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Bangladesh: New action to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

Amnesty International has today written to Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Morshed Khan and Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Moudud Ahmed, as part of a website action calling on Bangladesh to ratify the Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court.

The action is available on Amnesty International's website:

<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/icc-action-eng>.

Bangladesh was the first South Asian state to sign the Rome Statute. It should now fulfil its pledge to international justice and pave the way for other South Asian states to do the same by completing the ratification process as soon as possible, Amnesty International said today.

At the close of the Rome Diplomatic Conference, at which the Statute was signed, Bangladesh declared that its adoption "represented a giant leap forward in the establishment of justice and human rights worldwide". Bangladesh signed the Rome Statute on 16 September 1999, indicating its intention to ratify the treaty. To date, it has not done so.

When ratifying the treaty, the government will need to enact legislation allowing the Bangladesh courts to exercise their primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes and to provide full cooperation with the International Criminal Court. Amnesty International is urging the government of Bangladesh to begin the process of enacting implementing legislation as soon as possible.

In the past half century, millions of victims of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes have been denied justice, truth and full reparations. The Rome Statute creates a new system of international justice to end this injustice and to send a clear message to those planning such horrific crimes that they will no longer enjoy impunity for their actions.

The International Criminal Court requires the support of the whole international community. Amnesty International is encouraging the people of Bangladesh and all the peoples of South Asia to take part in this action calling on Bangladesh to ratify the Rome Statute as soon as possible. In doing so, they will be joining the struggle to end impunity for these horrific crimes forever.

Background

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted on 17 July 1998, provides that the Court will have initial jurisdiction over genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The International Criminal Court relies on states that have ratified the Rome Statute to investigate and prosecute people accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in their national courts. The Court will only step in when national courts are unable or unwilling to do so.

The International Criminal Court, located in The Hague in The Netherlands, is now fully operational. The Prosecutor, Luis Moreno Ocampo, is currently conducting preliminary examinations into crimes committed in the Ituri province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and into crimes committed in northern Uganda. It is reported that over three million people have died during the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, many of them victims of crimes within the International Criminal Court's jurisdiction. In Uganda, the conflict between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has resulted in mass displacement, arbitrary killings, maimings, abductions and forced recruitment, in particular of child soldiers.