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‘You Can Change the Course of a Country’

Report on the International Gender Symposium

Background and Introduction

The lack of a gender-sensitive approach to transitional justice can be seen across all different contexts. Though particulars about what is required to enact such an approach differ greatly in each context, one common thread is the need to ensure that at each phase, women victims and victims of gender-based violations are adequately represented and included—both as victims and decisionmakers—and that gendered patterns of harm are fully addressed. Despite countries’ different contexts, histories, and levels of progress (or lack thereof) toward truth, justice, acknowledgment, and redress for victims, there do exist clear commonalities in the ways by which women are affected by human rights violations and later excluded from the very processes and discussions intended to address their impact.

To that end, ICTJ has been working for the past two years on a project, funded by the Government of Canada, to ensure that transitional justice measures in several different countries more effectively address the causes and consequences of gendered experiences of human rights violations and to increase women’s active participation in such processes. The countries include Nepal, Sri Lanka, Syria, and Tunisia.

While the realities of each of the four contexts differ greatly from one another, it is ICTJ’s strong belief that fostering connections among women’s rights and gender justice advocates from these and other countries is an important way to promote exchange of information, key strategies, and lessons learned from the diverse experiences and to foster a strong sense of solidarity among these actors. For this reason, in February 2019, ICTJ hosted an international symposium in Tunis, Tunisia, on gender and transitional justice with representatives from eight countries where ICTJ has been actively engaged in implementing a gender-focused approach to its programming, both within the framework of the Canada-funded project and through other work. Participants joined the symposium from the following places:

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**'You Can Change
the Course of a Country'**
Report on the International
Gender Symposium

About the Author

Sibley Hawkins is a program expert at ICTJ. Her work focuses on gender justice and truth seeking, especially in the Middle East and North Africa region. She helped develop ICTJ's gender mainstreaming policy and has conducted workshops with civil society on implementing a gender-sensitive approach to transitional justice.

The majority of the participants represented civil society organizations or victims' groups, though a few joined to discuss their work within state-led transitional justice mechanisms. Even among the latter group, most had previously worked on justice issues as activists and members of civil society.

All of the participants happened to be women. While ICTJ recognizes the value of bringing men and gender non-conforming individuals into discussions on gender and activism, ICTJ's main partners on gender issues from the participating countries are currently predominantly women. Whether as a result of the all-woman makeup of the symposium or unrelated completely, a bond was quickly established among participants. Despite coming from very diverse contexts, the commonalities shared among these women activists developed into a strong sense of solidarity, which allowed for particularly frank, open, and personal discussions.

The objectives of the symposium included the following:

- identifying real, pressing challenges facing women and gender activists working on issues of truth, justice, accountability, redress, and reform;
- anticipating future issues and brainstorming concrete solutions and ideas for tackling them;
- discussing strategies for dealing with stalled or nonexistent processes;
- learning from successful strategies used to engage with both formal and informal transitional justice processes; and
- fostering exchanges between participants from different contexts and setting the stage for potential future collaboration among them.

Methodology

ICTJ designed the methodology to be participatory and diverse. Sessions included a blend of interactive Q&A panels, presentations from participants, small group discussions, and group exercises and activities. During the first two days of the symposium, participants met in closed sessions to share their work and discuss major challenges and effective strategies for overcoming them. This included discussing creative means for pursuing transitional justice objectives in situations where national processes have stalled, the challenges to pursuing justice and acknowledgment in contexts of ongoing conflict and repression, successful strategies for engaging official state-led processes, and advocating for gender-sensitive approaches to addressing past violations from inside formal mechanisms such as truth commissions.

The final day of the symposium took advantage of the location and focused on the transitional justice process in Tunisia. Representatives from the government, Tunisian civil society, and the international community working in Tunisia joined to discuss the country's progress and missteps related to its transitional justice trajectory and women's involvement in it. The Canadian Ambassador to Tunisia also gave opening remarks, expressing her support for the symposium and women's efforts to make transitional justice processes more gender-sensitive, in Tunisia and beyond. The symposium concluded with a discussion about the project entitled "Voices of Memory," which seeks to capture Tunisian

women's stories about the past in their own words and through creative means such as art, literature, graphic presentation, and a podcast.

Rather than presenting a summary of each session, this report is organized around several main themes that emerged over the course of the three days. The symposium followed Chatham House rules, so attribution is only made if consent was explicitly sought and obtained. It concludes with recommendations to donors, international organizations, and others about how to better support those working to advance women's rights and gender justice in transitional justice contexts.

Key Themes

Increasing Challenges at the National Level Require More Innovative, Non-formulaic Approaches to Transitional Justice

In many of the countries represented at the workshop, transitional justice processes have stalled or been blocked at the national level, receiving little support from the international community while political willingness to address the past remains low among powerholders. The work of the organizations represented at the symposium tries to advance transitional justice at all levels—from the individual, local, or community to the global.

As such, the work needs to be adaptive to the fluidity of each context in which the organizations and activists are working, but also persistent, pro-active, and creative in finding alternative routes and methodologies when other approaches are blocked. For example, panelists from Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda, and Nepal discussed some of the challenges of pushing transitional justice processes where access to justice has not only been hampered but is sometimes actively blocked. To get around these blockages, they have used creative approaches, such as music, community gatherings, radio, and storytelling, to raise awareness about the consistent demand for justice, particularly at the community level. Another example of the degree of tenacity that is often required was the successful lobbying for a law on the missing and disappeared in Lebanon—which took 36 years of persistent advocacy, awareness-raising, and pressure.



Participants engage in a session in which they molded their ideas about justice out of clay and then organized the pieces together to form a larger narrative (ICTJ).

One of the striking features of many of the interventions and approaches presented was the use of various art forms and modes of communication for a range of purposes related to transitional justice: for raising

public and political awareness; for therapeutic purposes for survivors, activists, and wider constituencies; for outreach; and as an alternative means of relating stories of loss and violence beyond legal texts or other more official narratives, which often do not include or adequately represent the human experience of the violations suffered. These approaches used music, YouTube and other video clips, installation art, embroidery, plasticine, literature, and other media, often in a highly participatory and very hands-on manner involving direct and indirect victims. The end results were of a high quality but not always polished works of art, thus giving them a more visceral, raw, personal, and grounded feel than might otherwise have been the case with more professional—but more detached—productions.

Across the board, much of the work of the participants has been and continues to be done at the national level. However, given the delays, blockages, and lack of political will at that level, coupled with the need to address victims' very real and pressing needs, there seemed to be a shift toward more sub-national work even where national processes exist.

In Tunisia, for example, the Voices of Memory project tried to focus some of its activities in remote rural areas in order to access survivors who are often marginalized because of their geographical isolation. Similarly, the Syrian nongovernmental organization (NGO) Start Point uses the communication platform Skype to conduct psychosocial support sessions for adults and children in Syria and countries of asylum. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Justice and Peace Action Network (RAJP) conveyed the importance of engaging with young people in rural areas to advocate for transitional justice processes. Particularly striking was how RAJP was able to coordinate a range of youth organisations and activists across regional, ethnic, linguistic, and gender divides to discuss the country's legacy of conflict using avenues such as music and other campaigns that made transitional justice accessible and meaningful to broader groups of Ivoirians. This work also provided an opportunity for groups who had been left out of official processes to get engaged: young people, women, and residents in rural areas far from the capital city.

These approaches increasingly go beyond calls for punitive justice to also include demands for psychosocial support, improving the livelihoods of survivors, reducing community stigmatisation, and providing collective remedies. The approaches presented were all nuanced and thought through in detail and in terms of possible backlash and stigmatization of beneficiaries, such as in the case of designing reparations for conflict-related sexual violence victims in Kosovo. Simultaneous to a major push from civil society to broaden the legal recognition of categories of conflict-related human rights violations to include sexual violence, there has been a movement to destigmatize the violations among the broader public. Activities to this end included a major exhibition in 2015 held in the country's national stadium where 5,000 dresses were displayed along with 5,000 stories of sexual violence and its life-shattering effects. The proposed pension program, now law, has also taken into account that women might need a cover story to explain to family members who do not know about their victimization why they are receiving a monthly sum. Without these measures, survivors may be much less likely to come forward to apply for the benefits.

The Need for Continued, Concerted Action on Gender

Related in many ways to the need to find alternative avenues to push for acknowledgment, justice, and truth is the reality that while gender justice advocates have made marked progress over the years, without concerted and continued action to ensure an inclusive and gender-sensitive approach toward such goals, these advances could quickly regress to the norm. Several recent policies, such as the original reparations law in Kosovo and the Interim Relief Program in Nepal, categorically excluded victims of sexual and gender-based violence from remedy or recognition. These examples, and many others that were mentioned during the symposium, demonstrate that the advances made across the globe in addressing sexual and gender-based violations cannot be taken for granted. As witnessed in Kosovo, it takes women and other activists banding together to denounce these exclusions and fight to ensure these victims are recognized and included.

Elsewhere, state-led entities may pay lip service to the inclusion of women and gender considerations to appease outside forces and yet take little meaningful action. Worse, in some cases, powerholders have created formal avenues for addressing gender consider-

ations and then rendered those avenues essentially powerless. The Dialogue, Truth, and Reconciliation Commission (CDVR) in Côte d'Ivoire is a good example of this. While the commission indeed had a "Gender Sub-commission" and a strong commissioner who headed it, the sub-commission's mandate was subsumed into other sub-committees and therefore had little power or scope to influence important functions of the CDVR that had major gender implications, such as the statement-taking process or research on the causes and consequences of violence.

As a partial solution, several discussions made reference to the importance of "gender champions" within the government or state-led transitional justice institutions. For example, without the support of former President Atifete Jahjaga in Kosovo, it is unlikely that the country would have made the progress it did with regard to recognizing survivors of sexual violence. In Tunisia, participants who had led an active push to raise awareness among Tunisian women around the country about the work of the Truth and Dignity Commission recognized the critical role that certain commissioners played in supporting this work and pushing for women's inclusion from within. As one participant put it, "You can change the course of a country when you have a woman in charge who believes other women."

Despite the very positive role having powerful allies within institutions can play, in many other contexts, women survivors and women's rights activists are left to do the work of promoting women's rights and gender equality themselves, often achieving great things against all odds.

Importance of Networks and Coalition Building for Realizing Collective Action

This idea—of both the necessity and the power of women taking collective action for themselves—was a clear thread across discussions about all countries represented at the symposium. Participants spoke about the different ways women in their countries had been marginalized from processes and their pain and experiences ignored, and yet, over and over again, women banded together to make their voices heard.

One participant talked about the fact that, in Nepal, the government did nothing to collect data or provide information about the incidence of violations such as rape, other forms of sexual violence, or torture and how the country's early interim relief program excluded these victims entirely. While the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission does have a mandate that includes conflict-related sexual violence, in practice, the commission failed to put in place adequate protocols that would encourage women and men to come forward to talk about such acts of violence and the immeasurable impact these acts have had on their lives.

Faced with this overwhelming silence about women's experiences and a lack of understanding among the general public about the impact sexual violence has on people's lives, the organization Story Kitchen decided to channel its expertise in journalism and storytelling toward work with survivors so that their stories would be heard in their own words. The organization's work has had additional benefits, too. Women in communities where they work have started organizing together on their own, forming networks, helping each other, and teaching more people about the power of storytelling. The group has worked with male victims of sexual violence as well, helping them to process trauma they had previously needed to repress and connecting them with others who had similar experiences, so they did not have to feel like they were alone.

Similarly, in Uganda, women had few existing options to pursue justice and acknowledgment for the harms they experienced. One group in particular—women who bore children as a result of rape—faced extreme exclusion and marginalization, both at a policy level and in their own communities. An organization known as Women's Advocacy Network (WAN) started organizing women together, focusing on what it called peer-to-peer support structures. The network counts among its members 500 women who were abducted by armed groups and later returned home with children. This network has provided a form of healing and support for the women and has given them a platform to organize around specific demands, such as adequate health care and education for their children, among others. This work also led WAN to submit a petition to the Ugandan parliament voicing their demands, which was accepted and passed as a motion. The network has also contributed to bringing women from different geographic areas and ethnic groups together, helping to counter state-sponsored narratives about "one tribe against another."

This latter phenomenon of women overcoming divisions and coming together across sectarian lines was also visible in Côte d'Ivoire through RAJP's work, described above, and in Lebanon. In Lebanon, primarily female relatives of those who had been forcibly disappeared or gone missing during the country's civil war started organizing even while the conflict still raged on. The Committee of the Families of Kidnapped and Disappeared in Lebanon was established in 1982 after the founder's husband was abducted and never seen again. Wadad Halwani issued a call over the radio for families in similar situations to come together. Thirty-seven years later, the committee is still active and still led by Halwani. The committee has always fostered a sense of solidarity among victims above all

else, which is evident in the make-up of its membership who are drawn from across the country's numerous sects. For decades, the committee pushed for a law requiring action around the issue of the missing and disappeared and, in an historic victory, such a law finally passed in late 2018, thanks in large part to the tireless work of the committee and other organizations.

In Sri Lanka and Syria, women are organizing even though there are either extremely limited opportunities to engage with state-led processes (in the case of Sri Lanka) or none at all (in the case of Syria). In Sri Lanka, women banded together during and after the war to document violations against them and come forward to give their testimonies and provide information to the various national and international mechanisms established to address the massive human rights violations committed during the country's war. As such institutions

have proven to be toothless, women have continued organizing and engaging in collective protests and activism, for example, around the issue of disappearance. In Syria, despite ongoing conflict and devastation, the organizations represented have helped organize groups of former detainees to come together and support each other and discuss their demands. They have also organized networks of women journalists to build their capacity to report on the conflict and its impact on women.

What is particularly powerful about much of the work described above and other initiatives discussed at the symposium is that it is all centered on the idea that women and



Participants play different roles during a session about the importance of intersectionality in transitional justice work (ICTJ).

other victims must be telling their own stories and issuing their own demands, rather than being represented by others. This idea is at the core of the work by Story Kitchen and the Voices of Memory project, for example. In the words of one participant, "There is power in storytelling, and it's even more powerful when the person is the survivor. As activists and journalists, we told the story about the survivors, but it is very beautiful listening to [the stories] from survivors themselves. They are the writer, the editor, and owner of the story."

The Importance of Intersectionality

The importance of intersectionality could not be stated enough within the discussions. Factors such as class, geography, age, ability, religion, ethnicity, race, and others were recognized as inextricable from discussions about gender. To take a few examples, participants from all the countries represented discussed how essential it is in their work to reach out to women and other victims around their country, including outside capital cities and in the most marginalized geographic areas. Often, geography dictates how women and others experience conflict and affects how easily accessible discussions about transitional justice are. In Tunisia, women in the more marginalized areas of the country, such as the South, were not only impacted more deeply by repression, violence, and deliberate policies set up to further their region's socioeconomic marginalization, they were also less likely at the beginning of the truth-seeking process to know that the truth commission existed or how they could engage. In Sri Lanka, geography directly correlates to certain identity markers and any work that remains concentrated in any one area will fail to capture the experiences and demands of others who reside elsewhere. Moreover, activism is made more difficult by the intense divisions across these geographic and ethnic lines, meaning that those working on justice and human rights have to be very careful in their work not to be perceived as aligned with one side or another or working to further certain interests. In Syria, communities' responses to women survivors of sexual violence, detention, and other violations are very different depending on the region. The more conservative South is more likely to reject and ostracize these women, whereas in the North, communities are supportive of them and more likely to view them as having contributed to their cause.

The participant from RAJP in Côte d'Ivoire reminded us all throughout the symposium to not forget about the importance of engaging young people in activism and work on transitional justice. Not only is it possible that their experiences of conflict are unique and thus require tailored responses, they may also be more likely to become marginalized from formal processes or limited to tokenistic participation without any meaningful voice. Moreover, the work of RAJP demonstrates the power of youth voices through the way they have been able to galvanize young women and men from across the country and across different sectarian lines to call for justice and redress for harms and to find creative means to spread messages of justice, peace, and inclusion.

During an exercise on the topic of intersectionality, participants expressed a strong commitment to understanding different factors and how they intersect and interplay with gender to affect people's experiences of violence, repression, and the work that follows. One area where more attention is needed is gender identity and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) rights. As noted, all participants at this symposium were women, and there was not much representation from the LGBTIQ community. Certain discussions showed that more work could be done to deepen the understanding of women's rights groups about gender identity and sexual orientation and how these can

further exacerbate violence and marginalization, again, both during periods of systemic violence and in the aftermath. For its part, ICTJ should also commit to doing more to increase the representation of LGBTIQ individuals and groups in future spaces like this one.

Messages and Recommendations to the International Community

One of the mornings of the symposium was intended to be a space for participants to discuss their engagement and experience with international actors; specifically, intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations (UN), international NGOs (INGOs), donor entities, and the media. Participants were asked to discuss problems and challenges they see in terms of the relationship between these international actors and local and national civil society groups, but also to offer suggestions and messages for addressing them. The discussion was very rich and certain recommendations emerged very clearly.

United Nations

Participants identified a number of issues with the UN's role in supporting their work. The first related to the UN's overall approach to human rights issues. For example, participants expressed frustration with how long it can take for the entity to respond to and denounce instances of human rights violations, particularly when it comes to denunciations of violence against women and human rights defenders. Part and parcel to this issue is the inherently political nature of the UN. Often, certain contexts are prioritized over others based solely on the political interests of powerful member states.

One solution that was discussed was simply greater willingness by the UN Secretary General, UN member states, UN agencies, and others to denounce violations more quickly and more robustly across the board. Another recommendation was to allocate greater resources to the agencies and mechanisms that can address human rights issues so that these institutions are better able to take a rights-based approach and fulfill their mandates. Participants also suggested better internal vetting of peacekeepers and others tasked with safeguarding against human rights violations, since many within this group have themselves been complicit in such violations in the past.

Another issue raised was that the UN is too state-centric in its approach. Participants suggested that it open up more meaningful spaces for direct engagement with civil society. Relatedly, UN country operations were described as being too heavily concentrated in country capitals. Such interventions should do more to expand into regions and areas outside the capital and to develop strong relationships with a more diverse set of civil society organizations and victims' groups in these places.

Donor Entities and INGOs

Three critical, and somewhat connected, issues emerged during the discussion about the role of donor entities (including governments, foundations, and others) and INGOs. The first issue had to do with coordination, both in terms of coordination between these groups and local and national-level partners and among themselves. In terms of the former, participants wanted to see greater coordination with local groups before any international entity begins working or funding work in a particular place. Funders and other international actors need to be more willing to listen directly to the local and national civil society organizations and victims' groups that know the context best and to engage in work that aligns with the priorities of those groups, rather than pushing their

own agendas. In the words of one participant, “donors should be giving voice to victims, not the other way around.” Local actors should be treated as equal partners in the process rather than being asked to simply carry out predetermined agendas.

Along these lines was the notion that donors and international NGOs often “steal” the ideas or work being carried out at the local level and then market the outcomes as their own success stories. To combat against such stealing, participants suggested that contracts and grants include explicit provisions around communications and publicity that would protect the implementing or partner organizations in country and ensure their contributions to the work are made explicitly clear.

Still falling under the umbrella of coordination is the need for better coordination and communication among donors and INGOs. Improved communication among these entities and even the creation of a network would lead to more effective and coherent work across the board. It would also help increase transparency about who is being funded and how much they are getting. A current lack of information in this regard was another source of frustration expressed by participants.

A second issue that emerged was the need for greater institutional support and capacity building for smaller, grassroots organizations. At present, funding and other forms of support often go to bigger, more well-established organizations—often based in capitals—at the expense of more grassroots organizations doing work directly with victims at the most local levels. This funding bias means that these smaller organizations are never able to grow, perpetuating a cycle and often ultimately rendering these groups unable to continue working. Donors and INGOs should do more to fund the work of these organizations but also to help them develop institutionally so that they can become sustainable and more capable of growing and receiving additional funds in the future. Greater sustainability means that local groups can carry on the work that begins with the support of international entities even after the latter has moved on.

Lastly, and somewhat related to the issue of sustainability and institutional capacity, donors in particular should allow for greater flexibility around project implementation. Transitional justice does not always follow a set timeline, and, often, major political developments, delays at the policy level, or other factors beyond the control of civil society actors—local, national, and international alike—derail plans. Donors should understand this and be more receptive to amending projects along the way to account for new developments and engaging in more adaptive monitoring and evaluation. On the latter point of monitoring and evaluation, there should also be a greater understanding among donors that the transformative impact of transitional justice interventions cannot be measured in weeks, months, or sometimes even years. Again, equal partnerships, more fluid communication with grantees, and increased flexibility on the part of donors will help and will give implementing organizations the space they need to design meaningful, relevant, and responsive interventions and measure and evaluate them appropriately.

Media

One of the primary problems that participants discussed in terms of the media was the biased or otherwise problematic nature of its coverage of periods of violence or conflict, victims' experiences, and transitional justice processes. In the best cases, such coverage is a result of a lack of understanding among journalists and other media actors about transitional justice and how to appropriately work with and report on the experiences of

survivors. In others, it is the result of intentional (often state-promoted) bias, ill will, or even drive for profit and popularity at the expense of victims.

Participants noted that these issues are exacerbated when it comes to media's portrayal of women. They told stories of women victims who were objectified in the media or otherwise portrayed inaccurately. Moreover, media stories often perpetuate certain images of women as sad, downtrodden, and weak because of their experiences. In the eyes of the media, victimhood sells more stories than resilience, activism, and strength, and women in particular must fit into this narrow conception of what it means to have been a victim of human rights violations.

To counter these problems, participants offered several recommendations. For one, civil society—national and international—should be investing more in trainings and capacity building for media outlets, journalists, and other outlets. Journalists, reporters, and others should learn how to cover transitional justice issues appropriately and engage with victims sensitively. Working with owners of media outlets to develop editorial policies and reporting protocols would be hugely beneficial. And these same actors should understand the importance of presenting a more holistic and complex picture of victims—raising awareness about their experiences of violence, but also showing their resilience and activism and communicating their political demands.

More generally, governments, civil society, and other members of the international community should do more to promote press freedom and invest in alternative and independent media sources. Greater support should be channeled to organizations who are working directly with survivors and others affected by violence to tell their own stories and act as journalists, reporters, and storytellers themselves.

Importance of Exchange Across Countries

Perhaps the clearest takeaway from the symposium is the importance of hosting such events. The space it provided for exchange across diverse countries, but about common struggles, goals, and objectives, was invaluable. There are several reasons for the overwhelming success of the symposium, not least of which was an extraordinary roster of participants. Two others are worth noting. First, the rich, thought-provoking discussions led to new ideas, new connections, and new strategies and approaches. Conversations between participants from Tunisia and the representative from the Kosovo Verification Commission for the Recognition of Sexual Violence Victim Status sparked new ideas about how the latter can strengthen its own procedures. Participants from some of the most challenging contexts such as Sri Lanka and Syria drew inspiration from the decades-long struggle of their Lebanese counterpart whose determination never waned and whose work finally paid off at a policy level. Across the board, participants were inspired by their Ivoirian counterpart's commitment to the cause of engaging young people and have already commented that they will do more to ensure young people's active participation in their work. And several participants noted that they were eager to try out some of the new strategies shared by fellow participants: In Syria, inspiration was drawn from the preservation by Tunisia's Truth and Dignity Commission of love letters between husbands and wives written while one was detained; participants from Nepal and Tunisia hope to implement an initiative similar to the dress protest in Kosovo; and the power of song as demonstrated in Lebanon and Côte d'Ivoire was particularly moving for many.

The second reason is the sheer and overwhelming sense of solidarity that emerged. This is no small matter for people who are working on the frontlines of justice in politicized and even violent contexts that are often hostile to human rights in general, and women's rights in particular. As one participant put it, "What I am taking away is the sisterhood, the most important thing for me, and the passion, commitment, and the feeling that I'm not alone." The space provided an opportunity for each participant to see that they are not the only ones working in difficult environments and to feel as though they are part of a common struggle. Despite the differences in each context, many of the challenges they described and the goals they are working toward were shared. In the words of another participant, "The days we spent here, we talked about so many things; this group really added something I will never forget. What's special is that despite our differences—in country, wars, experiences, geography, time periods—we were still able to meet on the same path toward one goal."

Because each country represented at the symposium is at such a different stage in its own trajectory of seeking truth, justice, acknowledgment, and repair, the different stories provided a certain amount of perspective and hope. For those just beginning their process, or still stuck in a period of violent conflict, it was helpful to see that eventually, openings to pursue meaningful justice do appear. For example, for Tunisian participants, whose transitional justice process has been at once lauded as groundbreaking and beset by intense problems, divisions, and politicization, it was important to understand how plagued processes in other countries have also been by politics, sectarian divides, and other obstacles in order to gain insight and develop new strategies for their country.

For these reasons and more, it is ICTJ's strong concluding recommendation that spaces such as this symposium continue to be opened, supported, and prioritized. These spaces should not be conferences and events for their own sake, but places for meaningful exchanges led by those doing the important work of justice on the ground and in the most difficult of circumstances. One participant noted at the end of the symposium, "This felt so much like it was all of ours. Like we all owned it." This principle should guide similar events in the future if they are to give the most power possible to the voices of the victims and activists who matter most.

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The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the Canadian government's official policies.

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The International Center for Transitional Justice works across society and borders to challenge the causes and address the consequences of massive human rights violations. We affirm victims' dignity, fight impunity, and promote responsive institutions in societies emerging from repressive rule or armed conflict as well as in established democracies where historical injustices or systemic abuse remain unresolved. For more information, visit www.ictj.org

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