

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

7 March 2014

**Grave Crimes against Women Continue, Greater Accountability Needed**  
*ICC and states must increase efforts to prosecute sexual and gender-based crimes*

**New York/The Hague**—The International Criminal Court (ICC) and governments around the world should advance women’s rights by increasing their efforts to hold perpetrators of sexual and gender-based crimes in conflict to account, the Coalition for the ICC said ahead of International Women’s Day, 8 March.

“The ICC prosecutor is demonstrating greater commitment to gender justice. But as today’s acquittal of Germain Katanga for sexual crimes in the DRC shows, much work remains to be done in securing evidence sufficient for successful prosecutions,” **said Jelena Pia-Comella, program director for the Coalition for the ICC.** “Governments around the world must also up their commitment to women’s rights by ratifying the Rome Statute and adopting national laws to prosecute these horrendous crimes.”

Former Congolese rebel leader Germain Katanga was today found guilty of several counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the first ICC trial to involve sexual and gender-based charges. However, judges said that although the crimes of sexual slavery and rape were proven to have taken place, there was not enough evidence to prove beyond reasonable doubt that Katanga was responsible.

“The Katanga decision should also be a wakeup call to ICC member states that the prosecutor is in serious need of greater resources and support in her efforts to gather more and better evidence to secure convictions,” **Pia-Comella added.**

ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda is set to shortly publish her office’s first policy on the prosecution of sexual and gender-based crimes, a first for an international criminal tribunal. While the Coalition’s membership has provided expert input to the policy’s development, it is a particular achievement for Brigid Inder, executive director of Coalition steering committee member Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice, who helped craft the policy in her separate capacity as special gender advisor to the prosecutor.

International Women’s Day provides a moment to celebrate recent successes in strengthening and promoting women’s rights, as well as reflection on the work that remains to be done. The Coalition and other organizations will continue to work to end impunity for sexual and gender-based crimes and ensure that all victims have access to justice.

**Coalition member statements in honor of International Women’s Day**

“In addition to disseminating information, it is necessary to support the process of giving victims of gender-based violence the psychological, moral and material strength to claim the rights they were previously denied. This requires determination, competence and resources.”

**Mama Koité Doumbia, president of the Malian Coalition for the ICC**

“The occasion of International Women’s Day provides an opportune moment to reflect on the achievements made and obstacles that remain in the advancement of women’s rights and gender justice. This week, which also marks the ten year anniversary of the establishment of the Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice and our programmes in Northern Uganda, we are emboldened to continue to work with a large number of partners and allies towards the

**CONTACTS:**
**In The Hague:**  
**Niall Matthews**

 Head of Communications  
 Tel: +31 (0) 70 311 10 85

[matthews@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:matthews@coalitionfortheicc.org)
**In New York:**
**Jelena Pia-Comella**

Program Director

Tel: +1-646-465-8525

[pia@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:pia@coalitionfortheicc.org)
**Dan Verderosa**

Communications Officer

Tel: +1.646 465 8524

[verderosa@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:verderosa@coalitionfortheicc.org)



prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and promoting accountability for those who perpetrate these crimes through the ICC and domestic legal mechanisms.”

**Jane Akwero Odwong, programme officer, Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice, Uganda**

“[I]n the past 20 years, we have important and unprecedented progress including: the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which identified the impact of armed conflict on women as a critical area of concern and called for a reduction in excessive military expenditures and control of the availability of arms; the first convictions under international law for rape and other forms of sexual violence as torture and as acts of genocide; and the codification of the broadest range of sexual and gender-based crimes in history under the ICC Statute.”

**Brigid Inder, executive director of the Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice**

“Rape and other forms of serious sexual violence in armed conflict are war crimes and crimes against humanity and also constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions in the Rome Statute. On International Women Day 2014, Justice Without Frontiers calls for urgent action—especially in Arab armed conflict countries—to address the culture of impunity, to promote justice and to prosecute perpetrators for acts of sexual violence committed in armed conflict in the aim of ensuring that all victims of sexual violence, particularly women and girls, will have equal protection under the law and equal access to justice.”

**Brigitte Chelebian, executive director of Justice without Frontiers**

“In a country like Colombia where people are already referring to the ‘post-conflict’, and which will have to face the tremendous challenge of providing justice to six million victims, a situation of continued obstacles to the access of women to justice is no longer possible and, more importantly, no longer tolerable. Colombian women have been and are victims of forced displacement, sexual violence, threats and tortures. Truth, justice and reparation—these are the three enormous challenges that lie ahead on the Colombian horizon. If, during this long road ahead that has only recently begun, there is a failure in ensuring an active role of women and the respect of their rights, Colombia will ultimately fail in this historic opportunity to heal some wounds and begin a new era of reconciliation.”

**Adriana Benjumea, director of Corporación Humanas, Colombia**

**Background:** International Women’s Day is a global day celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women. Around the world, women play an important role in their communities and countries, but are often specifically targeted with violence in conflict situations. In ongoing conflicts in the CAR, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Darfur, Syria and elsewhere, sexual and gender-based violence is widespread. In conflicts such as these, sexual and gender-based violence is used to terrorize or degrade women, to punish communities, and as a tool of ethnic cleansing. International law recognizes that women face specific harm during armed conflict. The ICC Rome Statute is the first international treaty to identify crimes against women such as rape and sexual slavery as crimes against humanity, war crimes, and in some instances, genocide. The Statute also features special provisions to protect witnesses and victims of sexual and gender-based crimes.