

**Statement on Behalf of the Bahrain Coalition for the ICC**  
**8<sup>th</sup> Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court**

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Mr. President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased at the outset to thank you for this opportunity, and please allow me to introduce myself; my name is Naser Burdistani, Coordinator for Bahrain's Coalition for the International Criminal Court, and the Coordinator of Amnesty International in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

You are well aware that the establishment of the International Criminal Court is considered one of the most important achievements in the last decade of the last century, which came as a result of your efforts and the support of civil society organizations in various parts of the globe, and which aimed at putting a limit and an end to the phenomena of impunity which, unfortunately, was common in human history and in various cultures and civilizations.

The Islamic civilization and Arab culture emphasize the importance of human dignity; it is not allowed for anyone, regardless of his status, to be above the law, or to be immune from accountability, even if he was a Prophet from God.

Mr. President,

We believe that the main obstacle to ratification by the Kingdom of Bahrain, with many Arab countries, is the lack of political will in this area and the lack of seriousness in this regard. Giving the excuse of studying the national law to make it compatible with the Rome Statute, and raising the issues of double standards practiced by some major powers in executing international justice, are only repeated responses to the postponement of its commitments in international forums. The fact that there is no fixed date for this study is only a clear indication of lack of seriousness in this regard.

We have created this coalition in the Kingdom of Bahrain to support the International Criminal Court by calling upon the legislative, executive and judicial powers to ratify the Rome Statute as we are the least represented region in the Court, which is a cause of embarrassment for us.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is one of the countries that signed the statute in the year 2000; it had contributed positively at that time to the discussions through the participation of the current Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs, who was then the Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice, and who insured future cooperation with

the court. The assistant of the Secretary General then gave a press release to take a political decision on the ratification. However, after that press release, we only had silence from the official side, while the Legislative Council made a bold step to hold the regional meeting of the members of the Organization of Parliamentarians for Global Action under the auspices of the President of the House of Representatives in March 2009.

We call upon you as States Parties of the Rome Statute to the ICC to open serious communication channels with the various Arab countries that were at the forefront of countries in the world that supported the establishment of the Court, to raise the importance of ratifying to the court and advocate for adopting appropriate domestic legislation compatible with international conventions and treaties on human rights through and determining a deadline for this.

Mr. President,

Arab and Islamic public opinion see that there can be no justice and peace in one view, and the absence of an effective role of the Court in some regional cases such as the war on Gaza, Lebanon, Iraq and Afghanistan has increased the sense of injustice and double standards of the Court. Therefore, the biggest challenge that we have in Arab Coalitions for the ICC is not convincing the Arab governments to ratify, but the absence of popular enthusiasm for such an initiative, which makes activists in this area between the government's hammer and the people's anvil.

Despite the challenges we face in the world, despite all the difficulties and obstacles placed in front of our march towards justice, we remember what the Turkish poet Nazem Hikmat said, "the most beautiful seas are those you haven't sailed to yet, the most beautiful children are unborn yet, the prettiest words are those I did not say yet, and the most beautiful days are those we haven't lived yet."

In conclusion, I wish you every success in this session in order to achieve the desired results, stressing the importance of adhering to the principle of independence, neutrality and impartiality of the Court, away from political pressure, hoping to reach a comprehensive definition of the crime of aggression in the Review Conference in 2010, which will push the rest of the hesitant countries to join the court. I wish the Court continued success in the performance of its functions in facing its challenges towards a safer world.

Regards, thank you for your kind attention.