

Joint initiative

Groups call for ICC referral of situation in Syria

15 May 2014

Over one hundred civil society groups from around the world issued the following statement today to urge the United Nations Security Council to approve a resolution to refer the situation in Syria to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court:

We, the undersigned civil society groups, urge United Nations Security Council members to approve a draft resolution supported by a broad coalition of countries that would refer the situation in Syria to the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

More than three years into a conflict that has claimed well over 100,000 lives, according to the United Nations, atrocity crimes are being committed with complete impunity by all sides in the conflict, with no end in sight.

Neither Syrian authorities nor the leaders of non-state armed groups have taken any meaningful steps to ensure accountability for past and ongoing grave human rights crimes. The failure to hold those responsible for these violations to account has only fueled further atrocities by all sides. Against this background, we believe the ICC is the forum most capable of effectively investigating and prosecuting the people who bear the greatest responsibility for serious crimes and of offering a measure of justice for victims in Syria.

The latest report from the UN's Syria Commission of Inquiry, published on March 5, 2014, also found that all sides to the Syria conflict continued to commit serious crimes under international law and held that the Security Council was failing to take action to end the state of impunity. The commission, which has published seven in-depth reports since its establishment in August 2011, recommended that the Security Council give the ICC a mandate to investigate abuses in Syria

The need for accountability in Syria through the ICC has likewise been supported by more than 60 UN member countries, representing all regions of world, including 10 of the current members of the Security Council. We urge all Security Council members to heed this call for justice. Other countries should publicly support the draft resolution and warn Russia and China against using their veto power to obstruct accountability for violations by all sides.

As a permanent international court with a mandate to prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity when national authorities are unable or unwilling to do so, the ICC was created to address exactly the type of situation that exists in Syria today. Though the court's work can be only one piece of the larger accountability effort needed in Syria, it is a crucial first step.

We therefore strongly urge Security Council members to urgently act to fill the accountability gap in Syria. The people of Syria cannot afford further disappointment or delay.

Co-signing organizations in alphabetical order :

Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture, France
Amnesty International, Benin
Advocates for Public International Law, Uganda
Arabic Network for Human Rights Information, Egypt
Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Australia
Act for Peace, Australia

Arab Coalition for Sudan, Sudan
Arab Program for Human Rights Activists, Egypt
Arab-European Center Of Human Rights And International Law, Norway
Arab Foundation for Development and Citizenship, United Kingdom
Andalus Institute for Tolerance and anti-Violence Studies, Egypt
Benin Coalition for the International Criminal Court, Benin
Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies, Egypt
Campaña Colombiana Contra Minas, Colombia
Center for Media Studies and Peacebuilding, Liberia
Child Soldiers International, United Kingdom
Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Belgium
Club des Amis du Droit du Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo
Coalition Ivoirienne pour la Cour Penale Internationale, Cote d'Ivoire
Colombian Commission of Jurists, Colombia
Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, South Sudan
Conflict Monitoring Center, Pakistan
Congress of National Minorities of Ukraine, Ukraine
Comité Catholique Contre la Faim et Pour le Développement - Terre Solidaire, France
Comision Mexicana de Defensa y Promocion de los Derechos Humanos, Mexico
Comision de Derechos Humanos, Peru
CSO Network, Western Kenya
Dawlaty Foundation, Lebanon
Democracia Global, Argentina
East Africa Law Society, Tanzania
Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, Egypt
Elman Peace and Human Rights Center, Somalia
Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network
FN-forbundet / Danish United Nations Association, Denmark
Franciscans International
Fundación de Antropología Forense, Guatemala
Friends For a NonViolent World, United States
Georgian Young Lawyers Association, Georgia
Genocide Alert, Germany
Global Solutions.org, United States
Global Justice Center, United States
Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, United States
Gulf Centre for Human Rights, Denmark
Horiyat for Development and Human Rights, Libya
Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation, The Netherlands
Humanitarian Law Center Kosovo, Kosovo
Human Rights First, United States
Human Rights Watch
International Justice Project, United States
International Commission of Jurists, Kenya
International Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law, Nigeria
International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, United States
International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture, France
International Center for Policy and Conflict, Kenya
Insan, Lebanon
Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights, United States
Justice Without Frontiers, Lebanon
Kenya Human Rights Commission, Kenya

La Coalition Burundaise pour la Cour Penale Internationale, Burundi
Lira NGO Forum, Uganda
Ligue pour la Paix, les Droits de l'Homme et la Justice, Democratic Republic of Congo
Media Foundation for West Africa, Ghana
Minority Rights Group International, United Kingdom
National Youth Action, Inc., Liberia
No Peace Without Justice, Italy
Norwegian People's Aid, Norway
Optimum Travail du Burkina, Burkina Faso
Open Society Justice Initiative
Pakistan Body Count, Pakistan
PAX, The Netherlands
Pax Christi International
Parliamentarians for Global Action
El Equipo Peruano de Antropología Forense, Peru
Physicians for Human Rights, United States
Pak Institute for Peace Studies, Pakistan
REDRESS, United Kingdom
Reporters Without Borders, France
Rencontre africaine pour la défense des droits de l'homme (Raddho-Guinée), Guinea
Reseau Equitas, Côte d'Ivoire
Samir Kassir Foundation, Lebanon
Southern Africa Litigation Centre, South Africa
South African Institute for Advanced Constitutional, Public, Human Rights and International Law, South Africa
Syrian Network for Human Rights, United Kingdom
Syria Justice & Accountability Center, The Netherlands
Syrian Nonviolence Movement, France
Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, United Kingdom
Synergie des ONGs Congolaises pour la lutte contre les Violences Sexuelles, Democratic Republic of Congo
Synergie des ONGs Congolaises pour les Victimes, Democratic Republic of Congo
The International Federation for Human Rights, France
The Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law, Sierra Leone
The Association of Political Scientists, Greece
The Sentinel Project for Genocide Prevention, Canada
The Igarape Institute, Brazil
The Arab World Center for Democratic Development, Jordan
The United Nations Association of Sweden, Sweden
United to End Genocide, United States
Vision GRAM-International, Canada
Violations Documentation Center, Syria
Wake Up Genève for Syria, Switzerland
West Africa Civil Society Institute, Ghana
West African Bar Association, Nigeria
World Federalist Movement, Canada
World Federation of United Nations Associations
Womens's International League for Peace and Freedom, Switzerland
Zarga Organization for Rural Development, Sudan