

## A public commons of legal sources

When hyperlinked decisions or other texts are made available on the Internet, they can dramatically increase the dissemination of legal sources in international criminal law. The Katanga Trial Judgment of 7 March 2014, for example, hyperlinked to 538 sources in the ICC Legal Tools Database. That judgment alone amounts to a small, systematic library in international criminal law. Given that the Database is extensively used around the world and enjoys more than 2,000,000 hits in 2015, every document that hyperlinks legal sources to their PURL in the Database highlights that these sources are freely available to everyone through the Database, which serves as a public space or commons of legal information in international criminal law. This can be of distinct practical importance to users with limited access to proprietary legal information (such as subscription-based databases or journals, or expensive publications). Many actors who work only occasionally with international criminal law need one, central repository of legal sources that can be accessed through one search and browse platform. The ICC Legal Tools Database is a service owned by a permanent public international organization which has no commercial interests in the Database.

## PURLing publications and reports

It is against this background that an increasing number of authors and organizations are seeking both to hyperlink sources to their PURL in the ICC Legal Tools Database,

national jurisprudence would have a profound influence on the development of ICL.<sup>8</sup> This prediction has come

<sup>5</sup> Art. 2(4), Charter of the United Nations (<http://www.legal-tools.org/doc/6b3cd5/>).

<sup>6</sup> One noticeable endeavour is the Kellogg-Briand Pact which "condemn[s] recourse to war for the solution of international controversies and renounce[s] it as an instrument of national

and to have their publications and reports included in the Database (which gives the documents a unique PURL).

Erik Møse:  
**The ICTR and Reconciliation in Rwanda**  
Torkel Opsahl Academic EPublisher  
Brussels, 2015  
Published on 30 June 2015.  
ISBN: 978-82-93081-85-2.  
PURL: <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/7e3bae/>.

Online commentaries such as CLICC ([www.cmn-kh.org/clicc/](http://www.cmn-kh.org/clicc/)) also hyperlink to the Database.

## Sustainable content management

The ICC Legal Tools Project has been continuously active since 2003, with an increase in the content and use of the ICC Legal Tools Database every year. A key factor in this sustainable content management has been the network of external partners working on the loading of documents and metadata onto the Database. Currently there are such partners in thirteen States on all continents:

- Argentina
- Canada
- China
- Egypt
- Germany
- India
- Japan
- Korea
- Poland
- Singapore
- South Africa
- United Kingdom
- United States

These partners are led by a part-time Project Co-ordinator and a Deputy, with administrative support from the ICC. The Project is financed outside the regular budget of the ICC, through voluntary contributions, in recent years primarily from the European Union, Denmark and Finland. The Centre for International Law Research and Policy (in particular its IT and CMN departments) has offered extensive *pro bono* support for the Project.

You can contact the Project by sending an e-mail message to [info@casematrixnetwork.org](mailto:info@casematrixnetwork.org).



## Building a public commons of legal sources in international criminal law

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Using PURLs in the  
ICC Legal Tools Database

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## Free access to legal sources in electronic form

Everyone working with core international crimes needs access to legal sources in international criminal law. Legal sources are the staple food of legal practice. Inadequate access prevents lawyers, investigators and analysts from working to their capacity. Unequal access creates uneven empowerment between criminal justice professionals in materially rich and less resourceful countries. The overwhelming majority of legal sources in international criminal law – such as treaties, statutes and court decisions – are produced by States and financed by tax payers. Such sources should therefore be freely available online in electronic form.

## ICC Legal Tools Database

This Database provides free online access to more than 95,000 legal sources relevant to work on international criminal law. The Database is comprised of thirteen in-depth collections of documents:

- ICC Documents
- ICC 'Preparatory Works' and Statute Amendments
- International Legal Instruments
- Other International Law Decisions and Documents
- Human Rights Law Decisions and Documents
- International(ised) Criminal Jurisdictions (Basic Documents)
- International(ised) Criminal Decisions
- National Jurisdictions
- National Implementing Legislation
- National Cases Involving Core International Crimes
- Publications
- United Nations War Crimes Commission
- International(ised) Fact-Finding Mandates

Documents can be freely read, printed or downloaded from the Database. Most documents are full-text searchable. Search data (metadata) have been registered for all documents. Documents can be found both by browsing (picture 1) and searching (picture 2).

## Giving documents a permanent home: PURLs

Each document in the Database has a persistent URL known as a 'PURL' (picture 3). It looks like this: <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/498c38/>. It is the permanent Internet address of the document. The ICC Legal Tools Project guarantees that the PURLs in the Database are not broken. Hyperlinks to such PURLs are therefore not corrupted, but will remain functional indefinitely. As a consequence, ICC and other judges, publish-

ers and authors are increasingly hyperlinking legal sources in their texts to their PURL in the Database (picture 4). Such hyperlinks can be embedded in any part of the reference to a legal source (as in picture 4), or in the PURL itself when included in the text. Even if a text is not intended for the Internet, including PURLs in footnotes can help readers to find sources quickly. Only the last seven characters distinguish between PURLs.