



Statement by Khaled Emam on behalf of Justice Call for the 20th Session of the Assembly of States Parties to the International Criminal Court.

Tuesday, 7 December 2021

The World Forum, The Hague

Mr. President, Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen,

My name is Khaled Emam, and I am an honour to address you today on behalf Justice Call which is regional youth-led organization based in the Middle East and North Africa region. We promote human rights and the rule of law with one focus in particular: we concentrate on young people and pursue our goals by enabling young people and organizations led by them to drive sustainable change towards a peaceful, democratic, and just society.

As an organization that works to prevent violence and atrocity crimes, we believe that accountability is an integral part of prevention mechanisms. We also believe that if the perpetrators of atrocity crimes know in advance that there will be a day for justice, they would not committed the grave ceimes that they committed, where others would not have followed them in committing other crimes that shook the conscience of humanity and put international peace and security at stake.

Despite the deaths of nearly 500,000 civilians in Syria, the deaths of nearly 300,000 people and the displacement of millions in the conflict in the Darfur, and the hundreds of thousands of deaths in Yemen and Libya, most of them children, youth, and women, many of the perpetrators of these inhumane acts are still in power, as if nothing happened! The road to justice and accountability is long, and much distance is yet to be covered.

All of this points to the utter decay that has set into national justice systems across the MENA region. It underlines the absence of any degree of seriousness in bringing the perpetrators of these crimes to justice.

This why we believe that supporting and strengthening the role of the International Criminal Court in the MENA region is the best solution, and perhaps the last chance to ensure redressal, compensation, and rehabilitation for the victims, and the holding those responsible accountable.

However, significant interventions by the International Criminal Court have remained very limited in the MENA region so far. Only a few Arab countries have ratified or acceded to the Rome Statute, and other states that fall within ICC jurisdiction over atrocity crimes do not cooperate enough in investigation and conviction procedures. In the present situation, it seems to be sufficient to present the perpetrators before this August Court. The handover of crucial evidence that will assist the Court in the performance of its duties is most often obstructed.

Mr. President, Ladies and gentlemen,

Civil society organizations in the countries I referred to, especially those led by young men and women, play an essential role in strengthening justice systems and human rights, and questioning the continuing impunity of atrocity crime perpetrators. They do this in difficult circumstances. Despite their important contribution, they face grave dangers, including murder, torture, travel bans, and threats to their families, as a result of their bravery and courage in the face of power.

There is an international obligation to support them: The United Nations Security Council resolution 2535 (2020) on Youth, Peace and Security calls upon Member States to end impunity, and investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against civilians, including against youth. This requires cooperation from regional governments, including those outside the Rome Statute, to end the current state of impunity. This requires supporting among other also supporting the civil society.

My organisation stands by the International Criminal Court and the Assembly of States Parties to ensure independence and impartiality in the delivery of justice. Civil society organizations can enhance these efforts, and help bridge the gap between the ICC and grassroots communities.

It is with that pledge, that commitment in mind, that we call upon the Court to enhance cooperation with civil society organizations, in particular those led by youth and women, by developing a comprehensive strategy for exchange of information, and sustained engagement and participation. We call upon you all to work towards ensuring the meaningful and effective participation of these organizations in support of the ICC. At the same time, we emphasise the need to formulate policies to protect those organizations and human rights defenders who are exposed to dangers as a result of their cooperation with the Court or calling for Justice.

Finally, we take this opportunity to call upon states across the MENA region to enhance cooperation with the International Criminal Court at the national and regional levels, to ensure the implementation of the

Rome Statute by strengthening national justice systems, to respect and abide by human rights within the framework of the principle of complementarity.

It is only through collective, and more importantly, collaborative efforts of the ICC, governments of the MENA region, and civil society organizations that we can build towards ending impunity, and bringing .the perpetrators of atrocity crimes against innocent people across our region to justice

Thank you.