

# Two-Way Dialogue: Expanding the IIIM's Reach

Many of you have heard us talk about our [victim/survivor centred approach \(VSCA\)](#) and our two-way engagement with Syrian civil society. However, what does this mean in practice?

Shortly after being appointed as Head of the IIIM, I met with Syrian civil society organisations. It was immediately clear we would need to make these meetings a regular event. With the generous support of the Netherlands and Switzerland, the Lausanne Platform was established.

For the past five years, the platform has been a central pillar of our two-way engagement with Syrian civil society organisations, with a changing focus. The IIIM updates on its progress and representatives from a variety of organisations share their views and priorities. This twice-yearly engagement has led to tangible progress in our work and expanded our understanding of the victim/survivor experiences of the conflict.

However, we are aware that the voices and concerns of victims/survivors need dedicated spaces, and that there are many groups and organisations that still have difficulties accessing international justice and accountability processes. This past year, we took the opportunity to explore further ways to broaden our engagement efforts.

We developed and implemented a new outreach framework and put in place two additional in-person meetings in Geneva. The overarching theme for the 2022 events was the IIIM's [Structural Investigation](#), the key tool we use to facilitate inclusive justice for both criminal and non-criminal proceedings relating to core international crimes.

The first meeting was the Geneva Consultations, the first of what will be an annual event specifically for victim/survivor groups and family associations. This is a space for the IIIM to seek participants' perspectives of justice and criminal accountability and hear more about the barriers preventing the participation of some communities in justice processes. The ultimate objective of this consultation is to identify tangible ways in which the insights of those consulted may guide and be incorporated into our work.



Our regular Lausanne Platform meeting was held in the Netherlands in July, with both the IIIM team and CSOs discussing structural investigations as a component of the wider Syrian justice and accountability ecosystem.

In the final event of the year, we convened specialized CSOs at our first Accountability Workshop, held in Geneva. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss critical challenges in the documentation of core international crimes and the related analytical work linked to one of our strategic lines of inquiry.

All three complementary engagements, as well as all IIIM outreach activities in-person or online, are opportunities to hold meaningful discussions, allowing us to hear directly the priorities and concerns of those impacted by the crimes and violations our mandate covers as well as answer questions on our work.

The recent launch of the [IIIM's Gender Strategy and Implementation plan](#) is one example of how targeted consultations informed one of our thematic strategies and helped develop institutional frameworks that fully integrate gender at every stage of our work.

In 2023, my team and I look forward to many new opportunities to meet, answer questions, and when possible, share how much our two-way engagement with Syrian CSOs and our VSCA are an integral part of our work, both as a UN body and as a justice facilitator assisting competent jurisdictions. Your cooperation with and support of the IIIM's work is the most concrete demonstration of our shared commitment to inclusive justice.

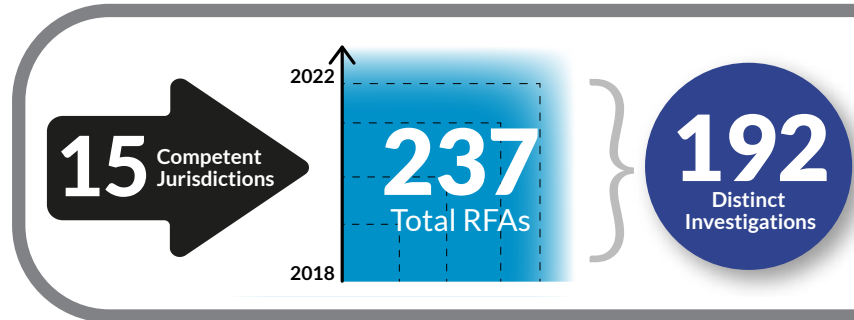
**Catherine Marchi-Uhel**

# IIIM Progress Update

## Support to Jurisdictions

In 2022, the IIIM received **72** requests for assistance (RFAs). This brings the total of RFAs from 2018 to the end of 2022 to **237**. These RFAs relate to **192** distinct investigations or prosecutions being conducted across **15** different competent jurisdictions.

In addition to sharing information and evidence, the IIIM has also shared **35** analytical products and continues to expand the forms of assistance it offers in response to RFAs.



These products take different forms and cover a wide range of topics, from legal briefs on the contextual elements of core international crimes and analytical reports on organisational entities to geolocation of crime scenes, expert reports and analytical reports on criminal patterns. The large majority of products are developed in a way that they can be shared in the same format across all the jurisdictions the IIIM supports. The IIIM is also, at the request of competent jurisdictions, tailoring some of its analytical work to fit the unique needs and circumstances of specific criminal proceedings. One of these tailor-made analytical products was for instance recently relied upon and discussed in court in ongoing trial proceedings in Sweden.

## Cooperation Agreements



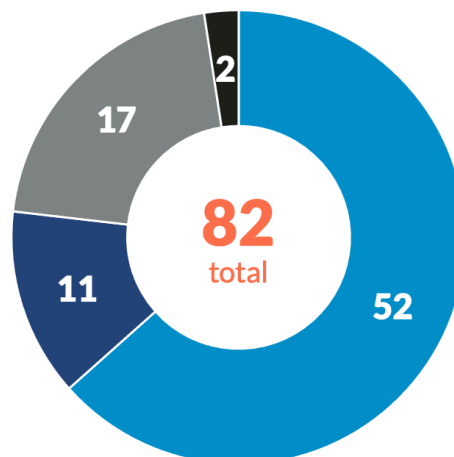
The Cooperation Convention signed last year between France and the IIIM was approved by France's Parliament. In October this year, the Head of the IIIM met with France's permanent representative to the UN in Geneva for the submission of the instrument of approval of the Convention between France and the IIIM, as a result of which the Convention entered into force.

This cooperation framework allows the IIIM to request information and evidence from French authorities, including French courts, which had previously not been possible. It also allows acts of judicial cooperation

between IIIM and France, such as interviewing witnesses and collecting information on French territory.

The IIIM has also recently concluded arrangements with Australia regarding the conduct of IIIM investigative activities, which brings the total to **82** cooperation frameworks. These are divided between,

**52** CSOs  
**11** International organisations  
**17** State entities  
**02** Other entities



Since 2018, the IIIM has preserved in its Central Repository **138** terrabytes of data. This is made up of **434** collections from **146** sources, and represents **3.75 million** records out of which it has processed **2.3 million** records.

The IIIM team collects multi-format material (video, print, audio etc.) in a range of languages and of varying levels of quality. It continues its efforts to continually refine the process of identifying and analysing relevant material to be more effective and efficient through the use of digital tools and new approaches.

Preserving information and evidence securely in the Central Repository means that whether now or in the future, there is a starting point for investigators, prosecutors and judges to seek assistance for their work.

## Outreach Activities

### The Genocide Network Meeting

April 5 - At the 31<sup>st</sup> meeting of the European Network for the Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity and War Crimes hosted by Eurojust in The Hague, the Deputy Head of the IIIM, Michelle Jarvis, gave a presentation on the IIIM's Structural Investigation concept as part of the open session. The session explored the growing use of structural investigations in different jurisdictions focusing on accountability for core international crimes. Ms. Jarvis explained how the IIIM's structural investigation concept is informed by its unique mandate and is being developed as a key justice facilitation tool, helping to promote coordination within the ecosystem of accountability actors working on crimes committed in Syria. It is also an important vehicle for the integration of the IIIM's victim/survivor-centred approach and other thematic strategies for inclusive justice into the IIIM's daily work.

### Brussels VI Conference: Supporting the Future of Syria & the Region

May 10 - At the Brussels VI Conference, the IIIM was invited to participate at the ministerial segment during the meeting of foreign ministers. The speech highlighted the support the IIIM was providing to competent jurisdictions and the importance of accountability remaining a priority for member states.

*"The precedent of unchecked brutality and violations in Syria risks becoming the norm for conduct in conflicts around the globe."*



The Head of the IIIM gave five suggestions of concrete actions for member states to commit to, including by:

- Reiterating the call for the Syrian situation to be referred to the International Criminal Court and exploring other available jurisdictional avenues for accountability.
- Lifting obstacles preventing national justice actors from investigating core international crimes in Syria and increasing the capacities of existing war crimes units to prosecute such crimes, including by charging them cumulatively or instead of terrorism affiliated charges.
- Joining existing joint investigative teams or creating new ones.
- Cooperating directly with entities such as the IIIM and continuing to support Syrian civil society actors documenting crimes or advocating for the rights of victims and survivors.

The rest of the speech can be read [here](#), and the video viewed [here](#).

## Moving Forward on Truth & Justice: Addressing the crisis of missing persons & detention in Syria

*"This priority of the families of missing persons must be part of our priorities and is an important part of our victim and survivor centred approach"*

May 6 - The IIIM also participated in a side event at the Brussels VI Conference, organised by Syrian CSOs to address the crisis of missing persons and detention in Syria.

Ms. Marchi-Uhel's remarks can be read [here](#). More details on the IIIM's Strategy to support entities clarifying the fate of the missing, can be found [here](#).

## Anchoring Accountability for Mass Atrocities

May 19 - The IIIM participated in a panel at the launch of the [Anchoring Accountability for Mass Atrocities report](#), released by the Oxford Institute for Ethics, Law and Armed Conflict (ELAC).



The IIIM Deputy Head presented the case for structural reform in the accountability landscape, in particular mainstreaming a victim/survivor centred approach into the work of accountability mechanisms.

## Advancing Justice for Children

September 16 - In a panel on "[Advancing justice for children: Strengthening accountability](#)" convened by Save The Children in Berlin, Germany, the IIIM briefed on its strategic approaches to address the clear gap in evidence and understanding about crimes committed against children or affecting them in the Syrian context.

## USIP: Delivering Justice for Syria: Assessing the Progress of the IIIM

October 17 - The IIIM participated in a United States Institute of Peace panel discussion entitled "[Delivering justice for Syria: Assessing the progress of the IIIM](#)". The event was an opportunity to look back at the IIIM's achievements as a justice facilitator and zoom in on its cooperation with CSOs in this regard, as well as in pursuit of broader justice objectives.

## International Law Week Roundtable on Inclusive Justice

*"...even when there is an accountability process, the justice needs of certain categories of victims and survivors are at risk of being left out."*

October 26 - During International Law Week in New York, the IIIM Deputy Head spoke at an event exploring how inclusive justice can be facilitated through the adoption of a victim/survivor-centred approach, that is given concrete expression through proactive strategies.

The roundtable on inclusive justice was sponsored by the missions of Canada, the Netherlands, Lichtenstein and Sweden and discussed how to take the lessons from previous justice efforts and move from principles to practice and meaningful justice outcomes.

## International Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) Conference

November 28/29 - As part of the [International Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative \(PSVI\) Conference](#) hosted by the United Kingdom between 28-29 November, the IIIM participated in a panel discussion organized by Legal Action Worldwide entitled "Overlooked and Underserved: Improving Responses to Conflict-related Sexual and Gender-based Violence against LGBTQI+ People", sharing insights relevant to Syria grounded in the IIIM's Gender Strategy.

## UN Women: justice and accountability for CRSV survivors in Syria and Iraq

December 1 - At a UN Women event on "[Survivors as changemakers for justice: Justice and accountability for sexual violence as a weapon of war in Iraq, Syria and worldwide](#)", the IIIM spoke about the practical implications of its Gender Strategy in its documentation of sexual and gender-based crimes, and the overall reflection of a gender dimension in its work.

## IIIM Events

- June - The Geneva Consultations, a meeting dedicated to Victim/ Survivor groups and Family Associations.
- July - The Lausanne Platform, regular meeting between the IIIM and CSOs, convened by the Netherlands and Switzerland.
- November - The Accountability Workshop, with specialized CSOs discussing challenges and opportunities in documentation.

## Publication of the IIIM Gender Strategy & Implementation Plan

History has shown that more than good intentions are required to ensure justice for all, including women, children, persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, and others at risk of being marginalized in accountability processes. From its establishment the IIIM was clear that tailored strategies, a genuine commitment to implementation and resources and expertise were an essential part of its work to support inclusive justice.

In that regard, the IIIM developed a comprehensive Gender Strategy and Implementation Plan which is now available as a public document in Arabic and English, and both the abridged and technical version, can be downloaded from our website [here](#).



The strategy focuses on the implementation of concrete measures to understand and address gender-based violence and disadvantage in accountability efforts.

It also draws on key lessons learned from accountability efforts over the past three decades, tailored to the Syrian context. The

strategy benefitted greatly from extensive consultation with Syrian and other civil society interlocutors, UN actors and external experts on gender and international criminal law.

The Strategy embodies the IIIM's formal commitment to ensuring that gender-based disadvantage does not reduce prospects for justice. It also provides relevant insights for accountability processes relating to other conflict situations.

The IIIM held two events to publicly launch the Gender Strategy. The first on **October 11** was hosted by Sweden, Canada and the Netherlands at the United Nations in Geneva.

After opening remarks from the Ambassadors and representatives of the member states, Catherine Marchi-Uhel addressed why the IIIM decided to adopt a Gender Strategy as part of its victim/survivor-centred approach.



Courtesy of Austrian Embassy The Hague

The Geneva launch was open to Member State diplomats, CSOs and UN actors and was also streamed online for a broader audience.

The second event was held on **22 November**, in The Hague in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Austrian Embassy in The Hague and the Women in International Law Network.

Taking place at the Netherlands MFA, the Director of Multilateral Organisations and Human Rights, Gerard Steeghs, delivered welcome remarks to an audience of international criminal law practitioners, academics and diplomats.

The two events were an opportunity to share the Strategy with a wider audience and discuss the importance of proactively addressing gender equality and inclusion in international criminal justice efforts, including through the application of a gender analysis throughout accountability work.

## Contact Us

If you have any comments, questions or would like further information on the IIIM's Gender Strategy and Implementation Plan, or to request content usage please contact us at: [iiimsyria@un.org](mailto:iiimsyria@un.org)