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Malaysia: Arrest Sudanese President wanted for war crimes

The Malaysian government should immediately withdraw its invitation to Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir, and arrest him if he travels to Malaysia, Amnesty International said today.

The Malaysian government announced yesterday that President al-Bashir will participate in the Langkawi International Dialogue, an economic forum being held in Malaysia from 19 to 21 June 2011.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for al-Bashir for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur.

“Malaysia should not turn itself into a port of call for fugitives from international justice” said Donna Guest, Deputy Asia Pacific Director at Amnesty International. “The Malaysian government should bar Bashir from its territory, and arrest him if he turns up.”

Amnesty International welcomed Malaysia’s announcement on 21 March of its intention to become a state party to the Rome Statute and to recognise the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court. In his announcement, Malaysian Law Minister Nazri Aziz said, “This is a declaration that Malaysia rejects war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.”

When the UN Security Council referred the situation in Darfur to the ICC in 2005, it urged all states to cooperate fully with the Court. Although Malaysia is not yet party to the Rome Statute of the ICC, it should arrest Omar al-Bashir should he arrive in Malaysia, Amnesty International said.

“Malaysia’s invitation to Omar al-Bashir flies in the face of its decision to join the ICC,” said Guest. “Instead of hosting people wanted by the ICC, Malaysia should reaffirm its commitment to justice.”