

Chad: Don't Welcome Back Al-Bashir
Human Rights Watch
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(New York) – The Chadian government should arrest President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan or bar him entry to Chad, Human Rights Watch said today.

News reports indicate that al-Bashir will travel to Chad to attend the Greenbelt Conference of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States on March 18, 2013. Al-Bashir is sought by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes committed in Sudan's Darfur region.

“Chad should join the many African countries that have said they'll arrest al-Bashir or prevent his visits,” said Elise Keppler, senior international justice counsel at Human Rights Watch. “Activists across Africa have called for Chad to stand with victims and to ensure that the Sudanese president is surrendered to the ICC for prosecution.”

As a member of the ICC, Chad is obligated to cooperate with the court in the surrender of fugitives, Human Rights Watch said. Other African ICC members – including South Africa, Malawi, Botswana, Central African Republic, Zambia, and Kenya – have made clear that al-Bashir will be arrested, or have cancelled visits or relocated conferences to ensure that he does not enter their territory.

Chad contends that in welcoming al-Bashir, it is abiding by a decision of the African Union (AU) calling for African governments not to cooperate in his arrest. As a matter of international law, however, AU decisions cannot negate Chad's obligations as an ICC member, Human Rights Watch said.

Only three other African ICC members – Djibouti, Malawi, and Kenya – have permitted al-Bashir to visit since an arrest warrant was issued for him in 2009. Malawi and Kenya cancelled return visits, though, following a diplomatic and public outcry.

Chad is the only ICC member to allow al-Bashir to visit three times. In February, in advance of an earlier visit, nearly 100 organizations called on the Chadian president to arrest al-Bashir. The ICC, as well as the European Union and the United Kingdom, also called for Chad to cooperate in the arrest of al-Bashir.

“Chad's international treaty obligations cannot be wiped away by an AU decision,” Keppler said. “Chad should arrest al-Bashir, not welcome him.”

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