

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Uganda: Amnesty International says government obliged to arrest Sudanese President

Amnesty International today expressed dismay at Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's invitation to Sudanese President Omar al Bashir to attend the special African Union summit on refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in Africa, scheduled to begin on Monday, 19 October 2009 in Kampala.

The invitation was reportedly issued in a statement made on 14 October 2009 during which President Yoweri Museveni indicated to reporters that President Omar al Bashir would not be arrested and surrendered to the ICC upon his arrival in Uganda.

"President al Bashir is a fugitive from international justice – charged with responsibility for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur," said Christopher Keith Hall, Senior Legal Adviser with Amnesty International's International Justice Project.

"The Ugandan government has an obligation to arrest President al Bashir and hand him over to the ICC should he enter Ugandan territory."

An arrest warrant for President al Bashir was issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on 4 March 2009.

Uganda is a state party to the treaty establishing the ICC and is obliged without exception to cooperate with the ICC and arrest and surrender anyone named in an arrest warrant to the ICC. If it fails to do so, the ICC can refer this clear violation of Uganda's obligations to the Assembly of States Parties, the ICC oversight body.

Notes to editors:

- Since the ICC issued the arrest warrant on 4 March 2009, President al Bashir has visited seven states (Eritrea, Egypt, Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe), none of which are parties to the ICC treaty.

- Although the African Union has urged states not to cooperate with the ICC in enforcing this arrest warrant, several states parties to the ICC treaty, including Botswana, Brazil and South Africa, have indicated that they would fulfil their legal obligations and arrest him if were to enter their countries.

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