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## War-Crimes Panel to Take on Congo Case

By REUTERS

STOCKHOLM, Jan. 27 — The International Criminal Court hopes to begin its first investigation — an examination of war crimes accusations in northeast Congo — by October, its chief prosecutor said Tuesday.

The prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, said continuing violence in the region made it difficult to begin the investigation earlier because potential witnesses could be killed.

"The idea is that we start in October because then we can be sure we have stopped the violence and we can go there and talk to people," he said at an international antigencide conference in Sweden.

The court, which has no formal cases on its books yet, was set up in The Hague to try suspects for genocide, war crimes and systematic human rights abuses.

Ethnic clashes between rival Hema and Lendu militias in the northeastern province of Ituri have claimed more than 50,000 lives since 1999.

Mr. Moreno-Ocampo said that trials would probably begin next year and that the court could only investigate crimes that took place after July 2002, when it came into force.

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