



ACCOUNTABILITY UNIT

Promoting, Protecting and Enforcing Rights

As 2023 has come to a close, we are reflecting on our past year as a small NGO dedicated to accountability for violations of international law and asking what it means to be a "success" in the face of an increasingly darkening world, in an ever-challenging geo-political climate, for the rule of law and justice.

As many in the civil society space are acknowledging, our shortcomings and limitations are manifold given the large-scale of the challenges in the situations of our concern, with much outside of our control. Nevertheless, during 2023, our members continued our commitment to international justice in the following ways:

- Publishing two briefing papers: "[Genocide: A Short Primer on the Law](#)" which provides clarity on the law relating to genocide, given the increasing use of the term by non-specialists in the context of ongoing international conflicts (Nov 2023); and "[Genocide and Gender](#)" which provides an overview of how sexual and gender based violence is linked to genocide (Oct 2023).
- Advising several stakeholders, inquiries and panels on international law issues relating to the armed conflict in Ukraine and, in particular, on the crime of aggression. A [private briefing paper](#) was also produced on the creation of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression (Mar 2023).
- Filing a [major UN Human Rights Committee case](#) on violations of international human rights law by Turkey in conducting unlawful air strikes on Yazidi civilians and civilian objects (Jun 2023).
- Providing research assistance, drafting support and advice to parliamentarians on issues related to genocide and crimes against humanity including assistance with the [Genocide Determination Bill](#), sponsored by Lord David Alton, together with partners at the [Coalition for Genocide Response](#) (2021-Present). A private briefing was produced (Dec 2023), and a public version will be issued in 2024.
- Continuing work with the [Yazidi Justice Committee](#) (YJC) to find a State Sponsor for proceedings at the International Court of Justice for violations by three States of the Genocide Convention concerning the commission by the *so-called* Islamic State of the crime of genocide against the Yazidis. July 2022 saw the publication of YJC's major report: [State Responsibility and the Yazidi Genocide](#) at a side event, sponsored by Baroness Helena Kennedy KC in the House of Lords, to the Inter-Ministerial on Freedom of Religious Belief hosted by the FCDO.
- Continuing Accountability Unit's '[in conversation with](#)' Series as well as the [OUT- LINES in international law](#) in collaboration with Garden Court North Chambers and Manchester International Law Centre and Others. Our two new podcasts included: [Women at the International Court of Justice](#) with Dr Gail Lythgoe and Dr Jessica Corsi (Aug 2023); and [Iran Protests: A Fight for 'Women, Life & Freedom?](#) with Dr Gail Lythgoe and UN Special Rapporteur Prof. Javaid Rehman (Nov 2023).

Justice - both bringing the law into alignment with ideas of justice and enforcing what just laws we have - continues to face immense hurdles with, even accepted, international law and norms being violated on a vast scale. This includes: continued and intensifying commission of international crimes in Ukraine; the risk of genocide in Sudan; the ongoing genocides of the Yazidis in Iraq and Syria, the Rohingya in Myanmar, and the Uyghurs in the PRC; the acute violation of international criminal law in Israel and in Palestine; *and the list continues to grow*. In the face of these immense situations, with complex and variegated origins, the work of a small NGO can seem futile and even insignificant. Our work, however, has reached important stakeholders, helped change narratives, and provides the prospect of future accountability where there was previously none.

For 2024, we are mindful of our size and resources but we consider it imperative to continue our work in reaching change-makers internationally, helping to utilise available international mechanisms for enforcement of international law, and ensuring that gaps in enforcement are filled by creating new mechanisms where they are needed. Our work is rarely siloed, and we will continue to work jointly in the legal, policy and advocacy spaces, with valued partners, to advance the commitments to our ultimate beneficiaries: survivors and victims.

We invite your continued engagement with these issues, your thoughts, and your investment in our efforts. **Please consider a gift - or perhaps an additional gift at year end (Mar 2024) - to support our work with a donation to our Pro Bono Fund.** Most of our work is undertaken *pro bono* by our members or through project-by-project funding. Every little makes an immense difference and enables us to continue our small but significant contributions to international justice. We are a charity regulated by the Charity Commission. All donations are eligible for gift aid so please do tick the box if you are a UK taxpayer.

You may donate securely online via our website or feel free to contact our Acting Director, Aarif Abraham.

We continue to partner (non-exclusively) with brilliant colleagues and institutions around the world including the Coalition for Genocide Response, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, Manchester International Law Centre, the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales, and Women for Justice *among others*. We cannot afford to be divided, in the civil society space, in honouring the rule of law and ensuring accountability for rights violations, over competition for limited resources or attention. Please do generously support our friends and allies too.

Your generous and loyal support is deeply appreciated. Thank you for being an advocate and an interested friend in our growing community!

Wishing all of our friends a healthy, happy, and peaceful new year!

Aarif Abraham, Acting Director
3 January 2024