

Odhikar Press Release

Odhikar urges the Caretaker Government to ratify the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court

Odhikar, as a member of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) held a discussion meeting to observe the International Day of Justice at Odhikar's office.

Globally the 17 July commemorates the adoption of the statute establishing ICC on that day in 1998 in Rome.

On 16 September 1999 Bangladesh became the first South Asian country to sign the Rome Statute creating the International Criminal Court (ICC). However, the Government of Bangladesh is still to ratify the Treaty.

The discussion meeting was presided over by Ahmed Ziauddin of Asian Network for the International Criminal Court (ANICC), who said:

"As a signatory to the ICC Treaty, Bangladesh has an obligation to ratify the Treaty. Ratifying the Treaty would demonstrate the commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to uphold human rights as is enshrined in our Constitution and is exemplified by our troop contributions to UN Peacekeeping missions. Ratification would improve the image of this Government in the eyes of the international community."

The International Criminal Court is a permanent independent judicial body established by the international community of states through the Rome Statute to prosecute the perpetrators of grave crimes under international law, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.

The meeting also discussed the present status of ICC campaigns in Asia and, in particular, South Asia. In Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and India the human rights activists continue to campaign on for their

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countries to ratify the ICC Treaty. Until today 139 countries have signed the Rome Statue and among them 104 countries have ratified it.

Odhikar urges the Government of Bangladesh to ratify of the Rome Statue to contribute to the international criminal justice system.

In addition, Odhikar urges the UN General Assembly to formally recognize 17th July as International Day of Justice. And urges all other South Asian governments to ratify the ICC Treaty immediately.

The other discussants of the meeting were J Hasan, Sultana Razia and Acting Director of Odhikar, ASM Nasiruddin Elan.

Notes to the Editor:

- 1. Odhikar is a Bangladeshi human rights organisation registered with the NGO Affairs Bureau*
- 2. Odhikar seeks to uphold the civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights of the people of Bangladesh.*