

## **An Introduction to the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and its Impact on the Rule of Law in Rwanda**

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### **Summary**

On 8 November 1994 the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (“ICTR”) was established by the United Nations Security Council in the immediate aftermath of a genocide that took the lives of over 800,000 Tutsi, moderate Hutu, Twa and others. While the ICTR’s core function remains the prosecution of those most responsible for the crimes committed in 1994 related to the genocide, the ICTR also recognised the need to assist Rwanda in its efforts to rebuild an almost completely destroyed judiciary and to ensure that perpetrators at all levels are held accountable.

This lecture focuses on the evolving relationship between Rwanda and the ICTR over the past two decades and how that relationship has led to judicial reform in Rwanda. The lecture will provide a brief overview of the Rwandan legal system in the wake of the genocide and focus on how the judicial decisions rendered by the ICTR impacted legislative reform in Rwanda and strengthened the national court system to ensure the prosecution of those offenders that did not fall within the ICTR’s mandate.

Since its inception, the ICTR has been aware that prosecution and judicial decisions alone cannot preserve peace or attain reconciliation in a country devastated by unparalleled atrocities. For this reason, and as discussed during the lecture, the ICTR created outreach and capacity-building programmes to ensure that affected communities understand the work of the Tribunal as well as the efforts undertaken by the ICTR to seek justice and promote peace and national reconciliation in the Great Lakes Region.

The strengthening of Rwanda’s judiciary through judicial decisions, trainings and other capacity building initiatives demonstrate the impact that the ICTR has had on the rule of law in Rwanda, which, hopefully, will influence other countries in the continued fight against impunity.