



REDRESS, FIDH, ECCHR AND TRIAL RELEASE NEW REPORT ON THE RIGHTS OF VICTIMS OF SERIOUS INTERNATIONAL CRIMES IN THE EU

28 October 2014 – REDRESS, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR), the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and Track Impunity Always (TRIAL) will launch tomorrow, 29 October 2014, a new report, ***Driving Forward Justice: Victims of Serious International Crimes in the EU***, in the margins of the 17th EU Genocide Network meeting in The Hague.

Proceedings in EU Member States which concern serious international crimes underscore the important role played by victims. Victims are key to identifying suspects, lodging complaints, opening investigations and contributing substantially to the cases.

The report highlights how the EU Directive on minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, which all EU Member States must incorporate into national law, applies to victims of serious international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, torture and enforced disappearance.

The EU Directive explains what rights victims have when coming into contact with investigators, prosecutors and other national authorities. Most Member States have a long way to go to put in place the necessary safeguards for victims of crime that are required by the Directive. Member States' laws and practices need particular strengthening when dealing with victims of serious international crimes. In our report, we make a series of recommendations, in line with the Directive, to assist authorities to bridge these gaps.

Victims' rights under the EU Directive

The Directive establishes several guarantees for victims of crimes. The report highlights the following:

- the right to support, for which the Directive sets out a new framework;
- the right to be protected during both investigation and prosecution stages of criminal proceedings, as well as an overarching right to privacy;
- the right to be heard;
- the right to be informed throughout the proceedings, beginning in the investigation phase and continuing after the trial concludes;
- the right to reimbursement of expenses;
- and the right to a decision on compensation by the offender within a reasonable time.

The report also underscores how these guarantees must be applied to victims of serious international crimes and points out the areas in which the Directive's scope must be broadened to account for the additional challenges faced by such victims. This is particularly important with regard to the right to be heard, as the Directive currently provides a wide margin of appreciation to Member States.

The report will be presented at a **conference on the rights of victims of serious international crimes**, hosted by the four organisations in The Hague.

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