

PRESS RELEASE

HISSENE HABRE TRIAL – CRIMINAL PHASE TO END IN FEBRUARY

The trial of former Chadian President, Hissène Habré, resumes today, February 8th, 2016, in Dakar, Senegal. The lawyers from both sides will be making their final oral arguments in a week expected to see proceedings come to a close before a verdict is given in May 2016.

The Habré trial reached a major milestone on December 15th, 2015, the day the last witness testified before the Extraordinary African Chambers (EAC) in Dakar, Senegal. The EAC was set up under an [agreement between the Government of Senegal and the African Union](#) with a mandate to try serious crimes allegedly committed in Chad between 1982 and 1990.

The trial opened officially on 20 July 2015 but was immediately suspended for 45 days after the defense counsels refused to appear before the Court. The Presiding Judge subsequently issued a ruling to assign court-appointed lawyers to the defendant.

From 7 September through 15 December 2015, [Justice Gustave Kam](#) and two other Senegalese judges attended 55 hearings to audition 92 witnesses, victims and experts. All of these hearings were summarized in [comprehensive reports](#) by [Senegalese law graduates](#) with the support of [TrustAfrica](#). For a period of 4 months the defense counsels, victims' lawyers and the EAC's Chief Prosecutor and judges thoroughly examined the charges ([war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of torture](#)) against Habré.

The alleged victims' initial testimonies in the first month of hearings shed light on [the social and political context](#) of the Habré regime. But the main highlights in September were [the forced appearance of the accused](#) and the [disturbances](#) orchestrated by his supporters.

The trial entered a new phase in October when the judges began to closely examine evidence on alleged repression against some tribes, including [the Hadjarai community](#), and the reports by a team of Argentine experts on [results of excavations](#) from the mass grave sites in Deli, Koumra and Gadjira. The court also heard testimonies from a [group of four women](#) who had suffered sexual abuse at a detention camp in Northern Chad.

The hearings in November focused on [the repression against Southerners](#) and political opponents, and on atrocities against [foreigners](#). On these occasions, the judges gleaned key evidence on the disappearance of some high-profile politicians like [Hassan Djamouss](#) and [Idriss Miskine](#).



In December, the final hearings were on war crimes and included atrocities against war prisoners, and the testimony of the sole survivor of the Ambing massacre, reported to have taken place in 1983.

After the lawyers from both sides complete the concluding arguments they have started submitting today, February 8th, 2016, this first phase of the trial will be brought to a close, pending a verdict in May 2016. Will this be the end, or will there be another phase to address the issue of reparations? The question remains open.

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