

I come before this Tribunal with a deep sense of shame and remorse. I have allowed myself to take part in the worst kind of persecution of people simply because they were Croats and not Serbs. Innocent people were persecuted; innocent people were evicted forcibly from their houses; and innocent people were killed. Even after I learned what had happened, I kept silent. Even worse, I continued in my office, and I became personally responsible for the inhumane treatment of innocent people.

The regret that I feel is the pain that I have to live with for the rest of my life. These crimes and my participation therein can never be justified. I'm speechless when I have to express the depth of my remorse for what I have done and for the effect that my sins have had on the others. I can only hope that by expressing the truth, by admitting to my guilt, and expressing the remorse can serve as an example to those who still mistakenly believe that such inhumane acts can ever be justified.

Only truth can give the opportunity for the Serbian people to relieve itself of its collective burden of guilt. Only an admission of guilt on my part makes it possible for me to take responsibility for all the wrongs that I have done. I hope that the remorse that I expressed will make it easier for the others to bear their pain and suffering. I have come to understand that enmity and division can never make it easier for us to live. I have come to understand that our -- the fact that we all belong to the same human race is more important than any differences, and I have come to understand that only through friendship and confidence we can live together in peace and friendship, and thus make it possible for our children to live in a better world.

I have asked help from God to make it easier for me to repent, and I am thankful to God for making it possible for me to express my repentance. I ask from my brothers, Croats, to forgive us, their brother Serbs, and I pray for the Serb people to turn to the future and to achieve the kind of compassion that will make it possible to forgive the crimes.

And lastly, I place myself at the full disposal of this Tribunal and international justice. Thank you very much." (Milan Babić, further initial appearance, 27 January 2004)

"Your Honours, I can't say anything else but that I'm very sorry for what I did. I've appeared before this Tribunal and I've told the truth, and I believe that this will help to achieve reconciliation among the peoples in the Balkans. I have placed myself at the disposal of this Tribunal believing that this is the only institution that can bring peace to my homeland. I know that some people consider me a traitor; however, I believe that by appearing before this Tribunal I serve the best interests of all the people to arrive at the truth. I invite all the others who are aware of the facts of what happened to appear before this Tribunal and tell the truth. The historical truth has to be recorded so that the future generations may learn from our mistakes. Thank you.