

Dominican Republic: urge the government to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

The Dominican Republic signed the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute) on 8 September 2000. Senior Dominican Republic parliamentarians have expressed their support for the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the Organization of American States recently called on all member states that have not yet ratified the Rome Statute to consider doing so (AG Res. 2039, 8 June 2004).

Amnesty International and the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) are calling on the Dominican Republic to complete its ratification process as soon as possible. By so doing, the Dominican Republic would accept the jurisdiction of the ICC over genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, if its national courts were unwilling or unable to investigate and prosecute such crimes. So far, 97 states worldwide have ratified the Rome Statute.

The Dominican Republic has recently elected a new government, and is finalizing amendments to its criminal penal code to include some crimes under international law. These developments provide an excellent opportunity to encourage the Dominican Republic to fulfil its commitment to international justice by ratifying the Rome Statute and encouraging other Caribbean and Latin American states to do the same. Within the Caribbean, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago have all ratified the Rome Statute, as have the majority of Latin American states.

Take action

Support Amnesty International's appeal by sending letters by mail or fax urging the government of the Dominican Republic to ratify the Rome Statute and implement it into national law.

You might like to use the following letter as a guide.

Dear President,

At a time when the International Criminal Court (ICC) is beginning its important work to end impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, I am writing to urge you to ensure that the Dominican Republic supports the new system of international justice by ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute) as soon as possible.

The Rome Statute provides for the establishment of a permanent International Criminal Court to bring to justice people accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes as the most serious crimes under international law. The ICC will only act when national courts are unable or unwilling genuinely to do so.

As of 1 November 2004, 97 states had ratified or acceded to the Rome Statute, including 7 Caribbean states (Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, St Vincent and

the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago) and 12 Latin American states (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela). A further 43 states, including the Dominican Republic, have signed the Rome Statute. The ICC has recently announced its first two investigations into crimes under international law committed in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda since 1 July 2002.

I welcome reports that the Dominican Republic has been examining the Rome Statute in detail in preparation for ratification. I now urge you to move forward with prompt ratification of the Statute. In addition, I understand that a new Penal Code is being discussed in Congress and would urge you to ensure that this new code includes all crimes under international law. Genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes should be included and defined in a way that is consistent with the Rome Statute and other international law by the time the Dominican Republic ratifies, in order to ensure that the Dominican Republic can perform its primary role of investigating and prosecuting these crimes.

The Dominican Republic should also ensure that it implements legislation enabling it to cooperate fully with the ICC; Amnesty International regrets that the new Criminal Procedural Code does not include any provision on cooperation with international courts. I urge you to ensure that such legislation is drafted in a transparent manner with broad consultation with civil society.

I hope that the Dominican Republic will be able to take these steps as soon as possible so that it can join the international community in building an effective system of international justice to end impunity for the worst crimes known to humanity.

Yours sincerely,

Please send appeals to:

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