

International Criminal Court acquits former president Gbagbo of war crimes in Côte d'Ivoire

Former President of Côte d'Ivoire Laurent Gbagbo has been cleared of crimes against humanity in Côte d'Ivoire by the International Criminal Court ([ICC](#)), it announced on Tuesday.

The development relates to bloody clashes in the West African nation that claimed a reported 3,000 lives following the [2010 election](#) in which current President Alassane Ouattara defeated Mr. Gbagbo.

In June, the Court – which has more than 15 other cases that are either ongoing or yet to commence, including against Mr. Gbagbo's wife, Simone – overturned the war crimes conviction of Jean-Pierre Bemba, former vice-President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

In a statement, the ICC said that both Mr. Gbagbo and co-defendant Charles Blé Goudé had [been acquitted](#) “from all charges of crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010 and 2011”, relating to the alleged existence of a “common plan” to keep the former premier in power.

The crimes for which they were being tried included murder, rape and persecution.

The Hague-based court added that the order to release both men could be appealed by the prosecution in a new hearing on Thursday morning.

Ahead of a full statement explaining its decision, it noted that the Prosecutor had “failed to submit sufficient evidence” showing how both men had committed crimes against civilians, “pursuant to or in furtherance of a State or organizational policy”, nor the existence of “patterns of violence” indicative of a “policy to attack a civilian population”.

The ICC statement also explained that the Prosecutor had been unable to show that speeches by each man “constituted ordering, soliciting or inducing the alleged crimes...accordingly, there is no need for the defence to submit further evidence”.

The Trial Chamber's decision had been by majority, the ICC added, with Judges Cuno Tarfusser and Geoffrey Henderson in support of the acquittal, and Judge Herrera Carbuccion against.

The court noted that since the trial began in January 2016, some 231 days had been spent hearing the Prosecutor's evidence and 82 witnesses testified in court and through video link, while thousands of documents had been submitted into evidence, along with “hundreds of motions, requests and decisions”.

After the prosecution's case was declared closed in June last year, both defendants filed motions for their immediate release, which were heard in October and November 2018.

The ICC was established by the Rome Statute of 1998 to prosecute the worst crimes against humanity, including genocide and war crimes.

The United Nations first acknowledged the need to establish such a court based on international cooperation in December 1948, with General Assembly resolution 260, which adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

After the International Law Commission was invited to study the "desirability and possibility" of setting up the court, a draft statute was drawn up in 1951, but not completed until 1998.

At this point, the General Assembly convened the UN Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, which was held in Rome, Italy, from 15 June to 17 July 1998, "to finalize and adopt a convention on the establishment of an international criminal court".