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Central African Republic must arrest Omar al-Bashir during visit

Amnesty International has called on the Central African Republic (CAR) to arrest wanted Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir and surrender him to the International Criminal Court (ICC), should he go ahead with his planned visit to the country on Thursday.

President Bashir is wanted on charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes for his role in the conflict in Darfur.

"The Central African Republic should not shield President al-Bashir from international justice," said Christopher Keith Hall, Senior Legal Adviser at Amnesty International.

"His visit to the country is an opportunity to enforce the arrest warrant and send a message that justice will prevail."

Today, an ICC Pre-Trial Chamber requested the CAR "to take all necessary measures to arrest Omar al-Bashir and transfer him to the Court."

If it were not to arrest President Bashir, the CAR would violate its obligations under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which it ratified in November 2006.

President Omar al-Bashir has reportedly been invited to attend a ceremony marking the 50th anniversary of the CAR's independence in the capital Bangui on Thursday.

Since it started in 2003, the Darfur conflict has seen more than 300,000 killed, thousands raped, and millions forcibly displaced.

An arrest warrant for President Bashir was issued by the ICC in March 2009 on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes. A further arrest warrant with three charges of genocide in Darfur was issued in July 2010.

Amnesty International has called on all members of the international community to ensure full accountability for crimes under international law committed in Sudan.