

ICC: The Court of the Democracies

The ICC embodies the values and laws of democracy: human rights, due process, judicial transparency, accountability, and the protection of victims. Tyrants and rogue states do not want to be bound by these high standards; rather, the ICC member states are overwhelmingly democracies and friends of the U.S.

94.5% of ICC States Parties Are Free or Partly Free

The non-profit organization Freedom House annually assesses every country as "Free," "Partly Free," or "Not Free," based on the level of political rights and civil liberties in each country. At the time of ratification, nearly two-thirds of ICC States Parties are ranked as "free" and another 30% ranked as "partly free," with some form of democracy and respect for human rights. In fact, of the 92 countries that have ratified the Rome Statute, only five (Tajikistan, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo) are "not free." For these five countries, ICC membership is a beginning step in democratic transitions and the establishment of the rule of law.

Democratic Countries Control the ICC's Administration

Each ICC member gets one vote in the Assembly of States Parties, a democratic forum that makes all important decisions about the Court, including the election of judges and prosecutors, the removal of rogue judges and prosecutors, approval of the budget, and any amendments or addendums to the ICC's Rome Statute. Because of this democratic and transparent process, no one country, or group of countries, can hijack the Court to pursue political agendas.

The ICC Judges Hail from Free and Democratic Countries

In early February 2003, the Assembly of States Parties elected the ICC's first 18 judges. Every one of these judges represents a country that is ranked "Free" by Freedom House; all 18 countries are also U.S. friends and allies. The 18 countries are Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, Italy, South Korea, Latvia, Mali, Samoa, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom.

U.S. Democratic Allies Strongly Support the ICC

Key U.S. allies are members and strong supporters of the Court, including all 15 European Union members, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Argentina, Jordan, and South Africa. Japan, Russia, and Mexico, while not yet full members of the ICC, are also vocal supporters of the Court and its important work.

Emerging Democracies Have Joined the ICC to Secure the Rule of Law

New democracies in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa are among the ICC's strongest supporters. For these countries, joining the ICC helps build the rule of law and respect for human rights within their own borders, protecting against a return to tyranny and strengthening their democratic traditions.