



Coalition for the International Criminal Court
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Chile Joins International Criminal Court as 109th State Party
*National Civil Society Campaign Leads to Universal Support for Ending
Impunity in South America*

New York, NY. Today, Chile formally joined the International Criminal Court (ICC) by depositing its instrument of ratification to the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the ICC, at United Nations Headquarters in New York. With Chile's ratification, each of the 13 countries in South America is now a state party to the Court. In the larger region, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Cuba are the only countries in Latin America that have yet to join the Court.

"Chile's ratification poignantly underscores the country's recent history and long fight against impunity," said William R. Pace, convenor of the Coalition for the ICC. "It also demonstrates the

indispensable role of a strong and vibrant civil society that—for more than a decade of tireless advocacy— made ratification possible in Chile.”

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) is a global network of more than 2,500 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) advocating for a fair, effective and independent ICC and improved access to justice for victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

To highlight the urgent need for ratification, the Coalition’s member organizations in Chile worked to raise the profile of the Court by hosting public lectures and debates at universities and other forums, and by reaching out to government officials and members of the media.

Humanas, one of the Coalition’s main partners in Chile, launched a public awareness campaign that used broadcast spots, billboards, newspaper inserts, brochures, radio ads and awareness raising on the street to highlight the urgency of ratification.

“Today’s news brings Chile in line with the rest of the international community—more than half of which has joined the Court,” said Lorena Fries, President of Humanas, a key civil society actor in the bid to ensure Chilean ratification of the Rome Statute. “This development also represents the payment of a debt to the Chilean people to guarantee—once and for all—that the grave violations perpetrated during the Pinochet regime will never again be tolerated. As a nation, we can hold our heads high today and celebrate with pride.”

Hugo Relva from Amnesty International noted that “although the ICC does not have retroactive jurisdiction and is therefore unable to investigate or prosecute the thousands of crimes perpetrated in Chile in the past, the acceptance of the ICC’s jurisdiction for crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes that may be committed in the future is a clear sign of commitment from the Chilean government in ending impunity.”

Chile signed the Rome Statute more than ten years ago on 11 September 1998—only months after the historic adoption of the treaty on 17 July. The country’s ratification process was delayed by a number of legal and constitutional hurdles. A major turning point came on 20 May 2009 when the Chilean Chamber of Deputies approved a constitutional amendment recognizing the Court’s jurisdiction. This fulfilled an April 2002 Constitutional Court ruling that required such an amendment as a prerequisite to Chile’s ICC membership. In addition, Chilean President Michelle Bachelet declared that joining the Court was part of her political platform for change.

“Those who had opposed the ICC have finally understood that by joining the Rome Statute and supporting a judicial, independent, permanent and complementary court, you do not lose your sovereignty as a nation. Rather, sovereignty is transferred directly to citizens,” said Mr. Gabriel Ascencio, MP, member of Parliamentarians for Global Action, and rapporteur of the ratification bill adopted by the lower chamber of Congress in 2002. “The decision to ratify the Statute taken by the congress recognizes this principle, which contributes to guaranteeing the equality of all citizens and nations before the law.”