



**Coalition for the International Criminal Court**  
**[www.coalitionfortheicc.org](http://www.coalitionfortheicc.org)**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12 February 2010

*Contact:*

*In New York:*

Linda Gueye

(212) 687-2863 x16

[gueye@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:gueye@coalitionfortheicc.org)

Mariana Rodríguez

(212) 687-2863 x17

[rodriguez@coalitionfortheicc.org](mailto:rodriguez@coalitionfortheicc.org)

**INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS**  
*One Year Later, Lubanga Trial's Impact Is Felt on the Ground*

On 12 February 2010, the world will celebrate the International Day against the Use of Child Soldiers in commemoration of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. The Optional Protocol which came into force on 12 February 2002 prohibits the recruitment of children under 18 into armed groups and government army and their direct participation in hostilities.

The Rome Statute – founding treaty of the International Criminal Court (ICC) – qualifies the enlistment and recruitment of children under fifteen, or using them to participate actively in hostilities, as a war crime. The ICC is the first permanent international court capable of trying individuals accused of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The trial against the Congolese warlord Thomas Lubanga, ICC's first trial, which opened one year ago, is an important step in the fight against the use of child soldiers. Lubanga is accused of using child soldiers in the Ituri conflict in eastern DRC from 2002 to 2003.

At the resumption of the Lubanga trial on 7 January 2010, Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations for Children and Armed Conflict, testified as an expert witness. She highlighted the positive impact of this trial on the recruitment of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). "The ICC prosecution and trials are carefully monitored on the field, they have a

deterrent effect on many armed groups: some have stopped recruiting and some have freed [child soldiers],” she said.

Pigeon Kambale Mahuka of the Association of Victims of Ituri War (AVIGUITURI) noted that many in the Ituri region still consider recruitment and use of child soldiers as a minor crime. “When children are forced to turn into soldiers, they lose their innocent nature and become weapons of war. Those responsible for turning them into child soldiers are the real criminals,” said Mr. Muhuka. “The Lubanga trial is a good way to drive home the message that these crimes are grave.

“There is no question that the Lubanga trial underscores how much damage the use of child soldiers causes to children and communities,” said Brigitte Suhr, Director of Regional Programs for the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC). “We hope that this trial will set an example not only in the DRC but also around the world that the use of child soldiers is a serious crime and thereby contribute to the global trend away from using children as soldiers.”

## **BACKGROUND**

The trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo opened on 26 January 2009. Mr. Lubanga has allegedly participated, as a co-perpetrator, in the enlistment, conscription and use of children under the age of fifteen in hostilities. The crimes were allegedly committed during the period beginning September 2002, when the Forces Patriotiques pour la Libération du Congo (FPLC) were founded, and ending 13 August 2003.

To date, the ICC has issued thirteen arrest warrants and one summons to appear in four of the most brutal conflicts of our time: the Central African Republic; Darfur, Sudan; Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Four suspects have been arrested. The Court is also monitoring at least eight other situations on four continents. A second trial started on 24 November 2009 against Congolese rebel leaders Germain Katanga and Mathieu Ngudjolo Chui for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

## ***FOR MORE INFORMATION***

Experts from DRC human rights organizations and international NGOs are listed on the following pages for comments and background on the trial. See <http://www.iccnw.org/?mod=drctimelinelubanga> for more information.

## **NGOs in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

*Listed alphabetically*

**Ms. Yuma Malaika Garcia, Chargée du Programme Femmes et Enfants, Ligue pour la Paix et les Droits de l’Homme - LIPADHO (Coordinator of the Woman and Children Program, League for Peace and Human Rights)**

*Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo*

Telephone: +243 990508870

Email: [yumamalaika@yahoo.fr](mailto:yumamalaika@yahoo.fr)  
(French)

**Christian Hemedi, Coordinateur de la Coalition nationale pour la CPI (Head of the DRC National Coalition for the International Criminal Court)**

Telephone: + 243 99 99 166 96; + 243 81 700 5452

E-mail: [coalition\\_cpi@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:coalition_cpi@yahoo.co.uk)  
(French)

**Mpinga Tshibusu Michel Innocent, Président de l'Observatoire national des droits de l'homme (President of the National Council on Human Rights)**

Telephone: + 243 99 831 37 40

E-mail: [batmpinga@yahoo.fr](mailto:batmpinga@yahoo.fr) and [tshilundu90@yahoo.fr](mailto:tshilundu90@yahoo.fr)  
(French)

**Georges Kapiamba, Vice-Président, Association Africaine de Défense des droits de l'Homme ASADHO (Vice-President, African Association for the Defense of Human Rights - ASADHO)**

Téléphone : + 243 81 404 3641

E-mail: [gkapiamba@yahoo.fr](mailto:gkapiamba@yahoo.fr)

**Roger Muchuba, Secrétaire Exécutif de Héritiers de la Justice (Secretary of the Inheritors of Justice)**

Telephone: +243 99 86 76 6477

E-mail: [rogermuchuba@yahoo.fr](mailto:rogermuchuba@yahoo.fr)  
(English, French)

**Descartes Mponge Malasi, Point focal de la Coalition nationale de RDC pour la CPI pour la Sud Kivu (DRC national coalition for the ICC focal point for South Kivu)**

Telephone: +243812124090; +243853138383

E-mail: [cpiskrdc@yahoo.fr](mailto:cpiskrdc@yahoo.fr)  
(French)

**Bisimwa Ntakobajira, Coordinateur de l'Association de promotion et de défense des droits de l'homme (Head of the Association for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights)**

Telephone: + 243 81 355 1835

E-mail: [aedbukavu@yahoo.fr](mailto:aedbukavu@yahoo.fr) and [matsobismwa@yahoo.fr](mailto:matsobismwa@yahoo.fr)

**Eloi Urwodhi Uciba Wabiyik, Coordinateur National de la Ligue pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme (Head of the National League for Peace and Human Rights - LIPADHO)**

Telephone: +243 819821320, +243 990903958

Email: [wabiyik@yahoo.fr](mailto:wabiyik@yahoo.fr)  
(French)

**Bukeni Beck Wazuri, WITNESS and former Director and Founder of Jeunes pour le Developpement Integre-Kalundu/Projet Enfants Soldats (AJEDI-Ka/PES – Youth Development and Integration/Child Soldiers Project)**

Telephone: + 646-744-8064 (mobile); +718-783-2000 ext.307

E-mail: [bukenitw@hotmail.com](mailto:bukenitw@hotmail.com) ; [bukenibeck@yahoo.fr](mailto:bukenibeck@yahoo.fr)

(English, French)

**Anneke van Woudenberg, Chercheuse principale chargée de la RDC (Senior Researcher on the DRC, Human Rights Watch)**

Telephone: +243 81 085 2407

Email: [woudena@hrw.org](mailto:woudena@hrw.org)

(English, French)

### International NGOs

*Listed alphabetically*

**Dr. David Donat Cattin, Director of Programmes, Parliamentarians for Global Action**

Mobile phone: +31 623 318 581

E-mail: [donat@pgaction.org](mailto:donat@pgaction.org)

(English, French)

**Richard Dicker, International Justice Program Director, Human Rights Watch**

Office telephone: +1 212 216 1248

Mobile number: +1 917 747 6731

Email: [dickerr@hrw.org](mailto:dickerr@hrw.org)

(English, French)

**Elizabeth Evenson, Counsel, International Justice Program, Human Rights Watch**

Mobile tel: +32 (4) 9 82 98504

E-mail: [evensoe@hrw.org](mailto:evensoe@hrw.org)

(English)

**Mariana Goetz, REDRESS Trust**

Mobile phone: + 31 6 154 77 324

E-mail: [mariana@redress.org](mailto:mariana@redress.org)

(English, French)

**Dadimos Haile, Head of the Thematic and International Justice Department, Avocats Sans Frontières**

Mobile telephone: +32 4 98 10 95 42

E-mail: [DHaile@asf.be](mailto:DHaile@asf.be)

(English and French)

**Brigid Inder, Executive Director, Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice**

Office telephone: +31 70 3 02 99 11

E-mail: [brigid@iccwomen.org](mailto:brigid@iccwomen.org)

(English)

**Mariana Pena, Permanent representative, Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de L'Homme (FIDH)**

Mobile telephone: +31 (0) 6 81939793

E-mail: [mpena@fidh.org](mailto:mpena@fidh.org)

(French, English, Spanish)

**Andrew Philip, DRC Researcher, Amnesty International**

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7413 5620

Email: [aphilip@amnesty.org](mailto:aphilip@amnesty.org)

**Alison Smith, Legal Counsel, No Peace Without Justice**

Telephone: +32 2 548 3912

Mobile phone: +32 486 986 235

Email: [alison@sensible.it](mailto:alison@sensible.it)

(English)

**Lorraine Smith, IBA Programme Manager, International Bar Association**

Office telephone: +31 70 302 2859

Mobile number: + 30 634266310

Email: [lorraine.smith@int-bar.org](mailto:lorraine.smith@int-bar.org)

(English)

**John Washburn, Convenor, American NGO Coalition for the ICC**

Office telephone: +1 212 907 1317

Mobile: +1 917 589 5988

Email: [jwashburn@unausa.org](mailto:jwashburn@unausa.org)

(English)

***Important notice:** The Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC), an independent NGO movement, is dedicated to the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a fair, effective, and independent international organization. The Coalition as a whole, and its secretariat, does not endorse or promote specific investigations or prosecutions or take a position on situations before the ICC. However, individual CICC members may endorse referrals, provide legal and other support on investigations, or develop partnerships with local and other organizations in the course of their efforts.*

###