International Center for Transitional Justice

2018-2022
STRATEGIC PLAN

ICTJ | Justice Truth Dignity
Cover image (from left to right, top to bottom): A child in the Al-Sakhoor neighborhood of East Aleppo carries manuals distributed by UNICEFF on identifying and reporting unexploded objects (UNICEFF); ICTJ and iDebate conduct a “train the trainers” workshop in Tunisia in 2008, as part of the Cafe Talk project (ICTJ/Cafe Talk); Gambians attend a youth town hall in Soma, The Gambia, in 2018. (ICTJ); A Colombian woman performs a traditional regional dance during the “Return Festival” in El Pato, Colombia (ICTJ); ICTJ and a local youth organization lead a workshop for young people on ending violence in Cote d’Ivoire (ICTJ); A group of Gambian women, known as Kaneleng, perform before a town hall in Soma, The Gambia, in 2018 to raise awareness about issues affecting women (ICTJ); Women conflict victims gather in a circle during a workshop held in Mahendranagar, Kanchanpur District, in April 2018 (ICTJ); A Syrian woman gives an emotional testimony about the hardship she and her family experienced during the conflict at a ICTJ-organized public hearing in Geneva in 2018 (ICTJ); Tunisia’s Truth and Dignity Commission holds a public hearing in 2016 (TDC); A participant speaks at a youth town hall in Soma, Gambia, in 2018 (ICTJ); A woman poses for a photo at the “Voices of Memory” exhibition in Tunis, Tunisia, in 2018 (ICTJ); A sign in Colombia is inscribed with the word “Memoria” or “memory” (ICTJ); Women victims participate in ICTJ-led workshop in Nepal in April 2018 (ICTJ).
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INTRODUCTION

These are especially challenging times for those of us who work to assist societies in dealing with a legacy of atrocities and massive human rights violations. Violent armed conflicts have increased in number, duration, and ferocity around the globe. Immense displacement and waves of migration have followed, draining resources and causing domestic instability; and many countries have turned to authoritarian rulers, undermining respect for the rule of law and human rights and closing the space for civil society.

Following considerable internal reflection and a wide consultation with our supporters, ICTJ has adopted a new strategic plan to address these challenges. We have learned much from our experience. In particular, we know that every place is different, that there are no one-size-fits-all solutions, and that we are most effective when we listen carefully to those most concerned and earn their trust. We also know that in these challenging times we must think even more creatively about new approaches, build new alliances and partnerships, and communicate more effectively the value of justice. While doing so, we are constantly considering how to ensure that our resources are used efficiently and effectively, and setting concrete goals that will help to measure our performance.

In the following pages, we explain our approach, outline a new institutional roadmap consonant with the times, and demonstrate the importance and urgency of our work.1

1 ICTJ’s Board of Directors approved the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan on April 1, 2018. This document is an abridged version of the strategic plan.
For almost 20 years, ICTJ has worked with civil society organizations, government representatives, and the international community to help societies find their way as they seek to address the legacy of a troubled and violent past, restore lasting peace, and build just and inclusive societies. We have always taken a rights-based approach to the dilemmas they face as we never lose sight of the value of justice as a principle in itself or the importance of victims’ dignity and their rights to truth, reparation, and accountability. At the same time, we assist official institutions in acknowledging and fulfilling those expectations.

ICTJ is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We believe that transitional justice represents an essential element of this agenda, as it is articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals. By increasing access to justice for victims and helping to prevent the recurrence of violent conflict and abuses, our work makes critical contributions to the promotion of just, peaceful, and inclusive societies in countries such as Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Kenya, Nepal, and Tunisia. By establishing partnerships between civil society and national and international policymakers, our work helps to ensure that sustainable peace and development are achieved in all countries that struggle to address the legacies of their past.

The principle of justice is under assault every day at both national and international levels in countries as diverse as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Syria, and Yemen, and there is much work to be done to establish accountability before and during transitions and to clear the path for justice.

Because of our extensive experience around the world, we have proudly earned respect and a reputation for our unique expertise in transitional justice—expertise firmly grounded in deep knowledge, careful analysis, and an unvarying respect for those who seek our advice.

ICTJ is committed to its mission and will continue to work tirelessly to make a difference both on the ground and in policy debates and to assist those who rightly cry out for justice, whether today or tomorrow.
TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: PART OF WHAT WORKS IN THE GLOBAL POLICY AGENDA

Transitional justice refers to the many measures that can be implemented to address and repair the legacies of repressive regimes and massive human rights abuses. These measures can be judicial and nonjudicial and include, among others, truth-telling and truth-seeking processes; criminal justice initiatives in national, regional, or international jurisdictions; reparations programs; and political and institutional reforms.

By affirming victims’ dignity, fighting impunity, and promoting responsive institutions, transitional justice plays an important role in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, SDG 10, and especially SDG 16. ICTJ’s experience indicates that transitional justice is a critical element of sustainable peace and sustainable development. In countries emerging from conflict and repression—countries that very often monopolize the international agenda—progress toward attaining peace and development will be more sustainable if those societies implement transitional justice processes addressing the causes and consequences of massive human rights violations in innovative and inclusive ways.

Rule of Law and SDG 16

From our experience we have seen how transitional justice measures are an essential step to establishing or reestablishing the rule of law. They challenge impunity for perpetrators of serious crimes; reform institutions that committed, facilitated, or failed to prevent those crimes; and reestablish public trust in principles and systems of law by demonstrating due process and nondiscrimination. ICTJ’s work supporting these measures have helped countries such as Argentina, Colombia, and Sierra Leone to rebuild the rule of law.

The goals set forth in SDG 16.3 lead us to consider how people in countries affected by conflict and repression concretely benefit from the reestablishment of the rule of law. ICTJ therefore emphasizes that the tools and approaches of transitional justice can and should increase people’s access to justice.

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2 SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries. SDG 16: Promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies.

3 SDG 16.3: Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all.
SDGs 5 and 10

ICTJ’s work demonstrates that transitional justice contributes to achieving other SDGs 5 and 10. It facilitates gender equality in multiple ways: Truth-telling and judicial procedures can shed light on and help address the gender dimensions of past human rights violations, which in turn may lead to calls for reform of discriminatory laws and institutions that made those violations possible and enable and encourage women to participate and assume leadership roles so that such violations do not happen again. More broadly, we believe that transitional justice draws attention to the root causes of violations, the social and economic structural problems—including inequality and corruption—that facilitate crimes. In this way, it actually helps to reduce social, economic, and political marginalization. In Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Nepal, and Tunisia, ICTJ has supported efforts to ensure that justice measures meaningfully address issues of gender-based discrimination and socioeconomic marginalization.

Prevention

As with the rule of law, preventing recurrence has long been seen as a central aim of transitional justice. As conceptualized in the UN Principles to Combat Impunity, guarantees of nonrecurrence call for measures of administrative, legal, and constitutional reform that increase the legitimacy and integrity of state institutions and thereby help to reduce the likelihood that violations will occur. Recently, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of nonrecurrence has drawn attention to the need to expand the types of these measures beyond the realm of the institutional to include that of the cultural—such as the media, education, and storytelling. ICTJ’s work in Tunisia, Nepal, Côte d’Ivoire, and elsewhere demonstrates the power of an inclusive narrative to provide support for and ground institutional reforms, mobilize youth, break inter-generational barriers, and challenge the alienation of targeted groups in society.

ICTJ understands the important role that transitional justice can play in reducing the recurrence of different forms of violence, including armed conflict, communal violence, violent extremism, criminal violence, gender-based violence, and violence against children and youth. Our experience shows that responding fairly and effectively to past injustice can contribute to the prevention of such violence by holding accountable perpetrators of violence; fostering institutional inclusion, legitimacy, and accountability; repairing social relations; facilitating durable solutions to displacement; addressing root causes; and transforming societal norms. We are committed to furthering our understanding of how to prevent the recurrence of violence through research and documentation of our own knowledge and experiences. ICTJ-supported transitional justice efforts in Guatemala, Liberia, and Sierra Leone have been important factors in avoiding a relapse of conflict in those countries.

Ongoing Conflict or Repression

The protracted nature of current conflicts and the immense scale of the resulting displacement crises also raise questions about what can be done in the interests of justice and reconciliation in ongoing conflicts. While most transitional justice processes begin after armed conflict and repression have ended and when certain minimum political and institutional conditions are met, this does not mean that nothing can be done in the meantime. Despite the challenges
and uncertainties ongoing conflict presents, victims and human rights defenders do not wait for crises to end to pursue justice. Documenting crimes and listening to the voices of victims and displaced persons are some of the efforts that can be undertaken in the interests of acknowledgment, memory, and the right to truth in the midst of conflict, and they can play a critical role in enabling and shaping peace negotiations and transitional justice processes once the conflicts have ended. In particular, documentation can establish the truth of gross violations and counter efforts by perpetrators and others to deny they committed them or that they occurred at all during the transition and beyond. ICTJ’s efforts in Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Syria have demonstrated what can be done while conflict persists in the interest of a future sustainable peace.

**Economic and Social Injustice**

An increased understanding of the links between political, social, and economic exclusion and human rights violations has led to greater awareness within the transitional justice field of the need to respond not only to violations of civil and political rights but also to violations of economic, social, and cultural rights, including crimes of corruption. Moreover, the field should challenge structural economic, social, and cultural injustice and inequity.
APPROACH

ICTJ works to help societies challenge the causes and address the consequences of massive human rights violations.

Our approach is, at its core, a rights-based one. We work to affirm human rights, promote lasting peace, and build trust in the social norms and institutions that reflect and guarantee those rights. Our theory of change considers the role of different actors in society and the interaction among them. We support victims and other civil society actors who claim their rights, work together with the state actors and institutions responsible for safeguarding those rights, and facilitate interaction among these actors to promote inclusive and responsive solutions, in whatever form they may take.

At the global level, ICTJ envisions a world where societies break the cycle of violence by shaping the way practitioners, policymakers, donors, and academics think about and practice transitional justice. We work with national and international partners to inform responses to massive human rights violations everywhere in the world. Drawing on institutional expertise built up over years of working to advance transitional justice in over 50 countries, ICTJ provides tailored strategic advice based on applicable comparative experience; facilitates the sharing of knowledge and lessons learned among representatives of governments and other key institutions across borders; brings to the negotiating table victims’ perspectives, priorities, and initiatives; and advocates for realistic, nuanced, and context-specific processes. We provide training, disseminate knowledge and applied research, and convene and participate in global discussions to support effective and lasting solutions. As a result of our work, practitioners and policymakers at the international level are better informed and develop greater capacity to advance, recommend, and implement responsive, gender-sensitive, and context-specific solutions.

At the country level, our main goal is for societies to design and implement responsive and gender-sensitive solutions to address their legacies of massive human rights violations. ICTJ takes a context-specific and conflict-sensitive approach. We first assess and analyze diverse interests, conflicts, stakeholders, and power dynamics in a society so that our interventions do not harm victims and remain relevant to their priorities and the capacities of governments and other main actors. We focus on processes and goals over specific measures and understand that these processes tend to be long term and iterative. Our contextual analysis also takes into account those actors who oppose justice processes and it provides crucial insight that helps victims and other key partners design strategies to pursue justice and reform even in circumstances of powerful resistance or weak political will.
Depending on the context, we work with a wide range of actors whose expertise and experience must be engaged to establish effective measures of acknowledgement, accountability, and reform. Our work usually distinguishes three different sets of stakeholders: (1) victims and other civil society groups, (2) “duty bearers,” or government officials and representatives of other institutions with power and responsibility, and (3) the media and other important communicators and storytellers that help create a conducive environment for justice.

Victims and Civil Society

ICTJ works with victims and civil society organizations, including nontraditional activist groups, and brings them around a shared vision for justice so that they have the necessary knowledge, capacity, and support to advance their demands for justice.

Our work with civil society goes beyond sharing technical, expert knowledge and is based on partnerships. Together with our partners, we jointly develop strategies for change and identify avenues for action by conducting rigorous research, contextual analysis, and stakeholder mapping; helping victims develop a meaningful and rigorous process for monitoring government institutions; facilitating the sharing of experiences among victims and civil society across borders; helping victims and civil society to articulate their needs in specific proposals, actions, and solutions; increasing awareness of rights among victims and civil society; and fostering and strengthening alliances among victims and civil society.

In selecting our partners, we aim to be inclusive, working across ethnic, religious, economic, political, and geographic divides, and actively promote the participation of marginalized groups such as women, youth, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and victims of gender-based violence.

Duty Bearers

In countries addressing massive human rights violations, ICTJ works closely with representatives of formal and informal institutions, such as the state and ad hoc transitional justice institutions, respectively, since they are the actors responsible for protecting and promoting human rights. We develop their capacity to uphold human rights by providing technical advice, embedding ICTJ experts in processes over the long term, and assisting with the creation, delivery, and management of solutions that take into account the perspective of victims and apply coherent policy approaches to acknowledgement, accountability, and reform. We help them develop innovative solutions based on the experience of ICTJ and our partners globally. We also identify and support champions for justice inside institutions, advocate for citizens’ participation and transparency in transitional justice processes, and work to improve accountability mechanisms, including those within the security and justice sectors.

As part of this work, ICTJ continuously coordinates with development, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding actors. These actors constitute an important group whose work is essential to laying the groundwork for pursuing acknowledgment, accountability, and reform. ICTJ’s strategy involves functioning as a go-between and a reliable hub for the exchange of
information and analysis so that our partners understand transitional justice in terms of what works and does not work.

Communicators and Storytellers

ICTJ’s analysis goes beyond the technical and institutional aspects of transitional justice to include consideration of its role in cultural and public discourse. In the past three years, ICTJ has piloted innovative projects that incorporated cultural interventions—involving the media, education, and storytelling—to promote a shared vision of justice, direct attention to the root causes of conflict and human rights violations, increase the saliency of the transitional justice policy agenda, and promote narratives and individuals that bring together rather than divide people in society. Building on this experience, we are increasing our outreach to media and other key public figures in the countries where we work. Our goal is a more inclusive public discourse that provides space for the perspectives of victims and in turn leads to a more conducive environment for addressing the causes and consequences of massive human rights violations.

ICTJ has stepped up its collaboration with leading public figures, media outlets, artists, philanthropists, religious actors, and others with leverage and influence on the national and international stages. We support local partners and work with them to develop initiatives to articulate a more accurate, inclusive, and empathetic public narrative. We help our partners better inform public discourse and to build public support for justice, and we connect them to key actors through our international networks.

Building Bridges

A vital component of ICTJ’s approach is building bridges between victims and those whose responsibility is to act, helping them come together, hear each other, and advance solutions. As an international organization with a reputation for neutrality and reliability, solid and unique technical expertise, and an “ear to the ground” to identify the priorities and goals of domestic actors, ICTJ is in a unique position to work with all stakeholders and contribute to responsive and feasible solutions. As our recent work in Colombia, Syria, and Uganda attests, ICTJ has a positive track record in making “unlikely partnerships” happen. An external evaluation of ICTJ’s 2015-2018 work found that “[i]n each country, interviewees were virtually unanimous in praising ICTJ’s contribution to building bridges between duty-bearers and rights-holders (CSOs [civil society organizations] and victims’ associations).”

Implementing Solutions

Addressing human rights violations is a long and arduous process, and the hardest and most critical tasks oftentimes happen after the international spotlight has moved elsewhere. Our experience tells us that these processes are cyclical, iterative ones, whose effects should be monitored and followed over the long term, rather than discrete instances when everything

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happens at once. ICTJ’s interventions seek transitional justice solutions that are responsive and gender sensitive. Once these solutions are formulated, ICTJ advises and assists stakeholders with implementing and monitoring them. We actively support victim-led initiatives, and advocate for formal and informal processes that are legitimate, nondiscriminatory, fair, and harmless.

Measuring Institutional Results

ICTJ is outcome driven. We rely on rigorous data collection and analysis to accomplish our objectives. Our Design, Monitoring, and Evaluation unit works closely with all parts of the organization to support smart, effective, and evidence-based approaches around the world. We do this, in part, by organizing our work around an institutional results framework. Accordingly, we aim to capture both the results of our fieldwork, by measuring the successful implementation of responsive and gender-sensitive solutions in the countries where we have interventions, and the results of our global programs, such as our role in shaping the field of transitional justice.

You can learn more about our results framework here.
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

What We Want to Do

While the challenges and opportunities facing the transitional justice field have evolved in recent years, the solutions and mainstream doctrine the field has offered have not always kept pace. Our strategy for the next four years is to focus more intently on innovation and knowledge development and dissemination, while continuing to provide tailored technical support and advice in ongoing transitions and to develop more agile responses to emerging needs on the ground.

Stakeholders know ICTJ as the credible “go-to organization” and “thought leader” in transitional justice. In recent consultations, partners in the field and policymakers pointed to the world-class expertise and experience that ICTJ brings to societies addressing a troubled past, often finding solutions where nobody thought it possible.

As the leading organization in this specialized field, ICTJ has a unique role to play in providing activists, practitioners, and policymakers with lessons learned from years of successes and failures in different countries and with results from our analysis and research. As an organization that simultaneously works directly in the field, conducts research, and informs thinking at the global policy level, we are in a privileged position to spur change.

ICTJ is fully committed to providing contextualized, expert technical advice and support to governments, civil society, and victims that are immersed in transitions and are pursuing accountability for human rights violations as the cornerstone of a new inclusive and peaceful society. By offering its accumulated knowledge, comparative expertise, and creative thinking, ICTJ will continue helping local and national actors to design and implement inclusive and gender-sensitive solutions that address the consequences of past violations. Additionally, ICTJ will increase its capacity to respond to early requests from the field and include in its programming assistance to nascent transitions that require our technical support.

A major goal over the next four years is to meaningfully contribute to a new but necessary vision of how transitional justice is understood and to foster innovation in how its processes are designed and developed. We will continue to promote a more sophisticated and nuanced approach that is:

- Focused less on individual measures or mechanisms such as trials, truth commissions, or reparations programs and more on the processes through which justice is pursued, regardless of whether they are traditionally identified with transitional justice
- More sensitive to context and appropriate to the political, institutional, and social dynamics of each individual society or community
- More realistic and grounded in what is feasible at different times and stages of transition
• Based on analysis of and engagement with parallel interventions that directly relate to or affect the pursuit of accountability and prevention, such as anticorruption measures and other institutional and constitutional reforms

• Ultimately influences and improves the global practice of transitional justice and human rights

At the same time, ICTJ recognizes that the nature and dynamics of violence, repression, and armed conflict has changed, and that there is a growing demand for transitional justice expertise to be applied and adapted to contexts of ongoing conflict and displacement, peace processes, and post-conflict transitions. There is therefore increased need to understand the ways in which transitional justice processes can contribute to the prevention of violent conflict in its various forms and aspects, including human rights violations, violent extremism, corruption, and displacement. One fundamental piece of our strategy is to allocate research capacity to collecting and presenting evidence on this topic.

Our goal is to advance the cause of human rights by convincing policymakers, funders, and the general public of the value of transitional justice to sustainable peace and development. In line with the Agenda for Sustainable Development’s stated commitment to achieving just, peaceful, and inclusive societies, we believe we can meaningfully contribute to advancing solutions that achieve accountability for massive human rights violations and that form the basis for a restoration of the social contract between citizens and the state.

How We Are Going to Do It

We have reviewed our internal structure and are now a nimbler organization that is better able to both support ICTJ’s program teams in the field and respond to developing situations. By increasing flexibility, strengthening coordination, streamlining internal managerial systems, and articulating new roles and responsibilities of programmatic staff, ICTJ will improve its performance and increase its critical contributions to transitional justice processes all over the world.

We will increase our ability to regularly produce and share—in forms that are easily accessible and immediately useful—our analysis from the field with our partners, funders, and stakeholders. At the same time, we will establish an initiative whose purpose is to identify and analyze emerging issues in the field and promote substantive and stimulating discussions with policymakers, academics, practitioners, and staff members from other organizations working on transitional justice.

1. ICTJ will lead discussions involving the most reputable practitioners to persistently challenge the often simplistic and formulaic common understanding of transitional justice and its processes and objectives, and to explore emerging and cross-cutting issues.

2. ICTJ will convene high-level international forums—that will include significant representation from the global South—on critical policy issues that will shape the advancement of the field, including a working group on transitional justice and SDG 16+ within the Taskforce on Justice, an initiative of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies.
3. ICTJ will organize a regular series of learning workshops that will delve deeper into the technical aspects of the processes that have proven most effective for addressing the key issues. Together these three components will help ICTJ develop and articulate innovative solutions and produce the most advanced critical thinking on crucial global justice issues. To strengthen our ability to produce research that will inform this work, ICTJ has cultivated partnerships with several academic institutions.

ICTJ will continue to improve the understanding of the role that gender plays in victims’ experience of violence, including the different longer-term impacts of violations on men and women. Furthermore, in the next few years, ICTJ will analyze and research gender as a factor contributing to victims’ vulnerability to violence in the different contexts where we work. This gender perspective informs how we design responses that substantively address harms and their full impact, while also challenging the structures that trigger and allow for gender-based violations to happen in the first place. Another important focus of ICTJ’s gender-sensitive approach is promoting the active participation of women in all civil society and state-led initiatives. Our institutional policy on gender mainstreaming—rolled out in 2017—will progressively guarantee the meaningful and representative participation of women at all levels.

In parallel, supporting the active engagement of children and young people in transitional justice efforts remains central to our work around the world. Throughout ICTJ’s work, we have seen engagement in justice efforts inspire a sense of activism and responsibility among young people and prepare them to effectively contribute to the [re]building of a society committed to the respect for human rights and sustainable peace. In many cases, the contributions of children and youth help push the boundaries of the field, challenge the status quo, and raise pressing issues that need to be addressed in order to make a real break from the past, as the basis for a better present and future. ICTJ thus takes programmatic approaches that aim to give young people the necessary space, support, and resources they need to make their voice heard and challenge forces of oppression, injustice, and exclusion.

**Where We Are Going to Work**

With limited resources, ICTJ must carefully choose where it engages. We factor in existing demand for our work (including requests from both national and international actors), availability of funding, our existing relationships with domestic actors, and the security situation on the ground. We follow up with a thorough political assessment of any openings for reform, prospective lines of work, and ICTJ’s added value compared with that of other organizations.

ICTJ will continue its work in the countries where it has an established presence, but at the same time consolidate its capacity to intervene meaningfully in emerging contexts or where specific developments or crisis require analysis and expertise. We aim to maintain a vibrant service-oriented organization with multiple entry points and an agile global program.

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5 Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Kenya, Lebanon (with a focus on both Lebanon and Syria), Nepal, Tunisia, and Uganda.
able to respond quickly to requests with a variety of tailored engagements and investments depending on the opportunities in each context. The involvement of our field experts in the global program is a key element of our new structure: With their vast experience on the ground and intimate knowledge of regional issues, they are best situated to contribute to transitional justice efforts in emerging contexts.

Resource permitting, over the next four years, we envision expanding our engagement around the world. In Asia, we will continue our limited engagements in The Philippines and Sri Lanka while we assess opportunities for expansion, and we will explore new openings for our work in Myanmar. In the Middle East and North Africa, we are beginning to plan projects in Iraq and Libya, with a focus on civil society, and will study the feasibility of working in Yemen once minimum conditions for transitional justice are in place. In Sub-Saharan Africa, we will assess opportunities to engage in Burundi, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, Sudan, and Zimbabwe. In Latin America, we will closely monitor developments in El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, and Venezuela, and gauge possible entry points for our work. Finally, in the Balkans and Eastern Europe, we are weighing our options in Georgia, Kosovo, and Ukraine and initiating an incremental program in Armenia.

Furthermore, ICTJ intends to start gradually responding to some of the current demands in established democracies where the consequences of past massive human rights violations have still not been addressed.

There is much work ahead in the next four years. But ICTJ remains committed to its mission, and we are better poised than ever to continue innovating the field, responding to fast-changing contexts and needs, and advancing justice and human rights through this period and beyond.