



Annual meetings held between the International Criminal Court and NGOs

On May 20-24, 2019, a series of annual strategic round table meetings between the International Criminal Court (ICC) and non-governmental organizations was held in Hague.

The meetings concerned the issues of cooperation between the non-governmental sector and the ICC and the challenges faced by judicial bodies of various countries at the stages of preliminary inquiry and/or investigation as well as in their daily activities.

Participants of the round table meetings included judges and the Prosecutor of the ICC

and representatives of the Office of the Prosecutor, the Registry and other sections of the ICC, on the one hand, and representatives of local NGOs and international human rights organizations, from the side of the non-governmental sector.

Participants of the meetings from Georgia included representatives of the Human Rights Center, Article 42 of the Constitution, Justice International, the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association, and the Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims.

The representatives of the NGOs spoke about challenges relating to the ICC's investigation concerning the August War of 2008 which is underway in Georgia and called on representatives of the Office of the Prosecutor to pay particular attention to the most large-scale and grave crimes committed during the war, including the ethnic cleansing of the Georgian population. At the same time, the NGOs emphasized the fact that – considering the large scale of the crimes committed against ethnic Georgians – it is important that the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC is able to establish the liability of the highest-ranking officials. The participants of the meetings also emphasized the importance of the success of the investigation in Georgia for regions outside Africa, as the situation of Georgia is the first non-African investigation for the ICC which is going to have an effect in terms of future support, trust, and awareness-raising about the ICC among the public.

The NGO representatives once again stressed the current grave socio-economic situation of the affected IDPs and the need for the ICC's Trust Fund for Victims to implement programs of support with the aim of providing assistance for those affected as a result of the war. They also emphasized the need to strengthen the local office of the ICC in Georgia and to equip it with additional human and financial resources, as well as the need to implement active information and awareness-raising activities, including informing the victims about the mandate, role and ongoing investigation of the ICC and about their rights in the legal proceedings.

In their turn, representatives of the ICC emphasized the priority nature and significance of the investigation underway in Georgia. Representatives of the Office of the Prosecutor noted that the investigation was proceeding actively, although, due to the confidential character of the ongoing process and the interests of the investigation, they refrained from disclosing concrete details. According to information

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provided by representatives of the Trust Fund for Victims, the Fund is now assessing the situation of affected IDPs and in November 2019 the board of the Fund will decide on the implementation of concrete programs of assistance for those affected in Georgia.

The NGOs from Georgia took part in the round table meetings with the financial support of the Open Society Georgia Foundation and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court.

Signatory organizations:

- Human Rights Center;
- Justice International;
- Georgian Young Lawyers' Association;
- Article 42 of the Constitution;
- Georgian Centre for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims.