



3 June 2014 – [Accountability](#) is at the heart of international law. The Nuremburg and Tokyo tribunals post-World War II, followed by the conflicts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia as well as in Rwanda in the early 1990s, highlighted the need for a permanent international criminal court.

In 1998 the General Assembly in Rome drafted the Rome Statute, creating the [International Criminal Court](#), which entered into force in 2002. The ICC aims to prosecute leaders of armed factions, politicians, high military leaders and heads of state who have committed crimes against their populations, thus ending impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of concern to the international community. The goal is to render accountable those who traditional judiciary systems cannot, or will not, prosecute.

As the [conflict in Syria](#) continues, with devastating effects on the civilian population, [mass atrocities](#) have already been, and are being, committed. A group of independent United Nations human rights experts have [emphasized](#) that the Security Council's inability to refer the situation in Syria to the ICC leaves the door wide open for new atrocities in the ongoing conflict. Vetoes by permanent members Russia and China have blocked the Council from referring the situation in Syria to the ICC.

The resolution, backed by 13 members of the council, would have given the ICC a mandate to investigate the crimes committed within Syria.

Since March 2011 over 150,000 civilians have died, millions have been displaced and human rights violations run rampant. In the absence of prosecution at the domestic level, the experts noted that it was the Council's responsibility to refer the situation to the ICC.

The group of independent experts speaking out for the referral of the Syrian situation to the ICC come from a half-dozen sectors. "The double veto last week to a resolution referring the situation in Syria to the ICC is likely to expose the Syrian population to further gross human rights and humanitarian law violations," the experts stated in a [news release](#). "The failure to hold those responsible for the violations to account may fuel further atrocities."

"Referring the situation in Syria to the ICC would have been an important and most necessary step both to protect civilians against continued and future violations by all sides to the conflict, and to curb impunity for the grave violations of human rights and humanitarian law, some amounting to crimes against humanity," the experts stressed.