



ICTJ Launches First Report on ICC Outreach

Report Stresses Importance of Victim Outreach and Greater Visibility in the DRC

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BRUSSELS, KINSHASA, AND NEW YORK, March 26, 2007-The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) today launched Sensibilisation à la CPI en RDC : Sortir du « Profil Bas », an in-depth in-country assessment of the outreach efforts of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Launched from the Center's offices in Brussels, Kinshasa, and New York, the report analyzes the Court's outreach, profile, and reputation in the DRC. Congolese Thomas Lubanga is the first person the Court is prosecuting for war crimes.

"Not only is this a critical time in the Congo's transition to peace, the DRC is also a major test for the ICC," said Alpha Fall, Senior Associate at the ICTJ's Kinshasa office. "If the Court hopes to promote a culture of justice and respect for human rights during the course of this trial, it must reach out to victims and educate the general public about its activities in the DRC."

The report takes a critical look at the ICC's outreach strategy in the DRC, suggesting that it has so far fallen short of reaching out effectively to the many victims of the Congo's brutal conflicts. For example, the report finds that the Court's presence in the DRC has met with mixed reactions because of its lack of transparency. The ICC also faces

criticism for failing to inform victims about how they might participate in the trial and why the Court's focus has been limited thus far to the Lubanga case and to Ituri province.

More than an analysis, the report also aims to provide a roadmap for the immediate future, giving the ICC recommendations on how to improve its outreach efforts, for instance, by encouraging it to develop a closer relationship with the Congolese civil society, which can ensure better information of the victims most concerned by the trial.

"The ICC must face the fact that it is prosecuting Lubanga in the The Hague while impunity and insecurity continue in the DRC," said Fall from his office in Kinshasa. "Victims need to be informed about how the Court operates, what their rights are, and how they can trust in and be a part of the pursuit of justice in their country."

The report-written by ICTJ consultant Franck Petit and edited by the Center's Dorothee Marotine-is being widely distributed at the ICC-NGO consultation meeting in The Hague from March 26 through 29. To access the full report, see [Sensibilisation à la CPI en RDC : Sortir du « Profil Bas »](#) (in French). The report will be made available in English in the near future at www.ictj.org.

History of the Conflict in the DRC

The DRC is emerging from a decade of brutal war and transition after 30 years of violent and corrupt dictatorship under Mobutu Sese Seko, whose rule ended in May 1997 when rebel forces led by Laurent-Desire Kabila took control of Kinshasa with support from Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. In August 1998, Kabila's expulsion of Rwandan and Ugandan officials sparked a full-scale armed conflict that has since involved nine African states, 20 different armed factions, and is estimated to have killed as many as four million people, branding it "Africa's First World War."

Despite Laurent-Desire Kabila's death and replacement in January 2001 by his more moderate son, Joseph Kabila, and the subsequent negotiation of peace agreements with neighboring states, the fighting has continued, drawing in local ethnic groups, proxy militias, UN forces, and breakaway forces of the national army. Today, atrocities against civilians continue, particularly in the volatile regions of Ituri, North Katanga, and the Kivu Provinces, where it is estimated that 120 people per day perish from violence, hunger, and disease. Elections on July 30, 2006 were the nation's first democratic elections in more than four decades.

The ICTJ's Work in the DRC

The ICTJ has been involved in transitional justice work in the DRC since early 2003, when it provided comments on draft legislation for a truth commission and traveled to Kinshasa to hold workshops and consultations with local groups, the UN, and international NGOs. Since then, the Center has been working with local civil society groups to enhance their ability to formulate transitional justice policies and lobby effectively for their implementation.

Because of the significance of the Congolese conflict for the Great Lakes region, in late 2005 the ICTJ established a permanent presence in the country through the appointment

of Alpha Fall, Senior Associate at the ICTJ's Kinshasa office. Olivier Kambala, a Congolese Program Associate based in the Center's Cape Town office, and Suliman Baldo, Deputy Director of ICTJ's Middle East and North Africa Program, based in New York, are experts on the DRC working with Alpha Fall. In November 2005, the ICTJ Congo team conducted a series of meetings with senior UN personnel, diplomats, and government officials, including Vice-President Azarias Ruberwa and several cabinet members, members of civil society, and the Congolese Coalition for Transitional Justice (CCJT). The mission served to consolidate the Center's work in the DRC and launch a two-year program to provide support to in-country transitional justice initiatives.

About the ICTJ

The International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) assists countries pursuing accountability for past mass atrocity or human rights abuse. The Center works in societies emerging from repressive rule or armed conflict, as well as in established democracies where historical injustices or systemic abuse remain unresolved.

In order to promote justice, peace, and reconciliation, government officials and nongovernmental advocates are likely to consider a variety of transitional justice approaches including both judicial and non-judicial responses to human rights crimes. The ICTJ assists in the development of integrated, comprehensive, and localized approaches to transitional justice comprising five key elements: prosecuting perpetrators, documenting and acknowledging violations through non-judicial means such as truth commissions, reforming abusive institutions, providing reparations to victims, and facilitating reconciliation processes.

The Center is committed to building local capacity and generally strengthening the emerging field of transitional justice, and works closely with organizations and experts around the world to do so. By working in the field through local languages, the ICTJ provides comparative information, legal and policy analysis, documentation, and strategic research to justice and truth-seeking institutions, nongovernmental organizations, governments and others.