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ICJ: Ex-Chad leader Habré's victims' long wait for justice

Senegal must abide by today's decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and prosecute the former president of Chad Hissène Habré on charges relating to large-scale human rights abuses during his time in power, Amnesty International said.

"This is a victory for victims that's long overdue, and now it's high time the courts in Senegal delivered justice. They must immediately comply with this ruling," said Michael Bochenek Amnesty International's Law and Policy Programme Director.

"The latest judgment of the International Court of Justice brings hope to the many who have been waiting more than a decade for Senegal to take action."

Habré was overthrown on 1 December 1990 after a brutal rule that spanned more than eight years from June 1982.

He has been living in Dakar since being granted political asylum by Senegal soon after his ouster.

On 3 February 2000, the Dakar Regional Court indicted the former Chadian leader for "crimes against humanity, acts of torture and barbarity," but a Court of Appeal later ruled that they did not have jurisdiction to try acts of torture committed by a foreigner outside of its territory.

Today's judgement by the ICJ by a majority of 14 to 2 found that Senegal must "without further delay, submit the case of Mr Hissène Habré to its competent authorities for the purpose of prosecution, if it does not extradite him".

An extradition request from Belgium has been pending since 2005.

However, the ICJ failed to rule on other aspects of the case including whether the obligation to extradite or prosecute existed under customary international law.

In its judgment, it also failed to consider the matter of universal jurisdiction for crimes against humanity, missing out on a unique opportunity to further develop international law in relation to these most serious of crimes.