

PRESS RELEASE

HISSENE HABRE TRIAL – CRIMINAL PHASE SET TO END IN FEBRUARY

The trial of former President Hissène Habré reached a major milestone on 15 December 2015 with the deposition of the last witness testifying before the Extraordinary African Chambers (EAC) in Dakar, Senegal. The EAC, established by an [agreement between the Government of Senegal and the African Union](#), is mandated to try serious crimes allegedly committed between 1982 and 1990 in Chad.

The trial officially opened on 20 July 2015 but was immediately suspended for 45 days following the defense counsels' refusal to appear before the Court and subsequent nomination by the Presiding Judge of court-appointed lawyers for the defendant.

From 7 September through 15 December 2015, [Justice Gustave Kam](#) assisted by two judges from the Senegalese bench heard 92 witnesses, victims and experts for a total of 55 hearings. All of these hearings were summarized in [comprehensive reports](#) by [Senegalese law graduates](#) with the support of [TrustAfrica](#). Over 4 months of hearings, defense counsels, victims' lawyers, the Court's Chief Prosecutor and judges thoroughly examined the charges for which Hissène Habré is being prosecuted (i.e. [war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of torture](#)).

The first month of hearings shed light on [the social and political context](#) of the Habré regime and offered the opportunity to gather initial testimonies from alleged victims. Hearings held in September were also marked by [the forced appearance of the accused](#) and by the [disturbance](#) caused by a loyalist of the former President.

In October, the trial entered a new phase with judges examining evidence of the alleged repression perpetrated against ethnic groups, including [the Hadjarai community](#), and the [results of excavations](#) at mass grave sites in Deli, Koumra, and Gadjira by a team of Argentinian experts. The chamber also heard testimonies from a [group of four women](#) who were taken to a detention center in Northern Chad and suffered sexual abuses.

Most of the hearings held in November focused on [the repression against people from the South](#) and political opponents as well as atrocities perpetrated against [foreigners](#). In the process, the judges were able to unravel part of the mystery surrounding the disappearance of a number of political figures, including [Hassan Djamouss](#) and [Idriss Miskine](#).



Final hearings held in December ended with accounts of war crimes, including atrocities against prisoners of war, and testimonies from the sole survivor of the alleged massacre of Ambing in 1983.

After written conclusions are submitted by all parties by 18 January 2016, the first chapter of the Habré trial will close with oral arguments from both defense and civil party counsels and final submissions from the Prosecutor starting on 8 February 2016. A verdict is expected in May 2016 and the prosecutor and the defense will have 15 days to file an appeal. Once the criminal phase ends, the question on everyone's mind is going to be: ***will the next phase address reparations?***

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