

2019 / 2020 Annual Report



PROVIDING INVESTIGATIVE
SUPPORT TO CRIMINAL
JUSTICE ACTORS

Annual Report

April
2019

March
2020



“CIJA’s work will one day become the key axis around which the wheels of justice and trials will turn, whether domestically or internationally, thanks to the special and unique character of the working method for gathering evidence during the periods of the Syrian conflict, which many active legal agencies have overlooked.”

CIJA Investigator, Syria (name withheld)



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am proud to present CIJA's first annual report, which provides an overview of the Commission's achievements between 01 April 2019 and 31 March 2020. CIJA deliberately maintains a light public profile, balancing our priority to keep our people and investigative reach secure with the social importance of the work we do. After years of impunity and painstaking work by national investigators, the first arrests, trials and convictions of Islamic State (IS) members and Syrian Regime officials are taking place, relying among other things, on CIJA evidence and analysis.

CIJA continued to focus on the investigation of Syrian Regime and Islamic State criminality with an eye to holding individual senior leaders criminally responsible for their offences. Despite serious military, political and diplomatic challenges on the ground, especially in Syria and Iraq, we achieved

unprecedented levels of success, collecting over a tonne of Syrian Regime documents and 112.5kg of IS materials.

CIJA ultimately exists to provide support to its operational partners, the law enforcement agencies of national authorities, who request our evidence and analysis with increasing regularity. During the last investigative year, CIJA received 169 requests for assistance from national authorities and provided information on 451 named suspects, many of whom are known to be present in Western jurisdictions. CIJA's evidence, analysis and testimony contributed to two convictions of IS members in Germany and the Netherlands, adding to the important judgment in *Colvin v. Syrian Arabic Republic* in January 2019. Crucial evidence and support provided to German authorities over three years also led to the arrest and preparation of the first trial of a ranking Syrian official, Anwar R.

The increasing call for CIJA's evidence and expertise by national authorities is the strongest endorsement of our work and validation of our investigative and analytical methodology. CIJA continues to prioritise its work such that national authorities are able to bring more cases, not only against direct perpetrators but more importantly against higher-ranking officials. It is our hope that the many inquiries that CIJA supports will soon lead to more arrests.

As the Executive Director and founder of CIJA, I remain exceedingly proud of the efforts made by my colleagues over the years, most especially CIJA's national investigators, to ensure, alongside the CIJA's generous donors, a measure of justice for the victims of core international crimes.



Bill Wiley

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

As a former prosecutor, I know that holding powerful individuals accountable requires credible, probative evidence. Gathering it amidst conflict is a great challenge, particularly where the country's government is implicated in the crimes, and where no international court has jurisdiction to investigate. This is where CIJA comes in.

With the UN Security Council blocked in Syria, states supporting accountability turned first to human rights documentation, but evidence linking crimes to perpetrators was lacking. This required partners on the ground, trained to



collect evidence to the highest standards, and experienced international justice practitioners who could build ironclad cases of individual criminal responsibility. CIJA stepped forward to address this need: with the support of international donors, it developed local investigative teams, gathered one million documents, built a searchable evidence database and conducted 22 structural investigations, all while responding rapidly to an increasing number of requests from national law enforcement agencies.

When German authorities located Anwar R., a former Syrian Regime official, they turned to CIJA, which had already prepared a prosecution-ready dossier on his conduct. Today, Anwar R. is on trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is unprecedented for there to be a trial in a third country of someone of his rank, for such crimes, and while the Regime he served is still in power. Thanks to CIJA, similar cases are now pursued in multiple jurisdictions.

It is an honour to serve as a Commissioner of CIJA. My fellow Commissioners and I pledge our support for CIJA in its continuing work to open pathways for justice in places where it was not thought possible.

Stephen J. Rapp

ADVANCING JUSTICE BY INVESTIGATING INTERNATIONAL CRIMES

The Commission for International Justice and Accountability (CIJA) is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation dedicated to supporting prosecutorial efforts to end impunity, whether at the domestic or international level, by conducting independent investigations to collect and prevent the loss and destruction of vital evidence.

In doing so, CIJA aims to expand opportunities to achieve justice for a broad range of crimes that impact vulnerable populations across the

globe, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, terrorism, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling. CIJA's highly trained national investigators collect evidence that may establish the individual criminal responsibility of mid to high-level suspects of international and transnational crimes, which is preserved in accordance with international procedural standards and analysed by a range of experts.

A robust assistance programme ensures that international and domestic justice actors are able

"[CIJA] represents a new force in international justice"

The Globe and Mail, 21 July 2019

CIJA ACHIEVEMENTS AT A GLANCE: 2019/20



LOCAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

56

Investigators trained

8

Partners organisations trained



INVESTIGATION

1,152.5

kg of original physical and documentary materials collected

452

Records of Interview



EVIDENCE PRESERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

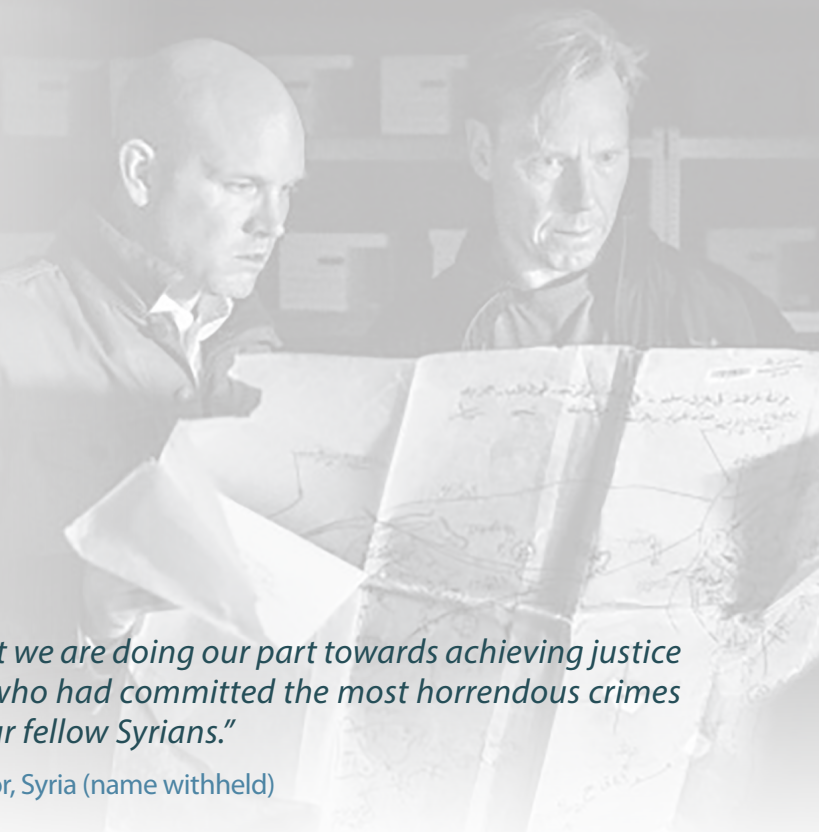
1,300,000

Syrian Regime documents

37,000

IS documents

to access critical evidence and analysis in support of their ongoing investigations. CIJA began its work in the early stages of the Syrian conflict, adapting and successfully deploying to Iraq following the spread of the Islamic State. CIJA has also supported investigative work of multilateral and national authorities in the Central African Republic, and is currently deployed in two further geographic situations, which will be made public once security conditions are met.



“We work like a beehive, with a feeling that we are doing our part towards achieving justice and holding to account the perpetrators who had committed the most horrendous crimes against our fellow Syrians.”

CIJA Investigator, Syria (name withheld)



ANALYSIS AND CASE BUILDING

3

Crimes against Christians case brief

Raqqa: capital of the caliphate case brief

Role of women in Islamic State in Northern Iraq and Syria report



ASSISTANCE TO JUSTICE ACTORS

169

Requests for assistance received

37

Law enforcement agencies supported



OUTREACH

42

Media appearances

49

Events and briefings

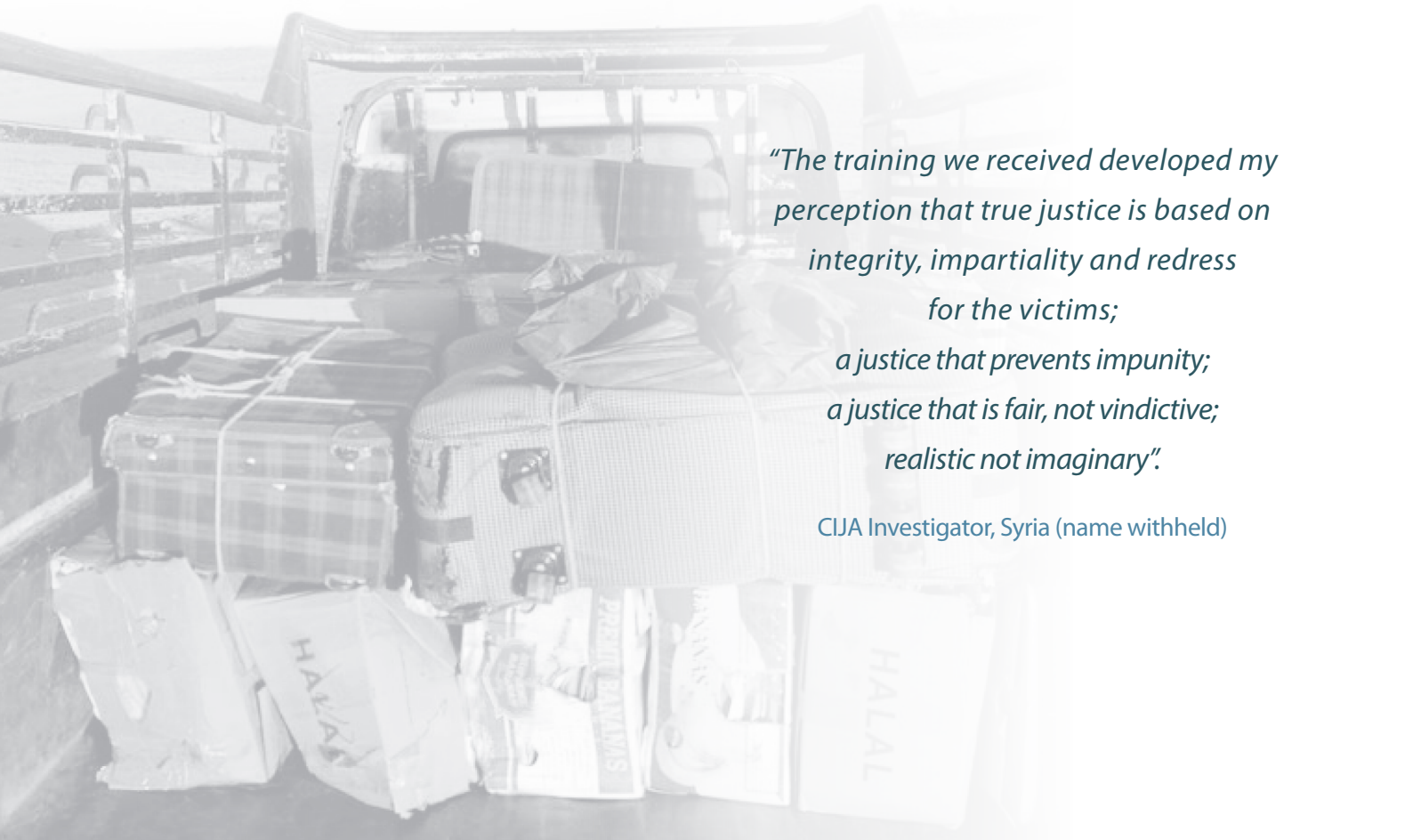
EMPOWERING AFFECTED COMMUNITIES ON THE FRONTLINES OF INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE

CIJA recognises the critical role of locally-owned investigations in ending impunity, training hundreds of activists and national organisations along with developing the investigative knowledge and skills of over fifty investigators.

Investigators are selected based on their understanding of conflict dynamics as well as access to territories and, through regular training and mentoring from CIJA's international experts, are able to complete complex investigative tasks with minimal supervision, while ensuring that their work is safe, ethical, secure and in accordance with the highest criminal procedural standards. Their tireless

and exacting work has ensured the collection of an unprecedented scale of documentary materials, witness interviews and digital evidence establishing the criminal conduct and individual criminal responsibility of mid- and high-ranking Syrian Regime and IS members.

In 2019-20, more than 50 of CIJA's investigators received training in complex skills and techniques addressing investigative objectives, including witness development and interviewing techniques, investigation of sexual offences in accordance with international best practices, and identification and tracking of suspects.



*"The training we received developed my perception that true justice is based on integrity, impartiality and redress for the victims;
a justice that prevents impunity;
a justice that is fair, not vindictive;
realistic not imaginary".*

CIJA Investigator, Syria (name withheld)

COLLECTING, PRESERVING AND MANAGING EVIDENCE

CIJA has collected more than 1,3 million evidentiary materials whose admissibility, as well as accessibility, is ensured through rigorous collection, processing and preservation practices that comply with the highest international standards.

In 2019-20, CIJA's investigators overcame a series of challenges, including shifting territorial frontlines and mistrust of NGOs in some affected communities, to collect 1,040kg of Syrian Regime documents and 112.5kg of IS-related materials. The collections contributed directly to the completion of legal briefs concerning IS criminality in Syria and Iraq and will add to information that can be provided to criminal justice inquiries, investigations and prosecutions.

"I am proud of my work. Whenever I hear a witness' statement or collect any paper or electronic evidence, I always feel that I am contributing another piece to the coming justice that will deliver restitution to the people of Syria who suffered greatly over the last nine years."

CIJA Investigator, Syria (name withheld)

"It is the biggest and most incriminating cache of documents ever collected from a war still in progress."

The Times, 23 September 2018



ANALYSIS AND CASE BUILDING

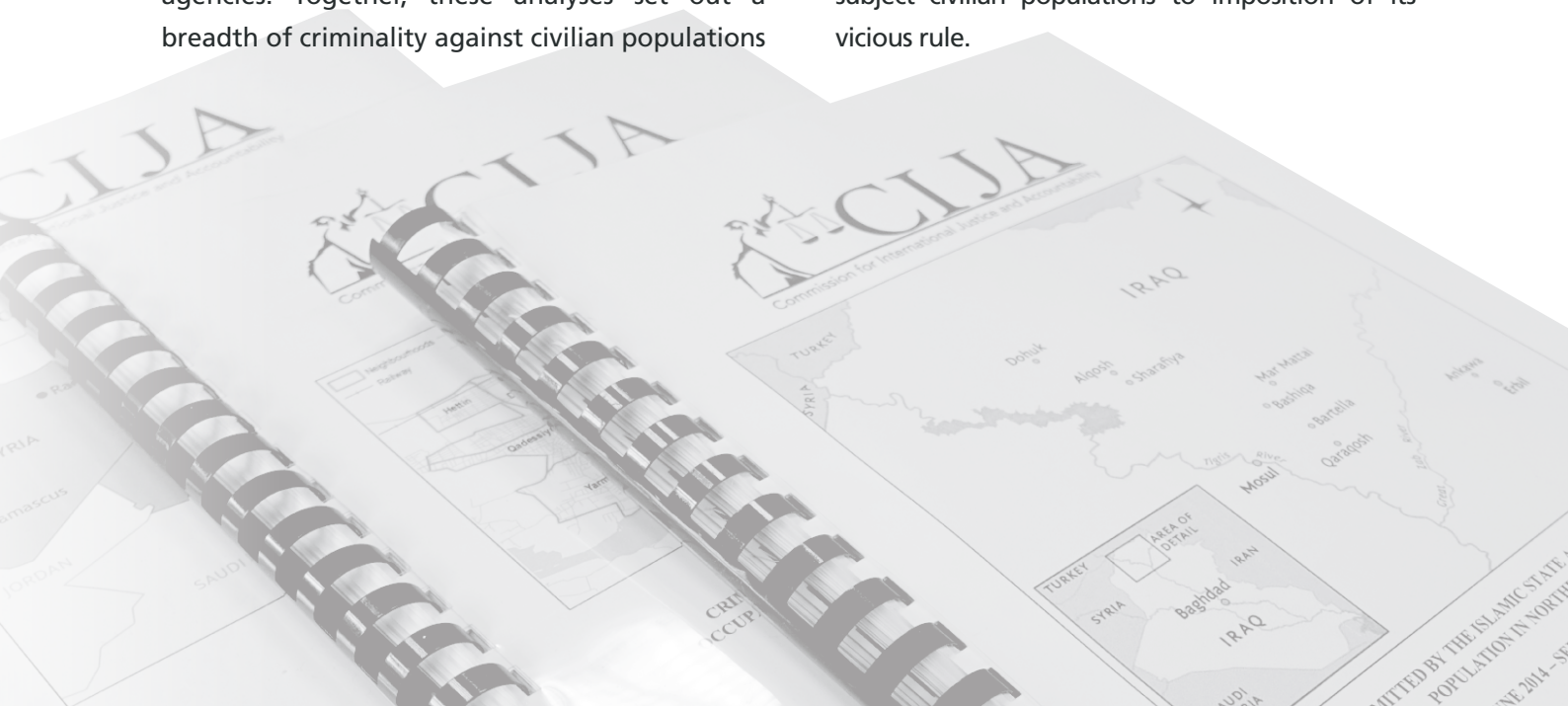
Interdisciplinary analysts assess, verify and corroborate information alongside the complex linkage analysis necessary to establish individual criminal responsibility of mid to high-level suspects. Methods and techniques draw on the analytical procedures established by ad hoc international and hybrid criminal tribunals and the International Criminal Court, as well as advances in counter-terrorism, suspect tracking and human trafficking analysis. CIJA's analytical capacity has supported and strengthened the work of national and international law enforcement agencies and public international bodies, in fulfilment of their mandates to pursue criminal justice accountability for violations committed in the time of conflict.

"Each of Syria's four intelligence agencies — military, political, air force and state security — has local branches across Syria. Most have their own jails. CIJA has documented hundreds of them."

The New York Times
11 May 2019

CIJA's analytical work, spanning Syrian Regime and IS criminality, enabled the completion of 22 legal briefs and structural reports that provide authoritative accounts of the leadership structures and identify dozens of mid to senior level suspects who may bear individual criminal responsibility for a vast array of crimes in Syria and Iraq. Those addressing the Syrian Regime reconstruct the leadership structures under President Assad, including the Syrian Armed Forces and key Syrian security and military intelligence agencies. Together, these analyses set out a breadth of criminality against civilian populations

across Syria in detention facilities as well as during the conduct of hostilities, including widespread and systematic sexual and gender-based violence. Briefs and reports on Islamic State set out its executive, military, judicial and administrative structures and provide a meticulous account of how the group used its apparatus to convert, kill, or enslave thousands of Yazidi men, women, and children; persecute Christian, Shia, and other religious minorities; and subject civilian populations to imposition of its vicious rule.

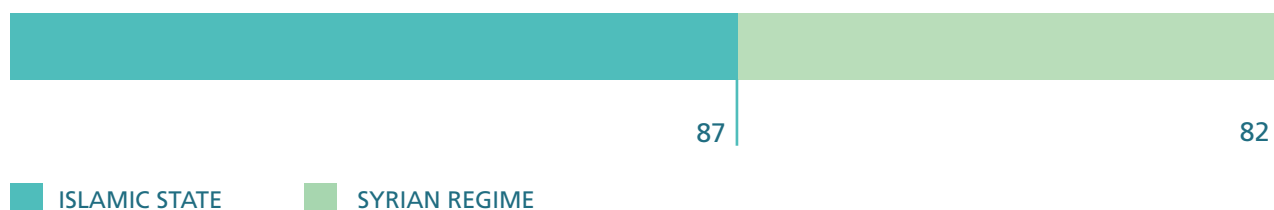


ASSISTING INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSES

CIJA supports international and domestic justice bodies in fulfilling their duty to investigate and prosecute international crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, terrorism and human trafficking, by providing access to its vast evidence collections as well as CIJA’s expertise in legal and military analysis, linguistics, open source intelligence, and rigorous evidence management procedures.

REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE: APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020

TOTAL REQUESTS: 169



CIJA’s personnel have provided specific expertise in support of a number of national inquiries, investigations and criminal proceedings, including sworn affidavits and expert or witness testimony.

requests for assistance and provided information on 718 targets including 451 suspects, with a continued increase of requests focusing on sexual and gender-based violence.

In 2019-20, CIJA assisted 37 operational partners from 13 countries as well as international bodies such as the IIIM, UNITAD, OPCW and Eurojust, as well as partner NGOs that are pursuing universal jurisdiction complaints. In total, CIJA received 169

As part of this work, CIJA provided evidence and analytical assistance to 14 ongoing investigations concerning Syrian Regime and Islamic State suspects being pursued by law enforcement agencies in at least five countries.

REQUESTS ACCORDING TO TARGETS: APRIL 2019 – MARCH 2020

TOTAL TARGETS: 718



CIJA also supported the first war crimes conviction of a foreign terrorist fighter in the Netherlands and the first criminal trial of a mid-level former Syrian Regime member:



DUTCH COURT CONVICTS ISLAMIC STATE MILITANT OF WAR CRIMES

29 July 2019

“Dutch judges [...] convicted an Islamic State militant of war crimes in Iraq and Syria and sentenced him to 7-1/2 years in prison after he posed with a crucified body and shared images of dead victims online.”



IF A TORTURER SWITCHES SIDES, DOES HE DESERVE MERCY?

20 April 2020

“The Commission for International Justice and Accountability [...] has shared a pile of documents with prosecutors establishing [Anwar, R.’s] command and control of Branch 251.”

In July 2019, a Dutch court convicted Oussama Achraf Akhlafa, a former Islamic State fighter, of membership in a terrorist organisation and the war crime of committing outrages upon human dignity and degrading treatment. The verdict constituted the first conviction within a European jurisdiction of a former IS fighter for war crimes. CIJA provided a series of evidentiary materials, including the submission of a detailed analytical report to the prosecutors of the case.

In early March 2020, the Higher Regional Court in Koblenz, Germany announced the commencement of trial proceedings in the case of Anwar R., a former official at the Syrian General Intelligence Directorate and the highest-ranking Syrian Regime member to be prosecuted under the principle of universal jurisdiction worldwide. CIJA provided investigative, evidentiary and analytical support throughout the investigation and will continue to assist German authorities as requested.

“CIJA secured a place for me at the forefront of transitional justice, which will one day arrive in the new Syria.”

CIJA Investigator,
Syria (name withheld)



SYRIA

CIJA has been investigating international crimes perpetrated by the Syrian Regime since 2012, as well as those committed by the Islamic State since 2014. Through the tireless work of our investigators, over 1,3 million original Syrian Regime and IS documents and digital materials have been preserved and analysed. Multidisciplinary teams have developed high-level legal briefs detailing organisational structures and crimes perpetrated by both the Syrian Regime and IS across key locations and facilities in Syria throughout the long-running conflict.

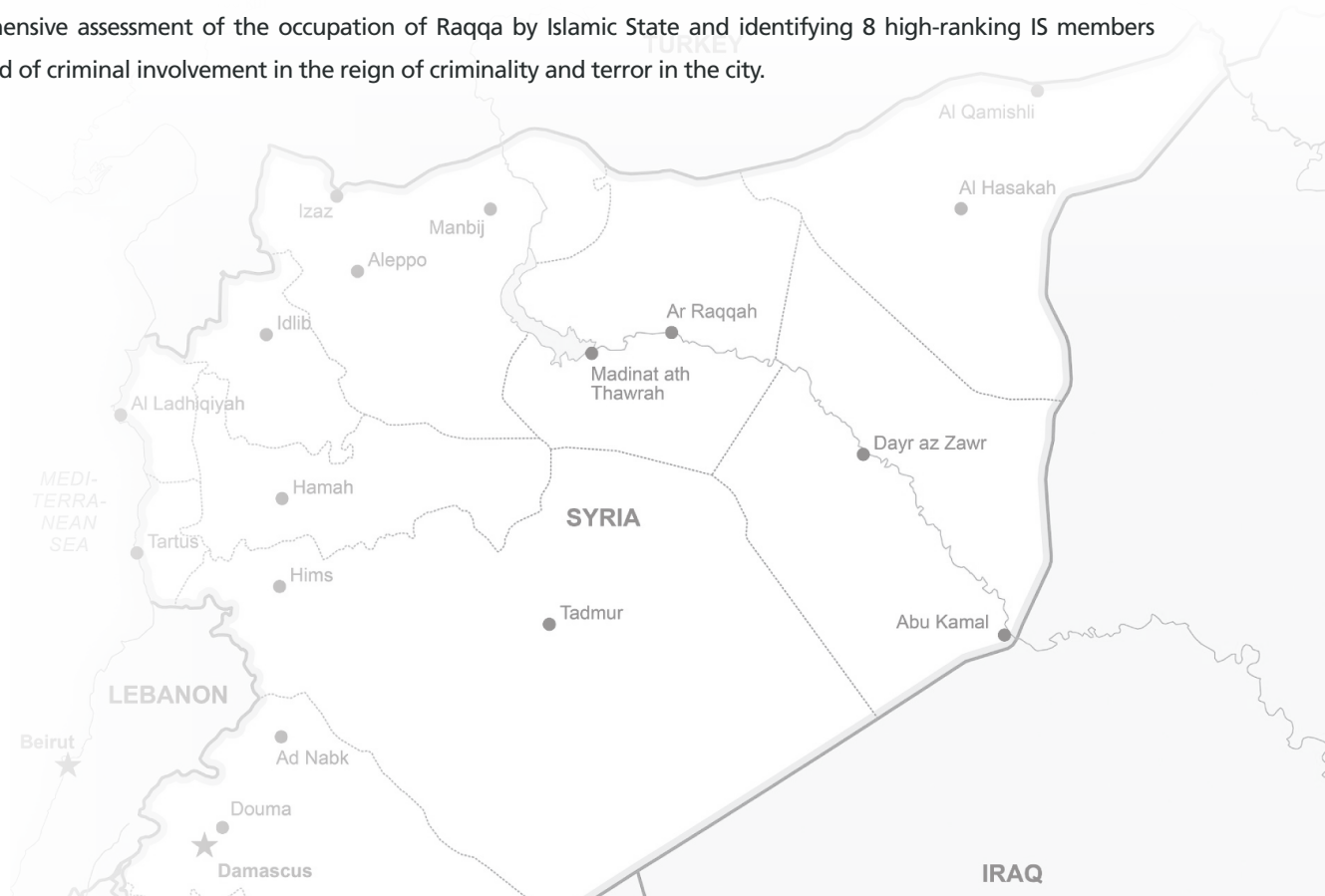
In parallel, CIJA's support to public bodies has included expert testimony as well as evidence submissions to a number of cases including *Colvin v. Syria*, the conviction of a former IS member for terrorism offences

in Aleppo (the "Zoher, J" case), the issuing of three arrest warrants for senior Syrian Regime members by the French War Crimes Unit (the "Dabbagh" case), and the ongoing trial of a former Syrian Regime Intelligence Official for war crimes and crimes against humanity (the "Anwar, R." case).

"My aspiration is that one day there will be a transitional justice period in Syria allowing CIJA-collected material and investigators to play a greater role before the Syrian public – so that Syrians know that we didn't let any of their rights fall through the cracks in going after the perpetrators from all angles."

CIJA Investigator,
Syria (name withheld)

Throughout 2019-20, Syria-focused investigators operated in the context of intense aerial bombardments, ground offensives and the re-establishment of security checkpoints. Despite this, 39 investigators from CIJA's dedicated Syrian Regime and Islamic State teams collected more than 1,147 kg of evidentiary materials and 288 records of interview with witnesses related to both Syrian Regime and IS criminality. The final legal brief on Syria was concluded, providing a comprehensive assessment of the occupation of Raqqa by Islamic State and identifying 8 high-ranking IS members suspected of criminal involvement in the reign of criminality and terror in the city.



IRAQ

CIJA expanded its Islamic State investigations into Iraq in 2015, having investigated the group's conduct in Syria since early 2014. CIJA's field teams have recovered critical evidentiary materials, including documents, witness interviews and digital devices addressing IS criminality and operations. Complex analysis of the organisational structure and policies of IS have complemented detailed findings on crimes perpetrated across Northern Iraq and Syria, including the persecution and enslavement of minorities, leading to the completion of 10 legal briefs and structural reports.

"Working with CIJA gave me hope in fulfilling the goal that I have been striving for every day and every night, and that is: the prosecution of the perpetrators and giving them the retribution that they deserve by law."

CIJA Investigator, (name withheld)

In the 2019/20 investigative cycle, CIJA finalised a detailed legal brief addressing crimes against Christians by IS, including its campaign of forced displacement and pillage; the detention, forced conversion and mistreatment of Christians; the destruction of Christian cultural property; and the crimes of murder and enforced disappearance. CIJA also supported Dutch prosecutors to secure the first war crimes conviction of a foreign terrorist fighter (the "Akhlafa" case) through the provision of evidentiary material.

Members of CIJA's Daesh Crimes Investigative Unit participated in training and mentoring that supported the collection of a variety of documentary and digital evidence as well as 164 records of interview with witnesses. In parallel, CIJA provided technical assistance and training support to a range of Kurdistan Region of Iraq justice actors including the Commission for Investigation and Gathering of Evidence as well as Christian, Yazidi, and Kurdish lawyers.



MEDIA

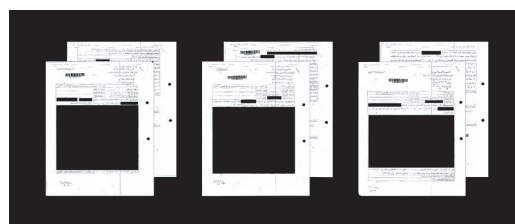
Since its creation, CIJA has become an established member of the international justice community. CIJA's expertise in complex criminal investigations, as well as its expansive knowledge of the organisational structures and chains of command of the Syrian Regime and IS, continues to be recognised and drawn upon by numerous media and research outlets. CIJA's public profile and social media presence remains discreet, as we strive to balance security and risk considerations for our personnel along with the wider public importance of our work. Senior CIJA personnel share their expertise with critical standard-setting initiatives, including the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) and the draft Global Code of Conduct for the Documentation and Investigation of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (the Murad Code).

In the course of 2019/2020, CIJA was featured in 42 multimedia publications, including 33 articles, three audio productions, six video interviews, as well as in three academic articles and a book exploring issues related to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict. Media coverage reflected growing public interest in universal jurisdiction investigations for crimes committed in Syria and Iraq as well as the political and legal issues surrounding returning foreign terrorist fighters. Our experts are regularly sought out by international justice actors and the media alike: in 2019-20 alone, senior CIJA personnel participated in 49 high-level briefings as well as 39 public events.



Inside Syria's Secret Torture Prisons: How Bashar al-Assad Crushed Dissent

"War crimes investigators with the nonprofit Commission for International Justice and Accountability have found government memos ordering crackdowns and discussing deaths in detention. The memos were signed by top security officials, including members of the Central Crisis Management Committee, which reports directly to Mr. al-Assad."



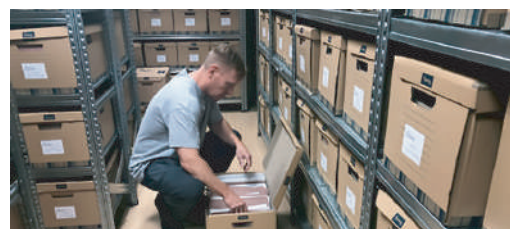
"Memos sent to Syria's head of military intelligence reporting the deaths of detainees in custody. Some information was blacked out to protect the integrity of evidence for possible prosecutions."

The New York Times



Documents Smuggled Out Of Syria Being Used To Build War Crimes Cases Against Regime

"A storehouse in an undisclosed location in Europe holds hundreds of thousands of documents smuggled out of Syria that are being used to build war crimes cases against the regime."



"The Commission for International Justice and Accountability store more than 800,000 official Syrian documents in its office in an undisclosed European location, according to its director."

Deborah Amos/ NPR

GOVERNANCE & FINANCE

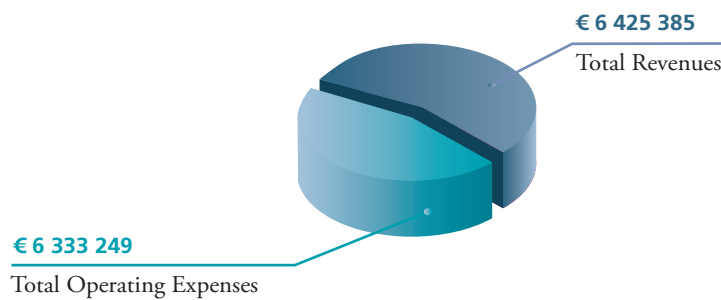
CIJA's governance structure is composed of a three-member Board of Directors and six-member Board of Commissioners. The directors manage day-to-day operations, regularly consulting with the Board of Commissioners on issues of strategic direction related to investigative objectives, operational planning, strategic partnerships, and organisational governance. They are further supported by an Advisory Panel composed of legal experts with extensive prosecutorial, analytical, and defence experience who are responsible for ensuring the quality of CIJA's analytical products.

In addition, each year an independent expert is appointed in agreement with CIJA's donors to review a specific function of CIJA's work: to date, this has included CIJA's investigative and evidence collection

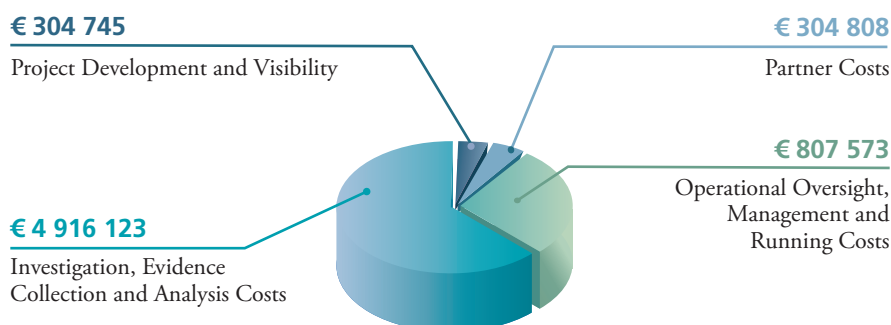
methodologies, legal effectiveness, organisational oversight and capacity, and potential contribution to transitional justice initiatives. Ad hoc expert bodies are assembled to address specific issues that might arise from CIJA's work, such as access to original documents.

All of CIJA's funding is project specific. The 2019-2020 investigative cycle in Syria and Iraq was funded by the UK, US, Germany, Canada, EU and OSF. Since its establishment CIJA has received fifty-nine grants from eleven donors. Every year, CIJA's finances are thoroughly reviewed by external auditors including those appointed by donors. CIJA has passed forty-nine external audits undertaken by independent auditors. CIJA is proud of its record in handling the funds entrusted to it and grateful for its donors' continued support.

REVENUES vs. OPERATING EXPENSES



OPERATING EXPENSES by SUB UNIT



STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Revenues vs. Operating Expenses

Income from Project Grants	€ 6 417 526
Other Income	€ 7 859
Total Revenues	€ 6 425 385
Total Operating Expenses	€ 6 333 249
Total Revenues Less Total Operating Expenses	€ 92 136

Operating Expenses by Sub Unit

Investigation, Evidence Collection and Analysis Costs	€ 4 916 123
Operational Oversight, Management and Running Costs	€ 807 573
Project Development and Visibility	€ 304 745
Partner Costs	€ 304 808
Total Operating Expenses	€ 6 333 249

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

Assets

Cash and Cash Equivalents	€ 1 445 362
Grant and Contribution Receivables	€ 1 292 512
Total Assets	€ 2 737 874

Liabilities and Net Assets

Accounts Payable (Deferred Income from Grants)	€ 1 778 512
Other Payables	€ 91 914
CIJA Contingency Reserve	€ 867 448
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	€ 2 737 874



"CIJA's success is built first and foremost upon the dedication of its men and women working in conflict zones. Every achievement enjoyed by CIJA is ultimately attributable to their efforts."

Bill Wiley, Executive Director



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**The Commission for
International Justice and
Accountability**