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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Global Coalition Urges Algeria to Join the International Criminal Court
Algeria must demonstrate its commitment to international justice and the fight against impunity in the Middle East and North Africa

New York/The Hague—The Coalition for the International Criminal Court today called on Algeria to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). Algeria is the March 2013 focus country for the Coalition’s Universal Ratification Campaign (URC), part of the global campaign to encourage all countries to join the Rome Statute system.

In a letter to Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal, dated 6 March, the Coalition urged Algeria to demonstrate its commitment to international justice and the rule of law by ratifying the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of ICC—the first permanent international court capable of trying perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

“Each time a state ratifies the Rome Statute, the Court’s jurisdiction grows. The Coalition is committed to ensuring that all territories eventually fall under the Court’s jurisdiction through ratification,” **said Brigitte Suhr, director of Regional Programs for the Coalition for the ICC.** “During this period of change in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Algeria should take the step of becoming party to the Rome Statute to make clear its commitment to justice and the rule of law.”

In its letter, the Coalition highlighted several important developments in the region, including Tunisia’s ratification in 2011 and a high-level conference hosted by Qatar, as well as an uptick in calls for accountability around the region.

“Events on the ground have elevated the issue of justice and accountability so that rarely a day goes by without news from the MENA region relating to international criminal justice. That increased attention should translate into concrete action by governments to ratify and implement the Rome Statute,” **said Leila Hanafi, Coalition MENA regional coordinator.**

During its May 2012 review by the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Algeria received numerous recommendations to ratify and implement the Rome Statute. Algeria has not yet responded to such ICC-related recommendations.

“We urge Algeria to accept the recommendations and to report to the Council clear and concrete steps it will take to bring itself closer to ratifying the Rome Statute and implementing the provisions at the national level,” said Hanafi.

Ratification of the Rome Statute would allow Algeria to help shape the future of international criminal justice through participation as a state party in the sessions of the Assembly of States Parties (ASP) to the Rome Statute, as well as by participating in all negotiations and decisions of the ASP, including making proposals on any amendments to the Statute.

To date, only four of the Arab League’s 22 member states—Jordan, Djibouti, the Comoros Islands and Tunisia—have joined the ICC as states parties, while nine are signatories to the Rome Statute. Through its strengthened regional efforts geared towards civil society, governments, media and others, the Coalition is pushing for greater alignment with the Rome Statute in MENA countries.

Background: *The ICC is the world’s first permanent international court to prosecute war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. 122 states have joined the Rome Statute, the Court’s founding treaty. The Statute is one of the first international treaties to extensively address gender-based crimes as crimes against humanity, war crimes, and in some instances, genocide. Specifically, the Statute recognizes rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced sterilizations, gender-based persecutions, trafficking of persons particularly women and children, and sexual violence as among the most serious crimes of concern to the international community as a whole. Central to the Court’s mandate is the principle of complementarity, which holds that the Court will only intervene if national legal systems are unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute perpetrators of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. There are currently eight active investigations before the Court: the Central African Republic; the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Côte d’Ivoire; Darfur, the Sudan; Uganda; Kenya, Libya and Mali.*

The Coalition for the International Criminal Court is a global network of civil society organizations in 150 countries working in partnership to strengthen international cooperation with the ICC; ensure that the Court is fair, effective and independent; make justice both visible and universal; and advance stronger national laws that deliver justice to victims of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. For more information, visit: www.coalitionfortheicc.org.

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