

Argentina: Ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court -- a positive step against impunity

Argentina's ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute) indicates the country's commitment to deterring and ending impunity for the worst crimes known to humanity, Amnesty International said today.

The organization welcomed this positive step by Argentina, which on 8 February 2001 deposited instruments of ratification with the office of the United Nations Secretary-General. It is the 28th country to ratify.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) will be established after 60 states have ratified the Rome Statute. The Court will have the power to prosecute those accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed both in international and non-international conflicts. 139 countries have indicated their intention to ratify the Rome Statute by signing it.

"The creation of the ICC will be a milestone in ending impunity for these heinous crimes," Amnesty International said.

"In the past, perpetrators of these crimes have acted in the knowledge that they are unlikely to be held accountable for their actions, and victims have been denied their right to see justice done. The ICC is an important opportunity for the world to halt this trend."

Argentina is the fifth member of the Organisation of American States (after Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, Venezuela and Canada) to ratify the Rome Statute. Amnesty International urges the government of Argentina to encourage the remaining 30 OAS members to ratify as soon as possible so that the Court can be established as soon as possible and to offer assistance to these states to complete the ratification process.

Background

The Rome Statute was adopted on 17 July 1998 at the conclusion of a diplomatic conference in Rome. 120 of the 148 countries present voted in favour of the Rome Statute. Only seven countries voted against it and 21 abstained.

Once it has been established, the ICC will not be a substitute for national courts which are able and willing to fulfil their responsibilities. Indeed, as the Preamble of the Rome Statute makes clear, countries have the primary responsibility to bring those responsible for such grave crimes to justice. The ICC will exercise its jurisdiction *only* when countries fail to carry out their responsibilities under international law. The very existence of the ICC will act as a catalyst to inspire national legal systems to fulfil their duties and will act as a deterrent to such crimes.

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