

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism Action Alert

**Take action on Yom Hashoa – Support the International Criminal Court
and help ensure that Genocide never goes unpunished**

April 2003

Yom Hashoa is a yearly reminder of the incomprehensible horror of the Holocaust – a time for us to attempt to understand the scope of the tragedy. We remember so that history will not repeat itself. Never Again. This year, as we recall the Holocaust we can also take steps to ensure that no people ever suffers from genocide again. The International Criminal Court's has recently been formed to apprehend and prosecute those who commit the most serious violations of international humanitarian law, namely war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. This independent judicial body is capable of both trying and deterring the Hitlers, Pinochet and Milosevics of the future.

The past century witnessed the worst violence in the history of humankind. In the past half-century alone, more than 250 conflicts have erupted around the world; more than 86 million civilians, mostly women and children died in these conflicts; and over 170 million people were stripped of their rights, property and dignity. Most of these victims have been simply forgotten and few perpetrators have been brought to justice. It was not until the creation of the International Criminal Court that has been a permanent, international mechanism capable of prosecuting the most nefarious violators of international humanitarian law.

Despite being a leader in the creation of the International Criminal Court, the United States Senate has not yet ratified the treaty necessary for the U.S. to join the court. By enforcing international law in a fair and consistent manner, the International Criminal Court will serve to deter future war crimes and crimes against humanity and, therefore lessen the necessity for military interventions

One component of the International Criminal Court is designed to help victims of atrocities. The Victims Trust Fund, will provide direct restitution to victims, their families, and their communities. This money will help victims seek medical and psychological care, regain lost property, properly bury their dead, create community memorials, pay school fees for orphans, and in other ways help them reconstruct their lives and communities.

Action Needed:

Contact your Senators and urge them to publicly support International Criminal Court and vote to ratify the Rome Statute, which would make the United States a member of the court To easily reach your members by phone, you may call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224- 3121. To send an e-mail go to "Take Action Now" above.

To learn more about the Victims Trust Fund go to <http://www.victimstrustfund.org>

Background

Yom Hashoa is a yearly reminder of the incomprehensible horror of the Holocaust – a time for us to attempt to understand the scope of the tragedy. We remember so that history will not repeat itself. Never Again. This year, as we recall the Holocaust we can also take steps to ensure that no people ever suffers from genocide again. The International Criminal Court's has recently been formed to apprehend and prosecute those who commit the most serious violations of international humanitarian law, namely war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. This independent judicial body is capable of both trying and deterring the Hitlers, Pinochet and Milosevics of the future.

The past century witnessed the worst violence in the history of humankind. In the past half-century alone, more than 250 conflicts have erupted around the world; more than 86 million civilians, mostly women and children died in these conflicts; and over 170 million people were stripped of their rights, property and dignity. Most of these victims have been simply forgotten and few perpetrators have been brought to justice. It was not until the creation of the International Criminal Court that has been a permanent, international mechanism capable of prosecuting the most nefarious violators of international humanitarian law.

Despite being a leader in the creation of the International Criminal Court, the United States Senate has not yet ratified the treaty necessary for the U.S. to join the court. By enforcing international law in a fair and consistent manner, the International Criminal Court will serve to deter future war crimes and crimes against humanity and, therefore lessen the necessity for military interventions

Jewish Tradition

Judaism teaches that we are not to carry grudges in our hearts. However, we cannot confuse this teaching with the urgent ethical obligation to bring criminals to the bench of justice. Our sages observed that a pattern of transgression brings in its wake further transgression. As it is written, "Run away from a transgression, for a commandment pulls along a commandment and a transgression pulls along a transgression" (*Pirke Avot* 4:2). Our tradition also teaches that there is no limit to the judgments for the wicked, and that we are not to stand idly by at the suffering of other human beings. Failure to apprehend and prosecute war criminals sends a message that such actions are acceptable, with the result that further perpetrators of evil will also believe that they have nothing to fear.

How well we understand, from our own tragedies as a people, the awesome price human beings pay for indifference and silence. We, above all others, must be alert to suffering and injustice anywhere in the world and be proactive in deterring the perpetuation of war crimes. We cannot allow notorious criminals to escape justice.

Legislative Update

On March 11, 2003 the International Criminal Court's first 18 judges were sworn in, formally opening the Court that will end impunity for the world's worst crimes. Now the

international community, including the United States' closest allies, will finally hold the worst global criminals accountable for their atrocities. However, because the U.S. Senate has not yet ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the U.S. is not yet a member of this critically important court. We urge you to contact your senator and show your support for this critical international judicial body.

Additionally, one component of the International Criminal Court is designed to aid the victims of atrocities. The Victims Trust Fund, will provide direct restitution to victims, their families, and their communities. This money will help victims seek medical and psychological care, regain lost property, properly bury their dead, create community memorials, pay school fees for orphans, and in other ways help them reconstruct their lives and communities. To learn more about the Victims Trust Fund or to support it go to www.victimstrustfund.org

Letter to Senators

On March 11, 2003 the International Criminal Court's first 18 judges were sworn in, formally opening the Court that will end impunity for the world's worst crimes. Now the international community, including the United States' closest allies, will finally hold the worst global criminals accountable for their atrocities. However, because the U.S. Senate has not yet ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the U.S. is not yet a member of this critically important court.

Judaism teaches that we are not to carry grudges in our hearts. However, we cannot confuse this teaching with the urgent ethical obligation to bring criminals to the bench of justice. Our sages observed that a pattern of transgression brings in its wake further transgression. As it is written, "Run away from a transgression, for a commandment pulls along a commandment and a transgression pulls along a transgression" (*Pirke Avot* 4:2). Our tradition also teaches that there is no limit to the judgments for the wicked, and that we are not to stand idly by at the suffering of other human beings. Failure to apprehend and prosecute war criminals sends a message that such actions are acceptable, with the result that further perpetrators of evil will also believe that they have nothing to fear.

How well we understand, from our own tragedies as a people, the awesome price human beings pay for indifference and silence. We, above all others, must be alert to suffering and injustice anywhere in the world and be proactive in deterring the perpetuation of war crimes. We cannot allow notorious criminals to escape justice.

I strongly believe that the best way to protect American interests and advance the cause of international justice is for the U.S. to ratify the Rome Statute and join the International Criminal Court – working cooperatively with the world community to ensure that atrocities do not go unpunished. I urge you to publicly support the International Criminal Court and work with the rest of the Senate to ratify the Rome Statute so that the United States can become a member of this critically important new international court.