

## FOREWORD

### THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (FIDH)

FIDH is a network of 141 national human rights organizations from all over the world. Founded in 1922, the FIDH was the first international human rights NGO with a general mandate: to promote respect for all human rights, civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights, as later set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Based in Paris, FIDH has representation before the ICC in the Hague, before the UN in Geneva, New York, and before the European Union in Brussels.

FIDH has consultative status at the United Nations, UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the International Labor Organization, the Organisation of American States, the International Francophonie Organization, and the Commonwealth and observer status at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

FIDH's main priorities are:

- **Protecting and supporting human rights defenders:** FIDH provides support and protection to human rights defenders and mobilises the international community to recognise their vital role.
- **Fighting impunity and international justice, redress for victims:** FIDH makes use of the full range of national, regional and international mechanisms for fighting impunity. FIDH provides regular support to victims of torture, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, by supporting them throughout legal proceedings, before domestic courts and the ICC. FIDH also monitors processes of transitional justice.
- **Globalization respectful of human rights:** FIDH campaigns for states, corporations and international institutions to design and implement their policies and strategies with full respect for universal human rights.
- **Protecting women's rights:** FIDH works towards the effective implementation of the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to guarantee respect for women's rights as human rights. FIDH's Action Group for Women's Rights, launched in 2004, aims to provide FIDH's members and partners with renewed incentive and increased support to promote women's rights and to revive the alliances between NGOs focussing on women's rights and other human rights NGOs.
- **Protecting human rights in the "fight against terrorism":** FIDH strives to expose the opportunism with which the antiterrorist struggle is exploited to pursue political repression, restrictions on freedom of information and the right to a private life. In this context, FIDH advocates international and regional guarantees against arbitrary infringements of fundamental freedoms.

### FIDH AND THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

Since 1998, when negotiations in Rome led to the adoption of the Statute for the ICC, FIDH has worked towards the establishment and operation of an independent and effective Court. Today, FIDH continues to monitor the Court's activities, and works to ensure that the ICC becomes an effective tool in the fight against impunity; that the ICC fulfils its role to deter the perpetration of further crimes; that it

supports efforts and increases capacity at the national level to bring to justice the main perpetrators, on the basis of the complementarity principle, and that it supports effective implementation of victims' rights to participation and reparation. FIDH campaigns towards universal ratification of the Rome Statute and the enactment of effective national implementing legislation. FIDH works to enhance the effective cooperation of States Parties and international organisations with the Court.

Following the entry into force of the Statute of the ICC, many of FIDH's member and partner organisations around the world, human rights NGOs engaged in the fight against impunity at the national level, expressed the need for legal and technical assistance in order to make effective use of the ICC system. In response to these needs, in March 2004, FIDH established permanent representation at the seat of the ICC in The Hague, to provide support and training on the ICC to victims and the NGOs supporting them and to monitor the Court's activities.

FIDH is also a member of the Steering Committee of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC)<sup>1</sup>, and a member organization of the Victims' Rights Working Group (VRWG)<sup>2</sup>.

## THE FIDH LEGAL ACTION GROUP ON THE ICC: Facilitating victims' participation and legal representation in ICC proceedings

In accordance with the mandate of FIDH and based on its extensive experience in supporting and assisting victims in their legal actions before national tribunals, FIDH decided to extend the activities of its Legal Action Group to facilitating victims' participation and legal representation before the ICC.



### COMPOSITION AND MANDATE OF THE FIDH LEGAL ACTION GROUP

The FIDH Legal Action Group (GAJ) is a network of lawyers, magistrates and legal advisors, from FIDH member and partner organizations as well as elected representatives of FIDH. Its mandate is:

1. To support and assist victims: to provide direct legal assistance to victims of serious human rights violations, by advising, representing and supporting them in proceedings against the suspected perpetrators. The Legal Action Group works to implement the rights of victims of access to fair and independent justice, to ensure that their rights are recognised and that they receive measures of reparation.
2. To bring together all the necessary legal and factual elements to initiate legal proceedings at the national level to bring those responsible for human rights violations to justice.

1. See CICC website: [www.iccnw.org](http://www.iccnw.org)

2. See VRWG website: [www.vrwg.org](http://www.vrwg.org)

3. To initiate legal proceedings before national and international tribunals. In order to strengthen the activities of national legal systems in the investigation and prosecution of those responsible for human rights violations, the Legal Action Group makes particular use of the principle of universal jurisdiction.
4. To build on the complementarity of national and international jurisdictions, by promoting rapid and universal ratification of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, and the enactment of effective national implementing legislation.
5. To provide clear explanations of the mechanisms of international criminal law to enable FIDH member organisations and their local partners to use the procedures available to them at the national, regional and international levels.

FIDH and its Legal Action Group have recently started working for the full implementation of the rights granted by the ICC Statute to victims. By assisting and supporting victims in their applications to participate in proceedings before the ICC, FIDH aims to contribute to the effective recognition of victims' rights before the ICC. Members of the Legal Action Group have represented victims before the ICC.

Over the last three years, FIDH, in collaboration with its members and partners, has transmitted communications to the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC, on the basis of Article 15 of the Rome Statute, and information under Article 54(3)(e) concerning crimes which fall within the ICC's jurisdiction. In particular, FIDH has been working extensively with victims in the Democratic Republic of Congo and has contributed to the clarification of the regime for victims' participation.



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