

25 March 2002

AI Index IOR 40/007/2002 - News Service Nr. 54

Countdown to the International Criminal Court - only 4 more ratifications needed

With Panama becoming the 56th state to ratify the Rome Statute, fast progress is being made towards the establishment of the International Criminal Court, Amnesty International said today.

Only four more ratifications are now needed for the Statute to come into force and the Court to be established.

"Fifty-six states have so far shown their commitment towards ending impunity for the worst crimes known to humanity," Amnesty International said. "At this crucial stage in the establishment of the Court, we are calling on all other states to take immediate steps to ratify the Statute and to enact effective implementing legislation, including, providing for full cooperation with the Court."

Background

On Thursday 21 March 2002, Panama ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which was adopted at a diplomatic conference on 17 July 1998. The Statute provides for the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court to investigate and prosecute people accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. A provision was included in the Statute that 60 states must ratify the Statute before the Court can be established.

Amnesty International has been working, together with the more than 1000 members of the Coalition for an International Criminal Court, for the establishment of the International Criminal Court since 1993. Immediately following the adoption of the Rome Statute, Amnesty International launched a worldwide campaigning effort for all governments to ratify the Rome Statute and to enact implementing legislation providing for full cooperation with the Court.

Even after the 60th ratification has been deposited and the Court is established, Amnesty International will continue to lobby all states to ratify the Statute. This will be essential, because, in many cases, the Court will only have jurisdiction if the crime was committed on the territory of a country that has ratified or by the national of a state that has ratified.

More information about the International Criminal Court and Amnesty International's work on the issue is available on our website (www.amnesty.org)

\ENDS

public document

For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW web : <http://www.amnesty.org>