# All three Hague tribunals reject Jeremic's invitation, says Meron

All three Hague war crimes tribunals have turned down the invitation to attend a discussion on their work convened for April 10 in New York by UN General Assembly President Vuk Jeremic, the president of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Theodor Meron, has said.

Not only the ICTY but all three war crimes tribunals turned down Jeremic's invitation, Meron said at a panel on the role of the Hague tribunals in the protection of human rights held at the Brookings Institution in Washington on Thursday.

Jeremic convened the discussion in response to certain rulings, which raises questions about the basic rules on respect for the rule of law, Meron said, adding that his participation would not make any important contribution to the condemnation of something he cared about very much.

US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues Stephen Rapp told Al Jazeera on the fringes of the panel he would not attend the discussion and that, as far as he knew, the US would present a statement together with several other countries in support of international justice and the importance of fair trials.

Rapp warned about attempts to ascribe to international war crimes tribunals bias at the expense of a people or collective.

Terms under which entire peoples, ethnic groups or political movements are responsible for a crime should never be included at war crimes tribunals, he said, stressing that in prosecuting war crimes it was always about individualising guilt.

In war crimes it is about individual responsibility and those individuals should be held to account under the law and based on evidence, and if someone is convicted, it is a signal to the rest of the community that it is not about the community but about the individual, said Rapp.

He said the two panels convened after the General Assembly session were composed so as to be entirely unilateral in criticising the work of international war crimes tribunals. He said Jeremic should have invited both supporters and opponents of the Hague tribunals.

Asked by the press whether the date of the session, April 10, was appropriate given that on that day in 1941 the Nazi-styled Independent State of Croatia (1941-45) was declared, Rapp said Jeremic's choice of that date was cause for concern.

The horrors of World War Two, the Ustasha government in Croatia against which we fought until all were defeated... Those involved in the persecution of Serbs, Jews and others at that time are not people we should remember that day. Every day on the calendar has some implication, but we think Jeremic could have chosen a better day. We don't want what happened recently to be linked with those events from World War Two, said Rapp.

# <http://dalje.com/en-world/all-three-hague-tribunals-reject-jeremics-invitation-says-meron/462452>