



## Statement by Khaled Emam on behalf of Justice Call for the 20th Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the International Criminal Court.

Tuesday, 7 December 2021

The World Forum, The Hague

**Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,**

**My name is Khaled Emam, and I am honoured to address you today on behalf of Justice Call which is a regional youth-led organization based in the Middle East and North Africa region. We promote human rights and the rule of law by enabling young people and organizations led by them to drive sustainable change towards a peaceful, democratic, and just society.**

As an organization that works to prevent violence and atrocity crimes, we believe that accountability is an integral part of prevention mechanisms. We also believe that if the perpetrators of atrocity crimes know in advance that there will be a day for justice, they would not commit the grave crimes that they have committed, and others would not have followed them in committing crimes that shook the conscience of humanity and put international peace and security at stake.

**Despite the death of nearly 500,000 civilians in Syria, the death of nearly 300,000 people and the displacement of millions during the conflict in Darfur, and the hundreds of thousands of deaths in Yemen and Libya, most of them children, youth, and women, many of the perpetrators of these inhumane acts are still in power, as if nothing has happened! This shows us that the road to justice and accountability is long, and there is a lot that needs to be done by all of us to progress it.**

The crimes that were and are still committed with near total impunity in the region point to the utter decay that has set into national justice systems across the MENA region. It underlines the absence of any degree of seriousness in bringing the perpetrators of these crimes to justice. This is why we believe that supporting and strengthening the role of the International Criminal Court in the MENA region is the best solution, and perhaps the last chance to ensure compensation, and rehabilitation for the victims, and to hold those responsible accountable.

However, significant interventions by the International Criminal Court have remained very limited in the MENA region so far. Only a few Arab countries have ratified or acceded to the Rome Statute, and other states that fall within ICC jurisdiction over atrocity crimes do not cooperate enough in investigation and conviction procedures, including the provision of evidence that could assist the Court in the performance of its duties.

**Mr. President, Ladies and gentlemen,**

**Civil society organizations in the countries I referred to, especially those led by young men and women and human rights defenders play an essential role in strengthening justice systems and human rights and fighting the continuing impunity of atrocity crime perpetrators. They do this in difficult circumstances. Despite their important contribution, they face grave dangers, including murder, torture, travel bans, and threats to their families, as a result of their courage and peaceful work.**

In fact, there is an international obligation to support them: The United Nations Security Council resolution 2535 (2020) on Youth, Peace and Security calls upon Member States to end impunity, and investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against civilians, including against youth. This requires cooperation from regional governments, including those outside the Rome Statute, to end the current state of impunity. Working with and supporting CSOs constitutes an integral part to fulfill this obligation.

**My organisation stands by the International Criminal Court and the Assembly of States Parties to ensure independence and impartiality in the delivery of justice. Civil society organizations can enhance these efforts, and help bridge the gap between the ICC and grassroots communities.**

It is with that pledge, that commitment in mind, that we call upon the Court to enhance cooperation with civil society organizations, in particular those led by youth and women, by developing a comprehensive strategy for the exchange of information, and sustain the engagement of CSOs with the court. We call upon you all to work towards ensuring the meaningful and effective participation of these organizations in support of the ICC. At the same time, we emphasise the need to formulate policies to protect those organizations and human rights defenders who are exposed to dangers as a result of their cooperation with the Court or calling for Justice.

**Finally, we take this opportunity to call upon states across the MENA region to enhance their cooperation with the International Criminal Court at the national and regional levels, to ensure the implementation of the Rome Statute by strengthening national justice systems, to respect and abide by human rights within the framework of the principle of complementarity.**

It is only through collective, and more importantly, collaborative efforts of the ICC, governments of the MENA region, and CSOs that we can build towards ending impunity, and bringing the perpetrators of atrocity crimes across the MENA region to justice.

Thank you.