

PRESS RELEASE

Yvonne Basebya acquitted for the most part in first genocide trial

Amsterdam, 5 March 2013 - On 1 March 2013 the Regional Court of The Hague acquitted Yvonne Basebya of genocide, attempted genocide, conspiracy to commit genocide, murder and war crimes. She was convicted of incitement to commit genocide and sentenced to the maximum sentence of 6 years and 8 months of imprisonment.

Yvonne Basebya was prosecuted for alleged meetings in and near her house and a number of murders in the district of Gikondo, where she lived. Even though defence counsel was pleased to hear the court pronounce the acquittals, they deem the conviction for incitement a tragic mistake. The court failed to attach due importance to the large number of witness statements in Yvonne Basebya's favour, such as the neighbours and Tutsi friends who never saw Yvonne Basebya at meetings where anti Tutsi propaganda was being disseminated. Furthermore, the court to a large extent disregarded defence counsel's plea that the witnesses who testified against Yvonne Basebya lacked credibility: the court erred in particular by allowing into evidence a number of local inhabitants who have a financial interest in her conviction.

Moreover, the court erroneously attached grave importance at sentencing to Yvonne Basebya's alleged lack of remorse. Given that she at all times maintained her innocence, she could, of course, not show remorse for the facts she was being accused of. This is not to say that she did not express her most sincere sympathy to the victims of the genocide; she did so on several occasions, amongst others during her own final statements at trial.

Defence counsel await the appeal with confidence.

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