

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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International Criminal Court: Amnesty International calls for all states to nominate candidates to be International Criminal Court judges

Amnesty International is calling on all states that have ratified the Rome Statute and those that will ratify it in the next weeks, to nominate the highest qualified candidates from their countries for the election of six International Criminal Court judges in January 2006.

It is essential that at every election the Assembly of States Parties (made up of the 99 states that have ratified the Rome Statute) should have the broadest pool of nominees representing the highest qualified candidates from all states parties to choose from.

However, with less than a month before the nomination process closes on 9 October 2005, only eight states have made nominations. The small amount of nominations from certain regions, unless addressed immediately, could require that an extension of the deadline.

It is disappointing that so few states parties have yet to make nominations. It is the responsibility of all states to ensure that the highest profile positions in the International Criminal Court are occupied by the most highly qualified candidates, who will stand up to the in-depth scrutiny of their work thereby ensuring the credibility of the Court.

A broad pool of highly qualified candidates will also ensure that the judges include a fair balance of female and male judges and include those with specific expertise on important issues, such as sexual violence and violence against children.

To achieve this goal, all states parties, if they have not already done so, should immediately commence transparent national nomination processes involving civil society in their countries to identify their strongest candidates and put them forward. To assist states in this process, Amnesty International has issued its International Criminal Court: Checklist to ensure the nomination of the highest qualified candidates for judges (AI Index: IOR 40/026/2005) – available at www.amnesty.org/icc

Amnesty International urges all states that have ratified the Rome Statute or are in the process of ratifying it to take immediate steps to address this issue.

Background

The first 18 judges of the new International Criminal Court were elected in February 2003 and inaugurated at a special ceremony in The Hague in March of that year. Amnesty International welcomed the election of the 18 highest qualified judges from the international community, including seven women judges as a success for the International Criminal Court.

At the end of that election, lots were drawn assigning the 18 elected judges three-, six- or nine-year terms. The terms of the six judges who were assigned three-year terms expire in 2006. The forthcoming election will focus on electing six judges for full nine year terms. The six judges whose terms expire in 2006 are eligible for re-election.

Amnesty International takes no position whether individual candidates should be nominated or elected to the position of International Criminal Court judges or any other role in the Court.