



## Coalition for the International Criminal Court

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

24 June 2011

### **Global NGO Coalition Welcomes Tunisia as the 116th ICC State Party**

*Tunisia's Accession Demonstrates Commitment to International Justice and the Rule of Law*

**Amman, Jordan/ New York, NY** – One of the first critical decisions of the interim Tunisian government to respect human rights and accountability was implemented today, said the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC). On 24 June 2011, Tunisia deposited its instrument of accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the United Nations Headquarters. Next week, Tunisia will also deposit an instrument of accession to the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Court (APIC). The CICC welcomes Tunisia as the 116th State Party to the Rome Statute —the founding treaty of the first permanent international court capable of trying perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. Tunisia's accession demonstrates its commitment to international justice and the rule of law and is an important step toward universality in the Rome Statute system, the Coalition said today.

“Tunisia's accession to the Rome Statute of the ICC and other important human rights treaties reflects an emerging democracy fundamentally reinforcing freedom and justice nationally while strengthening its commitment to end impunity for the worst crimes in international law,” said Coalition Convenor William Pace who met with Interim Tunisian President Foued Mebazaa on

11 March 2011. "Tunisia continues to inspire other nations and peoples throughout the region and world," he added.

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court — a civil society network of 2,500 organizations in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent ICC and improved access to justice for victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity — commends Tunisia for its decision to join 115 other nations around the world and spread support for the ICC in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, the most underrepresented region in terms of States Parties to the Rome Statute.

With Tunisia's accession, four Arab League members have ratified the Statute: the Comoros Islands, Djibouti and Jordan. The Coalition is calling on all governments in the region to follow Tunisian's commitment to justice by joining the ICC. In this period of transition in the region, the principles embodied by the Rome Statute should be a priority and ratification of the Statute should be seriously considered now more than ever.

"Today, Tunisia becomes the fourth Arab country to be member of the ICC, this great step has become possible only after the collapse of Ben Ali's 23 year rule. The decision is indeed a concrete example of the aspirations of the Tunisian people to justice and respect for basic human rights after decades of denial and cruel repression under the dictatorship," said Dr. Amor Boubakri, Professor at the University of Sousse. "This decision will pave the way for other Arab countries to adhere to the Rome Statute which, during this period of Arab uprisings, reflects a strong demand amongst Arab people for justice."

This historic step follows the publishing of Decree Law Number 4 of 2011 dated 19 February 2011 in the Tunisian Official Gazette. During a press conference held after the first cabinet meeting of the Tunisian interim government on 2 February 2011, Minister of Education and Interim Government Spokesperson Taieb Baccouche indicated that the government was prepared to adhere to many important international human rights treaties, including the Rome Statute. Tunisia will also accede to the APIC, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the first optional protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the optional protocol annexed to the UN Convention to Combat Torture and Other Cruel Treatment next week.

The Coalition also commends Tunisia's accession to the APIC next week, as the ratification of this important treaty will allow for robust cooperation with the ICC. The Coalition is now looking forward to Tunisia's next steps to fulfill its obligations under the Rome Statute, including full implementation of the Statute into national law as well as the cooperation with and support for the Court.

**Background:** *The ICC is the world's first, permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. 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 perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. There are currently six active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Kenya; Libya; and Uganda. The ICC has publicly issued 15 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. Three trials are ongoing. The Office of the Prosecutor has made public that it is examining at least ten situations on four continents, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea, Nigeria, and Palestine.*

*The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a global network of civil society organizations in 150 countries working in partnership to strengthen international cooperation with the ICC; ensure that the Court is fair, effective and independent; make justice both visible and universal; and advance stronger national laws that deliver justice to victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. For more information, visit: [www.coalitionfortheicc.org](http://www.coalitionfortheicc.org).*

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