

1 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:20:33] Mr Al Mahdi, the Chamber will hear

2 your statement.

3 MR AL MAHDI: [9:20:46](Interpretation) Thank you, your Honour.

4 Mr President, distinguished members of Chamber, ladies and gentlemen, I greet you all.

5 I would like to start by reminding myself of the words of the Almighty: All ye who

6 believe stand up firmly for justice as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves or

7 your parents or your next of kin. The words of the Almighty.

8 I would like to remember the words of those who said that we need to speak justice even

9 against ourselves. We have to be truth -- true to ourselves, even that truthfulness would

10 burn our hands.

11 Ladies and gentlemen, it is with deep regret and with great pain I had to enter a guilty

12 plea and all the charges brought against me are accurate and correct.

13 I am really sorry. I am really remorseful and I regret all the damage that my actions have

14 caused. I regret what I have caused to my family, my community in Timbuktu, what I

15 have caused my home nation, Mali, and I'm really remorseful about what I had caused the

16 international community as a whole.

17 My regret is directly -- or, is directed particularly to the generations, the ancestors of the

18 holders of the mausoleums that I have destroyed.

19 I would like to seek their pardon, I would like to seek the pardon of the whole people of

20 Timbuktu, I would like to make them a solemn promise that this was the first and the last

21 wrongful act I will ever commit. I seek their forgiveness and I would like them to look at

22 me as a son that has lost his way and consider me part of the social fabric of Timbuktu

23 and must not forget what I have contributed in the past to Timbuktu.

24 It is my hope that in accordance with the noble Islamic principles to be able to forgive me

25 and to accept my regret. I think if they were to do this then they would have fulfilled the

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1 words of God where in the Quran where we say those who forgive then they will be
2 rewarded by the Almighty.

3 If I was influenced by a group of deviant people from Al-Qaeda and Ansar Dine, and if
4 they were able to influence me, to carry me in their evil wave through actions that affected
5 the whole population, but even with these temporary actions I do not think that we will
6 be able to change the heritage of the city of Timbuktu.

7 Ladies and gentlemen, in this Chamber I'm willing to accept the judgment of the
8 Chamber, but I will do so with pain and with a broken heart. I will be deprived of my
9 freedom and I know I will not be able to see the loved ones.

10 However, I am pinning my hope on the fact that the punishment that will be meted out to
11 me will be sufficient enough for the people of Timbuktu to show forgiveness, and for the
12 people of Mali for forgiveness and mankind to offer forgiveness.

13 It is also my hope that the years I will spend in prison will be a source of purging the evil
14 spirits that had overtaken me. And I will keep my hopes high that the people that I have
15 hurt will be able to forgive.

16 In conclusion, I would like to make -- to give a piece of advice to all Muslims in the world
17 not to get involved in the same acts I got involved in because they are not going to lead to
18 any good for humanity.

19 In conclusion, I would like to thank all parties at the ICC, Judges, OTP, Registry and
20 staff of the detention centre for dealing with me in such a civilised and respectable way
21 where human rights were upheld to the maximum. And I applaud the way they
22 interviewed me and listened to my statement. And in particular I would like to thank
23 Maître Mohamed Aouini, who decided to defend me in this case all the way. Thank you.

24 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:27:25] Thank you, too. The Court will
25 now proceed to ask you some questions, Mr Al Mahdi, pursuant to the Rome Statute.

1 (Trial Chamber confers)

2 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:28:29] Mr Al Mahdi, can you please rise

3 again.

4 MR AL MAHDI: [9:28:38] (Interpretation) Yes, your Honour.

5 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:28:39] Now you have made an admission of

6 guilt this Chamber will proceed to ask you some questions.

7 Mr Al Mahdi, the Chamber would like to know if this admission is made voluntarily. Do

8 you make this admission of guilt voluntarily of your own free will, without being

9 threatened or forced by anyone?

10 MR AL MAHDI: [9:29:08] (Interpretation) Your Honour, absolutely. This is a voluntary

11 admission from the bottom of my heart.

12 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:29:14] Do you remember signing an

13 agreement with the Prosecution regarding an admission of guilt, complete with a

14 supporting factual basis, on February 18, 2016, and was this agreement presented to you

15 in a language you fully understand and speak?

16 MR AL MAHDI: [9:29:41] (Interpretation) Your Honour, yes, it was presented to me in

17 Arabic.

18 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:29:44] Did you fully consult your counsel

19 before signing the agreement and making your admission in Court today?

20 MR AL MAHDI: [9:29:55] (Interpretation) Yes, I have consulted the counsels and they

21 presented all the legal advice to me.

22 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:30:05] Thank you.

23 Do you understand that the Chamber is not bound by the terms of the agreement that you

24 signed and that the Chamber is not required to accept your admission of guilt made here

25 today?

1 MR AL MAHDI: [9:30:22] (Interpretation) Yes, I do understand that. And it is also
2 mentioned in the text of the document which was presented to me.

3 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:30:30] By making the admission of guilt
4 and signing the agreement, you have waived many of the rights you would otherwise
5 have as an accused; do you confirm that waiver?

6 MR AL MAHDI: [9:30:46] (Interpretation) Yes, your Honour. I confirm this. And I
7 confirm what I have signed in this agreement.

8 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:30:54] We now proceed to the questions on
9 the sentencing range.

10 Mr Al Mahdi, you understand that the Chamber is not bound by the 9-year to 11-year
11 sentencing range you have agreed to with the Prosecution?

12 MR AL MAHDI: [9:31:16] (Interpretation) Yes, I do know that.

13 PRESIDING JUDGE PANGALANGAN: [9:31:18] And you understand that the crime
14 you are admitting guilt to can carry a maximum term of 30 years?

15 MR AL MAHDI: [9:31:31] (Interpretation) Yes, I have understood that in the document
16 which was presented to me.