



The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders

The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders unites 30 human rights NGOs in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Network seeks to facilitate creation of a safer and enabling environment for human rights defenders in the South Caucasus and to strengthen their voices in the region and internationally.

The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders International Justice day Statement

July 17, 2009

The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders together with the Coalition for the International Criminal Court (CICC) and the Human Rights House Foundation - celebrate the 17th of July the International Justice Day on the occasion of a regional meeting taking place in Bazaleti, Georgia.

Today marks the 11th anniversary of the adoption of the Rome Statute – the founding treaty of the International Criminal Court, on 17th July 1998. “As one of the most important advances in international law and human rights since the adoption of the UN Charter in 1948, the ICC has a huge potential in deterring for the perpetration of future abuses by bringing to justice the perpetrators of the most heinous crimes, such as crimes against humanity, war crimes, crimes of genocide, and once defined, the crime of aggression”, said Ucha Nanuashvili, Director of the Human Rights Centre in Georgia and the Coordinator of the South-Caucasus Network.

The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders notes that as of today only Georgia has ratified the Rome Statute of the ICC and fully implemented its provisions into its national legislation. “In spite of the contribution and efforts made by the Armenian and Azerbaijani delegations in the Rome conference establishing the Court, both countries have not ratified the Statute yet”, said the 20 organizations from Armenia and Azerbaijan; “we appeal the Armenian and the Azerbaijani Governments to ratify the Rome Statute of the ICC as soon as possible, thus making the Court stronger and better equipped to fulfil its role”. The ICC is a Court of last resort, intervening only when national authorities are not able or willing to investigate and prosecute at the national level.

In August last year, following the outbreak of violence between Georgia and Russia, the Prosecutor of the ICC publicly announced that his Office would be monitoring information of alleged crimes falling under the jurisdiction of the Court, committed during the conflict. As a State Party to the ICC, Georgia has the primary responsibility to investigate and prosecute alleged violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed on its territory.

The South Caucasus Network of Human Rights Defenders regrets, however, that one year after the Russia-Georgia conflict, no investigation has been opened by either national or international authorities, thus leaving the crimes committed unpunished and the victims of those crimes deprived of justice and redress. The South Caucasus Network urges today the competent national and international authorities to put an end to impunity and start a thorough investigation into the violations allegedly perpetrated during last August.

The South Caucasus Network reminds the important role of Human Rights Defenders in bringing light on any human rights violation and remains committed to documenting and

“Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.”
Article 1, UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders

reporting information on war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide to all relevant authorities, including to the Office of the Prosecutor at the ICC. To that end, we call on the relevant authorities to give full access to the crime scenes, to enable international and national NGOs to carry out their mandate in a meaningful way.

Member organizations of the South Caucasus Network for Human Rights Defenders are:

Azerbaijan

Institute for Reporters' Freedom and Safety
Human Rights Center
International Student Cooperation,
Public Association for Assistance for Free Economy
Women Association Center after Aliyeva,
Democracy and HR Resource Centre Public Union (Sungait),
Legal Education Society,
Society for Humanitarian Research
Institute for Peace and Democracy
Media Rights Institute
Election Monitoring and Education Center

Georgia

Human Rights Center (HRIDC)
Center for the protection the constitutional rights
Anti-violence Network of Georgia (AVNG)
Former Political Prisoners for Human Rights
Article 42 of the Constitutions
Multinational Georgia
Inclusive
Georgian Center for Psychosocial and Medical Rehabilitation of Torture Victims
Studio Reporter
Caucasian Center for Conflict and Human Rights

Armenia

Armenian Helsinki Association
Helsinki Assembly, Vanadzor
Socioscope
Democracy Today
Armenian Helsinki Assembly, Yerevan
Jurists against Torture
Public Information and Need of Knowledge (PINK)
Women's Resource Center Armenia
Vernatun- Political Prisoners' Wives
Asparez, Journalist Club, Gyumri region