



TRIAL OF ANWAR RASLAN

Higher Regional Court – Koblenz, Germany
Trial Monitoring Report 56
Hearing Date: December 15, 2021

CAUTION: Some testimony includes descriptions of torture.

Summaries/Highlights:¹

Day 108 – December 15, 2021

This was the last day for closing statements from Plaintiffs and Plaintiffs Counsel. Like others before them, three Plaintiffs emphasized the importance of victim participation in universal jurisdiction trials. Each of their Counsel then joined the Prosecutors' demand for a life sentence with particular severity of guilt for Anwar Raslan [meaning that Raslan is not eligible for parole after fifteen years imprisonment]. All speakers directly addressed Anwar Raslan, requesting him to break his silence at the next trial day in January and to provide information about the fate of missing.

Trial Day 108 – December 15, 2021

The proceedings began at 9:32AM with seven spectators and two journalists in the audience. Two cameramen took videos and photos before the start of the session. The prosecution was represented by Prosecutors Klinge and Polz. Plaintiffs P1 and P50 sat next to their respective Counsel. Plaintiffs Counsel Kroker and Bahns were not present.

Presiding Judge Kerber left the floor to the plaintiffs to deliver their closing statements.

Closing Statement by P1

P1 started his closing statement by quoting Dante's *Divine Comedy*, saying "[a]bandon hope all ye who enter here." P1 also quoted George Orwell, saying "[n]ever, for any reason on Earth, could you wish for an increase of pain. Of pain you could only wish for one thing: that it should stop. Nothing in the world was so bad as physical pain. In the face of pain and its consequences there are no heroes."

P1 went on to explain that "[t]he one who enters this place is lost, and the one who gets released is newborn" is a saying created by the Syrian Intelligence Services and repeated by Syrian society in private and public. It turned into a long, never-ending nightmare. According to P1, this was exactly what one was supposed to [experience upon] entering the detention facilities. It was also a way to feel your body in places that are designed to destroy one's body.

After greeting the Judges and parties to the trial, P1 said that his psychotherapist, [REDACTED], who has extensive experience working with Holocaust survivors, told P1 about the impact and meaning of 'traumatic memories'. The psychotherapist told P1 the following story which, according to P1, helped him to recognize how important conversations are [in coping with these memories].

¹ Throughout this report, [information located in brackets are notes from our trial monitor] and "information placed in quotes are statements made by the witness, judges or counsel." Note that this report does not purport to be a transcript of the trial; it is merely an unofficial summary of the proceedings. The names of witnesses have been redacted.



His psychotherapist told P1 that when the allied forces were close to Berlin, the SS guards forced the survivors in the concentration camp to march "with their emaciated bodies" to then take them somewhere else. Many of them died or were executed because they were unable to continue walking. They eventually reached a forest between Berlin and Brandenburg where they were left alone in the cold, [in a state of] weakness. After a while, the survivors were forced to eat tree trunks to survive, but they did not forget to engrave their memories in these trunks. The trees continued to grow steadfast and preserved the memory of the survivors engraved on their trunks. P1 said these trees are still standing today and the victims will be remembered as long as the trees are standing.

P1 continued by saying that he is standing in front of the Court today, facing an existential dilemma because he survived, but he keeps asking himself "why exactly did I survive? What happened and is happening to our colleagues who we left behind? What can we do to save them?" P1 said he knows that "we" are powerless to do anything more than continue to tell what "we have experienced and not remain silent at all costs." P1 described that at Branches "of the evil," that have countless ways to harm someone, there are still more than 142,062 people waiting for their loved ones who have been abducted or captured. Amongst others, they are held at Al-Khatib Branch and other Intelligence Branches simply due to their participation in the democratic movement, or because they exercised their right to freedom of expression and voiced their opinion. According to P1, one's existence is denied as soon as one enters such a place [Intelligence Branch]. First, the existence of one person, then the existence of an entire group, and eventually the existence of an entire society is denied. This is how society loses its identity, said P1. An entire society is living, searching for its identity that was lost with the loss of the knowledge about the fate of its loved ones and the loss of being able to achieve justice.

What is terrifying, said P1, is that the crime of enforced disappearance and torture was an essential tool to demonstrate the absolute and imbalanced power of the regime. It was commonly used by all Intelligence Branches. According to P1, it is the core of the regime's existence. The regime who is proud in front of the entire world because of how it spreads horror and terror to take control of the lives of Syrian people every day, even after they have survived [these horrors].

P1 said he was one of those who were forcibly disappeared by the regime during his two detentions. During his first arrest, P1 was suddenly abducted from an internet cafe without saying goodbye to his beloved and friends. P1 said he was on Facebook talking with friends about their basic rights and democracy, freedom, and the start of the Syrian revolution. During his second arrest, P1 was abducted from Damascus Airport because he decided to take his camera and went to the streets, determined to document what was going on. When he was exposed, P1 decided to flee, thinking that he could smuggle and save what he had documented. Unfortunately, the documents did not survive, but his body survived and so did the story along with it, said P1.

P1 addressed the Court, asking people to "imagine saying goodbye to one of your family members, and the other part of the family is waiting for you on the other side of the airport, and suddenly you disappear just like that." P1 said one's family would not know if the person actually started his travels, stayed, or decided to leave this world. According to P1, in such a case, one's family would keep asking themselves questions like "what happened when and where?" and continue waiting and searching for their loved one. This is how the regime uses time and waiting to torture people and prevent progress even when people are outside [the regime's] prisons, even when they are in places of refuge.

P1 quoted Samuel Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot', saying "let's go!" followed by "we can't." He asked "why not?" and replied "we're waiting". P1 said this is what his family had to live through for months, and what the families of many of the forcibly disappeared are still living through.



The dilemma is that abduction, enforced disappearance, and torture is still ongoing in Syria. P1 said he is certain that in every moment he spends in this Court, there is more than one Syrian family who has to endure what P1 and his family had to before. P1 added that the torture methods increased and were further developed over the past nine years. P1 said there are people being tortured at this very moment, hanging between life and death, whereas perpetrators are still in their position. This feeling “hits us in the core of our stomachs everyday” said P1. He described [the feeling] as ripping peoples’ hearts out.

According to P1, the impact of enforced disappearance is deeply traumatizing to Syrians as a society and individually, even when people survive. P1 addressed the Court, saying he was standing there on this cold day that reminded him of the weather in Damascus. P1 felt as if he was in Damascus. Especially undergrounds it gets cold, said P1. Undergrounds, where the cold in the detention facilities was very hard on the detainees. P1 described the situation in the detention facilities where he and others were half-naked, psychologically broken, and closer to death than life, deprived of food and water, shivering from the cold, and barely breathing or perceiving the world around them. P1 said he and hundreds of other detainees were forcibly deprived of the freedom to know the time in solitary cells and in community cells that were full of people who deserve to have a dignified life. P1 also described detainees being thrown in the corridors, covered with pieces of clothes torn due to brutal torture. Their families did not know anything about them. P1 said he and others were lost as if they were inside a black hole or a parallel world. P1 recalled that, back then in Damascus when he could hear the screams of torture day and night and when the terror had no end, he and the other detainees knew they were unable to do anything about it. The squeaking from opening and closing the cells’ doors which preludes torture or killing under torture, and the screams of torture and the sounds of the cables hitting the body, were a daily threat to detainees. P1 said this was the reason he thought about committing suicide when he heard the sound of the prison guards approaching the cell and before opening the cell door to take him to interrogation or a torture session.

P1 quoted German philosopher Schopenhauer who found that “if we are suffering from severe physical pain, or if the pain lasts for a long time, all we are thinking about is just finding a way to stop this feeling in any way or form, and that makes suicide easy.” P1 remembered that on a day similar to [the cold December days in Germany] he was asked during an interrogation whether he likes President Bashar Al-Asaad, knowing that he would be tortured regardless of his answer. The guards arbitrarily beat P1 with cables, their hands and feet, and he was hung from his wrists until he felt like his body was torn in the middle. P1 added that he still has this feeling nowadays, especially when falling asleep. P1 said he could not help himself and could barely breathe while he was tortured. While he was beaten, P1 also felt a hard object inside his anus. He felt he was at the end of his tether and felt severe abdominal pain. P1 said it was as if his head was split into two parts. He recalled that he did not know whether he was able to scream or not. A terrifying shudder and numbness ran through his body which he was unable feel, and he started sweating. Even nowadays when he sees a stick in someone's hand, P1 feels anxiety, stomach pain, suffocation, and his body starts to sweat.

P1 further described that after he was released from prison, he suffered from severe infections. But he was afraid to talk about the issue due to shame and potential dishonor. He felt that something inside him had been destroyed. A feeling of insecurity and mistrust led him to hate his own body. After he was released, P1 often thought about suicide. Even during the hot summer, it was cold inside him, and he felt taken back to this dark terrifying place where he was deprived of his freedom. P1 explained that he is unable to accept that he is living safely in Germany or America where he often travels for work. P1 said there are times when his sense of security and location disappears. That is when he cannot believe that he is living in safety now.



P1 said he then does not know if security is real or a temporary illusion that is going to disappear. He then also struggles to believe that he is where he is.

P1 said he sometimes hears a noise in his ear and loses his sense of time and space. He then finds himself in the middle of the street when the traffic light is red. It also happens that he is standing [in the same spot] for some time without noticing and the traffic light has changed several times. According to P1, these feelings were worse when he came to Germany, but once he started psychotherapy, his condition gradually improved. P1 said this, nonetheless, took away a lot of his abilities that he could have used to make art, films, or [used toward] his social life. P1's therapist told him [the trauma] would stay with him for the rest of his life but that at least there was a way to deal with it safely.

P1 said "the world does not believe what we have been through, what we had to experience because it is too horrific for people to imagine." According to P1, people learned to match society's perceptions and consider men as the guardians of the state. If "something like this happens," they have to stay silent because merely speaking about this is considered weakness, reducing one's value and respect and disqualifies one from being a normal human being. P1's therapist says society cannot accept these experiences because it does not want to hear since it cannot do anything about them. According to P1's therapist, society prefers such things not to happen, and for the image of a strong society to prevail, unbroken by its victims.

P1 described that on a cold day like this very day, he was told during an interrogation that no one would ever hear about him again and that the guard had all the authority to do whatever he wanted. P1 recalled that he was surrounded by the sounds of beatings, giggles, insults, torture, humiliation, people being proud to torture, and death threats. The goal was to force him to confess that he was making films on behalf of America and France. The mere thought of this prelude [threat that no one would ever hear about him again] was enough for him to be scared that the guards would soon execute and hang him at Al-Marjeh Square as a disciplinary measure and to set an example for society.

P1 recalled that Anwar Raslan himself said in his first plea that the reason for P1's detention was that he had relations to foreign countries. Anwar Raslan imbued the regime's beliefs and was convinced that what P1 did was a crime that deserved punishment. Being financed by the West for making films and making them in the first place was considered a crime, said P1. He said he was punished because he was making documentaries and because he was brave enough to document this story, including scenes that criticize the Syrian regime. P1 explained that there is one scene showing Syrian regime forces firing live ammunition at peaceful demonstrators, and another one showing the fall of the picture of the "dictator Bashar al-Assad" then people stepping on [the picture]. P1 remembered that a fellow detainee who was detained in the cell next to him, told P1 that P1 carried great guilt and was to be executed and should pray. However, P1 grew up as an atheist rejecting the existence of a god and only believing in truth, freedom and democracy. P1 did not find a way to believe in and pray to a god who watches torture, is silent about it, or even participates and enjoys it as the guards enjoy it. God does not exist [at the Intelligence Branches] said P1 and referred to Nietzsche's infamous "God is dead! God remains dead!" P1 concluded that the truth is that one only has one life and the Intelligence Services as "elements of torture" took it away from "us". P1 said "we have regained our strength to speak out and search for justice by all means."

P1 went on to describe that after he shared his experience in Court, he was the victim of a defamation campaign and hatred. P1 said there were public calls from supporters of Anwar Raslan and Eyad Al-Gharib. P1 claimed that a representative of theirs is sitting in Court right behind him.



P1 said the organization published false testimony of him on their website, and the person who published it claimed it was a verbatim record of P1's testimony. According to P1, it was published alongside his name and personal information. According to P1, the testimony was used to incite people to hate him. He was allegedly pressured to withdraw his testimony. P1 said there were also calls to kill him and prevent him from demanding his rights. P1 said people contacted him, his lawyer Anwar Al-Bunni, his co-workers, and his family to create recordings of calls and to preserve messages, or social media posts to instigate hatred against P1. "They" have also used Qatari and Turkish-backed platforms to spread false and misleading information about P1. As a result, his family received death threats, and people were sent to collect information about him to be used to defame and abuse him and his family. P1 said he was forced to relocate his family despite the cost and difficulties of finding a new home for them in northern Syria. P1 further told the Court that there is a Facebook page run by relatives of Anwar Raslan called "The Trial of Colonel Anwar Raslan in Germany" and "a page dedicated to the justice of Colonel Anwar Raslan, the respected son of Taldou". P1 said these are the platforms where the calls [against P1] started. According to P1, the page was still live until that very day. P1 said these platforms tried to use him as an example to intimidate witnesses and victims and discourage them from talking about their experiences and cause distrust in this trial and the usefulness of testifying and trying to turn victims into perpetrators and perpetrators into victims. P1 concluded it had a huge impact on him and his family and has caused him psychological and professional damage.

P1 went on to say that despite all this, he was again in Court for the second time. P1 said he very much likes to keep talking about his experience "because silence has more of an effect on us than talking." P1's therapist told him that acknowledging the damage caused to him does not give the perpetrators a moral victory. According to P1's therapist, it is silence that gives [the perpetrators] a sense of victory. P1 recalled that the same campaign he described above also asked for forgiveness for Anwar Raslan and Eyad Al-Gharib and turned them into victims, criticized prosecuting them because they were defectors, or because they were Sunnis, or because they belonged to tribal areas and regions that were targeted by the regime of Bashar Al-Assad. However, one must also acknowledge that Anwar Raslan was an integral part of the torture system of the Assad regime, said P1.

P1 said these calls, especially those directed against himself and other victims, did not have an impact on him. On the contrary, they motivated him to continue, and to believe that Anwar Raslan did not represent himself alone but is rather a defender of the beliefs of the torture regime that has existed for decades. According to P1, this represents the body and mind of the regime. For decades, the regime has been trying to deny and criminalize people in order to terrorize them and their families and prevent them from speaking. P1 recalled that throughout the trial sessions, Anwar Raslan took notes, tried to justify himself, and tried to undermine individual experiences, and by that, undermining the experiences of society as a whole. According to P1, the regime is not only a body that tortures and lets people disappear, but the regime is also an evil thinker and an experienced manipulator. P1 said the regime keeps taking advantage of peoples' experiences because the regime has a talent of unfolding the evil. These are the very experiences and talent that mutilated peoples' bodies, said P1. It is the education that Anwar Raslan talked about in his defense plea that is the reason people are "here" seeking refuge and trying to restore life in their bodies. P1 said Branch 251 is a place to violently indoctrinate people to love the regime of Bashar Al-Assad and to test the vilest methods on their bodies and the many possibilities for bringing death. If one gets out alive, the traces of these experiences remain on their bodies. This is just to see for how long people stay alive and keep fighting against it [regime and/or experiences].



P1 said he was not saved and is unable to fully recover from his experiences, but he keeps trying. P1 explained that back then, he did not care about the regime's revenge tactics nor the methods of its supporters trying to bring shame on him. Back then, P1 was an innocent student and a filmmaker at the beginning of his career. P1 had a dream. At that time, P1 was looking for a future and to escape conscription in the army of the regime because he did not want be part of it even for one day. P1 said he is certain that there are many advocates for and sympathizers of the perpetrators who are trying hard to find a way to disgrace the victims, palliating the perpetrators, and raising their profiles by demonizing the victims. P1 said he wants to quote Primo Levi, a chemist, writer and Holocaust survivor who said that "to confuse the executioners with their victims is a moral disease or an aesthetic affectation for the executioners or a sinister sign of complicity; above all, it is a precious service rendered (intentionally or not) to negate the truth of the experiences and their eligibility". P1 concluded that this service is indeed no less despicable than the crimes of the criminal himself.

P1 recalled that he started as a filmmaker before the beginning of the democratic revolution in Syria and continued throughout it. Making documentaries criticizing the regime has long been considered an unforgivable crime, and filmmakers like P1 have been criminalized for doing their job. The regime told people to hinder P1 and other filmmakers from doing their job and portrayed them as dangerous people who must be eliminated or humiliated. P1 recalled that this was also the reason for why the Syrian regime recently forced the father of one of the characters in the film "The Cave" to appear in the media, denying the content of the film. Buthayna Sha'ban, Bashar Al-Assad's political and media advisor, wrote an editorial entitled "The Most Dangerous War" in the most powerful Syrian newspaper of the Syrian regime and in another one affiliated with Hezbollah, accusing P1 of running an office in the West to fabricate news about events in Syria. P1 called this article a character assassination. Over the course of his work as a documentary filmmaker during the Syrian revolution, P1 created almost 2,500 hours of recordings that documented unspeakable horror, made films about it, and made films documenting the ongoing crimes committed against Syrians, including the use of sarin and other internationally prohibited gasses, the killing of civilians, the use of siege and starvation, and airstrikes targeting White Helmets volunteers, their work centers, and attacks on hospitals and marketplaces carried out by the regime and Russia. This has long been met with misguided campaigns by the regime and its allies, said P1. The discourses of denial and hate were part of the torture regime and a reason for its existence, and a reason to kill and isolate filmmakers, even though their films are documenting a struggle for democracy and human rights violations. P1 said he and other filmmakers are just individuals committed to speaking about things the authorities do not want to hear.

P1 said "above the ground and below it," he had to witness the evil that is still happening in Syria because the regime behind it is still in power. But P1 has also seen the good things survivors did, which gives people confidence that they will find justice somewhere on this earth.

P1 said he is also thinking of his lawyer [REDACTED], of his Kurdish friend [REDACTED], of his fellow documentary filmmakers who have been forcibly disappeared. He is thinking of the sounds of their screams, and of their smell that P1 will not forget until his death. He is thinking of their ghosts who visit him in his sleep and while he is awake. P1 said this gives his life a purpose and the strength to be in Court on this very day and talk about the experiences of those who continue to be in his memories. P1 said that nothing can restore the dignity of peoples' destroyed bodies, or of families seeking justice, except to reveal the fate of their loved ones and to consider the institutions that tortured and disappeared persons as criminal organizations terrorizing people around the world. P1 said these institutions continue to exist despite any moral rules. These places exist to break peoples' will as free individuals and undermine their individual rights. According to P1, these institutions seek to create copies of the regime. People are not even allowed to be the shadow of a society.



One is not supposed to exist at all in the first place, said P1. P1 added that people like Anwar Raslan and others in his position accepted to be a part of these institutions. They are executing the will of evil and punish people for their mere existence. A first step to prevent these people from doing their job is to trust in justice and trust that those who died under torture will not be forgotten, said P1. He added that the world has changed and is no longer a place where perpetrators wander with impunity. According to P1, the absence of deterrence will no longer make society implicitly accept torture and all evil disappear. He said that punishing these people will make for a just society.

P1 apologized for providing such a long closing statement, adding this was his last paragraph. He explained that he came to the Court with confidence and gratitude in the counsel representing him in this case, with gratitude to his lawyer in Syria, Anwar Al-Bunni, and with great belief in the usefulness of this trial. P1 said he endured the psychological, professional, and social consequences of sharing his experience. P1 said he was accompanied by the thought that he would testify on behalf of his friends who shared the same experience as P1 regarding “these extermination Branches” but did not have the opportunity to share their experience. P1 said he also came to the Court to find answers to his family's and daughter's constant questions about what happened before and during this trial and what will happen in the future. P1 concluded by saying he trusts in the Court's wisdom and thanked the Court.

Presiding Judge Kerber announced a 15-minute break before Plaintiff Counsel Mohammed delivered his closing statement.

[20-minute break]

Closing Statement by Plaintiff Counsel Mohammed

Plaintiff Counsel Mohammed started his closing statement by saying that, in legal terms, the case would be explained relatively quickly in terms of facts and required life sentence also finding the particular severity of guilt. Mohammed said he would join these demands as well. Nonetheless, he also thought about the consequences of this trial beyond the legal aspects.

He turned to Anwar Raslan, saying that he was a lawyer himself and that he sometimes wondered what Raslan was thinking. Mohammed asked Raslan if he actually thought that anyone was convinced of his innocence. He mentioned that Raslan knew the parties for 18 months now and his lawyers for almost three years. Mohammed addressed Raslan, saying that he must be aware that he will have to face a life sentence. Mohammed explained that Raslan is almost 60-years-old and with a life sentence with particular severity of guilt ahead of him, given an average age of 78 years, he will literally have to spend the rest of his life in prison. The rest of his life will be limited to a 10-sqm cell. Mohammed said he wondered how Raslan feels about that. Mohammed even spoke about it with his girlfriend, and they found that this would be the completely opposite situation of their own lives at the moment. They were in a situation where they were making plans, where to go for vacation, whether to buy a house. Mohammed asked Raslan how he was dealing with his own situation right now, given that he has to spend his sunset years in prison.

Mohammed went on to say that during the last 18 months, the Court often discussed Raslan's role as a Sunni within the government system, and the options available to him. However, it was never asked what an Alawite is and what Alawites believe.

Mohammed said to Raslan that the two of them were both Sunnis and probably the only people in the courtroom who understand all these questions. Mohammed said Sunnis believe in afterlife and the idea that people who are doing good in this life will be awarded in the afterlife. The question was therefore what one has to do in case he did something bad. Mohammed said the answer is to regret and ask God for forgiveness. However, Mohammed was wondering whether Raslan actually had any regrets. Mohammed quoted verse 2:222 from the Quran saying that ‘Allah loves those who are doing penance and those who purify themselves.’ According to Mohammed, Raslan was, however, merely claiming that he did not do anything and only found himself in a bad situation.

Mohammed explained to Raslan that according to § 258 (2) StPO, Raslan has the right to provide his last words in this trial. He told Raslan to use that opportunity to answer the questions of victims. Many of them were unable to see what happened around them while in detention. Mohammed referred to P1 and asked what it depended on for someone to be subjected to sexual violence or not. Raslan has the chance to use his voice and help the victims. Mohammed added that using his own words also provides Raslan with the opportunity to actually demonstrate his opposition to the government. However, Raslan must also defect from his first plea claiming his deprivation of power.

Mohammed again referred to a quote from the Quran (verse 40:40) saying that “the person who does good things in this life will be forgiven all sins in the afterlife.” Mohammed said Raslan now has the chance to do good in this life and benefit from it in the afterlife. In the end, he only has to stand before God and ask for forgiveness. Mohammed said if Raslan uses his chance, he will ask his clients to forgive him as well.

Referring to P1, Mohammed said his client was attacked in the media and accused of being a liar. Mohammed recalled that he personally spoke with more than 100 people none of whom believed in this trial. He therefore thanked the Court for making this trial happen. He added that one might at times have wondered if there would ever be an end to this trial. According to Mohammed, the upcoming verdict will be a relief for many. It shows that a fair court legally confirmed that things actually did happen as people described them. He added that people in Damascus were robbed of their trust in God. On January 13, 2021, their trust will be restored. Mohammed concluded by saying that for many others, however, trust will still remain a dream.

Closing Statement by Plaintiff Counsel Reiger

Plaintiff Counsel Reiger started his closings statement by saying that he would like to come back to the very basis of this trial: § 7 VStGB. He said there is no common legal definition of crimes against humanity. § 7 (1) VStGB provides its own definition. If someone, however, seeks a linguistic definition of humanity [Menschlichkeit], one talks about tolerance, respect, and empathy. German dictionary ‘Duden’ defines humanity [Menschlichkeit] as mercy and humanitarianism. Reiger said this was a stark contrast to what happened to the people in Syria. Humanity died in Syria, it died in the basement of Branch 251/Al-Khatib Branch. Reiger said Anwar Raslan is also responsible for humanity dying in Syria. It is therefore rightful and important that he is held accountable for that.

Reiger recalled that the Court heard witnesses like P1 and Anwar Al-Bunni. Reiger said he has a lot of respect for these people who always continue to fight for humanity. He constantly wondered how these people were able to continue their fight despite being detained and tortured. Reiger said justice can be achieved in many different ways. In the end, humanity would always be stronger than the torture henchman. Reiger concluded that the correct linguistic definition would however be only of limited relevance and mostly be of political relevance.



He went on to say that in one's mind, the torture basements in Syria are far away from Koblenz. The subject matter, however, was not far away. Germany is a country governed by the rule of law, with jurisdiction to hold all perpetrators accountable under the principle of universal jurisdiction. Reiger said the trial is therefore a signal to the entire world.

Reiger recalled that he had many discussions with his client, P28, because P28 could not believe how such atrocities remained unpunished so far. Reiger had to tell him that it was impossible to hold all perpetrators accountable at the moment. According to Reiger, that answer is a big disappointment for many Syrians. But the Koblenz Trial gave people a space and opportunity to tell their stories. There was even an attempt to silence P1. Reiger added that everyone sitting at a table together with Bashar Al-Assad must know what he is like.

Reiger said his client, P28, told him that he feels his dignity is restored [through the trial of] Anwar Raslan, who is responsible for all his suffering [and now] sitting on the defendant's bench. P28 wants to thank the BKA, the German Federal Prosecutor General's Office and the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz. Reiger recalled that P28 told the Court how he was arrested, despite not being an activist. He does not know the reasons for his arrest until this very day. P28 assumes that he was arrested simply due to a confusion of names. Nonetheless, Anwar Raslan remains silent and hides behind his first plea. Reiger said this showed the inhumane acts committed by the Syrian regime and Anwar Raslan. Reiger further read out a note by P28 saying that detainees were psychologically intimidated in detention and that he still suffers from this mental pressure today. P28 said he still lived in the death cell in which he was detained. His son is unable to fall asleep alone in the dark. P28 further said in his statement that he cannot forget his pain for a single day, and he still has the pictures in his head. He cannot fall asleep without his ears ringing. P28 concluded that he is not himself anymore.

Reiger said P28 is forever marked by his horrible experiences and hopes that Raslan will be held accountable. Nonetheless, one would still only scratch the surface of the unimaginable suffering of victims, according to Reiger. He added that for legal reasons his other client was unable to participate in this trial. The Federal Prosecutor General's Office should therefore continue to pursue more of these cases.

Reiger said, as a lawyer, Anwar Raslan knew about the prohibition of torture. He was aware of what he was participating in. He heard the screams of torture every day and saw injured detainees. Reiger said Raslan was certainly "not the good man of Al-Khatib." He was a long-serving officer and agent who committed the crimes of the regime that have been perpetrated since 2011 until this very day. Reiger said Raslan allegedly defected when the regime turned against his hometown, however, his defection was not due to his humanity but mere self-interest because he was personally affected.

Reiger concluded by saying that he, on behalf of his client, joins the Prosecutors in demanding a life sentence and establishing the particular severity of guilt for Anwar Raslan who must bear the costs of this trial.

Closing Statement by Plaintiff Counsel Schulz

Plaintiff Counsel Schulz first said that he would try to avoid any repetition. On behalf of his client, P25, he joins the Prosecutors' demand for life imprisonment and establishing the particular severity of guilt for Anwar Raslan. Schulz said "P25 was one of the few lucky ones who made it out of hell after ten days." To stick to the quote of Jean Améry, Schulz hopes that P25 will feel home again in Germany where he lives with his family and is now helplessly exposed to the cold bureaucracy. Schulz told the Court the story of how P25's newborn child was named: the German registrar did not accept for P25's son to have the same name as his father, although this is Syrian tradition.



However, Schulz added, the bureaucracy of the BAMF [German Migration and Asylum Office] was even worse. The newborn baby was sent a letter telling him to immediately detail his asylum status in writing. The newborn baby therefore had to hire a lawyer to help him deal with the German authorities. Schulz said, although the German bureaucracy was overwhelming, the family was eventually able to deal with it.

Schulz went on to recall that one of the torture tools frequently mentioned in this trial was the so called "German Chair", *Al-Kursi Al-Almani* in Arabic. Allegedly it was the Nazis who brought this tool to Syria. There are also rumors that the GDR [German Democratic Republic] taught the Syrian Intelligence Services how to use this torture item.

In 1954, Schulz said, a man called George Fischer started selling sauerkraut. At the same time, Alois Brunner, the right hand of Adolf Eichmann, the highest Nazi technocrat who was tasked with solving the Jewish question, was twice sentenced to death in absentia by a French Court. Brunner was hunted by the Mossad and eventually sought refuge in Syria where he became a consultant to the Intelligence Services on all issues related to torture. In 1966, Brunner met then Syrian president Hafez Al-Assad. Schulz went on to say that by 1971, Brunner and Hafez Al-Assad established a network of intelligence services under control of the Alawites. Brunner was a consultant to the President and a helping hand to the police state. Brunner sought protection in Syria from the Mossad who was hunting him. In Syria, Brunner was given a house and protection. But rumor has it, said Schulz, that Brunner once, called Hafez Al-Assad a 'dog'. In 2001 he was reported to have committed suicide in a Syrian torture prison, allegedly Branch 251. Schulz turned to the GDR side of the story by saying that in the mid-1960s, the GDR supported the Ba'th party by building upon Brunner's previous work. Erich Mielke [Head of the GDR Ministry of State Security] even met with his Syrian colleague Abdennaser at the East-German State Security premises in Berlin. Schulz said the cooperation of the two countries' intelligence services was consequently strengthened. Schulz said the GDR was the "obstetrician of the Syrian torture apparatus." The Syrian government then wanted to get rid of Brunner but his deportation failed in April 1989.

Schulz turned to Anwar Raslan's curriculum vitae, saying it was known that Raslan worked in different cities in Syria as part of his training and was involved in torture by the Intelligence Services. He learned intelligence work and the required practical skills from scratch. Schulz recalled that the State Security in the GDR had a Division called "Main Department IX, Investigative Body", the German equivalent to the Syrian Investigations Division at Branch 251. Both used torture as a state policy.

Schulz said the story of the German Chair would now come to an end: the German Chair was used by the Secret State Police and State Security in the GDR and by the Syrian Intelligence Services, until the implementation of international criminal law through the VStGB [German Code of Crimes against International Law]. Schulz concluded that at the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Anwar Raslan was now sitting on a German Chair himself, however, a far more comfortable one.

Schulz then quoted Friedrich Nietzsche who said in "Jenseits von Gut und Böse" that if one only stares into the abyss for long enough, the abyss stares right back. According to Schulz, Raslan's defense was too obvious and limited. He was now right in the middle of the abyss. Schulz said that one who is fighting beasts must be cautious to not become one himself.

Schulz finished his closing statement by saying that Raslan's last words were still forthcoming. Nonetheless, the German Chair at the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz would probably accompany him for a long time.

Presiding Judge Kerber announced a 70-minute-break.

[70-minute break]

Closing Statement by P50

P50 started his closing statement by saying “in the name of God, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.” After greeting the Judges and everyone else present in the courtroom, P50 said they just listened to the statement of P1 who does not believe in God. Now, people will listen to a person who believes in God’s existence. P50 recalled that what brought the two of them together is that they are both victims of the regime. P1 and P50 also share their belief in the principles of freedom, justice, and the Syrian revolution. P50 said his closing statement would not be long, since he only prepared three pages.

P50 explained that this Court is of great importance to the Syrian context, as it is the first court to consider the issue of detention by the Syrian regime. Therefore, P50 and others want it to be a success story. They want it to be a foundation on which they can build upon to hold the leaders of the regime, and the most important individuals and entities that founded and maintained it, accountable. P50 recalled that according to documentation, so far more than 130,000 people have been detained and disappeared in Syria. P50 said this number includes his father, his cousins, his relatives, his friends and other innocent people. P50’s father, who disappeared eight years ago when he was seventy-three years old, still visits P50 in his sleep. P50 said he does not know when he will be able to accept that his father died, or have hope to see him again. P50 described that no one can imagine for how long a woman who lost her husband or her child keeps waiting to know their fate.

According to P50, the Syrian people who are yearning for freedom are looking at this Court full of hope. They hope that this trial will pave the path toward uncovering the regime’s atrocity crimes. The mindset of the oppressive regime was clear from the beginning, said P50. The regime does not hold back from doing anything against innocent citizens in order to maintain its power. As Syrians, P50 and others dreamed of having political pluralism in which a former president would hand over power to a new president in a smooth and peaceful manner. P50 said people dreamed of seeing a scene similar to what people witnessed a few days ago when Ms. Merkel left office and handed over everything to her successor. However, the regime's Shabiha and its henchman insisted that Al-Assad remain in power and said: "Al-Assad or we burn the country!"

P50 said they eventually not only burned the country by displacing its people and ruining the economy and society, but they literally burned the country: by bombing schools, hospitals, defenseless houses, and even displacement camps were not spared from their rockets. The detention carried out by the Syrian regime is not, as it claims, a “legitimate measure to protect the country’s security” but rather one of its dirty tools to silence the voices of freedom because they exposed [the regime] and revealed its truth to the world. P50 said that the regime targeted intellectuals and peaceful people who called for freedom, tortured, and killed them. This for example happened to “our colleagues and companions in the peaceful revolution, including the icons of the Syrian revolution: martyr Yahya Ash-Sherbaji, martyr Ghiyath Matar” At the same time, P50 said, the regime was releasing “terrorists, extremists and takfiris” P50 explained that these releases happened so that, with the help of these people, militant groups like ISIS and others could be founded, later allowing the Syrian regime to present itself to the world as a counterterrorism fighter.



P50 said that his detention, and the detention of his fellow doctors, who were fulfilling their professional and national duty, and the detention of many others believing in their country, is sufficient proof against the allegations of the regime. Even if the regime's relationship with ISIS was not subject of this trial, P50 was sure that it will be discussed in subsequent trials, "hopefully soon." P50 added that there was a big difference in mentality: the mentality of those who demanded freedom and a state that protects its citizens and their well-being on the one side, and the mentality of the regime that reminds its citizens of its generosity that they grew up unharmed, a regime prepared to "burn the green and the dry" [to destroy everything], and to kill the elderly, women, and children in order to remain in power. P50 concluded that "in order to liberate our country and people of this regime, we carried out the revolution, and we will not back off until we achieve our goals, God willing."

P50 recalled how he was transferred to the Main Branch of State Security on Eid Al-Adha, the most important day of the year. This day was supposed to be one of the happiest days of one's life, and celebrated with friends and family, said P50. It was on this day that he and fellow doctors were arrested and forced to stand in painful positions all day long. P50 told the Court that as he stood in pain and listened to the sound of Eid celebrations and chanting outside, he found the courage to pray to God to give him the ability to forgive. P50 said he believes that God has responded to him. P50 said he and many others demanding freedom are "willing to forgive the aggressors if they stop their crimes, confess their sins, and accept to engage in the mechanisms of transitional justice."

P50 explained that he has no personal grudge toward Anwar Raslan or others who were affiliated with the security services of the regime. In fact, he feels sorry for them. "Revenge is not in our vocabulary," added P50. What he and others want is to succeed in rebuilding their homeland on the foundations of freedom and human dignity and to restore the rights of the people. P50 said he and others have paid a lot in terms of health and time and they lost many relatives and friends. Hundreds of thousands of people have suffered the physical and psychological effects of detention. The suffering of women in detention does not end with psychological and physical torture, said P50. He explained that these women also suffer stigmatization and rejection by society. Some even thought of committing suicide or actually committed it. P50 concluded that for these reasons, revenge will not give back what people lost. However, it is important that their suffering has a meaning that justifies and consoles them. P50 recalled that he had already told the Court about so-called "Meaning Therapy", a form of psychotherapy. It was invented by a German [speaking] psychiatrist named Frankl who suffered from detention and torture in the Nazi concentration camps for three years. P50 explained that in detention, Frankl found that having purpose in people's lives and suffering is what keeps them alive. P50 said that his participation in this trial, despite the difficulties and psychological intensity, was a way for him to find meaning. P50 said he wants to feel that he is contributing to efforts to expose the torture machinery of the Syrian regime. He and others want to feel that they are contributing to prevent such things from happening again by sending a clear message to all those tempted to affiliate with a criminal intelligence system. The message is: 'Your defection from the system after committing what you have committed does not relieve you of your responsibilities. In other words, a profession cannot be vanished by defection.' P50 said he therefore hopes again that this Court can help the Syrian people yearning for freedom and justice, to find such meaning, and that their suffering as Syrians will be the last of this kind. P50 concluded that "enough is enough" [He said it in English and Arabic].

P50 concluded his closing statement by addressing and thanking Presiding Judge Kerber and the other Judges, the Prosecutors, the Plaintiffs' Counsel, his fellow Plaintiffs, the witnesses, the interpreters, and everyone who contributed to this trial.



P50 said he does not want to forget to especially thank the Defense Counsel whose presence and efforts in defending the defendant is important for a fair trial in which the defendant can enjoy all his rights until he is convicted. The fact that Syrians yearn for a country with fair trials was one of the main reasons they started the revolution, said P50. P50 recalled that when he was detained, the interrogator, who P50 did not know, but who was certainly one of the interrogators at Al-Khatib Branch which Anwar Raslan headed the Interrogation Division, reminded P50 of a verse from the Qur'an [74:30] in which the nineteen angels of torment in hell were mentioned. The interrogator compared them to the nineteen security branches of the regime. P50 recalled that he, on the other hand, reminded the interrogator of a great verse from the Noble Quran [16:118] in which God almighty says: "we did not wrong them, it is they who wronged themselves". God Almighty has spoken the truth, concluded P50.

P50 thanked the Court in Arabic and German.

Closing Statement by Plaintiff Counsel Dr. Oehmichen

After greeting the Judges and the parties to the trial, Oehmichen explained that one question that was repeatedly asked by trial monitors and journalist throughout the trial was "why are defectors being punished?" She said that one must answer that the Defendant is tried for the things he had done before his defection and that defection is not an excuse for what he did before. The suffering of the Plaintiffs of this trial and of Syrian society was not restituted by the Defendant's defection. According to Oehmichen, the Plaintiffs in this trial are only the tip of the iceberg because there were no statistics about the number of victims. She added that systematic crimes are not committed alone by those in power. It always needs followers and small cogs to keep the wheels turning. However, shared responsibilities do not release anyone in charge of their responsibility.

Oehmichen went on to explain that this trial is the first torture trial worldwide against the Syrian regime. It should not be the last one. It has an effect on Germany and the international community. Oehmichen explained that her task on this day was to represent persons who were immediately affected by the crimes at the heart of this trial. She said she represents these people also in the name of the Open Society Justice Initiative and Steve Costas. She explained that her closing statement will first focus on two aspects that highlight the trial's importance as a legal precedent. She will then detail the consequences of the crimes for her clients and the importance of this trial for her clients. Then she will draw a conclusion and thank her clients and all witnesses.

Stir that this trial will create

Dr. Oehmichen said she first wants to join the commendation of the speakers before her and thank the Court for its sovereign and pragmatic handling of the trial. The Court conducted the trial without any eagerness to raise its profile and did not engage in media interviews. Oehmichen added that the Court did not treat Anwar Raslan any differently than other defendants, and most importantly, it was always fair. She also thanked the Judges for their thoughtful treatment of the most vulnerable persons and for becoming increasingly aware of the witnesses' concerns, taking their concerns seriously and providing protection whenever possible.

According to Oehmichen, this trial also showed the shortcomings of German procedural law (StPO) regarding witness protection. She said that witnesses remain the most important source of information and that trials like this are dependent upon bereaved people describing their experiences without fear. Witness protection is therefore a crucial element for conducting a criminal trial: witness protection leads to witnesses who provide important evidence which is crucial for indictments and verdicts.



Oehmichen recalled that it is often difficult to summon witnesses who are afraid of the Syrian regime. There is no possibility under German law nor experience in providing protection to these witnesses. Oehmichen said the Court experienced how witnesses spoke about their relatives being threatened by the Syrian regime or intimidated by the relatives of Defendant Eyad Al-Gharib. In the end, many witnesses did not appear in Court because they were too afraid. The Judges and other parties to the trial learned how serious and real the danger is for witnesses. The Judges therefore allowed some of them to stay anonymous. However, others were not granted such measures because they had no legal counsel, felt obligated to make a testimony, or were not aware of the dangers. Oehmichen said this trial therefore has a significant impact on future trials. Witnesses will not dare to participate in any trials because they saw the limited the protection measures [in Koblenz]. One will therefore not learn how the witnesses were influenced or what the Court could have known if the witnesses were not exposed to threats. Oehmichen concluded that many witnesses in this trial simply did not appear in Court. This is not acceptable because it hinders the Prosecution.

According to Oehmichen, this trial has shown that witnesses must be informed about their rights and the relevant procedure before their questioning. Those witnesses who were supported by NGOs were assisted by legal counsel. Those who were forwarded to the BKA by the German Office for Migration and Asylum (BAMF) did not receive such support. One must think about ways to protect all witnesses. For example, a public audience can be excluded from certain sessions, although a public audience was not excluded in this trial because it constitutes a ground for appeal in specific circumstances. Oehmichen added that international courts and tribunals, however, apply a well-established practice of having the most vulnerable witnesses testify anonymously via video link, and offering them support beyond the main proceedings. Oehmichen concluded that increased witness protection can encourage people to participate in legal proceedings in Germany.

Outreach

Oehmichen went on to explain that it was important to inform the public and affected societies about the proceedings in Court. The VStGB [German Code of Crimes against International Law] acknowledges that certain crimes affect the international community as a whole and have to be taken to trial in Germany. However, those who are directly affected by the crimes cannot follow or understand the proceedings. According to Oehmichen, the Court did important work with this trial but the trial resonates very little when people do not know that the trial took place or how it worked. Oehmichen added that it must be explained to people why German courts have jurisdiction over these crimes at all, as well as how fair trials and equality of arms work. According to Oehmichen, the closing statements by the Plaintiffs showed that these principles were not known in all countries around the world. Oehmichen concluded that if such information is not made available, those actually affected by the crimes at the heart of the trial do not know that there is no impunity for the crimes. Lacking information also creates ideal conditions for misunderstandings, rumors, and misinformation. This is eventually only beneficial for those opposing trials like this.

Oehmichen said that of course, no court is obliged to provide extensive information on ongoing trials. However, it would be insufficient if only accredited journalists could follow the proceedings in the Arabic language. Instead, information must be made available to NGOs and journalists in different languages so that it can be made available to the media. Oehmichen explained that most information about this trial spread on Facebook and through word of mouth. This left a lot of room for misunderstandings. She added that in order to keep control over information, it is useful to better inform the public with multilingual information and background communicated in multiple languages through the press office.

Only then can non-German non-lawyers understand the proceedings. Oehmichen provided three recommendations: (1) regarding international crimes, public relations work must become an integral part of judicial administration, (2) accredited journalists must be given access to interpretation from the very beginning of a trial, and (3) do not leave the coverage of the beginning of a trial and other important moments to the media and instead provide information to the public.

Oehmichen said this trial was a foundation stone. Other judges in Germany and beyond should learn from the experiences of this trial. Oehmichen said that “unfortunately, the Judges rejected a request to audio record the trial.” Concerns about witness protection could have easily been solved. According to Oehmichen it was common practice in many countries to record criminal trials. Many witnesses therefore expected that the trial was recorded anyway. According to what is written in the [new government’s coalition contract](#), this practice is about to be implemented.

Fate of Oehmichen’s Clients

Oehmichen went on to describe what happened to her clients while in detention at Branch 251.

Oehmichen recalled that [P22](#), a medical professional, who testified in Court on December 9, 2020, was tricked into Al-Khatib Branch by officials who told him that his interrogation would only last fifteen minutes. He was then detained at the Branch for ten days before he was transferred to Kafar Souseh where he had to stay for fifteen days after which he was transferred to Adra Prison from where he was eventually released. During all ten interrogations, he was blindfolded and tortured. He was also forced to hear a friend being violently interrogated. Oehmichen recalled that the interrogation officer told P22 to be grateful for the free professional training he enjoyed. He was very scared and was tortured with *Falaqa*. He was detained in a solitary cell which was around 0.80 meters wide and between 1.60 and 1.80 meters long. P22 stated that the interrogation officer who interrogated him was from Homs and that he still remembered his voice. However, Anwar Raslan was unwilling to provide a voice sample, said Oehmichen. P22 further told the Court about arbitrary, absurd torture at the Branch, including collective punishment. After a short circuit, guards entered the cell and started beating all detainees. Oehmichen further recalled that the hygienic situation during P22’s detention was horrible and that his family was not officially informed about his whereabouts. P22 also spoke about psychological torture and an alleged amnesty that raised hopes among detainees. He described the constant state of limbo between hope and fear and that he was also threatened.

Oehmichen recalled that [P27](#) who testified in Court on January 28, 2021, participated in demonstrations and was detained twice with the Military Intelligence and Criminal Security Branches, once at Al-Khatib Branch, then several other Branches thereafter. Oehmichen remembered that during the first conversation she had with P27, he did not even mention the welcome party he had to endure because he thought that beating did not qualify as torture. He was chained during the transfers between Branches. P27 said that Al-Khatib Branch was the worst because there was no fresh air circulating. It was hot and smelled very bad. He described how there was a significant difference regarding the quality of air between the cell and the hallway in front of the cell. P27 further described the detention conditions and the interrogations he had to endure. Oehmichen recalled that P27 was arbitrarily beaten and saw signs of torture on the bodies of his fellow detainees. He was tortured with *Shabeh* and was always blindfolded during interrogations.

Oehmichen went on to recall what [P44](#), who testified in Court on August 8, 2021, had to endure during his detention at Branch 251. P44 was stopped at a gas station where he was insulted, beaten, and later taken to Al-Khatib Branch. He had to undergo the welcome party and was taken to a 3x3 meter cell which was so small and overcrowded that only a few detainees were able to lie down.

The air was so bad that many detainees got scabies. Oehmichen said that P44 was lucky because he only had to endure the bad detention conditions which, however, constitute torture themselves. P44 was not interrogated and was allowed to leave the Branch after a few days.

Oehmichen recalled that [P50](#) already described what this trial means to him personally. Oehmichen therefore only briefly recalled that P50 was detained at Al-Khatib Branch for forty days during which he was interrogated and tortured. [...] he described how attacks on the detainees were the rule. For there to not be attacks was exceptional. Oehmichen recalled P50 telling the Court that it was strange for him to not be able to see himself in the mirror and that he was scared when he first saw himself in the mirror after his detention at Al-Khatib Branch. After Al-Khatib Branch, P50 was detained at other Branches of the General Intelligence Directorate, the Military Intelligence Service, and eventually Adra Prison.

Impact of the Crimes on Oehmichen's Clients

Oehmichen explained that her client P27 received psychosocial treatment for one year and a half. He is living in fear every day and the mere word "investigations" scares him. As a medical professional, P50 treated people who experienced similar things. He spoke about this aspect during his testimony in Court, for example that women especially suffer from their detention experiences. They are abandoned by their families or even killed. Oehmichen recalled P50 telling the Court about a woman who was detained for only two hours but became depressed afterwards. Oehmichen concluded that most people focused on the physical consequences, but the psychological consequences are often even worse. She recalled P50 saying that 'people are suffering post-traumatic stress disorder after detention and some even change their personality.'

Importance of the Trial for the Plaintiffs

Oehmichen explained that many Plaintiffs and witnesses said they do not feel any personal anger toward Anwar Raslan himself. P50 affirmed this at the very beginning of his testimony, as did P22 at the end of his testimony. Oehmichen said P22 was not in Court today, but he asked her to read out a statement on his behalf:

P22 said he wants for Raslan to be held accountable. According to P22, Raslan does not show any sign of remorse. He keeps claiming that he defected, but at the same time he refuses to cooperate. P22 said it should be the regime of Bashar Al-Assad facing trial. P22 said he hopes that this present trial will prove the crimes against humanity committed by the regime.

Oehmichen went on to say that she hopes that the consequences of [Raslan's] actions and the anticipated life sentence should open Raslan's eyes to see that others are still suffering today. [...] According to Oehmichen, those who are released from detention are no longer the same people they were before. She recalled one witness saying that 'those who are detained are lost, those who are released are newborn.' Witnesses are still scared of police officers today, suffering from sleeping disorders, and are scared by certain noises. According to Oehmichen, these consequences were the very goal of the regime and its employees terrorizing the civilian population.

Oehmichen directly addressed Raslan saying, "it is not too late. The last word has not been spoken. Please help us uncover the crimes."

Oehmichen then went on to say that this trial unveiled many abysses. The Caesar Files and information about mass graves do not require further details in this closing statement, she said. Oehmichen said people inside the courtroom were often speechless and wondered how human beings could commit such crimes against other human beings.



Oehmichen then turned to Presiding Judge Kerber, saying that when Kerber said on February 24, 2021 that she would never forget the Caesar Files, it was more than a personal comment. No one would ever forget what one saw in the Caesar Files. Nor would one forget witnesses telling the Court that they made friend with cockroaches because the guards were monsters. [...] Oehmichen recalled “so many brave Syrians testified in this trial and showed humanity.” She further acknowledged that the political and historical context must be acknowledged in such trials, as discussed in international criminal law. Oehmichen added that the testimonies of many witnesses also showed that people have a choice and that the Syrian people achieved something historical.

Oehmichen concluded by quoting Berthold Brecht who wrote in “Das Leben des Galilei” that “unfortunate is the country that needs heroes.” Brecht also wrote in the 1940s that poor people have no choice but to be heroes, saying that ‘to get a bag of flour one now needs the same energy which before was sufficient to make an entire field arable.’ According to Oehmichen, the many heroic acts in Syria are proof of the injustice there. Syria needs many heroes. The Plaintiffs and many witnesses in this trial are heroes. She said that her clients are impressive examples of such heroes: P27 was only 21-years-old when he participated in demonstrations. P44 developed a strategy on how to inform his relatives about his and his family members’ detention. P50 supported people who had the same experiences as him, and one must not forget the teenagers in Dara’a who started the revolution. Oehmichen recalled that P44 not only saw activists and bloggers demanding freedom at demonstrations, but also a 70-year-old man. Those who filmed the demonstrations, thereby risking their own lives, the doctors who treated injured people, witnesses who did not turn in their friends despite massive pressure, detainees who informed the families of fellow detainees about their [missing loved ones’] whereabouts, detainees who secretly smuggled bread and gave it to other detainees, the 85-year-old man who stood in the way when his son was about to be arrested, supporters of NGOs such as CIJA, lawyers like Mazen Darwish and Anwar Al-Bunni, Caesar and his friends and supporters; all these people are heroes said Oehmichen. She concluded that their sad and important role shows how bad the situation in Syria is because ‘unfortunate are the countries who need heroes.’

The proceedings were adjourned at 2:31PM

The next session will be on January 6, 2022 at 9:30AM when the Defense Counsel will provide their closing statements and the Defendant will be given the opportunity to provide his last words in this trial.