



## **NPWJ celebrates International Justice Day with partners around the world**

Brussels, Rome – 17 July 2011

Today, 17 July, is International Justice Day: after years of campaigning by No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) and others, this date was adopted by the Assembly of States Parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC) during the first Review Conference of the Rome Statute held in Kampala, Uganda, in June 2010. International Justice Day marks the anniversary of the adoption by 120 States in 1998 of the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the ICC, which entered into force on 1 July 2002.

### **Statement by Alison Smith, Legal Counsel of No Peace Without Justice:**

“No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) and the Nonviolent Radical Party, Transnational and Transparty (NRPTT) celebrate International Justice Day together with our partners around the world. On this day on which the ICC was born, through the adoption of its Statute, we wish to commemorate this landmark moment with our partners and with everyone involved with the fight against impunity, including the ICC itself. We take this opportunity to congratulate the international community, the States Parties to the ICC, as well as the large number of States, governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations and individuals who have contributed to the strengthening of the international criminal justice system throughout the years.

“This year we have witnessed -and still are witnessing- a massive demonstration of the beginnings of democracy in action in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The people are demanding change and the right to have a say in their own future and in the way the country is run. It is critical that these countries are not allowed to fall back into business as usual but that the revolutions turn into sustainable democracy. This requires the reestablishment of trust in public institutions and the rule of law. One of the main challenges facing the region is to draw a line between the past and the new; what is needed is an effective transitional mechanism by which to determine who was responsible for the violations of the past and remove them from positions of power. This will not only demonstrate the break with the past, but also ensure that it is done fairly with respect for human rights and the rule of law.

“Tunisia was the first country to engage in a democratic revolution, starting the Arab Spring and spurring other countries in the MENA region to take action. Just last month, the Republic of Tunisia joined the ICC in an important step towards fulfilling the human rights commitments that were made when the interim government first began its work. We hope Tunisia’s accession to the Rome Statute will likewise encourage other MENA States to join, particularly those emerging from repression and dictatorship.

“This year Grenada, Moldova, Saint Lucia and the Seychelles also deposited their instruments of accession to the Rome Statute, bringing to 116 the total number of States Parties to the ICC. To give real teeth to the threat and promise of justice, all States Parties who have not done so should implement the Rome Statute in their domestic law, so that they may fulfil their obligations under the Rome Statute and ensure they are in a position to investigate and prosecute those suspected of committing the most serious crimes of international concern.

“2011 has already been a significant year in international criminal justice, with a tremendous accomplishment in fighting impunity: the arrest of General Ratko Mladić. In one of the most horrific acts during the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, Bosnian Serb forces under the command of General Ratko Mladić executed more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys in Srebrenica and forced another 25,000 women, children and elderly people to leave their homes. General Ratko Mladić is finally facing trial before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or customs of war. We believe his trial will enable the ICTY to fulfil its core objective and to demonstrate to would-be perpetrators that violence can no longer be allowed to triumph over justice. This arrest was also crucial demonstration of Serbia’s redefinition as a European country and an ultimate landmark in Serbia’s rejoining of the community of democratic nations.

“Even as we commend those involved in General Mladić’s arrest, we cannot forget that there are still numerous fugitives from justice: their prompt arrest and transfer to face trial is the least that their victims deserve. This past year, a number of ICC States Parties violated their obligations under the Rome Statute by receiving President Omar al-Bashir on their territory without arresting him. This must no longer be allowed to happen: all States must ensure that there will be no safe haven anywhere in the world in which alleged war criminals may hide. This is as true for President al-Bashir as it is for Colonel Gadhafi and all other ICC fugitives, as well as those who continue to evade justice before the ICTY and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

“There can be no doubt that international justice has made great advances in the past year: on 26 February, only 11 days after the beginning of the violent crackdown of demonstrations by the Libyan government, the UN Security Council decided unanimously to refer the situation in Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to the ICC. This decision and the short timeframe in which it was agreed, show the high level of credibility and the central role that the ICC has gained in the international community’s fight against impunity. In only four months from the referral, with an unprecedented speed, the ICC issued three arrest warrants against those allegedly bearing the greatest responsibility for crimes against humanity in Libya, including Muammar al-Gaddafi. With the warrant against a Head of State, the Court has demonstrated that it stands on the side of victims and responds to their interests, even against those who are at the pinnacle of power. Now the international community, and particularly ICC States Parties, needs to transform the promise of justice in real actions providing all necessary support and cooperation to the Court and consequently not granting any extradition agreement to Muammar al-Gaddafi and the others indicted by the ICC. It is only through working together with commitment and dedication and bringing those alleged to have committed the most serious crimes of international concern that International Justice will be able to fulfill its promise of redress and accountability for victims of those crimes.”

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