

Citing New Medical Report, Milosevic's Lawyers Urge Postponement in War Crimes Trial

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PARIS, Nov. 12 - The declining health of [Slobodan Milosevic](#) has led an international medical team to call for an immediate halt to his activities and has renewed doubts about whether his long war-crimes trial can be completed next year.

Lawyers for Mr. Milosevic, the former Yugoslav president, said three doctors, from France, Russia and [Serbia](#), examined him on Nov. 4 at the United Nations detention center in The Hague, where he has spent the past four years.

The medical report, which until now had not been disclosed, said that because Mr. Milosevic's condition was "unstable" and further "complications" might arise, he would need complete rest "for a minimum of six weeks."

The lawyers said they summoned the medical team after their client had a brain scan and other recent tests at a hospital in The Hague. Mr. Milosevic had been suffering increasing pains in his neck, ears and head, they said.

"He's already taking a dozen different medicines, and he rarely complains, but we wanted another independent opinion," said Zdenko Tomanovic, one of Mr. Milosevic's lawyers, by telephone from Belgrade. He added that the medication and the pain were beginning to make it difficult for Mr. Milosevic to concentrate.

He declined to discuss the doctors' full diagnosis but made available their joint conclusions, which were signed by Dr. Florence Leclercq, a French cardiologist; Dr. Margarita Shumilina, a Serbian vascular specialist; and Dr. Vukasin Andric, a Russian ear specialist.

Mr. Milosevic's condition reopens the question of whether the trial, now in its fourth year, can continue without the presence of the defendant, who acts as his own lawyer. Tribunal rules do not forbid a trial in absentia.

Judges assigned two British defense lawyers to him a year ago to assist him in cross-examining witnesses and otherwise lighten his work load in the enormous trial that spans a decade of three wars in the 1990's and deals with charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

But Mr. Milosevic has refused to deal with the two British lawyers, who nonetheless attend all court sessions. His own Serbian lawyers assist him only outside the courtroom.

Even if the panel of three judges ask for the trial to continue without Mr. Milosevic, such a move may not succeed. Last year, when Mr. Milosevic was ill and the court ordered the assigned lawyers to take over, most of the 150 defense witnesses who were contacted said they would not appear. This year, a defense witness refused to cooperate on a day when Mr. Milosevic fell ill and was absent. The Serbian witness was given a suspended sentence for contempt of court.

The new medical report compounds the trial's difficulties. The presiding judge, Richard May, died of a brain tumor last year, and Mr. Milosevic often suffered bouts of high blood pressure and other illnesses. He has missed almost 70 days in court. But judges also said Mr. Milosevic had not managed his assigned time well and had fallen much behind in his defense schedule.

The judges have warned that Mr. Milosevic has already used up close to 75 percent of his defense time but has addressed only a third of his indictment.

Judges are expected to take up the latest medical report on Tuesday. If they accept the doctors' advice, the trial is likely to resume in January.