



International Day of Justice

July 16-17, Rome, Italy

Rally Speech

World Without Genocide is a US-based human rights organization with special consultative status at the United Nations.

World Without Genocide has advocated for the International Criminal Court for nearly twenty years. We have held 27 educational programs, published 39 articles, and written hundreds of social media posts. Every year we celebrate International Justice Day, the anniversary of the Court's founding on July 17, 1998. We have attended the court's Assembly of States Parties for almost a decade. We are members of the international Coalition for the International Criminal Court and the Washington Working Group for the International Criminal Court.

Today I will speak about someone who was here in Rome in 1998 for the ratification of the Rome Statute: Ben Ferencz.

His human rights legacy began after World War II at the Nuremberg trials. These trials were led jointly by the four Allied nations - the US, UK, Soviet Union, and France. Nations used the just rule of law together to prosecute accused perpetrators for the worst atrocities committed on the planet.

The dream of a permanent international court to hold high-ranking individuals criminally responsible for the world's gravest crimes came from those watershed Nuremberg trials.

The biggest murder trial in history was in Nuremberg in 1947, 22 leaders of the Nazi Einsatzgruppen, mobile killing squads charged with murdering over a million people with intent, with calculation, and with no remorse.

Ben Ferencz, at age 27, was the lead prosecutor. He received guilty verdicts for every one of the accused. It was the first trial of his life.

He said afterwards, "Nuremberg taught me that creating a world of tolerance and compassion would be a long and arduous task. And I also learned that if we did not devote ourselves to developing effective world law, the same cruel mentality that made the Holocaust possible might one day destroy the entire human race."

He participated in the UN Diplomatic Conference and witnessed the adoption of the Rome Statute. He delivered a powerful address at the Rome Conference for the International Criminal Court on June 16, 1998.

He said, "I have come to Rome to speak for those who cannot speak—the silent victims of monstrous deeds." He highlighted his Nuremberg experience, stating, "I asked the tribunal then to affirm the legal right of every human being to live in peace and dignity. The place is here, and the time is now!"

On July 17, 1998, the international community stood up for justice. Today, 125 nations unite in that cause.

In 2011 Ben Ferencz gave the prosecution's closing argument at the International Criminal Court's first case, a person accused of massive human rights violations who was ultimately sentenced to 14 years imprisonment.

Mr. Ferencz was 91 years old at that trial. He drew a parallel to his opening statement at the Nuremberg trial, when he was 27, stating, "The case we present is a plea of humanity to law."

Ben Ferencz passed away in 2023. He dedicated his life, from Nuremberg to the ICC, to promoting law, not war.

Today, on International Justice Day, we remember Ben Ferenc. Like him, we believe that the Court represents our hope for sustainable peace. In his memory, we advocate for the Court to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and for its worldwide support.

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Press Conference Remarks

World Without Genocide, a human rights organization with special consultative status at the United Nations. We are headquartered in the United States. I am here today to affirm that many organizations and individuals in the United States support the International Criminal Court.

We are deeply distressed by the actions of the United States government to limit and impede the global rule of law.

The goals of the ICC are essential to peace in the world.

- This court is a tool of retribution, meting out punishment for perpetrators of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and aggression, the worst crimes on the planet. The court gives immunity and impunity to no one for these crimes.
- The court is a global deterrent, a standard-bearer for sustainable peace, without which the world cannot endure.
- And this court's legal foundation, the Rome Statute, is the model for laws that are adopted by nations around the world.

The International Criminal Court affirms that nobody is immune from the law and nobody can perpetrate atrocities with impunity. When individuals attempt to thwart the rules-based international order, it is up to each of us to stand up and say no, that the rule of law must prevail.

Civil and legal communities are the last line of defense for maintaining *jus cogens*, the "super norms" of international law, the moral foundation from which the international community must not permit deviation.

Examples of these moral principles include prohibitions of genocide, crimes against humanity, illegal aggression, war crimes, racial discrimination, and torture. And now, these highest-order principles are being destroyed to wage illegal wars with impunity and to eviscerate the international order to benefit individuals and their personal agendas.

More than 150 NGOs, including World Without Genocide, have joined with member states in publicly decrying the U.S. sanctions against the Court. The U.S. administration must be excoriated, and the court must be defended with all possible measures, because the rules-based international order is perilously close to destruction. The time is now, on International Justice Day, to affirm the global commitment to peace and justice.

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