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Srebrenica survivors to appeal UN ruling

AFP - Survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre will appeal a ruling next week preventing them from suing the UN for failing to protect the enclave, their lawyer said on Thursday.

"We find it unacceptable that the actions of an organisation like the United Nations cannot be independently assessed," lawyer Axel Hagedorn told AFP. The appeal is due next Thursday.

The Srebrenica massacre has been termed genocide by the International Court of Justice -- which handles disputes between nations -- and the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which was set up by the UN to try war crimes committed during the Balkans conflict.

The UN has admitted it failed to protect the Muslims of Srebrenica -- which was Europe's worst atrocity since World War II -- but none of its officials were held responsible.

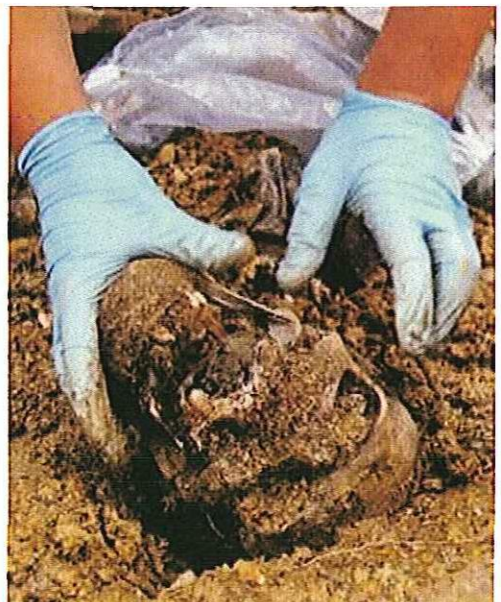
"Especially in a case like this one, that involves genocide, we believe a judge must be able to test whether the UN had acted correctly or not. The UN cannot be above the law," said Hagedorn.

The "Mothers of Srebrenica" group comprises 6,000 survivors, mostly women, and relatives of the 8,000 men and boys killed in the massacre by Bosnian Serb forces.

In July 2008, a Dutch district court ruled that the group could not sue the UN in the Netherlands on the ground



Bosnian Muslim women from Srebrenica hold up a carpet in Sarajevo with the names of their relatives who were killed by Bosnian Serb forces in 1995. Survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre will appeal a ruling next week preventing them from suing the UN for failing to protect the enclave.



A forensic expert inspects body remains at a mass grave on the outskirts of Srebrenica in 2008. Survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre will appeal a ruling next week

that "in international law practice the absolute immunity of the UN is the norm and is respected."

preventing them from suing the UN for failing to protect the Muslim enclave.

The survivors are seeking a trial of the UN and the Dutch state over peacekeeping troops' alleged failure to protect the enclave. They also want compensation.

Srebrenica was a UN-protected Muslim enclave until July 11, 1995, when it was overrun by Bosnian Serb forces who loaded thousands of men and boys onto trucks, executed them and threw their bodies into mass graves.

The Serbs brushed aside lightly-armed Dutch UN peacekeepers in the "safe area" where thousands of Muslims from surrounding villages had gathered for protection.

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