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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Global Coalition Calls on Egypt to Move Forward on ICC Commitment**

*Civil society urges ratification of the Rome Statute*

**New York/Cairo**—Egypt should work towards the ratification of the Rome Statute, in line with its expressed commitment to uphold human rights, rule of law and international justice, the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (ICC) said in a letter to the president of Egypt, Dr. Mohamed Morsi, dated 21 May 2013.

*“The ongoing transitional justice process in Egypt is reigniting a crucial debate among transitional justice advocates as to the role that the ICC can play in delivering justice and redress to victims of grave crimes,” said Leila Hanafi, regional coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) at the Coalition for the ICC. “The Rome Statute contains important standards that can help guide Egypt as it continues its important task of judicial and legal reform.”*

As the largest Arab country and an instrumental player in regional politics, Egypt is in a position to act as a leader for a region underrepresented at the ICC. For the last two years, the Coalition has monitored developments in the country, including the drafting of the 2012 constitution, the parliamentary and presidential elections processes and the trial of former president Hosni Mubarak. Ratification of the Rome Statute is now being openly discussed in Egyptian civil society and government circles, and the responses have been mixed. Although there are different opinions on specific aspects of how the Rome Statute might affect national law, civil society is united in their recognition of the need to ratify the Statute.

*“Egypt is witnessing a sharp conflict between the outdated political and legal regimes and the new social relations created by the Egyptian uprisings,” said Nasser Amin, convenor of the Egyptian Coalition for the ICC and director of the Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and Legal Profession (ACIJLP). “Following the January 25th revolution, Egypt urgently needs to ratify the Rome Statute. Ratification will prevent future crimes against humanity such as those that occurred under the previous regime, and will greatly contribute to ending impunity for authorities by guaranteeing a fair and independent judicial process.”*

The Coalition acknowledged some promising steps taken by Egypt in the last two years, including statements of interest and commitment to Egypt’s ratification process made by government officials. Most recently, in February 2013, the then minister of justice, Ahmed Mekki, announced plans to include the ratification of the Rome Statute as part of the work of the International Humanitarian Law Commission. The Coalition welcomed this statement and urged the president to not lose the momentum despite a cabinet shift that displaced Mekki. As the new minister of justice, Ahmed Suleiman, takes his position, the forward push towards examining ratification should continue.

*“Egypt is undergoing a rule of law crisis,” said Mahmoud Farouk, executive director of Egyptian Union of Liberal Youth and member of the Egyptian Coalition. “Today, it is the responsibility of all stakeholders, from youth leaders to government officials, civil society and legislators to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the ICC’s Rome Statute, which establishes a new framework where impunity is no longer an acceptable option.”*

To date, 122 states worldwide have joined the ICC, with Côte d’Ivoire being the most recent. Egypt would be the 123<sup>rd</sup> state party, and the third in the MENA region (Jordan and Tunisia are the only two states parties from the region). The Coalition believes that by ratifying the Rome Statute and undergoing a review of internal legislation to bring it in line with Rome Statute standards, Egypt’s justice system would be modernized and strengthened in ways necessary for it to withstand its recent transitions.

**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 unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. There are currently eight investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; Côte d’Ivoire; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda; Kenya; Libya; and Mali. The ICC has publicly issued 20 arrest warrants and nine summonses to appear. The Court issued a judgment in its first trial on 14 March 2012. Two other trials are ongoing. There are seven preliminary examinations on four continents: Afghanistan, Colombia, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Republic of Korea, and Nigeria.*

*The Coalition for the ICC 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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