



Coalition for the International Criminal Court

[www.coalitionfortheicc.org](http://www.coalitionfortheicc.org)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Global Coalition Celebrates International Women's Day**

*Civil Society Renews Calls for States to Uphold Commitment to Rome Statute  
Landmark Gender Standards*

**The Hague/ New York**—Today, 8 March 2012, marks the celebration of International Women's Day and serves as a reminder of the urgency for all governments to ensure justice for women. By ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and by implementing its landmark gender provisions at the national level, states can advance and protect women's rights the Coalition said today.

By targeting sexual crimes, the Rome Statute's provisions represent a historic advance for international justice. The Statute is one of the first international treaties to extensively address gender-based crimes as crimes against humanity, war crimes, and in some instances, genocide. Specifically, the Statute recognizes rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilizations, gender-based persecutions, trafficking of persons particularly women and children, and sexual violence as among the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole.

International Women's Day helps bring into sharper focus the urgency of the work of the ICC to end impunity for crimes against women. It also serves as a reminder for ICC states parties to move forward with effective and comprehensive legislation implementing Rome Statute crimes so that protection of women's rights are guaranteed at both national and international levels.

The Coalition and women's organizations around the world will continue their tireless efforts after today's celebration to ensure that violence and persecution of women are treated as the serious criminal and humanitarian law violations that they are.

## **Coalition members' statements in honor of International Women's Day, 8 March 2012**

"In this 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the ICC, full implementation of the Rome Statute's landmark protections for women should be a priority for all states committed to justice and human rights. It is high time for countries to bring their national laws in line with the standards enshrined in the Statute, by criminalizing the serious crimes contained in the Statute, by improving access to justice for victims of these crimes, and by ensuring that laws make full cooperation with the ICC possible."

**Evelyn Balais Serrano, Regional Coordinator for Asia and the Pacific, Coalition for the ICC Secretariat, Philippines**

"The Rome Statute is meaningful for women and women's movements in many ways. For us, it is the document that gives recognition to gender crimes and sets standards that can and should be applied in national criminal law. It also gives many vulnerable women hope and belief that justice will be delivered regardless of the status of the perpetrators of crimes against women."

**Aigul Alymkulova, Executive Director, Women Support Center, Kyrgyzstan**

"The Rome Statute is the first treaty to recognize rape as a crime against humanity and a war crime, thus bringing revolutionary changes to the status of women in international law. The Statute deserves the support of African countries where rape and sexual violence are prevalent."

**Oby Nwankwo, Executive Director, Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre, Nigeria**

"The Rome Statute's importance is that it has recognized gender crimes under international human rights law. Therefore, the crimes most often committed against women—sexual assaults—have been recognized with the same severity as other violations of physical integrity and may constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes. The Statute's message is that women's rights violations are just as serious as those that affect men and are now recognized in international instruments."

**Cecilia Barraza, Director, Humanas Colombia**

"The first woman Prosecutor of the ICC will take office in a few months' time. She must be at the forefront of the fight against impunity for the most ignored category of crimes under international law – those committed against women and girls. Today, Amnesty International is pointing to the urgent need for Fatou Bensouda to fully investigate sexual violence under the Court's jurisdiction – especially in Côte d'Ivoire and the DR Congo. Only then will the ICC be playing its part in protecting the fundamental rights of women and girls."

**Widney Brown, Senior Director of Law and Policy, Amnesty International**

"As we celebrate International Women's Day (IWD) we take stock of the progress and challenges towards the legal recognition of women's rights around the world and to the participation of women in the development of international gender justice norms. For the 6,000 members represented by the Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, the majority of whom are grassroots women's rights and peace organisations, networks and advocates living in armed conflict countries under ICC investigation, IWD is a day of celebration for surviving another year and for localised gender justice victories, both large and small. It is also a time of renewing our collective determination to promote human security and peace within communities beset by conflict and to end impunity for gender-based violence including through the ICC and domestic mechanisms in countries where women experience significant

levels of violence and limited legal standing. The ICC continues to be the most significant global institution for addressing gender-based crimes because for many women the Court represents their only hope of accountability for crimes their state is unable or unwilling to prosecute. The ICC is also the only international criminal body with the positive obligation to prosecute such crimes as mandated by its visionary treaty. The Rome Statute contains the most advanced articulation in the history of international criminal and humanitarian law of acts of violence, gendered in nature, predominantly sexual and most commonly perpetrated against women. This year, we celebrate the first conviction of a senior military figure in the Congolese Army for crimes against humanity for his role in leading an attack on the remote town of Fizi in South Kivu where more than 60 women were raped. We celebrate the statement made by women from Northern Uganda to the judges of the domestic war crimes court at the start of the first hearing ever to be held within the country in relation to the longest running conflict on the African continent. We celebrate the voices of women living in IDP camps in Darfur who, despite their impoverished existence in makeshift dwellings, continue to demand accountability of those within their Government responsible for the Darfur violence and the violations against women human rights defenders. We also celebrate the election in December 2011 of Fatou Bensouda as the first woman and first African to be appointed as the ICC Chief Prosecutor, the work of Margot Wallström as the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the efforts on peace and security issues undertaken by the new UN agency for Women led by Michelle Bachelet.”

**Brigid Inder, Executive Director, Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice**

***Background:** The ICC is the world’s first permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. 120 states have joined the Rome Statute, the Court’s founding treaty. Central to the Court’s mandate is the principle of complementarity, which holds that the Court will only intervene if national legal systems are unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. There are currently seven active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Côte d’Ivoire; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda; Kenya and Libya. The ICC has publicly issued 20 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. The ICC prosecutor has also made public that it is conducting eight preliminary examinations on four continents: Afghanistan, Colombia, 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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