

Coalition for the International Criminal Court Commemorates International Women’s Day with International Gender Champions

**An exclusive interview with Kathyne Bomberger, Director-General,
International Commission on Missing Person**

1. What does International Women’s Day mean to you?

On International Women’s Day it is important to remember – and express solidarity with – the huge numbers of women around the world who are struggling to access their rights, in the case of women who have lost family members, these include the right to truth, to justice and to reparations. A majority of those who go missing as a result of conflict are male, which means that women are often obliged to bring up families on their own, often in patriarchal societies or in communities where they may constitute a social or religious or ethnic minority.

2. What is the most pressing issue for women in 2019?

Multiple pressing issues can be addressed if fundamental human rights are upheld; these are not men’s rights or women’s rights but human rights. Where large numbers of women have disappeared, for example in the case of Yezidi women following the Da’esh occupation of Sinjar in 2014, or where large numbers of men have disappeared, for example, at Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 – the right response is to address the crime through the full and systematic application of the law, based on the obligation of states to investigate missing persons cases and to try to bring those responsible to justice. This may be said to apply across the full spectrum of rights violations, from these egregious examples involving mass murder, to issues such as wage discrimination.

3. Is the gender equality gap narrowing or growing?

It is fluid – forward steps and backward steps. It is true that in many parts of the world, women have been empowered in the last 30 to 40 years – but in some parts of the world, there appears to be a reversion to or a consolidation of patriarchal values. The World Economic Forum’s 2018 Global Gender Gap report notes that “if current rates were to be maintained in the future, the overall global gender gap will close in 61 years in Western Europe, 70 years in South Asia, 74 years in Latin America and the Caribbean, 135 years in Sub-Saharan Africa, 124 years in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 153 years in the Middle East and North Africa, 171 years in East Asia and the Pacific, and 165 years in North America.” The length of time before equality is achieved – at present rates – can only be viewed as rather dispiriting.

4. As an International Gender Champion, what message would you like to send on International Women’s Day?

Families of the missing are striving all over the world to access their fundamental right – to truth, to justice and to reparations. We must support them through advocacy and education and above all by upholding the rule of law.