

## **International Justice Day – a continuing need to address sexual and gender-based crimes**

**17 July 2019**

Today, July 17<sup>th</sup>, marks International Justice Day. Twenty-one years ago, states parties, civil society, and the larger international community committed to one of the greatest advances in international justice by adopting the Rome Statute, the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court (ICC). On this important anniversary, it is important to reflect on the current issues before the ICC, including progress on gender justice issues.

The Women's Caucus for Gender Justice brought together women's human rights advocates from around the world to the negotiations towards the creation of the ICC to firmly ingrain the principles of gender justice and accountability for crimes of sexual and gender violence in the Rome Statute. More than twenty years later, the ICC remains a catalyst for the development of policies on investigation and prosecution of SGBV policies, training and outreach all over the world.

Despite a slow and oftentimes frustrating process, the recognition of sexual and gender-based violence is increasing. Only last week, Bosco Ntaganda was convicted on 18 charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including rape and sexual slavery. Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice [welcomed](#) this decision as an important step in the development of international criminal law jurisprudence on sexual and gender-based violence. Today, the ICC is hearing closing statements in the confirmation of charges hearings in the case of Al Hassan, in which the crimes he was accused of include persecution on the grounds of gender - a ground-breaking first if confirmed.

This International Justice Day, Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice calls on States, international organizations and civil society to continue confronting the widespread use of sexual violence in conflict, and work towards accountability for these heinous crimes. As noted by other civil society organizations today ([No Peace Without Justice](#), [Open Society Justice Initiative](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#)) the ICC must be strong and steadfast in order to fulfil the potential of the Rome Statute, as must all stakeholders in the international system of justice created twenty one years ago. Ensuring that the ICC has the means to be robust in its fight to end impunity, including for sexual and gender-based violence that characterizes so many conflicts, is critical to ending impunity.

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Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice is an international women's human rights organisation that works to achieve gender justice. We aim for equality through and in the law, including increased accountability for sexual and gender-based crimes. We work to include gender perspectives and increase female participation in justice mechanisms and strive to elevate the voices of local actors and victims to international structures such as the ICC. Current programme countries include the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Find more about our Call it what it is campaign [here](#).

**Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice**

