

026/00

AI INDEX: AMR 19/04/00

8 February 2000

## **Brazil signs Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court -- Amnesty International welcomes positive step to end impunity**

Amnesty International welcomes Brazil's signature of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute). It is the 94<sup>th</sup> country to take this positive step.

*On 7 February, Brazil signed the Rome Statute in the office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.*

*"By signing the Statute, Brazil has shown its support for the creation of a permanent international court that will be able to prosecute people accused of the worst crimes known to mankind and has indicated its intention to ratify the Statute," Amnesty International said.*

*"Amnesty International urges Brazil to take the next step and ratify the Rome Statute as soon as possible and to urge other countries to do the same."*

*The International Criminal Court will be created once 60 states have ratified the Rome Statute. The Court will have the power to prosecute the perpetrators of genocide, other crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in both international and non-international conflicts. To date six states have ratified the Rome Statute and 94 have illustrated their intention to do so by signing it.*

*"It is essential that the first 60 ratifications are obtained as soon as possible," said Amnesty International. "Genocide, other crimes against humanity and war crimes are occurring in nearly every region of the world today. In most cases, the perpetrators escape justice. Creation of the Court will be a major step towards ensuring that impunity for these crimes finally comes to an end."*

Amnesty International also calls on Brazil to ensure the effectiveness of the Court by refusing to enter into agreements prohibiting the surrender of citizens of certain countries to the Court and / or refusing to make a declaration that it will not accept the Court's jurisdiction over war crimes for a

seven-year period. *The organization also urges Brazil to begin work promptly on any legislation necessary to implement the Statute once ratification takes place.*

### ***Background***

The Statute, which was adopted by the international community of states on 17 July 1998 at the conclusion of a diplomatic conference in Rome. 120 of the 148 countries present voted in favour of the Statute. Only seven countries voted against the Rome Statute and twenty-one abstained.

*In the last half of the 20th century despite millions of victims of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, countries have largely failed to fulfil their responsibilities to bring those responsible for these heinous crimes to justice. The result has been that perpetrators of these crimes have acted in the knowledge that it was extremely unlikely that they will be held accountable for their actions and victims have been denied their right to see justice done.*

*The Court will not, of course, be a substitute for national courts which are able and willing to fulfil their responsibilities. It will exercise its jurisdiction only when states fail to carry out their responsibilities under international law to bring those responsible for these crimes to justice. The very existence of the Court will act as a catalyst to inspire national legal systems to fulfil their duties and will act as a deterrent to such crimes.*

ENDS.../