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Media Advisory

"Give justice a hand"

International Criminal Court -- Rome 1998

On 15 June, after four years of intense preparations, UN member states will begin a crucially important meeting in Rome. They are preparing to adopt the statute establishing a permanent international criminal court. Amnesty International, together with hundreds of other non-governmental organizations, will also be in Rome, lobbying hard to ensure that governments do not water down the court's powers, but guarantee that it is fair, just and effective.

Amnesty International's delegation in Rome will be available for pre-conference briefings, interviews, and information updates throughout its duration. They will be based in the *Palamnesty* -- a pavilion close to the governmental conference in the FAO headquarters.

BACKGROUND

In the aftermath of the Second World War, humanity said "never again", and in 1948 the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights -- promising a world without injustice and cruelty. Fifty years on, genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity continue almost unchecked. One of the reasons for these continuing is that people who have killed, tortured and raped on a massive scale are still likely to escape punishment, and their victims continue to be denied justice. Bosnia, Cambodia, Chile, Iraq, Rwanda. All countries which have suffered the horrors mass human rights abuses. All countries where virtually no-one who ordered or carried out atrocities has been called to account.

A permanent international criminal court will have a deterrent effect. It will send a clear message that the international community will not tolerate these crimes, and the full weight of the law will be brought to bear on perpetrators. It will help to end the cycle of impunity that has helped fuel continuing violations. People planning to commit these crimes will think again if they know they will be brought to justice. Victims and their families will have the chance to get justice and truth, and begin the process of reconciliation.

Finally, after years of intense preparations, the international community is gathering in Rome where the statute establishing a permanent international criminal court is expected to be adopted. Yet still, some states are thwarting efforts to establish a strong, independent court

and seriously undermining its effectiveness. Amnesty International is calling on these states to finally live up to the promise made 50 years ago.

*Source: Amnesty International, International Secretariat,
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