

## **International Justice/ICC: Mar '08**

**Author:** [IWPR ICC](#)

IWPR's coverage of the ICC praised for its fairness.

The team's balanced reporting of developments at the International Criminal Court, ICC, has been commended by a top defence lawyer and a human rights representative.

Karim Khan, former defence lawyer for ex-Liberia president Charles Taylor, who is currently on trial in The Hague for war crimes, told IWPR that he found its work crucial in supplying balanced information on trials.

"I am a huge fan of IWPR," he told reporting impact. "I think the work of IWPR is critical to ensure balanced dissemination of information. The danger in this area of law is the demonisation of accused, [with].. evidence... often forgotten.

"What IWPR does, to its great credit, is ensure the evidence itself, which is heard in court, is disseminated widely. To foster peace and reconciliation, you need to separate myth from reality, and what the institute does is critical in that regard."

Khan explained that due to bar rules, defence counsels are not allowed to brief the press about the facts of the case, while prosecutors are given this opportunity. This inequality makes IWPR's balanced coverage of cases all the more important, he said.

"The prosecution has a spokesperson, but the defence doesn't. While IWPR is no-one's spokesman, it allows clarifications to be made when needed, and it is a forum for that to be done."

Khan, who is inundated with media requests for interviews, said that IWPR was one of the few media organisations he trusted enough to grant interviews to.

"Having someone you can speak to, and knowing IWPR is a mature organisation and is responsible, you will speak to their journalists and have balanced reporting. They will not be a mouthpiece for either the prosecution or defence but understand the difficulties faced, and therefore will hear what is said by both sides and draw their own conclusions."

He pointed out that as IWPR's Hague office covered trials both at the ICC and at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, its team members had broad knowledge and expertise in reporting on war crimes trials.

Another highlight from March came when the project secured an exclusive interview with David Matsanga, chief negotiator for the Lord's Resistance Army, LRA.

From this, the ICC team produced a particularly interesting feature - Ugandan Rebels to Appeal ICC Warrants - which looked into the requests by the Ugandan government to drop arrest warrants against the LRA.

The report came about after negotiators for the rebel group came to The Hague to find out the procedure for applying to the ICC to drop warrants for the arrest of its leaders.

The authors of the report - reporter Katy Glassborow and editor Peter Eichstaedt - were careful to present the opposing views of the court and the rebel group in their piece.

Matsanga told IWPR that arrest warrants were no longer necessary as the Ugandan authorities had agreed to set up a special court to try the rebels, including their leader Joseph Kony. He said that his team would be filing a motion with the ICC to have the warrants withdrawn.

Mariana Pena of the International Federation for Human Rights, FIDH, who read the story, said it was a good example of IWPR's balanced reporting.

"By providing information on the views of all actors, IWPR does not suggest to the reader which side he or she should support but rather leaves it up to him or her," she said.

Pena added that because the ICC was far removed from the communities most affected by the crimes the court is investigating, the work of IWPR was all the more important in keeping people on the ground informed of developments related to international justice.

"[There's] misinformation in local communities in the countries affected by ICC investigations, due to the very distance [from the court] and the fact that speculation runs high when national interests are at stake," she said.

"Journalists in Uganda might lack first-hand information on the court, which they can get from colleagues in The Hague through [IWPR's work]."

**Location:** Balkans  
Uganda

**Topic:** Reporting Impact

**Focus:** ICC - International Criminal Court

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**Source URL:** <https://iwpr.net/global-voices/international-justiceicc-mar-08>