



Canadian Centre for International Justice

Summary INFORMATION ON LEGAL OPTIONS

What is the CCIJ?

The Canadian Centre for International Justice is a national, charitable, human rights organization headquartered in Ottawa. The CCIJ works with survivors of genocide, torture and other atrocities to seek justice and hold perpetrators responsible for their crimes. We are an independent, non-profit group and we are not affiliated with the Canadian government.

Who can benefit from the CCIJ's services?

The CCIJ's clients are survivors of human rights violations or people with close relationships to victims who died as a result of human rights violations or who are otherwise unable to contact us.

What does the CCIJ do?

The CCIJ serves as a resource centre to provide information to our clients about their options for pursuing justice and help them assess the most favourable avenues. We also seek to hold perpetrators accountable for their crimes. When the CCIJ receives information that a human rights abuser is living in or visiting Canada or is a company or group doing business here, we can initiate an investigation. Often, the preferred form of justice for a client is a legal case against an alleged perpetrator. After the CCIJ has conducted an initial investigation, if a client is interested in pursuing a case or some other action, the CCIJ will refer the client to the proper person or office to take the process forward. The CCIJ does not provide legal representation but does remain involved in any case and accompanies the client through the process.

What forms of justice might a client be able to pursue?

The CCIJ can help clients pursue the following forms of justice:

- ***Criminal prosecutions in Canada and abroad***

The CCIJ carries out investigations that may be referred to the Canadian government, foreign governments or international courts for the criminal prosecution of human rights abusers. If an investigation uncovers sufficient evidence and the client wishes to pursue a criminal prosecution, we will contact the appropriate officials. If the government or court expresses a genuine intention to pursue the prosecution, the CCIJ will put the client in contact with the officials and hand over the evidence we have collected. Once a case is referred to a government or court, we will continue to verify that the prosecution is being conducted in an effective and fair manner and make recommendations to prosecutors where necessary.

- ***Civil lawsuits in Canada***

The CCIJ carries out investigations that may lead to the filing of lawsuits seeking compensation for clients. If an investigation uncovers sufficient evidence and the client wishes to pursue a civil lawsuit, we will help the client find a lawyer to file and pursue the case without charging legal fees.

- ***Extraditions***

The CCIJ supports foreign or international cases based on the client's wishes or when Canada is unwillingness or unable to prosecute. The CCIJ also supports bringing abusers to Canada for criminal prosecution when other countries are unwilling or unable to act.

- ***Denaturalization, deportation and exclusion***

The CCIJ supports immigration penalties against human rights abusers only as a last resort when no other forms of justice are available. The CCIJ opposes deportations that could lead to further human rights violations or permit abusers to escape justice.

- ***Compensation for clients***

The CCIJ helps clients pursue compensation through victim support funds.

- ***Publicity campaigns***

The CCIJ conducts public outreach to bring attention to issues of impunity and the presence of human rights abusers in Canada.

What types of human rights abusers does the CCIJ investigate?

Many of the CCIJ's investigations involve individual people accused of human rights abuses. We also investigate abuses by foreign governments, the Canadian government, corporations and other associations, such as rebel or militia groups.

What types of human rights violations does the CCIJ investigate?

Unfortunately, the CCIJ cannot investigate all types of crimes. We have limited resources and we can only focus on a small number of issues. The human rights violations we investigate are those that are considered by the world to be the most severe. They are limited primarily to acts of torture, which means severe mistreatment by government officials, usually when a person is in prison, and extrajudicial killings, which means murder committed by government officials. If someone is a survivor of torture or other severe abuses carried out by government officials, the CCIJ may be able to assist that person. If someone has a close relationship to a person who was killed by a government, a militia or a rebel group, the CCIJ may be able to initiate an investigation.

What does a client have to do once a case begins?

A client's responsibilities depend on the type of case or action the client decides to pursue. In all cases, the client will need to provide the CCIJ with some personal information and details about the client's story. We understand how difficult it can be to talk about such traumatic events so we will take the lead from the client. We also prefer, if possible, to have the client's help in identifying witnesses and evidence. The CCIJ has strong rules to protect confidentiality. We do not voluntarily reveal the identities of clients, witnesses or other contacts or the confidential information they provide

without their approval, although there is always a possibility that a court could order us to disclose this information. Whether the client decides to pursue a criminal prosecution, civil lawsuit or some other legal case, the client will very likely have to give testimony in court in front of a judge. It is sometimes possible for clients' identities to be kept secret from the public but the alleged perpetrator who is charged in the case has a right to know the names of witnesses who testify.

Do clients get money by participating in a case?

If the client pursues a civil lawsuit or other compensation proceeding, there is a chance the client may recover money but doing so is very difficult. There is no guarantee that the client will receive compensation.

How long does a case take?

Almost every legal case takes a long time to reach a conclusion. The CCIJ's initial investigation can take several months or a year. Filing a case often requires several more months. Once the case is filed, the length of the process will depend on how aggressively the alleged perpetrator fights the case. Regardless, any case is likely to take at least three or four years and many take longer than that. A client will probably have to spend approximately 10 days each year working with the CCIJ and lawyers, giving testimony, traveling to court and carrying out other activities related to a case. Other actions that are not legal cases may require less time.

Does a client have to pay money for an investigation or to start a legal case?

No. The CCIJ or other lawyers or officials can cover expenses related to an investigation or case.

To speak with the CCIJ, please contact the Legal Coordinator, Matt Eisenbrandt:

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