses to questions from Reuters, Lubanga said the CPR had both political and military elements, including armed men in three areas of Ituri.

Bringing peace to the area "requires an immediate change in governance and government," he said, though he added that the group has not launched military operations.

It is unclear how many combatants Lubanga might control. U.N. experts last year accused him of mobilising fighters to support a local militia and M23.

Congo's presidency did not respond to a request for comment on Monday.

Ituri has been rocked by violence by various armed groups for decades. Doctors Without Borders last week described "a renewed spike in atrocities" that had killed more than 200 civilians and displaced around 100,000 people since the beginning of the year.

Ugandan troops are present in Ituri to help the government fight the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which is affiliated with the Islamic State and stages brutal attacks on villages.

Kenya

ICC Public Documents - Situation in the Republic of Kenya

UN chief strongly condemns killing of Kenyan peacekeeper in Central African Republic (UN News) March 29, 2025

A statement from the UN Spokesperson's Office on behalf of António Guterres said the peacekeeper had been killed on Friday by so-far unknown assailants when his unit was on a long-range patrol near the village of Tabane in the Haut-Mbomou prefecture, in the southeast of the country.

"The Secretary-General expresses his deepest condolences to the family of the fallen peacekeeper and to the Government and the people of Kenya," the statement continued.

Possible war crime

"The Secretary-General recalls that attacks targeting United Nations peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law. He calls on the Central African authorities to spare no effort in identifying the perpetrators of this tragedy so that they can be brought to justice swiftly."

The Central African Republic, or CAR, has been in a state of internal conflict along sectarian lines since 2012 when predominantly Muslim militia began battling mostly Christian anti-Balaka militia, resulting in thousands of deaths and leaving many more dependent on aid.

In 2013, armed groups seized the capital forcing President François Bozizé to flee. After a brief period of reduced violence in 2015, and elections held in 2016, fighting intensified.

Peace talks got underway in early 2019 under the auspices of the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation in CAR, led by the African Union (AU) with UN support. A deal was agreed in Khartoum and formally signed in CAR's capital, Bangui.

'Heinous attack'

The head of the MINUSCA, Valentine Rugwabiza, said in a statement she was "extremely shocked by this heinous attack on peacekeepers whose mission is to protect civilians."

A rapid intervention team has been deployed to the site of the incident to secure the area, she added.

The MINUSCA chief – who also serves as UN Special Representative in the country – called on authorities in CAR "to spare no effort in identifying the perpetrators of this attack so that they can be brought to justice swiftly."

She said cowardly attacks would not diminish peacekeepers' determination to carry out their mandate "in service of peace and stability".

Security Council condemnation

The UN Security Council issued a statement on Sunday condemning the attack in CAR, reiterating that attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes, and reminding all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Ambassadors called on the Government to "swiftly investigate this attack with the support of MINUSCA, promote accountability for such acts by bringing perpetrators to justice, and keep the relevant troop-contributing country informed of the progress consistent with Security Council resolutions 2518 (2020) and 2589 (2021).

Council members stressed any involvement in planning, directing, sponsoring or conducting attacks against peacekeepers constitutes a basis for possible sanctions.

"The members of the Security Council expressed particular concern about reports of illicit transnational trafficking networks which continue to fund and supply armed groups in the Central African Republic. They stressed the need to further investigate and combat this threat."

Ambassadors reiterated their strong support for Special Representative Rugwabiza and for MINUSCA, to assist the Government and people of CAR in their efforts to bring lasting peace and stability.

EUROPE

Russia

Russian court convicts 23 Ukrainian captives on terror charges (Central Fife Times)
March 26, 2025

Russia has convicted 23 captured Ukrainians on terrorism charges stemming from the war in

Ukraine in a military court trial that Kyiv denounced as a sham and a violation of international law.

The defendants included current or former fighters with the elite Azov brigade, which Russia designated a terrorist group, and those who worked there as cooks or support personnel, according to Russian media reports and rights activists.

Memorial, a prominent Russian human rights group, designated the defendants as political prisoners. It said some of them were captured in 2022 during fighting in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol, where they held out at the Azovstal steel mill under siege by Russian troops.

Others were detained as they tried to leave the city after it was overrun by Russian forces, the group said.

Only 12 defendants were in court on Wednesday in the city of Rostov-on-Don, while 11 others, including nine women, have returned to Ukraine in prisoner exchanges and were convicted in absentia.

One other defendant died in custody last year and the case against him was closed.

All had been charged with staging a violent coup and organising the activities of a terrorist organisation. Some faced an additional charge of training to carry out terrorist activities.

Those convicted were given prison sentences ranging from 13 to 23 years.

The 12 men still in Russian custody will serve their time in maximum security penal colonies, according to the court. Russian independent news site Mediazona said all 12 plan to appeal against the verdict.

Memorial said “none of the defendants in the case are accused of any war crimes: they are all being tried for the very fact of serving” in Azov at one time or another.

Ukraine’s human rights envoy Dmytro Lubinets denounced the proceedings when they began in June 2023 as “another sham trial” held for Russia’s “own amusement”.

“Russia and fair justice have nothing in common. The world must respond to such shameful sham trials of Ukrainian defenders,” he said at the time.

“It is obvious to everyone that those who should be in the dock are not those defending themselves but those who initiated the aggression, those who invaded foreign land with weapons, and those who arrived with tanks on the territory of an independent state.”

The same month, Ukraine’s presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said the trial of combatants amounted to “an official war crime” warranting a response from the International Criminal Court.

Petro Yatsenko, a representative of the Ukrainian Co-ordination Centre for the Treatment of PoWs, echoed his sentiment in remarks quoted by the Hromadske news outlet, saying the proceedings violated the Geneva Conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war.

Rostov-on-Don is home to Russia’s Southern Military District, about 60 miles east of the Ukrainian border.

Mediazona reported that the defendants told the court of of abuse behind bars, saying they were severely beaten and had bones broken, were interrogated with bags over their heads, were given

food laced with household chemicals, and were forced to stand all day long and sing the Russian anthem.

These allegations are in line with reports by Russian and international human rights groups that detail systematic abuse of Ukrainian POWs and civilian captives in Russian custody.

TOPICS

Gender-Based Violence

UN Commission on Ukraine accuses Russia of enforced disappearances, sexual assault against men and women, torture, and executing POWs (The Insider)

March 20, 2025

On March 19, Erik Møse, Chair of the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, presented a report on crimes committed by the Russian military during its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The commission interviewed almost 1,800 individuals, including victims and witnesses of the violations and crimes described.

Among its key findings was the conclusion that the armed conflict has resulted in over 12,000 civilian deaths and more than 29,000 injuries among civilians in Ukraine. The report also noted that Russian forces have also detained large numbers of civilians in all occupied regions of Ukraine, targeting local officials, civil servants, journalists, and others perceived as threats to their military objectives. Many prisoners of war were also subjected to enforced disappearances.

"These crimes were carried out as part of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population, in all provinces of Ukraine where areas came under Russian control, and in the Russian Federation," Møse explained.

"The victims were often transferred to detention facilities in Russian-occupied areas in Ukraine or deported to the Russian Federation. In these detention facilities, they were subjected to other grave violations and crimes, including torture and sexual violence. Many persons have been missing for months, or years. Some have died. The fate and whereabouts of many remain unknown, leaving their families in agonizing uncertainty," he added in a press release issued after the presentation to the UNHRC.

The commission concluded that the "enforced disappearances against civilians were perpetrated pursuant to a coordinated state policy and amount to crimes against humanity."

FSB officers regularly used torture or ordered its use. "Personnel of the Federal Security Service exercised the highest authority when present in detention facilities. They committed or ordered torture during various stages of detentions, and in particular during interrogations, when some of the most brutal treatment was inflicted," explained Vrinda Grover, another member of the commission.

Russian authorities systematically committed sexual violence as a form of torture against

detainees. The majority of victims were men — but the commission has now documented new cases of rape and sexual violence, used as forms of torture against female detainees, who were subjected to humiliating and degrading treatment. “Some women were raped during interrogation as a means to coerce, intimidate or punish them; others were subjected to forced nudity in the presence of male guards. This illustrates the gendered dimension of sexual violence in detention,” Møse continued. “A victim of rape told the Commission, ‘I can’t describe all of it... Those drunk, stinking men, tearing my clothes, treating me like I was a rubber doll... It was unbearable.’”

“A civilian woman who had been raped during confinement in a detention facility held by Russian authorities, stated that she pleaded with the perpetrators, telling them she could be their mother’s age, but they dismissed her, saying, ‘B*tch, don’t even compare yourself to my mother. You are not even a human. You do not deserve to live.’”

We have concluded that Russian authorities committed the war crimes of rape and sexual violence as a form of torture,” Grover concluded.

The commission also investigated the growing number of incidents involving the killing or wounding by Russian forces of Ukrainian soldiers who had been captured or were attempting to surrender — a war crime. Some soldiers reported hearing orders not to take prisoners, but to kill them instead. For instance, a Russian deserter who spoke to the commission recounted hearing a battalion commander say: “We don’t take prisoners. Those Nazis should not be taken in captivity, they should be killed.”

The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine is a United Nations-mandated body established by the UN Human Rights Council in March 2022 — shortly after the start of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

It is tasked with gathering evidence on crimes committed in Ukraine, identifying responsible parties, and assessing whether these crimes amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide. Its findings can be used in legal proceedings and could serve as evidence for future war crimes trials — including at the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Aiding and Abetting

Nazi crime cases near end as few perpetrators remain (The Courier) By Stefan Heinemeyer
March 30, 2025

Almost 80 years since the end of World War II, the legal process of prosecuting Nazi war crimes is reaching its final stages, Germany's top Nazi war crimes prosecutor says.

"We are still finding suspects, but we are proceeding cautiously and have now reached the final stages of Nazi persecution," head of the German government office tasked with investigating Nazi-era crimes Thomas Will said.

In an interview with the Neue Osnabrucker Zeitung newspaper released on Sunday, Will said the youngest potential perpetrators were now 97 years old, having been 17 years old during the final year of the war in 1945.

The oldest individual convicted by the office was 101 when brought to trial, Will said, adding that with the suspects' advanced ages, the office's ability to continue investigations was now limited,

leaving only a few years to pursue leads.

While no new specific preliminary investigations are under way, Will said it was still possible new suspects could be found.

For each concentration camp, his office has data records on persons who have not yet been located.

"If we were to find them, we could potentially have dozens of further proceedings, though this is highly improbable at this stage," he said.

According to the newspaper, only one national-level indictment remains open.

The case involves a man accused of aiding and abetting murder in 3322 cases at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin.

While a court initially ruled him unfit to stand trial based on expert testimony, the Frankfurt Higher Regional Court rejected that decision and ordered further examinations.

A judiciary spokesman told the newspaper a final ruling was not expected soon.

WORTH READING

Assessing the Responsibilities of the International Criminal Court in the Investigation of War Crimes in Ukraine (SCIELO) By Serhii Ablamskyi, Denakpon L.R. Tchobo, Vitalii Romaniuk, Goran Simic and Nadiya Ilchyshyn
November 28, 2023

Ukrainian law enforcement agencies are working in cooperation with the International Criminal Court - ICC and countries that jointly support the ICC to collect evidence of Russia's atrocity crimes in order to hold the alleged perpetrators accountable. The collection of evidence in the situation of Ukraine ever turned into an unprecedented investigation of the likely international crimes committed by Russian armed forces in Ukraine. This study aims to determine the fundamental role and significance of the ICC in a collective investigation of the situation in Ukraine. Knowing that the definition of the term "war crimes" does not exist in the current legislation of Ukraine, this study attempts a correlative analysis of the term "war crimes" in the context of international law and finds that Ukrainian law enforcement agencies and institutions are capable of documenting war crimes committed in Ukraine by the Russian Federation. This suggests that the ICC, in comparison to its previous international investigations, definitively has a wide range of support resources to hold accountable "those most responsible" for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity, as emphasized in its prosecutorial policy documents.

Thank you. Extremely interesting .
Please continue having me in your mailing list.
Adolfo Salgueiro
Prof. of International Law (Retired)(now in exile in Miami)
Universidad Católica Andres Bello
Caracasa-V enezuela

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