

Jamaica – urge Prime Minister Patterson to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

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As a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Jamaica played a leading role in establishing the International Criminal Court. In 1989, Jamaica and other Caribbean states joined in an initiative by Trinidad and Tobago to create the Court by calling on the United Nations General Assembly to take steps towards establishing a permanent international criminal court to deal with crimes under international law, as well as drug trafficking.

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute) adopted on 17 July 1998 provides that the Court will have initial jurisdiction over genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. States that have ratified the Rome Statute will meet in 2009 to consider adding additional crimes, including drug trafficking, to the jurisdiction of the Court.

Jamaica signed the Rome Statute on 8 September 2000, indicating its intention to ratify the treaty. However, to date, Jamaica has not yet done so. In July 2003, during the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting, members which had not yet ratified or acceded to the Rome Statute, including Jamaica, said they would do so expeditiously.

The government reportedly intends to enact legislation implementing the Rome Statute into national law before Jamaica ratifies so that Jamaican courts can exercise their primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute the crimes and to provide full cooperation with the International Criminal Court. Amnesty International welcomes this decision as such legislation is essential for the Court to function effectively. However, it is a matter of concern that the process of preparing such legislation has not yet started.

Amnesty International is calling on Jamaica to start drafting effective implementing legislation in a transparent process involving broad consultation with civil society so that it can ratify the Rome Statute as soon as possible.

Take Action:

You can help encourage the government to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court without delay. Please send appeals by mail or fax, preferably in English, to Prime Minister Patterson. You can use the model letter below.

Dear Prime Minister,

At a time when the International Criminal Court is beginning its important work to end impunity for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, I am writing to urge Jamaica to ratify the Rome Statute as soon as possible.

As a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Jamaica has played a lead role in the establishment of the International Criminal Court. Notably, it indicated its intention to ratify the Statute by signing it on 8 September 2000, and in July last year during the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting Jamaica committed to ratifying expeditiously.

I welcome reports that government intends to enact legislation implementing the Rome Statute to criminalize genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in national law and provide full cooperation to the Court before it ratifies. Such legislation is essential to ensure that Jamaica meets its obligations to the Court. However, I am concerned that the preparation of this legislation has not yet started.

I urge you to make drafting effective implementing legislation in a transparent process involving broad consultation with civil society a priority so that Jamaica can join the international community in the fight against impunity by ratifying the Rome Statute as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

[address]

Appeals to:
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