

Iranian Center for International Criminal Law Statement on the Recent Withdrawals from the Rome Statute

The 15th annual session of the Assembly of States Parties of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is taking place while some concerns about challenges that threaten the future of the Court have arisen. Three African states are in the process of materializing their intention to withdraw from the Rome Statute. These withdrawal efforts are based on a perception that the ICC is disproportionately targeting African countries and ignoring equally or worse heinous situations in other parts of the world.

The Iranian Center for International Criminal Law (ICICL), as the only NGO promoting the Court in Farsi/Persian-speaking societies, does not consider this claim as a genuine excuse to withdraw from the ICC. The ICICL firmly believes that the ICC is in many cases the only path towards justice for millions of vulnerable victims of crimes, therefore, it exhorts states to engage through collective power in the noble mission of the ICC.

In addition, the ICICL finds pertinent to indicate that the negative perceptions of the Court ignore the fact that almost all of the ICC's investigations on African States were referred to the Court by those countries themselves: Uganda, Central African Republic, Mali, DRC, and Côte d'Ivoire. There is substantial evidence that crimes committed in African situation countries fall within the jurisdiction of the Court. These crimes should not go unpunished regardless of the perpetrators and the location of perpetration.

Furthermore, it is also of vital importance to highlight that the ICC Prosecutor, Mrs. Fatou Bensouda, is actively seeking to expand the work of the Court to other regions. Conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Ukraine are all under preliminary examination at the Office of the Prosecutor. These preliminary examinations are evaluating if potential crimes against humanity and war crimes were committed by powerful states such as US, UK, Russia and Israel.



The ICICL openly applauds the Court's current efforts and encourages the Office of the Prosecutor to continue taking a historic role in delivering justice and in giving voice to those voiceless victims that have suffered from horrific crimes committed in the context of a culture of impunity. Moreover, it specifically supports the efforts in the preliminary examinations and urges the Office of the Prosecutor to thoroughly analyze if potential crimes were committed by the United States in Afghanistan, by the United Kingdom in Iraq, and by Israel in Palestine.

The ICICL is also heavily concerned and alarmed by the life threatening of a fellow Palestinian NGO activist. It is quite evident that some parts are not content about the possibility of seeing the Court's jurisdiction being exercised. These actions, while being horrific, demonstrate that the Court's impact is expanding globally, not only in Africa. The ICICL exhorts States Parties to the Court and the ICC's host State, the Netherlands, to continue to protect all who strive for international justice to prevail.

The Court is at the threshold of a momentous point in the history of the international criminal justice system. The ICICL reiterates that the international community must remain united, not isolated, to face the enormous challenge of preventing the commission of crimes, prosecuting the alleged perpetrators, whoever they are and wherever they are, and to ensure that our human values of peace, stability and security are protected.

