

Darfuri Leaders Respond to the Expected Arrest Warrant for Sudanese President al-Bashir

The following statements were offered by Darfuri diaspora leaders in the United States in expectation that the ICC will issue a warrant for President Omer al-Bashir's arrest on Wednesday, March 4, 2009. They may be cited publically or used in press releases or other communications materials by organizations and activists advocating for peace and justice in Darfur.

“As the sixth anniversary of the horrors of genocide in Darfur approaches, world leaders have failed to make a dent or stop the genocidal crusade orchestrated and supported by the Sudanese Junta. Amidst the rising death tolls until this day, the time to knock down the walls of indifference has come, and it is now. Those who have perpetrated those crimes have to be brought to justice now, as it is a great fallacy to assume peace can come without justice. To quote Martin Luther King, Jr.: ‘the time is always right to do the right thing.’ This is not to mention the Sudanese record of never honoring or keeping an agreement, ever.

“That is why the ICC indictment is the only hope for the people of Darfur. It may not resolve their issue, but it will surely help steer the vehicle of peace in the right direction. It can help build momentum and it can cement all the efforts of civil movements as well as world leaders to stop one of the worst humanitarian crises in the 21st century.”

- Ismail Adam is from El-Fasher in North Darfur and currently resides in Toronto, Canada. He is the president of the Darfur Association of Canada.

“While al-Bashir remains in power challenging all the efforts by the international community to bring an end to the suffering of our beloved people in Darfur, and Darfuris are frustrated by the failure of the international community to protect them, today is al-Bashir's turn.

“The decision on the arrest warrant brought great hope back to us. Today Darfuris and so many others recognize that there is an international institution capable of ending their suffering through the pursuit of justice. It marks a new history of our nation where respect for human dignity can be maintained. We believe that justice is our last resort and last hope.”

-Niemat Ahmadi is from Kabkabiya in North Darfur and currently lives in Washington, DC. A long-time human rights advocate, she is a founding member of the Darfuri Leaders Network in the U.S. and serves as Darfuri liaison officer at the Save Darfur Coalition.

“I think that the ICC's decision to issue a warrant for al-Bashir's arrest is the beginning of the end of the catastrophic events in the final chapter of the history of genocide in Darfur.

“To me, justice in Darfur simply means justice for the civilian victims of the evil saga of ethnic cleansing through a genocide that targeted not only able men but also innocent children, women and the elderly through the use of unspeakable indiscriminate killing and destruction that included property and the livelihoods of the indigenous people of Darfur. It also means that holding the perpetrators of these genocidal crimes to account is a moral imperative on behalf of the innocent civilian victims who have been intentionally targeted for elimination due to no fault of their own making.”

- Dr. Mahmoud Braima is from El-Fasher in North Darfur and now lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He is president of the Darfur Association in the United States and chair of Mass Communications at Southern University. He is a member of the Darfuri Leaders Network in the U.S.

“The arrest warrant for al-Bashir is a bright light that will shine in the lives of the victims of Darfur, to show them that peace is starting to become real as the perpetrator is being held accountable.”

- Fatima Haroun is from the Jabel Marra region of Darfur and now lives in Philadelphia, PA. She is a prominent human rights activist and advocate for Darfur. She serves as president of the Darfur Rehabilitation Project and is a founding member of the Darfuri Leaders Network in the U.S.

“The ICC’s decision to issue a warrant for Bashir’s arrest means that the whole of humanity has started a real battle against those dictators who are committing war crimes and crimes against humanity and who think that they will not pay for those crimes. Ending impunity for anyone who committed war crimes and crimes against humanity is not just words but true action. We can see this example by calling al-Bashir a wanted war criminal by the ICC.

“For us, justice means peace. We believe that there will never be peace in our beloved land Darfur without justice.”

- Mohamadain Ishag is from North Darfur. He currently lives in Brussels, Belgium where he leads the Darfur Organization for Peace and Cultural Heritage.

“The ICC's decision marks a new and historic phase in this genocide. Our families in the camps inside Darfur and in eastern Chad always reiterate that the perpetrators must be brought to justice. The absence of accountability is the hallmark & the reason why such heinous crimes have continued for more than six years.”

- Badawi Osman is from El-Fasher, North Darfur and now lives in Philadelphia, PA. He is a member of the Darfur Working Group.

“Al-Bashir’s arrest is a great justice for the Darfuri people and it means freedom and peace. Our families in Darfur are very happy for their enemy's arrest. We are supporting the ICC forever.”

- Bakheit Shata is from West Darfur and lives in Omaha, Nebraska. He serves as president of the Darfur Community Organization of Nebraska and is a member of the Darfuri Leaders Network in the U.S.

“I expect the ICC to issue a warrant of arrest of al-Bashir on the 4th of March. The crimes committed in Darfur are overwhelming and devastating. Al-Bashir must be held accountable for each and every atrocity that has occurred in Darfur.

“Justice is the first step in stopping the genocide in Darfur. The arrest warrant must be followed with immediate action to arrest al-Bashir and bring him to face justice. Any delay in apprehending Al-Bashir means justice denied. Relatives I have talked to recently in Darfur are all excited that finally the chief perpetrator will be brought to justice.”

- Mohamed Suleiman is from North Darfur and now resides in Washington, D.C. He is a member of the Darfuri Leaders Network in the U.S.

“The ICC arrest warrant for al-Bashir will bring historic and long-awaited justice, like bringing the Pol Pot of Africa to justice. The whole world will be awaiting this moment, especially those who demonstrated around the world asking for accountability for the architects of the Darfur genocide. Today Darfurians and the whole world will say, supporting the ICC decision, ‘Happy Birthday Justice.’”

- Mohamed Abdelrahman is from Darfur and currently lives in Illinois. He is president of the Darfur Association of Illinois and is a founding member of the Darfuri Leaders Network in the U.S.