



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

www.coalitionfortheicc.org

For more information, contact:

In Turkey: Günal Kurşun
Spokesman, Turkish Coalition for the ICC
Tel. +90.312.4280610
Email: gunalkursun@rightsagenda.org

In Brussels: Virginie Amato
Europe Programme Officer
Coalition for the ICC (Europe Regional Office Secretariat)
Tel: +32 (0)2 502 62 15
Email: amato@coalitionfortheicc.org

In The Hague: Oriane Maillet
Head of Communications
Coalition for the ICC (The Hague Secretariat)
Tel: +31 (0) 70 311 10 82
Email: maillet@coalitionfortheicc.org

In New York: Ata Hindi
Outreach Liaison for MENA and Europe
Coalition for the ICC (New York Secretariat)
Tel: +1 646 465 8518
Email: hindi@coalitionfortheicc.org

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Global Coalition Calls on Turkey to Join the ICC

Civil Society Urges Turkey to Reaffirm its Commitment to Justice and the Rule of Law by Acceding to the Rome Statute

Brussels, Belgium— The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC)—a global network of more than 2,500 non-governmental and civil society organizations in 150 countries—called on Turkey to reaffirm its commitment to eradicating the culture of impunity and strengthening the rule of law by acceding to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

The Coalition has chosen Turkey as the focus for its March 2011 Universal Ratification Campaign (URC), a monthly campaign launched to encourage countries to join the Rome Statute—the founding treaty of the first permanent international court capable of trying perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

In a letter sent on 1 March 2011 to Turkish President Abdullah Gül, the Coalition urged Turkey to fulfill its pledge to accede to the Rome Statute. With Moldova's recent ratification in October 2010, 114 states are parties to the Rome Statute and 139 are signatories. "Turkey has long stated its intention to accede; it is time for Turkey to turn its words into concrete actions and join in the growing movement to end impunity by acceding to the Rome Statute now," said Brigitte Suhr, the Coalition's Director of Regional Programmes.

In May 2004, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan pledged before the Assembly of the Council of Europe that "Turkey will soon approve the Rome Statute after completing its

internal preparations and will become part of the [International Criminal Court].” Furthermore, in December 2008, the government adopted the third National Program for the Adoption of the European Union (EU) “Acquis,” which lays out the steps Turkey should take to become a party to the ICC.

During the general debate of the first Review Conference of the Rome Statute held in June 2010, the Head of the Turkish Delegation, Mr. Ismail Aramaz, also stated that “While additional progress is required in further aligning our legislation more closely before we can finally accede to the Statute, especially with respect to war crimes and the crime of aggression, Turkey remains committed to the goal of accession as declared by Prime Minister Erdoğan in 2004.”

The Coalition strongly encourages the Turkish government to submit a bill to Parliament as soon as possible in order to accede to the ICC Rome Statute, and to fully align Turkey’s legislation with all obligations under the Rome Statute, including accession to the Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the ICC.

“With the support of the CICC, the Turkish Coalition will continue to engage national authorities, members of the parliament, the media, students, civil society and the general public to ensure the ICC does not drop off the national agenda,” said Günel Kurşun, Spokesman of the Turkish Coalition for the ICC, a network which includes many prominent Turkish human rights NGOs¹. “In advance of the upcoming parliamentary elections we hope our authorities will realize the potential the ICC has as an instrument for the protection of victims of serious human rights abuses in the world and act upon its promises to be part of this new system of justice,” he added.

Accession to the treaty would also allow Turkey to participate as a state party in the 2011 Assembly of States Parties to the ICC—the Court’s governing body—during which states make important decisions in relation to the administration of the Court, including the election of judges and prosecutor. A year from now, six judges, the prosecutor and deputy prosecutor will complete their terms of office. If Turkey accedes in time, it can nominate candidates to these crucial posts and participate in these important elections.

Background: *The ICC is the world’s first permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. There are currently 114 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 perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. There are currently five active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda and Kenya. The ICC has publicly issued 12 arrest warrants and three 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, Chad, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, South Korea, Nigeria, and Palestine.*

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a global network of civil society organizations in 150 countries advocating for a fair, effective and independent International Criminal Court and improved access to justice for victims of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. For more information, visit: www.coalitionfortheicc.org

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¹ Ankara Bar Association; Capital City Women’s Platform; Association of Civil Society in Criminal Execution System; Diyarbakir Bar Association; Helsinki Citizen’s Assembly; Human Rights Research Association; Human Rights Association; Human Rights Agenda Association; Izmir Women Solidarity Association; The Association of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People; Ivy Struggling with Poverty and Sustainable Development Association; Foundation for Society and Legal Studies; Social Events Research and Confrontation Association; Human Rights Foundation of Turkey; Amnesty International Turkey; Van Women Association.