

AL-MAHKAMAH

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TOGETHER FOR JUSTICE

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PALESTINE JOINS INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT Mahmoud Abbas acceded to the Rome Statute on 2 January 2015, making Palestine the 123rd state party as of 1 April. Palestine also issued an Article 12(3) declaration, giving the ICC jurisdiction over crimes committed on Palestinian territory since 13 June 2014.

ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda subsequently opened a preliminary examination into the situation in Palestine on 16 January.

Many Palestinian Coalition members, such as [Al Dameer](#), had called on the Palestinian government to accede to the Rome Statute throughout 2014. Munir Nuseibah, director of Coalition member organization [Al-Quds Human Rights Clinic](#), believes that civil society advocacy was a determining factor in Palestine's decision to join the Court.



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas signs the Rome Statute

Al-Haq published a joint letter to President Abbas on the ICC stating that taking such step “could ensure access to international justice for victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed on Palestinian territories, and would send an important message that such crimes cannot be committed with impunity.”

Following the accession, Al-Haq Director Shawan Jabarin stated that “President Abbas’s decision to finally accede to the Rome Statute is groundbreaking (...) There is no doubt, that Palestine’s accession will fundamentally change the way that Israel carries out its occupation and treats Palestinians.” Today, several Coalition member organizations have been tasked to assist the Palestinian Authority with all ICC related issues, including the collection

THE YEAR 2014 saw a number of developments related to justice and accountability in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). With continuing political turmoil and violent conflict throughout the region, the atmosphere is not always conducive to progress in the fight against impunity. Nevertheless, the Coalition remains diligent in its work, bolstered by events like Palestine’s decision to accede to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The Coalition is determined to capitalize on Palestine’s accession, in hopes that it will create momentum in the region for more states to join the Court.

of evidence and witness testimonies to be submitted to the ICC Prosecutor for further evaluation.

While the Israeli government strongly criticized Palestine’s accession, many Israeli civil society groups raised their voices in support of ratifying the Rome Statute. In response to government criticism aimed at the ICC, the Public Committee against Torture in Israel ([PCATI](#)) published a “Citizens’ Guide to the International Criminal Court” in June 2014. The publication indicates that the ICC is a judiciary institution that does not have any political stake in the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

“There is no doubt, that Palestine’s accession will fundamentally change the way that Israel carries out its occupation and treats Palestinians.”

THE PROPOSED “ARAB COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS”

IN SEPTEMBER 2014, Arab League foreign ministers met in Cairo and agreed on a draft statute to create an Arab Court of Human Rights. Their intent was to provide justice for victims of human rights violations in Arab League member states.

The draft statute—which was completed without transparent consultation with civil society—has come under scrutiny from over 18 human rights organizations, including Coalition members such as the [Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies](#), Al-Haq and [Hurryyat](#). They asked the Arab League to modify the statute to ensure its compatibility with international law and human rights standards. The proposed court, which can only be accessed by states, has been criticized for its lack of judicial independence; lack human rights of monitoring and reporting; acceptance of capital punishment; and lack of women’s rights.



The League of Arab States

THE CAMPAIGN FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE - EGYPT

IN NOVEMBER 2014, the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review held its second review of Egypt. The Egyptian government received several recommendations to ratify the Rome Statute, including from neighboring Tunisia. Egypt had also been criticized for its excessive use of force against protesters, as well as the lack of fair trials and transparency in the judicial process. Coalition members in Egypt note that the country is witnessing a sharp conflict between the outdated laws and the new expectations for justice created by the 2011 and 2013 uprisings. Lessons need to be drawn from the shortcomings of the last few years; timing is opportune to break with the past laws and protect Egyptians from human rights violations as well as promise them equality before the law.

In November 2014, as part of its Campaign for Global Justice, the Coalition sent a letter to Cairo urging President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to uphold international standards and ratify the Rome Statute. Despite the recent postponement of parliamentary elections, the Coalition looks forward to a productive 2015 in Egypt in hopes that civil society activity may continue to work towards bringing justice and accountability to the country.



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi addressing the UN General Assembly

COALITION ACTIONS IN MENA

LEBANON - On 21 July 2014, the Coalition sponsored a conference on sexual and gender-based crimes in conflict with Steering Committee member Justice Without Frontiers (JWF) and the Beirut Bar Association. A training toolkit on gender crimes and international instruments was presented, with a special focus on the ICC. The event also provided a platform to discuss UNSC Res. 1325 (Women Peace and Security) and the work of the ICC on investigating and prosecuting sexual and gender-based crimes.

IRAQ - On 20-21 October 2014, Parliamentarians for Global Action organized a mission from the Kurdish Regional Government of Iraq to meet with ICC President of the Sang-Hyun Song. Coalition members Kurdistan Without Genocide and others from the Kurdish Organizations Network Coalition for the ICC met with the delegation to discuss the Rome Statute ratification process in Iraq.

MOROCCO - In September 2014 the Coalition inaugurated the premises of Mohamed V University's International Criminal Law Center, building upon its strategic partnership with the school. The arrangement resulted into the creation of a "Research Working Group" within the Faculty of Law to examine the law and practice of the ICC, its con-

tribution to international criminal law and policy, and its potential role in Morocco. The Coalition and the University hope to continue to develop an International Criminal Law program for graduate law researchers and enhance academic outreach about the ICC in Morocco.

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