



“THE RECKONING: THE BATTLE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT”

By Paco de Onís, Peter Kinoy and Pamela Yates

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Filmmaker’s Statement

I heard about the International Criminal Court (ICC) via a member of the Peruvian Truth Commission. In a high Andean village, he told how he had previously worked as part of a coalition to establish the first permanent, international criminal court that would try perpetrators for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. The idea that no one would be immune, that even heads of state might be brought to justice for genocide during an ongoing conflict, was amazing. This would represent a paradigm shift in the growing panorama of international justice, because after the bloodiest century in human history, this new Court would force us to ask, “Does humanity have the possibility of doing better than this?”

I started out thinking that **The Reckoning** would be about the ICC’s cases and trials, like any good crime thriller. Because the Court investigates during ongoing conflicts, I knew I would have to lead a film team to the sites of some of the world’s worst conflicts — Colombia, Darfur, Uganda and Congo, where over 4 million people are estimated to have died in the worst conflict since World War II. Quickly I realized that I had to expand the vision for the film in order to include the effects the International Criminal Court was having at the local level, where its investigations were causing a tremendous amount of controversy, because the Court was intervening in ongoing conflicts where peace negotiations were underway. The Court’s arrest warrants generated a global debate on whether the interests of peace and justice were at odds. In the end the Court itself became the protagonist of **The Reckoning**, and all the cinematic elements were developed in realizing this idea.

I chose to work with a real Dutch Master, cinematographer Melle van Essen. Together we devised a look for the Court, which is based in The Hague. We chose a cool blue that echoed the Court’s minimalist high-tech headquarters. It is a look that highlights the world’s best and brightest, the young prosecutors who are drawn to this idea of a Court that says no one is above the law.

In the filmed footage of Uganda and the Congo, the hues are bright, the light warm. This was meant to reflect the depth of the wars’ destruction set against the real beauty of the land and ancient cultures. The first humans came from this part of Africa and we are all their descendants. The culminating story of **The Reckoning** focuses on attempts to arrest the President of Sudan Omar al-Bashir on charges of genocide in Darfur, which I tell through the Court’s battle in the United Nations Security Council. The hypocrisy in the corridors of power is filmed in counter-distinction to the death and destruction in Darfur. The United Nations can have long debates about how to stop genocide, but the victims in Darfur cannot wait for the power brokers to work through the issue, and the charismatic, concerned Prosecutor of the ICC confronts the U.N. diplomats. He must act quickly.

The title **The Reckoning** has three meanings: the reckoning of a world trying to bring the worst perpetrators of massive crimes to justice; the reckoning of the International Criminal Court becoming an effective global arbiter of justice; and the reckoning with the international community — do we have the political will to carry out the arrest warrants and fulfill the mandate of this new Court?

— Pamela Yates, Director

