



The Hague International  
Model United Nations

# THIMUN Model International Criminal Court Handbook



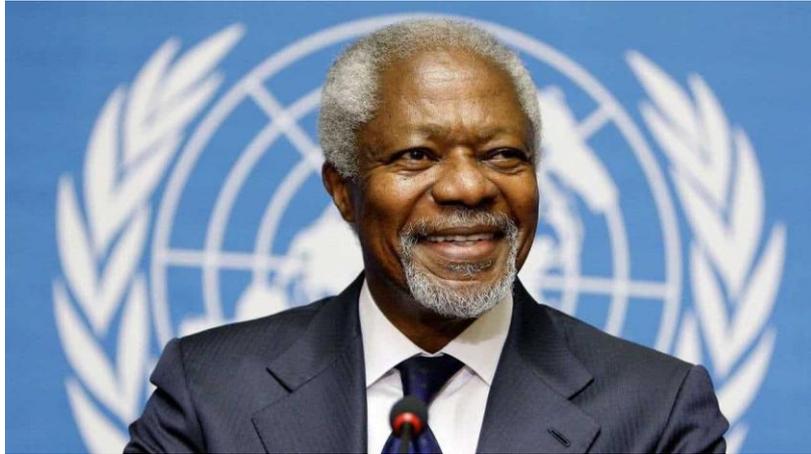
*The International Court of Justice, The Hague, the Netherlands*

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*Chamber 1 in session of the International Criminal Court © ICC*



*UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, 1938-2018*

*"In the prospect of an international criminal court lies the promise of universal justice. That is the simple and soaring hope of this vision [...] to ensure that no ruler, no State, no junta and no army anywhere can abuse human rights with impunity. Only then will the innocents of distant wars and conflicts know that they, too, may sleep under the cover of justice; that they, too, have rights, and that those who violate those rights will be punished."*

*Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General, 11 June 1997*

## **Introduction**

### **Welcome to the THIMUN ICC!**

With the founding of the UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION, there was great hope to overcome wars, crimes against humanity, and other atrocities among states and even within states.

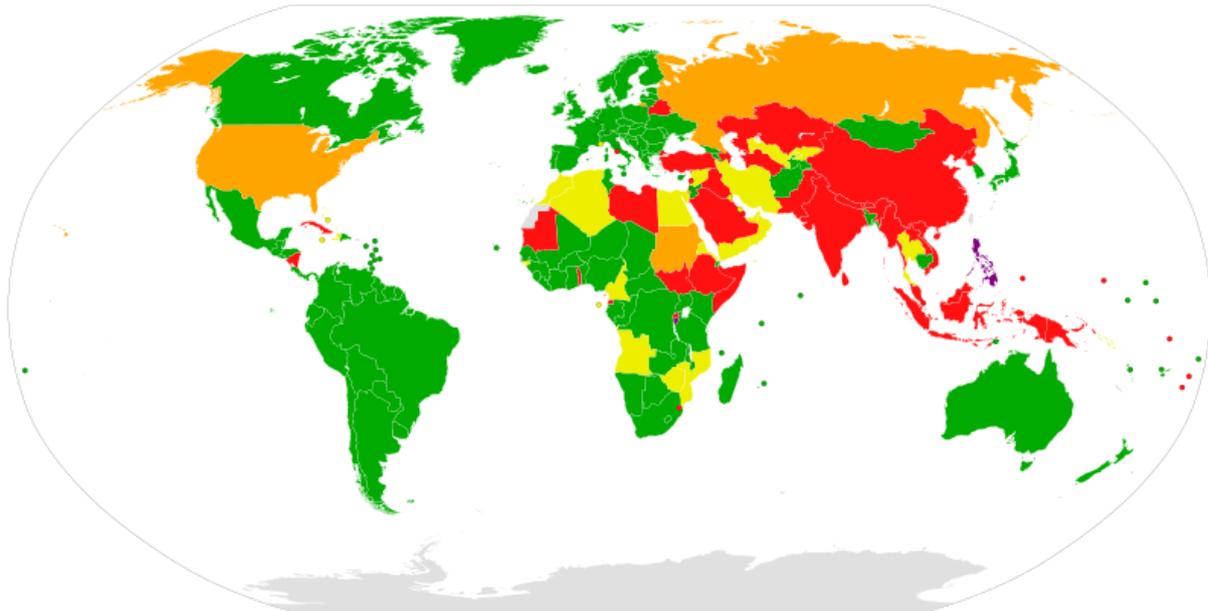
Despite undeniable improvements which the UN has initiated during its 80 years of existence, we still must endure wars, human rights violations, and genocide. But the UN has given itself an institution to let execrable crimes not go unpunished: the International Criminal Court. At THIMUN 2026, we will strive to model this fight against impunity by conducting two trials.

Participating in the THIMUN International Criminal Court [TICC] as President, Registrar, Judge, Prosecutor, or Defence, your expertise and work will shape this court, set precedence, and help to further establish the TICC as a valued organ of the THIMUN Conference.

### **What is the ICC?**

On 17 July 1998, the UN General Assembly adopted the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) by a vote of 120 to 7, with 21 countries abstaining. China, Iraq, Israel, Libya, Qatar or the USA voted against the Treaty.

The ICC is an intergovernmental organisation and international tribunal seated in The Hague, Netherlands. Its jurisdiction aims at prosecuting individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.



*Parties and signatories of the Rome Statute, 2025*

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ICC\\_member\\_states.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ICC_member_states.svg)

	State party
	Signatory that has not ratified
	State party that withdrew its membership
	Signatory that withdrew its signature
	Not a state party, not a signatory

As of 2025, 125 states have ratified the Rome Statute, thus becoming members of the ICC, Ukraine being the recent one. The jurisdiction of the ICC is limited; it can only investigate and prosecute crimes:

- if these crimes are committed within member states, committed by nationals of member states, or in situations referred to the Court by the United Nations Security Council;
- if member states' courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute criminals.

As "court of last resort", the ICC is meant to complement existing national judicial systems, not to replace it.

### **Why the ICC? History and mandate of the ICC**

Following World War I, the negotiators of the Treaty of Versailles proposed establishing an international court to try the Kaiser and German war criminals. The issue was addressed again at a conference held in Geneva in 1937, which resulted in the conclusion of the first convention stipulating the establishment of a permanent international court to try acts of international terrorism. The convention was only signed by 13 states but not ratified and never entered into force.

Following the Second World War, the allied powers established two tribunals to prosecute Axis leaders accused of war crimes. The International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg prosecuted German leaders while the International Military Tribunal for the Far East in Tokyo prosecuted Japanese leaders.

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly first recognised the need for a permanent international court to deal with atrocities of the kind prosecuted after World War II. At the request of the General Assembly, the International Law Commission (ILC) drafted two statutes in the early 1950s, but tensions

and rivalries during the Cold War era prevented reaching consensus on the establishment of an international criminal court.

In June 1989, following the easing of tensions, the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, A. N. R. Robinson, revived the idea of a permanent international criminal court by proposing the creation of a tribunal to address the illegal drug trade. In response, the General Assembly tasked the ILC with drafting a statute for a permanent court.

Atrocities unfolding in the 1990s in the Balkan Peninsula and east-central Africa drew world attention. In response to heinous crimes committed by armed forces during the Yugoslav Wars (1990-2001), the UN Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993, and a year later, following the Rwandan genocide, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). With these tribunals, the need for a permanent international criminal court became even more apparent.

In 1994, the ILC presented its final draft statute for the International Criminal Court to the General Assembly and recommended a conference to negotiate a treaty that would serve as the Court's statute.

After the Preparatory Committee, with input from non-governmental organisations (NGOs), had debated stipulations of the statute, the UN General Assembly convened a conference in Rome in June 1998 with the aim of finalising the treaty to serve as the Court's statute. On 17 July 1998, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court was adopted by a vote of 120 to 7, with 21 countries abstaining.

Following 60 ratifications, the Rome Statute entered into force on 1 July 2002, and the International Criminal Court was formally established. It issued its first judgment in 2012 when it found Congolese rebel leader Thomas Lubanga Dyilo guilty of war crimes related to using child soldiers.



*Thomas Lubanga Dyilo*  
*© Michael Kooren / AFP / Getty Images*

### **What are the benefits of being a member of the court and what are its challenges?**

In the “**real world**”, the signatory states of the Rome Statute affirm their commitment to the rule of international law and defence of Human Rights. They want to participate in a global fight to end impunity, and through international criminal justice. This new International Criminal Court [ICC] aims to hold those responsible accountable for their crimes and to help prevent these crimes from happening again.

Without any executive power on its own, the ICC depends on the cooperation with national governments. Since some permanent members of the Security Council, Russia, the United States, and China are not signatories, the court's effectiveness seems limited. Nevertheless, an arrest warrant issued for a citizen of a non-member state must be pursued in all member states and his or her name will always be connected to that warrant. Consequently, the ICC's arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin hindered him from attending a BRICS conference in South Africa in August 2023 since the authorities there would have been obliged to arrest him.

For the victims and for the general public's understanding of justice, it is essential that those who are responsible for atrocities such as human rights violations, rape as a means of war, and genocide are held accountable. Before the establishment of the court, a person stood a better chance of being tried

and judged for killing one human being than for killing 100,000 as José Ayala Lasso, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, put it.

**Being part of the TICC**, you will gain a deeper understanding of the cases which are in the mandate of the court:

- As a prosecutor, you must gather evidence that proves your case beyond a reasonable doubt.
- As the defence you must identify the shortcomings of the prosecutor's argument.
- As a judge, you must meet the challenge of acquitting or convicting the defendant justly.

By working on these tasks, you will learn a great deal about yourself and your potential. You will engage in debates with other young people who value clear and well-reasoned argumentation. You will gain insight into how the court functions and investigate cases to better understand how such atrocities occur and the harm they inflict on individuals and communities. Ultimately, your greatest challenge will be discerning the truth based on the evidence presented and arguing your case accordingly.

## The Cases

At THIMUN ICC 2026, two cases will be tried:

**1. The Prosecutor Versus *Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi***

Accused of a war crime involving the intentional targeting of ten buildings belonging to Mali's cultural heritage.



*Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, Photo: GETTY / EPA*

**2. The Prosecutor versus Joseph Kony**

Suspected of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Uganda since July 2002



*Joseph Kony, <https://alchetron.com/Joseph-Kony> 2024*

# Role of Participants

## Presidency

The **President**, the **Deputy President** and the **Registrar** work closely together and coordinate the activities of the Prosecutor and the Defence. The Presidency gathers information on both cases and supports all members of the court in their preparation. They hold online meetings with the court members to monitor their preparations and report regularly to the TICC advisor. The President carries the burden of the coordination of the work among the Presidency and the responsibility of reporting regularly to the ICC Advisor.

During the trials, the Presidents set the agenda, ensure the court's adherence to the rules, decide on objections, facilitate goal-oriented debate, and make sure that the deliberations lead to a verdict within the allotted time. The Registrar keeps a speakers' list, yields the floor, keeps record of the main arguments and results of the sessions, swears in witnesses, and provides additional information, when necessary.

## Prosecutor

The members of the Office of the Prosecutor must submit sufficient evidence for conviction, i.e., collect evidence to prove the defendant's guilt beyond reasonable doubt. They bear the burden of proof by providing witness statements, testimonies, videos or other visual or written materials.

## Defence

The members of the Office of the Defence carefully analyse the submitted pre-trial and trial evidence. They present their perspective on the case and find exculpatory evidence / witness statements to rebut the prosecution.

## Judges

Before the trial, the Judges must rely on the pre-trial evidence and the memoirs submitted by both the Offices of the Prosecutor and the Defence.

During the trial, they listen carefully, take notes, inspect the submitted pieces of evidence, and deliberate the validity of prosecutor and defence with each other. After the closing arguments, they write the verdict and, in case of a conviction, decide on the sentence. Deviating opinions can be submitted.



*ICC judges, 2025, vrt nws*

# Important Terms

## The Court

### *Defence Advocate*

A defence advocate is a lawyer who is authorised to represent a client in a court of law. At the TICC, the defence advocates make up the Office of the Defence.

### *Office of the Prosecutor*

At the TICC, the Office of the Prosecutor has the task to prove that the defendant is guilty, and to enforce legal action for the purpose of securing the conviction and punishment of the accused of crime.

### *Bench*

A judge's seat in a law court, often used to collectively refer to all the judges hearing a case.

### *Counsel*

A lawyer, attorney, attorney-at-law, counsellor, solicitor, barrister, advocate, or other individual licensed to practice law. At the TICC the counsels are advocates of the Office of the Defence or members of the Office of the Prosecutor.

### *Defendant*

A person against whom the court proceedings are brought.

### *Hearing*

Any part of a trial or other court proceedings that takes place inside a courtroom.

### *Precedent*

A judgment or decision of a court in a former case can be a precedent for the case at hand and can justify proceedings or decisions in a similar matter accordingly.

## The Crimes

### *Genocide*

Acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.

### *Crimes against humanity*

Acts or knowledge of acts committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population: murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation or forcible transfer, unlawful deprivation of liberty, torture, rape and other serious sexual violence, collective persecution, enforced disappearances, apartheid and other similar inhumane acts causing great suffering or serious injury.

### *War crimes*

"War crimes" include grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and other serious violations of the laws and customs applicable in international armed conflict and in conflicts "not of an international character" listed in the 1998 Rome Statute, when they are committed as part of a plan or policy or on a large scale: murder; mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; taking of hostages; intentionally directing attacks against the civilian population; intentionally directing attacks against buildings dedicated to religion, education, art, science or charitable purposes, historical monuments or hospitals;

pillaging; rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy or any other form of sexual violence; conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into armed forces or groups or using them to participate actively in hostilities.

### *Aggression*

The use of armed force by a state against the sovereignty, territorial integrity or political independence of another state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Charter of the United Nations.

## The Proceedings of the Trial

### *Indictment*

A formal charge or accusation of a crime. The indictment most probably contains several counts (issues).

### *Memoire*

Prior to the beginning of the trial / of meeting in The Hague, the memoire of each party is presented to the judges. This document contains information on the case, from the perspective of the specific party, e.g., historical background, political situation in which the crime took place, relevant facts, points of law / legal principles. Finally, it contains the prayer of each party.

### *Stipulations*

Before the trial begins, the counsels of both parties agree on facts that are not in dispute and create the Joint Stipulations. These stipulations cannot be questioned during the case. From the moment they are presented to the court, no changes are possible.

### *Opening statements*

During the opening statements, the parties present to the court what they have submitted in the memoires, i.e., they refer to the historical background of the case, their policy, and the outcome that they want the trial to have (prayer). It will be up to 15 minutes long each.

### *Rebuttal and Surrebuttal*

The counsels of both parties can question the assertions of the opposing party by a rebuttal. In a surrebuttal, the rebuttal can be rejected / rebutted.

### *Burden of proof*

Each party has the obligation of proving its assertions; either the assertion that the defendant is guilty or not guilty. The burden of proof is met if two third of the judges (6 out of 9) are convinced beyond reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty.

### *Beyond reasonable doubt*

This highest standard of proof must be met by the Prosecutor in a criminal trial. To overcome the presumption that a person is innocent until proven guilty, no possible explanation for the facts presented must be consistent with the innocence of the accused. In other words, these facts must not allow any logical explanation other than that the defendant committed the crime. While doubts about the defendant's guilt may still arise, there must be no reasonable doubt to be derived from the evidence presented.

### *Preponderance of probabilities*

In contrast to the principle of 'beyond reasonable doubt', the 'preponderance of probabilities' requires that the party's assertion is more likely to be true than false. The prosecutor is bound to the principle of 'beyond reasonable doubt' which the defence can counter by proving the 'preponderance of probabilities', thus proving 'reasonable doubt'.

### *Evidence*

Evidence is used by each party to support its argumentation. There are two categories, real evidence and testimony. At the TICC all material objects, such as documents, books, articles, and treatises available online are accepted as real evidence. The statements made by the witnesses under oath serve as testimony. A witness must be a real person, not a fictional character. Authenticity and credibility of all evidence will be scrutinised by the opposing party and the judges.

### *Presentation of evidence*

During the presentation, each party submits only real evidence to support their case. The other party has the right to object.

### *Witnesses*

Complementing their real evidence, each party may bring a maximum of three witnesses to the court and support their case with the witnesses' testimony. A Witness will be played by another delegate coming from the advocates school that is not a Student Officer, Secretariat member or Press member.

### *Direct Examination*

The party that has called the witness does the Direct Examination. During Direct Examinations, leading questions are not allowed unless the witness is an expert or a hostile witness (s. below).

### *Cross-Examination*

Cross-examination is executed by the opposing party and the judges. Leading questions are allowed during cross-examination. The opposing party and the judges are only allowed to ask questions regarding the examination.

### *Objections during Examinations*

Permitted objections will be due to one or multiple of the following:

- Hearsay.
- Leading Question in the Direct Examination as well as Non-Leading in Cross.
- Relevance, i.e., questions in the Cross Examination do not relate to facts brought up during the Direct Examination.
- Badgering (distressing) the witness.

Counsels will submit their objections orally upon asking of the question before the witness has replied. The presidency will decide whether to sustain or overrule the objection.

### *Hearsay question*

Hearsay is difficult to define, and there are many exceptions to the rule. Basically, you cannot ask a witness about an out-of-court statement or act allegedly made by someone other than the witness. A hearsay is a testimony provided by a witness that is not based on personal knowledge but is a repetition of what someone else said. It is never admissible because it is impossible to testify its truthfulness in a cross-examination.

“Ms. Miller, what did Mr. Anderson say? Objection, hearsay! Why? Because Mr. Anderson is not available to be cross-examined to determine the veracity/truth of the matter stated. You can ask Ms. Miller what she (Ms. Miller said), but not what someone else said.

### *Leading Question*

Leading questions are suggestive as they imply or contain their own answers:

- How many victims did the defendant appear to have killed?
- You watched from a small distance, didn't you?

These types of questions are only allowed in cross-examination, but not during the direct examination.

### *Non-Leading Questions*

Conversely, non-leading questions do not imply the answer. These are permitted exclusively during direct examination. For example: “What were you doing on the day of the crime?” is a non-leading question, as opposed to “You were eating breakfast on the day of the crime, right?”, which is leading.

### *Examination of Evidence*

Judges are called to examine all pieces of evidence which were presented to the court. Each judge gets appointed a different piece of evidence to read, to assess based on relevance, reliability, and authenticity. Finally, the respective judge presents the outcome of the examination to the other judges.

### *Objections regarding pieces of evidence*

- Authenticity, e.g., being based on facts is questionable.
- Reliability, e.g., it is not from a credible source / cannot be traced back.
- Relevance, e.g., it is not relevant to the case.

### *Prayer*

In their prayers, the parties explicate what they ask the judges to decide – this refers not only to the final verdict but also to the protection of witnesses and possibly reparations or compensations.

### *Closing Statements*

In their closing statements both parties outline some points of the trial, repeat some of the facts that they previously mentioned and address some questions that the court may have. The prayers are part of it. These closing statements will each be 20 minutes, maximum. The prosecutor will go first, however, if they wish, they may split their total time and permit the defence to speak after, say, 10 minutes. The defence will have their 20 minutes, and then the prosecutor will continue with their remaining time.

### *Verdict*

After the taking of evidence has ended and after the closing remarks, the judges come to a verdict – either acquitting (not guilty) convicting (guilty) the defendant. A two-third majority is required.



*Current ICC Prosecutor Karim A.A. Khan*

# Rules of Procedure

1. **Opening of the session:** The president opens the session and brings forward motions to be voted on. The president is responsible to grant the floor to the counsels, judges, and witnesses.
2. **Stipulations:** Prior to the opening, the prosecutor and the defence discuss those relevant issues of fact and of law to which an agreement can be reached before the case is presented and submit ONE set of stipulations. After the prosecutor's Opening Statement, the stipulations are read to the judges. For each one, the defence is asked if they agree. If they do, the president says, "so stipulated", and that stipulation is evidence, and can be considered by the judges.
3. **Opening Statements:** The prosecutor and defence counsels present their statements (in that order). These presentations should not take more than 20 minutes each.
4. **Rebuttal and Surrebuttal:** The president grants time to both parties' counsels to consult with each other before the trial commences with rebuttals and surrebuttals to the opening statements (same orders as in 2).  
The scope of the rebuttal is limited to the content of the opening statements. Rebuttals (two minutes speaking time) will be followed by surrebuttals from the previous counsel (one minute). Its scope is limited to the content of the rebuttal.  
The bench may allow more than one round of rebuttal and surrebuttal.
5. **Presentation of Evidence:** The prosecutor and defence counsels (in that order) present and explain their evidence for the counts of indictment by turns.  
A good presentation:
  - 5.1 Begins with an introduction of the counsel and the count being presented,
  - 5.2 Summarises the facts relevant to the count,
  - 5.3 Highlights the facts or legal positions in dispute,
  - 5.4 Presents arguments in favour of the party's position,
  - 5.5 Presents any evidence in support of the party's argument,
  - 5.6 Anticipates the main arguments from the opposing counsel and presents a preliminary defence to prove how their line of argument is sound and based in law and legal precedent,
  - 5.7 Indicates (if applicable) the witness the counsel intends to examine later, and a brief overview of what they wish to examine the witness for,
  - 5.8 Concludes with a summary.
6. **Rebuttal and Surrebuttal to the Presentation of Issues:** After the presentation of the count, the floor is open to all counsels of the opposing party for a rebuttal (max. one minute). Rebuttals will be followed by surrebuttals from the other party (max. one minute). The scope is limited to the content of the rebuttal provided.
7. **Witness Briefing:** Both parties choose up to three witnesses in advance to complement the evidence. They brief their witnesses to the effect that they understand the case and their position in it. Both parties provide their witnesses with a storyline and prepare them for their examination. Both parties are free to make reasonable inferences from the facts of the case to build the storyline and add facts to make the witness's testimony more authentic, without contradicting any facts.

The witnesses should be very well-prepared, during direct examination they should know the questions and give prepared answers. Most importantly, they know how to respond to the cross-examiner.

- 8. Witness Examination:** Before witnesses take the stand, they are required to execute the following statement: "I solemnly declare that I will speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." After the direct examination of the witness, the opposing party may cross-examine the witness. During the examinations, the opposing party has the right to raise objections regarding the admissibility of a question. The president will decide on the objection raised.

Evidence may be introduced or already introduced evidence may be shown to the witness during examinations.

At any phase of the examinations, the judges are entitled to question a witness.

**9. Cross Examination**

In the cross examination, the opposing party strives to find incoherences in the testimony and to impeach the witness's credibility, also taking their demeanour into account.

The questions asked cannot exceed or be outside the scope of the direct examination. No hearsay is allowed, either. But every question can and should be a leading question, i.e., the opposing party tells the witness what they want them to say by asking suggestive questions which can be replied to by "yes" or "no". *Example: You were lying when you said you saw the defendant in the store, weren't you?" "Isn't it true that the person you saw was not the defendant, but someone else?"*

- 10. Comments and Recalls:** After the witness examination, both parties have the right to comment on the witnesses' statements (max. five minutes). Ideally, the president will call on both parties alternating after each comment. Parties may also ask to recall witnesses if they require further clarification on a specific matter before the beginning of the closing statements.

Both parties are encouraged to treat this phase like a debate and reflect on, reply to, and show the strength or weakness of previous comments in their speeches. The president shall decide on such requests.

- 11. Questioning:** After completing the taking of evidence, the president will call a recess of approximately 90 minutes. During this time judges will convene in closed session to prepare questions for either prosecution, defence, or both. Such questions may refer to any factual or legal matter regarding the case. 30 minutes before the time of the recess ends, prosecutor and defence will be provided with a list of questions for their side, to prepare the answers.

- 12. Closing Statements:** Each party, the Office of the Prosecutor and the Office of the Defence, has 20 minutes to deliver their Closing Statement. While the Office of the Prosecutor will attempt to show that the defendant's guilt has been proven beyond reasonable doubt, the Office of the Defence will dispute that assertion and attempt to prove at least a preponderance of probability that the defendant is not guilty.

- 13. Advocate Questioning:** Judges will have as much time as is necessary to ask any questions they wish of the counsels to gain last insights into the case.

- 14. The Verdict:** The court will be adjourned for the day while the judges deliberate the verdict and formulate the reasons for their decision.



On 10 February 2023, the judges of the ICC elected Mr Osvaldo Zavala Giler as Registrar for a period of five years.

## Sources and Further References

The Rome Statute: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/RS-Eng.pdf>

Elements of Crimes <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/ElementsOfCrimesEng.pdf>

(Meant to assist the Court in the interpretation and application of articles 6, 7 and 8, consistent with the Rome Statute)

How the Court works: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/about/how-the-court-works>

The ICC Process (you tube video)

<https://binged.it/3LyBMKp>

### Fact Sheets

- The Court Today: [https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/TheCourtToday-Eng\\_0.pdf](https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/TheCourtToday-Eng_0.pdf)
- Defence: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/DefenceENG.pdf>
- Prosecutor: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2022-12/factsheet-otp-web-v.3-eng.pdf>
- The Judges: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-03/JudgesENG.pdf>
- Victims: <https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2025-03/VictimsENG.pdf>

Human Rights Watch, International Criminal Court: <https://www.hrw.org/topic/international-justice/international-criminal-court>

### Case Information

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<https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/CaseInformationSheets/Al-MahdiEng.pdf>
- <https://www.icc-cpi.int/mali/al-mahdi>
- Joseph Kony:  
<https://www.icc-cpi.int/sites/default/files/2024-04/KonyEng.pdf>

Kofi Annan: Advocating for an International Criminal Court, in: Fordham International Law Journal 21/2 1997 Article 2: <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2237&context=ilj>

CSIMUN Athens Model United Nations Handbook: <https://mun.campion.edu.gr/non-ga-committees/icc/#Introduction>

Rato Bangala School, Patan, Nepal: [International Criminal Court – RBS MUN XVII](#)

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