



Statement of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on International Criminal Justice Day (17 July 2011)

As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, I join the world today in commemorating International Criminal Justice Day. It is the day on which we all remind ourselves, every year, of the pledge we made in Rome on 17 July 1998, to put an end to impunity for grave international crimes that invariably come in the manner of human rights violations that shock the conscience of humanity.

It is right to recall on this occasion the gains made in the pursuit of international criminal justice in the period since the trials of war criminals in Nuremberg and the Far East. We celebrate in particular the accomplishments and work in progress at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Extraordinary Chamber in the Courts of Cambodia, and, of the course the International Criminal Court. I commend all the international, hybrid and national courts that have done so much to advance international criminal justice, in the determination to end impunity for gross human rights violations.

In this connection, I welcome the following positive developments, among many, that we witnessed this year: the arrest and transfer of General Ratko Mladić to the ICTY; the conviction of General Augustin Bizimungu at the ICTR; the conviction at ICTR of former Rwandan Minister Pauline Nyiramasuhuko for, among other crimes, the rapes committed against her fellow women during the Rwandan Genocide because of her own superior responsibility over the Interahamwe rapists; the very recent conviction by an Argentine national court in Buenos Aires of two former members of the military junta that ran a most repressive regime in Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s; and the judgment of the Supreme Court of Mexico requiring trials of soldiers in civilian courts for the violations of human rights of civilians.

I also welcome the ratification of the Statute of the International Criminal Court this year by Grenada and Tunisia, respectively making them the 115th and 116th States Parties to the Rome Statute.

Yet, while we celebrate these elements of progress in international criminal justice, current events around the world sadly compel a sense of enduring grave concern for the condition of human rights in our time. In places like Libya, Syria, Myanmar, Yemen, Bahrain and many others, we are starkly reminded of the hard work that lies ahead for all who so deeply desire a world in which there is no impunity for gross human rights violations.

I therefore call upon the international community to redouble their efforts to bring to account all those implicated in gross human rights violations. I remind states of their primary responsibility in that regard, especially to investigate and prosecute or extradite without delay persons, within their jurisdictions, who are implicated in such crimes.

And, I call upon all States to ratify the Statute of the International Criminal Court, and to cooperate with the processes of that Court; with a view to truly put an end to impunity for human rights violations that horrify our collective conscience.

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