

Genocide Watch

PRESS RELEASE

1 July 2002

The treaty of the International Criminal Court enters into force on 1 July 2002.

The International Campaign to End Genocide welcomes the International Criminal Court as an important step to prevent genocide and calls for the creation of a Center for Genocide Prevention at the United Nations.

The International Campaign to End Genocide, an international coalition of sixteen human rights, religious, and educational organizations on four continents, welcomes the International Criminal Court (ICC) into being on this first day of July 2002. The International Campaign to End Genocide (ICEG) was launched in the Hague, Netherlands by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in 1999, and has strongly supported the establishment of an independent and effective International Criminal Court.

"This is a tremendous step for global justice and the protection of human rights worldwide," said Bernard F. Hamilton, Chair of the ICEG, in London.

"The era has ended when tyrants could get away with mass murder. A new century for international justice has begun," said Dr. Gregory H. Stanton, President of Genocide Watch, Coordinator of the ICEG, in Washington, D.C.

The International Criminal Court evolved from the legal precedents of the international criminal tribunals of Nuremberg, Tokyo, and the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

The creation of the ICC displays a serious devotion on the part of the international community to increase the world's consciousness of crimes against humanity, affirms that law prohibiting these crimes transcends national sovereignty, and shows that such crimes will no longer be tolerated.

The ICC will encourage investigation into atrocities and will remove the protective cloak of secrecy in which perpetrators have hidden. Acknowledgement of the truth will also offer important relief for the victims and provide healing for wounded societies.

The ICC will serve as a deterrent to those contemplating acts of genocide. Although a few tyrants will always be undeterred by the law, the increased probability of personal prosecution and punishment by the ICC will deter other leaders from planning and committing such crimes.

While the creation of the ICC is an enormous step forward for international human rights, it is only one of several measures necessary to prevent and punish crimes against humanity such as genocide.

The ICC is designed for retrospective justice. It is necessary to take steps to prevent these horrors before they occur and attempt to protect the lives of potential victims.

The 1994 genocide in Rwanda made clear that there is a need for a Center for Genocide Prevention within the UN headquarters to provide a focal point for collection and distribution of information on potential genocides. This Center should enable the U.N. Secretary General and the members of the U.N. Security Council and the General Assembly to have timely information, which, with political will by U.N. members, would permit action to prevent future genocides.

The 1985 Whittaker Report on Genocide and the 2000 (Brahimi) Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations support the creation of such a Center for Genocide Prevention.

"Just as the International Criminal Court provides a single door, upon which anyone can knock, so there must be a single desk at the United Nations Headquarters where reports of impending genocide can be evaluated and acted on," said Dr. Peter Hall of Physicians for Human Rights - UK, one of the few international human rights NGOs that entered Rwanda at the time of the 1994 genocide.

The International Campaign to End Genocide today launches its campaign to have a UNITED NATIONS CENTER FOR GENOCIDE PREVENTION in place by 2004, the tenth anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda.

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