



EMBARGOED

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Over 60 Celebrities Sign On to the Victims Trust Fund Campaign

Celebrities ask Senators to Support Justice for Victims of Atrocities

WASHINGTON --- Nearly seventy celebrities, including **Harry Belafonte, Richard Dreyfuss, Mike Farrell, Susan Sarandon, Martin Sheen, Gloria Steinem** and others, have signed a letter urging senators to "support U.S. engagement with the Victims Trust Fund and the International Criminal Court." (Please see letter and signatories below.)

Across the country, thousands of U.S. citizens are participating in the Victims Trust Fund Campaign by sending their personal donations to their senators' offices, with a request to pass the check on to the Fund. The Campaign will demonstrate to elected leaders the depth of support among U.S. citizens for justice for victims of the world's worst crimes through the International Criminal Court.

"The campaign is off to an incredible start - with nearly 70 celebrities signing on to the open letter, the participation of more than 20 U.S. civil society groups, and checks now flowing into the offices of senators!" said Heather Hamilton, Director of Programs at the World Federalist Association.

"Today is the anniversary of the Armenian genocide – the first genocide of the 20th century. Sadly, it was not the last. The atrocities of the 20th century prompted the world to build the International Criminal Court to end the cycle of violence and suffering. The International Criminal Court will prosecute perpetrators of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity when their own countries cannot or will not.

"Despite widespread citizen support for the International Criminal Court, the current administration has rejected this giant leap forward for human rights. This month thousands of American citizens across the nation are making their voices heard on the Hill to show their elected leaders how very much they think that the U.S. should be leading, not attacking, efforts for international justice and victims assistance through the Victims Trust Fund and the ICC."

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Notes to Editors:

There will be a **press event for the campaign on May 6, 2003**, in Washington, DC. Speakers include: **Frederick** (survivor of the Nazi Holocaust); **Dr. Orlando Tizon**, the assistant director of TASSC and a torture survivor from the Philippines; and **Fiona McKay**, Director of International Justice, Lawyers Committee for Human Rights.

Other important dates in April: April 6, 1994, the Rwandan genocide began; April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge rose to power in Cambodia; April 24, 1914, the Armenian genocide began; April 29, the U.S. recognizes Holocaust Memorial Day.

Campaign partners include: Advocacy Project; American Coalition for the ICC (AMICC); Amnesty International USA; American Humanist Association; Campaign for UN Reform; Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism; Conference of Major Superiors of Men; Friends Committee on National Legislation; Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and Their Children; Independent Student Coalition for the ICC; International Criminal Court Alliance; International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies; Lawyers Committee for Human Rights; National Service Conference of the American Ethical Union; REDRESS; Torture, Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition (TASSC); United Nations Association – USA; United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society; Unitarian Universalist Association; Washington Kurdish Institute; World Federalist Association.

OPEN LETTER TO U.S. SENATORS:

“... during this century millions of children, women and men have been victims of unimaginable atrocities that deeply shock the conscience of humanity.”

-- *Preamble to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*

Dear Senators:

How do you begin to ameliorate the suffering of a child who has witnessed his village massacred or comfort women whose psyches bear the scars of systematic rape at the hands of war criminals? After mass atrocities, justice is incomplete if it stops in the courtroom: we must also restore the dignity and hope of the individuals whose lives have been shattered.

There is an important new way to help victims of atrocities, called the Victims Trust Fund, which will provide direct reparations to victims and their families. The money will come from the fines and seized properties of convicted criminals, but others – governments, businesses, and individuals – can donate funds as well. **This money will help victims seek medical and psychological care, regain lost property, properly bury their dead, pay school fees for orphans, and in other ways help them rebuild their lives and communities.**

“The first need of victims is the affirmation of their human dignity.”

-- *Frederick Terna, survivor of the Nazi Holocaust*

The Victims Trust Fund was created as part of the new International Criminal Court, which holds to account perpetrators of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, when their own countries are unable or unwilling to do so. The Victims Trust Fund is just one of the ICC’s many provisions to protect and empower victims of the world’s worst crimes.

“There are boundaries of decent behavior beyond which one must not cross. Those who did so must be taken care of in a way that will show that this cannot be done again.”

-- *Magbula Divovic, survivor of Srebrenica*

Under the ICC, justice is not just an outcome, but a process meant to heal victims and their communities. By cooperating with the ICC, we can provide justice and healing for child soldiers, women who have been systematically raped, and persecuted ethnic and religious groups. We can use the ICC to bring an end to abuses such as those committed by rebels in the Congo, drug lords in Colombia, the military in Burma, war

lords in Afghanistan, slave traders in the Sudan, and even international terrorist suspects like Osama bin Laden.

This month, thousands of U.S. citizens are sending you and your colleagues their personal donations to the Victims Trust Fund. Even though the United States has not ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, we join with your constituents in urging you to support U.S. cooperation in bringing horrendous criminals to justice before the ICC and in providing reparations to the survivors of these crimes through the Victims Trust Fund.

U.S. citizens are united in their support for international justice. Our common humanity calls us to seek justice and healing for the hundreds of thousands of victims of atrocities around the world. Please support U.S. engagement with the Victims Trust Fund and the International Criminal Court.

*Americans supporting the International Criminal Court:
Restoring dignity. Rebuilding communities. Ensuring justice.*

**Victims Trust Fund Campaign
Celebrity Signatories to Open Letter**

(Names embargoed : 04/24/03)

Jason Alexander	Richard Dreyfuss	Wendie Malick
Edward Asner	Olympia Dukakis	Amanda McBroom
Amy Aquino	Stevie Earle	Catherine McClenahan
Diane Baker	Hector Elizondo	Kent McCord
Alec Baldwin	Cary Elwes	Julia Ormond
William Baldwin	Shelley Fabares	Alexandra Paul
David Bale	Bill Fagerbakke	David Rabe
Cameron Bancroft	Morgan Fairchild	Phil Alden Robinson
Harry Belafonte	Jamie Farr	Susan Sarandon
Theodore Bikel	Bonnie Franklin	John Saxon
Barbara Bosson	Janeane Garofalo	Martin Sheen
Bruce Boxleitner	Larry Gelbart	Mary Steenburgen
Jackson Browne	Greg Germann	Gloria Steinem
Gabriel Byrne	Melissa Gilbert	Marcia Strassman
Chevy Chase	Elliott Gould	Loretta Swit
Jayni Chase	Robert Greenwald	Rita Taggart
Jill Clayburgh	Paul Haggis	B.J. Ward
David Clennon	Tess Harper	Dennis Weaver
Peter Coyote	Marilyn Henner	Haskell Wexler
Suzanne Cryer	Ken Howard	Alfre Woodard
Ted Danson	Gordon Hunt	Noah Wyle
E.L. Doctorow	Mimi Kennedy	Tracy Wyle

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