

Yesterday, 24 January 2021, Mahamat Said Abdel Kani, also known as “Mahamat Said Abdel Kain” and “Mahamat Saïd Abdelkani”, was surrendered to the International Criminal Court (ICC) by the Central African Republic (CAR).

Mahamat Said was on an ICC warrant of arrest issued on 7 January 2019, he is suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Bangui in 2013.

Single Judge of Pre-Trial Chamber II, Rosario Salvatore Aitala issued the warrant of arrest on reasonable grounds to believe that an armed conflict not of an international character was ongoing on the territory of the CAR from at least March 2013 until at least January 2014 between the Seleka – a coalition of armed groups predominantly composed of Muslims opposed to former president François Bozizé – and the Anti-Balaka – a movement opposed to the Seleka and supportive of former president Bozizé. Moreover, the Single Judge found reasonable grounds to believe that, from at least March 2013 until at least January 2014, a widespread and systematic attack was conducted by members of the Seleka against the civilian population and those perceived to be collectively responsible for, complicit with or supportive of the former Bozizé government and, later, of the Anti-Balaka.

The Single Judge found reasonable grounds to believe that Mr Said, a national of the Central African Republic, born on 25 February 1970 in Bria, was a Seleka commander and, in this capacity, he is suspected of being responsible for the following crimes:

crimes against humanity (imprisonment or other severe deprivation of liberty; torture; persecution; enforced disappearance; and other inhumane acts; and war crimes (torture and cruel treatment).

Mahamat Said is suspected of having committed these crimes jointly with others and/or through others or ordered, solicited or induced these crimes or aided, abetted or otherwise assisted in the commission of these crimes; or in any other way contributed to the commission of these crimes.

The ICC Registrar, Mr Peter Lewis, thanked the authorities of the CAR and of the host State, The Netherlands, for their cooperation in the arrest and surrender of Mr Said to the Court.

The initial appearance of Mr Said before the Single Judge of Pre-Trial Chamber II,

Judge Rosario Salvatore Aitala, will take place in due course.

Background: On 30 May 2014, the Government of the CAR referred the situation in the CAR since 1 August 2012 to the Court. The situation reportedly involved alleged crimes committed by both the Seleka and the Anti Balaka. The violence allegedly led to thousands of deaths and left hundreds of thousands displaced. On 24 September 2014, the ICC Prosecutor, Ms Fatou Bensouda, opened an investigation in relation to this situation. The ICC has another ongoing case in this situation, concerning Alfred Yekatom and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona. The trial in this case is scheduled to open on 9 February 2021.