

Serbia: Witness tells UN court he was forced to lie about Milosevic, Seselj

The Hague, 6 June (AKI) – A protected witness in the trial of Serbian ultranationalist Vojislav Seselj told the United Nations war crimes tribunal on Monday he was forced by the prosecution to give false testimony against Seselj and former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic.

The witness, a former policeman from northern Serbian city of Subotica, testified on Monday under pseudonym DS-1, despite the fact that he demanded to testify under his true name.

DS-1 told the court he had spent some time in the war in Bosnia and was later forced by the tribunal's prosecutors to testify against Milosevic or would be prosecuted himself for war crimes.

Milosevic was indicted by the tribunal for genocide and war crimes, but died in the Hague in a jail cell in March 2006.

Seselj has been accused for war crimes against Muslims and Croats in 1991-1995 war that followed the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. He surrendered to the tribunal in February 2003 and the trial was still going on.

He was sentenced to 15 months in jail for revealing names of protected witnesses in the main trial. He was indicted for contempt of court again this year for allegedly revealing the names of 11 protected witnesses.

Seselj claims that witnesses themselves revealed their identity before he did so and DS-1 confirmed it in the court. Asked by Seselj whether he agreed that his name be revealed in one of Seselj's books, the witness said: "I consented to the publishing in the book and on Internet."

DS-1 said he was threatened by the tribunal investigator Paolo Pastore he would be indicted if he didn't testify in the trial against Milosevic and Seselj. Before testifying against Milosevic, DS-1 said he had spent a year and a half in Netherlands where prosecutors prepared him on how to testify.

"It was a sad testimony," DS-1 said. "They trained me for one month what to say and the prosecutor would give me signal if I said something wrong," he said.

After testifying against Milosevic, DS-1 said he was transferred to Norway under false identity where he was given "an apartment, automobile, documents and a lot of money".

When he was called to testify against Seselj, DS-1 fled Norway and returned to Serbia, "leaving everything behind", he said.

"I had nothing to testify against you" the witness told Seselj. He will be cross-examined by the prosecution on Tuesday

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