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## **ICC: Hearing in Congo War Crimes Case** *Confirmation of Charges Session for Rebel Leader Callixte Mbarushimana*

(Brussels, September 14, 2011) – The hearing to confirm the charges against the Rwandan rebel leader Callixte Mbarushimana for crimes alleged to have been committed in the [Democratic Republic of the Congo](#) (DRC) will open on September 16, 2011, in The Hague. The hearing will be before pretrial chamber I of the [International Criminal Court](#) (ICC).

The confirmation hearing was originally scheduled to begin on August 17, but on August 16, the judges of pretrial chamber I decided that it would be in the interests of justice to postpone the hearing because of last minute issues relating to the disclosure of evidence.

Mbarushimana was the executive secretary of the [Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda](#) (FDLR), a predominately Rwandan Hutu armed group that has been operating in eastern Congo under various names since 1994. He is facing charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes allegedly committed in 2009 during the armed conflict in the Kivu region of Congo.

The hearing will allow the court to evaluate whether the ICC prosecutor has enough evidence to move ahead with a trial. It is not a trial and will not determine Mbarushimana's guilt or innocence. The hearing is required under article 61 of the Rome Statute, which created the ICC. Mbarushimana's defense may object to the charges, challenge the prosecution's evidence, and put forward its own evidence.

“The ICC's hearing of evidence against Callixte Mbarushimana will begin to lay out the horrific atrocities suffered by Congolese civilians at the hands of the FDLR,” said Param-Preet Singh, senior counsel in the International Justice Program at Human Rights Watch. “Seeing him in the dock should send a powerful message to other FDLR military commanders who are operating in eastern Congo that justice will catch up with them.”

Mbarushimana was arrested on October 11, 2010, at his apartment in Paris, where he had lived since 2003. Two other FDLR leaders, the former president, Ignace Murwanyashaka, and vice president, Straton Musoni, were arrested by German authorities in November 2009 and are on trial before a local court in Stuttgart, Germany.

Despite the arrest of its three top political leaders in Europe, the FDLR remains an organized armed group with an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 combatants and a clear structure and chain of command. The FDLR continues to operate in eastern Congo and to commit atrocities, including [sexual violence against women and girls](#), killings, and looting.

**For more Human Rights Watch reporting on the FDLR and the conflict in the**

**Kivus, please visit:**

“‘You Will be Punished,’ Attacks on Civilians in Eastern Congo,” December 2009:

<http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/12/14/you-will-be-punished>

**For more Human Rights Watch reporting on the ICC, please visit:**

<http://www.hrw.org/en/category/topic/international-justice/international-criminal-court>

**For a question and answers document on the trial of two other FDLR leaders in Germany, please visit:**

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2011/05/02/germany-qa-trial-two-rwandan-rebel-leaders>

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