

Note on the passing of Ms. Rhonda Copelon, Champion for Human Rights

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) is saddened to learn of the passing of Ms. Rhonda Copelon on 6 May, 2010 in New York City. Rhonda Copelon, an inspirational feminist human rights lawyer, was one of the Co-Founders of the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice (WCGJ).

Current vice president of the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and a professor at the City University of New York School of Law at Queens College, Ms. Copelon played a major role in several groundbreaking cases in US Courts, including one that allowed victims of abuses in other countries to seek justice in American tribunals. In her long career- of more than 40 years- she worked on cases involving gender-based violence, racial discrimination, government wiretapping, job discrimination and abortion rights. She filed amicus briefs in cases before the UN ad hoc tribunals that contributed to recognition in international law of rape as a crime of genocide and torture.

In 1997 Copelon co-founded the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice in the International Criminal Court (WCGJ), one organization member of the Steering Committee for the CICC. The WCGJ coordinated an effort with partners across the globe ensuring that the Rome Statute was written to take gender into account concerning the crimes, procedure and evidence and composition of the Court and personnel. In particular, as a result of her tireless passion and work with partnering organizations, the ICC codified sexual and gender crimes as being part of their jurisdiction.

"The CICC sends its most sincere condolences. Rhonda Copelon will be missed, but her work and idealism are enshrined in the Rome Statute and in so many legal rights causes that she led," said William Pace, convenor of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court. "Rhonda's passing is a huge loss for the global human rights community."

Copelon was a member of CARASA, the National Jury Project, the NARAL Board, Feminist and Gay/Lesbian roundtables, and Human Rights Watch, Women's Rights Advisory Board. She was also a member of the National Lawyers Guild, and on Boards of the Center for Constitutional Rights.

**THE CICC IS A GLOBAL NETWORK OF OVER 2,500 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS SUPPORTING
A FAIR, EFFECTIVE, AND INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT.**

Steering Committee: Amnesty International (AI), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos (APRODEH), Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre (CIRDDOC-Nigeria), Comisión Andina de Juristas (CAJ), Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme (FIDH), Human Rights First (HRF), Human Rights Network- Uganda (HUNEL-U), Human Rights Watch (HRW), No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ), Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), The Redress Trust (REDRESS), Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice, and World Federalist Movement (WFM).

