



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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GLOBAL COALITION URGES ALGERIA TO PRIORITIZE RATIFICATION OF ROME STATUTE

Algeria Must Demonstrate its Commitment to International Justice

Algiers – The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC)—a global network of more than 2,500 civil society organizations—this week called on the People’s Democratic Republic of Algeria to ratify the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, without further delay. Algeria signed the treaty on 28 December 2000 and is the October 2009 target for the Coalition’s Universal Ratification Campaign (URC), which each month calls upon a different country to join the Court.

In a letter dated 7 October 2009 to Algerian President Abdel Aziz Bouteflika, the CICC urged Algeria to prioritize its ratification of the Rome Statute.

“The Rome Statute, whatever its imperfections and limitations, represents a great hope for those who have suffered heinous crimes in silence, such as the Algerian people,” said Khelil Abdelmoumene, Secretary-General of The Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights (LADDH).

“The LADDH encourages the Algerian state to ratify this Statute in order to ensure that the crimes of the recent past do not occur again.”

In 2004, before the UN Security Council, Ambassador Mourad Benmehidi stated that the “International Criminal Court must see its role strengthened, and the integrity of its Statute should be preserved so as to advance the cause of justice and law and put an end to impunity.” It has been nearly five years since that statement and nine years since Algeria signed the Rome Statute.

The call for Algeria’s ratification comes as the Review Conference of the ICC is quickly approaching. Ratification will enable Algeria to participate as a voting State Party in the highly important Review Conference of the ICC in June 2010 to address its needs and concerns, including the adoption of a definition for the crime of aggression. Moreover, as a State Party, Algeria will also be able to participate in judiciary and other elections at the Court.

In Egypt this past July, at the recent Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit – to which Algeria is a long-time member – NAM States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC called upon those States, which have not yet done so, to consider ratifying or acceding to the Rome Statute of the ICC. Algeria must now take the opportunity to heed this call.

“By ratifying the Rome Statute of the ICC, Algeria will be demonstrating its commitment to the rule of law and participating in the global effort to end impunity,” said Abeer Al Khraisha, CICC Regional Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa.

“All this will serve in the interest of victims of serious violations such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide – crimes that shock human conscience; therefore, we urge Algeria to carry out its duties towards building this effective system of international justice,” added Al Khraisha.

Algeria played an important role in creating this new system of international justice. The Arab League, to which Algeria is a member, includes 22 Arab states, has only three members that are States Parties to the ICC – Jordan, Djibouti, and the Comoros Islands. Algeria is also a member of the African Union, of which 30 countries are States Parties to the ICC.

Algerians were victims of international crimes during its decade-long civil war, which ended in 2002 and cost an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 lives.

The CICC stressed the fact that the ICC does not have retroactive jurisdiction and would only be able to investigate crimes that occur *after* Algeria joins the Court, unless the Algerian government expressly chooses to accept the Court’s jurisdiction over crimes committed since July 2002, when the Rome Statute entered into force.

There are currently 110 ICC States Parties. Central to the Court’s mandate is the principle of complementarity, which holds that the Court will only intervene if national legal systems are unable or unwilling to investigate and prosecute. There are currently four active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; and Uganda.