



Libya should stand up for justice, not grant impunity to President al-Bashir

Brussels-Rome, 7 January 2012

On Saturday 7 January 2012, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir travelled to Libya as part of a two-day visit and was met by Mustafa Abdul Jalil, Chair of Libya's National Transitional Council, at the Tripoli airport. President al-Bashir is the first sitting President indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), which issued a warrant of arrest against him in March 2009 for allegedly bearing the greatest responsibility for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur.

Statement by Alison Smith, Legal Counsel of No Peace Without Justice:

“No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) and the Nonviolent Radical Party, Transnational and Transparty (NRPTT) laments the acceptance by Libya’s transitional ruling authorities to host Sudanese President Al-Bashir, which blatantly contradicts the values and principles championed by those brave men and women who carried out the revolution and threw out the previous dictatorial regime.

“By hosting a head of State who is on the run from international arrest warrants for grave human rights violations, the National Transitional Council has missed an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to justice, the rule of law and the promotion and protection of human rights.

“While it is certainly in the interest of President Al-Bashir to expand the range of countries where he is seen to be able to travel with impunity, it is not in Libya’s interest to be considered a safe haven for war criminals, particularly given the situation with Saif al-Islam. We have said before that since Libya seems to be willing to prosecute war criminal themselves, once we are sure it is able, the ICC should defer to Libyan prosecutions of Libya’s alleged war criminals, including Saif al-Islam. Shielding President Al-Bashir from the ICC and welcoming him at the highest levels has to give pause for thought as to whether Libya really is willing to ensure no impunity for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

“Hundreds of thousands of victims of the violence in Darfur now live as refugees as a result of the crimes committed against them. The ICC has found that there is reasonable basis to believe that President al-Bashir may have been responsible for some of the crimes they suffered. The time has come to hold President al-Bashir and other ICC fugitives to account, not to welcome them with open arms and to stand up for justice and for victims everywhere.”

NPWJ runs a Transitional Justice program in Libya, assisting civil society and nascent institutions in establishing truth and justice mechanisms and processes. For further information, contact Alison Smith on asmith@npwj.org or +32-2-548-3912 /+ 218 919386116 or Nicola Giovannini on ngiovannini@npwj.org or +32-2-548-39135.

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