



## Civil Society Statement on International Justice Day

**Today we join you in celebration of international justice day and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rome Statute of the ICC. At the same time, we commemorate 10 years since the 2008 conflict in Georgia.**

Throughout the last decade, many victims have passed away, thousands of displaced people are living in dire conditions, and civilians are living in fear. Families of the lost ones and the remaining victims are losing hope that they will ever get justice.

Looking at the future of the Rome Statute system, on this symbolic occasion, we would like to provide 10 key recommendations to the new ICC leadership and to the Trust Fund for Victims, to make the ongoing process meaningful for the affected communities.

# საქართველოს ახალგაზრდა იურისტთა ასოციაცია GEORGIAN YOUNG LAWYERS' ASSOCIATION



The ICC has opened an investigation on the situation in Georgia in January 2016 bringing a new glimmer of hope. There is however a desperate need for detailed and balanced information amongst the victims and affected communities as well as in media and general public. There are numerous unanswered questions and misunderstandings regarding the investigation and what the Court can do.

The ICC Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) has recently been blamed for leading a one-sided investigation against former Georgian state officials. Numerous misleading and fake reports about the investigation are massively spread amongst the society. This happens largely because of the informational vacuum on the ground. While we are attempting to fill the space, we cannot replace the court in its outreach functions. Especially when accusations and attacks against civil society fighting for victims' rights and justice also happen simultaneously.

While we have welcomed the opening of the ICC field office in Georgia, we regret that its capacity to deliver outreach and act as the ICC visible voice in Georgia is limited due to a lack of investment from the Court and back-up from the States Parties, including financial.

Now is the time when public opinion needs to understand what the ICC can do in Georgia and we believe the court's active engagement in public outreach and information activities is crucial to bring in the much-needed clarity and build strong support. However, without sufficient human and financial resources, we fear that the field office, as it is envisaged in the 2019 budget proposal, and the Court's activities in Georgia are doomed to fail ensuring the Court is understood and ensuring the people stand with the victims.

## **We call on the ICC to ensure effective implementation of court's mandate:**

1. Develop a **court-wide strategy on its engagement in Georgia**, to ensure all organs have a vision of how to overcome existing challenges and ensure effective implementation of the court's mandate to deliver justice to the victims.

2. Establish advisory groups composed of local experts from civil society, legal and diplomatic communities, academia, to support the court with expertise on crucial matters in its activities in Georgia and the region.

#### **To the Prosecutor:**

3. Provide information to the public, civil society and relevant actors on the progress of the investigation on a regular basis

4. Publicly respond to direct allegations and accusations of partiality and bias, to ensure public trust and support

#### **To the Registrar:**

5. Provide sufficient human and financial resources for the field office in Georgia, including by recruiting qualified local staff who speak local languages to interact with the communities and follow the daily developments on the ground

6. Ensure full implementation of victims' rights to access justice and redress, including participation in the proceedings and adequate representation

7. Appoint a dedicated staff member from the Victims Participation and Representation Section (VPRS) to the Field Office to interact with victims on the ground;

8. Ensure local lawyers and jurists have opportunities to be on the ICC List of Counsels, including by organising trainings, and information sessions in local languages.

#### **To the Chief of the ICC Georgia Field office:**

9. Implement a fully-fledged outreach strategy in Georgia, and establish regular and specific communication tools and dedicated activities with civil society and with the media; Respond to misinformation and fake news about the ICC and Court's role in

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Georgia and relay information about local and regional developments to the HQ

**To the Trust Fund for Victims:**

10. Urgently follow up to the 2017 visit to Georgia, appoint a dedicated staff and launch programmes under its assistance mandate in Georgia to respond to the harms of victims and their families

**Signatory organizations:**

Article 42 of Constitution

Georgian Young Lawyers Association

Human Rights Center

Justice International

Georgian Center for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims