

Special Achievement Award - The Office of the Federal Prosecutor of Belgium

The Office of the Federal Prosecutor of Belgium is awarded a Special Achievement Award for its successful genocide prosecution under Belgium's universal jurisdiction law. The team, Federal Chief Prosecutor Frédéric Van Leeuw, Deputy Federal Prosecutor Philippe Meire, and Federal Magistrate Arnault d'Oultremont, achieved success in the case against Fabien Neretse, a former high-ranking Rwandan civil servant. He was found guilty of genocide and war crimes against both Tutsis and moderate Hutus, and was sentenced to 25 years of imprisonment.

The events prosecuted took place during the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and the team reached a successful outcome in 2019 as we mark the 25th anniversary of the genocide.

The team's work highlights the importance of international cooperation, and the stand that all prosecutors must take against crimes against humanity. Neretse was investigated both in France and in Belgium, and the countries collaborated in order to allow the Belgian prosecution to take place, despite his arrest in France, since Belgium's investigation was further advanced.

War crime cases are notoriously difficult to prosecute, because of the age of the evidence, and the fragile state of the witnesses to the atrocities.

While this was a first for Belgium, other cases are expected to be tried, and investigations are underway in respect of other atrocities committed in Rwanda. The IAP congratulates the team for persevering through this landmark prosecution.