



**TRIAL**  
International

# 2024 Activity Report



# THE LAW AS A BULWARK, JUSTICE AS AN ANTIDOTE



Dear friends,

Current events sometimes make our work seem futile. When bombs fall on civilians in Ukraine, Gaza, or eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to name just a few examples, when world powers undermine the very institutions they claim to uphold, and when victims' pleas are met with indifference or cynicism, what role remains for an organization like ours?

Yet it is precisely in these moments that our mission takes on its full meaning: that of a patient, determined justice, often working in the shadows. It is a long-term commitment that does not bear fruit overnight and inevitably faces immense challenges and setbacks. What we are building is the antidote to barbarism and an essential pillar without which history will repeat itself: the documentation of crimes, the quest for truth, the recognition of victims, and the establishment of accountability.

In 2024, TRIAL International continued this methodical work to fight against impunity. We have shown that even the most powerful can be brought to justice and that walls of silence can crumble. The historic trial of Ousman Sonko in Switzerland, former Minister of the Interior of The Gambia, and as such the highest-ranking official ever tried in Europe under the principle of universal jurisdiction, perfectly illustrates the effectiveness of this legal mechanism. His 20-year prison sentence for crimes against humanity marks a decisive turning point. Other trials, in Switzerland, France, Germany, and the United States, have taken place or are being prepared for 2025.

But targeting only the direct perpetrators of crimes is not enough. We have also opened doors on another front: holding economic actors involved in conflicts accountable. Beyond denouncing atrocities, it is crucial to prosecute those who finance, orchestrate, or profit from them. Private military companies, extractive firms, logistics or security companies: all these actors must be held accountable when their activities fuel impunity.

The law is not a privilege reserved for times of peace. It is not optional. It constitutes a bulwark – for victims, for the truth, for the future.

Your unwavering support allows us to persevere in this quest for justice, paving the way towards an era where the responsibility of individuals and economic actors in times of conflict is not only recognized but actively pursued, and where victims of international crimes remain at the heart of our work.

**Together, we are advancing towards a future where justice and accountability become the norm for all.**

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your continued engagement at our side.

**Leslie Haskell**  
*President*

**Philip Grant**  
*Executive Director*

# TRIAL INTERNATIONAL'S IMPACT IN 2024

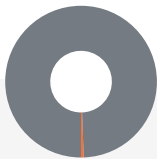
TRIAL International carried out investigations into crimes committed in 17 countries. Meanwhile, we have continued our work with affected communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and have begun working in Ukraine.

TRIAL International has supported the representation of **5'085** victims in legal proceedings, including:



**2'381**

women



**25**

children



**164**

sexual violence victims

We have brought **15 new cases** before the national courts, alone or in partnership.



**380**

victims  
obtained  
favorable  
decisions



**3**

perpetrators  
of crimes  
convicted



**77**

ongoing  
proceedings  
(including 74 at  
national level and 3  
at international level)



**9**

favorable  
verdicts at  
the national  
level



**7**

reparation  
decisions

## CUMULATIVE IMPACT SINCE 2002:

**11'800**

victims supported in court, including  
**1'980** survivors of sexual violence

**5'775**

people  
trained

**484**

cases  
supported



In 2024, 19 new cases were subject to a preliminary investigation by TRIAL International. This initial phase assesses the strategic relevance of the case, the solidity of the evidence, and its potential to give rise to legal precedents. Security risks for victims and survivors, the type of crime, and the likelihood of being able to collect evidence and access a competent jurisdiction are also essential criteria for case selection.

To conduct its investigations, TRIAL International collaborated with 40 national and international partners. Close to forty fact-finding and documentation missions were undertaken or supported by the organization.

In Ukraine, TRIAL International uses profiling techniques to identify suspects who travel abroad and applies investigative methods that reveal recurring patterns of human rights violations — allowing the organization to go beyond isolated cases and highlight patterns of violations across multiple cases. This approach led the organization to submit cases against several high-ranking officials in various European jurisdictions. This contributes to the development of a cross-border network that identifies and locates the perpetrators of atrocities in Ukraine, maximizing the chances of securing their arrest and conviction, while multiplying the legal remedies available to victims.

## ZOOM

### **The investigation into crimes against humanity committed in a National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)**

The Batwa community in the South Kivu province of the DRC has suffered repeated waves of violence, allegedly perpetrated by the armed guards of the Kahuzi Biega National Park, in close collaboration with the Congolese army, in an attempt to drive them from their ancestral lands. Burned villages, constant terror, torture, rape, murder, and looting: the abuses have left deep scars. The last attack is believed to have occurred in January 2024. In response to these atrocities, TRIAL International and its partners have conducted in-depth documentation of evidence and testimonies. In response, the judicial authorities in South Kivu have opened a formal procedure to examine these allegations. In December 2024, the military prosecutor in Bukavu led a judicial inquiry mission into the most recent attacks, marking a crucial step forward in the quest for justice. The follow-up to this investigation remains uncertain due to the deteriorating political and security situation in the east of the country in early 2025.





Strategic litigation is central to our mission to combat impunity. Whenever possible, we first use national mechanisms to ensure justice is delivered as close as possible to the affected communities. When the context does not allow it, we then resort to international and extraterritorial justice mechanisms, including the principle of universal jurisdiction, to facilitate access to justice for victims and survivors. To this end, we collaborate closely with local and international NGOs.

In 2024, we worked on 89 cases at the national level, including 47 in the DRC, 24 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and 18 cases of extraterritorial jurisdiction, including universal jurisdiction, relating to various contexts such as Ukraine, The Gambia, Syria, and the DRC. Among these 89 cases, 15 cases were newly submitted to the national prosecuting authorities and mainly concern acts of torture and sexual violence, constituting international crimes.

In 2024, TRIAL International and its partners supported the representation of more than 5'000 victims. Among them, 380 victims obtained favorable decisions through nine trials held in the DRC, Germany (for crimes committed in The Gambia), and Switzerland (for crimes committed in The Gambia, Belarus, and Guatemala).

## ZOOM

### **Former Gambian minister convicted in second trial for crimes against humanity in Switzerland**

Ousman Sonko, former Gambian minister of the interior from 2006 to 2016, was sentenced by the Federal Criminal Court in May 2024 to 20 years in prison for crimes against humanity. This trial followed a complaint filed by TRIAL International in 2017. This conviction highlights the crimes committed under the dictatorship of former Gambian president Yahya Jammeh and also makes Ousman Sonko the highest-ranking official ever tried for international crimes under the principle of universal jurisdiction in Europe. In this trial, TRIAL International facilitated the participation of the nine plaintiffs – Gambians who traveled to take part in the proceedings in Bellinzona – and provided them with the opportunity to receive psychological support. TRIAL International also promoted the dissemination of information on the progress of the trial in The Gambia by publishing daily summaries of the hearings and working with Gambian civil society and media actors. Disseminating information to communities directly affected by the crimes being tried enables these communities to take ownership of the international justice process. In this context, the organization regretted the lack of official translations of the hearings into the languages of the victims.

**5'085** VICTIMS SUPPORTED IN COURT, INCLUDING  
2'381 WOMEN AND 25 CHILDREN

**15** NEW CASES  
SUBMITTED

**9** TRIALS

**9** FAVORABLE VERDICTS AT  
THE NATIONAL LEVEL



## CAPACITY BUILDING

In the DRC, TRIAL International trained 235 legal practitioners in South Kivu and the Kasai region, including lawyers and magistrates, members of local civil society, and representatives of a provincial truth and reconciliation commission. During the first half of 2024, TRIAL International notably supported the commissioners of the Kasai-Central Provincial Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission in developing their intervention strategy. This support helped them structure the Commission's mandate and priorities in favor of truth and justice for victims.

TRIAL International also conducted the first training sessions as part of its new program dedicated to combating impunity for private military and security actors. The organization trained 29 people from civil society organizations in Kenya, the DRC, Nigeria, Iraq, and Mozambique on documenting international crimes and serious human rights and environmental violations. Participating organizations also contributed to the training by sharing their knowledge and experience in their respective contexts. These exchanges helped identify common challenges and best practices.

To ensure our activities contribute to a sustainable improvement in the services provided to survivors, we offer mentoring for lawyers and NGOs who engage in documentation and strategic litigation over the longer term. Thus, we continued to support seven lawyers and six NGOs throughout the year.

## ZOOM

### First pilot training in Ukraine

TRIAL International and its partner organized a pilot training course for 20 Ukrainian judicial actors in February 2024. The aim of the training was to provide concrete tools for the development of strategic cases against high-level perpetrators according to a repeated *modus operandi*. Following the training, TRIAL International's partner received 136 requests for assistance in applying the methods and tools presented during the training to specific cases. Participants expressed a desire to replicate the training at the provincial level to build the capacity of those in direct contact with victims and the crime scene. Based on this experience, TRIAL International has developed new local capacity building activities for 2025.

#### KEY FIGURES

**284** PEOPLE TRAINED IN TOTAL,  
INCLUDING 70 WOMEN

**57** LAWYERS TRAINED

**147** MEMBERS OF CIVIL  
SOCIETY TRAINED

**80** JUDICIAL ACTORS AND  
AUTHORITIES TRAINED



In BiH, TRIAL International continued its advocacy efforts throughout 2024, addressing systemic challenges in the country's transitional justice system at both the national and international levels. At the national level, these efforts led to the issuance of official instructions by the chief prosecutors of the Federation of BiH, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District for the compensation of victims of conflict-related sexual violence. This important step ensures consistency across prosecutors' offices and promotes systematic reparations, thus ensuring equal access to justice for all victims of conflict-related sexual violence. By embedding these advances in institutional frameworks, TRIAL International has helped to make reparations claims standard practice, ensuring sustainability and long-term impact.

In the DRC, 2024 was marked by the gradual withdrawal of the UN peacekeeping mission, which called into question the current model of international support for the Congolese justice system in the fight against impunity. Faced with this development, TRIAL International considered it essential to create a space for dialogue in order to rethink and adapt this support in anticipation of the absence of one of its main actors. In collaboration with the judicial authorities and MONUSCO, the organisation therefore organised a national workshop in July 2024, bringing together all the technical and financial partners of the Congolese justice system in order to assess the priority areas of support needed by the Congolese judicial authorities and to draw up recommendations for the future.

## ZOOM

### Advocating for a Convention on Crimes Against Humanity

Unlike other international crimes such as war crimes, genocide, torture and enforced disappearance, there is currently no international treaty specifically dedicated to crimes against humanity, and this represents a significant gap in the international justice system. In 2024, TRIAL International strongly advocated for the development and adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity. The organization actively contributed to the opening of the negotiations leading to its adoption and to ensuring that the future convention contains the legal standards most conducive to the protection of all from crimes against humanity. In cooperation with partners, it published briefing notes and organized events for States to promote a constructive exchange on the meaning and content of this future convention. In December, the UN General Assembly finally adopted a resolution establishing the negotiation process for such a treaty, a decisive step towards the conclusion of a legally binding instrument on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED TRUST AND SUPPORT!

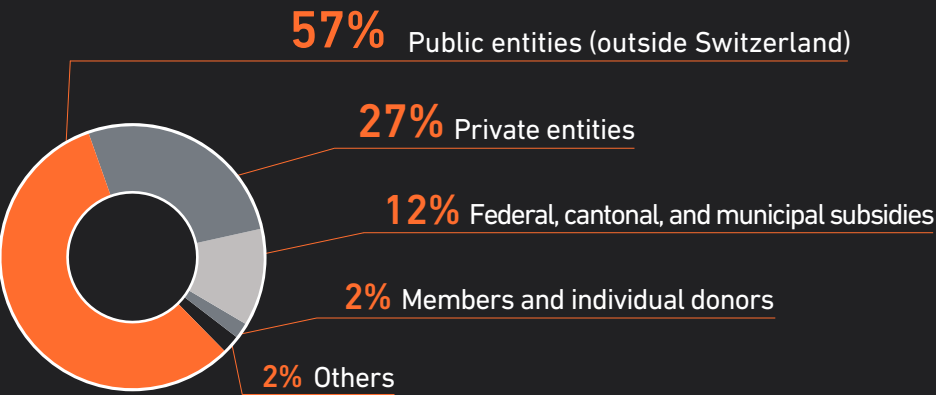


TRIAL International works **with numerous local and international partners, 30 institutional donors and 261 individual donors** to fight impunity.

We sincerely thank you for your trust and your support, which, once again this year, have enabled us to assist multiple victims in their quest for justice. **THANK YOU!**

**CHF 4'221'366**  
**TOTAL EXPENSES**

## DONOR CONTRIBUTIONS (as percentage of revenue)





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