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UN prosecution appeals Haradinaj's acquittal

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The United Nations war crimes prosecutor has appealed on Friday against last month's acquittal of former Kosovo premier and guerrilla chief Ramush Haradinaj on a serious of war crimes charges, murder, rape and illegal detention, UN prosecution said.

The newly-appointed chief prosecutor, Belgian judge Serge Brammertz has filed an official complaint on Friday.

Haradinaj's acquittal raised a storm of criticism in Belgrade, but also among legal experts on the West, who argued that former rebel leader pushed the justice a step too far with continuous threats to prosecution witnesses, nine of which were killed.

At the end of the trial, the prosecution asked for a 25-year imprisonment for Haradinaj, but judges ruled that although his wing of Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) committed wartime atrocities, the prosecution failed to prove that he was part of a "joint criminal enterprise" directing atrocities or that the killings were broad enough to constitute crimes against humanity.

Brammertz who took over the Hague's prosecution at the end of trial, faced a stiff international pressure to continue legal proceedings against Haradinaj, as Western diplomats warned that acquittal could place a final nail into the coffin of Belgrade's already shaky cooperation with UN war crimes court.

But, the trial marked by fishy developments outside the courthouse, with a number of witness refusing to testify, and additional nine potential eyewitness killed in murky incidents during the investigation and trial. Thirty four out of 81 witnesses had to receive special protection.

Serbia bitterly condemned the acquittal, with outgoing Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica describing it as "mockery of justice" and President Boris Tadic calling for an appeal.

In addition to the appeal, the Hague Tribunal charged a former Kosovo minister Astrit Haraqija and former newspaper editor Bajrush Morina with a contempt of court for allegedly trying to intimidate a witness in a war crimes trial.